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# **STUDIA I ROZPRAWY**

THEORETICAL STUDIES



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## Education as Cultural Migration: Organic Transformations in the Developmental Knots of Activity

**ABSTRACT:** Despite the growing appeal of the cultural-historical approach, there are still many of Vygotsky's ideas that remain unrecognised and unexploited in educational practice. One such idea is the concept of developmental activity knots. The article addresses the process of formation of activity knots and the developmental transformations occurring in them. The example analysed is an extract from one of the sessions conducted in a youth club where we worked with teenagers at risk of social exclusion. They experienced cultural migration when they had to find themselves in a system of social relations that was new to them after being placed in an educational centre. The analysis of the changes occurring in the process of establishing knots of activity between adolescents and adults enabled us to identify the characteristics of the knots and the conditions in which they take on a developmental character.

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## INTRODUCTION

The role of education in the development of individuals and societies has an unequivocally positive function. Without it, the transmission of socio-cultural achievements is impossible. Concern for education, therefore, gives rise to many discussions and new reforms and also initiates disputes over control of the content provided. It is thanks to education that we can see, perceive and learn about people and things hitherto unseen. We change not only our own viewpoints but also those of others by giving them access to our observations, thoughts, and experiences. Education appears to be a kind of journey during which we “visit” others on the one hand and invite them into our world on the other. We discover new horizons and perspectives, but also people and ourselves when we “look at ourselves through their eyes.” It allows the past to become the present and the present to become the future. This is the beauty of all forms of educational migration into the world of other people and societies (emigration) and the inclusion of others into one’s own world (immigration).

It should be, however, remembered that just as not every “migration” is of a positive nature, education not only often fails to fulfil its most important function but may also have a negative impact on the process of the child’s development to date. Such is the instance when education is consciously used for political, ideological, religious, or even military purposes, when, instead of acquiring the competence to build “knots” with other people and societies, differences and antagonisms are strengthened, and not infrequently also the child is “disconnected” or “uprooted” from its natural environment of life, which includes not only geographical space-time but also cultural-historical space-time. In place of development, there is a pathological state of alienation and isolation. Not only are new “knots” not created, but those already existing are “severed.”

The perception of education as a journey has taken on particular significance in recent years. Human history is marked by various migrations caused by the urge to solve problems faced by both individuals and entire communities. Today we are talking about a deepening migration crisis caused by climate change, economic poverty, and political and armed conflicts. In our part of Europe, we are experiencing the

drama of the forced and violent abandonment of homes by millions of Ukrainians fleeing the atrocities of the war that has gripped their country. Migration is always motivated by a desire to improve the situation, obtain better, safer living conditions, and expand educational, livelihood, or professional opportunities. The multitude of complex issues related to migration is a “hot” topic of broad social and political discourse and numerous action projects undertaken at international, state, and local levels. In this form of the “new world” there is also the issue of education and its functions enabling the creation of cultural and historical “knots.”

This is why, by joining this discussion, we would like to go beyond viewing migration in a geographical context. The temporal dimension of migration also characterises the inner world of human. While the former describes easily apprehensible physical dimensions and mechanical relations, the latter concerns the world of the psyche, imagination, intellect, emotions, and, more broadly, cultural-historical conditions that go beyond the externally perceived “hic et nunc.” The first dimension describes the physical presence of people and objects, while the other refers to their psychological presence. However, the relationship between the two is not quite as simple as the colloquial saying “a healthy spirit in a healthy body,” suggesting that the material aspects of existence directly and almost immediately trigger their transfer to the “inner life.” Research on children clearly demonstrates that not every external human presence evokes a psychological presence (Spitz & Wolf, 1946). Popular culture even perceives an inverse relationship that “the more of you, the less” (Kukulka, 1997). This means that strong external commitment may not, in every instance, have a positive effect in psychological terms. On the contrary, such a situation may lead to breaking social bonds, deep alienation, loneliness, and “uprooting” from social life.

We intended to make this theme the focus of our article by posing the question: How does the transition and fusion of the mental and physical, the individual and the social worlds occur? The cultural-historical approach provides us with a clue, which is the genetic law. Vygotsky explains it using the metaphor of a theatre scene depicting development. The higher mental function appears on two planes in one stage of development as a social relationship. The first plane inter-psychologically takes place between people, then intra-psychologically on the second internal, individual plane (Vygotsky, 1997c, p. 106; Veresov, 2010, pp. 267-295).

Formulating the genetic law, Vygotsky left us at the same time with a puzzle of transformative conversion in/on the transition from interpsychological to intrapsychological actions. If education, both formal and informal, is to serve the full development of a human being who will be able to create a new, good future for himself and the world, then it must solve this puzzle (Hakkarainen, 2010; Zuckerman, 2014).

In seeking an answer to this question, we will use the dialectic method, characteristic of the cultural-historical approach, in which human development is seen as a unity of opposites (Vygotsky, 2019, pp. 25-26). The attractiveness of Vygotsky’s thought in creating the education of the future consists, in our opinion, of overcoming emerging crises by insightfully identifying contradictions and developing a new, holistic view of them as unity. In the processes of education, the child is introduced

to the system of social relations, and the individual sense given to social reality is confronted with objective meaning. We can speak here of cultural migration, when an individual rooted in one environment (e.g., local, family, institutional) moves to another, in which social relations are significantly different from what was known before. The entry into the system of new relations is made through knots, in which the activity of the individual is crossed with the activity of other people. It is in the knots of activities that the contradictions come to the fore, not only between the individual and the community but also in the psychological world of the individual and his or her emotional life.

Formulating the concept of “unity of opposites,” Vygotsky developed a research method consistent with it, the fundamental principle of which is to identify an indivisible unit of analysis that contains all the characteristics of the properties of a given phenomenon (Vygotsky, 2019, p. 25-29). In our attempt to look at the education of the future in light of various cultural migrations, we focus our attention on the processes that occur in the knots of activity that are established. The example we use to analyse the process of tying a developmental knot comes from the practice of a youth club. We are aware of the uniqueness of each knot, according to A. N. Leontiev’s fundamental assumption that “knots” that connect separate activities are tied not by the action of biological or spiritual forces of the subject which lie within it but by that system of relationships into which the subject enters [...] multifaceted activities of the subject are intertwined one with another and connected in knots by objective relationships, social in their nature, into which it necessarily enters. These knots, their hierarchies, also form that secret “center of personality,” which we call the <<I>>” (Leontiev, 1978, p. 159, 188). Knots are social relations, the existence and entering into new, objective social relations, which are connected in a specific and unique way because each person’s life is unique. They live in a unique cultural and historical moment and conditions in which no one else has lived and will not live.

However, we are not aiming to explain the diversity of knots formed by individuals and communities in the course of cultural migration but to a holistic account of the relations that occur in the processes of knot formation. The method of research left to us by Vygotsky and Leontiev shifts our attention from the elements that create the uniqueness of a particular knot to its typical properties. The objective of the following analysis of a specific piece of educational practice in which the problem of cultural migration is strongly visible is to identify the regularities and conditions in which knots of activities are formed between people from different cultures. We are particularly interested in the process of the formation of developmental knots of activity and the developmental transformations in the knots of activity. How do teenagers and adults co-create conditions in the process of tying and transforming their knots of activities? What changes take place in the knots of activity that make the knots gain developmental character?

## THE CONCEPT OF ACTIVITY KNOTS IN A CULTURAL-HISTORICAL APPROACH

The conceptual basis of this article is the cultural-historical activity theory pioneered by L. S. Vygotsky (1997a, 1997b), S. L. Rubinshtein (1989; Brushlinskii, 2004; Sokolova, 2013), A. N. Leontiev (1978, 2005), and further developed by Y. Engeström and his co-workers. In this approach, the guiding principle of development is the genetic law, which states that each developmental change, before it becomes an immanent characteristic of the individual, must previously occur in social relations. However, this is often understood as the predominance of the social world over the individual and the supremacy of the material world over the mental one. The genetic law is then reduced to the behavioural influence of the material and the social aspects on the mental and individual features.

Vygotsky described the genetic law as a principle of internalisation, not in the sense of the external and physical presence and influence of something to be transferred to the inner world, but as a social relationship that is internalised: “every higher psychic function in a child’s development makes its appearance twice - first, as a collective, social activity, i.e., as an inter-psychic function; secondly, as an individual activity, as the inner ability of the child to think, as an intra-psychic function” (Vygotsky, 2017, p. 368).

It is not a process of duplication or imprinting but of creating, or rather co-creating, a zone of proximal development that is created when two people work together to solve a problem that is important to them. For the child, the main task is a specific and objective difficulty, and for the adult, it is the fact that the child is unable to solve the relevant issue, experiencing helplessness and loneliness. The adult decentres and “incarnates” himself in the child and his *perezhivanie*, and thanks to this, the child “incarnates” and learns to take on the perspective of the adult, together with his understanding of the situation and his competences.

An adult and a child dialectically combine their activities and cognitive perspectives into an organic knot. The knot of activity is the dialectical unity of the individual and the social. The emergence of new knots, which connect the activities of the individual with the activities of others, develops both the structure of human and community activity. The formation of a knot of activity changes not only the individual but also the community as a whole. Knotworking is a method that aims to connect people so that they can act together in new ways.

The knot, by its very nature, is not a mechanical strand that represents the joining of two ends of a shoelace in a shoe. It is a qualitatively new phenomenon not only because of the uniqueness of the people who tie it but also because of the uniqueness and untranslatability of the situation and the context in which it occurs.

Education, conceived as social conditions, and the child’s development taking place within it, is organic, not mechanical. Vygotsky believes that “development is not simply a function that can be determined entirely by X units of heredity and Y units of environment. It is a historical complex, which at any stage reflects its past content. In other words, the artificial separation of heredity and environment points

us in a fallacious direction; it obscures the fact that development is an uninterrupted process which feeds upon itself; that it is not a puppet which can be controlled by jerking two strings” (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 253).

The organic nature of education and the knot of activity that emerges from it is also expressed not so much in structure as in function, and consequently, the extinction of function leads to the disappearance of the knot. The sustainability of knots is, therefore, closely related to the stability and functionality of the social situation for both the individual and the community. The functional character of knots reveals not only their unique, inimitable but also their often unpredictable nature. The trajectories and forms of transformation of knots are dynamic and dependent on the historical conditions of their origin and development. This means that education and every knot of activity created during it is and must be creative in its essence because every human and community activity is creative. There is no reproductive activity, just as there is no identical knot of activity as “the subject in his actions, in the acts of his creative self-activity is not only revealed and manifested; he is created and defined in them” (Rubinshtein, 1989, p. 15).

An organic view of the nature of knots may lead to the hasty conclusion that if the shape of the knots is unpredictable in nature and therefore, its formation requires no external intervention or, moreover, that intervention may be detrimental. The organic nature of activity knots is not the same as educational naturalism. Therefore, the image of the individual as a person primarily acting and creatively developing becomes the basis for a specific vision of education in cultural-historical terms, as a process that “must be based on the student’s individual activity, and the art of education should involve nothing more than guiding and monitoring this activity. In the process of education, the teacher must be like [...] a gardener who affects the germination of his flowers by increasing the temperature, regulating the moisture, varying the relative position of neighboring plants, and selecting and mixing soils and fertilizer, i.e., once again, indirectly, by making appropriate changes in the environment. Thus, it is that the teacher educates the student by varying the environment” (Vygotsky, 1997b, pp. 48–49).

Education is thus the site of the creation of activity knots, understood as the organic unity of the child and its environment. The knot of activity is the expression that the social environment has taken on the child, internalised, but also the child has taken on and internalised its social environment. The child and the adult acquire the capacity to take on perspectives from the outside and the inside (Fleer, 2011).

Consequently, those who undertake formative interventions aimed at creating knots find themselves in a special role as they have to avoid putting themselves in a position of authority. Their task is not so much to design the knots as to create the context for tying them, not so much to tie them as to stimulate the natural, organic processes of their formation (Gołębniak, 2021; Yamazumi, 2010).

The object of activity of the individual and his or her community, as well as the cultural tools, rules, and collective actions taken, play a key role in the process of knot formation. The object of the activity itself is already an organic synthesis of the



individual and the social, the material and the ideal. It is not static and mechanical but dynamic and organic, like a knot. Reducing the object of activity, confining it to a structural dimension, deprives it of its chief property: the dynamic, organic, and adaptive function of creating a 'living' knot. Like the knot itself, the object of activity, an integral element of it, has the character of a phenomenon constantly developing in its ideal and material dimensions, developing its function for the individual and society (Engeström, 2001).

The object is the ideal form of the motive for human activity. The motive for the development of an individual's activity arises when human needs meet a stimulating object. It is closely dependent on the social context of individual development: social roles, division of labour, available tools and their complexity, and social relations (gender, age, education, social status). Thus, each person may undertake a social activity because of a different motive while sharing with others the object of that activity in its material and ideal form (Engeström, 2008, 1999; Engeström & Blackler, 2005; Gołębnik 2021). The effect of tying the knot of activity is the creative materialisation of the motive in the object of social activity. It is the incarnation of the motives and needs of the individual and society in a creative and, therefore, also unique object (Vygotsky, 2004, p. 41).

#### THE FORMATION OF DEVELOPMENT KNOTS OF ACTIVITY

In analysing the transformative processes taking place in the knots of activity, we refer to the formative interventions we conducted in the youth club. It was inspired by a summer workshop that students ran for boys living in the juvenile rehabilitation centre (JRC). The boys (aged 12-18) had been referred to the JRC by the family court because of prolonged educational failure linked to various types of difficulties experienced by their families and often as a consequence of minor breaches of the law by the boys.

In their case, we can talk about socio-cultural migration. The boys were transferred from their previous living environment to an educational institution. The physical change of location was linked to the entry into the culture of a new community, different from what they had known and taken for granted so far. Apart from adapting to new formal and informal rules and expectations and the rhythm of the day, they had to cope with a new set of cultural tools made available to them. The difference they struggled with was also language. Although they used Polish like everybody else, they had to build up a linguistic understanding with new people, sensing what was suitable and what was not. They were also expected to be correct in their choice of words, phrases, and the very way they communicated.

The most common theme in our conversations with educators was a desire to break the boys' indifference to the good conditions created for their development. The boys came from low-income families where their basic needs, both material and psychological, were rarely met. The educational centre provided the boys with a good material standard of living on a daily basis. They lived in nice, well-furnished rooms,

had access to new technologies (computers with Internet connection, educational software), had regular and healthy meals every day, and received some pocket money. Teachers and tutors made numerous attempts to awaken in them the motivation to take up challenges, finish primary and secondary school, and become interested in something they could pursue in adult life. They offered them attractive activities that had hitherto been unavailable to boys: sailing on a yacht, fencing workshops, winter skiing courses, trips around Europe, and regular meetings with interesting people who had achieved success in various walks of life.

The indifference demonstrated by the boys and, not infrequently, their unwillingness and resistance to these efforts were perceived by the form teachers as ungrateful and caused frustration. Passive adaptation to the conditions was evident in the observed behaviour of the boys. The boys recognised the expectations directed at them and carried out the tasks assigned to them. However, their adaptation to the new conditions was clearly of a mechanical nature, manifesting itself in the formal fulfilment of successive points of the rules and regulations. The boys spent their free time watching TV or cycling around the premises of the centre. At the same time, they expressed a definite reluctance to devote that time to other activities which were attractive, according to the instructors.

The aim of the club was to extend the adolescents' development space by co-creating new areas of engagement with them. The club was located in a separate wing of the school the boys attended. Participation was voluntary. The club was open to all. Our attention was drawn to the variation in the way boys interacted with visitors to the club. With some visitors, they easily struck up a conversation and then entered into joint actions; with others, it took them several meetings to establish contact, and some they ignored altogether. Among those with whom the boys quickly built relationships was Gregory, a Polish language teacher at a prestigious secondary school who had previously worked for several years as a cameraman at one of Poland's largest television stations.

We were interested in the way Gregory and the boys work together. We wondered why the knots of activity that they establish with each other while working on the project become organic and evolving, as opposed to other activities that quickly die down, often before the task is even completed.

For the analysis, we have chosen a snippet from one of the club meetings when Gregory proposes to the boys to start a new project. A few weeks earlier, Gregory had run a film workshop with the boys, which they were interested in. During all the meetings at the club, two cameras were turned on, which the boys set up themselves. The following transcription of the discussion is from the camera recording. The boys' names have been changed. The participants were Gregory, Beata (teacher), Paul (volunteer), Adam (l.15), Mark (l. 17.), and Dennis (l.17).

(1)Gregory (G.): Listen, do you know what I would suggest to you? A project, a serious one, that we, but mainly you, will make a film about yourselves.

(2) Adam (A.): Holy shit! Wouldn't it be better to...

