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THE BIOGRAPHICAL EXPERIENCE OF BEING A TEACHER AS THE ESSENCE SHAPING LIFELONG LEARNING PRACTICES¹

ABSTRACT: This text is an attempt to answer the question of how to construct educational experiences in the professional biography of adults and their location within the practices of lifelong learning. To this end, the author presents the results of research on the ways in which public school teachers give meaning to their own professional experiences. Next she tries to show that the issues revealed as a result of the analysis are an important horizon for understanding and learning about their everyday life. As a result of the analysis of teachers' narratives, the author established three schemes for defining professional experiences, which in their essence reveal: lack of teachers' influence on the quality of education in general (a), perceiving the school as an effective organisation operating on the market (b), closing professional identity within its teaching method and its improvement. Referring to the concept of "biographicity" by Peter Alheit, the author shows that individual biography is a dynamic construct constantly reconstructed in a specific time, in socio-cultural and political conditions or in relation to other people – that is, practices that we identify as lifelong learning. In the case of the interviewed teachers, an element of these practices is the issue of shaping the culture of subordination and with it the politicisation and marketisation of education as well as the instrumental treatment of oneself and students.

KEYWORDS: educational experience, biographicity, professional identity, teacher, lifelong learning.

Introduction

The aim of this article is to present a fragment of research on teacher's understanding of the importance of their everyday experiences in reference to the construction of their role, or more broadly – to who they are. I will attempt to look at the understanding of being a teacher as revealed through a simple procedure of conducting an open, biographical interview with teachers currently teaching in public schools – the initiating question being "what does the experience of being a teacher² teach you". The reconstruction of individual teacher's stories about their own professional experience

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¹ The title of the article is formulated as a direct reference to Peter Alheit's (2018) *The Concept of "Biographicity" as Background Theory of Lifelong Learning?* published in *Dyskursy Młodych Andragogów/Adult Education Discourses* 19, which I used as the methodological scaffolding for the here presented study related to teachers biographically constructed professional experiences.

² Note that interviews were conducted between spring 2019 and spring 2020. The material was captured by a voice recorder and transcribed, during social distancing related to the pandemic, MS Teams was used. All together 15 interviews were conducted with teachers working in public primary schools (excluding grades 1-3) as well as in high schools.

was to lead to an analysis aimed at revealing issues important to them that are **included in the lifelong learning process**.

In this article, I refer to the narrative nature of individual experience in the sense that a biography consisting of experiences is a structure in which the process of understanding takes place. A structure in which the meaning of the actions undertaken by the subject occurs always in relation to the way they build relationships with the world. Placing oneself within an experience means being in relation with something or someone. Being in this relationship and describing it requires the subject's ability to conceptualize, which is a form of understanding of one's situation along with one's beliefs, traditions, institutional forms of organising life and as Andreas Fejes (2006) claims – forms of self-discipline. As Peter Alheit (2018) writes, lifelong learning has its own dynamics and complex structure precisely because of the dynamic nature of experiences that construct human biographies. He elaborates that this is not due to each biography containing various facts and episodes from the subject's life but is rather caused by the ways in which they are presented and understood or put simply – by what the mechanism of building their meaning is. The aforementioned author emphasizes several times in his works, that the scientific character of the description of a biography must take into account the tensions resulting from its construction. In his opinion, they are included in the very concept of “biography” – which is the subject's fundamental ability to internalize the external factors of the world that he considers important to himself and for his own development (Alheit, 2021: 119) as well as in “biographisation” (Alheit, 2018: 10). The latter being an expression of social impact on an individual in institutional forms such as education, socialization, desired patterns of life passed down from generation to generation through various forms of cultural practices. And yet it is so that despite the standardized pattern of life characteristic for a given type of society, the individual chooses the way he/she realizes his own biography and makes a number of changes in it. According to Alheit (2018; 2020; 2021), this happens as a result of the ways in which experiences are constructed, experiences that are contextual, reflective and temporal in nature. Temporal – that is, they are set in a specific time, but their meaning is made up of what was in the past and what the individual has in plan for the future. Contextual – because they result from social, political and cultural conditions. Reflexive – because modern identity is not a project one can conclude once and for all – its formulation requires using already available resources as well as that which is new, discovered and related to an everchanging everyday life. According to this author, it is through reading into the meaning of biographical experiences and how they are actualized that the meaning of an individual's lifelong learning and practices it activates lies.

