



***From Personal to Empirical Interests in the Light
of the Four-Phase Model by Suzanne D. Hidi
and Ann K. Renninger and Selected Narratives
of Qualitative Research Participants
Od zainteresowań personalnych do empirycznych
w świetle czterofazowego modelu rozwoju
zainteresowań Suzanne D. Hidi i Ann K. Renninger
oraz wybranych narracji uczestników badań jakościowych***

ABSTRACT

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE: The scientific aim of the article is to deepen understanding of the process of developing interests from personal to empirical ones with reference to the four-phase model of interest development by Suzanne D. Hidi and Ann K. Renninger.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHODS: The research problem is included in the question: What is the process of the development of interests from personal to empirical ones with reference to the model of interest development by Suzanne D. Hidi and Ann K. Renninger in the light of selected narratives of qualitative research participants? The research method is the method of biographical narrative analysis: thematic analysis of the collected material (Riessman, 2008) with the help of a digression-reflective essay.

THE PROCESS OF ARGUMENTATION: The research process was theoretical-cognitive and empirical in nature. The first step was developing theoretical foundations for understanding the problem. Then, we focused on the concept of interests according to the four-phase model of interest development by Suzanne D. Hidi and Ann K. Renninger. The next stage was the analysis and interpretation of the collected research material with the use of the narrative technique called a reflective-digression essay. The last step was drawing conclusions and suggesting postulates.

RESEARCH RESULTS: The analysis of the collected material showed the importance of the development of personal interests for professional development. The stages of development of these interests proceed in different ways, but individual (personal) interests are explored in an interdisciplinary dimension, which facilitates personal and social development of a human being.

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CONCLUSIONS, INNOVATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS: There is a need to correlate the above-mentioned interests, which may stimulate the development of all educational entities remaining in specific interpersonal relationships. Therefore, their specific features in the individualization of the educational process, especially at the academic level, should be reflected in educational curricula.

→ **KEYWORDS:** **PERSONAL INTERESTS, PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS, EMPIRICAL INTERESTS, FOUR-PHASE MODEL OF INTEREST DEVELOPMENT, NARRATIVE THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

STRESZCZENIE

CEL NAUKOWY: Celem naukowym artykułu jest pogłębienie rozumienia procesu rozwoju zainteresowań od personalnych do empirycznych w odniesieniu do czterofazowego modelu rozwoju zainteresowań w ujęciu Suzanne D. Hidi i Ann K. Renninger.

PROBLEM I METODY BADAWCZE: Problem badawczy prowadzonych badań zawiera się w pytaniu: Jak przedstawia się proces rozwoju zainteresowań od zainteresowań personalnych do empirycznych w odniesieniu do modelu rozwoju zainteresowań Suzanne D. Hidi i Ann K. Renninger w świetle wybranych narracji uczestników badań jakościowych? Metodą badawczą jest metoda biograficznej analizy narracyjnej-tematycznej zgromadzonego materiału (Riessman, 2008) za pomocą eseju dygresyjno-refleksyjnego.

PROCES WYWODU: Proces badawczy ma charakter teoriopoznawczy i empiryczny. Pierwszym etapem było opracowanie podstaw teoretycznych dla zrozumienia problemu, następnie skupienie się zasadniczo na pojęciu zainteresowań, czterofazowym modelu rozwoju zainteresowań wg Suzanne D. Hidi i Ann K. Renninger. Kolejnym etapem była analiza i interpretacja zgromadzonego materiału badawczego za pomocą techniki narracyjnej, jaką jest esej refleksyjno-dygresyjny. Ostatnim krokiem było wyciągnięcie wniosków i zaproponowanie postulatów.

WYNIKI ANALIZY NAUKOWEJ: Analiza zgromadzonego materiału wskazała na znaczenie rozwoju zainteresowań personalnych dla rozwoju zawodowego. Fazy rozwoju tych zainteresowań przebiegają w różny sposób, jednakże zainteresowania jednostkowe (personalne) ulegają eksploatacji w wymiarze interdyscyplinarnym, co sprzyja rozwojowi osobistemu i społecznemu człowieka.

