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## COMPUTER GAMES VERSUS SHAPING PRIMARY PUPIL'S PERSONALITIES

**Introduction.** Nowadays we live in the time when the development of information technology is so fast that we cannot keep up its pace. Fascination of computerisation is becoming one of everyday duties — obligatory forms of spending free time among primary school pupils. ‘Internetomania’ and ‘computeromania’ belong to the most popular means of mass media in the world. All deliberate pupils’ activities focus on innovative improving their environment, which in turn aims at making the standards of everyday living higher and more attractive. ‘Computeromania’ is used for utilitarian, professional and finally for entertainment purposes. The main feature of Polish society is the fact that computer is becoming a preferred and priority means used in learning, playing and work. This article draws attention to the role of computer games in shaping primary pupils’ personalities as they, apart from the Internet, make a ‘guru’ for their entertainment life. They captured the youth displacing and suppressing all the other attractive ways of spending their free time. Access to the computer, the Internet and computer games is still seen as a innovative achievement of the present time, unlimited range of interdisciplinary subjects, source of our world’s events and phenomena, rivalry, parts of ‘co-playing’, and above all it is believed to be the way of escaping from difficult, dull everyday life’s reality and routine.

**The concept of play, game and a computer game.** Play is a basic form of child’s activity, it accompanies children from the early age, it is the main source of children’s development until the time of adolescence. In pedagogical, psychological and linguistic literature ‘play’ and ‘game’ are treated sometimes as synonyms and sometimes as antonyms.

According to T. Siek-Piskozub [1] the difference between a game and a play is not so distinctive. In some languages there is no difference between them, eg. Russian — игра, German — spiel, French — jen and English — fun, play, game. Play is ‘a peculiar, subconscious exercise that introduces the player into biological, social and cultural life. With the passing time it takes more and more attractive forms characterized with joy, happiness and pleasure’ [2]. It is hard to give a uniform definition of a play and a game. A game is believed to be a play conducted in precise, strict rules which have to be observed rigorously. According to G. J. Gibbs [3] a game is an activity conducted by cooperating and competing decision — makers who are trying to reach their goals and obeying the rules of the game. R. Maidment i R. H. Bronstein [4] claim that a game is an activity including interactions between individuals and groups aiming at achieving their goals. The means used to achieve them are determined by the rules of the game. Therefore, a game is one of the forms of a play.

A game has usually an entertaining, socializing character, including elements of competition and rivalry. It is based on previously set rules. A game is also an activity which we can perform in groups consisting of several, dozen or so or a few dozen of people. It is also a fight between players. The most popular with Polish youth games are computer games. A computer game comes from IT area, it is a kind of a computer program – entertaining and educational, whose using consists in solving various tasks, eg. strategic, dexterous, adventurous, logical, etc. tasks. J. Skrzypczak defines a computer game as “a computer program that is a set of comprehensible commands performed by a processor. The flexibility acquired in this way enables activating on the same computer a lot of different games whose character is either entertaining or educational’ [5]. According to S. Łukasz a computer game is ‘a written in any way and on any digital carrier (tape, floppy disk, electronic systems) computer program that fulfills a ludic and playful function by facilitating electronically generated manipulations on the screen (liquid crystal display, television set, etc.) of graphic objects and texts, following the rules set by the authors of the game. Unlike graphic programs, games are used only for entertainment reasons, now then they are not of any utilitarian functions which would enable any creative work” [5].

The concept of a computer game is connected with the concept of a video game. It is written in Wikipedia [6] that the discrepancy in understanding either a computer or a video game is related to the differences in electronic devices used to activate the game. The hardware platform for a computer game is a personal computer whereas to activate a video game wire or wireless consoles are used. However, the difference between these two concepts vanishes in the colloquial language with the flow of time. As a result, these two terms — a computer game and a video game have been used interchangeably in the professional literature and have been treated together as interactive entertainment.

