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Version 2.0 of the individual style of conducting classes by an academic teacher in the context of contemporary changes and trends in education



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Introduction

The vast majority of contemporary students are people born after 1995. This generation is defined in journalistic publications, as well as in the sociological literature, as the generation “Z” (the term generation “C” is also used and has been coined from the English words “connect, communicate, change”). This generation has come to know, love and embrace modern technologies and together with the generation “Y” (people born between 1980 and 1995) they create the generation of so-called digital natives (Sajdak, 2015, p. 17). These days, they are the “native speakers” of the digital language (Prensky, 2001, p. 2). Young people, in order to communicate, in a natural way and without further instructions, use the internet, mobile devices and social media, where they create personalized networks of friends, colleagues and similarity groups (Pew Research Center, 2014, pp. 5-6). The omnipresent e-environment and people’s constant interaction with it caused that students from the generation Y, and especially Z, think and process information in a different way than their predecessors. The issue has become one of areas of the interest of neuroeducation (also referred to as – *mind, brain and education* or MBE). This fast-growing field of science, brings together *neurobiologists, neuropsychologists, psychiatrists conducting clinical research, logicians, mathematicians, physicists, cybernetics and computer scientists, who deal with neural networks and artificial intelligence, as well as educators, sociologists, linguists, philosophers and cultural anthropologists* (Juszczak, 2012, p. 40). Their task is to examine the optimal teaching and learning process from the perspective of brainwork, through the exploration of interactions between biological processes and education. This area of interest of

neuroeducation, also includes the issue of the impact of modern technologies on teaching and learning processes (Hon Wah, Chi-Hung, 2013).

When analyzing the impact of the development of technology on education, one should consider the overall psychosocial and cultural factors conditioning the learning processes (Busso and Pollack, 2014, pp. 6–8). Awareness of this complex environment of “teaching” and “learning” should be the foundation of a good workshop of an educator. The aim of this article is an attempt to create a model of individual style of a lecturer’s teaching methods at the end of the second decade of the 21st century.

Individual style of conducting classes 2.0

Following the work of Anna Sajdak, four paradigms in the field of academic didactics: behavioristic¹, humanistic², critical and emancipatory³ and constructivist (Sajdak, 2013, p. 301) have been distinguished. These paradigms are the source of justification for didactic activities – in relation to the goals and methods of education as well as shaping the appropriate role of an academic teacher. The concept of *individual style of conducting classes*, described in the further part of the article, is inscribed in the constructivist paradigm, probably the most prevalent in academic didactics. Without going further into the details of the theoretical sources of constructing the constructivist paradigm, one can point out several elements, which – from the point of view of this paradigm – characterize the learning process. These include:

- a) the assumption that education is an activity of a student and a teacher in the area of development,

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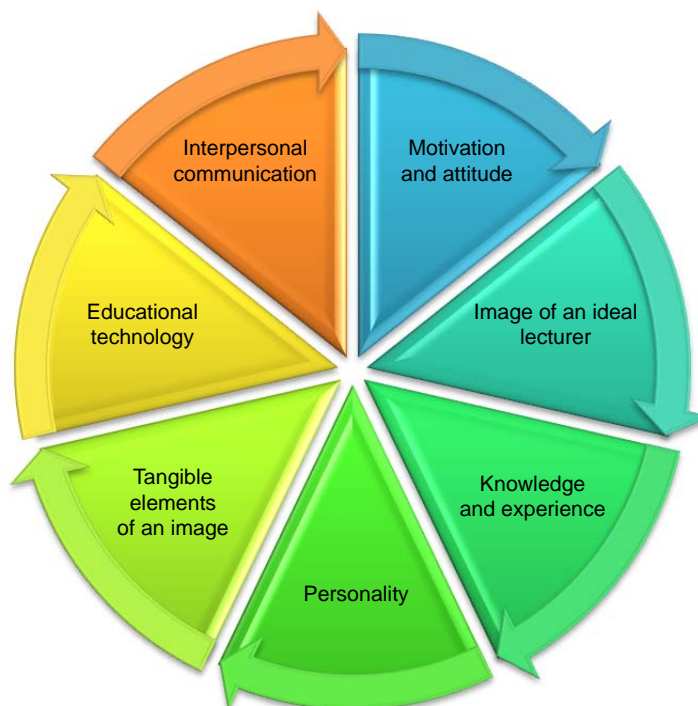
¹ The behaviorist paradigm – also called positivist – based on the concept of a man as an externally controlled machine and utilising behavioural patterns of teaching and learning (Sajdak, 2013, p. 301).

