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Planned Future, Exciting Present, and Positive Memories – Attitudes to Time Among Students from Polish-Belarusian Borderland⁴

ABSTRACT

The paper presents the results of quantitative research using the diagnostic poll method, carried out as part of an international project which involved 440 teacher students from the Polish-Belarusian borderland. The research focused on self-assessed level of information management, team work skills, and recognition of one's own time perspective. The text only refers to one aspect of the competence, i.e., attitude to time. The findings show that the participants function in three temporal dimensions. The majority of the respondents are future-oriented. More than half of them sometimes waste time doing something meaningless. The vast majority of the students act upon the belief that what will happen to them in the future only depends on their effort, but many also declare a fatalistic attitude to life and the belief they have made wrong decisions in the past. In the article, we suggest the need to equip young people with instruments

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allowing them to create themselves, their lives and the world around them in the context of the *foresight* concept.

Keywords:

pedagogy, time, foresight concept, present culture, borderland

INTRODUCTION – THE TEMPORAL DIMENSION OF FUNCTIONING OF THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

The current view of the society is a society engrossed in its own transformation and revival, preferring the present rather than the former, young rather than old, and the future rather than the past (Nora, 2009, p. 5). Nowadays, we live in a specific chronometric space in which time is sensed and experienced in a different way than in the past. The belittled significance of the present and the emphasized role of a project, typical of the modernity, have been abandoned and liquidated now (Bauman, 1998). In the contemporary network society the linear, irreversible, measurable and predictable time of a positivist project is being fragmented (Castells, 2007). The time-space of ever-present “now” and “here” is emerging (Bauman, 1998, p. 196). In the late modernity, time has become a set of randomly dispersed points (Bauman, 2006, pp. 27–28). Human life can be reduced to a never-ending series of passing moments (Bauman, 1998, p. 231), fragments so small that they hardly exist (Eriksen, 2003, p. 16). Time is pointillist in nature, it disintegrates into multiple isolated shreds (Maffesoli, as cited in Bauman, 2009, p. 40).

Zygmunt Bauman calls contemporary humans synchronic – living only in the present, without planning for the future or referring to the past. In the present culture there is no time for continuation, anchoring or maintaining tradition; time-intensive activities and responsibilities are replaced by short-term gratifications. In addition, according to Bauman, nothing should be done forever. Actually, nothing can be done forever. Therefore, investing in the future is pointless (Bauman, 1998, p. 203). A contemporary human should live here and now, intensively and quickly, thinking neither about the past or about the future. This culture affects a number of aspects of our life: work, family life, politics, and consumption (Eriksen, 2003, p. 7), often changing, transforming, and sometimes even degrading or invalidating them (Carnoy, 2000). Nowadays, humans perform a huge number of related tasks in different locations and focus on many activities at the same time. This means they devote less and less time to individual activities and experience the fragmentation of time (Rosa, 2010).

Digital technology deeply modifies the temporal human environment and the way of functioning in time. Modern technologies promote the development

of a specific culture of acceleration: hyperculture, in which, according to Stephen Bertman, a person is expected to do more in a shorter time (Bertman, as cited in Tarkowska, 2010, p. 107). The culture of virtual reality leads to transforming time into two different forms: the simultaneity of what is eternal and what is transitory and timeless (Castells, 2007, pp. 458–459). The “logic of new temporality” is emerging, referred to as timeless time. Market mechanisms are also of great importance, because the dominant model of culture based on consumption is technological acceleration in all areas of life, acceleration that results in “gadgetization” of our existence and the broadening area of waste and rubbish, both in the material and the symbolic sphere (Burszta, 2005, pp. 77–78). Living in the consumption society means living in haste. Nearly all is going on faster now (Gleick, 2000). As Jonathan Crary observes, for many years now a number of institutions of the developed world have been operating twenty-four hours a day, every day. This mode, also affecting individuals, has been designed for the unceasing work of markets and information networks (Crary, 2015, pp. 20–21).

