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## Seeking Happiness in Consumer Society. Inspirations for Pedagogy

## Poszukiwanie szczęścia w cywilizacji konsumpcyjnej. Inspiracje dla pedagogiki

*Happiness depends on ourselves*  
Aristotle

### Introduction

As individuals, we live in the age of consumerism and overproduction of virtually every kind of goods and services. In such civilizational conditions, we are being encouraged to consume intensively, both in material and “spiritual” manner. At present, the notion of “consumption” concerns every aspect of any individual’s life, related to their undergoing experiences in the spheres

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of professional work, personal life, ways of spending their free time, relations with other people. Consumption is no longer merely an indicator for social class identity. Nowadays, it has become one of the most significant elements of the identity of an individual. It happens so due to e.g. the increasing need for seeking sensual and emotional stimulation; changes in the value system, developing towards individualism, autonomy and individual identity; increase in the information offer and new forms of communication, as well as the socially-based turning consumer goods into symbols, by purchasing of which a person of today constructs their "own self". Consuming has become the way of creating one's identity, even if this identity is fragmental, flexible and constantly changing. Furthermore, in contemporary capitalist societies, the material status and high levels of consumption have been dubbed the most important indicators for life success, or even for happiness. There has been a gradual transition from the production-based society, where work constituted humans, to the consumer society, based on the ideologies of consumerism (Byłok, Sważba, & Walczak-Duraj, 2016).

Seeking happiness in these conditions of the consumer society is the subject of the following paper.

The issue has not often been discussed in the pedagogy-related publications yet. However, psychology, especially the psychology of the quality of life, also known as happiness/positive psychology, has already pondered upon a wide range of viewpoints, attitudes and contexts in the light of which happiness has been considered. Many analyses carried out by researchers such as Angus Campbell (Campbell, Converse, & Rodges, 1976), Robert Schalock (Schalock, 2000), or Martin Seligman – the leader of positive psychology (whose work is going to be considered in the further part of the paper), have identified the quality of life with the overall wellbeing resulting from an individual's functioning in the particular spheres of life. The issue of happiness has also been present in the works of many renowned Polish psychologists; just to mention Tadeusz Tomaszewski, Janusz Czapiński, Stanisław Kowalik, Augustyn Bańka, Maria Straś-Romanowska, Anna Zalewska, Roman Derbis, and more. The psychological theories about human's happiness and the studies of it, mentioned in this paper, should become an inspiration for pedagogy, as they generate pedagogical implications for human development, as well as implications for education aimed at fostering creation of valuable lives.

## Selected characteristics of the consumer civilization

Our civilization has been characterized by a multitude of various definitions, carrying both positive and negative connotations. One of such definitions, undoubtedly of negative character, is the term *consumer civilization*, meaning a civilization where demand for material goods and services is not justified by real needs, and in which *consuming* is considered to be the most significant indicator for the quality of life of an individual, or even for their *happiness*. In such a culture, the only and most significant question is money – the cult figure of capitalism – and the main role attributed to a person is “being a consumer” who should never feel satisfied (Golka, 2004; Szulakiewicz, 2012; Aldridge, 2006). Of course, the necessary condition to be able to consume is having some income, the source of which mostly being *professional work*.

George Ritzer, author of a book “Enchanting a Disenchanted World”, and a term “mcdonaldization”, indicates that where goods and services are consumed, revolutionary changes take place, which have a profound influence on social life. In the life of an individual, consuming has been gaining significance: we often consume on our own, we buy many diverse goods and services in one place, and we consume many identical things in the same places as most other people. In order for people to be able to consume at every time, consumption has been given – at least, from the consumer’s point of view – a spectacular, even a “magical” character. As G. Ritzer writes, in the “temples” of consumption, an interaction of users with the temple itself and its products and goods takes place: to a much higher degree than they interact with other people. The amount of money that individuals can spend on consumption varies, but every individual nowadays is, in fact, a consumer. Thus, we all proceed towards *hyperconsumption*, i.e. a highly democratic form of consumption that concerns the vast majority of the society. The temples of consumption are e.g.: fast food restaurants, retail chain shops, mail order catalogues, shopping malls and electronic centres, discount stores, etc. This group may also contain cruise ships, casinos, chains of adult entertainment centers. According to the author, shopping malls are the places where people go to practise their “consumer religion” most frequently. They are no longer commercial and financial businesses only, but also places in which people satisfy their need for contact with others and the nature (owing it to the presence of water and plants: trees, bushes, flowers), as well as their need to celebrate. They

