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PREVENTING AGGRESSION AT SCHOOL USING EDUCATIONAL TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

Abstract: The author, pointing to research results on the phenomenon of aggression among children and adolescents, postulates the need for schools to take more effective means to prevent aggression. She proposes using transactional analysis as a psychological theory and its application in education as a pedagogical practice. She discusses selected concepts connected with transactional analysis (Ego states, transactions, life positions, strokes, discounting, and passivity) and their links with the problem of aggression. She also shows how knowing these concepts may help teachers understand the roots of students' aggressive behaviour, respond adequately, and take preventive actions. This article is only an outline of the issue presenting the potential of educational transactional analysis as the basis of educators' and class teachers' pedagogical work, with particular emphasis on preventing aggression.

Keywords: preventing aggression at school, Educational Transactional Analysis, teachers' knowledge and self-awareness.

INTRODUCTION

For years aggression¹ in children and adolescents has been one of the most important pedagogical problems, quite often explored in social research and represented in scientific literature. However, despite the available knowledge and development of various ways of reducing and preventing aggressive behavior², these behaviours

¹ I understand aggression here as the act of being inflicted or intended for the purpose of harming another person / organism or oneself (Żygulski 1998, p. 1; Colman 2009, p. 13).

² These include both programs that require special training - e.g. Aggression Replacement Training (see e.g. Małkowska-Baranowska 2017) as well as publications containing proposals wi-

seem to be on the increase. For example, extensive comparative research by Krystyna Ostrowska and Janusz Surzykiewicz (2005, pp. 65-72) conducted in 1997 and 2003 with a group of over 1,600 pupils from various types of schools and regions in Poland shows that the number of aggressive behaviors in schools has increased, especially in terms of verbal aggression. 2/3 of the respondents in 2003 suffered verbal and over 1/3 physical aggression; nearly 16% of pupils were victims of teachers' aggression and violence. In turn, the latest report by We Give Children Strength Foundation (2018) from a survey conducted with 1,155 teenagers, indicates that 57% of respondents report they experience aggressive and violent behavior from their peers, 41% from close adults, and 16% admit to self-mutilation, i.e. acts of self-aggression (Włodarczyk, Makaruk, Michalak, Sajkowska 2018, pp. 7-8, 40 and others). These studies did not include the category of online aggression: various forms of cyberbullying (see Pyżalski 2009; Dyrła-Mularczyk, Pluciński 2017). In 2007, when the use of the network by children and young people was not as common as it is now, Łukasz Wojtasik (2009) in a research report for the Nobody's Children Foundation found that various types of verbal aggression (vulgar abuse, humiliation, ridicule, scaring, and blackmailing) were experienced by more than half of nearly 3,000 surveyed Internet users aged 12-17. Most probably, with the wider availability of new technologies and the decreasing age of their users³, this problem has only escalated.

There are many reasons for the prevalence of aggressive behavior in children and adolescents, i.a.:

1. the very essence of aggression as a psychologically multidimensional phenomenon, due to its forms (physical, verbal, symbolic, and sexual), types (emotional/impulsive, instrumental; reactive, proactive) and conditions that are addressed by a multitude of theories of aggression (see Żygulski 1998, p.1; Krahé 2006, pp. 31-49, 173-197; Kirwill 2004, pp. 14-19);
2. its social background: the impact of political, economic, and cultural factors on reducing or intensifying aggressive behaviors exhibited by individuals;
3. insufficient educational work focused on addressing and preventing aggression in educational institutions.

While educational authorities at various levels (from the ministry to the management of individual institutions) and class teachers do not have a direct impact on wider social phenomena and on the condition of families raising children, they

dely available to teachers and tutors (e.g. Portmann 1999; Guerin, Hennessy 2004; Zielińska 2012; Rogers 2014) or many programs focused on strengthening social and emotional competences that have preventive potential, e.g. developing empathy, improving communication and interpersonal relationships, creating a value system, coping with stress etc.