Apart from the fragmentation of life, haste, and the worship of the present, contemporary culture is permeated with excess, surfeit, and overload (Crary, 2015, p. 23), especially in the information sphere (Borawska-Kalbarczyk, 2016). According to Tomasz Szlendak (2013), the category of excess permeates all the areas of human existence, causing the multiplicity of options and difficulty in making choices; it gives rise to impatience and new temporal requirements.

The text presents the results of research carried out among teacher students from Brest and Białystok. The study focused on skills we believe to be necessary for contemporary young people’s effective functioning in the dynamically changing world, such as: information management, team work, and recognizing one’s own time perspective. We assumed that a certain “pool” of basic skills is needed to function efficiently in the contemporary society, regardless of differences between local communities. Hence, assuming that young people who decide to start university are similar in many respects (Melosik, 2013), we did our research in the academic environment at the Polish-Belarusian cultural borderland. The text is a research report, presenting the fragment of the research referring to the recognition of one’s own time perspective.

TIME PERSPECTIVE

We adopt the psychological understanding of temporal perspective as the awareness of one’s location on the temporal continuum including the past, the present,

and the future (Nawrat, 1981). It may also be treated as the space of time the person takes into consideration when planning, predicting and performing their activities, i.e., the space of time in which the person functions psychologically, cognitively and emotionally (Szmajke, as cited in Tarkowska, 1987, p. 138).

Human thoughts, emotions and behaviors refer to three temporal perspectives: the past, the present, and the future. Everybody applies these basic temporal perspectives, but they differ in how much attention they devote to their past, their present situation, and thinking about their future, and in how much each perspective affects their emotions and activity (Kałużna-Wielobób, 2014, p. 83).

In accordance with the time perspective theory (Gonzalez & Zimbardo, 1985), the person's opinion of themselves, the world around them and interpersonal relations is filtered through a temporally determined cognitive process. A human learns to divide or sort their experiences using the categories of past, present and future. The time perspective permeates (though often unconsciously) interpersonal relations, events and experiencing them. The person learns it from childhood by participating in culture, education, religion, and a primary group (Keough, Zimbardo, & Boyd, 1999).

Four types of personality can be identified: past-oriented – a retrospective type, present-oriented – presentist type, future-oriented – prospective type, and those who are oriented at the whole time spectrum (Obuchowski, 1987; Zimbardo & Boyd, 2009). Each perspective in a way determines the human functioning and makes them engage in this space (Nawrat, 1981). Philip Zimbardo and John Boyd (2009) add some details to the three main time perspectives and they identify: past positive and past negative perspective, present hedonistic and present fatalistic perspective, future perspective, and transcendent perspective of perceiving time in the future.

The past (positive or negative) perspective refers to the person's attitude to the past, not an objective record of good or bad events (Zimbardo & Boyd 2009). Attitudes to the past may be a reflection of positive or negative events the person has really experienced or the reconstruction of previous events that could have been completely different in reality. The perception of the past depends much more on the present mood than on the accuracy of memories (Draissma, 2000). The ways of perceiving the past play the key role in making everyday decisions; they are the binding systems of reference.

People with the hedonistic time perspective (Zimbardo & Boyd 2009, p. 119) enjoy the moment; they neither look back nor think about the future. Zimbardo and Boyd claim that such people display high creativity and like challenges if the challenges are pleasant for them. They appreciate what is stimulating, exciting and new, and they avoid whatever requires effort and toil, whatever is routine and

boring. They do not invest in their own development, because they do not need it at the moment. According to Zimbardo and Boyd, the life of people with a fatalistic temporal perspective is based on fate. They believe their actions have no influence on their lives and do not help them achieve the desired effects. It results in a kind of learned helplessness and resignation (Zimbardo & Boyd 2009, p. 119).