provide the same kind of centrality as traditional temples, and they are built in such a way as to have similar balance, symmetry and layout. Customers feel a sense of community there, and get certain services as well. Almost in the whole world, religious practices encompass entertainment, which is why shopping malls provide customers with such means of having fun; they also give the opportunity to have meals there. As Ritzer notices, the temples of consumption are significant not only as such, but also when taking into consideration the influence they have over the elements of social environment. Many traditional, or even old-fashioned places have begun to imitate them: sport facilities, closed luxurious housing estates, educational centres, medical institutions and hospitals, museums and charity organizations, or even churches (the most original of them have hectares of parking space, mental counselling services or multimedia Bible knowledge lessons) (Ritzer, 2004).

Consumer civilization brought us, above all:

- *The development of consumer capitalism*, that is a social system based on maximizing profits, permanent economic development, and individuals focusing on their own interest. One of the system's characteristics is being reluctant to mature and take responsibility for oneself and for others.
- *The development of consumer culture*, which results from consumer capitalism and bases on the assumption that happiness is achieved by purchasing and owning goods, and a person's value is not who they are or what features they have, but what they possess and how much it cost.
- *The development of cultural narcissism*, which comprises of overrating oneself and one's abilities, discrediting every value but success, money and fame, concentrating on oneself and one's needs. As a result, the individuals foster such features as arrogance, self-love and admiration, conceitedness, vain gloriousness, and egocentrism.
- *The explosion in consumer choice*, i.e. the multitude of options, plurality and diversity of possibilities offered to the individuals of today, and at the same time *the development of the so-called society of choice*. The choice has an obvious and outstanding instrumental value, as it allows the individual to receive what they want and need, in accordance with their financial abilities. It also has an expressive value, which may be even more significant than the previous one, as it is related to one's freedom, autonomy and self-determination.

- *Time obsession, “despotism of time”* – time has become a value itself, being reified and fetishized; it has become a separate resource, a product that may be saved, lost, wasted, invested, utilized, sold and bought.
- *The speed obsession, the acceleration of life* – the more time-saving technologies, the more pressure we are under. Although the quick pace of living facilitates technical advancements and countries’ enrichment, and positively influences the standards of living and the contentment of citizens, it has been even faster, and the number of activities and things to do has been increasing. The pressure of living whilst constantly watching the time is a strong stressor and the cause for many contemporary civilizational diseases.
- *The development of the non-stop, 24-hour, night-time economy, manic and galloping societies* – around-the-clock activity of the society adversely influences the functioning of individuals, thus resulting in posing a threat to their health and lives.
- *Individualization* – being self-oriented and developing as a person has become an even greater value. Interpersonal interactions have become indirect, impersonal and lacking mutual closeness; individuals expect the relations with other people to give them diversity, novelty and interchangeability, exactly as shopping does (Tomaszewska-Lipiec, 2018).

These are just some selected examples.

Of course, as has been already mentioned before, one must receive an income from doing professional work in order to be able to consume. At present, consumption is possible almost non-stop: there are no days free of consumption, and almost every “temple” is open 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. Thus, the development of consumer civilization favors undertaking increased professional activity. As Arlie Russel Hochschild notices, *“exposed to a continual bombardment of advertisements through a daily average of three hours of television, workers are persuaded to “need” more things. To buy what they now need, they need money. To earn money, they work longer hours. Being away from home so many hours, they make up for their absence at home with gifts that cost money. They materialize love. And so the cycle continues”* (Hochschild, 2003).