² The humanistic paradigm that treats a man as a free, self-controlled person, who develops in accordance with their natural potential. It is an image built upon a humanistic psychology, personality learning patterns and strategies for promoting personal development (Sajdak, 2013, p. 301).

³ The critical and emancipatory paradigm sees an academic teacher as a „deconstructor of reality”, an entity that fully autonomously constructs their own professional role (Sajdak, 2013, p. 301).

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Figure 1. Components of individual style of teaching_1.0



Source: A. Rozmus (2012), Indywidualny styl prowadzenia zajęć. *Wykładowca doskonały. Podręcznik nauczyciela akademickiego*, p. 87.

- b) the perception of learning as a process of mastering cultural tools,
- c) the agreement that learning is situational, i.e. it takes place in a specific situation that is significant both for the nature of learning and for its results,
- d) understanding the role of a teacher as the one who facilitates a student by arranging an educational environment that is rich in experiences (Filipiak, 2012, pp. 23-24).

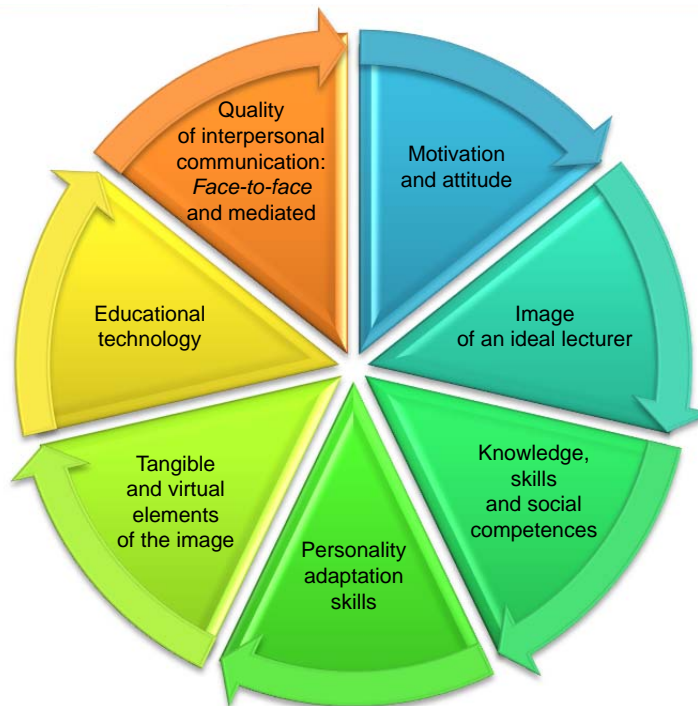
As Anna Sajdak puts it: *Supporting the development of academic teachers in the constructivist paradigm is primarily characterized by the orientation to initiate a change in personal beliefs about academic didactics and students' own practice* (Sajdak, 2013, p. 417). A certain technique or the style of conducting didactic classes is – according to the constructivist paradigm – a replication of a reflective action.

For the first time, the “concept of an individual style of conducting classes” (ISCC) was presented in 2010 in an academic textbook *Wykładowca doskonały* [Excellent Lecturer] (Rozmus, 2010, pp. 87–119). In this concept, the elements of ISCC (figure 1) have been described in the context of an effective teaching message, i.e. how it should be perceived and in which direction one should be developing in order to achieve the desired state (educational value). At the same time, the fact that the ISCC consists of many different elements makes it a unique emblem of every lecturer; their unique coat of arms.