People with the future time perspective act in accordance with the adopted plan and predict tasks and dangers that might prevent them from achieving the goals (Zimbardo & Boyd, 2009, p. 119). Sometimes they even achieve the set goals by force, ignoring their own emotions, needs and well-being (Kałużna-Wielobób, 2014, p. 85). Patient efforts ensure those people school or professional successes, which motivates them to further activities and accomplishments. If this perspective is not balanced with others, they pay high personal costs, such as stress, tension, overload and fear of failure, as well as difficulties with accepting their own weaknesses (Kałużna-Wielobób, 2014, p. 85).

RESEARCH DESIGN

The aim of the research was to determine the self-evaluated level of information management, team work skills and recognition of one's own time perspective among students from the borderland in the context of developing knowledge society. The paper presents a fragment of research findings, including the analysis of the respondents' attitude to time.

We used the diagnostic poll method in the research, involving two techniques: self-evaluation scale concerning teamwork, information management and the recognition of one's own time perspective,⁵ and a questionnaire whose main aim was to find out the factors that facilitate or hamper the development of those competencies.⁶

The study participants were 440 students of two universities located at the Polish-Belarusian borderland: University of Białystok (Poland) and Brest State University named after A.S. Pushkin. The respondents represented different faculties (both social/liberal, such as education or Polish studies, and scientific, such as biology or chemistry). What was typical of the whole study sample was the prospect of future teaching career. The decision to carry out the research at university

⁵ Some questions included in the scale were inspired by Zimbardo's *Time Perspective Inventory*, presented in the book *The Time Paradox* (Zimbardo & Boyd, 2009). Others were taken from the book in full.

⁶ This issue is not discussed in the text.

resulted from defining it as an institution that integrates representatives of many scientific fields and allows students to construct and develop common fundamental skills, regardless of differences in local or cultural environments that may affect the quality of planning and management of one's own career and modify individual paths of development. The research involved two stages. In the first part (in 2014), 199 Belarusian students took part. The second one (2015/2016) was a continuation of the study with 241 Polish students of the University of Białystok, using an identical instrument.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Education psychologist Barbara M. Kaja asks a question that any person working with young people should ask themselves from time to time: Why do some individuals prefer distant goals, invest in the future, and their concept is related to the social position and material status, whereas the lives of others are filled with lazy, parasitic bliss? (Kaja, 2010, p. 108). The scholar's view is that the mechanism determining different life concepts is understanding and experiencing the relationality of the world, because in order to know how you want to live, you need to know the relations between persons, activities, phenomena and events, and – what is important – their consequences. A human acts by giving meaning to these elements, which results in motivation to or discouragement from certain actions (Kaja, 2010, p. 108). This relationality of the world also includes the temporal dimension. If the orientation at a certain area of the temporal continuum implies engagement in this area (as psychologists point out), then it is worth asking which temporal area young people – students who are beginning their independent adult life – are engaged in. Are they engaged in courageously planning the future, in attractive ongoing life, or in remembering the past? (Tarkowska, 1992, p. 19). Below we present the results of the study concerning students' attitude to the past, the present, and the future.

The analysis of the findings shows that the majority of the respondents, regardless of the place of study, plan and carry out tasks they consider to be important (PCZ_1/1). More than 80% of the participants (combined) answered “definitely yes” and “rather yes”. Only few of the students declare they rather do not plan or carry out the tasks they consider to be important (3.7% – BI; 2.5% – BR), and only one person does not do so at all. More than twice as many students from Białystok (14.9%) as from Brest (6%) find it hard to answer this question. The vast majority of participants declare they act in accordance with what they think is important.

Table 1. Distribution of the frequency of responses concerning the variable “perception of the future”