*Consumerism* is expansive, and this expansion is visible in promoting various styles of consumption, which are more attractive for particular individuals. The most important styles are, e.g. *ostentatious consumption*, related to trying to distinguish oneself from other people; *symbolic consumption*, directed towards the goods representing a specific lifestyle of an individual, a group or the whole society; and *spontaneous consumption*, which is irrational and impulsive. It is worth adding that at present, in the times of the aforementioned hyperconsumption related to the excessive purchasing and consuming of goods, the consumers themselves have become the most important – instead of consumer goods. Treating individuals-consumers in a subjective way in market relations favors the increase of one's activity, and one of the forms of giving people subjective character is the so-called *prosumption*. It assumes that people actively seek individualized consumer goods adjusted to their expectations. Consumers' role changes along with the development of prosumption. They ceased to be only the purchasers of the produced goods and services; they have become co-creators that contribute ideas, knowledge and competences to the process of developing new products. They have begun to fulfil the function of a "worker" but with no social security and no income, that is of a *prosument* (Bylok et al., 2016). In other words, consumption has transformed from being a means of achieving some goals into a value itself. Owing to consumption, one is able to attain individual goals and satisfy the needs connected with the social and psychological spheres. It might even be said that a peculiar *consumption ethos* has emerged, related to the ideology of consumerism that assumes that consumer values that stimulate individuals to excessive consuming, i.e. hedonism, self-realization through consumer goods, individualism, etc. are in the centre of social values. The results of the research on contemporary societies indicate that today's generations are present time-oriented and strongly focused on new values that get socialized quickly. The process of internalization of such values is reinforced by the mass media, that promote hedonistic consumption in everyday life. Consequently, professional work has gradually lost its value-making function to consumption and has become a means of providing the funds necessary for serving the role of a consumer (Bylok et al., 2016).

Individuals are encouraged to devote as much of their time as possible to consumption, thus interfering in the organization of their free time. Consumption no longer concerns a limited range of issues; it applies to all the aspects of life.

In the light of the hitherto reflections and analyses made by multiple scientists in the subject literature, a thesis may be advanced that the attractiveness of consumer civilization results from its development being based on the assumption that *happiness* is the ultimate goal one should strive for. However, happiness is understood as a form of *pleasure*, which is related to an individual adopting the hedonistic attitude. The means of achieving this goal are consumer goods, which have charge of pleasure and potential for bringing happiness. Modern *hedonism* is based on emotions that are stirred up by the image of a perfect state of pleasure related to using of goods one has dreamed of. Pleasure is a value that stimulates an individual (consumer) to engage in activity today. Furthermore, in consumer civilization, a happy life seems to be of primary value, but only when it is instant and never-ending (Bauman, 2007).

In consumer civilization, there is a tendency to identify happiness with possessing material goods, which has an influence over both social life and the lives of individuals. Thus, the following part of the paper contains questions about the ways of defining happiness and the consequences for the society and individuals of selecting the values and goals promoted by the consumer culture.

### **Towards “the happiness formula”**

The issue of *happiness* is especially interesting from scientific point of view.

In the history of happiness research, we can distinguish two main trends: the first one, already mentioned before, called the hedonistic trend, related to the Cyrenaic school (4 BC), and the other one, the eudemonistic trend, stemming from the Aristotelian definition of living a good, virtuous life. Both trends give a different answer to the question about a happy, successful life. For the supporters of the first approach, it is important whether an individual is happy with their life and whether it brings more joy than pain. The balance of pleasure and sorrow is the measure of a good life. On the other hand, the supporters of the second trend believe that happiness does not equal positive emotional experiences, but rather achieving what is worth striving for, what gives one the sense of meaningfulness of life, despite the suffering and disappointments they have experienced. It is worth adding that nowadays, in common thinking, we can also distinguish two life orientations. Some believe happiness equals maximizing pleasant experiences, whereas for others striving

for goals that make their lives meaningful is most important (Czapiński & Panek, 2015).

Empirical studies concerning happiness started in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century in a few fields of social sciences simultaneously. A decade ago, it was estimated that the number of reports concerning this topic was about 3000 then, and the number of publications increased exponentially. In the recent years, the research into happiness has suddenly become institutionalized; the International Society for Quality of Life Studies, the International Society for Quality of Life Research and the Database of Happiness have been established, and a specialist academic Journal of Happiness Studies has been published. Obviously, these are merely some examples.

In the dynamically developing positive psychology, the founder of which is believed to be Martin Seligman (Seligman, 2020), an impressive scientific output concerning positive effects of happiness has already been produced. Based on the analyses that had been carried out, researchers have suggested that happiness is the force that makes one “move forward” and favors commitment to tasks and people. Undoubtedly, it is therefore something that is desired in the contemporary world. The analyses performed within this field have also showed that human health comprises of physical, mental (emotional and individualistic) and social wellbeing. The sense of overall wellbeing depends on the balance between the challenges an individual has to face and the resources (internal and external) they have at their disposal (Dodge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders, 2012).