After a few years, however, it seems that this concept requires refreshing. Despite the fact that since

2010, broadly understood IT technologies (or the so-called new media) have already had a significant impact on the education process, nowadays they also „create” a specific recipient of educational content. Thus, a contemporary lecturer, while building their individual style of conducting classes, must also consider not only the characteristics of their recipients, but also the real and virtual world that they live in. With that said, the highlighted elements in the original ISCC concept require redefinition and modification (figure 2).

Personality and adaptation skills of a lecturer. *Personality is understood here as a whole complex of thoughts, emotions and behaviors, which provides the direction and the pattern (cohesion) to human life. Similarly, with regard to the body, the personality consists of both cognitive structures and processes, and reflects the action of the same nature (genes) as the environment. The notion of personality also includes the temporal aspect of human functioning, the personality contains memories of the past, mental representations of the present as well as ideas and expectations about the future* (Pervin, 2005, p. 416). In the 21st century adaptive abilities become extremely important in many areas of human life and are associated with one's personality. They can be understood as the ability to recognize the changes and cope with them in a positive way by modifying one's own thinking, attitude or behavior (enGauge, 2003, p. 35). These skills are also associated with the ability to manage complexity and self-directedness. A contemporary lecturer, to use Bauman's (Bauman, 2006) phrase of the era of “liquid modernity”, should

Figure 2. Components of individual style of conducting classes_2.0

Source: authors' work based on A. Rozmus (2010), Indywidualny styl prowadzenia zajęć. *Wykładowca doskonały. Podręcznik nauczyciela akademickiego*, p. 87.

therefore possess highly developed adaptive abilities, since both the didactic environment and the subject of educational activities are changing dynamically.

The motivation and attitude of a lecturer concern the needs and goals, the beliefs about themselves and the world. Among numerous theoretical approaches to the issue of motivation, the concept of Frederick Irving Herzberg seems interesting and relevant. According to Herzberg, a key role in building a positive attitude to work is a sense of personal development and self-fulfillment. It is influenced by such factors as: achievement, recognition, opportunities for development, promotion, responsibility and work as a value in itself (Adair, 2000, p. 85). The level of motivation, and hence the degree of engagement of a lecturer, is influenced by many factors, including:

- a) a clear and lasting set of values and ideals that shape their actions regardless of social conditions,
- b) permanent analysis of their own experiences and abilities as well as constant assessment of the context of their work,
- c) a strong sense of identity and the ability to cope with external restrictions,
- d) an intellectual and emotional commitment (Day, 2008, p. 94).

Knowledge, skills and social competences of a lecturer depend on their education, seniority at the university, scientific and research activity, supplementary education as well as professional and life experiences. At this point, it is necessary to mention

a category, which is well-defined in the pedagogical literature, namely the ambivalence of the teacher's professional role. Today, the term "ambivalence" is usually understood as "oscillating" and following Anna Sajdak, it has *nothing to do with the pejoratively understood instability, as much as with the need to reconcile opposing reasons, requirements and expectations. Ambivalence is a characteristic of the inability to make an unambiguous decision in a situation of being the part of conflict of opposing forces* (Sajdak, 2013, pp. 187-188). In accordance with this theory, there is a constant tension between the role of an academic teacher and the role of a researcher. It is a specific game between the requirements related to didactic duties and the goals of scientific development set by the university. In extreme cases, we can talk about conflicting normative expectations assigned to a given role (Bereźnicki, 2009, p. 122). For an academic teacher, the first year of work at the university is the beginning of the process of forming their own didactic identity. Strategic factors include: openness to new experiences, variety of assigned tasks in the university environment, receiving support from other research and teaching staff, financial conditions of work at the university and relations with the superiors (their attitudes, degree of control and expressed expectations).

Quality of interpersonal face-to-face and mediated communication. Interpersonal communication is influenced by four contexts:

- semantic (a summary of acts of communication preceding or coexisting with the main act),

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- interpersonal (complexity of relationships that connect participants of communication),
- task-oriented (fields of activities which involve communication, e.g. education, work, play, etc.),
- cultural (common non-linguistic experiences of people involved in communicating or their lack) (Nęcki, 2000, p. 29).