- (3) G.: Let me, let me tell you. Your life is hard  
(3) Mark (M.): It sucks  
(4) G.: I agree, it's hard  
(5) Dennis (D.): meaning it sucks  
(6) G.: No  
(7) A.: I can record when I light up [he says, laughing]. But I'm telling you that we can record how we do marijuana. I would take a drag, we would play junkies, and K [Dennis's nickname] would record it.  
(9) D.: I want to play a junkie, too  
(10) A.: You would be a dealer [points to Piotr]. You would be our mother [points to Beata]  
(11) Paul (P.): I don't want to be a dealer  
(12) D.: Why?  
(14) M.: [turns to the boys] You bitches get the fuck out of here, you don't live here anymore! [points to the door, speaks loudly, with emphasis and with purpose] [Mark and Adam are laughing loudly, Dennis is serious, he is eating an apple]  
(15) A.: This movie would be so cool!  
(16) G.: Your life is hard.  
(17) A.: Who told you that?  
(18) G.: Most people, you know how they live? In the Bermuda Triangle, which means: they go to school, come home, and then sit in front of a computer  
(19) M.: Or they dope  
(20) G.: Or they go to the pub and have booze. They go to work again. They work like that: home, school or work, pub (he is drawing a triangle in the air)  
(21) A.: They don't let me go  
(22) G.: And they know nothing about life at all. And they, er create such er, they watch "Judge Maria Wesołowska" [a popular TV para-documentary] or any such TV shows  
(23) M.: These are good shows.  
(24) D.: I watch it  
(25) M.: These are good shows  
(26) D.: I watch "Judge Maria Wesołowska" [he is reaching out his hand and counting on his fingers]  
(27) M.: "Police Officers"  
(28) D. I watch "Family court," I watch  
(29) M.: "Police Officers"  
(30) D.: "Policemen," "With Lights and Sirens," "28 Seconds," "Hospital"  
(31) M.: "Nurses"  
(33) Beata (B.): Daniel, when do you watch them?  
(34) M.: At night  
(35) D.: What? I watch at night, Miss  
(36) M.: Miss, I hear sirens from his phone all night  
(37) D.: I watch how people work, how they learn

- (38) G.: You have to start somewhere. There is a saying: may you live in interesting times, and this is a curse. That is, if someone has an interesting life, unfortunately, it is not calm. And the second thing is that your life is interesting and therefore it is not peaceful. And this is a cool topic. If you watch TV shows like “Detectives”
- (39) M.: O, “Detectives” are great!
- (40) G.: This is not entirely true; it is controlled, it feels, and it shows
- (41) A.: I would push you, and you would strike back
- (42) D.: I watch “28 Seconds” how it is burning, and it’s not real?
- (43) G.: I don’t know, I haven’t watched it yet.
- (44) D.: “28 Seconds” on YouTube
- (45) G.: Do we have it? [he is looking at the computer]. We can watch. Look for it. We will see how it is edited.
- (46) D.: The house is really on fire!
- (47) M.: With a camera, they get in as it’s on fire? [he is saying with mockery]
- (48) D.: Wanna bet?
- (49) M.: They wouldn’t let the cameraman in
- (50) G.: Have you watched it?
- (51) M.: No
- (52) G.: If you haven’t watched it, wait until we watch it.
- (53) M.: But that’s a stretcher!
- [Mark and Dennis start arguing, Beata provides an internet connection from her phone and Dennis takes his laptop and searches for the video]
- (54) G.: And imagine that you are filming what will happen to you
- (55) M.: Doping too?
- (56) G.: If it was to be fair, then you are filming everything. At the editing stage, you will choose what you want to show. But it’s not always worth showing everything.

The quoted passage features a dynamic interaction in which gradually Gregory and the boys create a common object of activity. After Adam’s spontaneous reaction in which he tries to question Gregory’s proposal, the boys take up the subject of creating their film. It takes the form of a free-flowing story that all the boys identify with. This can be seen in their emotional involvement as they add to one another’s storylines, the content of which is so obvious to them that it requires no definition. The story developed by the boys seems to be a ready-made script with roles and dialogues which they unhesitatingly assign to the people present in the club. The unambiguousness of its negative and violent overtones is reflected in the phrase “It sucks,” with which Mark (3) and later the other boys (5) sum up their lives.

Gregory contrasts their experience of a difficult life with the unreflective everyday life of many people who live passively (18-22). In doing so, he uses the metaphor of the ‘Bermuda Triangle’. Just as ships and planes disappear in the legendary region of Bermuda, people lose their agency in everyday routine, stimulants, addictions, and watching other people’s lives on TV screens. Gregory points out the shallowness

of popular docudramas showing imaginary and distorted social problems, whose viewers have a false sense of reflection on life.

The Bermuda Triangle, described by Gregory, is the boys' everyday experience, which is largely filled with routine and docudramas. In the course of the conversation, the teenagers repeatedly return to the theme of docudramas, as they not only spend their free time watching them but are convinced of their value and boast about their knowledge of them.

Here we observe the process of tying the developmental knot between the adult and adolescents. Gregory stops at the point where he perceives a discrepancy between his proposal and the meaning the boys give to the reality they experience. His attempt to show the boys a new perspective on creating an interesting story about their lives clashes with the boys' conviction about the value of stories shown in docudramas. Following the events depicted in them gives them a surrogate sense of participating in the lives of the characters and their successes: "I watch how people work, how they learn" (37). In their opinion, this is a good, ordinary life from which they themselves have been excluded.

Although Gregory expresses his negative opinion about the credibility of the stories presented, he shows genuine interest in what is important to the boys. He suspends his own certainty and proposes they watch a film they value together. At the same time, he gives them a criterion, new to them, for evaluating the film: "We will see how it is edited" (45).

This is a turning point in the discussion. The very shift in Gregory's attention from the storyline, which the boys are fascinated by, to the various elements of the making of the film makes Mark doubt the credibility of a docudrama.

The stopping of superficial judgement and adoption of other people's opinions introduced by Gregory pertains here also to Marek. The boys have repeatedly migrated between different social environments, and in each of them, they have received a set of ready-made ways of thinking, perceiving the world, and acting correctly. They have a trained mechanical adaptation to external expectations.

Gregory's intention, however, is not for Mark to adopt his way of seeing, even if it is the right, better approach. The pointing gesture that Gregory directs towards the film is an invitation to shared source viewing through new questions. It requires a willingness on the part of the boys to identify with Gregory in order to adopt his point of view. We can speak of mutual identification here because Gregory also looks at reality from the perspective that the boys show him.

The story the boys want to tell in the film is a poignant portrayal of their experiences, told in the vulgar language in a seemingly playful tone. Gregory does not correct or admonish them. Instead of the typical reading of their story as a picture of marginalisation and social exclusion (drug use, being made homeless, living on the streets), Gregory shifts it to a new interpretative context. This is the well-known old proverb about the curse of living in interesting times (38). Looking at the boys' lives in the light of hard times links their experiences to previous generations who lived in hard times. Gregory replaces the expression the boys use to describe their lives, "It

sucks” (3, 5), with “It is hard and interesting” (38), and once again contrasts their difficult but real experiences with stories about other people’s lives, invented according to the rules governing shallow film productions.

By highlighting the opposites between the passive experience of everyday life and pseudo-documentaries about social problems on the one hand, and the boys’ difficult experiences on the other, Gregory invites them to create in their imagination a real, serious film about themselves (54). Gregory’s dialectic enables both himself and the boys to see a completely new solution. It is not a simple registration of their sad everyday life, nor a re-coloured story told according to the typical one-dimensional interpretation of a docudrama narrator. The imaginary object of their activity gradually acquires specific features. It is meant to be an honest story about their difficult but interesting life. Gregory confronts the boys with a double task: to enter the middle of the story as a protagonist and actor and as a director who looks at the story from the outside, reflects on the whole, values its content, and evaluates and chooses the scenes he thinks are worth showing.

#### CONCLUSION

By contributing to the discussion on education of the future, we proposed to look at it in the light of one of the interesting leads we found in cultural-historical activity theory. It is the process of integration of the individual into the system of social relations. The founders of this approach left us not only important hints but also warnings that set the course for our research. One of the possible dangers indicated by them is introducing the child into the environment, areas of culture, and knowledge according to ready-made educational programmes and one-sided activities belonging to adults. This was the case in the described situation at the JRC. We observed a very high involvement of educators in introducing boys to a cultural environment new to them, filled with interesting, attractive offers. Paradoxically, the greater the educators’ efforts to involve boys in worthwhile activities, the deeper the sense of “uprooting” the young people became. Boys were uprooted from their previous living environment and transferred to a new one, objectively and in many respects “much better,” in which they received the socially expected “rules of correct action.” The result was their passive adaptation to adult expectations.

Meanwhile, Leontiev (1978, pp. 188-189) stressed that: “It is only necessary to emphasize here that inclusion in the system does not at all mean being dissolved in it but, on the contrary, means finding and disclosing in it the force of one’s action.” We were intrigued by the determinants of the formation of developmental activity knots. Following Vygotsky’s footsteps (2019, pp. 11-12), we differentiated the specifics of mechanical and organic knot formation. Their analysis in the light of the education taking place in the zone of proximal development of all those involved opened new perspectives for us to seek an answer to the question: What changes do take place in the knots of activity that make the knots gain developmental character?

Being aware of the uniqueness of each human relation with the social environment, we tried to identify those features of the analysed knots that give them a developmental character. These features, according to Vygotsky's method of research, can be seen in the various knots established between the individual and the community.

The most characteristic feature of developmental activity knots is their synthesising nature. The knots establish a relationship between an individual's activity and the activities of others. However, it is not about the unification of actions or their mechanical matching as in a jigsaw puzzle. Unity between the individual and the social environment is a qualitatively new, living, dynamic and organic relationship. In the analysed case, which was registered in a youth club, the process of tying the knot does not run smoothly; there are tensions, stops, and turning points in its course. The regularities that emerged in the course of the analysis concern the creative process of creating a common object of activity.

When creating a new object of joint activity, the participants start from the familiar context by working together on a new, imaginary object and only then direct the joint activity towards a new object that takes the tangible form of realization. In the recorded discussion, the starting point for the film work is the boys' experience of their harsh lives, which they describe as 'it sucks,' the opposite of which is the paradoxical television documentaries, which show invented stories that have little to do with everyday life. These mutually exclusive contradictory images of life present in the boys' experiences find their synthesis in the new project. Tying the knot of joint activity is a creative process for both the boys and Gregory. They have to go beyond what is familiar to them and first create together in their imagination a new story about life. The next stage is working on the film, which culminated in a premiere open to the public at the local cinema.

Making the film would not have been possible without the ability of the young people participating in the project to adopt the perspective of the viewer. It is due to the developmental knot that reciprocal internalization occurs when the participants in the established relationships mutually adopt their perspectives of perceiving reality. What triggers decentration, according to Vygotsky, is the pointing gesture and symbolic tools (Vygotsky, 1999; El'konin, 2001). We see this gesture when Gregory points out to the boys a new perspective on their lives as difficult but interesting embedded in the interesting history of other people. The boys also make the gesture of pointing to the world as they see and live it. The difference in viewpoints and experiences generates cognitive conflict but also interest, which initiates a process of learning about the other person's perspective. The activated inference socially recursive leads to the mutual internalization of cognitive perspectives in the form of joint intentionality and activity (Tomasello, 2014, 2015, 2019).

One can clearly see here the phenomenon of a new knot of activity forming when, as El'konin and Vygotsky believe (El'konin, 2001, p. 15) "an adult's action is never carried through to completion: there is always some gap in it, a place where the child can step in and act in concert. One might say that, in this case, the zone of proximal development is bare to the extreme and becomes a zone of proximal movement.

The knot of development is mutual internalization, where the adult makes space in himself and in his actions for the actions of the youth, and the youth incorporates the meanings and actions of the adult. The actions resulting from the developmental knot between the adult and youth are, therefore, not strictly linear and imitative (Zuckerman, 2007). Orienting actions develop Gregory's joint activity with the boys. This is reminiscent of dance, which has a cultural-historical background, but the dynamics and form are dependent on the people dancing. They are mutually tuning each other and the socio-cultural conditions of their actions. El'konin calls such adult actions incomplete as they are complemented by the actions of children. The complementarity of Gregory's actions with the youth creates a developmental knot: "incorporating the actions of one person into the actions of another, i.e., special conditions and a special means for 'finding a place' in the action of another person" (El'konin, 2001, p. 13; Goldsmith, 2010; Raikes et al., 2009).

The dialectical way of obtaining unity allows us to see dynamic temporal connections in the knots. In contrast to the linear passage from past to present and then to future in the knots of activity, temporality includes not only continuities but also ruptures, leaps, and unusual paths that allow us to gain distance from the experienced present. These can be links between an individual's present and past in new socio-historical contexts. In the analysed discussion, Gregory links the boys' present and past with the experiences of past generations. This link allows them to go beyond their previous adaptation and to look at reality in terms of change. The imaginary journey through time opens up a new perspective for the boys. They cannot continue to see themselves as "uprooted," because their lives are integrated into a wealth of important but difficult experiences of other people, including previous generations. The aim of this process is not to alienate or negate the "old reality" by the "new" one, nor to mechanically combine or mathematically add them together, but it is a process of mediation, creatively constructing a completely new psychological situation.

The process of socio-cultural mediation provides tools and supports the development of agency and self-regulation, both intrapsychically and socially. By re-interpreting and showing the possibilities of using one's own experiences and those of the surrounding world, the adult reinforces the children's agency. It can be said that the global has become local, the historical has become current, the social has become individual, and vice versa. The developmental knots created by "incomplete orientation activities" can serve as an example of organically inclusive education, mutually embodying the world of children and adults.



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**EDUKACJA JAKO KULTUROWA MIGRACJA: ORGANICZNE TRANSFORMACJE  
W ROZWOJOWYCH WĘZŁACH DZIAŁALNOŚCI**



# **Z BADAŃ**

RESEARCH ARTICLES



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## Assessment as Learning: Use of Reflection Videos in the Massive Open Online Course to Enhance Learning and Digital Identity Among Pre- and In-Service Teachers in Norway

**ABSTRACT:** This study examines teachers' experiences of their engagement with the reflection videos in the Pedagogical Information and Communication Technology (ICTPED) Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) aimed to develop Norwegian teachers' professional digital competence. The study also considers how teachers' engagement with reflection videos might have enhanced their digital identity. Analyses of teachers' experiences draw on the cultural-historical perspective and, in particular, Galperin's conceptual contribution. Mixed methods were used to analyse the data by providing evidence about the teachers' engagement with the reflection videos in 2016-2020. Findings reveal that the teachers' engagement with the reflection videos contributed to the development of their conceptual understanding and their agentic capacity to learn online. In doing so, their digital agency might have been enhanced.

**KEYWORDS:** online learning, Massive Open Online Course, assessment, reflection videos, digital identity, Galperin.

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### WHY IS THIS STUDY?

This study examines Norwegian teachers' experiences of the use of reflection videos<sup>1</sup> in the Pedagogical Information and Communication Technology (ICTPED) Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) aimed to develop teachers' professional digital competence (PDC). The study also provides an insight into how teachers' use of reflection videos may contribute to developing their conceptual understanding and enhance their digital identity.

Research reports that the identity teachers develop through engaging in the teacher-training programmes and their educational practice has a tremendous effect on students' learning (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Friesen & Besley, 2013; Schutz et al., 2018). The key grounding for the development of teacher identity is sought in engaging in contextually situated sociocultural practices organised according to community norms and values (Martin & Sugarman, 2000; Suad Nasir & Kirshner, 2003). While sharing this perspective, Stetsenko (2017) believes that it can be further strengthened by capitalising on the dynamics of teachers' participation in community practices and on unique individual contributions to collaboratively *transforming* these practices as the grounding for both *identity* and *learning*. "Identity is about the search of a meaningful activity that can make a difference that matters to others and to ourselves and therefore constitutes the uniqueness of ourselves" (Stetsenko, 2017, p. 228). The significance of a teacher identity has even been more emphasised in the current educational climate of increasing teacher attrition, heightened accountability, and demand for teachers to develop their PDC required in technology-rich Norwegian classrooms (Aagaard & Lund, 2019).

Several attempts to conceptualise teachers' PDC (Brevik et al., 2019; Caena & Redecker, 2019; Ilomäki et al., 2016; Instefjord & Munthe, 2017; Kelentrić et al., 2017; McGarr & McDonagh, 2019; Mishra & Koehler, 2006) indicate that digitally competent teachers possess a wide range of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are required

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed explanation of a reflection video is presented in 4.2 ICTPED MOOC



when using digital technology to perform tasks, solve problems, communicate, manage information, collaborate, and share content. However, the continuous emergence of new digital technologies requires teachers to constantly improve their PDC, and therefore, teacher PDC is of a transformative nature. Such a transformative nature inherently connects PDC with teacher digital identity.

Researchers explain teacher digital identity as a dynamic and ongoing process of sense-making, reinterpreting beliefs, values, and educational experiences urged by the new realities in the contemporary digital society (Gorospe et al., 2015; Robson, 2018). Teachers may develop their digital identity through engagement in online learning, and this engagement constitutes the pathway for teachers to acquire the digital tools that allow for developing educational practices and, thus, the pathway to becoming unique individuals and professionals (Avidov-Ungar & Forkosh-Baruch, 2018; Engeness, 2021; Ertmer, 2005).

However, how teachers learn in online environments with the aim of developing their digital identity is an under-researched area (Castaño-Muñoz et al., 2018; Engeness & Nohr, 2020; Kleiman et al., 2013; Laurillard, 2014; Vivian et al., 2014). Researches indicate that teachers appreciate engaging in collaborative learning activities, peer-assessment, participating in discussion forums, and sharing pedagogical ideas and useful resources (Laurillard, 2016). However, when involved in online learning, teachers may create their individual learning trajectories and, in doing so, develop their capacity in online learning and enhance their digital identity (Engeness & Nohr, 2020). Brandmo et al. (2020) argue that adequately designed assessment forms may stimulate students' self-regulated learning. While considering the importance of a self-regulating capacity in online learning (Littlejohn et al., 2016), assessment in MOOCs deserves particular attention.

Research has widely addressed the aspect of assessment in MOOCs (Chauhan, 2014; Daradoumis et al., 2013; del Mar Sánchez-Vera & Prendes-Espinosa, 2015). The benefits and limitations of the two scalable forms of assessment in MOOCs: multiple choice tests and peer-assessment have been debated (del Mar Sánchez-Vera & Prendes-Espinosa, 2015). However, how teachers experience their engagement with reflection videos as an assessment form to enhance their digital identity has been hardly considered. This study addresses this gap by examining the following research questions:

RQ1: How did teachers experience their engagement with the reflection videos as an assessment form in the ICTPED MOOC?

RQ2: How did teachers' engagement with reflection videos might have contributed to enhancing their digital identity?

#### LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT IN MOOCs – WHAT DO WE KNOW?

When learning in MOOCs, participants have to not only select the resources they need to engage with to achieve the desired learning outcomes, but to develop their understanding of how to interact with these resources (Littlejohn et al., 2016). In

doing so, the need for learners' self-regulating strategies comes to the fore, which can be described as a process where the learner activates and sustains their cognition, motivation, and behaviours towards the attainment of a learning goal (Brandmo et al., 2020; Schunk, 2014). Several strategies for self-regulation learning have been outlined, such as goal setting, identifying an approach to engage in learning, and self-evaluation (Zimmerman, 2002, 2008). It has been pointed out that explicitly teaching self-regulation strategies can have a positive effect on learners' attainments (Pintrich & Zusho, 2002) and that good self-regulators do much better than poor-self regulators (Panadero, 2017; Zimmerman & Pons, 1986). These findings corroborate the research on online learning, indicating the need for students to exhibit the qualities of self-regulated, self-directed, and self-sustained learners (Azevedo & Hadwin, 2005; Barnard-Brak et al., 2010; Serdyukov & Hill, 2013; Wang et al., 2013).

Several measures have been suggested to assist learners in developing their self-regulated capacity to learn. For example, such features of online courses as convenience and flexibility, a choice of assignment topics, a variety of implementation formats, social networking and virtual collaboration spaces, as well as self-paced study and continuous feedback may provide students with pathways to developing their autonomy (Engeness & Nohr, 2020; Serdyukov & Hill, 2013). In other words, the design of an online learning environment may contribute to enhancing students' capacity in self-regulated learning (Broadbent & Poon, 2015). To address these needs, MOOC design principles have been suggested to include (1) self-evaluation, (2) organising; (3) goal setting and planning; (4) keeping records and monitoring; (5) memorising; (6) reviewing records; (7) seeking information; (8) seeking social assistance; (9) self-consequences and (10) structuring personalising learning environments (Lee et al., 2019). However, teacher digital identity as a capacity to reveal the potential of digital technology and engage in meaningful interactions with digital technology may be developed (i) through engagement in online learning and (ii) by teachers' involvement in the design of digital environments. Such an engagement reveals how teachers may acquire cultural (digital) tools and thus the pathway to becoming unique individuals and professionals (Engeness, 2021). To facilitate teachers' participation and their meaningful contributions in online environments, Engeness (2021) suggested the following design principles: (1) identify the target concept, its essential characteristics, and the order in which these characteristics will be presented to teachers; (2) teachers' engagement in learning activities should follow a general approach of how knowledge is created in a particular subject area; (3) present an overview of the entire learning activity (for example, a structure of a MOOC, a module or an activity) for teachers; (4) present some resources in a materialised form (textual information, videos, audio files); (5) engage teachers in social interactions to develop their understanding of the target concepts and (6) provide feedback reflecting teachers' progress and indicating pathways for further improvements (Engeness, 2021a). The suggested design principles are intended to enhance teachers' digital identity and learning through their actions and interactions with digital tools to develop their gradual meaning-making of these tools. However, the argument about the impor-

tance of the MOOC design to enhance teachers' digital identity highlights the need to consider how different elements of a MOOC design may contribute to achieving this aim. Assessment in MOOCs may be considered as one of the MOOC design elements.

The two main types of MOOCs are xMOOCs and cMOOCs. While xMOOCs are instructivist and individualist, use classic e-learning platforms, and are based on resources, cMOOCs are connectivist and are based on social learning, cooperation, and use of web 2.0 (Fidalgo-Blanco et al., 2016). Concerning assessment in both x- and cMOOCs, mainly two forms of scalable assessment prevail: multiple choice tests and peer assessment (Chauhan, 2014; Daradoumis et al., 2013; del Mar Sánchez-Vera & Prendes-Espinosa, 2015; Littlejohn et al., 2016). Since xMOOCs adopt a traditional teaching model and largely rely on videos and automated assessment (Ross et al., 2014), the main aim is to assess students' learning in relation to content. This is achieved mainly through multiple choice tests. In contrast, in cMOOCs (constructivist MOOCs), peer-assessment is widely used with the suggested assessment rubric outlining the criteria for assessment (del Mar Sánchez-Vera & Prendes-Espinosa, 2015; Gamage et al., 2017; Meek et al., 2017). Although learners in x- and cMOOCs indicate their interest in knowing whether they are more likely to succeed or fail towards reaching their educational goals (self-regulated learning) and receive more varied feedback (Daradoumis et al., 2013), such feedback-giving is not scalable and challenging to provide by human online course instructors. Peer-assessment is recognised and appreciated by learners; however, it is effective when the students are provided with a well-designed assessment rubric and instructions indicating how to use it (Downes, 2013). In addition to multiple choice tests and peer assessment, portfolio assessment (Chen, 2017), network-based grading (Wu et al., 2016), and learning analytics (Lu et al., 2017) have been used as alternative forms of assessment in MOOCs. Although these forms of assessment are useful to reduce dropouts, help students to develop their understanding of the target concepts, facilitate social interactions in online environments and provide formative feedback indicating ways of further improvements, they hardly address the need to develop learners' self-regulating capacity and enhance their understanding of how to engage and advance in online learning. By developing such understanding, learners' digital identity might be enhanced. This study addresses this gap by examining teachers' experiences of their engagement with reflection videos as assessment forms in the ICTPED MOOC through the lens of the cultural-historical perspective.

#### THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The central premises of the cultural-historical theory, developed in the works of Vygotsky, Luria, Leontiev, Galperin, Davydov, and others, may offer a useful perspective on how to enhance human learning and development. These premises aim at surpassing the Cartesian dualism between the objective (given) and the subjective (imagined) and underline that the development of human consciousness needs to be

studied in the context of practical activity (Miettinen & Paavola, 2018). The activity approach developed further by Vygotsky's followers (Davydov, 1988; Galperin, 1976; Leontiev, 1978) capitalises, among others, the *principle of activism*, which positions humans as central actors in the activities they engage in. Other principles of the cultural-historical approach consider object-orientedness, transformative nature of human consciousness, mediation, internalisation, and externalisation. From the perspective of activism, the development of human consciousness is seen as part of the larger practices aimed at making and remaking the reality by humans' meaningful contributions to the surrounding reality (Stetsenko, 2017). Therefore, the development of human consciousness is considered as a creative process of constructing human activities. By considering that teachers may develop their digital identity through engagement in online learning to acquire the digital tools that allow for developing educational practices, the structure of online activities would seem to be crucial. A particular emphasis on the need to construct human activities to enhance learning and development was suggested by Galperin. His argument is that any learning activity consists of *orienting*, *executive* and *control parts* (Engeness, 2021b). The *orienting part* of the action carries four main tasks or purposes: (i) evaluation of the present situation, (ii) identifying the potential of the cultural objects present in the situation for the actual needs of the learner, and (iii) creating a plan of the action and (iv) control of the action's execution according to the created plan. Sometimes, the control of the action's execution may turn into an evaluation of learners' understanding of the present situation (Engeness, 2021b). Galperin emphasised that these four components were crucial to the activity design. The *first component* (evaluation of the present situation) concerns constructing an image of the present situation by identifying the cultural objects that encapsulate knowledge to be revealed by learners during their interactions with these objects. Through interactions with the cultural objects, learners develop an image of the present situation. The *second component* concerns clarification of the potential of the available cultural objects for learners' needs, whereas the *third component* concerns creating a plan of action – how learners will interact with the cultural objects. This plan indicates how the action will be performed. Finally, the *fourth component* concerns (i) facilitation of the action during its execution and (ii) correction of the observed deviations. In summary, these four components of the orienting activity indicate that when engaging in the activity design, humans interact with two types of images: (i) images of the surrounding reality (images of the available cultural objects, their potential for the needs of the learner and a plan of action) and (ii) ideal images of the action (how learners will interact with the available cultural objects).

The executive part of the activity concerns performing the activity and its transformation from the ideal to the real plane. The control part ensures that the performing of the activity happens in accordance with the activity plan created in the orientation phase. If considerable deviations from the previously designed activity plan are noticed, the activity can be modified and adjusted according to the previously created ideal image. By engaging in such planning, learners develop their

understanding of the activity design process; they are able to validate their design and reflect if any corrections are needed to the designed activity plan. In doing so, learners develop their understanding of how to engage in the learning process and validate the achieved learning outcomes in relation to the selected criteria. Such an approach highlights how learners' self-regulatory capacity may be enhanced. Applied in MOOCs' context, such a capacity may indicate teachers' ability to learn online by revealing the potential of digital technology, engaging in purposeful interactions with technology, and making meaningful contributions. In doing so, teachers' digital identities might be enhanced.

Understanding learning activity comprising orienting, executive, and control parts will be used to examine teachers' experiences of their engagement with reflection videos as an assessment form in the ICTPED MOOC. Such use of Galperin's theory is innovative, and we are interested in exploring whether the lens of the three parts of the learning activity will help in our analysis of teachers' engagement with reflection videos as an assessment form in the ICTPED MOOC to develop their digital identity. In addition, Galperin's approach might be useful to examine how teachers' individual contributions by engaging with the reflection videos may contribute to transforming their practices as grounding for developing their digital identity and learning.

## METHOD

### *Participants and setting*

Data were collected through the questionnaire administered to all pre- and in-service teachers engaged in the ICTPED MOOC in 2016-2020. The questionnaire aimed to examine the teachers' learning experiences in the ICTPED MOOC. The questionnaire included the following: (a) general information about the teachers, (b) teachers' learning experiences in the ICTPED MOOC, and (c) course instructors' facilitating of the learning process in the ICTPED MOOC. The questionnaire included 33 questions; some questions applied a five-point Likert scale, and some questions required detailed answers. Table 1 shows the number of respondents to the questionnaire in 2016-2020, their professional background, and general evaluation of the ICTPED MOOC.

*Table 1.* The number of respondents to the questionnaire in 2016-2020 and their general evaluation of the ICTPED MOOC

Years	Number of respondents	Male/female mean (M)	Professional background (M)	General evaluation of the ICTPED MOOC mean (M) (SD)
2016-2020	430	Male M = 23,72%	In-service teacher M = 73.4%	Very weakly satisfied M = 1.40% (0.89)
		Female M = 76,28%	Pre-service teacher M = 18.6%	Weakly satisfied M = 2.0% (1.41)
			Other M = 8.0%	Somewhat satisfied M = 4.80% (0.84)
				Strongly satisfied M = 41.20% (9.04)
				Very strongly satisfied M = 37.80% (21.82)

*ICTPED MOOC*

The ICTPED MOOC was first introduced in Norway in 2016. The course was developed by researchers and development specialists from Østfold University College. The ICTPED MOOC has a structure of an xMOOC; it is a built-in Canvas platform and aims to enhance the development of PDC with pre- and in-service teachers. The xMOOCs are defined as institutionally focused, largely reliant on video resources, and providing automated assessment through quizzes (Armellini & Padilla Rodriguez, 2016; Fidalgo-Blanco et al., 2016), and all of these elements are present in the ICTPED MOOC. The ICTPED MOOC comprises seven modules to be completed by the participants over the course of 20 weeks. Each module opens with an introductory video presenting learning goals and expected outcomes. Thereafter textual information (accessible as text on the page) and embedded research articles, complemented by relevant video and audio resources are introduced. Further, teachers engage in individual tasks, elaborate on the reflection questions, and solve multiple-choice quizzes at the end of each module (summative assessment). Figure 1 presents a typical structure of the modules in the ICTPED MOOC.

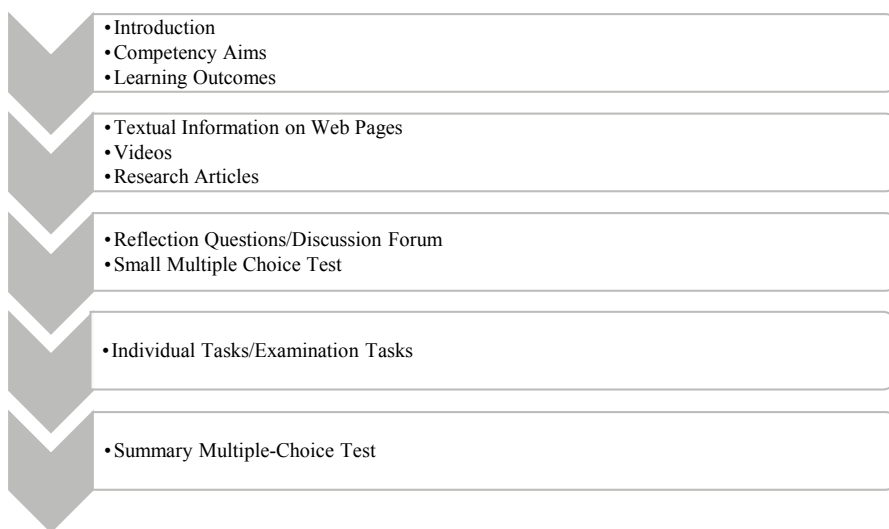


Figure 1. The structure of the modules in the ICTPED MOOC

Small multiple choice tests are used as formative assessments, and they are embedded in different places in the modules. Universal Design is integrated into the ICTPED MOOC, and audio files are embedded on every webpage. The teachers can also download every module as an audio file, a podcast, a flat pdf file, or an e-book. The list of the modules included in the ICTPED MOOC and the progress plan that the participants are to follow are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Progress plan and the modules in the ICTPED MOOC

Module	Progress plan week
0. Pre-course	2
1. ICT and learning	3-4
2. Digital studying techniques	5-6
3. Multimodal Texts (examination module)	7-9
4. Cyber Ethics	10-11
5. Classroom management in digital learning environments	12-13
6. Assessment for learning	14-16
7. Flipped classroom (examination module)	17-21

In several modules, teachers are expected to give and receive feedback and submit examination assignments (in Modules 3 and 7). The examination assignment Flipped Classroom included in Module 7 is presented in Figure 2.

**Examination Assignment: Flipped Classroom**

The main goal of this examination assignment is to create a flipped classroom that can be used in your teaching practice. You may choose any topic relevant to the curriculum in English, and the topic of your choice should be specified in the assignment. Your flipped classroom should contain a combination of videos, textual information, and other resources. However, all resources used in your assignment should be self-produced. Remember to reference the sources you have used. Your flipped classroom assignment should be designed for three teaching hours.

You will need to submit the following two elements, which comprise the examination assignment (both elements should be submitted in Canvas):

1. A link to the flipped classroom assignment (log-on information must be enclosed if log-on is required)
2. A reflection video (maximum length of 10 minutes). In the reflection video, you should present in detail your flipped classroom assignment, providing reasons for the choices you have made. You should also argue for the pedagogical value of your flipped classroom: How will the students develop their conceptual understanding? The reflection video should be produced as a screencast with you as a narrator (talking head in the lower-right corner of the screen). You can submit your reflection video as a link or an mp4 file. The following tutorial offers practical advice about how to make a video (link to the tutorial).

**Assessment Criteria**

The following questions will be addressed by the course instructors evaluating your flipped classroom. Does your flipped classroom:

- (a) contain competency aims and learning objectives students should achieve?
- (b) demonstrate your ability to utilize a flipped classroom's distinctive features/benefits?
- (c) demonstrate your ability to produce videos and other resources of an appropriate quality?
- (d) introduce a learning design that indicates the sequence of activities in which students will engage?
- (e) reflect on a teacher's role in the flipped classroom assignment?
- (f) present your reflections about the pedagogical value, benefits, and limitations of the flipped classroom assignment?

<b>How to Engage in the Examination Assignment</b>
<p>We suggest that you follow the steps outlined below to solve the examination task.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read the task carefully and think about the topic for your flipped classroom—consider theoretical and practical resources that might be useful. Carefully read the assessment criteria.</li> <li>2. Your group leader will arrange a collaborative meeting to share and discuss these ideas with other students. The aim of the meeting is to solve the examination task by engaging in discussions with your peers. You will present your ideas about your flipped classroom, resources that might be useful and discuss the pedagogical value of your flipped classroom.</li> <li>3. Create a draft of your flipped classroom. Submit your draft to the course teacher to receive feedback on your ideas.</li> <li>4. Create your flipped classroom and submit the following: (i) a link to the flipped classroom and (ii) your ten minutes reflection video.</li> </ol>

Figure 2. Examination assignment: Flipped Classroom

On successful completion of the ICTPEDMOOC (evaluated to pass or fail), teachers are awarded 15 European credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS) credits. Over 80% of teachers passed the ICTPED MOOC in 2016—2020. The open version of ICTPED MOOC can be accessed here: <http://bit.ly/iktpedmoocopen>.

#### *Data and analysis*

To address the research questions in the study, the following questions were included in the questionnaire administered to the teachers in the ICTPED MOOC in 2016-2020: Q27 *What is your experience of creating a reflection video as an assessment form?* (Applied on a five-point Likert scale); Q28 *Describe how was creating a reflection video useful for your learning?* (Teachers were to provide detailed descriptive answers) and Q29 *If you were to choose an examination form in this course, would you prefer to (a) create a product and make a ten minutes reflection video or (b) create a product and complete a written assignment?* However, in 2020, this question was modified to include another option (c) *create a product and make an oral presentation* (teachers had a choice between two options in 2016-19 and three options in 2020). In addition, the transcribed teachers' reflection videos were analysed by the research team.

The data comprised 430 teachers' responses to Q27, 28, and 29 and their reflection videos. The teachers' responses to the questionnaire were anonymous and voluntary. The project was approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data. Mixed methods (Creswell, 2012) were applied to analyse the data by providing quantitative and qualitative evidence about how reflection videos as a form of assessment contributed to teachers' learning in the ICTPED MOOC. To examine how reflection videos contributed to teachers' learning, their responses to Q29 and reflection videos were thematically analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2020; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The teachers' responses and reflection videos were imported to NVivo 12 and coded by employing an inductive approach to the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2020) without any predetermined categories (Patton, 2015). To uncover the thematic aspects, a detailed approach was applied in the analysis of the teachers' responses to Q28. By following the detailed approach, all sentences were individually examined with regard to the



significance of the phenomenon (Van Manen, 2016). When examining the teachers' reflection videos, a holistic approach that targets the underlying meaning of a large part of the text was used (Van Manen, 2016).