Comments on methodology

The question that initiated the conversation – what the experience of being a teacher teaches you was addressed to a dozen or so public primary and secondary school teachers. It suggests that I treat being a teacher as a teaching practice, a type of experience that not only defines the professional status of a specific person, but also defines it as a subject and makes them as a subject, making them responsible not only for their own fate, but also for the shape of social life and its quality (see Usher, Bryant & Johnson, 1997). This approach is not new, in research on the professional condition of teachers this type of perspective was used, among others, by Astrid Męczkowska (2002), Joanna Rutkowiak (1992; 2010a), Alicja Jurgiel (2007), Bogusława D. Gołębnik (2004). The common foundation of these author's projects is that in their approach to understanding the teaching role they go beyond the context of the classroom, showing that being a teacher is a kind of social commitment, cultural practice and politicality.

In terms of methodology, this project assumes that the knowledge generated by man is the result of negotiations between him and the world in which he lives. It takes the form of a text. That is why language, together with its cultural and social codes is both a kind of medium constituting the subject and an instrument of giving meaning to reality itself. For the researcher, at the level of material analysis, it is a serious challenge to reconstruct what the respondents say, but also to make sense of what they say by finding a meaning scheme behind the validations present in individual stories about the experience of being a teacher. Context is key to recognizing the semantic scheme in this material. By context, following J. Rutkowiak's (2010b: 166) definition, I mean "a system in which cognitive events take place, and thus a system that determines their meanings". In this way, the context, or rather its conceptualization, determines what a person sees, ignores, considers significant and what he reduces. Regarding the teacher's narratives reconstructed here, of importance are not only their positions on the matter but also the manner and mechanism of their presentation. I would like to emphasise once again, following P. Alheit (2009; 2018) that it is not about determining the order of events or episodes in the stories being studied, but about matters that the interviewees indicate as being significant in their experience of being a teacher. In practice, as a result of the analysis of the collected material, it is about identifying issues related to the ways of being a teacher, resulting from the individual experience of the respondents and, consequently, the importance to their personal learning. I would like to define what teachers take into consideration when describing their experiences, and in which ways these are conceptualized (see Kansanen et al., 2000) as well as what the source of said conceptualisations could be i.e. the titular **essence** that shapes lifelong learning.

*What does the experience of being a teacher teach you?
An attempt at reconstructing teachers' reasoning*

From an analysis of the material, I established three types of narrative schema, defining the way teachers understand their role in the dimension of describing the nature of the experience that built this understanding. Identification of the schema was possible by analysing the content of the interviews aiming to compare the contexts within which the statements were situated. In a technical sense, the material, in the form of a text transcription, was organised and structured following the steps of:

- a) Highlighting the topics raised in the conversation inspired by the question “What do you learn from the experience of being a teacher?”;
- b) Condensing the text – assigning fragments of a statement to the thematic areas distinguished as a result of the conversation;
- c) Isolating contexts from utterances;
- d) Comparing the meaning of contexts in one statement;
- e) Comparing the type of contexts between cases / biographies and selecting the specificity of the narrative (see Jurgiel-Aleksander, 2013).

Throughout the interviews the ways of describing teaching experience were always based around topics such as: teaching, the status of the teacher, the public image of the teacher, however, their use in individual statements served other purposes. In the first type of narration, the method of describing the teaching experience revealed the phenomenon of teacher's helplessness and how it originates, in the second type it exemplified the importance of routine in the everyday life of the school and the teacher, and in the third type – served to see the meaning of teaching work in correcting and modifying one's own practice related to teaching a given subject. This revealed the teaching conceptualisations of their professional experience and how it fits into the dynamics and nature of their lifelong learning.