WNIOSKI, INNOWACJE, REKOMENDACJE: Nasuwa się potrzeba korelowania wspomnianych zainteresowań, co może stymulować rozwój wszystkich podmiotów edukacyjnych pozostających w konkretnych relacjach interpersonalnych. Zatem uwzględnienie ich specyfiki w indywidualizacji procesu kształcenia zwłaszcza na poziomie akademickim winno znaleźć odzwierciedlenie w programach edukacyjnych.

→ **SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** **ZAINTERESOWANIA PERSONALNE, ZAINTERESOWANIA ZAWODOWE, ZAINTERESOWANIA EMPIRYCZNE,**

**CZTEROFAZOWY MODEL ROZWOJU ZAINTERESOWAŃ,
ANALIZA NARRACYJNA TEMATYCZNA**

Introduction

The concept of “interests” often appears both in the scientific context and in everyday life. Beata Bajcar, Anna Borkowska, Agnieszka Czerw, Agata Gąsiorowska, and Czesław S. Nosa write that “interests indicate [...] specific kinds of situations, objects and activities the exploration of which is interesting and important for the subject. The profile of interests is a form of behavioural fulfilment of preferences in the conditions shaped by environments (family, peers, school, professional environment, etc.)” (Bajcar et al., 2006, p. 9). We often refer to the correlation of interests with intelligence, talents and personality, which is the subject of the research carried out by, inter alia, Phillip L. Ackerman and Eric D. Heggstad (1997), who also review similar research works by authors such as Dorothy Adkins and Frederic Kuder (1940), Gary D. Gottfredson, Elizabeth M. Jones & John L. Holland (1993), John L. Holland (1973), etc. They notice a relationship between a higher level of intelligence and broader, more specific areas of interests (Ackerman & Heggstad, 1997). Moreover, a positive relationship between interests and talents can be noticed in the realistic, investigative and artistic fields, while in the enterprising and conventional area such a relationship does not occur. The above-mentioned authors conclude that talents, interests and personality develop in tandem, which means that the level of talent and personality dispositions determine the probability of achieving success in the fulfillment of tasks that belong to a particular field, while interests determine the motivation for taking up tasks. Successful fulfillment of a task facilitates development of interests in a particular area. It is the opposite when the fulfillment of a task is not satisfactory. In such circumstances the level of interests decreases (Ackerman & Heggstad, 1997), which also depends on a person’s internal and external factors, i.e. generally speaking, on their level of maturity. In this context, we may assume that properly developed interests in a particular manner stimulate and activate our motivational system, especially the internal one, which facilitates a person’s creative self-fulfillment (Pervin, 2002). This, in turn, may support self-becoming (Wojtyła, 2000) understood in the anthropological-personalist perspective that elicits each person’s unique individuality which is connected with developmental activity determined by Kunowski as investigation (Kunowski, 2000) that is inseparable of creative development of interests expressed in the practical and empirical dimension. Taking into account the meaning of interests for the development of a person, taking up the above-mentioned subject seems to be justified, especially due to the fact that the scope of scientific literature related to the pedagogical category of interests requires further exploration, particularly in the context of their development process. It must be emphasized that the reference to the four-phase model of interest development by Suzanne Hidi and Ann K. Renninger (2006) made by the author of this work is only a starting point for the outline of theoretical and empirical analysis.

Another aspect that will be presented is outlining the course of the research process in the qualitative strategy with the use of selected biographical narratives through three reflective-digression essays on the narrators' experience in developing their personal interests leading them to empirical ones. These essays provided the researcher with data to be analyzed and interpreted. According to the principles of the qualitative research in question, codification refers to maintaining full names of people who approved of using those names in the narrative analysis that has been carried out. The criterion of selecting the sample was saturation (Palinkas et al., 2015; Patton, 2002) applied with reference to the richest content that optimizes the results, and providing the reply to the research problem included in the question: *What is the process of the development of interests from personal to empirical ones with reference to the model of interest development by Suzanne D. Hidi and Ann K. Renninger in the light of selected narratives of qualitative research participants?* The answer to the research question will be formulated after the layer analysis and data interpretation. They will enable us to gain an opinion on the problem, draw conclusions, and formulate the basic postulates.