Happiness has been considered to be the main criterion for an individual's mental health. It has been noticed that the sense of happiness is related to multiple real benefits, such as better physical health, lower levels of psychopathologies, better coping skills or even longer lifespan. This is why the aim of positive psychology is to further extend the knowledge of how to help people increase their levels of happiness.

In the theoretical model proposed by Kennon M. Sheldon and Sonja Lyubomirsky et al., happiness has been defined as the evaluation of the long-term balance of positive and negative emotions, conditioned by the three main factors that influence its current level:

- 50% – the natural potential of the individual,
- 10% – situational/contextual factors that occur in life,
- 40% – volitional factors, related to the intentional actions taken by the individual which need effort. The activities may be of cognitive, behavioral or

volitional character, i.e. related to the determining important personal goals and pursuing them.

Taking the aforementioned determinants of happiness into consideration, the proposed model supposes that it is possible to induce and maintain the happiness level that would be higher than the initial happiness level of the individual.

The up-to-date studies of the field have shown that, e.g.:

- It is important to be able to choose the ways of actions and the role of the person being adjusted to their actions. In other words, not everyone is able to experience an increase in the level of happiness as a result of undertaking the same actions. Their predispositions, values, interests and aptitudes are of key importance; they predispose individuals to gain more advantages from certain actions than from others,
- The effort needed to initiate and then perform and maintain actions aimed at raising the level of one's subjective wellbeing plays an important role,
- Social support is a significant correlate of mental wellbeing,
- The actions taken habitually play an important role; i.e. the actions that are initiated in a regular manner due to their potential positive outcome, not the actions performed routinely and automatically,
- It is also crucial to participate in culture (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2007).

Raising the level of one's happiness is not a simple task, as people oftentimes fail to predict the influence of future events in an accurate way and are often under delusions; every person is able to gain happiness, although by different means. S. Lyubomirsky et al. have concluded that there are twelve types of activity that actually and lastingly increase the sense of happiness; not every kind of activity works for every person:

- 1) Relations with other people: helpfulness and kindness, strengthening the relations with other people, expressing gratitude, forgiving;
- 2) Resourcefulness and pursuing goals: exercising the ability to cope with difficult situations, doing what we really enjoy and are engaged in, being committed in striving for goals;
- 3) Optimism and worrying: practicing optimism, resisting the tendencies to self-pity and comparing oneself to others;
- 4) Body and spirituality: taking care of one's body, finding joy in life, practicing religions and spirituality (Lyubomirsky, 2008).

One of the most important concepts that positive psychology has come up with is the formula that the researchers called simply the *happiness formula*:

$$H=S+C+V$$

The enduring level of happiness (H) of an individual is determined by the biologically set range (S) of the potentially sensed happiness, circumstances in one's life (C), and the volitional factors, i.e. the factors under one's voluntary control (V). The challenge that positive psychology has to face is using the scientific methodology in order to determine what kinds of C and V variables may cause the level of happiness (H) reach its highest level possible (within the potential set range) (Haidt, 2007).

According to Ed Diener and Robert Biswas-Diener, authors of "Happiness. Unlocking the Mysteries of Psychological Wealth", happiness is a „process" and not a "destination"; it is "a way of travelling" and not the "final station". As both authors claim:

- People who feel engaged and happy at work are usually better workers.
- Happy people usually have more acquaintances and close friends.
- Happy people seem to be healthier and live longer.
- Happy people are more prosocial, i.e. trust others more, and are keener to help them.
- Happy people are more peaceful and cooperative (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2010).

The scientists describe the relation between the feeling of happiness of an individual and their health, or more precisely: morbidity rate, survival rate, and lifespan. Health is one of the elements of human's mental wealth, as it gives energy and possibilities to undertake actions that lead to living a happy life. They also describe the connection between happiness and social relations, and remind that the need of contact with others is a genetically-determined feature of humans. Close interpersonal relations and friendships full of mutual understanding, care and perceiving the other person as valuable are the ones that bring the most happiness. As they notice, the level of being content with life suddenly rises when one gets married. Although being married does not guarantee happiness, the cohabiting unmarried couples are not as happy as the married ones. Everything depends on how strong their love and friendship are. Similarly, the relations between children and parents are the sphere of interesting research results. It turns out that children are not a significant source of happiness, which may seem shocking and hard to accept. Furthermore,

the study results quoted by the authors also indicate the positive influence of successful social contacts over one's health. Thanks to other people, we feel safe and important; we know that they may be helpful in case of need; thanks to emotional support we are able to cope with difficulties more efficiently; and their diverse impact upon us may be either a challenge or a source of new, creative ideas. As far as money is concerned, the well-known formula –