**Personality as a spectrum of processes reflecting primary pupils' activities.** In the present article we will deal with a personality area of a pupil, which starts to develop and be shaped in an early age of a child. Child's personality is a subject for personality psychology. The definition of personality cannot be assumed unambiguously in Psychology, because the ways of treating it by specialists differ. J. Strelau defines personality as "united, dynamic and extremely complex system whose main function is to regulate human's activities" [7]. Somewhat different approach is represented by J. Reykowski who claim that personality is a system of an internal functional organisation because of which mutual human relations with the world are regulated by exchanging information. Personality is made of: instinctual and emotional impulses, values, operation system, cognitive elements and the most important structure 'I'. In turn, K. Obuchowski maintains that personality is an organisation of psychological properties in every person (of both: those originated biologically and those acquired in social experiences) being the reason for all the human's activities. This organisation consists of a programming system, which decides on direct effectiveness and gives the chance of distant effectiveness. It also sets a course of human's actions and it is connected with consciousness. The second element of the organisation is a basic system, which plays a vital role in stabilisation of distant effectiveness, determines people's possibilities made in the programming system. Its base is created by processes and activities in brain (productivity, outer control, memory) [8]. As it was already mentioned a personality area is a subject for personality psychology, which distinguishes a lot of theories presenting personality in different contexts. Personality is defined by L. A. Pervin [9] as a complex whole of thoughts, emotions and behaviour, which makes people's lives and directs them consistent. Personality is made of a lot of elements, structures of the processes which reflect activities of individuals.

Modern developmental psychology [10] characterises a primary school pupil (II educational stage — IV—VI) mainly by development of the level of integration of the mechanisms that regulate cognition structure. They replace instinctual and emotional impulses and begin controlling them. A pupil gets into the stage of operating thinking, controls emotions, reacts to acquired knowledge and to absorbed moral standards, that is so called higher emotionality. Pupils get to know the influence of their emotions on their behaviour and thanks to that they express their emotions in a better way, which is expected by others.

One of the personality elements is interest, which during adolescence is not stable yet. M. Żebrowska writes: 'passion for learning becomes dependent on the social surroundings and its popularity with peer groups of the adolescent [11]. This age is said to be the time of getting into various interactions and of being assessed by family, teachers, local society and peers, who play an

important role in upbringing of the child. J. Strelau [12] is of the opinion that a peer group and taken social standing by a pupil are two elements which influence on the picture which pupils create about themselves. At that stage moral reasoning is developed significantly on the basis of rules and principles that were given by people from the immediate surroundings. Children start evaluating the behaviour and standings of their peers and adults reflecting their points of view and intentions of their actions.

In our opinion, the personality of an adolescent is susceptible and receptive to both positive and negative influences of computer games. Our interests are focused on a social and cultural phenomenon of computer games. We are going to draw attention to the direction and the quality of influence computer games on primary school pupil's personality area. The influence of the games on pupils' needs, standings, behaviour, psychosocial development, cognitive abilities, interests, driving forces on adolescents is becoming bigger and more many-sided. Lack of control over various kinds of games bring adverse effects, which we are going to discuss in the latter part of the article. There will be presented many standpoints emphasizing both virtues and negative elements that influence on shaping the whole personality structure of a primary school pupil.

**Computer games — their kinds and description.** The success and incredible popularity of computer games have contributed to the mess in terminology in computer games. According to B. Zajączkowski [13] the reason for that is historical chaos related to them and bigger and bigger technological possibilities. Producers of electronic entertainment are not allowed to call their products of artistic value. Therefore, there is not a unified, stable classification. Computer games can be divided in terms of hardware platform (designed to be played on the personal computer), desktop console games that require a connection to the screen (Play Station, Xbox 360, Wii), portable console games with a built-in screen (Play Station Portable, GameBoy) and console using other multimedia appliances with the possibility of playing games (mobile phones).

Taking into the consideration the age of a player European organisation ISFE made a classification system of games called PEGI. Among the age ratings of PEGI there are games for children under 3 years old such as Bugs Bunny or Tom & Jerry. They do not include the element of fright, violent scenes, nudity, etc. The games for six-year-old children contain sounds and scenes a bit frightening and scary. They may be of some nudity. The next age group is the one which we are particularly interested in, namely children at the age of 11–13. It can be seen here violence towards animals or people, nude scenes, elements of aggression and mild vulgarism. The fourth group make 16-year-olds. Computer games are full of violence, sexual abuse, brutality and scenes showing drugs and crime. The last group in PEGI is assigned for adults, over 18 years of age. There is violence, sex, crime, aggression, etc. in the games.

We have presented two classifications, but there are a few dozen kinds of games. Each

of the player chooses the game, which suits the most. There are various kinds of games, all of which try to suit the player's needs. For some what it only matters is strategy, for others skills, or simulation of reality. All the preferences mentioned above relate to the games available on the market. The curiosity is that there are main categories distinguished, in which there are subcategories, but these divisions do not show completeness or accuracy. Nowadays these games are popular that combine elements of different types of games (hybrids).