The codes identified by the detailed and holistic approaches were presented in the form of a descriptive label that directly described or was taken from the teachers' responses to Q28 or their reflection videos. These codes represented (i) teachers' reflections about how the designed videos contributed to their learning in the ICTPED MOOC and (ii) aspects addressed in the reflection videos. Thereafter, the codes were put into context with each other to create themes that represented a bigger picture of the examined phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2020). The single codes from the open coding process were grouped into larger themes to represent patterns of teachers' elaborations of how creating reflection videos contributed to their learning in the ICTPED MOOC. These themes are presented in 5.0 Findings. Once the themes were identified, they were examined through the lens of the assessment criteria in the examination assignment *Flipped Classroom*. To ensure the reliability of the results, a thematic analysis of the teachers' responses to Q28 and their reflection videos was conducted by the research team.

## FINDINGS

### *Analysis of teachers' responses about their engagement with reflection videos*

The teachers' experiences of their use of reflection videos are first analysed by examining their responses to Q27 *What is your experience of creating a reflection video?* (Table 3).

Table 3. Teachers' experiences of their use of reflection videos as assessment form

Years	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Mean (M)
Very weakly satisfied	2.94%	0%	0%	0%	1.63%	M=0.91% SD=1.33
Weakly satisfied	10.29%	5.88%	3.57%	9.35%	4.07%	M=6.63% SD=3.05
Somewhat satisfied	11.76%	21.57%	13.10%	18.69%	15.45%	M=16.11 SD=4.03
Strongly satisfied	36.76%	37.25%	54.76%	46.73%	50.41%	M=45.18% SD=7.90
Very strongly satisfied	35.39%	31.37%	27.38%	24.30%	28.46%	M=29.38% SD=4.21
Cannot answer	2.94%	3.92%	1.19%	0.93%	0.00%	M=1.79% SD=1.59

The data show that the majority of teachers were strongly (M=45.18% SD=7.90) and very strongly satisfied (M=29.38% SD=4.21) with creating reflection videos in the Flipped Classroom examination assignment.

Table 4 presents the teachers' responses to Q29 *If you were to choose an examination form in this course, would you prefer to (a) create a product and make a ten minutes reflection video or (b) create a product and complete a written assignment* (data from 2016-2019) and *(c) create a product and make an oral presentation* (data from 2020).

Table 4. Teachers' preferences for examination forms

Years	2016	2017	2018	Mean (M)	2020
Product & written assignment	22.40%	16.30%	13.30%	M=17.95 % SD=3.98	8.30%
Product & reflection video	77.60%	83.70%	86.70%	M=82.05% SD=3.98	79.30%
Product & oral presentation					12.4%

The mean and the standard deviation were calculated by using the data collected in 2016-2019. Since an additional category was introduced in 2020, these data were not included in the analysis. However, the data collected both in 2016-2019 and in 2020 show that the majority of teachers preferred creating a product (learning outcome) and a reflection video in the Flipped Classroom examination assignment rather than engaging in a written assignment or an oral presentation. These findings indicate the need to qualitatively examine teachers' reflection videos and their experiences of creating reflections videos.

#### *Analysis of teachers' reflection videos*

The holistic thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2020; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018) of the reflection videos identified that the teachers: (1) *created a setting* by introducing the topic for their Flipped Classroom, presenting the target students' group, identifying the learning objectives and referring to relevant competency aims; (2) *presented an overview* of their Flipped Classroom and identified the used assessment forms; (3) *reflected on how videos used in the assignment were created*, their length and what technology was needed to create the videos; (4) *reflected on the teachers' role* in the Flipped Classroom; (5) *presented students' feedback* from engaging in the Flipped Classroom (which was largely positive); (6) *discussed benefits and limitations* of the created Flipped Classroom and (7) *identified ways for further improvement* of the assignment. In addition, the majority of teachers expressed their willingness to use a Flipped Classroom approach in their further pedagogical practice. In doing so, the teachers integrated and thoroughly reflected on the assessment criteria presented in the text of the examination assignment (Figure 2) in their reflection videos.

#### *Analysis of teachers' experiences of creating reflection videos*

The detailed thematic analysis of the teachers' responses to Q28 *Describe how was creating a reflection video useful for your learning?* (teachers provided detailed descriptive answers) revealed several themes that indicate teachers' experiences of their engagement with the reflection videos. Estimated in NVivo 12, the percentage coverage of these themes is as follows: prioritising important aspects in the reflection video (36.85%), understanding own learning process (28.29%), positive experience of creating reflection videos (21.81%), and other reflections (10.66%). In what follows, we examine teachers' experiences of their engagement with reflection videos in detail.

*Prioritising important aspects in the reflection video*

The teachers indicated that they made thorough considerations about what to include in the reflection videos (Figure 3).

*I had to really think through what to include in the reflection video. In doing so, I have become conscious of my choices.  
I had to carefully plan for what I was going to say in my reflection video.  
The time limit contributed to me making priorities of what to include in the reflection video.*

Figure 3. Teachers' responses on prioritising important aspects in the reflection videos

The teachers reported that they had to make priorities of what aspects had to be included in the reflection videos. In doing so, they might have made thoughtful considerations about (i) which assessment criteria they had to reflect upon and (ii) how their Flipped Classroom corresponded to the assessment criteria outlined in the examination assignment. By engaging in such considerations, the teachers might have developed their understanding of the characteristic features of the Flipped Classroom approach and how well the designed pedagogical activity reflected these characteristic features.

*Understanding of own learning process*

The teachers indicated that by engaging with the reflection videos, they developed a good understanding of their learning process (Figure 4).

*Through my engagement with the reflection video, I have become a more conscious learner.  
I have developed a better overview of the target theory.  
By explicating my reflections, I have developed a conscious understanding of the choices that I have made.  
This is a great way to bridge theory and practice: create a Flipped classroom assignment based on the theoretical considerations and approaches.  
By making an oral presentation for others, you develop your own understanding.*

Figure 4. Teachers' responses about the role of the reflection video to develop their understanding of the learning process.

The teachers explicated that by engaging with the reflection videos, they developed a thorough understanding of the theoretical foundations of a Flipped Classroom approach and how to integrate the theoretical foundations into practice. In addition, the teachers reported they developed their understanding of the choices they have made, and, in doing so, they might have enhanced their capacity to compare the created assignment with the outlined assessment criteria. Such an approach might have contributed to teachers' conscious engagement in learning in the ICTPED MOOC.

### *A positive experience of creating reflection videos*

The teachers expressed their positive experience of creating reflection videos (Figure 5).

*It was very useful to create a reflection video. I wish I could make reflection videos in other assignments. Filming myself while reflecting on my assignment was a very useful exercise. I could not stand seeing myself on the video at the beginning; however, this was a useful experience to get over such a feeling. This is a fantastic opportunity to express my thoughts concerning the assignment I created.*

Figure 5. Teachers' positive experiences of creating reflection videos.

The teachers' responses indicate their positive experience of creating reflection videos and willingness to engage in this form of assessment in the future. The teachers elaborated on the significance of creating a reflection video to overcome their insecurity about being filmed. In addition, they appreciated the opportunity to present the ideas and thoughts they invested in the designed Flipped Classroom. By engaging in such reflections, the teachers had an opportunity to make their learning process transparent both for the course instructors and for themselves. Such reflections might have contributed to the development of teachers' understanding of the learning process they engaged in while completing their examination assignments.

### *Other reflections*

Individual teachers reflected on developing their digital competency, affordances, and limitations of the reflection video. These responses do not represent the patterns of the teachers' experiences concerning their engagement with the reflection video; however, by following a detailed approach to the thematic analysis (Van Manen, 2016), these responses were also analysed and grouped under the theme 'Other reflections' (Figure 6).

*I have learnt how to create and edit a video. It was challenging to do it for the first time; however, it will be easier to do it other times. By developing a screencast, the reflection video allows to present ideas and relate them to the created Flipped classroom assignment. I am thinking too much about how I look in the reflection video.*

Figure 6. Other teachers' responses concerning their engagement with the reflection video.

In summary, by engaging in creating reflection videos, the teachers directed their efforts at integrating the assessment criteria outlined in the Flipped Classroom. They also indicated that the reflection videos initiated their considerations about (i) the aspects that had to be prioritised in the video, (ii) enhanced their understanding of the learning process, and (iii) developed their positive attitude toward the reflection video as an assessment form. Individual teachers considered the affordances and lim-

itations of creating a reflection video and emphasised an opportunity to develop their professional digital competence.

### DISCUSSION

The analyses performed in this study focused on examining the teachers' experiences of engaging with reflection videos in the examination assignment Flipped Classroom and how such teachers' engagement might have contributed to developing their digital identity. The following research questions were addressed: *How did teachers experience their engagement with the reflection videos as an assessment form in the ICTPED MOOC?* and *How did teachers' engagement with reflection videos might have contributed to enhancing their digital identity?*

The patterns of teachers' experiences of engagement with the reflection videos in the ICTPED MOOC are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Teachers' experiences of their engagement with the reflection videos

Type of experience	Description
Prioritising important aspects in the reflection video	Reflections on the required assessment criteria and how the assessment criteria were addressed in the designed Flipped classroom
Understanding of own learning process	Reflections concerning (i) teachers' understanding of the theoretical foundations of the Flipped classroom approach and how to implement them in practice and (ii) justification of their choices and (iii) capacity to compare the designed learning outcome with the assessment criteria
Positive experiences of creating reflection videos	Reflections concerning (i) teachers' positive experiences of creating reflection videos and their willingness to further engage in this form of assessment, (ii) the significance of creating reflection videos to overcome the insecurity of being filmed, and (iii) an opportunity to present own ideas and thoughts behind the designed Flipped classroom
Other reflections	Reflections concerning (i) the need to develop teachers' professional digital competence, (ii) affordances, and (iii) limitations of reflection videos as an assessment form

*First*, the analyses revealed that when engaged with the reflection videos, the teachers directed their efforts at identifying the important aspects they had to include and elaborate upon. These aspects concerned the assessment criteria presented in the examination assignment and the teachers' reflections about how the designed Flipped Classroom integrated the required assessment criteria. By engaging in such considerations, the teachers might have developed their understanding of the key characteristic of the Flipped Classroom approach, and their conceptual understanding might have been enhanced. However, besides developing their conceptual understanding, the teachers reported that they enhanced their understanding

of the learning process by considering how theoretical foundations of the Flipped Classroom approach could be transferred into practice, justifying their choices, and comparing how their learning outcome (designed Flipped Classroom) matched the assessment criteria. In doing so, the teachers self-regulating capacity as independent learners in online environments might have been enhanced (Brandmo et al., 2020; Zimmerman, 2002; 2008). The teachers expressed their positive attitude toward engaging with reflection videos, and the majority of teachers preferred reflection videos to other forms of assessment in the ICTPED MOCC. Finally, the teachers reflected on the opportunity to develop their professional digital competence and considered the benefits and limitations of engaging with the reflection videos as an assessment form. In summary, the teachers' reflections indicate that their engagement with reflection videos contributed to the development of their conceptual understanding of the Flipped Classroom approach, and their self-regulating capacity in online learning might have been enhanced.

*Second*, Galperin's parts of a learning activity (orienting, executive, and control) might serve as a cue to reveal how teachers' engagement with reflection videos might have contributed to the developing their digital identity. In the reflection videos, the teachers explicated that they engaged with the theoretical foundations of the Flipped Classroom approach and considered how to transfer these theoretical premises into practice. Such considerations coincided with Galperin's aspects of an orienting part concerning the evaluation of the present situation and identifying the potential of the cultural objects present in the situation for teachers' actual needs. The resources presenting the theoretical foundations of Flipped Classroom could be considered as the cultural objects available for the learners. The teachers designed a Flipped Classroom and justified their approach to design (creating a plan of action) and reflected on how the designed Flipped Classroom correlated with the assessment criteria (control of the action's execution). These reflections highlight that by engaging in the design of their Flipped Classrooms, the teachers focused on constructing the *orienting part* of the learning activity. In the reflection videos, the teachers (1) introduced the topic for their Flipped Classroom assignment, identified learning objectives, and presented the target students' group; (2) presented an overview of their Flipped Classroom; (3) reflected on how videos were created; (4) considered the teachers' role; (5) presented students' feedback; (6) discussed benefits and limitations of the created Flipped Classroom and (7) identified ways for further improvement. In doing so, the teachers offered detailed reports on how the Flipped Classrooms were designed and used with their students – the *executive part*. Finally, by reflecting on how the designed Flipped Classroom corresponded to the assessment criteria, the teachers engaged in the *controlling part* of their learning activity. In summary, the teachers developed their understanding of how to design, perform and validate the quality of their learning process and outcome, and, in doing so, they developed their understanding of the learning process with digital technology. Such an understanding created positive premises for teachers' meaningful interactions with technology, and their digital identity might have been enhanced.

*Third*, the teachers expressed their positive attitude toward engaging with reflection videos and indicated their preferences for using this form of assessment in other ICTPED MOOC assignments. They emphasised the significance of creating reflection videos to overcome the insecurity of being filmed. The teachers considered reflection videos as a valuable opportunity to present their ideas and thoughts behind the designed Flipped Classroom. The majority of the teachers were strongly ( $M=45.18\%$   $SD=7.90$ ) and very strongly ( $M=29.38\%$   $SD=4.21$ ) satisfied with reflection videos as an assessment form, and they preferred reflection videos ( $M=82.05\%$   $SD=3.98$ ) to other forms of assessment in the ICTPED MOOC. These findings indicate that reflection videos might be considered valid forms of assessment in MOOCs that are of pedagogical value and appreciated by learners.

In summary, the teachers reported that their engagement with reflection videos contributed to the development of their conceptual understanding of the Flipped Classroom approach and how this approach can be implemented in practice. In addition, teachers' engagement with reflection videos enhanced their considerations of the orienting, executive, and control parts of the action. Such an engagement might have contributed to the development of their understanding of how to design a learning activity with cultural (digital) tools. Finally, teachers' positive attitude indicates that reflection videos can be considered a valuable form of assessment in MOOCs that might enhance teachers' conceptual understanding, their understanding of how to engage in online learning, and, in doing so, contribute to the development of their digital identity.

#### IMPLICATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There are several pedagogical implications considering using of reflection videos as an assessment form in MOOCs and online learning environments.

*First*, the teachers' engagement with the reflection videos contributed to the development of their conceptual understanding (Flipped Classroom approach) and their understanding of how to engage in the learning process. In doing so, their capacity as independent and conscious learners might have been enhanced.

The *second* and perhaps more profound implication is that assessment forms may affect teachers' learning in MOOCs and online environments. This study, therefore, raises the question about the need for the MOOCs developers' awareness of how assessment forms might facilitate teachers' independent and conscious online learning and their development as learners and professionals. By engaging with reflection videos, the teachers demonstrated their agentic engagement in their orienting (design), executive (implementing in teaching practice), and control (comparing with the assessment criteria) parts of the activity. Such an engagement may offer an approach to how to meaningfully interact and advance in online learning and, in doing so, may contribute to enhancing teachers' digital identity. Through interactions with the reflection videos and engaging in the orienting, executive, and control parts of the learning activity, teachers may develop their understanding of how to learn

online, and such a form of assessment carries a new function: not as an assessment of learning outcomes but as *a tool* for studying the essence of the learning process – *assessment as learning*. By engaging with reflection videos, teachers develop their understanding of the nature of online learning, and their digital identity might be enhanced.

The *third* implication is the cultural-historical principle of activism, and Galperin's considerations of how to design a learning activity to enhance learners' conceptual understanding and their understanding of how to learn appeared to be useful in the analyses of teachers' experiences of their engagement with the reflection videos in the ICTPED MOOC. We suggest that this approach might offer new pathways to use Galperin's theory in further research to examine educational practices in online environments which aim to enhance conceptual understanding and position learners as active agents in epistemic learning practices. Further research is therefore needed to examine how reflection videos as an assessment form may enhance students' conceptual understanding and their capacity to learn in MOOCs and online courses.

These findings, therefore, inform MOOCs and online course developers about how reflection videos may enhance the development of teachers' conceptual understanding and their capacity to learn online. They also emphasise the importance of awareness about how assessment may affect teachers' engagement in online learning, their agentic capacity to learn, and digital identity.

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## Adult Actions Supporting Narrative Playworlds in the Classroom

**ABSTRACT:** This study is a part of a more significant Narrative Play and Learning (NEPL) project in daycare centres in Vilnius, Lithuania, lasting for three years. The role of the adult in the narrative playworld is crucial, as their actions determine the nature and continuity of the play activities and the children's motivation, engagement, and opportunities for action. This qualitative study explores the teacher's involvement in the narrative playworld and examines what adult actions contribute to collaborative play development. The results show that the actions contributing to the development of collaborative play activities involve all participants, children, and adults, and create a situation where the adult becomes a partner in the children's play but does not lead the activity. All the cases analysed show that the teacher's participation in narrative play is a creative activity that requires constant improvisation. The children's reactions are always spontaneous and unpredictable; they do not know the teacher's plan, and the narrative playworld is created in the here and now. In conclusion, the NEPL programme, as a cultural tool, helps the adult create and maintain favourable conditions for collaborative play development.

**KEYWORDS:** narrative playworlds, teacher's actions, the in-role position of a teacher, improvisation, individual narrative voice

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## INTRODUCTION

Today's world can be described as intensively changing, full of surprises and challenges. Such a world forces the sphere of education to constantly solve new problems. Each generation of children finds itself in a unique '*social situation of development*', along with adults – parents and teachers. The education community's mission is to educate children so they can cope with present and future challenges. The fundamental question for scientists and educators is, what kind of pedagogy should be utilized today? In early childhood education, teachers have been dealing with a dilemma for a long time: what should prevail when organising the education of young children, didactic teaching, or collaborative play with children? The scientific community is seeking to answer this question as well.

Researchers studying children's early development note that the solution is to delve into the needs of early childhood development. In the last decade, more researchers have emphasised the importance of a child's play at preschool age and teachers' beliefs, perspectives, and experiences with play (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019). Meanwhile, formal education of young children is turning towards earlier academic training. This creates a challenge for early childhood professionals. They try to combine these recommendations in their practices: to encourage children's play and, through it, to help children develop academic skills. However, for over a decade now, it has been observed that children spend far more time being instructed than playing and exploring freely, exercising their bodies, and using their imagination (Miller & Almon, 2009; Pyle & Danniels, 2017). Many studies have revealed that the academic skills the child acquires while playing are precisely measured. Such an approach denies the very essence of play activity and turns it into a guided instructional activity. The terms schooling, play-based learning, and playful learning prevail in the research. Still, we must acknowledge that these terms' content is not unambiguous and may have different meanings (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019; Pyle & Danniels, 2017).