**Figure 1.** The happiness formula.

$$\text{Happiness} = \frac{\text{what we have (attainments)}}{\text{what we want (aspirations)}}$$

Source: E. Diener, R. Biswas-Diener, *Happiness: Unlocking the mysteries of psychological wealth* (Szczęście. Odkrywanie bogactwa psychicznego), Sopot 2010, Wyd. Smak Słowa, p. 114.

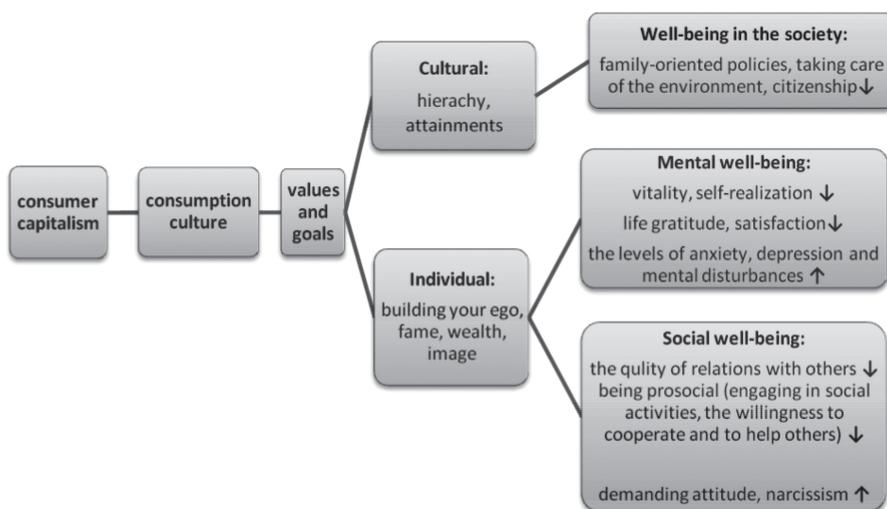
– clearly illustrates that it matters the most if an individual generates enough income to be able to satisfy their needs and desires. In this context, it is worth emphasizing that materialists tend to be less happy, as chasing after money does not allow them to focus on other aspects of life (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2010).

It is also worth noticing that the analyses of various scientists are similar and most of the results of the scientific and empirical studies suggest that age, gender and economic growth are related to happiness only to a small extent. The studies to date have suggested that the individuals who, instead of chasing after wealth, strive for intimacy and strengthening relations with other people, as well as for personal development, and contribute to the wellbeing of the community, experience a greater sense of happiness (Meyers, 2007). The studies emphasize the significance of leisure time, i.e. the ways of spending one's free time (especially sport and physical exercise turn out to be very effective). However, free time gives more joy when an individual has to pull themselves together, has the chance to utilize their talents, and when they achieve something owing to their activity. It has also been confirmed that leaves, holidays, days off work may be sources of happiness, relaxation and good health. It can also be mentioned that the issues of happiness are closely related to the time psychology. The studies in this field have been conducted by, e.g., Philip J. Zimbardo.

In this context, and also in relation to the features characteristic of the consumer civilization, it has to be strongly emphasized that the results of empirical studies carried out in various cultures and within many age groups indicate that focusing on gathering goods and identifying owning things with happiness is correlated positively with the preferring of such values as power, affluent life, material comfort, financial security and hedonism. In a situation when the significance of material goals increases, at the same time it correlates negatively with the importance of such values as: relations with other people, family, inner balance and religion. Furthermore, the increase in the striving for materialistic goals makes the striving for non-materialistic (autonomic) goals less intense, and the increase in hedonism (pursuing the goals related to the physical “self”) is related to the decrease in spirituality (pursuing the goals related to the “transcendental self”). Studies in the field of psychology led to similar results: when the significance of the materialistic goals (money, fame, wealth) becomes higher, or in other words, when materialism increases, then spirituality, religiousness, ethical sensitivity, harmony, the sense of meaning decrease (Zawadzka, 2014).