*Dexterity games* are one of the most popular games and they are based on cunning and clever manipulating the buttons by one of the players. They require, as J. Ulfik-Jaworska [5] writes, a very good acquisition of the mechanics of the game by observing the behaviour of both the character controlled by the player and the enemies. It is essential to be able to use skilfully a joystick and a keyboard. The task is to pass levels in order to reach the last one and to perform the last task, which accomplishes the game. There are several kinds of games distinguished in this genre such as: platform, racing, music, 'shooting' and adventurous. The main character here is involved in a plot and in order to reach the final level the character, with the help of the player, is to pass a few or a dozen or so levels in which he avoids various traps, jumps over the precipices, stray in the mazes and corridors, and fights. Such games require from the player to have good reflexes and skills, and also the ability of logical thinking. Such games, according to E. Borowik-Dąbrowska [14] are created in three — dimensional environment and the action is seen from the back of the character. The content of violence in such games is medium or very low. There is usually no brutal reality. Blood appears only from time to time and only in some games.

*Adventure games* — they are games, in which the most important thing is the plot which the main character is involved in. The player controls and steers the character's actions and enterprises, who becomes entangled in extremely unusual, unrealistic stories. The player conducts the dialogues with other characters, finds the objects that he uses in certain time and in a certain place. These games are said to be hybrid.

*Feature games RPG* (Role — Playing Games) involve individual characters, teams or groups of persons. The characters get experience for performed tasks and won battles and fights. The more experience a certain character gets, the more powerful they become. The most vital here is the development of the character's possessed features such as strength, speed and swiftness, accuracy of fire, etc. The player walks along fantastic lands and fights. Being patient and consistent is essential. These games contain some violence.

Strategic games require from the player several abilities of planning and predicting the results of undertaken decisions. The aim achievement depends on

Careful consideration of decisions and taking into consideration various aspects of reality in which the action takes place. J. Ulfik-Jaworska [5] distinguishes in this genre two kinds of games, which are war strategy and economy games. In war strategy games, as the author writes, the player leads a created army at the time of the war; the player is in favour of one of the sides of the conflict. The plot in such games can be either a fantasy, futuristic product or it can be based on authentic events in the history. The player impersonates a main leader of the army whose task is to plan and undergo different operations. The other games in strategic games are economy games which put the player in the position of a governor of some properties and the task is to administer them, multiply the fortune and finally reach a goal. In these games there are simulators to govern the town, football club, stock market, etc. Well thought — out planning, foreseeing, spotting the chances which occur [14] and rational administration of reserves are main abilities required in order to be successful in this game. Among strategies E. Borowik-Dąbrowska mentions four strategies, in which the game takes place in some rounds and real — time strategies, in which everything happens in progress.

*Simulative games* enable the player driving certain vehicles and leading people. The main characteristics about these games is their excellent graphics, smooth animation whose aim is to give a realistic reflection of the reality we are surrounded by. Most of the simulators do not have clearly stated aims which would enable the player to win. Among such simulators B. Zajączkowski i D. Urbańska-Galanciak [13] list plane and car simulators, social and animal simulations, ‘clothing’ and ‘makeovers’. Vehicle simulators enable the player to control a chosen machine giving the illusion of steering a real machine. Special equipment, steering wheels, rudders are used in these games. Social simulations offer the player virtual environment, in which the player can interfere with no limits. The authors emphasize that it gives the possibility of simulating people’s everyday life, their behaviour in different circumstances.

*Sports games* are games in which players can train sport, administer a created sports team. They represent the oldest type of games, which is still very popular with pupils. They are computerized versions of different sports: soccer, ski jumping, volleyball, golf, tennis, baseball and others. The priority in this game is dexterity and the ability of planning various activities.

*Logical games* are considered to be very popular with children youth and adults. They demand logical thinking, stimulate cognitive processes to creative activities, learn how to solve problems, puzzles, riddles, solitaires, practise perceptiveness and the ability of planning their own activities. Combinations, discoveries, searching regularities motivate players to take up playing logical games.

