

## LIFE ASPIRATIONS – A THEORETICAL APPROACH

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### Resume:

The article presents a theoretical approach to the problem of aspiration in life. The concept of aspiration thus is widely used on the basis of many scientific disciplines, most commonly used by pedagogists, psychologists and sociologists but also those involved in economics, biology and linguistics. Aspirations are among factors differentiating strongly human life in a wide variety of their dimensions. They are implemented ad hoc as well as in perspective sphere thanks to human activity concerning life plans aimed to meet own expectations.

### Key words:

aspirations in life, person, motivational processes, development aspirations.

### Анотація:

**Бродацька-Адамович Єва. Аспірації в житті людини: теоретичний підхід.** У статті запропоновано теоретичний підхід до проблеми аспірацій у польській науковій думці. Автор зауважує, що поняття «аспірація» використовують представники багатьох наукових дисциплін, зокрема педагогіки, психології, соціології, а також економіки, біології, мовознавства тощо. Аспірації належать до чинників, що найсильніше диференціюють людське життя з урахуванням усіх його проявів. Аспірації бувають тимчасовими й перспективними, завдяки активності, що сприяє реалізації життєвих планів людини та здійсненню її сподівань.

### Ключові слова:

життєві аспірації, людина, мотиваційні процеси, теорія аспірації, польська наукова думка.

### Аннотация:

**Бродацька-Адамович Єва. Аспирации в жизни человека: теоретический подход.** В статье предложен теоретический подход к проблеме аспирации в польской научной мысли. Как отмечает автор, понятие аспирации используется во многих научных дисциплинах, например, в педагогике, психологии и социологии, а также экономике, биологии, языкознании и др. Аспирации относятся к факторам, которые сильнее всего дифференцируют жизнь человека с учетом всех её проявлений. Аспирации осуществляются как временно, так и перспективно, благодаря активности, способствующей реализации жизненных планов человека, стремящегося к удовлетворению своих ожиданий.

### Ключевые слова:

жизненные аспирации, человек, мотивационные процессы, теория аспирации, польская научная мысль.

Among many factors which determine human activity an important role is paid to aspirations. This is due to the fact that they are an important component of an individual's personality which while being developed and increased, at different stages of his life and under the influence of a variety of factors and conditions the individual tries to implement his plans and desires. Aspirations are among factors differentiating strongly human life in a wide variety of their dimensions. They are implemented ad hoc as well as in perspective sphere thanks to human activity concerning life plans aimed to meet own expectations.

The concept of aspiration is a term with varied meanings which is based on the complexity of the issues involved, implications and how they combine in different ways the problems with many areas of science on one hand, and diversity of human experience on the other. It is differently defined, both in scientific meaning as well as in everyday terms. The ordinary meaning of this term is identified with several other ambiguous terms, such as ambition, purpose, aim, desire, dreams, need, claim or demand [19, p.101]. The definition of the term 'aspirations' given in the Polish language dictionary [16, p.59] attributes to an individual and his desires in order to achieve something significant in life such as gaining career or getting good education. The concept of aspiration thus is widely

used on the basis of many scientific disciplines, most commonly used by pedagogists, psychologists and sociologists but also those involved in economics, biology and linguistics. A lot of controversy on the issue is raised on different understanding of the concept by researchers representing these disciplines. Despite many years of ongoing discussions on its terminology, it is still not possible to formulate a universal definition of aspirations, leading the researchers to continual attempts to work out ways of resolving it.

Aspirations in the field of literature are usually defined as an attempt to achieve the intended objectives, to implement some of life ideals, [13, p. 24] or aspirations, intentions, desires, wishes about the results of own actions or achieving the desired states of an individual, acting for him as a reward [15, p.18]. Aspirations are also referred to as dominant needs, aims and interests of an individual or a group and thus they become the subject to a strong motivation combined with the intention for further implementation, which does not mean that they have to be fulfilled [2, p.85]. Yet another definition says that aspirations are durable and strong enough wishes of an individual related to states and behaviors, reflecting his future life and the will to possess different objects [7, p.32]. Some researchers point to the fact that these are the needs of an individual and recognized values, which

underlay aspirations and they indicate to be a factor that goes beyond the requirements of the current situation, in which the individual has been placed and which directs towards the progress in order to put him up to a higher level [9, p.12]. They also have the nature of desires aroused by constantly renewing ideas and cultural models. Others stress that the fact of recognition of some of the values is not sufficient for them to become the subject of aspirations. Therefore, there must occur additional belief in possibilities of achieving the aspirations [19, p.299]. A common feature of all definitions, including those not covered in this article is a clear remark that they relate to future states [1, p.81]. It should be also noted that aspirations can be defined differently depending on the branch of science to deal with. Therefore, it is differently perceived by has a pedagogist, a psychologist or a sociologist. The typology of aspirations is also different in this respect.