By turning young children's play into an educational activity, we deprive them of the opportunity to develop general abilities early, which are the basis of all human

life and learning. Research has revealed (Shanker 2020; Whitebread et al., 2009a; Whitebread et al., 2009b; Gopnik 2016) that self-regulated behaviour and self-regulated learning are abilities necessary for success in life and are crucially important in the development of academic skills. Development of self-regulation starts early in childhood, and play is the activity most supportive of its development (Whitebread et al., 2009). Young children's ability to independently develop complex forms of play diminishes, and they need the help of adults. Children's play can be encouraged by the appropriate behaviour of teachers and other adults – starting from creating the environment and demonstrating a positive attitude to engaging in children's play.

In this article, we extend the research that analyses the importance of adult participation in children's imaginary play and playworlds (Hakkarainen & Brėdikytė, 2010; Hakkarainen et al., 2013; Fleeer, 2015; Devi, Fleeer & Li, 2018; Fragkiadaki, Fleeer & Rai 2021; Brėdikytė, 2022; Utami, Fleeer & Li, 2022; Sujetaitė-Volungevičienė, 2022). This paper presents the key concepts underlying the research, followed by the study design and results highlighting the teacher's actions – critical turning points, moving the activity towards the development of collaborative play or guided teaching. We build on years of research to implement Narrative Play Pedagogy.

#### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The cultural-historical developmental theory forms the theoretical background for our research. The main theoretical concepts of cultural development in childhood are the social situation of development, *amplification* as “the ‘enrichment’ of child development, the ‘broadening’ of the child's genetic perspective, that is, of the zone of proximal and more distant development through specific ‘child activities.’” (Zaporozhets 2000; Kudryavtsev 2022). Imagination is the basis for the development of abstract thought, and adults are moderators of a child's cultural development.

Early development is essentially a creative process of self-development characterised by spontaneity. A young child develops in the way that is most suitable for him. From the wide cultural field, which Asmolov (2012) called the redundancy of development, the child chooses what is most important to him at that moment, what resonates with his experience and responds to his developmental needs. A dominant adult in an early childhood classroom might often stop and qualitatively change the self-development processes, which can lead to simplification, as Zaporozhets (2000) described. The child's developmental and learning strategies are then affected.

From this point of view, children's creative play based on imagination and exploration is the most appropriate activity for the child's self-development processes. The Narrative Play and Learning programme was created to meet the developmental and educational needs of 3-8-year-old children.

#### *Narrative Play and (Learning) Pedagogy*

The Narrative Play and Learning Pedagogy has been described in detail in several book chapters (Brėdikytė 2011; Hakkarainen & Brėdikytė 2018; van Oers 2018)

and articles (Hakkarainen et al., 2013; Hakkarainen & Bredikyte 2020) also in NEPL guidelines for teachers (Bredikyte 2017). The main defining principles of the approach are (1) adult participation in the construction of a narrative playworld; (2) the playworld is based on a storybook containing moral dilemmas; (3) adults participate in-role position in play; (4) playworld adventures are created in dialogic form between adults and children; (5) children's ideas lead the playworld adventures; (6) the playworld is not a replication/dramatization of the storyline but an improvised recreation and continuation of the story.

Such imaginary play creates new experiences that are linked to children's previous experiences. Playworlds bring together individual children's experiences and expand possibilities to live through new and exciting events, make moral choices and face the consequences of their choices. Vygotsky pointed out that in early childhood (around three years old), the development of imagination begins and later forms the foundation of formal, abstract modes of thought (Vygotsky 1987; 2004).

The primary purpose of narrative play on a collective level is to encourage imaginative, *collaborative play in the classroom*. On the individual level it is to support the development of an authentic *narrative voice* and the building of *personal selves*. Narrative play aims to maximise children's experiences through collaboratively constructed imaginative playworlds.

The goal of an adult stepping into children's play is to develop a collaborative play activity – the playworld – without transforming it into didactic teaching. What does it mean to establish the playworld? To create a chain of exciting events (storyline) with all play participants, relying on their ideas and reactions. Such activity is dialogic and improvisational in its essence. The task of a participating adult is to observe, listen, grasp the most appropriate and productive ideas, and connect them into a thrilling play adventure.

Usually, the central event of each play session is planned, but its realisation is always through improvisation. Thus, a narrative playworld has by no means a fixed plan. Instead, it has a blueprint of the main events. For example, a favourite fairy-tale character sets out on a journey to visit his grandmother, and on the way, they encounter various unexpected events. The fairy-tale and the characters are always those children like and know.

Meanwhile, the play events are born from observations of children's behaviour and living environments and are intended to involve them in solving controversial, ambiguous situations. For example, on the way to his grandmother, the character discovers a seriously ill wolf asking for help: What should the players do? From this moment, improvisation begins, and the most important thing here is the children's voices and ideas. At this point, as much time as possible is needed to satisfy all the players with the found solution. The adult's activity must be minimal; his functions are more organisational: helping to creatively combine children's ideas and implementing them, and moderating children's emotional reactions.

In narrative play, the teacher is usually in a role position, so he can influence the overall play only from the position of his role character without switching to the



position of the teacher. Such a situation limits the teacher's actions and gives the children more freedom and responsibility to create the play. In conclusion, we want to stress that the role of an adult in creating narrative playworlds is of great significance. The teacher's actions determine the character and continuity of the play activity, children's motivation, involvement, and possibility to act. Therefore, the *teacher's actions are chosen as the unit of analysis* for this study.

#### METHODOLOGY

This study is a part of a more significant Narrative Play and Learning (NEPL) project in day-care centres in Vilnius, Lithuania, lasting for three years. The project's goal was to implement the NEPL method in classrooms. Teachers with no previous experience with the NEPL programme were invited to the project. During the project, teachers participated in training sessions every month. They improved their professional competencies in observing and documenting children's play activities, assessing children's play levels and supporting children's play ideas. In addition, they had to implement a Narrative Play project in their practice. During the three years, 113 teachers participated, 75 classrooms were involved, and over 300 narrative play episodes took place.

This qualitative study examines the participation of teachers in the narrative playworld; a criterion in evaluating the quality of the involvement is adult actions supporting the development of collaborative play. The research question is, what are the adult actions in the narrative playworld supporting collaborative play development in the classroom? All narrative playworld episodes were filmed and analysed to answer the research question.

Following research ethics, at the beginning of the project, all participants, including teachers and children's parents/guardians, provided informed consent, in line with the university's ethical committee's requirements. For this study, it was essential to ensure the anonymity of all participants. All clues that allowed the participants or their schools to be identified were eliminated.

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the following paragraphs, we present the most representative narrative play situations teachers found themselves in when organising playworlds. From many episodes, the five cases that best reflect teachers' experiences and their choices were selected for the analysis. During the activities described in these episodes, the teachers' actions determined the nature of the activity and the children's opportunities to act. We seek to determine what actions of the teachers determined whether the joint activity developed in the direction of play or teaching.

The first situation illustrates the teacher's actions typical for most teachers and children just starting the project when their playing skills are beginning to develop. The remaining episodes represent teachers' and children's actions that occurred at

any stage of project implementation and are not necessarily related to play skills. The fifth situation demonstrates the actions of experienced players, usually observed at the end of the project.

1. *The Rooster is gone! The importance of the main principles of the Narrative Play.*

In a group of 3-4-year-old children, a narrative playworld is based on the folktale "The Hen and the Rooster". The main characters communicate with children by sending letters, online calls or visiting the playground.

*The first letter from the rooster.* Under the teacher's guidance, the children discover the rooster's letter in the classroom and give it to the teacher. The children gather around the teacher, who holds the rooster's note in her hand. One boy notices the rooster's picture in the letter and tries to say: "chicken..."; but the teacher corrects him: "we are reading the letter now", and continues: "Dear children, I left to the forest." Turning the letter to the children. "Look, forest. Yes? He wrote the phone number here. Shall we call?". One child shyly says, "No". "We should call," – the teacher, without paying attention to the child's response, starts calling the rooster.

*The second letter from the rooster.* A teacher (in a hen's costume) reads a letter from a rooster found in the playground with the children. "Letter! Yes? – says the teacher-hen. "And a hint!" – she takes the rattle from the letter and asks: "what could it mean?" The children look confused and surprised, and the teacher starts rattling the rattle. "Music! Yes?" she prompts. Several children nod their heads. One child takes a rattle with a letter from the teacher's hands, but she takes it back after a second and continues to explain to the children: "Let's open the letter, read it, let's see what the rooster has written to us..." The children surround the teacher. "Let's take the letter and read it. You listen, listen with wide open eyes and ears, yes?" – And she continues reading the letter: "Dear children, I set out to pursue my dream! What could it mean?" – she asks the children and helps them by answering, "Music. Yes?" – the teacher points to a rattle. "I hope to see you soon" – the teacher reads the letter and shows the children a heart drawn in the letter. "A rooster is sending you a heart. Yes? And here is the rooster's signature" she finishes and looks questioningly at the children. The children show no interest and split up to play around the playground.

Such situations are usually observed at the beginning of the project when the teachers start implementing narrative play with the children. The teachers plan all the events in detail, including educational activities and try to enforce them at any cost. The final event of this narrative adventure was integrated with musical training when the children sang together with the music teacher and eventually found the rooster hiding among the musical instruments. Such an idea can work if it is born from collaborative play and is proposed by the children. For example, after searching

all possible places, the children suggest going in and checking the music hall, because they hear some noises from there... In the two episodes with letters, the teacher asked questions, answered them, and performed most of the actions. With such guidance, the children could only agree and follow; they had no other choices.

There was no *mutual dialogue*, which is necessary for narrative play. The teacher did not give the children time to hear, see and respond. Even in the few cases when the children reacted and suggested something, the teacher either did not hear or did not pay attention or, even worse, did the opposite. This happened twice while reading the first letter. Why didn't the teacher stop and listen to the reluctance of several children to call the rooster? Why didn't a few boys want to call? Maybe they were unsure, afraid, or perhaps they had another, better suggestion on how to find the rooster. Our observations confirm that most teachers do not tend to change their plans, and then the teacher's plan does not become a shared plan, which is precisely what happened in the second episode. The teacher's actions did not involve children and did not turn the activity into collaborative play.

Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2002) introduced the term "sustained shared thinking", meaning that the teacher and the child or children share the same objective for communication and thinking. We can talk about the lack of *sustained shared actions* in the playworld, which means that the teacher and the children do not share the same theme and motive for play.

Reading the second letter, the children were not allowed to discover the hints themselves and, more importantly, to decode them. From the video, it was clear that the children did not understand the tips in the letter and the teacher's comments, so it is not surprising that their faces showed no interest after reading the letter. They walked away to play, leaving the teacher alone and upset. The activity had no continuation and did not become a shared play activity.

Another common problem is that it is not well understood what it means to assume the role of a play character. In the second episode, the teacher has the attributes of a hen costume, but she does not act like a hen. She behaves like a teacher. In other words, she does not follow the rules of the chosen role, which is another necessary condition for narrative play. This signals to the children that the teacher doesn't play, and they just listen to the teacher and follow her instructions.

How different would the situation have been if the teacher had followed the requirements of narrative play? Following the principle of dialogue, the teacher would have done things much more slowly and completed only a tiny part of her plan but would have listened to the children and adjusted the plan based on their reactions and understanding. It would have involved most, if not all, of the children and gotten the children's ideas. Then, the plan made by the teacher would have been transformed into a joint plan for both children and teachers and would likely have encouraged collaborative play.

If the teacher were in-role position, it would have helped her give up the usual adult dominance and transform the guided activity into a shared play activity. The

in-role position limits the adult's ability to guide play activities and allows children to act and find solutions. The teacher becomes a play partner but not a guide.

2. *Who will bring carrots for the bunnies? What to do when there is no plan, but the children continue to play? HELP!*

In a group of 4-5-year-old children, a narrative playworld is based on the story-book "Doctor Dolittle".

The children receive a request for help from the tiny bunnies – they are hungry and freezing and cannot reach Doctor Dolittle. Children take a map and go to the forest with Mother Hare (teacher in role). They find a parcel from Doctor Dolittle (a box of carrots for the rabbits) and must take it to a specified place. After finding the place, Mother Hare calls her bunnies, but no one shows up. "Children," the Rabbit addresses the children, "It seems I have understood. It's very crowded and noisy. My bunnies got scared and ran into the forest." The children look around worriedly. "What to do now?" asks Mother Hare and takes the box with carrots from the boy carrying it. "Then maybe you, Mother Hare, can take the carrots?" – suggests another teacher and turns to the children: "Children, shall we trust the carrots to Mother Hare to bring them to the bunnies?" The boy, who found the parcel and carried it all the way, approaches Mother Hare and wants to take it back, saying: "I'll help you". "Me too," – another child joins him. But Mother Hare does not hand over the package: "I have a bracelet of courage. I am not afraid! I will carry the carrots to my family. OK?" asks Mother Hare. "I can help," says the same boy and tries to take the box from the Hare, but she does not give it. "Wish me luck," – he says to the kids and leaves for the forest. The narrative adventure stops for that day.

This is an end episode of an exhilarating narrative adventure. The two teachers were in role positions; the children were involved, motivated and ready to go on with the play. It was time to return to the kindergarten, and the teachers tried to stop the play. It is always a difficult task to come up with a good ending. In this example, the teachers did not allow the children to complete the task and deliver the carrots to the bunnies. In this case, this was the children's plan. Meeting with the bunnies was not a planned event. This happens in narrative playworlds, and even experienced teachers sometimes don't know what to do. However, this is play, and everyone should use their imagination. It is always best not to hide your confusion and ask the children: "wow, we can't find the bunnies! What should we do now?" Children often have good advice, but the idea of returning to the classroom and asking for help (principal, police, parents, etc.) and extending the search the next day is always a good solution. We observed that experienced players, both children and adults, usually say: "now we need some time to think".

What happened at the end of this episode? We can again talk about the teacher's adherence to the plan. Although this narrative adventure was very successful in all respects, its ending allows us to see how difficult it is to make a spontaneous decision when unexpected and unplanned things happen. The teacher's fear of handing the initiative to the children was often evident. The children came up with the idea of taking the carrots to the bunnies, so why not let them think about how to find them, plan, and discuss, and let the teachers just listen to the children's suggestions? The project's teachers often emphasised (Brédikytė, 2022) that they were surprised by children's ideas and creativity when they were given the opportunity. In this narrative play adventure, the final episode did not destroy the whole playworld. On the contrary, the children were so worried about the little bunnies and Mother Hare that they wrote a letter asking if everything went well. The teachers planned the next play adventure using the children's ideas.

### 3. *Teddy bear's birthday – staying in role saves the play activity!*

A group of 3-4-year-old children develop a narrative playworld based on a Winnie the Pooh storybook.

Winnie the Pooh (teacher in-role) comes to the classroom to celebrate his birthday. The children prepare a present for Winnie the Pooh – a cake. A large wax cake with a honeycomb is placed on the table in the classroom. Winnie the Pooh tries to take the honeycomb from the wax cake: "I want to taste it..." "You need a knife," a boy says, observing what Winnie the Pooh is doing (At that moment, Winnie the Pooh removes the honeycomb from the cake with his hands). The boy is surprised: "Oh, how is it?" Winnie the Pooh picks up the honeycomb with his hands, even though the boy says he needs a knife. "Oh... how delicious it is... and it smells so good!" – Winnie the Pooh, licking, looks at the children surrounding him. The children watch with interest. "What is this? Do you know what is here?" – asks Winnie the Pooh. "Here's honey," the children answer. "Honey? Oh, how delicious... Let's see where that honey is hidden. I can smell it, but how do I get it out? How do you get it out of here?" "With your fingers," suggests one child. "With fingers?" Winnie the Pooh is surprised. "And you eat with your fingers?" "No, we don't," answers one girl. "You don't eat with your fingers?" "And bears can eat with their paws?" The children shyly answer: "yes, no..." One by one, they try to reach the honey from the honeycomb with their fingers. "Can I taste?" – asks Winnie the Pooh hesitantly. "Yes, you need to take a bite!" – one girl exclaims. "Can I take a bite?" Winnie the Pooh asks. "Yes," confirms the girl. "Maybe I won't bite, maybe I'll just lick..." – Winnie the Pooh pretends to lick the honeycomb. "Hmm... very tasty. All the children gather around Winnie the Pooh and try to taste the honey with their fingers.

Reflecting on this episode, the teacher revealed that while she was in the Winnie the Pooh role position, she faced a dilemma: to let the children try the honey with their fingers or stop playing. The teacher admitted that it was challenging for her not to interrupt the play. We all noticed from the video that it was her, in the Winnie the Pooh role, who first took honeycomb with her paws. The teacher admitted that she was unaware and realised this only after watching the video material.

Many teachers participating in the project shared a similar experience. During play, there are often situations where characters behave “inappropriately” from the adult’s point of view. Since those characters are usually played by teachers, they constantly have a question: can a teacher in the play show inappropriate behaviour to children? But, in a play situation, it is not the teacher but the character who misbehaves. And can Winnie the Pooh, being a teddy bear, eat other than with his paws?

The teachers’ experiences revealed that it is not easy for them to understand the function of such episodes. On the one hand, they mirror children’s behaviour in the classroom. Children can observe familiar situations, actions, and conflicts from outside. They immediately become involved in solving those situations because it happens in the play. For young children, this becomes an invaluable experience; they constantly practice solving controversial situations.

Winnie the Pooh’s birthday episode footage revealed that the teacher managed to bring the children into collaborative play. Trying the honey with their fingers together with Winnie the Pooh (teacher in role position) became the most critical moment of togetherness, which helped create the community of players. In-role participation of the teacher was crucial for such young and inexperienced players. The teacher’s in-role actions involved all children in a shared play activity.