*Educational games*, in our opinion, are the most valuable kind of games for pupils. The fulfilment of three main aims cognitive, teaching and educational

aims is seen in this kind of games. They contain didactic and educational values. They are assigned to different groups of pupils. They are described to have attractive graphic design and extremely effective soundtracks. Educational games are interdisciplinary and multipurpose because the player enters the area which is, for obvious reasons, the most interesting one.

Having presented the classification of computer games we are aware of the fact that the list has not been completed fully. There appear at the market more and more attractive games that let experience a lot of fascinating adventures in the virtual reality, often full of aggression, violence, brutality and cruelty.

**Positive and negative influence of computer games on shaping the personality of students — in the light of researches.** Computer games affect children, youth by the way of transferring the content, stimulate to activeness, give the opportunity to react to what is happening in the screen. They cause, as it E. Zielińska [15] defines, the effect of virtual illusion: 'If I had managed in the most dangerous, tricky, difficult virtual situations, I would definitely have no difficulties in coping with similar ones in the real world'. If we are going to investigate the influence of computer games on the personality area of primary school pupils, we have to take into consideration: *providing behaviour pattern* (impersonating the computer character, appearance, imitation and copying, conduct, behaviour), *creating system of values, shaping the attitude and standings* (emotional and anti — emotional experiences, emotional and anti- emotional attitude) towards facts, phenomena and situations. In many cases it is a pupil who understands aggression and violence shown in the computer screen in a playful way and then he realizes that the real contact with such situations lead to feeling lost, wrong doings, educational problems and finally to infringing the law, *training of patterns of behaviour* (repeating the activities, although violence and brutal scenes are simulated the player deliberately and consciously attacks, does harm, kills, fights, wins and destroys others, by observing the character's behaviour the player learns certain schemes unfavourable for shaping the player's harmonious personality), *creating opportunities for solving problems and taking decisions* (violence is rewarded by the success achieved in the game, the player becomes identified with the aggressor and wins, and because of that the player gets adept at that and by multiple playing the player gives in to violence and gets used to it. "The more accurately you shoot, the easier you can win and get the most points.").

Pupils in primary, secondary and high schools more often get fascinated and talk about so called 'red games', that is such games in which aggression, violence, killing become natural everyday phenomena. Cruelty, lie, taking drugs, shedding blood in the computer screen are ordinary, accepted by adolescents condition which loosens, relaxes and lets survive in their future lives.

In 2011—2012 we carried out researches among 84 pupils from sixth classes of primary schools who continued learning in one of the schools in

Malopolska province. In our research we used opinion poll and our techniques and tools were questionnaire and interview. The aim of undertaken researches was analysis of computer games which pupils spend their free time with. It was vital for us to check the influence of computer games on shaping primary pupils' personalities. It was assumed that they are both positive and negative factors. The main problem was put in the following question: 'Do and to what extent computer games influence on shaping primary pupils' personalities?' The following hypothesis was set: Computer games can influence either positively or negatively on primary pupils' personalities. Thanks to the questionnaire we collected the information concerning the behaviour, shaping emotions, motives of pupils' actions triggered off by computer games. In turn, the second tool — interview — turned out to be very useful. We got to know pupils' parents' opinions on the role, significance and usefulness of computer games and the ways they influence on shaping primary pupils' personalities. There were 71.9% girls and 28.1% of boys who took part in the research. The most often chosen forms of spending free time was for girls: watching TV and work on the computer whereas boys spend their free time surfing the Internet and doing sport.

Nowadays a lot of different computer games can be found at the computer, information market. There are also modern computer games that can be bought in the Internet. The conducted research shows that the most popular games are dexterity, adventure, strategic and sports (boys), musical and stylization (girls) games. However, the most often boys chose 'racing' and 'fight — brawl' games just because these games are competitive. They boost their self — esteem as they believe they are the best (perfect reflex, fast pace of performing tasks, cunning). The main reason for playing these games turned out to be willingness of constant winning.