Statement no.	Group	Attitude to the statement										Total	
		definitely yes		rather yes		hard to say		rather not		definitely not			
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
PCZ_1/1	BI	70	29.1	126	52.3	36	14.9	9	3.7	0	-	241	100.0
	BR	83	41.7	98	49.3	12	6.0	5	2.5	1	0.5	199	100.0
Total		153	34.8	224	50.9	48	10.9	14	3.2	1	0.2	440	100.0
PCZ_1/2	BI	55	22.8	122	50.6	45	18.7	17	7.1	2	0.8	241	100.0
	BR	95	47.7	81	40.7	15	7.5	7	3.5	1	0.5	199	100.0
Total		150	34.1	203	46.1	60	13.6	24	5.5	3	0.7	440	100.0
PCZ_1/3	BI	90	37.3	112	46.5	24	9.9	11	4.6	4	1.7	241	100.0
	BR	118	59.3	64	32.2	7	3.5	9	4.5	1	0.5	199	100.0
Total		208	47.3	176	40.0	31	7.0	20	4.5	5	1.1	440	100.0
PCZ_1/4	BI	28	11.6	59	24.5	55	22.8	60	24.9	39	16.2	241	100.0
	BR	27	13.6	58	29.1	30	15.1	66	33.2	18	9.0	199	100.0
Total		55	12.5	117	26.6	85	19.3	126	28.6	57	12.9	440	100.0
PCZ_1/5	BI	92	38.2	78	32.4	32	13.3	26	10.8	13	5.4	241	100.0
	BR	50	25.1	78	39.2	24	12.1	36	18.1	11	5.5	199	100.0
Total		142	32.3	156	35.5	56	12.7	62	14.1	24	5.5	440	100.0
PCZ_1/6	BI	57	23.7	107	44.4	62	25.7	14	5.8	1	0.4	241	100.0
	BR	88	44.2	83	41.7	19	9.6	7	3.5	2	1.0	199	100.0
Total		145	32.9	190	43.2	81	18.4	21	4.8	3	0.7	440	100.0

Source: authors' own study.

Legend: BI – students of the University of Białystok; BR – students of the Brest State University (the acronyms are used in all the statistical tables presented in the article). PCZ_1/1: I plan and perform my activities with consideration of what is important for me. PCZ_1/2: When I want to achieve something, I set myself goals and I think about specific steps that lead to achieving them. PCZ_1/3: I often think about what is waiting for me to do. PCZ_1/4: I plan each day in detail. PCZ_1/5: Sometimes I feel I waste my time doing something meaningless. PCZ_1/6: I take some actions because I know that what will happen to be in the future only depends on my efforts.

We need to remember that the study was carried out among future teachers and educators, who are preparing to act in a responsible way for their own good and for the good of others.

Nearly half of the students from Brest (47.7%) and only one fifth of those from Białystok (22.8%) declare that they definitely set themselves some goals and think about specific steps to achieve what they want to achieve (PCZ_1/2). Half (50.6%) of the Polish respondents and approx. 40% of Belarusian ones rather do so. It is upbuilding that only few participants do not think about any activities that could

help them achieve the set goals. Among students from Białystok, the proportion of such people is twice as high as among those from the Brest University. Almost one fifth of Polish participants (18.7%) and one thirteenth of the Belarusian ones (7.5%) find it difficult to decide whether they agree with the statement.

The vast majority of the respondents from each group often think about what is waiting for them to do (PCZ_1/3) (83.8% BI and 91.5% BR – responses “definitely yes” and “rather yes” added up). Only few students from Białystok (4.6%) rather do not think about their duties, and a negligible proportion (1.7%) definitely do not think about what they should do. Even fewer people from Brest answered this way (4.5% and 0.5%, respectively).

11.6% of the participants from Białystok confirm they definitely plan each day in detail (PCZ_1/4) and almost one-fourth (24.5%) rather do so. A very similar number (24.9%) declare they rather do not do so, and one sixth of the students (16.2%) definitely do not plan their days. Among students from Brest, the proportions of people in two response categories are similar (29.1% – rather yes, 33.2% – rather not). Much fewer respondents in this group definitely plan each day (13.6%) or definitely do not do so (9%). It is surprising that almost one fourth of the respondents from the University of Białystok (22.8%) and one sixth from the Brest University (15.7%) find it hard to say whether they plan each day.

Only one in twenty participants from each university definitely never feels they waste time doing something meaningless (PCZ_1/5) (BI – 5.4%; BR – 5.5%). One-tenth of the respondents from Białystok (10.8%) rather do not do so. It is also true for an even higher proportion of students from Brest (18.1%). More than half of the participants from each group sometimes waste time doing something meaningless (64.3% BR, 70.5% BI – responses “definitely yes” and “rather yes” combined). Every tenth student finds it hard to answer this question.