³ Research results (A. Bąk, 2015) show that 64% of 6-year-olds use mobile devices.

could take effective measures to reduce the severity of aggressive and violent behavior displayed by pupils both at school and outside if they were equipped with appropriate psychological, sociological and pedagogical knowledge. Many years of neglect in educational practice in this area result not only in the growing popularity of the Internet “hate” among young people, but also in the behaviors of adult school graduates: from domestic violence⁴, inter-group conflicts, hate speech against all “others” and those who have a different opinion, to acts of terror (see e.g. Kofta 2017; Skarżyńska 2017). At the same time, it is the broadly understood education, with the school still being its cornerstone, that we hope will stop the aggression destructive to entire societies.

One can blame the school as a social institution for failing to work reliably and effectively on shaping attitudes and behaviors that reduce the level and scope of aggression. The reasons for this negligence include: primacy of teaching (see Konarzewski 1992, pp. 296-302), a covert education program with inscribed symbolic violence (see e.g. Karkowska, Czarnecka 1994; Falkiewicz-Szult 2006), a poor system of educating would-be teachers that does not equip them with sufficient pedagogical competencies (see e.g. Sokołowska-Dzioba, Pankowska 2007). But instead of discussing the shortcomings it is better to focus on what can be done to change this unfavorable situation.

In this text I present aggression from the perspective of educational transactional analysis (ETA). This is one of the practical fields where transactional analysis (TA) is applied, apart from psychotherapy, counseling, management, etc. TA is a psychological theory developed in the late 1950s by Eric Berne, to this day creatively developed by his successors in many countries around the world, including Poland (see Stewart, Joines 2016, pp. 390-404; Jagieła 2018, pp. 272-278)⁵. Transactional analysis is particularly useful in teaching practice for several reasons:

⁴ For example, studies by J. Włodarczyk (2017) show that although acceptance of physical violence towards children decreased in the years 2005-2017, still as many as 49% of adults condone the use of corporal punishment by parents.

⁵ Individual fields of application (psychotherapy, management, consulting, education) are linked by references made by researchers or practitioners to the assumptions of transactional analysis as a scientific theory, and are divided by the specificity of goals, methods, recipients of the activities, the nature of the relationship between the entities, training, and obtaining certificates (Gregoire, 1998, pp. 311-320).

The two terms are often used interchangeably ‘Transactional analysis in education’ and ‘educational transactional analysis’, although there are attempts to specify their meanings. This first term is very broad - it covers all activities related to transactional analysis implemented in broadly understood education (theoretical applications, research, training, goals and methods, etc.), while the latter refers primarily to educational practice based on theoretical findings of TA, but closely related to didactic and educational goals, pedagogical theories, and working conditions in educational institutions (Pankowska, 2012; Newton, 2016).

1. it focuses on the development and possibilities of changing the individual, because it is rooted in the humanistic psychology and in philosophical assumptions which can be summarised in three short slogans: *People are OK. People can think, People can change* (Stewart, Joines 2016, pp.8-10);
2. its concepts clearly explain how people function, especially in interpersonal relationships;
3. it provides people involved in pedagogical activities with the knowledge, diagnostic tools, and methods that can be used in practice (see e.g. Jagieła 1997; 2018; Emmerton, Newton 2004; Pankowska 2012).

Therefore, it can also be successfully used for preventing aggression (see e.g. Barrow, Bradshaw, Newton 2001; Wye 2004; Edwards 2006, pp. 159-187; Świątek 2017). In this article, I give examples to show how, using the theoretical foundations of transactional analysis, coherent and consistent programs for preventing aggression at school can be built.

Selected concepts of transactional analysis and preventing aggression at school
Knowing individual concepts of transactional analysis can help teachers:

1. first, in interpreting students' aggressive behavior,
2. secondly, in taking preventive measures,
3. thirdly, in the choice of responses that will prevent aggressive behaviors and / or will support its victims.

In the following part of the paper, I will present a brief review of literature on aggression, primarily in the context of prevention, with references to selected concepts of transactional analysis. I will try to show how knowing Ego states, transactions, life positions, strokes, discounting and passivity⁶ can help class teachers understand the essence of students' aggression.