It may be thus stated that the aforementioned correlates of happiness are increasingly often neglected by people living in consumer society.

The reflections are illustrated in the scheme below:



**Figure 2.** Consumption culture, values and goals versus the well-being in the society, mental and social wellbeing. Based on Zawadzka, 2014, p. 22.

Having analyzed the global trends in the transformations of values, one may agree with Ronald Inglehart's stance. He was a creator of the postmaterialism theory (see (Inglehart, 1977) and more), and at the same time a researcher involved in the World Values Survey (a global research initiative in the field of social sciences, which comprises cyclical, representative comparative sociological studies; at present, 120 world societies participate at all the six inhabited continents, which comprises more than 90% of the population). When describing the system of values in the global perspective, R. Inglehart indicates two possible ways of its further evolution:

- 1) The first comprises the changes on the scale: from acknowledging traditional family paradigms, institutions and authorities – especially the religious ones, identifying oneself with the nation and feeling national pride to the secular-rational values that emphasize individual achievements, effectiveness and independence, democratic participation in political life and rational-legal legitimization of institutions.
- 2) The second one is the transition from the orientation towards materialistic values that result from the need of survival and physical and economic safety, to postmaterialistic values that express the needs of self-realization and self-expression, interest in the quality and comfort of life, as well as inner spiritual aspects of religious beliefs.

The results of the studies carried out as part of European Value Studies (EVS) and World Values Survey (WVS) confirm those predictions to a great extent. The highest degree of adopting both the secular-rational and postmaterialistic-individualistic values is to be observed in the countries of high levels of socio-economic development, such as Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany, Finland, Switzerland, Austria, France, and Belgium.

At the same time, the shift towards the postmaterialistic values has recently been observed; the values have become dominant in the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, as well as in the Scandinavian and Western European countries (Jasińska-Kania, 2009).

The aforementioned issues are an intriguing and inspiring interdisciplinary scientific problem, in the light of which it is increasingly often noticed that being happy and satisfied with one's life is influenced by the material prosperity,

i.e. wealth (the consumer civilization concentrates on) but also non-material prosperity, constituted by a myriad of factors, the most significant of which being: social security, interesting job and the kinds of activity; leisure; healthy life free of stress; family; friendships; warm social relations; bodily and mental health; spirituality and the feeling of sense in life; positive emotions and attitudes. The factors are non-measurable; their ranges overlap (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2010). All the aforementioned aspects constitute happiness; neglecting one of them or the lack thereof has some influence over the quality of the life of an individual.

To sum the reflections up, it is worth mentioning that since 2012, to UN's order, a "World Happiness Report" has been prepared. A year before that the UN General Assembly passed a resolution to declare the 20<sup>th</sup> of March the International Day of Happiness. The document emphasized that happiness and wealth are the primary goals of humanity, which is why they must be included in social policies of each country. In order to deliver the report, 156 countries are analyzed, and the findings are published exactly on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March. Although the attempt to measure happiness – a subjective feeling – may raise some doubts, the report has established certain measurable variables based on which the studied countries are awarded points. The factors presumably have real influence over the feeling of happiness amongst citizens. The 6 variables of happiness that the report includes are:

- 1) GDP per capita,
- 2) Life expectancy according to WHO,
- 3) Social support: the respondents were asked if they had relatives who would help them if they were in trouble,
- 4) Freedom to make life choices,
- 5) Generosity: the respondents were asked if they donated any money to the charity the month before,
- 6) Corruption – the higher the rank, the lower the level of corruption.

The World Happiness Report in 2019 (Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, n.d.) was delivered by the scientist under the guidance of John F. Helliwell, Richard Layard and Jeffrey D. Sachs. The report is published by the agenda of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network organization. According to the results, the residents of Finland are the most satisfied with their lives; this country has been announced the happiest in the world for the second time. The remaining 10 happiest countries were: Denmark, Norway, Iceland,

Holland, Switzerland, Sweden, New Zealand, Canada, and Austria. Poland was placed among the first fifty countries in the world; it came 40<sup>th</sup>, before the Baltic countries, Hungary and Japan. The soon-to-leave EU United Kingdom scored 15<sup>th</sup>, Germany – 17<sup>th</sup>, the United States – 19<sup>th</sup> and the Czech Republic – 20<sup>th</sup>. Russia finished in 68<sup>th</sup> place, between Pakistan and Philippines. Ukraine placed 133<sup>th</sup>, between the Republic of Chad and Ethiopia. The least happy countries are Afghanistan, the Central African Republic and South Sudan.