The vast majority of students in each group (68.1% – BI and 85.9% – BR if “definitely yes” and “rather yes” are added up) take some actions because they know that what will happen in the future only depends on their efforts (PCZ_1/6). One fourth of the participants in Białystok and only one tenth in Brest find it hard to answer the question. Only few respondents in each group declare they do not take any actions believing that the future depends on their efforts.

Whenever they have to choose between responsibilities/deadlines and pleasures, almost every sixth respondent from each group chooses the latter. More than one third of participants from both student groups declare so. One fourth of the respondents from Białystok and 41.2% students from Brest find it hard to assess what they would do. Only above 5% of participants from the Brest University will rather not choose pleasures when they have to make such a decision. The same is

Table 2. Distribution of the frequency of responses concerning the variable “perception of the present”

Statement no.	Group	Attitude to the statement										Total	
		definitely yes		rather yes		hard to say		rather not		definitely not			
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
PCZ_2/1	BI	41	17	89	36.9	61	25.3	44	18.3	6	2.5	241	100.0
	BR	34	17.1	64	32.2	82	41.2	11	5.5	8	4.0	199	100.0
Total		75	17.0	153	34.8	143	32.5	55	12.5	14	3.2	440	100.0
PCZ_2/2	BI	78	32.4	91	37.8	50	20.7	19	7.9	3	1.2	241	100.0
	BR	148	74.4	41	20.6	7	3.5	1	0.5	2	1.0	199	100.0
Total		226	51.4	132	30.0	57	12.9	20	4.5	5	1.1	440	100.0
PCZ_2/3	BI	45	18.7	76	31.5	79	32.8	34	14.1	7	2.9	241	100.0
	BR	103	51.8	57	28.6	21	10.6	13	6.5	5	2.5	199	100.0
Total		148	33.7	133	30.2	100	22.7	47	10.7	12	2.7	440	100.0
PCZ_2/4	BI	36	14.9	89	36.9	75	31.1	29	12.0	12	4.9	241	100.0
	BR	53	26.6	74	37.2	44	22.1	25	12.6	3	1.5	199	100.0
Total		89	20.2	163	37.3	119	27.0	54	12.3	15	3.4	440	100.0
PCZ_2/5	BI	27	11.2	64	26.6	93	38.6	45	18.7	12	5.0	241	100.0
	BR	67	33.7	70	35.2	41	20.6	18	9.0	3	1.5	199	100.0
Total		94	21.4	134	30.5	134	30.5	63	14.3	15	3.4	440	100.0
PCZ_2/6	BI	30	12.5	65	27.0	77	32.0	57	23.6	12	5.0	241	100.0
	BR	35	17.6	66	33.2	36	18.1	43	21.6	19	9.6	199	100.0
Total		65	14.8	131	29.8	113	25.7	100	22.7	31	7.0	440	100.0
PCZ_2/7	BI	46	19.1	90	37.3	69	28.6	31	12.9	5	2.1	241	100.0
	BR	47	23.6	90	45.2	36	18.1	18	9.0	8	4.0	199	100.0
Total		93	21.1	180	40.9	105	23.9	49	11.1	13	2.9	440	100.0
PCZ_2/8	BI	26	10.8	69	28.6	74	30.7	54	22.4	18	7.5	241	100.0
	BR	29	14.6	50	25.1	41	20.6	50	25.1	29	14.6	199	100.0
Total		55	12.5	119	27.0	115	26.1	104	23.6	47	10.7	440	100.0

Source: authors' own study.