The four-phase model of interest development by Suzanne D. Hidi and K. Ann Renninger

Hidi and Renninger prepared the four-phase model of interest development based on three main assumptions. First, interests include affective and cognitive factors that may function independently, but interact with one another, which is confirmed by neurobiological analyses. The affective component of interests is connected with experiencing positive emotions that accompany engagement, while the cognitive component is related to perceptive and representative actions. Interests may be of a positive or negative nature which energizes tasks or activities that are taken up (Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Panksepp, 2003). Second, the authors refer to biological bases of the above-mentioned components of interests, so they place interests in the nature of a human being who is physically, cognitively and symbolically involved in the subject of those interests. Third, they adopt the thesis according to which interests result from the interaction between a person and a specific subject, i.e. content towards which the person is directed. They notice the person's potentiality of interests, the influence of the environment specifying their direction, and the human being's participation in developing those interests, which requires effort, the person's self-regulation and support from the society. According to the authors, it must be emphasized that interests refer to specific contents, and not to the person's predispositions. It is true, however, that, in the course of the development of individual interests, one may come across new content related to their specific subject, new challenges, ideas, etc. that will also facilitate the development of particular predispositions (Hidi, 2000; Hidi & Renninger, 2006). Thus, there may be a situation in which developed predispositions will facilitate the development of interests, which should be taken into account in professions, especially educational ones, e.g. due to

the connection between interests and the motivational system supporting the achievement of objectives and the level of learning (Ainley, et al. 2002).

While analysing the nature of the classification of interests into individual and situational ones, as well as the result of their own research, Hidi and Renninger prepared the four-phase model of interest development the nature of which is syncretic. What we can notice in situational interests are focused attention and affective reactions triggered by an external impulse, characterized by a diversified level of lasting in time. This kind of interests is mainly specified as *extrinsic* and it positively affects the cognitive performance (e.g. reading comprehension), narrows inferencing, focuses attention, and enables integration of new information with prior knowledge. Individual, i.e. *intrinsic* interests, in turn, which are basically rooted in a person, refer – respectively – to the lasting predisposition that may make a person reengaged in the subject of interests over time, or to such a psychological state in which that predisposition has been achieved (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). Such interests are based on what a person perceives, cognitively directs towards themselves, and what they understand as an opportunity to act. Their positive influence refers to attention, recalling content, persistence, effort, and achievement of proper levels of learning. The authors of the above-mentioned model of interests emphasize the motivating function of interests (Hidi & Renninger, 2006) that may be based on the person's experiencing "something" that is subject to internalization and that, in a specifically processed form, may become externalized. The object of individual interests may inspire a human being to take up reflections not only in the personal, but also in the professional dimension.

The model of interest development includes four phases. According to Hidi and Renninger (2006) they are as follows:

- *triggered situational interest* results from short-term changes taking place in affective and cognitive processing. Such changes are caused by, e.g., a surprising piece of information or intensity of a stimulus. This kind of an interest is usually supported by the environment and it may be a precursor for an upgrading predisposition than reengages particular content over time, leading to more developed phases of interests;
- *maintained situational interest* is a consequence of triggered situational interest. It involves focused attention, persistence of time and event, reappears and is maintained because of the meaningfulness of the task and/or engagement of the person; it does not have to be supported externally, although the educational environment may facilitate maintaining such interest. Just like the previous phase, the interest may become a precursor for reengagement in the subject of interest or it may support further development of various forms of interests;
- *emerging individual interest* refers to previous phases of interest and engagement in the same understanding as above; this phase is characterized by positive feelings, stored knowledge and values. Just like in the previous two phases, the person who values the opportunity to reengage in the emerging subject of interest direct themselves towards that subject if possible. The development of this phase of

interests is determined both by personality and by the social environment. Support from the environment plays an important role, especially in the moments of difficulties. It should be added that this stage of interest development does not have to proceed because a person, for various reasons, may not take up further activity in that direction (Hidi & Renninger, 2006);