Scientific literature shows a number of aspirations, selected on the basis of several criteria, among which, apart from the level of aspiration, there is a relationship between the level of aspirations and possibilities of their implementation, the link between aspirations and the action, time prospect needed to implement, their durability and variability, their relationship with the knowledge as well as their content. The typology of aspirations is also made considering them in relation to possibility of their completion i.e. the relationship between the level and individual conditions of effective actions, taking for example into account the state of health of the individual, his personal development, possessed abilities, competence, success and failures in the above actions or life conditions. On this basis, the so-called adequate and inadequate aspirations can be distinguished. The latter may take the form of overestimated or underestimated referred to personal abilities of the individual [1, p.81]. Adequate aspirations can be found in situations where an individual takes measures appropriate to possessed conditions of their implementation. Aspirations are overestimated when the planned actions exceed possessed by the individual possibilities of their implementation. As a result his actions become ineffective and lead to failure. Underestimated aspirations can be found in situations where the objectives pursued by the individual are far below his abilities [18, p.197].

A common division is to distinguish them on the basis of their actions. Thus we will point out to wishful or action based aspirations [15, p.12].

Wishful aspirations which are closely linked with the determination of the ideal aim, future-oriented, related to fulfillment of dreams and wishes of the individual. These may generally not have to be combined with the action. However, behavioral or action based aspirations relate to a particular aim. They occur when the individual attempts to make an impact on the surrounding environment, trying to transform it deliberately and systematically [15, p. 9-11].

Another criterion is time perspective associated with implementing of the chosen action. Applying this criterion it helps to extract temporary and long-term aspirations [15, p.12]. The first ones can be referred to as desires and intentions with respect to the near future. The second ones require timing, they are also assumed to be relatively stable. Although aspirations can be attributed to long duration, it cannot be ignored that they are provided with volatility. In terms of perspective aspirations there can be distinguished those based on different horizontal and vertical mobility. Horizontal mobility is determined by the size of changes referred to the individual's place in the social structure whereas vertical mobility is dependent on the size of the changes, which the individual desires in relation to his position occupied in the social or professional hierarchy [15, p. 9].

Another criterion applied can be focus on a link between aspirations and the consciousness of targets set [1, p. 84]. Thus we can differentiate two groups of aspirations: conscious and latent. The first ones relate to goals which an individual tries to achieve while the latter ones are unconscious, and therefore very difficult to diagnose, and their interpretation does not give conclusive results. Their existence is concluded indirectly by analyzing the objectives, content and the value.

Yet another criterion for differentiating aspirations is their subject. The application of this criterion allows to distinguish aspirations aimed at achieving an object such as a desire to complete higher education, or starting a family. Aspirations of the second kind are focused on getting specific objects such as a flat or a car.

Aspirations can be also divided according to their mobility [1, p.84]. Thus they can be referred to on the basis of high or low mobility. Some researchers distinguish horizontal mobility of aspirations which are associated with the change of the place of residence, work, study, etc. and the vertical ones bound with changes in the social or professional hierarchy [1, p.85].

A very important criterion may finally be the content. On this basis a number of aspirations can be distinguished such as: educational, school, cognitive, professional, referred to self-education, social, pro-social, personal, recreational, related to interests and passions [18, p.199-200].

Aspirations are shaped by many factors. Most often mentioned are psychological (personality), sociological (environmental) and pedagogical factors [1, p.84]. Among the determinants of personality an important role is paid to the needs, such as the need to respect and recognition or the need for self-fulfillment, not to mention the need for security, which plays a huge role in appearing and development of aspirations. According to Abraham Maslow concept needs are associated with human self-development and they can occur only after lower rank needs are satisfied such as physiological needs [12, p.29].