(A) The experience of being a teacher described in the context of a lack of a sense of influence on the state of education

In this type of narrative, the experience of being a teacher is described in the language of the inability to influence the state of education in its various dimensions. Describing their everyday life, teachers emphasise that they do not decide about the choice of the content of education (only about their order), nor about the conditions under which this process takes place and on what principles. Therefore, over time, a climate of general discouragement begins to prevail at work. In addition, the progressive bureaucracy and the poor prestige of the profession affect the image of the teacher as a person who easily submits to the prevailing conditions and not only agrees to them but is disinterested in fighting for their own better position. This, in turn, causes students to associate their

educators' lack of "resourcefulness" with their general lack of aspiration and intrinsic motivation:

I entered the profession at the end of the 90's, everyone told me then that working in a school was not a good choice, but I persisted and went on to teach in a high school. I turned out preparing young people for final exams, and later also adults, because teachers did not want to come to work on Saturday. At the time, I thought that the director appreciated me for this and that is why ... I quickly learned to stop doing it. **After I became an appointed teacher, I saw that all my energy was focused on paperwork, and not on what it should be.** Later, another disappointment came, with pay raises at an embarrassing level. The free market on one hand, and no motivation on the other, first they tell you that you have to invest in yourself, do courses, post-graduate studies, and then it doesn't matter at all when it comes to your salary. I've always wanted to be a teacher, and now I'd love to change that. These students show that you are lame in life because you teach biology and earn pennies, yet you have educated a large group of doctors. This is another paradox. (I/W/25)³

Performing top-down tasks, often ones that are overly bureaucratic as well as the inability to use one's real competences in the education process, among others due to student's lack of motivation to learn or the lack of teaching resources, make teaching one great struggle. Only occasionally in critical situations (such as a pandemic) is it socially appreciated:

Until recently, it seemed to me that this virus is a professional curse, but now I think it's good that parents learned what it means to teach, on their own skin. They see how young people get tired and now even more. They are stuck with one another and with tutoring over the phone and on zoom, they did not even have private lessons before, now they have to. And I always have to put something into those heads, often empty and without abilities and willingness, I just have to and no one helps me and refuses to believe that it is not always possible without real scientific aids, maps, using modern software. When I see those old chairs, the lack of interest on the part of the students, but also the headmaster, it makes me feel weak. (X/W/20)

The educational authorities have their part in creating the climate of helplessness for teachers thanks to the publicly preserved image of the school, which a priori meets all the expectations of the student and the parent, without considering the conditions in which these expectations would be fulfilled and without the participation of teachers in determining them. As a result, an image of the teacher's work was created, which resembles a self-propelled machine that performs programmed repetitive activities, and its effectiveness is measured by whether it works flawlessly, and not what the actions are for:

And the public opinion as well. When there were strikes, we were criticised, what do we want? Then we always hear about the mission, about pride, and when it comes to what society feels like, that their kids are educated in a poor school and by a teacher without any motivation, it

³ Roman numerals I-XV – signify the interview numbers, W or M – means woman (W) or man (M), numbers refer to teaching tenure (in years).

would be best if the teacher themselves would clean up in that school – it would even suit parents. And so, we send grades through an online system, we are available all the time, we improve the tests, we inform about the grades immediately. **Sometimes I feel like I have opened a massage parlor and I massage everyone and check if they are satisfied. It all depends on the strength in your hands and not on your motivation, abilities or willingness.** (XII/W/20)

Teachers feel lonely in their struggles with everyday life, they feel a lack of substantive support from the authorities, colleagues, parents, but also criticise the model according to which they were educated as “not anchored in school life”:

Let's not kid ourselves, when you have to face something, **you are still left alone with it.** With a difficult student, with a demanding parent, with a differently thinking inspector, with the headmaster – an office clerk who forgot what it's like to be a teacher. You have to know this otherwise its unbearable, because they fed you with some ideals in college but it in fact works differently. The sooner you notice it, the better for you. I went through all these trainings on different students, their specific needs, but then you are left alone with it, you write some corrective programs, the headmaster ticks the box that it has been checked, writes a report and that's where it ends – and you are the one left with this student. (VII/W/16)

They feel that they are ignored by every political authority in their professional biography, and they evaluate the actions of the rulers as based on forcing change and not promoting it professionally:

And these politicians ... keep telling us what to do and how to think. Once, one of the ministers after the reforms threatened us with a cane, arguing that we should teach writing, reading, give the student a driving license, and that should be enough for everyone. Then there were attempts to reform how gymnasiums came to be and it was well seen that the teachers were educating themselves, we even got used to the fact that we had to handle huge amounts of material for exams and tests. Now the most important thing is that the student should not learn that people can live very differently, although the students themselves know it well from life, we should convince them to the only correct version of patriotism and prevent students from giving up religion lessons. **Suddenly, as a teacher, I have to stop thinking, recite definitions and silence students' difficult questions.** If I do not submit to this, I can always count on controls from the board of trustees, the director may have a problem, etc. You can only count on the fact that this authority will change like the previous ones. (II/W/15)

In this schema of the teaching story about one's own experience, there is a feeling of not having any influence on the shape of education and on strengthening the social and economic status of this profession. This kind of helplessness is the key to diagnosing the teacher's situation. It consists of the fact that in his activities related to teaching, solving didactic and behavioural problems, he feels lonely, and he looks for the sources of his powerlessness in the outside world – including in the absence of conditions for success, lack of good infrastructure, lack of parents' interest in their own children, students' low cultural and educational capital. Long-term reproduction of this state is part of the teacher's functioning and, as a result, leads to his acceptance. This kind of helplessness is produced and sustained by power – as a kind of desired attitude that

involves uncritically accepting, embracing and carrying out its plans. To simplify, we can say that we are dealing here with the following pattern: if you want to stay in the profession, you must recognize the feeling of helplessness as a state that will accompany you constantly, you cannot count on social recognition or dialogue with the authorities, you will be accompanied by loneliness in taking didactic and educational decisions. The most important thing is that you are able to meet the demands of the authorities and the expectations of parents manifested in the language of clients and to get rid of your own reflective attitude – if you still have one.

(B) The experience of being a teacher described in the context of optimizing the activities of the school as an efficient organization

The second type of narrative is strongly dominated by the **language of fulfilling the requirements and obligations** resulting from the functioning of the school as an institution, and above all those determined by the implementation of the curriculum. This work is accompanied by a teacher's routine action plan that is launched from scratch every day and requires a lot of energy to perform. This type of struggle has no potential for changing or for a "revolution", it is related to maintaining the current status quo and has been inscribed by teachers in the school's culture and in the predictability of its activities:

I appreciate a certain steady rhythm in the operation of the school. Requirements, exams, clear definitions of what the student should do, what we should learn. I have a lot of good examples when students reached contests and learned in the traditional way. They listened to the teacher, did their homework and got into college – and that's the point. You can see that students are changing, the parents are also different than ten years ago, more focused on defending their children, and the point is that we and the school should be something constant, unchanging, a place of reference. It is often said that school is boring, but you also have to know how to be bored... (XI/M/25)

The **metaphor of the school as a production line** works perfectly here, which signals the repetition of the teacher's daily activities with a view to producing good teaching results. It is synonymous with teaching success and a valuable building block for a good image of the teacher outside of the school:

We are still fighting with the programme in hand. We are racing for everything to succeed, for the students to pass their exams, final exams. We can see that it is sometimes impossible, but we roll up our sleeves and fight. **Lessons, textbooks, readings, tests – and all this non-stop. In the end a report card. It's like standing on a production line.** Now, that the students have passed their final Matura exam, I felt that it was worth working so hard. (VI/M/24)

And although sometimes there comes a moment of doubt, it is the result of a disturbed individual action plan focused on the effect of education due to the lack of the

expected competences of the student, rather than a doubt that is intended to undermine the sense of the work so far:

Being a teacher is about constantly coming to terms with the demands I make of my students. I teach computer science and English and the students differ. **I have to adapt to their abilities, otherwise I won't be able to do anything.** I feel like I am constantly lowering the requirements, and I work in a good school, where students come from intellectual families. I think there is some general discouragement, and I have to motivate them because otherwise they will not do anything, but when I do well, the final exam is a reward for my effort. (IX/M/12)

Complying with the standard action plan ensures the effective functioning of the organisation which is the school, not only allowing for but also forcing rivalry between teachers. The respondents are aware of the change in the quality of relationships between teachers. They explain this change with the common attitude towards achieving individual success as a need of modern middle-level employees and for the purpose of optimising the institution's activities, which is already present in various work environments, and has now become part of the school's work culture:

I feel that I keep on struggling with something lately. With parents – explaining that their children are not the way they think they are, parents imagine that lie, cheat and do not want to work. With a director who wants to please the board of trustees and talks only nonsense, sometimes with colleagues who do not even want to understand that we have to support each other and not compete with one another. When I started working 30 years ago, it was the norm to help a young teacher, **now everyone comes and leaves as soon as possible once school ends for the day. Now your profession is only your business, because the most important thing is being evaluated, and the need to have stars and teacher celebrities in schools is huge.** (V/W/30)

Any proposed top-down changes (by the ministry) are rather treated as an obstacle that appears on the path of teachers and prevents the achievement of the goal of implementing the curriculum using existing methods and achieving a meaningful place in school rankings:

I do not trust any reformers; they have never brought anything good. Most often they ruin what is already working well. Being a teacher has taught me that you have to do your own thing so that students pass their exams and get into college. Everything then works somehow. And so, again, looking through teaching programs, textbooks, the core curriculum – I have less and less energy and time for it. And this will not change the school and the student. Wasting my time while the curriculum and exams are waiting. (XIII/W/21)

It is not difficult to notice that the experiences described by teachers – in this schema – have a clear institutional setting. Teachers speak here from the position of a member of a specific organisation, which is the school. It has its own action plan, it has its own description of effective influence on the student, it has success indicators in the form of good teaching results, it is familiar with the mechanisms of internal

competition between students and teachers. If you want to be a good teacher and at the same time build your image of a professional on the outside, you must obey these rules.

(C) The experience of being a teacher described in the context of seeking individual effective teaching practice

Characteristic in this narrative is the language describing the various activities of the teacher, thanks to which he has a sense of real influence on what is happening at school. It is mainly about improving and mastering one's own teaching practice, continuous improvement of the profession. Its scope includes analysing the teaching content of subjects so that they are updated with relevant knowledge in the area of the scientific discipline to which they relate to as well ensuring that students "receive" modern teaching in terms of content and form:

What I've learned over the years is that I have to keep telling myself that what I'm doing makes sense. **Sometimes I manage to convince myself that there is still some sense in this work, like discovering an interesting student, or explaining difficult phenomena in my physics class or finding a common language with students.** But in this core curriculum, it's hard to find anything really important. I teach physics, but I know that what I teach is already in the past. The programme does not allow me to do modern physics with its discoveries, sometimes I manage to smuggle in modern content. (III/M/12)

I don't know if you've watched the lessons available on public television during the lockdowns. Everyone was outraged by the way these lessons were conducted by teachers selected for this programme. I heard that schools are modern now and that no one teaches in the way these TV programmes showed and that the authorities are creating this image on purpose to discourage the public from teachers who go on strike. **Meanwhile, in my school, lessons do look like the ones on TV. We teach what an ostrich skeleton looks like, we disassemble Mickiewicz's text into parts, breaking it down into words that the students do not understand, we open the blackboard and, turned away from the students, equations speaking in code. It is interesting that, as well-educated teachers, we pretend that this is what education is all about today.** (IV/W/15).

I like teaching very much, and I teach English. I am privileged because most of the students want to learn this language, and textbooks and aids are also interesting. The English have mastered making textbooks for foreigners and we use these resources. **Most of my students have extra after-school lessons also for subjects, even the best students do so. I know perfectly well that I cannot take full credit for their skills, the same goes for other subjects, but everyone on the teaching council pretends that it is the result of the school's work, and most of all probably the headmaster...** (VIII/W/5)

It's good that I'm a chemist. Fortunately, chemistry is free from discussions on what we should teach as is not the case within history or literature... it is an exact science. The most important thing is to be able to convey difficult topics in a short time. I do demonstrations of experiments, reactions and what is the most difficult is to teach students a lot in a short amount of time. I look for various methods of transferring knowledge and this is the most important thing in my work. (XII/M/12)