- *well-developed individual interest* is characterized by the same as above. The only difference is that, at this stage, the subject of interest makes a person able to anticipate in further stages connected with processing their work into the development of interests without feeling any effort put into it. What is more, well-developed interest makes a person persist in long-term, creative and constructive undertakings, as a result of which the person generates new types and levels of strategy of working with particular tasks. It facilitates solving problems, broadening the scopes of understanding various aspects of interests, and self-regulation. Education that takes into account the aspect of well-developed interests provides numerous opportunities that support interactivity, taking up challenges and building one's knowledge (Hidi & Renninger, 2006), which is very important in developing professional interests that reach for the universal hexagon of preferences by Holland (Bajcar et al., 2006).

The role and meaning of personal (individual) interest development for the development of empirical interests in selected narratives of the qualitative research participants

The above-mentioned model of interest development by Hidi and Renninger is a point of reference for the analysis and interpretation of the collected research material, according to the qualitative strategy of the research (Creswell, 2013) and to the stages of the research process indicated by Szmidt (2018). The method used in the research was narrative – biographical analysis in thematic dimension. The participants of the research and, at the same time, the researchers, earlier carried out the educational-research projects according to their preferences. Such an approach made it possible for them to reflect on discovering and (often) reinforcing their way of life, which sometimes required coping with epistemological and empirical difficulties. This was accompanied by extending their awareness concerning the selection of the scientific paradigm, the formulation of the objective and research problems, and the selection of techniques of data collection, as well as its analysis and interpretation, which requires the application of strategies and principles of creative acting with the maintenance of the research autonomy. The research resembled the model of a working *network* which was, however, different than a commercialized network in that it was not subject to “rigid” schematic standardization oriented at particular effects, but it was oriented at free update of the participants' creative potentiality, starting from the lowest level of that network up to the highest level that animates the research process, which was compliant with the adoption of the research-subject-participation paradigm (Ciechowska & Szymańska, 2018)

based on personalism. One of the most important results of the creative actions carried out within the research included the authors' reflective and digression essays entitled *From Interests to Research in Action; From the Project [...] to Empirical Studies*, etc.

The narratives being the source of data for the subject of the article have been evaluated in terms of the criterion of saturation. After obtaining the consent of the authors, three essays have been selected for narrative – biographical, layer analysis and interpretation. This provided the researcher with the basis for formulating the research problem that was signaled above. The attempt to solve this problem helped to understand the connection between individual (personal), situational, professional, and empirical interests. Therefore, the four-phase model by Hidi and Renninger was explored in terms of the stage of empirical interests, which will be presented below. What is significant, although the research participants indicated various paths in development of interests, they accented its starting point in childhood.