PCZ_2/1: Keeping deadlines and doing the necessary thinks is important, but not more important than doing what is pleasant for me. PCZ_2/2: It's important to make life exciting. PCZ_2/3: I do what I feel like doing at the moment. PCZ_2/4: Every day I enjoy the present moment. PCZ_2/5: Life is fascinating now; I like its pace. PCZ_2/6: I act on the spur of the moment. PCZ_2/7: I take some actions although I know I cannot control the future. PCZ_2/8: Taking risk makes my life stressful.

true for 18.26% of the participants from the University of Białystok. Only few of the interviewed students definitely do not give priority to pleasures in their lives. The analysis of the results shows that approximately half of the respondents are present-oriented, focusing on what is here and now and what gives them pleasure.

Only one fifth of the respondents (responses “definitely not” and “rather not” combined) from Białystok and one tenth from Brest give priority to responsibilities, not to pleasures.

Nearly one third of students from Białystok definitely or rather agree that it is important to make their lives exciting. Nearly all students from Brest think so (95% if “definitely yes” and “rather yes” responses are combined). Only 5% of the participants gave other answers. It shows that the young respondents pursue what is exciting for them; they are oriented at the present and want to experience a lot. One in ten respondents from the University of Białystok disagree with this statement – other things are important for them.

More than half of the Brest participants (51.8%) definitely do what they feel like doing at the moment (PCZ_2/3), and 28.7% rather do so (a total of over 80%). It is interesting that only 18.7% Polish students agreed with the statement, and almost one third of the respondents from this group (31.5%) answered “rather yes”. Nearly one seventh of Białystok respondents (17% – responses “definitely yes” and “rather yes” combined) do not do what they feel like doing at the moment. Almost one tenth of the respondents from Brest (9%, two categories combined) do so. Every third respondent from the University of Białystok and every tenth from the Brest one find it hard to decide what they do.

Clearly fewer students from the University of Białystok (14.9%) than those from Brest (26.63%) confirm that they spend each day enjoying what is here and now (PCZ_2/4). Nearly one third of the participants (BR – 37.2%; BI – 36.9%, respectively) sometimes do so. What is surprising is the fact that a relatively high proportion of the respondents find it hard to give a clear answer to this question (BR – 22.1%; BI – 31.1%, respectively). If response categories “definitely not” and “rather not” are combined, it is worrying that almost every sixth participating student from the University of Białystok and every seventh from Brest do not enjoy their present experiences (BI – 17%; BR – 14%). Three times as many Polish as Belarusian students definitely do not do so.

The analysis of research results shows that three times as many respondents from Brest (33.7%) as from Białystok (11.2%) consider the present life fascinating and like its pace (PCZ_2/5). More young people from Brest (35.2%) than from Białystok (26.6%) also chose the response “rather yes”. The emerging tendency is consistent: if we sum up the “definitely not” and “rather not” response categories, we can see that twice as many participants from Białystok (23.6%) as those from Brest (10.5%) do not feel the current life is fascinating and do not like its pace. Nearly twice as many students from Białystok (38.6%) as those from Brest (20.6%) find it hard to answer this question.

One third of the respondents from Białystok (31.9%) are not sure whether they act on the spur of the moment (PCZ_2/6); a similar proportion of students from Brest (33.2%) declare they rather do so. Among the surveyed students from Białystok, nearly one fourth chose the response “rather yes” (27%) or “rather not” (23.6%). One eighth of Białystok students (12.5%) act on the spur of the moment, and one twentieth from this group (5%) definitely do not do so. Almost every sixth participant from the Brest University (17.6%) definitely acts upon the spur of the moment, and fewer than one tenth (9.6%) definitely do not do so. The response “rather not” was chosen by almost one fifth of the respondents from Brest.

The analysis of the research results shows that nearly half of the respondents from Białystok (when “definitely yes” and “rather yes” responses are added up) and almost seventy percent of students from Brest take some actions although they know that they cannot control the future (PCZ_2/7). This suggests a fatalistic approach to the present. Nearly one third of the respondents from the University of Białystok (28.6%) are unable to decide in this matter, just like nearly one fifth of the participants from Brest (18.1%). About 15% of the students from Białystok and slightly above 10% of those from Brest State University do not do so (definitely not and rather not).