Every morning I have to remind myself that I am doing something important, that I teach mathematics and that my reward is that I have an influence on the education of engineers,

architects, specialists in various important professions. I don't expect my situation to change. I am happy how the students I tutor cope with difficult tasks. (XIII/M/10)

I teach computer science, it is important nowadays, for those who want to mean something and earn a lot. These are the jobs of the future. Students know it and want to learn, I have no problems with enforcing the requirements. (III/M/12)

Constantly working on ones methodical skills, improving them, gaining academic expert knowledge, sharing your own didactic experiences with other teachers lead to building the status of a professional and strengthening individual self-esteem. It is also a lifeline in moments of doubt:

I have experience of being in a network of such crazy teachers who know how to teach, it's a large group and the number of us is constantly growing. We exchange ideas on how to teach in an engaging way and process knowledge, we write lesson plans, we talk about what we are doing and what does not work. Students are different now than 10 years ago, they are constantly online, they have constant access to new things, they know languages. We cannot pretend that note taking and asking questions is enough, that the methodology we have learned works today, because it does not work. We have leaders among us who show us new methods. Unfortunately, modern pedagogy has failed us. I undertook postgraduate studies, various courses taught by people with university degrees, and decided it was a waste of time. They present some old bits of theory or talk about things that are irrelevant to us as if they were living in a different world. And we really need knowledge about the student's motivation, how to encourage them to read boring mandatory readings, how to speak in a modern language about ancient history, how to prepare for exams more effectively. Now I learn mainly from other practicing teachers. (XIV/W/15)

Such an attitude based on improving their own practice based on the most up-to-date knowledge and experience of leaders and experts means that in the field of education management, these teachers also require not only competences resulting from the knowledge of the management process, but also of ethical conduct. That is why they are critical of politicians influencing education in Poland:

I lost hope that politicians, the minister of education, would finally appreciate our role. I have been teaching for over 20 years and I have never had the feeling that the minister is on our side and understood what was happening in schools. Everyone comes and wants to manually change something – like telling you to write a new textbook, or to dress students in uniforms and spy on them after school or tell teachers to come to work during the holidays or between the holidays and the new year. I'm tired of this. I require real education from the minister, not make belief education, only then would there be hope that he'd read something about schools, would find various experts who know something about schools and would refer to scientific arguments in this field. It's as if they do not feel responsible for what they represent, I do more than they do because I do not pretend that I am doing something. At least I teach Polish and I do it as best I can, I pass on knowledge and I try to make it attractive and for the students to know something from literature, while politicians do nothing, most often they have no idea about modern school – yet they get to decide about it. (XV/W/20)

In this type of narrative, we are dealing with descriptions of individual teaching practices, which constitute a kind of equity that teachers have at their disposal and, at the same time, thanks to which they gain the status of a good teacher. The starting point for shaping this status is the rank of the subject taught and the development of an effective teaching method. These guarantee a sense of meaning in regards to work and become a good building block for the teacher's internal motivation. You are a good teacher when you are able to "convey" difficult content in an interesting way, expand the student's knowledge and focus on latest developments in your subject area. You are a good teacher because you constantly work hard, check tests, improve students' work, set requirements, notify parents about their children's achievements. This functional description of the nature of teaching is meant to determine the involvement of school in everyday life and the fulfilment of one's duties at a high level. The critical reference to the description of politicians' work that appears in the background is a way to show an example of a dishonest approach and disregard for duties that comprise a role, regardless of the profession.

The representations of the ways in which the experience of being a teacher are described, as presented in the above material, can be summarised as follows:

Table 1. Conceptualisations of teacher's experience

Topics brought up by teachers in interviews describing their experiences	Teacher's experience defined by lack of influence on the state of education	Teacher's experience defined by optimisation of the school's functions as an efficient organisation	Teacher's experience defined by seeking effective individual teaching practices
Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - shows as dealing with authorities, students, parents - bureaucratic machine - takes place in a climate of reluctance and isolation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identified by realising the curriculum - defined through the prism of good results as a source of teaching success, including school success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identified by transferring modern content, using modern didactics
Teacher's status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identified by teacher's economic standing - identified by ignoring teachers by authorities on various levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - dependant on the results of school evaluations - dependant on putting in effort to compete with teachers within a school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - dependant on the subject being taught - formed within a school by constant improvement of teaching practice
Teacher's public image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - teachers are a group that works without internal motivation, unable to fight for better working conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - dependant on public educational results (school rankings) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a teacher's rank depends on the subject they teach

Source: own analysis.