1. EGO STATES AND TRANSACTIONS

According to transactional analysis the personality structure consists of three Ego states, i.e. sets of feelings, thoughts and behavior patterns, referred to as the state of the Child, Parent, and Adult. The first two are almost entirely shaped in the first years of life and are a record of childhood experiences, emotions, knowledge of the world, and behaviors. The Child state is associated with the natural needs and reactions to reality characteristic of the early stages of development, and the Parent state reflects the observed and assimilated behaviors, emotions and way of

⁶ Due to the word limit, I skip references to other important concepts, such as life scripts, time structuring, and interpersonal games.

thinking of people who are significant to the individual - mainly parents or closest caregivers. In turn, the Adult state is an expression of conscious and autonomous responses to reality, and it is shaped during the cognitive development of the individual. This state encompasses rational, logical actions, and behaviors appropriate to the “here and now” (Berne 1998, p. 29; Stewart, Joines 2016, pp. 13-26).

The structure of the Ego states is shaped and individualized by specific experiences. Each of the states performs specific functions that are interpreted by transactional educational analysts as specific forms of behavior (Temple 2004; Jagieła 2017). The Parent, consisting of two main parts: Protective Parents and Controlling / Normative / Critical Parent, is responsible for all behaviors associated with giving protection, showing care and empathic understanding (the first part), and with setting boundaries, determining and assessing proper and improper behaviour, and sometimes for dominating and subordinating others (the second part). The Child consists of the Natural / Free Child and the Adapted Child. On the one hand, it expresses the needs, emotions, and the creative potential of the individual; on the other, habitual responses acquired during the socialization process, which may indicate compliance with socially accepted norms or be a symptom of resistance and opposition to external orders (the so-called Rebellious Child). The Adult state deals with problems and performs purposeful activity based on rationality and conscious decisions.

Educational transactional analysis differentiates between positive and negative forms of behavior of each Ego state. While positive behaviours, if they are appropriate to the situation, usually bring benefits to both the “actor” and their interaction partners, the negative emanations of the Ego states do not. The Normative Parent takes the form of a Critical Parent, which means dominant, excessively demanding, strict, autocratic, and sometimes aggressive behavior. Negative aspects of the Caring Parent mean overprotection limiting the partner’s independence. In the state of the Natural Child, individuals usually focus on selfish interests, without taking into account the rights and needs of other people, and the forms of expressing emotions become uncontrolled and incompatible with socially accepted norms. In turn, an Adapted Child can exhibit negative behaviour in the form of excessive submission or a hostile and destructive rebellion (Stewart, Joines 2016, pp. 27-40; Pankowska, 2010, pp. 41-46).

Knowing that a person can activate an Ego state at a given time with characteristic behavioral patterns makes it easier to understand the motives and goals of this person’s actions - including students’ aggressive behavior.

Different types of aggression can originate in different Ego states, and it is believed that only the Adult state is free from them⁷. In the Natural Child state

⁷ This assumption is based on the view of most transaction analysts that state the Adult is emotionless (see Pankowska 2010, pp. 32-34). However, if we consider the proactive / instrumental

people can be aggressive when their needs are blocked - this is a reactive behavior, motivated by anger and frustration at the obstacle. Hostile aggression, proactive or retaliatory, which is most difficult for educators, is typical for the Rebellious Child. Controlling Parent's aggressive behaviors include expressions of anger, indignation, and violent behaviors when one person wants to force another into submission. The Caregiving Parent, in its negative aspects, is usually the source of covert aggression, which through overprotection limits other people's autonomy. These last two types of aggression are more often characteristic of adults because of their social roles as parents, teachers, and pedagogues.

If the educator or class teacher is aware of the origin of the pupil's aggressive behavior, they can react adequately to the situation: try to help the pupil meet their needs and teach them how to deal with anger, when aggression comes from the Natural Child, or take other actions, usually more complex and varied depending on the individual case, when dealing with aggression from the state of the Rebellious Child. The latter should be preceded by an in-depth diagnosis, because aggressive behavior patterns usually originate in negative experiences from earlier developmental periods and / or difficult life situation of the student in the family or in the school environment. Unfortunately, the teacher must often react immediately, and here knowledge of transactions, the basic element of communication theory in transactional analysis, may be useful.