Almost one third of the respondents from the University of Białystok (29.9%) and almost 40% of students from Brest (responses “rather not” and “definitely not” combined) do not feel stressed when they take risks (PCZ_2/8). Every tenth participant from Białystok (10.8%) and almost every seventh student from Brest (14.6%) definitely feel stressed when taking risk. One fourth of the respondents from Brest (25.1%) chose the response “rather yes”, just like 28.6% of Polish students. It proves that for these people taking risks is connected with stress. A high proportion of students from each studied group (30.7% – BI; 20.6% – BR) find it hard to answer the question.

Around 70% of the respondents (“definitely yes” and “rather yes” combined) often think about what they should have done differently in their lives (PCZ_3/1). Much fewer participants from both groups (about 11% when both response categories are summed up) do not look back thinking what they should have done differently. Almost one-fifth of the respondents from Białystok and 16.1% students from Brest find it hard to refer this statement to themselves.

Every tenth respondent from Białystok (10.4%) feels sad when thinking about their past (PCZ_3/2); only half as many (5.0%) students from Brest experience this feeling. A large group of participants (BR – 25.1%; BI – 22%) have never thought about it and find it hard to give a clear answer. It is upbuilding that half of the respondents from the University of Białystok (50.2%) and even more students

Table 3. Distribution of the frequency of responses concerning the variable “perception of the past”

Statement no.	Group	Attitude to the statement										Total	
		definitely yes		rather yes		hard to say		rather not		definitely not			
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
PCZ_3/1	BI	100	41.5	67	27.8	47	19.5	22	9.1	5	2.1	241	100.0
	BR	67	33.7	77	38.7	32	16.1	14	7.0	9	4.5	199	100.0
Total		167	37.9	144	32.7	79	17.9	36	8.2	14	3.2	440	100.0
PCZ_3/2	BI	25	10.4	42	17.4	53	22.0	66	27.4	55	22.8	241	100.0
	BR	10	5.0	21	10.5	50	25.1	50	25.1	68	34.2	199	100.0
Total		35	7.9	63	14.3	103	23.4	116	26.4	123	27.9	440	100.0
PCZ_3/3	BI	44	18.3	91	37.8	63	26.1	40	16.6	3	1.2	241	100.0
	BR	56	28.1	88	44.2	33	16.6	14	7.0	8	4.0	199	100.0
Total		100	22.7	179	40.7	96	21.8	54	12.3	11	2.5	440	100.0

Source: authors' own study.

PCZ_3/1: I often think about what I should have done differently in my life. PCZ_3/2: Thinking about my past makes me sad. PCZ_3/3: Sometimes I feel I have missed something important.

from Brest State University (59.3%) do not feel sad when thinking about their past (“rather not” and “definitely not” responses summed up).

Almost one fifth of the students from Białystok (18.3%) and one third from Brest (28.1%) sometimes feel they have missed something important (PCZ_3/3). Approximately forty percent of the respondents answered “rather yes” (BR – 44.2%; BI – 37.8%, respectively). Only a little proportion of the participants never feel so, and the number is higher in Białystok than in Brest (BI – 17.8%, BR – 11%, “rather not” and “definitely not” responses summed up). Nearly every fourth student from Białystok and every sixth student from Brest find it difficult to evaluate themselves in this respect.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Analyzing the functioning of young people, we must see that humans “make choices using their experience stored in their long-term memory, the current parameters of the situation and their own efficacy, and the future consequences of the activities. Hence, activities carried out here and now involve three temporal dimensions: the past, the present, and the future, and they are oriented at future effects” (Zaleski, 1988, p. 932). On the basis of analysis of students' declarations, we can conclude

that most participants are future-oriented, they declare to plan and carry out tasks they consider to be important, but a far lower proportion of students set themselves goals and think about specific steps aimed at the achievement of the goals (the proportion is twice as high among students from Brest). Only one ninth of the participants from Białystok and one seventh from Brest definitely plan their days in detail. One fourth of Polish students and only one tenth of Brest students definitely do not plan. Much more than half of respondents from each group sometimes waste time doing something meaningless. The vast majority of students from both towns take some actions believing that what will happen to them in the future only depends on their efforts. However, nearly half the respondents from Białystok and almost 70% of students from Brest declare that they take some actions although they know they cannot control the future, which proves their fatalistic approach to life. It seems the young participants do not yet have fully developed views on who or what determines what happens in their lives. Thus, it would be good to create opportunities in the educational process for students to reflect on themselves and their experiences.