How do teaching experiences relate⁴ to lifelong learning?

The three reconstructed narratives above outline three images of the teacher. The first is that of a hard-working person, left alone in solving everyday problems, systemically discouraged from work by excessive bureaucracy, control, lack of opportunities for real promotion and lack of professional support. The second is the image of a person who cares about the efficient functioning of the school as an institution that has long been adopting the rules of the free market and trying to translate them into rules for the world of education. The third is an image of a person who sees the meaning of his own work in individual practice and its modification. Taking the perspective of P. Alheit (2018) about learning resulting from one's own experiences embedded in their biography, it should be stated that in the three schemes of experiencing being a teacher discussed here, learning is directed at shaping the processes of adaptation, because "you always have to adjust to the school, to the student, to power, to the current conditions". This type of adaptation is a derivative of seeing the world and the relationships that prevail in it. In the world of the interviewees, it is the authorities that do not play according to the rules of the game (because they can), students and parents are clients who need to be satisfied, and teachers must demonstrate good results in teaching due to the interests of the school and the fact that they are constantly "held accountable by public opinion". We are dealing here with a situation in which the teacher is always subordinated to authority, the market, parents, and the subject they are teaching. Paradoxically, the ones who feel the most helpless and try to define the mechanisms of producing this helplessness that are external to them – iEW probably the most aware of their own situation of being an instrument used to shape the culture of submission (narration A), while others (narratives B and C) seek development under market conditions and escape into teaching as a substitute for their own autonomy, self-determination.

Returning to P. Alheit's (2018) terminology, the **temporal** dimension of biographical experience in this article indicates the tension between what may be the reason for the reproductive nature of the fulfillment of the teacher's role, if the social and economic condition of the teacher has not changed for years (as in the narrative of A), and the way in which to reorganise the educational process so that the school functions as an efficient organisation (narrative B) and for working in it to bring satisfaction to the teacher (narrative C). One could say that the fundamental point that has been revealed here is the answer to the question of **where we as teachers are heading towards here and now?** The answer to this question is in fact formulated at the level of the teachers' acceptance of the vision of the school as programmed to perform the

⁴ I use the verb "resonate" intentionally and in line with H. Rosa's (2020) understanding of a relational mode, in which subject and world meet and transform each other.

same machine-like activities (narration A), or the school acting as a production line (narration B) and showing efforts to modify the teaching technique (narrative C) or at the level of manifesting dissatisfaction with the lack of good working conditions (narrative A). The dimension of **contextualising** (institutionalising) the biographical experience of the surveyed teachers shows the phenomenon of the **politicisation and marketisation** of education. Teachers directly state that they have never been equals to the rulers, that they must implement top-down orders, which become political instructions (narratives A and B) and perhaps that is why they became partner to the market in a more or less conscious way (narratives A, B, C), because at least they understand the rules of the game (competition, hierarchy of competences, focus on visible indicators of effectiveness in education), to which they comply. The **reflective** dimension of teaching experiences as inscribed in the condition of modern man concerns the way of treating oneself and others. The analysed material reveals the mechanism of **building hierarchical relations** (between the rulers and teachers, teachers and students and parents, but also in the environment of the teachers themselves) as a cultural issue. This can be illustrated by the statement that the respondents (narratives A, B, C) can hardly imagine that these relations could look different.

Finally, a comment of a more general nature. Gert J. Biesta (2013) – a contemporary theorist of education writes that he is fed up with the language of “facilities”, “educational services”, “creating opportunities for the individual” in describing the learning of modern man, because it shows that it has been subordinated only to market strategies. It seems that this concept of market-oriented education has been well absorbed by the interviewed teachers and that they treat it both as a necessity and a lifeline in their biography. One can only hope that everyday life will force us, people of education, to ask ourselves at some point what it means for education to be ethically good and that we will do this sooner than we find out for ourselves that there is no one and nothing to care about anymore.

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