4. *The tail of the wolf* – following children’s emotional involvement and ideas helps to grasp the themes and topics children care about most and discover their favourite characters.

In this classroom, the children’s favourite book – Little Red Riding Hood – was chosen as the basis for the narrative playworld.

The teachers planned an introductory session for a group of 4-6-year-old children: they laid out picture books, the story’s main characters, and a basket with buns. They wanted to talk to the children about the fairy-tale and see how quickly they would recognise the objects in the environment. To keep the children interested, they hung a wolf’s tail in the doorway and played a recording of a wolf’s howl. When they came to the classroom, the children immediately paid attention: they began to watch the tail, listening to the sound of the howling. They did not dare to touch the tail, but they began to whisper: “wolf”. After these words, a four-year-old boy ran to the classroom window and excitedly began to shout: “Wolf, wolf, I saw him!” All the children crowded around the window and began to look through it. The teachers joined them and asked about the wolf the boy had seen. “Oh, oh, I can see his hair!” Ev-

everyone was very excited; they didn't stop talking about the wolf. After a while, some children announced that they saw as many as four wolves! When the children overcame their emotions, sat in a circle, and the teachers showed them a basket with buns, most of them were convinced that the wolf had brought buns to the group. From the children's reactions, it became clear that the main character of the next narrative adventure should be the wolf, not Little Red Riding Hood.

During the reflection, the teachers summarised that everything went differently than they had planned. But they were very unsure if this all went right. Did they do the right thing by following the children's ideas and not carrying out their planned activities? It was the right decision. It was just a preparation for the narrative play, and the teachers involved the children within minutes. The idea of the wolf's tail in the doorway was so successful. The decision not to follow the plan, but to listen to the children's ideas and rely on them when planning the play adventures, were the actions that led to collaborative narrative play.

#### *5. Solving moral dilemmas – the highest level of narrative play*

A dramatic event or a clash of opposing viewpoints is at the heart of any fairy-tale. It is precisely such clashes that attract children. Dramatic confrontations happen daily between children in the classroom; this is the reality they experience. Children love stories with events or characters they can identify with. It is not always possible to discover such a tale right away, but when it is found, it is accompanied by success in creating a playworld.

One of the most evident signs that the narrative playworld has enthralled children is when they spontaneously start creating adventures and continue not only in kindergarten but also at home, involving family members.

A three-year-old boy who avoided participating in narrative adventures tells his teacher how he and his father fought a witch, and all the characters from the playworld helped them: "Dad and I fought the witch like that (showing with his hand). We weren't afraid; Elle, the Scarecrow, and Woodcutter helped us!" The teacher noticed that the boy fearlessly participated in all the narrative adventures with other children after this episode.

In kindergarten, they invite the teacher and offer their ideas, and continue the play adventures in small groups with other children, actively participating and solving problems in a shared adventure.

In a group of 5-year-old children, in a narrative playworld, the main characters, two best friends – Hare and Hedgehog (teachers in-role), got into a very tense argument. The children tried to reconcile them. The characters' arguments and strong words continued for quite some time. The children tried

different ways to reconcile the quarrelling friends. Each child had something to say, and in the end, one five-year-old boy's words convinced everyone: "You could lose your lifelong friend FOREVER!" This argument stopped the angry Hare and Hedgehog. All the overexcited children became silent after these words.

Teachers avoid creating such tense situations and allowing children to deal with them. At the end of the project, when teachers and children had mastered narrative play, similar episodes emerged in all classrooms. The children increasingly took the initiative of creating the play adventures into their own hands, and the teachers began to trust the children and themselves more. With more and more play practice, teachers mastered the principle of being in-role. They began to see how their behaviour changes children's behaviour by giving them more opportunities to act and create. The teacher's in-role actions moved the playworlds forward and facilitated children's independent play.

Solving moral dilemmas is an essential requirement of the NEPL program. Only courageous teachers dare to create situations of moral choice, which usually reflect the relationships between the children in the classroom and the conflicts they must solve. El'koninova (2016) pointed out that performing a heroic deed motivates children in play. The playworlds with dramatic events where children must make moral choices to fight evil and defend good and justice are highly motivating and engaging for children. This is especially important for 3-6-year-old children who have already developed the initial skills of self-regulation in play activities. Participation in narrative playworlds requires volitional behaviour from children and contributes to personality growth.

## CONCLUSIONS

Our study aimed to identify the teachers' actions that determine the character of their joint activities with children while implementing the Narrative Play and Learning approach. In summary, we can say that the actions that support the development of collaborative play activity involve all participants, children and adults, and create a situation where the adult becomes a partner in children's play but does not guide the activity. Our research has revealed that following the basic principles of NEPL helps to choose such actions. If these principles are not followed, the teacher's activity becomes a didactic activity.

Of particular importance are:

- » Actions that help adults engage in shared play and support collaborative play development.
- » Actions that support a constant dialogue with children. It is essential to hear children and accept their suggestions without prioritising the adult's own plans.
- » Actions that help create the assumed play role. The role limits the adult's actions, forcing them to suppress their activity and not allowing them to lead the play.



- » Actions of improvisational character. The teachers should not be afraid to improvise; play actions must be spontaneous.

One more general conclusion from all the analysed cases is that the teacher's participation in the narrative play is a creative activity requiring constant improvisation. Children's reactions are always spontaneous and unpredictable; they do not know the teacher's plan, and play is created in the here and now.

We could discuss the NEPL programme as a *cultural tool* that helps an adult create and maintain favourable conditions for collaborative play to develop. Without following the principles of the programme, the play gradually transforms into adult-guided activity.

The narrative playworld is created by limiting the adult's leading role. The teachers observe, listen, and hear children's voices, notice their intentions, learn from children's improvisation, and follow the principles of a narrative playworld based on an inspiring and demanding heroic storybook. The playworld inspired by such a book can motivate children to perform heroic deeds. Any motivated action requires deliberate effort and helps in the formation of self-regulation. Children learn to achieve a set goal, although it is only a goal in play. Still, constantly playing, the child practices volitional behaviour and self-regulation, which will be necessary for him to cope with the challenges of the real world.

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## „Pomiędzy rolami”. Narracje Polek czasu politycznej, ekonomicznej i kulturowej transformacji

**ABSTRAKT:** Od ponad trzydziestu lat Polska jest obszarem intensywnych zmian społecznych, politycznych, kulturowych i ekonomicznych. Wspomniane tranzykcje dotyczą także sytuacji kobiet. Transformacja ustrojowa spowodowała intensywny rozwój gospodarki, a to z kolei poszerzyło możliwości wyboru drogi i kariery zawodowej we wszystkich grupach społecznych. Kobiety przeszły szczególną zmianę w obszarze zawodowym, a ich nowe role zawodowe wciąż realizowane są obok tych tradycyjnych, kulturowo zakorzenionych w polskim społeczeństwie. W artykule opisuję proces konfrontacji współczesnych Polek osiągających wysokie pozycje zawodowe z rolami wpisanymi w figurę Matki Polki, jako socjalizacyjnego dziedzictwa (nie tylko) okresu PRL-owskiego. Badania, prowadzone w celowo dobranej grupie 12 kobiet, zostały zrealizowane za pomocą wywiadu narracyjnego. Analiza materiału badawczego koncentrowała się na trzech podstawowych elementach figury Matki Polki, tj. zdefiniowanych rolach matki, partnerki i Polki.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** Matka Polka, role kobiece, polska transformacja

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„Proszę Państwa 4 czerwca 89 roku skończył się w Polsce komunizm”. To zdanie zostało ogłoszone przez polską aktorkę goszczącą w Dzienniku Telewizyjnym 28 października 1989 roku, czyli parę miesięcy po częściowo wolnych wyborach, w wyniku których zakończyła się era PRL. Zmiana dokonała się 33 lata temu. Od tego czasu Polska stała się areną wielu transformacji, które wynikały zarówno z wewnętrznych przeobrażeń strukturalnych, jak i zmian globalnych. Tranzycje rozgrywające się na poziomie kraju odczuwalne są także w życiu indywidualnych obywateli. Ponowoczesność, z jej licznymi symptomami (m.in. zmiennością, niepewnością, indywidualizacją i brakiem zaufania do instytucji), stała się naszą rzeczywistością. Nie ma już jednego obowiązującego systemu wartości. Dotychczas obowiązujące zasady i standardy postępowania oraz struktury społeczne będące gwarancją stabilności uległy rozchwianiu (por. Bauman, 2007). Brak stabilnych podstaw i nienaruszalnych zasad może wywoływać poczucie zagubienia. Jednocześnie jednak daje nieograniczoną wolność wyboru i samodzielnego kreowania swojej tożsamości. Ścieżki życia nie są już trajektoriami wytyczanymi zgodnie z obowiązującym modelem. Odpowiedzialność za życie i kształtowanie swojej biografii spoczywa w rękach jednostki. Jesteśmy nie tym, czym jesteśmy, ale tym, co z siebie zrobimy (Giddens, 2001, s.108). Współczesny człowiek to *homo optionis*, skazany na ciągłą konieczność dokonywania wyborów, które mają wpływ na jego życie.

Wbrew opisanym wyżej zjawiskom w świadomości społecznej w dalszym ciągu istnieją wzorce, które stanowią punkt odniesienia dla obieranych sposobów życia. Jednym z nich jest ideał Matki Polki, do którego odnoszą się współczesne kobiety. Matka Polka to figura, stały i dobrze utrwalony element polskiej tożsamości obudowany historią, tradycją i religią. To także synonim określonej postawy życiowej. Jak podkreśla Anna Titkow (2012), za Januszem Tazbirem, wywodząca się z kręgów arystokratycznych rola Matki Polki opisywała jedynie nieliczną grupę kobiet w Polsce. Siła i nośność tego symbolu spowodowały jednak, że wzorzec Matki Polki utrwalił się na wieki w polskim społeczeństwie. Jest on wykorzystywany także dzisiaj i podobnie jak w poprzednich wiekach odgrywa rolę opisową i normatywną. Podstawo-

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1 Ponowoczesność (post-nowoczesność, postmodernizm) doczekała się szeregu opisów akcentujących różne aspekty. Dla potrzeb moich rozważań dotyczących konfrontacji z rolami społecznymi skupię się na kilku elementach, głównie na indywidualizmie (Beck), płynności (Bauman) i samorealizacji (Giddens).

we skojarzenie to kobieta matka, której powołaniem jest rodzenie i wychowywanie dzieci. Jednocześnie jest opiekunką domowego ogniska, a jej obowiązkiem jest troska o członków rodziny, ich zdrowie i samopoczucie. W figurę Matki Polki mocno wpisany jest także element narodowy. Poprzez odgrywanie roli macierzyńskiej kobieta spełnia swój patriotyczny obowiązek. Rodzi Polaków, a w procesie wychowania chroni i pielęgnuje polskie wartości, tradycje, wiarę i język (Titkow, 2012). Przekazuje je dalszym pokoleniom.

Figura Matki Polki wyłoniła się jako jedna z głównych kategorii w zebranych narracjach i w konsekwencji stała się konstrukcją, na której wspiera się analiza materiału badawczego.

#### PERSPEKTYWA METODOLOGICZNA PROWADZONYCH BADAŃ

Przy wyborze strategii badawczej kierowała mną potrzeba zastosowania podejścia, które pozwoli objąć zarówno wielowymiarowość głównego problemu moich dociekań, jak i dynamikę kontekstu społecznego. Zdecydowałam się na wybór strategii jakościowej jako tej, która pozwala na uchwycenie nie tylko indywidualnych sposobów konstruowania rzeczywistości przez uczestniczki badania, ale i złożonego obrazu sytuacji społecznej.

Zastosowaną metodą badawczą był wywiad narracyjny. Jego otwarta formuła ułatwia poznanie i uchwycenie subiektywnego znaczenia zdarzeń i procesów na podstawie pojęć i znaczeń używanych przez narratora (Teusz, 2002, s. 91). Treść narracji zależy od tego, jak dana osoba postrzega swoją rzeczywistość. Doświadczenia i wydarzenia są subiektywnie wybierane przez jednostkę, która przekształca je w całość i nadaje im indywidualny sens (Mendel, 2006). Nie jest to więc faktograficzna relacja z życia. W narracji wkomponowane są wypowiedzi dotyczące samorozumienia, własnej sytuacji, motywów postępowania, emocji, decyzji i podejmowanych działań (Trzebiński, 2002, s. 36). Opowieści konstruowane są przez ludzi, jednocześnie pozwalają nadać porządek przemyśleniom i odnaleźć sens. Mają więc charakter jednostkowy, ale zanurzone są w szerszym kontekście społecznym. Pozwalają odczytać nie tylko sens indywidualny, ale zrozumieć rzeczywistość społeczną przez pryzmat jej indywidualnych uczestników.

Badania realizowane były od września 2020 do kwietnia 2021 roku. Próba badawcza liczyła 12 osób zaproszonych w wyniku doboru celowego opierającego się na trzech kryteriach:

#### **płeć**

Ze względu na problem badawczy zależało mi na wywiadach jedynie z kobietami.

Jednym z celów badania było zrozumienie, w jaki sposób kobiety odnajdują się w rolach mocno zakorzenionych w polskim społeczeństwie i tradycji. Interesowało mnie, jak konfrontują się ze społecznymi (i często zinternalizowanymi) wymiarami kobiecości i co jest tego efektem.

**wiek**

Uczestniczące w badaniu kobiety urodziły się pomiędzy 1970 a 1983 rokiem. Kryterium wieku było istotne ze względu na możliwość uchwycenia wątku transformacji ustrojowej w Polsce.

Zależało mi na zebraniu narracji osób, których tłem życia są istotne zmiany społeczne. Dzieciństwo moich rozmówczyń przypadło na schyłkowy etap PRL. W swojej wczesnej dorosłości obserwowały intensywne zmiany ustrojowe, gospodarcze i społeczne. Prowadząc badania, chciałam dociec, w jaki sposób doświadczenia transformacji ukształtowały sposób myślenia o sobie, funkcjonowania w różnorodnych przestrzeniach życia społecznego oraz myślenia o Polsce.

**sytuacja zawodowa**

Wszystkie respondentki pracują w międzynarodowych organizacjach, na wysokich stanowiskach menedżerskich.

Do zdecydowanej większości kobiet dotarłam bezpośrednio dzięki własnym kontaktom. W przypadku dwóch respondentek kontakt był możliwy dzięki pomocy osób trzecich. Trzy kobiety zostały polecane przez inne uczestniczki badania. Liczba osób biorących udział w badaniu nie została z góry określona. O zakończeniu badań zdecydowało tzw. teoretyczne nasycenie.

Przeprowadzone wywiady zostały zarejestrowane w formie audio, a następnie przetranskrybowane. Transkrypcje były analizowane na bieżąco, bez oczekiwania na zebranie wszystkich wywiadów. Takie podejście umożliwiło zwrócenie uwagi na wyłaniające się wątki i zjawiska, których mogłam poszukiwać w kolejnych wywiadach. Pierwszy etap pracy analitycznej stanowiło kodowanie, które rozpoczęło proces interpretacji. Przypisywanie kodów było efektem pracy z materiałem, a nie ustalonych wcześniej hipotez lub założeń. W drugiej części pracy z materiałem empirycznym wygenerowane kody zostały ponownie przeanalizowane. Kodowanie skoncentrowane polegało na wyłonieniu najważniejszych i najczęstszych kodów, a w efekcie doprowadziło do tworzenia kategorii i integracji teoretycznej. W procesie analizy transkrypcji korzystałam z oprogramowania Atlas.ti9, pozwalającego na nadawanie kodów, porównywanie ich i tworzenia kategorii.

**WNIOSKI Z BADAŃ**

Pojęcie Matki Polki ze względu na swoją pojemność znaczeniową stało się punktem wyjścia dla analizy narracji zebranych w ramach prowadzonych przeze mnie badań jakościowych. Nie znalazło się ono przypadkowo. Pojawiło się w wypowiedziach kilku rozmówczyń, które traktowały figurę Matki Polki jak wzór, według którego oceniają swoje macierzyństwo i kobiecość.

Ze względu na główne komponenty konstruktów Matki Polki moją analizę oparłam na porównaniach „matka”, „partnerka” (niekoniecznie żona) i „Polka”.



## MATKA

Biologiczne uwarunkowania kobiety i możliwości w zakresie rodzenia dzieci stanowią jej dominujący atrybut we wszystkich kulturach. Oczekiwania dotyczące przyszłego macierzyństwa kształtują proces socjalizacji dziewczynek i młodych kobiet (Dziemianowicz-Nowak, 2006; Mandal, 1995). Zdecydowana część moich rozmówczyń jest matkami. Posiadanie rodziny jest dla nich największą wartością. Nie odbiega to zresztą od deklaracji większości Polek i Polaków (Titkow, 2007). Badania CBOS z 2019 roku wskazują, że dla 84% Polaków rodzina jest także najważniejsza<sup>2</sup>.

W przypadku moich respondentek posiadanie rodziny stanowi element stabilizacji i wsparcia potrzebnego w intensywnym tempie życia. Mimo wysokiego miejsca rodziny w hierarchii wartości, ich macierzyństwo jest dalekie od tradycyjnej formy. Wynika to z rzeczywistości, w której znaczącą rolę odgrywa praca. Aktywność zawodowa kobiet w Polsce rośnie systematycznie na przestrzeni lat. W 2020 roku ponad 63% kobiet w wieku produkcyjnym (1564 lata) było aktywnych zawodowo. Na tym tle wyróżniają się kobiety z wyższym wykształceniem. Obecnie w tej grupie znajduje się prawie 90% Polek, które wykonują pracę zawodową (Magda, 2020). Dla dzisiejszych kobiet, zwłaszcza osiągających sukcesy zawodowe, realizacja roli matki nie jest jedynym celem życiowym. Pragną one realizować się na polu zawodowym, a w związku z tym nie chcą całkowicie poświęcić się dziecku (Czernecka i in., 2009). Współczesne kobiety chcą korzystać z możliwości, których nie miały wcześniejsze pokolenia. Wolność wyboru uwarunkowana jest zmianami społecznymi i sposobem postrzegania kobiety jako niezależnej jednostki, która nie musi być już podporządkowana mężowi czy rodzinie. Moje rozmówczynie chcą same decydować i kształtować swoją drogę życiową i zawodową.