Much more students from Brest than those from Białystok adopt the attitude concentrated on the present: they give priority to pleasures rather than responsibilities, they feel it is important to make life exciting, they do whatever they feel like doing at the moment, and they spend every day enjoying what is here and now. They regard the present life as fascinating and like its pace, and they often act on the spur of the moment. Approximately 40% of the students from each group feel stressed when taking risks; the same number of respondents from Brest and 30% from Białystok do not feel any stress in such situations.

The analysis of research results shows that most of the surveyed students have made some wrong decisions in the past. Such experiences occur in the lives of all humans, so it is perhaps more surprising that almost one tenth of the respondents do not have such reflections on the past. More than half of the students from Białystok and more than 70% of the participants from Brest sometimes feel they have missed something important in life. Much fewer respondents do not have such feelings (more students from Białystok than from Brest gave this answer). Every tenth respondent from Białystok feels sad when thinking about their past, but only half as many students from Brest experience this feeling. The nature of human memories is very complex (Korzeniecka-Bondar, 2015): what has happened in the past may give the sense of security, especially if the memories are positive. But if one is stuck in the past, they are less likely to use the opportunities and take the risk (Zimbardo & Boyd 2009, p. 85) or even open to something new every day. Therefore, it is positive that half of the respondents from the University

of Białystok and approximately 60% from the Brest University do not feel sad when thinking about their past. People who have a positive attitude to the past are generally happier, healthier and more successful than those who perceive the past in a negative way (Zimbardo & Boyd 2009, p. 77).

CONCLUSIONS

Drawing on the thesis that prospective teachers expect their studies to give them an opportunity to develop a number of competencies (Dróżka & Madalińska-Michalak, 2016), it would be good to design the process so as to allow an in-depth analysis of the issue of time as the dimension that is crucial for existence. It is positive that young people function in three temporal dimensions, but we should provide them with instruments allowing them to create themselves, their lives and the world around them in the course of educational process (beginning from the lowest levels). It requires clear concentration on the future in the process of education, as well as taking a number of activities in the present, not because of traditions or past experiences but because of potential future events.

In the context of complexity of the world mentioned in the beginning, the foresight concept and the educational opportunities it provides seem interesting. This issue is discussed in greater detail by Piotr Błajet (2011). The concept of education worked out on its basis would be oriented at the future, treated not in the categories of anxiety and avoidance, but as the area of activity and personal strength (Błajet, 2011, p. 43). For this reason, the historical and futurological approaches need to be treated equally in educational programmes (orientation at the past and the future). Learning about the past is expected to result in concrete activities in the present. The surveyed young people, irrespective of the place of study, are oriented at the future, but it is not perceived as possible scenarios of activity which can be individually created by everyone, but rather in the category of vague, unpredictable events (Błajet, 2011). The foresight concept assumes a proactive attitude, as it involves an attempt to determine the consequences of different changes and to find out what strategies may lead to alternative development of the desired future. Foresight studies never result in a single form of the future; instead, many paths of expected and desired changes are set (Błajet, 2011, p. 34). And this is what seems to most fully correspond to psychological needs of young people testing different scenarios of their lives. Identifying and solving problems, from the simplest local ones up to more complex global ones, would make the members of the young generation grow as part of the society, aware of what is going on around them,

becoming responsible and independent citizens of the world. The process understood this way would occur in interaction with other people, but it would also be related to real life (in the local and global community), to nature, and to work, which seems crucial in thinking about the future of education (Gidley, Bateman, & Smith, 2004; Slaughter, Naismith, & Houghton, 2004).

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