In other theories of communication in interpersonal relations, the sender and the recipient are treated as a whole i.e. as persons, whereas in transactional analysis interactions happen between the state of the sender and the state of the recipient. Two basic types of transactions⁸ are complementary and crossed transactions. In the first a transactional stimulus (message) is sent from a sender's specific Ego state to the recipient's specific Ego state which then forms a response. There can be parallel transactions when the stimulus and the response relate to the same Ego states, e.g. the Parent of the sender and recipient, or the Adult / Child of both interlocutors. Complementary transactions are another type, when the stimulus is directed to a different Ego state than the state of the sender, but the response follows an expected pattern. It happens most often in the relationship between the Protective Parent and the Natural Child, and between the Controlling Parent and the Adapted Child (Subordinate or Rebellious). According to Berne's so-called *I rule of communication*, in complementary transactions interactions are uninterrupted and can follow any given pattern for any length of time. On the other hand, crossed transactions consist in answering from a different state than the

definition of aggression, which often takes the form of „cold” planned, targeted behavior, (Kirwill 2004, pp. 15-19), then the activity of the Adult state cannot be excluded.

⁸ I do not discuss ulterior transactions in this paper.

sender expected, which is related to a disruption in communication - interruption or change of its character, according to the *II rule of communication* (Rogoll 2010, pp. 34-40; Stewart, Joines 2016, pp. 81-88; Jagieła 2012, pp. 269-270).

The teacher, dealing with the student's aggressive behavior, which is a kind of message from a particular Ego state, can react in a way that maintains this behavior or prompts the student to change it. In such a situation, adults commonly make a mistake and respond from the Controlling Parent state by expressing criticism, exhortation, moralizing, ordering or punishing, which usually keeps the pupil in the state of the Rebellious Child - as a state complementary to that of the Controlling Parent. Ostrowska and Surzykiewicz (2005, p. 88) confirm this thesis in their study showing that students are most aggressive to teachers who ridicule and humiliate them, who are vindictive and malicious, strict in assessments and criticism. Revealing negative aspects of the Controlling Parent by the teacher in response to inappropriate student behavior is therefore a simple way to escalate aggressive behavior in both interlocutors, similarly to the Rebellious Child - Rebellious Child transaction, characteristic of the most vicious and emotional quarrels. To calm the situation the teacher can cross transactions from the Adult state, which will prevent aggression escalation on both sides and will give the pupil a chance to transition to the Adult state. Usually this is not easy to do, so it may be effective to react first from the state of the Protective Parent (showing care and making it easier for the student to activate the state of the Natural Child), and then to the Adult state to calmly and effectively solve the problem that is the source of the student's hostile behavior. If aggression originates in the Natural Child, it is sometimes useful to communicate from the Natural Child state (e.g. by using humor or identifying with the student's unmet need), and then to cross the transaction from the Adult state. Striving to activate the Adult state in a person behaving aggressively is crucial, because only in the Adult-Adult relationship is it possible to effectively solve problems and conflicts and work on a permanent change of aggressive attitudes and behavior.

2. LIFE POSITIONS AND STROKES

Life position is another important concept in transactional analysis. It is a generalized attitude towards oneself, other people and the world that can be expressed in four bilateral relations: *I am OK - You are OK*, *I am OK - You are not OK*, *I am not OK - You are OK*, *I am not OK - You are not OK*. If there are more individual or collective entities, it may take many different forms, e.g. *I am OK - you are OK - He / is not OK*; *We are not OK - You are not OK - They are OK*, *I am OK - You*

are OK - reality is not OK etc. (Berne 1998, pp. 115-122; Harris 2009, pp. 65-88; James, Jongeward 1994, pp. 62-65).