Primary school pupils play systematically such games like: GrandTheft Auto: San. Andreas, The West, Metin 2, Margonem (boys) oraz The Sims, 'dressing up', 'Mario bros', 'Harry Potter'(girls). The respondents in the research are the happiest when they overcome obstacles, hardships and difficulties, break the records and doing harm to others, in others words killing, murdering and being involved in a brawl. However, the most attractive is setting new records, winning and competing. Considering that computer games release certain emotions among pupils attempts to specify them were taken. Pupils listed such emotions like discontent, dissatisfaction, happiness, joy, pleasure, satisfaction but also anger, stress, rage and aggression. It must be underlined that computer games are great entertainment for young people and they are believed to be useful in the process of learning and in life in general. A great number of respondents pointed out their educational and teaching functions. In the questionnaire pupils were asked to give the time they spend in front of the computer. 67,2% of them spend 2,5—3 hours a day playing

computer games, while for the rest it takes 1,5 hours, 1 hour and 0,5 hour. We believe that most of the time they spend is on playing computer games. Young people play computer games just because there are not any other more attractive and more interesting activities to do, eg. going to the cinema, to the theatre, to the museum, going on trips, etc. The research shows that computer has dominated all the other forms of entertainment and has become the most important one — one of the mass media that provides pupils with outer and inner stimuli. The respondents talk about computer games with their parents, peers and siblings. The most often they talk to their peers. It often happens that, in the days of the great economic crisis the mass media take over the role of upbringing children. Busy, overworked parents are not able to take care of harmonic and versatile development of their children. Buying computer games parents want to fulfil children's free time. They do not consider values of their purchases, they are simply coaxed by their children. They let them use computer games that are inappropriate to their age, with aggression, sex and vulgarism.

Having analysed the results of the survey we arrived at the conclusion that parents do not control children's computer games and their playing. Most of the parents do not the titles nor kinds of computer games their children spend so much time playing on. The interviews with parents also show that the life of adolescents is significantly ruled by media. They rush to their computers to get to know new friends and new acquaintances in the virtual world — often dangerous neglecting those real and valuable ones. Parents claim that computer fulfils an entertainment function — helps in learning and informs us currently about the latest achievements in science, culture and technology. Most of the respondents is convinced that computer games exert negative influence on shaping personality model for young people. The reason for their opinion is the fact that children take examples and follow blindly the behaviour of negative characters found in media. Pupils in primary schools dissociate from the real world, forget about the surrounding them world and they do not care about their way of sitting while playing games, forget about the need to be active outside, they do not care if their eyes are tired, etc. The influence of the computer is much bigger. In some children the range of emotions gets wider while other children get quiet and withdrawn, they become indifferent to the things and the world presented in computer games. This indifference occurred quite often and it is advanced to a high degree. Pictures of aggression, violence cause in adolescents uncertainty, fear, irritation and anxiety. The responding parents think however, that their control is sufficient. They claim that they administer economically the time their children spent in front of the computer. Nevertheless, the control is sometimes not consistent as they work at night. They do not talk about the games and do not know their contents, either. As result, it should be pointed out that, children feel free in choosing and playing computer games.

**Conclusions.** Having analysed the outcome of the researches it has to be said that computer games influence both negatively and positively on shaping primary pupils' and adolescents' personalities. We have pointed out negative interactions as primary and more important ones because they are more frequent and more common. They are: destructive influence on the physical, moral and socio-emotional development, behaviour and attitudes, overburdening and exploitation of the nervous system, limiting interpersonal contacts in family life and peer groups, disturbance in the day schedule, low self — esteem, worse marks at school, violence, aggression, brutality, cruelty, relativization of their lives and many others. There are positive aspects of influencing computer games on personalities and they are: being in touch with a modern form of culture, relax, satisfaction, the development of cognitive — intellectual and motor — dexterity spheres, facilitation of perceptive, motor — sight abilities, facilitation of motor — sight coordination, creating a proper picture of yourself, socialising, contacts with other young people in all over the world, cooperation, bravery, creativity, cunning, success, satisfaction, fulfilling emotional needs, opportunity to achieve success, correcting mistakes, backing up and helping pupils in acquiring the information from many walks of life, shaping persistence and patience, developing interests.

Computer games should, above all, shape and enrich versatile development of pupils' personalities in the range of particular spheres, that is physical, intellectual and socio — emotional, but they should not be a danger and cause lack of feeling safe in the Internet. Youth is particularly prone to media interaction and they cannot cleverly and reasonably choose and assess computer games available on the market. They take their precious time away, distract them from more ambitious activities. The behaviour of children and their attitude towards the world cause doubts, aggression, violence, embarrassment, carelessness. All has therefore both positive and negative aspects. With an appropriate parents' leading and directing a suitable kind of game can be a source of knowledge and make for a pupil a way of escaping from their everyday, boring and mundane activities and duties.

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