It is obvious that every lecturer, while communicating with the group, uses both non-verbal means of communication (tone of voice, vocal qualities, pitch of voice, gestures, movement, appearance, mimic expression, touch) as well as verbal ones (spoken word and written words). However, it is important to distinguish between interpersonal *face-to-face* and mediated communication (i.e. via social media or online platforms). The latter requires proficiency in the communication on the internet (CMC – *Computer-Mediated Communication*), the knowledge about the impact of the internet and computers on society, network sociology, application of artificial intelligence in communication, the theory of virtual reality, and finally security and privacy in electronic communication⁴. In this context, the term “interactive communication” appears, that is, the use of a wide range of media and technologies. It requires from the participants to have proficiency in the use of electronic media (enGauge, 2003, p. 47). In recent years, the role of the so-called *teaming* and cooperation has also been discussed. *Teaming* is a situation in which individuals have a common goal, their cooperation provides unique opportunities in order to achieve it, and their work takes place in an organized environment (Fransen, 2012, s. 253)

Image of an ideal lecturer. *The ideas about the role of a lecturer* and the images of educators, who have become one’s authorities, either based on past or present experiences that are stored in one’s mind have undoubtedly influenced the development of an individual style of conducting didactic classes. For a lecturer, these types are an ideal signpost in their professional development.

Tangible and virtual elements of a lecturer’s image. A tangible image of a lecturer consists of: their superficiality, smell, clothing and the so-called accompanying items (a bag, pen, laser pointer, tablet, smartphone, etc.). However, a virtual image is created on the basis of social media, instant messaging or educational platforms. Lecturers can build their image on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, the Blackboard platform or in hundreds of other applications and programs.

Educational technology. The last component of the individual style of teaching – educational technology – includes such elements as: the construction of classes, didactic tools, arrangement of the learning space and the use of modern technologies in teaching. Contemporary lecturers have a very wide range of standard and non-standard tools at their disposal, as well as various techniques and methods that support the teaching and learning process. Following the development of modern technologies, they can apply in their classes e-learning or blended learning approach using the virtual learning environment (VLE e.g. Blackboard or Moodle) or implement simulations and decision-making games in order to facilitate the process of teaching and learning. What they will choose as their teaching apparatus will affect their image. On the one hand, students appreciate lecturers who are up to date with technological novelties and apply them in classes, on the other – they can appreciate the traditional approach to education as being the art of teaching. However, an academic teacher who uses modern technologies during their classes (as well as the methods and techniques of classes based on them) will be perceived by students as modern, trendy, or simply “current and contemporary”.

Through the analysis of the literature and the websites of individual universities in Poland, one can notice a clear interest in introducing many innovations in the didactic process, e.g. using gamification mechanisms⁵, design thinking (methods of creative problem solving) or m-learning⁶ (learning with the use of mobile devices, the internet and mobile applications). All this has a significant impact on the nature of the role of a contemporary lecturer, however, it also poses a challenge to their image: “If you want to be perceived as current and contemporary then you should introduce innovations into the didactic process and take advantage of the fruits of technological development.”

Summary, i.e. the changes in a nutshell

An academic teacher, while working on their individual style of conducting classes at the end of the second decade of the 21st century, must accept the fact that the changes in various areas of human life (caused by the current omnipotence of the internet), often in a tangible and irreversible way, have also forced to redefine the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the components of an individual style of conducting classes have been transformed. Table 1 lists the ISCC

⁴ More information on this topic can be found in the following publication: M. Szpunar (2017), *Imperializm kulturowy internetu*; idem, (2012), *Nowe-stare medium. Internet między tworzeniem nowych modeli komunikacyjnych a reprodukowaniem schematów komunikowania masowego*.

⁵ Among others, the following authors have written about it: Pawłowska, O., Pawełczak, M. (2014), E-learning na fali przemian, *e-mentor*, 5(57), pp. 40–42, DOI: 10.15219/em57.1139; Borowski, R., T. Kopczeński, T. (2015), Wykorzystanie programu LabSEE do tworzenia eksperymentów ekonomicznych online, *e-mentor*, 4(61), pp. 38–44, DOI: 10.15219/em61.1199.