Relating the knowledge of life positions to the problem of aggression, it is clearly visible that only the first position *I am OK - you are OK* does not contain any aggressive potential. The position *I am not OK - you are OK* may lead to self-aggression or taking on the role of the victim; while other positions, which are carriers of negative beliefs about other people, may trigger aggressive and violent actions. The last position, in which the individual assesses both themselves and others negatively, can be the source of the most destructive behavior since the individual disregards the consequences to themselves.

Teachers' recognition of students' life positions will help them identify pupils of both sexes who may be more inclined to exhibit aggressive behaviours than others, and take up systematic work on changing their attitudes towards the position *I am OK - you are OK*. These may be actions directed on the one hand at strengthening students' self-esteem, and on the other, on shaping attitudes towards other people: teaching respect and acceptance, tolerance, empathy, eliminating harmful stereotypes, etc.

In addition to the so-called existential, general life positions which are quite strongly fixed and most often felt and expressed, people can temporarily take on any other life position - the so-called behavioral positions. They are changeable and situation-based (Stewart, Joines 2016, pp. 152-160). For example, if a person who usually has a positive attitude towards themselves and others is unfairly criticised, and cannot fulfill a need or experiences failure, they can change their life position to *I am / I am not OK - You are not OK*. Changing the position to a negative one can also happen in response to another person's reluctance, which is why it is so important that - regardless of the student's behavior - the teacher be able to maintain his/her *I am OK - You are OK* position towards the student all the times. People can change their behavioral position under the influence of others, not only to a negative one, but also to a positive one, eg. seeing the kindness of the other person, they can move from the position *You are not OK to I am OK - You are OK*. And the position *I am OK - You / He / She / They are OK* is the best measure to prevent aggressive behavior.

Therefore, the teacher's life position is of key importance (both life position and awareness of one's own behavioral positions in a given situation) as well as the ability to maintain or possibly quickly return to the position *I am OK - You are OK*, which involves controlling one's own emotions and their expression. Research shows that most teachers have a positive life position (at least declaratively), but their second most frequent is the position *I am OK - you are not OK*, especially in difficult situations that occur in relationships with students (Pankowska 2010 , pp.

261-266). Fortunately, the latter attitude can be changed, if the teacher is aware of their own feelings and reactions, and has the motivation to change.

Life positions are shaped, i.a., under the influence of the so-called strokes⁹. These are expressions of being noticed and valued by others which satisfy an important need defined by Berne as hunger for being noticed and recognized, or hunger for support (Berne 1998, pp. 40-41; Jagieła 2012, p. 76). If someone received a lot of positive strokes in the form of care, protection, interest, acceptance, respect and recognition from their loved ones during childhood, they had the chance to develop not only the position *I am OK*, but also *you / you / other people are OK* because they experienced a lot of good from them. In turn, if someone experienced significant strokes related to disrespecting their needs, criticism, neglect or the so-called belittling i.e. behavior aimed at humiliating and deprecating someone as a person, violating their dignity and subjectivity, then they will probably develop one of the negative life positions (see James, Jongeward, 1994, pp. 72-89; Stewart, Joines 2016, p. 20). 96-106).

Constitutive traits of aggressive behavior include: negative strokes given to others or to oneself - in the case of self-aggression (i.e. unfair criticism, expressions of dislike, ignoring and exclusion), and discounting (i.e. insults, intimidation, and physical attacks). They are a source of unpleasant and sometimes painful emotions, which often induce the victims to retaliate (causing an escalation of aggressive behavior on both sides, mainly from the state of the Rebellious Child) or to believe that it he/she *is not OK* and give up (Submissive Child) suffering serious psychological consequences. People experiencing the so-called peer violence (bullying, mobbing) characteristic of the school subculture may experience such consequences. Peer violence is characterized by instrumental nature of aggressive behavior, disproportions in the strength of the attacker/s and the victim/s, repeatability of attacks, constant intimidation, escalation of forms and intensity (Kirwill 2004, pp. 9-10).