*To jest chyba wybór kobiety. Ja bym nie chciała powiedzieć, że idę taką drastyczną drogą i wybieram karierę, bo jakbym wybrała karierę całkiem, to bym pewnie tych dzieci nie miała. Natomiast myślę sobie, że to jest świadomy taki mój wybór, że ja chcę to robić w ten sposób (Agata).*

Bycie jednocześnie mamą całkowicie poświęcającą się dziecku oraz skuteczną menedżerką nie jest możliwe. Zawsze jest to kwestia akceptacji ponoszonych kosztów. Brak czasu i uwagi wydają się być naturalnym elementem funkcjonowania osób zajmujących odpowiedzialne stanowiska. Moje respondentki są tego świadome i wyrażają, że akceptują konsekwencje swoich decyzji. Intensywna praca zawodowa nie pozostawia dużej przestrzeni na realizowanie innych ról czy pasji. Dla niektórych kobiet racjonalna i świadoma akceptacja kosztów nie wpływa jednak na zmniejszenie potrzeby sprostanania wymogom idealnej matki, oddanej żony i wzorowej pracownicy, czyli „superkobiety” (Hansen-Shaevitz, 1984). Dla zdecydowanej większości łączenie roli mamy i menedżerki oznacza podejmowanie wzmożonych działań, także poza

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2 Jednocześnie szczęście rodzinne ważne jest dla 80% społeczeństwa. Co więcej zdecydowana większość badanych (87%) stoi na stanowisku, że do pełni szczęścia człowiek potrzebuje rodziny.

oficjalnymi godzinami pracy. Próby pogodzenia wszystkich obowiązków skutkują poczuciem rozdarcia pomiędzy powinnościami zawodowymi a obowiązkami matki.

Mimo deklarowanej potrzeby realizacji w życiu zawodowym i akceptacji kosztów, które to za sobą pociąga, w przypadku części badanych, byciu mamą towarzyszy poczucie winy wynikające ze zbyt małej ilości czasu i uwagi poświęcanej rodzinie, zwłaszcza dzieciom. To dylematy, o których piszą Ulrich Beck i Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2001). Kobiety funkcjonują z poczuciem rozdarcia pomiędzy „życiem własnym” a „życiem dla innych”. W tej sytuacji nie ma satysfakcjonującego rozwiązania, a wybór którejkolwiek z opcji jest obarczony poczuciem winy.

*Po tylu latach w korporacji śmiem twierdzić, i może to nawet jest swego rodzaju spowiedź, że moja uwaga nie jest w takim stopniu skierowana na dzieci, jak by to mogło być. Znaczy, ja im oczywiście staram się zapewnić jak najlepszy byt, staram się być dobrą mamą, ale siłą rzeczy jakieś są poświęcenia związane z tym, że się pracuje dla takiej dużej organizacji jak moja (Małgorzata).*

Dokonując oceny swojego macierzyństwa kobiety borykają się z poczuciem bycia niewystarczająco dobrą matką. Wyrzuty sumienia są wpisane w naturę współczesnych kobiet aktywnych zawodowo. Liczba, a przede wszystkim charakter ich obowiązków w życiu prywatnym nie uległ znaczącej zmianie. W dalszym ciągu są matkami, żonami czy córkami. Według przywołanej już Marjorie Hansen-Shaevitz (1984) zmiany społeczne nie wpłynęły znacząco na obniżenie oczekiwań wobec kobiet. W obiegowej opinii to kobieta jest odpowiedzialna za „wikt i opierunek”, nawet gdy zarówno ona, jak i jej partner wykonują pracę w bardzo podobnych warunkach. Siłę przeżywanego dylematu potęgują powszechnie obowiązujące wzorce rodzicielstwa. Opisana przez Sharon Hays (1996) „ideologia intensywnego macierzyństwa” zakłada, że dziecko jest najwyższym dobrem, a jednocześnie obowiązkiem. Stanowi punkt centralny w życiu kobiety, a w związku z tym to jemu podporządkowane powinny być wszelkie działania. Opinia publiczna jest kształtowana przez nagłaśniane przykłady idealnych matek (zazwyczaj celebrytek), które poświęcają czas i uwagę na samorozwój oraz zdobywanie wszechstronnej wiedzy (z zakresu psychologii, zdrowia, diety itp.) pomocnej w wychowaniu szczęśliwego dziecka (Bieńko, 2015).

Wyłamywanie się z obowiązującego wzorca rodzi pytania i rzuca cień na praktykowane macierzyństwo. Moje rozmówczynie zastanawiają się także nad konsekwencjami obranego przez siebie sposobu realizacji roli matki dla przyszłości swoich dzieci. Zgodnie z powszechnymi opiniami to matka ponosi odpowiedzialność za wszystkie aspekty życia dziecka, jego zdrowie, rozwój, osiągnięte sukcesy. Jest więc odpowiedzialna także za sukcesy i porażki w przyszłości (Budrowska, 2004).

Macierzyństwo uczestniczek badania dalekie jest od idealistycznego obrazu. Bycie matką nie jest dla nich jedynym i absolutnym powołaniem, któremu podporządkowują całe swoje życie. Pełnienie obowiązków rodzicielskich nie wyklucza równoległego rozwoju kariery. Odbywa się to jednak kosztem emocjonalnym. Macierzyństwo nie jest błogosławionym stanem, wbrew wielu obiegowym opiniom.

Towarzyszy mu wewnętrzne rozdarcie lub przynajmniej świadomość konieczności balansowania na krawędzi świata zawodowego i rodzinnego.

#### PARTNERKA

W tradycji polskiej kobieta przypisana jest do strefy domowej. Jej rolą jest dbanie o męża i ich wspólne potomstwo. Przez wieki sytuacja kobiety w małżeństwie była zależna od mężczyzny. Nie zmieniła tego ani sytuacja porozbiorowa, ani wojenna, która wymuszała na wielu Polkach konieczność stanięcia na czele rodziny i wzięcia odpowiedzialności za jej los.

Tradycyjna rola żony nie przystaje jednak ani do rzeczywistości, ani do ambicji i potrzeb moich rozmówczyń. Być może dlatego, czasem mimo wieloletniego stażu małżeńskiego, wolą definiować się jako partnerki, nie żony.

*Partnerka (...) dla męża. Żona, to tak jakoś właśnie już od razu brzmi jak takie upupienie. Raczej partnerka (Alicja).*

Wydaje się, że transformacja społeczna zdecydowanie przekreśliła możliwości powrotu do dawnego statusu kobiet podporządkowanych mężczyznom i tradycyjnie konstruowanym rolom społecznym. „Duch równości” nie da się „z powrotem zakorkować w butelce” (Beck, za: Ostrouch-Kamińska, 2011, s.79). Zmiany wpływają także na oczekiwania kobiet formułowane wobec ich związków. Coraz większą popularność w deklarowanych preferencjach zyskuje partnerski model rodziny (Titkow, 2007). Kariera zawodowa współczesnych kobiet, odnoszone sukcesy, a co za tym idzie wysokie dochody dające niezależność i pozwalające utrzymać rodzinę powodują, że tradycyjna rola mężczyzny zostaje zakwestionowana. Ta sytuacja wymaga od niego przyjęcia nowej partnerskiej, niepatriarchalnej formuły związku (Grochalska, 2006). Joanna Ostrouch-Kamińska (2011) podsumowuje cechy partnerskiego modelu rodziny. Nie ma w nim jasno wyspecjalizowanych ról czy funkcji. Panuje tu równy podział władzy. Partnerstwo to rodzaj związku, który nie podlega tradycyjnym normom czy standardom. Daje w ten sposób szeroką przestrzeń obydwu stronom. „Partnerstwo” pojawia się w większości wypowiedzi moich badanych, bez względu na oficjalny status ich związków. Częstotliwość tego określenia, ale także kontekst, w którym jest użyte wskazuje, że jest ono przejawem świadomej decyzji oraz emanacją potrzeb moich rozmówczyń.

*Miałam bardzo wyraźnie już od bardzo młodego wieku doprecyzowane moje oczekiwania na temat tego, jak moje życie powinno wyglądać w kontekście partnerstwa, tego jak ja chcę, żeby mój związek wyglądał. I bardzo dużo (...) uwagi poświęcałam temu właśnie, że jakby poukladałam, posortowałam sobie myśli, jakby byłam świadoma bardzo tego, co jest dla mnie istotne, co jest dla mnie ważne (Zofia).*

Partnerski model jest konsekwencją przemyślanych wyborów. Jest także rezultatem pracy, którą partnerzy wkładają w budowanie i rozwój związku. Taki model opiera się na akceptacji i zaufaniu. Tworzy warunki do swobodnego wyrażania siebie. Rozmówczynie podkreślają wartość wsparcia emocjonalnego, empatii, zainteresowania, które okazują sobie partnerzy. Jak podkreśla cytowana już J. Ostroch-Kamińska (2011), powołując się m.in. na Giddensa czy Becka, partnerstwo jest opozycją do indywidualizmu, osobistych osiągnięć i potrzeb. Realizacja takiego modelu związku stawia wysokie wymagania w zakresie ciągłej autorefleksji i samozrozumienia.

Prawie wszystkie rozmówczynie podkreślają, że łączenie ról zawodowych i prywatnych nie byłoby możliwe bez wsparcia rodziny. Odnalezienie się w sytuacji narastających wymagań możliwe jest przede wszystkim dzięki mężom lub partnerom<sup>3</sup>. Wydaje się, że dla moich respondentek układ, w którym obowiązki związane z rodziną i domem są dzielone pomiędzy partnerów jest zupełnie naturalny. To raczej standard i habitat współczesnych kobiet menedżerek. Zanika tradycyjny podział ról, w którym to kobieta dźwiga jarzmo opiekunki domowego ogniska. Wypowiedzi moich rozmówczyń korespondują także z wnioskami Agnieszki Gromkowskiej-Melosiak, której badania dotyczyły funkcjonowania kobiet menedżerek. Orientacja kobiet na sukces zawodowy prowadzi do zasadniczej rekonstrukcji wzajemnych relacji pozostających ze sobą w związkach kobiet i mężczyzn. Kobieta kariery nie akceptuje już „ideologii ogniska domowego” jako wyznacznika swojej tożsamości; również dla niej przestrzeń życia publicznego stanowi naturalną sferę działania (2011, s. 350).

Płeć w związkach badanych menedżerek nie determinuje podziału władzy i odpowiedzialności za rodzinę (w tym opieka nad dziećmi) czy dom (jego utrzymanie, prace domowe itp.). Taki układ jest oznaką, czy nawet konsekwencją „przełamania kulturowej bariery podziału na prace, obszary i «odpowiedzialności» kobiece i męskie” (DuchKrzysztofek, 2007, s.128). To raczej jest raczej ewenement w polskim społeczeństwie<sup>4</sup>. W znacznej części domów badanych kobiet to mężowie lub partnerzy są głównymi opiekunami dzieci oraz gospodarzami. Realizacja obowiązków domowych i troska o dobro rodziny dzielona z partnerem lub wręcz przeniesiona na jego barki wymaga czasem dokonywania trudnych wyborów w obszarze życia zawodowego. W trzech przypadkach mężowie moich rozmówczyń zdecydowali się na częściową lub nawet całkowitą rezygnację z kariery zawodowej. Jak zauważa U. Beck (2002) o ile równouprawnienie przynosi kobietom szereg korzyści (mniejsze obciążenie obowiązkami domowymi, lepsze wykształcenie i szanse kariery zawodowej) dla mężczyzn wiąże się z konkurencyjnością na rynku pracy i mniejszymi

3 Podobny wątek pojawia się w wypowiedziach uczestniczek badań przeprowadzonych przez Annę Zyrę (2006) i opisanych w artykule pt. Kobieta sukcesu, żona, matka. Dylematy funkcjonowania, w: J. Ostroch (red.) Przywiązanie i przekraczanie, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego.

4 Z badań sondażowych przeprowadzonych w 2013 roku wynika, że oczekiwania dotyczące równego podziału obowiązków związanych z rodziną i domem są bardzo wysokie, zwłaszcza wśród kobiet. 91% ankietowanych uważa, że zadania powinny być realizowane w sposób egalitarny, a 85% kobiet oczekuje także równości w podejmowaniu prac domowych (Pawlikowska i Maison, 2014).

szansami na awans, brakiem wsparcia jego kariery po stronie żony oraz większym natężeniem prac domowych.

Rezygnacja z ambicji zawodowych mężczyzny nie musi być jednak okupiona wysokim kosztem emocjonalnym. Ograniczone potrzeby własnego rozwoju jednocześnie pozwalają cieszyć się i odczuwać dumę z sukcesów żony czy partnerki.

*Ja też miałam zawsze takie poczucie, to jest takie ważne, ja nie byłam sama, ja mam wspierającego męża. On jest tak dumny, on nawet gdzieś tam opowiada ludziom o mnie (Joanna).*

Ambicje mężczyzn mogą ustąpić miejsca poczuciu satysfakcji z życia w związku partnerskim. Tacy mężczyźni „nie tylko popierają, ale także wspierają idee zaangażowania swoich żon w realizację ich kariery zawodowej” (Ostrouch-Kamińska, 2011, s. 106). Opisana postawa świadczy o wysokim stopniu dojrzałości oraz poczuciu własnej wartości mężczyzn, a kobietom daje poczucie bezpieczeństwa i stwarza warunki umożliwiające dalszy rozwój.

#### POLKA

Dzisiejsza rzeczywistość daleko odbiega od epoki szlacheckiej, w której tworzył się ideał Matki Polki. Funkcjonowanie Polek kształtują inne warunki ekonomiczne i sposób myślenia o sobie i kraju. Dla uczestniczek mojego badania Polska to przede wszystkim kraj dzieciństwa, zapamiętany przez pryzmat czasów PRL. Moment przełomu systemowego przypadł na czas ich wczesnej młodości (szkoła średnia) lub dzieciństwa (szkoła podstawowa). Wspomnienia PRL pojawiają się przede wszystkim w kontekście materialnym. W świadomości dziecka doświadczany deficyt dóbr skutkował podziałem świata na ten lokalny (biedny) i ten lepszy, w którym wszystko jest na wyciągnięcie ręki. Ten drugi, zachodni, utkwiał w świadomości kobiet jako lepsza emanacja bytu, do której się aspiruje. Wspomniane piętno pozostaje na długie lata i nie dotyczy jedynie kwestii materialnych. Z drugiej strony, brak możliwości natychmiastowego zaspokojenia potrzeb, według moich rozmówczyń stał się zaczynem ich pracowitości, wytrwałości i cierpliwości, której brakuje późniejszym pokoleniom.

Wątki polityczne związane z poprzednim ustrojem nie są szczególnie silnie akcentowane w zebranych narracjach. Pojawiają się raczej w kontekście skutków dla bezpośredniego funkcjonowania badanych kobiet. Ważnym aspektem ich życia było ograniczenie wolności osobistej, co bezpośrednio przekładało się na brak możliwości wyjazdów, ale także ograniczony dostęp do informacji spoza bloku komunistycznego.

*No to był taki okres, no to był zupełnie inny świat, gdzie później się konfrontowaliśmy gdzieś tam wyjeżdżając za granicę, otwierały nam się oczy, jak świat może wyglądać (Joanna).*

Zamknięcie i konieczność funkcjonowania według jednego wzorca spowodowały, że w opinii części kobiet pokutuje w nas Polakach brak tolerancji i otwartości na inność, we wszystkich jej wymiarach<sup>5</sup>. Paradoksalnie jednak zamknięcie i brak możliwości poznawania świata zrodziły ciekawość i potrzebę zobaczenia, co kryje się za „żelazną kurtyną”.

Ważnym momentem dla kształtowania tożsamości moich respondentek był przełom systemowy i nowe pojawiające się możliwości. To wywołało w młodym pokoleniu Polek i Polaków energię i nadzieję. Zerwana kurtyna odsłoniła inny świat. Spowodowała jednocześnie rzucenie światła na narodowe wady, które wcześniej nie miały szansy się ujawnić. W opinii badanych kobiet największym piętnem poprzedniego systemu, zarówno na poziomie pokolenia, jak i jednostki, jest zaniżona samoocena. Brak wiary w siebie i własne kompetencje nie znika mimo zajmowanych stanowisk i wymiernych sukcesów zawodowych.

*Mimo wszystko pokutował we mnie jakiś taki kompleks Polaka i takiej trochę drugiej kategorii obywatela świata (...)myślałam, no o takim kraju bardzo zaściankowym, szaroburym, niewiele oferującym, niespecjalnie mającym jakiś dorobek i rzeczy, z których można być jakoś bardzo dumnym na arenie światowej. Takim jakimś szaro, buro, byle jakim miejscem (Marta).*

Polska jako „szarobury kraj”, nie jest jedynym źródłem kompleksów. Brak wiary w swoją wartość, zdaniem respondentek, wynika także z obowiązujących w Polsce lat 70. i 80. wzorców wychowania. Trudno dopatrywać się w nich elementów kształtujących dumę narodową czy poczucie własnej wartości. Wychowanie w PRL-owskim społeczeństwie, w którym ważnym elementem funkcjonowania było niewyróżnianie się i dopasowanie do narzuconego standardu nałożyło ciasny pancerz na moje rozmówczynie. Trudno im się go pozbyć, mimo świadomości jego istnienia i dyskomfortu, który wywołuje.