In scientific literature close attention is paid to relationship of aspirations with motivational processes. Basic definition of a motive refers to a state of an individual aimed at achieving a certain object or finding yourself in a particular mental situation. Motives affect wishes which are meant as one-time, short-term desires to achieve a certain state, pushing towards an action or restraining from the action. It means that the result of the task has an impact on the level of aspirations, which increases the level of success whereas failure lowers aspirations. It should be noted that the relationship between a sense of success and the level of aspirations are individual.

The main difference between wishes and aspirations is the lack of durability of the former [7, p.32-33]. Therefore, since such motives play such an important role in this respect it can be seen that they turn into a number of requests. It should be remembered however, that these are only repeated requests which form aspirations, and only lasting and strong ones create desires while a few life aspirations result in an individual orientation [7, p.33].

The concept of aspirations involves the concept of their level. This one is referred to by many authors as a result and a set of efforts [12, p.14]. The level of aspirations is sometimes also referred to as expected by the individual result of actions aimed at achieving outlined goals [13, p.24]. It is also treated as a set of aspirations outlined by the hierarchy of objectives accepted and identified by the individual, regarded as important and decisive about his life plans.

The level of aspirations is often recognized from the point of view of psychology, sociology, and pedagogy. In psychological terms, the level of aspiration is anticipated or expected result of activity. Psychology refers to aspirations as part of a broader phenomenon of motivation and it is mainly interested in their nature. They can be recognized as psyche characteristics seen in terms of fixed parameters concerning desires, or in other words a part of a wider phenomenon of motives of activity. Thus they are understood as desires or aspirations of a certain intensity associated with the satisfaction of a certain need and aimed at a specific target. Aspiration level is seen as a result of an action anticipated by the person accomplishing aimed goal compared to the level of actual implementation and can serve as an indicator of certain attitudes or personality traits. In sociology aspirations are understood as a set of efforts outlined by a hierarchy of objectives accepted and defined by the individual to regard them as important and determine life perspectives or generally speaking - as dominant needs, aspirations and individual or group interests based on strong motivation in order to be implemented. Therefore, sociological research on aspirations come down more to investigations of individual's aspirations rather than their nature. From the point of sociology the level of aspirations is considered from the perspective of the desires and aspirations of large or small social circles, where the reference surface can be aspirations of these groups.

In terms of pedagogical perspective the level of aspirations is understood as in the case of sociology. However, except the reference to a hierarchy of values characteristic for sociology, they are accompanied by a discussion on the values and aspirations of a cultural nature [10, p.22-24]. It is usually noted that the level of aspirations can be recognized in terms of subjective and objective. In case of the former, their level is considered as a mechanism for regulations of human relationship with the neighborhood which triggers actions aimed at achieving a particular goal or prevents the individual from taking particular forms of activity. The other term defines the level of aspirations as the ratio of an expected result compared with the result which has been obtained [19, p.16]. Pedagogical studies, which take up the issue of aspirations their studies usually reflects the influence of the educational school process on the formation of the level of students' aspirations.

Aspirations are influenced by many factors, and because of a complicated process on the study of

human nature, their determinants have not been fully understood yet. Among the factors determining the formation of human aspirations there are usually mentioned psychological factors - mainly related to specific personality characteristics of an individual, sociological – resulted from specific characteristics of the environment in which an individual acts and pedagogical - resulted from the complex interactions taking place under the influence of educational effects on an individual.

Development of aspirations is also related to self-esteem. A high self-esteem helps to raise the level of aspirations. Self-assessment of an individual and his aspirations depend on a variety of individual factors, which comprise physical and mental personality traits, as well as environmental factors such as: the family, the group, local environment, and cultural factors [12, p.25]. The impact of the family is multi-factor and it usually appears in patterns of behavior and assessment criteria, but also in the material area.

The studies on aspirations were carried out in Poland in 60's of the previous century and they were mainly investigated by sociologists. Initially the research was focused on life aspirations and within the time it was spread over educational and professional ones. It was the dominant stream in 70's and 80's. At the end of the 20th century all the inquiries referring to the study over aspirations started to boost and they resulted from the political, economical and social changes in Poland which were closely linked with serious transformations on the job market. It demanded from a number of high school graduates proper qualifications related first of all to their competence. Hence, it is the first decade of the 21st century when the issue of aspirations has become so widespread among research workers.