Transactional analysis also draws attention to the phenomenon of collecting so-called *trading stamps*. They are an accumulation of negative feelings that, under certain circumstances, are expressed through violent attacks of aggression or self-destruction. "Redeeming" stamps of anger, rage, sense of harm, injustice, helplessness or anxiety is a common cause of serious acts of aggression directed at others or at oneself e.g. suicidal attempts by victims of school mobbing (see James, Jongeward 1994, pp. 244-258) Rogoll 2010, pp. 56-62). Therefore, a very important element of preventing aggression is to teach students how to deal with unpleasant

⁹ There are many terms in the Polish literature that explain the English word stroke (Jagieła 2012, pp. 210-215).

emotions and express them in a peaceful way - from the Adult state or the positive state of a Natural Child, so that no trading stamps of anger and rage accumulate.

Teachers have no influence on the baggage of emotional experiences students take to school, but they can have an impact on: 1) how parents behave towards their children (to a limited degree and indirectly) by educating parents on the school premises, 2) the relationships in the class and pupils' attitudes towards one another by conducting consistent educational work, 3) their own behavior. The strokes that pupils receive at school from teachers will either confirm their belief that both themselves and other people *are OK*, or strengthen positions *I am not OK and / or You / They / Other people are not OK*. Class teachers, by providing students with positive strokes i.e. showing interest, acceptance, recognition, do not only act directly, passing on the message *you are OK*, but in such situations they are also behavior models expressing the life position *You are OK*. An important task is also to train students to give and receive positive strokes and assertively defend against devaluing from the position *I am OK - you are OK*, even if in a given situation the behavior of the devaluing person is unacceptable (Pankowska 2010, pp. 173-180).

3. DISCOUNTING AND PASSIVITY

The above discussed devaluing belongs to a broader category of phenomena called *discounting* in the transactional educational analysis. The concept of discounting (diminishing / belittlement) consists of ignoring, disregarding or minimizing certain aspects of oneself, other people or situations (Jagięła 2004, pp. 86-88; Pierzchała 2013, pp. 88-93). There may be several aspects of discounting associated with aggression at school. First of all, devaluing other people means diminishing their value and expressing a life position *You are not OK*. All forms of aggression, not only non-verbal and verbal, but also involving exclusion (relational aggression), fall into this category. In turn, some self-deprecating behaviors may be auto-aggressive and / or lead to such behaviors as a consequence of low self-esteem (see e.g. Pankowska 2008a, pp. 252-253). At the unconscious level, a compensation mechanism may also appear, which consists in the desire to gain an advantage over others by aggressively diminishing them in order to improve self-esteem (see, e.g., Barrow, Bradshaw, Newton, 2001, p. 59; Jagięła, 2004, pp. 86-88). This kind of behavior can be found at school between students, teachers and students, among teachers themselves, and in teachers' relations with the management and parents.

Discounting and aggression at school may be caused by disregarding the problem at various levels, leading to ignoring:

1. the problem of aggression when teachers / school leaders “do not notice” various types of violent and aggressive behavior or deny their occurrence, in the facility or in their own behavior (e.g. the teacher considers himself/herself harsh or firm and is unaware that he/she is aggressive towards students);
2. the meaning of the problem, i.e. downplaying the observed phenomena and recognizing them as “normal”, not requiring educational intervention (e.g. young people using vulgar language or fights between boys) or as incidental and harmless to the functioning of the school;
3. the possibility of solving the problem, which is based on the conviction that aggressive behavior of some students cannot be changed, because they are “inherently” aggressive, or that it is too complex a social problem to be dealt with at school;
4. personal capabilities of solving the problem, when teachers believe they do not have sufficient competencies or predispositions to deal with students’ aggressive behavior, or think that only parents are able to change their child’s behavior (see Newell, Jeffery 2002, pp. 103-106; Pankowska, 2010, pp. 180-182; Pierzchała 2013, pp. 88-93).

These forms of negligence, both in relation to relatively rare and not very intense manifestations of aggression, as well as serious problems of increasing violence in the school environment, lead to the escalation of negative phenomena and increase the psychological costs not only for victims of aggressive actions, but also the witnesses of violent behavior, and the perpetrators (see Guerin, Hennessy 2004, pp. 35-38; Urban 2012, pp. 56-73, 114-147). As another consequence of devaluing problems passive behaviors form and consolidate.