*To też związane z confidence [pewnością – AP], bo to też coś nas ukształtowało, to skąd przychodzimy, jako Polki (...). Lata 70. urodzenie gdzieś tam, właściwie młodość w tym w takim okresie jeszcze tamtego systemu i takiego, wiesz, takiej don't stick out [nie wyróżniaj się – AP] i tak dalej, gdzieś też powodowało, że ta confidence nie jest naturalna. Ale być może często jest brana za brak kompetencji, a tak naprawdę jest to brak jakiejś tam pewności siebie (Joanna).*

Badane kobiety stanowią jednak dowód na to, że dziedzictwo PRL, z całym spektrum związanych z nim ograniczeń nie musi stanowić przeszkody w osiągnięciu suk-

5 Spostrzeżenia moich rozmówczyń znajdują odzwierciedlenie we wnioskach prof. Jerzego Eislera który pisze „jedną z konsekwencji faktu, iż w PRL mieliśmy w istocie do czynienia ze społeczeństwem zamkniętym, było pojawienie się i utrwalenie niechęci czy wręcz wrogości do obcych, innych nie naszych. Podłożem ksenofobii, obok innych motywów, zawsze jest wszak niewiedza oraz – realne lub wyimaginowane poczucie zagrożenia” (2016, s. 443).

cesu zawodowego. Dla niektórych respondentek podjęcie pracy w korporacji było spełnieniem ich młodzieńczych aspiracji. Wejście w środowisko międzynarodowego biznesu stało się formą realizacji dziecięcych marzeń i wyobrażeń o świecie innym niż Polska lat 70. czy 80. Było formą nobilitacji i odcięcia się od PRL-owskiej przeszłości.

*To wyobrażenie takiego lepszego świata w tym takim wymiarze materialnym na pewno gdzieś głębiej w umyśle dziecka zaszczepiło taką chęć dostąpienia tego, wiesz, zaszczytu, żeby w ten świat wejść (Małgorzata).*

Jednocześnie fakt pochodzenia z Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej cały czas po-brzmiewa w świadomości badanych menedżerek stawiając je w pozycji osób, które muszą udowodnić swoją wartość. I znów paradoksalnie uwierające dziedzictwo PRL stanowi jeden z czynników sukcesu i dobrej oceny Polaków pracujących w organizacjach międzynarodowych. Ciągłe poczucie bycia niedostatecznie dobrą motywuje Polki do wytężonej wysiłku.

Dla moich rozmówczyń praca w środowisku międzynarodowym to nie tylko nobilitacja, ale także możliwość spojrzenia z innej perspektywy na polskie cechy narodowe. Konfrontacja z innymi narodowościami staje się polem refleksji i uczenia się. Ten zdystansowany sposób patrzenia wyciąga na wierzch nie tylko pozytywne, ale umożliwia dostrzeżenie wad narodowych.

*Negowanie wszystkiego, czego nie znamy, jest narodowym sportem. Wydaje mi się, że to spowodowało taką ułomność naszego środowiska (Anna).*

Praca w korporacji, zarówno według obiegowych opinii, jak i wypowiedzi moich rozmówczyń, wymaga ogromnego zaangażowania i nakładu energii. Mimo tego stanowi gwarancję bezpieczeństwa materialnego i pozwala nabrać dystansu do skomplikowanej sytuacji politycznej i społecznej w Polsce.

*(...) jak jestem w pracy, to ja nie jestem w tym polskim piekielku, gdzie się mówi, że to nie są ludzie, tylko to jest ideologia, no wszystkie te rzeczy, które w tym momencie się na arenie publicznej czy politycznej dzieją, które są absolutnie fundamentalnie niezgodne z moim światopoglądem. One się nie dzieją w tej firmie (Marta).*

#### PODSUMOWANIE I WNIOSKI KOŃCOWE

Dokonując analizy materiału badawczego skupiłam się na trzech aspektach konstrukt Matki Polki. Jego zastosowanie pojawiło się w rezultacie analizy zebranych narracji oraz licznych opracowań dotyczących społecznego funkcjonowania kobiet w Polsce (m.in. Titkow, Hryciuk, Korolczuk). Fakt, że konstrukt ten jest tak często przywoływany zarówno w literaturze naukowej, beletrystyce, jak i w rozmowach

dnia codziennego, obrazuje jego miejsce w społecznej świadomości i kanonie kulturowym. Zdaniem Anny Kotlarskiej-Michalskiej (2012) może to wynikać z wartości symbolicznej wpisanej w figurę Matki Polki, a dotyczącej m.in. macierzyństwa, funkcjonowania w związku, stosunku do ojczyzny, religijności i wyznawanego systemu wartości. Pojęcie to zawiera w sobie nie tylko zakres zadań i powinności, ale służy jako narzędzie do oceny sposobu wywiązywania się z postawionych przez społeczeństwo zadań i stopnia, w jakim kobieta przystaje do oczekiwań społecznych. Co ciekawe, konstrukt Matki Polki jako probierza używają nawet kobiety, których rzeczywistość daleka jest od tradycyjnego modelu życia.

Matka Polka w zebranych przeze mnie wywiadach pojawia się w kontekście macierzyństwa. To najbardziej popularne skojarzenie. W powszechnej opinii Matka Polka to kobieta, która całe swoje życie podporządkowuje potomstwu. Jemu poświęca swoje indywidualne potrzeby, w tym ambicje zawodowe. Matka Polka przypisana jest do sfery domowej. Wychowuje dzieci i nawet jeśli pracuje, jej aktywność zawodowa jest podporządkowana rodzinie. Jak pisze Anna Titkow, takie ujęcie matki Polki wykorzystuje „fasadowy charakter kulturowej konstrukcji macierzyństwa, opartej na założeniu, że dla wszystkich jednostek macierzyństwo i życie rodzinne są najważniejszymi wartościami w życiu” (2012, s. 28).

Dla moich rozmówczyń ważnym aspektem ich życia jest praca. To właśnie przez pryzmat stanowiska i ról zawodowych opisują i definiują siebie. Jednocześnie jednak podkreślają wartość rodziny. Kobiety menedżerki nie chcą rezygnować z macierzyństwa. Zdecydowana większość uczestniczek mojego badania to matki. Ich macierzyństwo nie przebiega według wzorców ugruntowanych w polskiej tradycji. Czynnikiem wyróżniającym jest przede wszystkim to, że mniej czasu poświęcają rodzinie. Ze względu na obowiązki zawodowe i pracę w międzynarodowych korporacjach (w tym funkcjonowanie w zróżnicowanych strefach czasowych) kobiety menedżerki większość swojego czasu spędzają na aktywnościach zawodowych.

Jednak ciężar odpowiedzialności i ogrom pracy, a co za tym idzie ograniczony czas i uwaga poświęcona rodzinie, wywołują poczucie winy. Jak zostało powiedziane, jest to konsekwencja ciągłego dokonywania wyborów pomiędzy życiem rodzinnym a prywatnym, z których żaden nie daje poczucia pełnej satysfakcji. Moje respondentki funkcjonują na przecięciu dwóch światów: tradycyjnego, określającego wzorce funkcjonowania kobiet i ich powinności oraz nowoczesnego, w którym jest przestrzeń na indywidualne wybory i możliwości samorealizacji i samostanowienia.

Piastując wysokie stanowiska, są świadome swoich potrzeb. Wydaje się, że konieczność mierzenia się z potencjalnym ostracyzmem społecznym nie stanowi dla nich przeszkody w realizacji celów zawodowych. Jak pisze Anna Titkow: „Kobiety, które widziały się wchodząc w dorosłe życie jako godzące dom z pracą zawodową, to kobiety wewnątrzsterowne, o mniej negatywnym obrazie własnej osoby” (2007, s. 137). Moim zdaniem poczucie winy badanych kobiet wynika z obaw dotyczących konsekwencji, jakie obrany model macierzyństwa może przynieść ich dzieciom i tego, jak może odbić się na sposobie ich funkcjonowania w dorosłym życiu.



Przeżywane rozterki i wątpliwości nie wpływają na zmianę sposobu funkcjonowania badanych kobiet. W swoim przeżywaniu roli matki zdołały one oddzielić doświadczenie macierzyństwa od instytucji macierzyństwa naznaczonej patriarchalnym nakazem poświęcenia życia dla dobra dzieci i rodziny (por. Rich, 1976). Deklarowane niebycie Matką Polką może być próbą zdystansowania się wobec tradycyjnego modelu macierzyństwa, który nie pozostawia przestrzeni na (samo)realizację zawodową i poczucie spełnienia poza środowiskiem domowym. Wydaje się więc, że macierzyństwo moich rozmówczyń bliższe jest nie figurze Matki Polki, a Nowej Matki (Sikorska, 2012), czyli kobiety, która łączy życie zawodowe z obowiązkami rodzinnymi. Jest świadoma trudności i kosztów. Akceptuje to i daje sobie pozwolenie na wątpliwości, przeżywanie dylematów i proszenie o pomoc.

Jak podkreślają respondentki, spełnienie ich ambicji zawodowych oraz pogodzenia pracy z życiem rodzinnym nie byłoby możliwe bez aktywnego wsparcia ich partnerów. Ograniczenia czasowe wymuszają konieczność dzielenia się obowiązkami. W domach badanych ten podział przebiega w sposób demokratyczny, bez określania, które z czynności przynależą jedynie kobiecie. Co więcej, w niektórych rodzinach, z racji obowiązków zawodowych kobiet ciężar zadań związanych z zarządzaniem domem spoczywa na barkach mężczyzn. To przesunięcie zwyczajowo kobiecych obowiązków na mężczyznę jest jednym z mocniejszych przejawów odejścia od tradycyjnego modelu i wzorca Matki Polki jako niestrudzonej gospodyni i opiekunki ogniska domowego. W związku z obowiązującym w domach badanych menedżerek partnerskim modelem związku dochodzi do zmiany wieloletniej tradycji, która przypisywała kobietę do sfery prywatnej, kameralnej, podczas gdy mężczyznę kojarzyła ze światem zewnętrznym. Moje respondentki to osoby, które z racji pracy w międzynarodowych korporacjach funkcjonują globalnie, utrzymując kontakty zawodowe z „całym światem”. Ich rola wymaga nierzadko obejmowania wysokich stanowisk za granicą, co oznacza konieczność wyjazdu do innego kraju. W takich sytuacjach umożliwienie adaptacji rodziny do nowych warunków i organizacji życia rodzinnego na „obczyźnie” jest zadaniem mężczyzn. W związkach opisanych przez część moich badanych to kobieta jest „główną żywicielką rodziny”, podczas gdy dochody mężów lub partnerów są mocno ograniczone. Ta sama tendencja dotyczy budowania pozycji zawodowej. Badane menedżerki realizują swoje ambicje i zdobywają kolejne szczeble kariery. Rozwój zawodowy mężczyzn jest zawieszony lub całkowicie podporządkowany obowiązkom domowym. Taki układ silnie narusza utrwalone wzorce funkcjonowania rodziny, w której dominującą rolę odgrywa pan domu, głowa rodziny. Obrany model ignoruje także androcentryczny porządek społeczny (z jego sferą męską i kobiecą) przekraczając symboliczne granice oddzielające kobiecość i męskość (por. Kopiciewicz, 2003). Uczestniczki badania nie odnajdują się w ciasnym gorsze Matki Polki, który nakazuje im posłuszeństwo i podległość, za cenę szczęścia domowego i niezmałowanego spokoju. Zdecydowanie preferują partnerski model związku, w którym żadna ze stron nie jest ważniejsza lub bardziej uprzywilejowana.

Partnerstwo to skomplikowana i złożona materia, która nie tylko konstruowana jest w wymiarze władzy i dominacji. To przede wszystkim proces ciągłego budowa-

nia związku z uwzględnieniem różnorodnych wymiarów funkcjonowania zawodowego (wysokość dochodów, zajmowane stanowiska, prestiż) oraz pozazawodowego (relacje, opieka nad dziećmi, zadania związane z domem). Podejmowanie trudu konstruowania partnerstwa wymaga dużej świadomości obydwu stron, a nierzadko także odwagi do wyjścia poza kulturowe normy, nawet jeżeli obarczone jest to ryzykiem krytyki i napiętnowania.

W zebranych narracjach znaczące miejsce zajmuje Polska jako kraj pochodzenia. Istotnym wątkiem jest także kwestia trudnej historii, czasu realnego socjalizmu i ich wpływ na kształtowanie się tożsamości moich rozmówczyń oraz funkcjonowanie w obecnym międzynarodowym środowisku. Wypowiedzi wskazują na ich ambiwalentny stosunek do Polski. Pozytywne aspekty bycia Polką równoważone są bardzo krytycznymi opiniami na temat naszych cech narodowych. Na obraz Polski duży wpływ ma szarzyzna czasów PRL, pamięć powszechnych deficytów i kontrast z krajami Europy Zachodniej, do której standardów zarówno ekonomicznych, jak i społecznych w dalszym ciągu aspirujemy. Dziedzictwo PRL to brak wiary w siebie i odwagi, kompleksy narodowe i ksenofobia. Równocześnie jednak rozmówczynie zwracają uwagę na pracowitość i przedsiębiorczość Polaków oraz ciekawość świata ukształtowane w czasach życia za „żelazną kurtyną”.

W zebranych wypowiedziach trudno doszukiwać się jednoznacznej miłości do ojczyzny i dumy z naszych cech narodowych. Rozmówczynie dalekie są od bezkrytycznego zachwyty czy demonstrowania przejawów etnocentryzmu, czyli postrzegania własnego kraju i kultury jako najlepszych oraz traktowania właściwych swojemu narodowi sposobów funkcjonowania jako jedynie słusznych i godnych naśladowania (Przytuła, 2011). Trudno więc w ich przypadku mówić o pełnieniu przypisanej Matkom Polkom misji obrończyni tradycyjnych narodowych wartości czy moralności (Zielińska, 2010).

Przeciwnie, wydaje się, że moje rozmówczynie cechuje przede wszystkim wysoka elastyczność kulturowa. Są świadome swoich filtrów kulturowych, które nie tylko wpływają na to, jakie zachowania i postawy przyjmują, ale także, jak postrzegają swoją rzeczywistość i otoczenie zawodowe. Elastyczność kulturowa pozwala im radzić sobie z trudnymi sytuacjami emocjonalnymi czy oceną. Umożliwia zdystansowanie się wobec własnych naturalnych reakcji i spojrzenie na problem z innej perspektywy (Matsumoto, 2007, za: Przytuła, 2011). Porównywanie na co dzień polskich i zagranicznych współpracowników pozwala dostrzec nie tylko narodowe zalety, ale także przywary, które często mają swoje źródło w skomplikowanej historii Polski.

Środowisko pracy menedżerek cechuje wielokulturowość, czyli funkcjonowanie w jednym czasie w wielości cech kulturowych, których emanacją są język, sposób zachowania, wyznawane wartości, religie, tradycja, a nawet wygląd. Różnice są widoczne, wpływają na sposób współpracy i funkcjonowania (Rozkwitalska, 2017). W tego typu środowiskach dochodzi także do przemieszania i przenikania różnych wzorców, a co więcej tworzenia w ich miejsce nowych specyficznych dla danej organizacji. Dobrym przykładem jest język, którym posługują się pracownicy międzynarodowych organizacji. W zdecydowanej większości powszechnym językiem komunikacji jest

angielski. Jest on jednak kształtowany, czy zniekształcany przez osoby, dla których nie jest „matczyną mową”. Proces oddziaływania odbywa się w obydwie strony. W języku polskim, którym posługują się moje rozmówczynie, pojawiają się liczne wtręty angielskie lub kalki językowe, które dla postronnego obserwatora mogą brzmieć dziwnie, a nawet niezrozumiale.

Język badanych kobiet, podobnie jak ich sposób myślenia i mówienia o Polsce jest przejawem tożsamości kosmopolitycznej. Jest ona „definiowana jako świadomość globalności oraz postnarodowych powiązań, jest świadomością heterogeniczności, akceptowaniem inności i wielości” (Delanty, 2006, za: Zielińska, 2010, s. 4). Moje rozmówczynie to zdecydowanie bardziej obywatelki świata, odnajdujące się w wielości wzorów kulturowych, niż repliki Matki Polki odpowiedzialne za trwanie narodu i poświęcające swoje życie dla dobra ojczyzny. Praca w międzynarodowym środowisku daje im możliwość wyjścia poza ukształtowane w polskim społeczeństwie ramy ról, w tym także tych, przypisanych kobietom. Na zachowania respondentek równie silnie jak kultura narodowa zdaje się oddziaływać kultura korporacji. Przyczyną może być wspomniana już ich wysoka elastyczność kulturowa oraz świadoma decyzja podyktowana potrzebą odgradzenia się od istniejących w tradycji wzorców zachowań, które nie są zgodne z ich systemem wartości. Wielokulturowość korporacji stanowi bezpieczną przystań i schronienie przed „polskim piekiełkiem” życia publicznego.

Pomimo deklarowanego dystansu i formułowanej krytycznej oceny, Polska jest ważnym elementem kształtujących tożsamość moich rozmówczyń, a pogmatwane losy kraju, jego historia i kultura stanowią nieświadomione dziedzictwo, także w znaczeniu rozwojowym. Przeżywane tranzycje, zarówno te wynikające z najnowszej historii Polski, jak i indywidualnych losów kobiet, zainicjowały konfrontację z dotychczas obowiązującymi zasadami i wartościami. Wynikiem tego są własne przekonania i postawy respondentek, dalekie od zasad, którymi tradycyjnie powinny kierować się kobiety.

Ukształtowane przez polską historię wzorce kobiece zdają się nie przystawać do realiów dzisiejszego świata. Obecna polityka państwa oraz lansowane przez władze „cnoty niewieście” jako kanon cech prawdziwej Polki pozwalają wysnuć wniosek, że kwestia ról kobiecych, a zwłaszcza ich aspekt normatywny nie może być przedmiotem jedynie dyskusji akademickiej. To temat dotyczący ogólnego funkcjonowania kobiet w społeczeństwie. Problem konfrontacji z rolami kobiecymi w polskiej kulturze i tradycji może stać się bardzo istotny w nadchodzących latach, a może nawet miesiącach. Rezultatem zmagania może okazać się coraz większy rozdźwięk pomiędzy wymuszonym przez ultrakonserwatywne władze wzorcem kobiety Polki a wizją kobiecości świadomych swoich potrzeb, praw i ambicji Polek.

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