⁶ More about m-learning has been written by, among others: Lubina, E. (2007), M-learning w strukturze metodycznej e-learningu, *e-mentor*, 5(22), pp. 27–30; Chojnacki, L. (2006), Pokolenie m-learningu – nowe wyzwanie dla szkoły, *e-mentor*, 1(13), pp. 23–27.

Table 1. Transformation of components of individual style of conducting classes

Individual style of conducting classes in version 1.0	Individual style of conducting classes in version 2.0	The field that requires transformation/area of special attention of a lecturer
Personality of a lecturer	Personality and adaptation skills of a lecturer	Development of adaptive abilities, i.e. the ability to recognize and deal with change in a positive way by modifying one's own thinking, attitude or behavior
Motivation and attitude of a lecturer	Motivation and attitude of a lecturer	Permanent analysis of one's own experiences and abilities as well as constant assessment of the context of work
Knowledge and experience of a lecturer	Knowledge, skills and social competences	Shaping the so-called social maturity based on responsibility and autonomy
The quality of interpersonal communication	Quality of interpersonal face-to-face and mediated communication	Identification of differences between individual generations of students (X, Y, Z) and paying close attention to the quality of interpersonal mediated communication (e.g. through social media or online platforms)
Image of an ideal lecturer	Image of an ideal lecturer	Constant monitoring of the achievements of other lecturers and openness to possible change of the previously adopted „image of an ideal lecturer”
Tangible and virtual elements of an image of a lecturer	Tangible and virtual elements of an image of a lecturer	Paying attention to a virtual image created on the basis of social media, instant messaging or educational platforms
Educational technology	Educational technology	Keeping the track of the development of modern technologies, in terms of their possible use in the didactic process and constant work on didactic innovations

Source: authors' findings.

components in version 1.0 and 2.0 (the latest) and the so-called fields that requires transformation, i.e. the areas to which a lecturer should pay their particular attention are indicated.

Finally, it is worth to highlight that not only the way of forming the ISCC, but also the role of a lecturer in itself requires reflection. On the one hand, students have enormous and diverse opportunities to acquire knowledge, on the other – they are sometimes confused, have no competence to differentiate between *false information, partially false or an incomplete one* (Piecuch, 2016, p. 111), thus more often than not they uncritically accept it. Therefore, it seems that one of the key tasks of a lecturer should be to facilitate students in the ultimate settlement of the truthfulness and reliability of different sources of information.

One thing is certain – in the face of such broad opportunities and changes in the educational environment, an academic teacher must redefine their style of conducting classes and not to allow to disregard the process of its continuous improvement.

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Abstract

Generations Y and Z are constantly associated with new technologies, so it causes them to think and process information in a different way than their predecessors.. It is extremely hard to state clearly how many benefits and how many problems modern technology brings to the process of learning. On the other hand, technological development cannot be stopped. Therefore, it is necessary to learn about technology and to accept it without negating other factors influencing modern education, like psychosocial and cultural factors. A good academic lecturer should be aware of this close relationship between new technologies and the way in which modern students are learning. The main goal of this article is to try to build a model of an individual style of academic lecturer teaching at the end of the second decade of the 21st century. In version 2.0, the individual lecturer workshop consists of a) the personality of the lecturer and his/her adaptive skills, b) motivation and attitude, c) knowledge and skills in social competences, d) the quality of interpersonal communication (face-to-face, indirect communication), e) the image of an ideal lecturer, f) tangible and virtual elements of the image, and g) technology used in teaching. The contemporary lecturer creates his/her own style of teaching during classes. Firstly, he/she should adjust the tools for transferring knowledge to the students and their perceptive abilities. Secondly, he/she ought to help them in the final settlement of truth and the reliability of sources of knowledge.

Key words: individual style of academic teaching, teaching at the higher education level, generation Z, trends and innovations in learning.

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