Passivity in transactional analysis consists in not taking responsibility for oneself, one’s own behavior, and life (Jagiela 2012, p. 141) and can manifest itself in four forms: passivity, over-adaptation, agitation and either: incapacitation or aggression (Pierzchała 2013, p. 104-108). The latter category - as a reaction to failure to try to solve the problem on one’s own is most obviously related to aggressive behavior at school. Pupils and teachers who, by devaluing problems, are unable to deal with them constructively, may resort to aggression which becomes a kind of “mask” of agency for the helplessness they feel. In addition, through acts of aggression, they draw other people’s attention to themselves, prompting others to propose solutions and take responsibility for their effect (as is the case with an aggressive student who is dealt with by parents, class teacher, pedagogue, other people or institutions).

However, other forms of passivity may also be related to the problem of aggression. Passivity, i.e. not doing anything to improve the situation, is conducive to

becoming a victim of peer or teacher's violence. In turn, incapacitation is associated with self-aggression, because it consists of causing - more or less consciously - some harm (e.g. injury, illness) to provoke others to take care of and solve the person's problem. Over-adaptation, which means excessive adaptation to the expectations of the environment, in order to avoid further belittlement on its part, may lead to imitation of aggressive behavior observed in the group or conformist adaptation to patterns dominating in the environment (e.g. not protecting the victim of violence or joining persecutors not to become the next victim of *bullying*). Even agitation, i.e. manifesting excessive, often senseless activity, to justify not taking action to overcome difficulties, can contribute to the increase in the level of aggression. Such a person experiences frustration resulting from not solving an important problem, and at the same time is constantly in a state of emotional tension, which can lead to aggressive reactions.

According to Jarosław Jagieła (1997, p. 33), passivity is one of the most common pathologies of the school that has a negative impact on the quality of its functioning in many areas, including the failure to cope with children's and adolescents' aggressive behaviours. Counteracting discounting and passivity at every level of the education system (authorities, specific institutions, and teachers) can be an indirect, but important - because it is multi-faceted - strategy of preventing aggression.

CONCLUSION

Transactional analysis, apart from providing knowledge about the formation and functioning of personality and interpersonal relations, formulates certain developmental goals. The most important thing is working on yourself to achieve autonomy. In transactional analysis, "being autonomous means managing yourself, determining your own destiny, taking responsibility for your own actions and feelings, and rejecting the wrong pattern of existence that is not related to life here and now" (James, Jongeward 1994, p. 337) An autonomous person characterized by consciousness, spontaneity and the ability to be intimate can not only responsibly manage his/her own life and achieve goals, but also do good in his/her environment (James, Jongeward 1994, pp. 337-350; Jagieła 2012, pp. 29-30). An autonomous individual, whose decisions result from the activity of a mature Adult state, manifesting the life position *I am OK - You / Other people - the world is OK*, having a sense of agency and responsibility, has no reason or need to resort to aggressive behavior.

Due to its positive, pro-developmental, and focused on achieving subjectivity properties educational transactional analysis can be a useful basis for creating a broadly understood educational program at school (see, e.g., Barrow, Bradshaw,

Newton 2001, pp. 104-123; Newton 2004, pp. 92-102; Pankowska 2010, pp. 200-211), as well as a theoretical and practical resource for solving specific pedagogical problems, such as aggression at school. Thanks to TA theory, its system of concepts and psychological mechanisms, teachers can:

1. understand and interpret students' (and their own) aggressive behavior taking into account its psychological reasons,
2. choose actions appropriate to the situation - from those proposed by transactional educational analysis or other concepts consistent with ETA assumptions;
3. use the tools proposed in the literature to diagnose Ego states, life positions, patterns of giving strokes, identifying games, etc. which helps to define the objectives of educational work not only in the field of prevention or counteracting aggression, but also in relation to the positive impact on the entire school culture (see Pankowska, 2008b; Stewart, Joines 2016, pp. 106-109);
4. develop a habit of constant self-reflection leading to the improvement of one's own pedagogical work, which is the essence of the attitude of a teacher-reflective practitioner.

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