### **Final conclusions**

The deliberations presented in the paper paint a picture – and probably a pessimistic one – of an individual who seeks happiness in consumer civilization. Of course, these are only some selected reflections that should be further discussed; there are also some deepened analyses that might be carried out. In the presented approach, the authors wish to articulate the tendencies that are present particularly in social life. The individuals in consumer civilization, by identifying the sense of happiness mostly with objective quality and standards of life and external successfulness, are forced to satisfy the ever appearing new material needs and replacing the used-up consumer values. Thus, consumption becomes a kind of enslavement, which has become of total character: economic, political, cultural and mental. It has, therefore, become a real danger. As the consumption ethos is being highly glorified as the factor of social development, the category of happiness becomes distorted and its correlates – neglected. The mentioned transformations, being the sign of the times, are characteristic mostly of the lives of the residents of highly-developed countries, thus leading to the transformations of every aspect of existence. This historical change in the ways of perceiving happiness has become an important subject of scientific studies and researchers, especially those in the field of pedagogy, must not remain indifferent to this fact.

The issues of the relations between the individual and happiness, discussed within this paper, may be perceived as a significant topic from pedagogy's point of view. Taking into consideration the dynamics and changeability of today's world, as well as preparing the subsequent generations to being successful at work and in life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is crucial to give individuals the skills to create their own life and career paths, and to make them aware that it is important if they feel happy. The presented reflections open a discourse in the

field of one's functioning and happiness in the perspective of consumerism; it is of key importance for both pedagogic theory and practice. The "search" for happiness may thus be perceived as a challenge for contemporary education. In the context of the presented reflections, it must be emphasized that it is necessary to educate people about conscious, ethical and responsible consumption.

**Abstract:** One of the tasks of education in preparing an individual to professional work. However, in the sphere of human's work, dynamic transformations determined by many factors take place, including the development of consumer civilization, in which being happy is like a "duty". The article ponders upon the concept that consumer civilization appears attractive owing to its development being based on the assumption that *happiness* is the ultimate goal one should strive for. Yet, happiness is understood as a kind of *pleasure*, which means that an individual adopts a hedonistic attitude. The tendency to identify happiness with possessing goods influences the lives of both the individual, along with their attitude towards work, and consequently – the whole society. By glorifying the consumption ethos as the factor behind social development and growing rich, the category of happiness becomes distorted and its correlates – neglected. The authors of the paper have devoted it to the analysis of the so-called happiness formula in the reality of consumer civilization. The aim of the reflections is the postulate for pedagogy to pay close research attention to the relations between an individual and happiness.

**Keywords:** consumer civilization, professional work, consumption, happiness, pedagogy

**Streszczenie:** Jednym z zadań edukacji jest przygotowanie jednostki do pracy zawodowej. W obszarze ludzkiej pracy zachodzą jednak dynamiczne przeobrażenia determinowane m.in. rozwojem cywilizacji konsumpcyjnej, w której istnieje "obowiązek" bycia szczęśliwym. W artykule zaprezentowano pogląd, iż atrakcyjność cywilizacji konsumpcyjnej wynika z oparcia jej rozwoju na założeniu, że to *szczęście* jest ostatecznym celem, do którego należy dążyć. Przy czym, *szczęście* rozumiane jest w kategoriach *przyjemności*, co wiąże się z przyjmowaniem przez jednostki postawy hedonistycznej. Tendencja do utożsamiania *szczęścia* z posiadaniem dóbr nie pozostaje bez wpływu na życie społeczne, a także życie jednostki, w tym podejście do własnej pracy. Coraz silniej gloryfikując etos konsumpcji jako czynnik rozwoju społecznego i bogacenia się, wypacza się kategorię *szczęścia* i zaniedbuje jego korelaty. Autorki po-

święciły niniejsze refleksje analizie tzw. wzoru na dobrostan psychiczny w warunkach cywilizacji konsumpcyjnej. Celem podjętych rozważań jest postulat podejmowania – w *pedagogice* – poszukiwań badawczych w obszarze relacji: jednostka-szczęście.

**Słowa kluczowe:** cywilizacja konsumpcyjna, praca zawodowa, konsumpcja, szczęście, pedagogika

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