In academic literature referred to pedagogical, sociological or psychological issues many empirical publications can be found on educational, career and life aspirations among students and university students [e.g.; 6; 11; 4; 14; 20]. However, studies on that issue were mainly conducted with reference to secondary school students, post-secondary and vocational schools perceived in different context and seen from other perspective. So far, especially during the last few years among Polish publications on this area there have been works reflecting the issue of students' aspirations, however restricted basically to career aspirations in the context of a job market [22; 5, p.101-123]. Apart from coherent publications, the problem of aspirations has been presented in reports based on complex research

carried out throughout Poland, still referred to different faculties [8; 21;]. As it refers to the analysis of the subject on aspirations among university students educating qualified pedagogists in the future, it must be pointed out that in Poland there have not appeared coherent publications which proves that there is not any scientific point of reference. Because of lack of such academic study or any comparable character in social sciences both in Poland and abroad the existing state of knowledge is mainly restricted to findings on its former stages. It needs to be stressed that any comparable analysis worked out before the year 1989 on the issue of young generation aspirations have already lost its diagnostic value. Intensification of the social and political transformations both in Poland and Europe have changed situation of young people, who face up new possibilities but also dangers e.g. unemployment or poverty.

The aspirations are very important and key motif of human's behaviour as they induce to take up various activities directed towards self-improvement and own surrounding. They reflect the shape of social and economic life, significantly effect on individual and social groups functioning. Therefore, by knowing young people's aspirations it enables to predict and understand behaviour both referred to an individual as well as a social group. University students are just ahead to face up numerous life decisions concerning their life career, further education, taking up a professional job, personal life as well as their acting in social and political sphere.

The issue of aspirations stays in close link with, so important in the field of contemporary pedagogy - the issues of axiological nature. In modern and computerized world values undergo fast changes. People representing two generations followed in succession so far feel the lack of understanding. It is becoming so clear to notice in progress the process of alienating of an individual, it has also become real to experience global consciousness, people are guided by the principle of self-interest, material benefits and pleasure which lead interpersonal links towards materialization. A classical disfunction of social structures, including school as the future work environment for the students of pedagogy faculty is leading towards pathology of social life. There appear such phenomena as a rampant lust for success, carrier and wealth which results in egoism, depreciation of basic social values as well as apathy, discouragement, frustration and passivity of an individual, whereas a human as the basic social

value loses his role. After all, for pedagogy it is the human with his aspirations on every stage of education to be regarded as the most important. Apart from axiology issues, with no matter is the issue of educational aspirations provided by university or a college, as it has specific features which may be used to describe its recipient i.e. the youth participating in the process of higher education, still shaped with certain aspirations on the moment they already start a university course. Even though, he or she still stays in the time course of an intensive development and this period characterizes the growth of functions efficiency, conditioning cognitive abilities of an individual. High quality of intellectual processes create favourable conditions towards the outlook of the world. At the same time a self-portrait is being shaped, with an arisen tendency towards independence from external factors, an increased self-control and self-regulation behaviour patterns. There appear two significant tendencies - the first one refers to specifying personal plans and life aspirations, whereas the other reflects in striving after actions and significant deeds which positively change the environment.

A university or a college is also not infrequently a value in itself. It is aimed to let fulfill other personal and social highly praised values. A university or a college is an institution with its unique features which distinguish it from other stages of education as it educates and develops education but also induces to undertake own research. That way, the students are accustomed to their own activity, scientific trust, perceiving problems, criticism and striving after the truth. The process of education, in much extent is based on the

students' individuality and the choice of faculty has been mostly made of their own free will, according to their interests. It influences quality and engagement into the study, indulging into the studied field deeply. Moreover, there may appear model interactions between educational and self-upbringing activity, especially when the tutor and the foster child have the same goal to achieve, which means gaining education and preparing towards a professional role. On this basis, a very important problem is the issue of educational, professional and life students' aspirations which certainly undergo changes and modifications but still projecting a desire to get professional knowledge. This can be regarded as a process of actions leading towards acquiring by the individual the profession of a teacher-educator and achieving high professional and life usefulness. It still denotes that the necessity of study on aspirations is extremely important, with reference to those who as university or college graduates will adopt tasks labeled to intellectuals and whose potential undoubtedly translates into the shape of modern civilization.

The theoretical assumptions presented in this article make an important point as a reference towards the current study over the problems of aspirations which condition conscious career planning and taking responsibility by the youth. Latest studies allow to predict the direction of young people's aspirations referred to education and career supervising based on the market demands. That is why aspirations are becoming a common source for those representing various scientific areas such as sociologists, psychologists, pedagogists or even economists.

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