In case of Joanna, her individual interest took a "spontaneous" or natural form and became an aesthetic-social property of personality that was being shaped (Dąbrowski, 1975). She writes: *My adventure with dancing started at the preschool age, so it has always been present in my life. Dancing has always been one of my everyday activities. As a child, I was not aware of the fact that it could be absent.* Dancing helped Joanna cope with shyness and make friends, and, due to physical exercises, she was learning systematic work and fighting with problems, which required strengthening her will and diligence that shaped her moral character. Her dancing skills, which were shaped and developed, led to another stage of interest, i.e. professional skills. She recalls: *At the age of 18 I started teaching dancing.* This stage resulted directly from the previous one and it seemed inseparably connected with it, as Joanna became a more and more professional dance "coach" or "instructor." Further events in her life forced her to take up a new challenge, i.e. educational work with children. In her text, she emphasizes: *Whenever I do something, I want to do it well, and, as I was not fully satisfied with it, I started experimenting with something else. In this way, I started conducting classes for preschool and early school-age children based on fairytales and their dance staging. Children's favourite musical themes from fairytales and cartoons, colourful costumes, and stage sets, made children very happy.* Despite various difficulties, conducting such classes was very satisfactory for Joanna. We may conclude that her spontaneous, triggered, and also situational interests merged, which is why Joanna saw herself not only as a person fascinated by dancing, but she also started discovering a specific kind of her teaching vocation connected with pedagogical talent (Michalski, 2017). Teachers who cooperated with her noticed that and they constructively motivated her to take up bachelor studies. In this way, Joanna entered the next stage of interests connected with planning, implementation and evaluation of the educational-research project oriented at helping children in solving their problems. She noticed the good influence of dance on a child's self-confidence, self-esteem and self-belief. Properly conducted dancing classes creatively developed both students and teachers, constructively activating their positive thinking (Seligman, 2006; Jasiński, 2016). Thus, dance was not only a method

of teaching, education or social rehabilitation, but it became a way of shaping a person. Creative transformation of attitudes of educational entities facilitated strengthening bonds by creating a community of people, and the personological attribute of creativity (Szmids, 2005) gave a direction to Joanna's activities. In the light of the four-phase model of interest development by Hidi and Renninger, it can be noticed that their process of development depends on the research participant's axiological attitude and leads to social good, and such well-shaped interests start to serve the proper individual and social good. This also takes place in case of a narrative analysis of data collected by Magda and Natalia. That is why, their replies will be quoted in fragments.

Magda writes: *Art has accompanied me since early childhood. I was both its recipient and creator. Since that time, I have been developing my skills in the secondary school and in the adult life.* Her interests include painting, which, just like in the case of Joanna, starts to perform the function of a service to those to whom she devotes most of her time. She says: *All of my experiences connected with art helped me take up the subject of using art techniques in my project and enabled me to carry out my research in action. I have been dealing with art in practice for many years. I mainly use oil paint and water colours, but, by nature, I am open to new techniques. Both in my own work and while working with children, I often use collage.* Her "spontaneous" interests changed into the situational stage of social nature and focused on helping students with intellectual disability, including autism spectrum disorder, as well as their parents. Reducing negative emotions of those students through the use of proper painting techniques inspired Magda to take up research in action, i.e. to create an educational-research project, which required appropriate didactic, educational and methodological competences. She notes: *I have been experimenting with various techniques. At the same time, I completed my studies in special pedagogy and many courses that helped me extend my knowledge of the students I have been working with for many years.* This is how she justifies the meaningfulness of her research the inspiration for which was not only her increasingly stronger interest in art, but also her reflection on whom and what art may serve. In this case, it can also be seen the development of individual interests revealed in the development of teaching vocation eliciting this specific interest feature that is expressed in the creative and educational correlation. This can support the teacher's creative formation and, to a certain degree, creative transformation of students' attitudes, who overcome the negative emotions also thanks to increasing cooperation between teacher and parents who learn how to accept and support their children. Emerged individual and situational interests have been reinforced and then well-developed, just like in the case of the presented four-phase model of interest development by Hidi and Renninger. The only difference was that individual interests took the form of well-developed interests and were connected with interests in the situational, spontaneous phase that was oriented didactically, which led to empirical studies that actually reinforced Magda's sense of professional vocation. Extending the axiological and methodological awareness became the factor that gave Magdalena's well-developed interests the nature of service to the superior aim which is individual and social proper good of people participating in her classes.

The development of Natalia's interests is slightly different than in the above cases although her interest in art also appeared in childhood. She writes as follows: *Since I was a child, my interests have been focused on art, in particular on fine arts, which is why I chose pedagogical studies after which I could be an art teacher. After a few years, the need for further professional development resulted in the fact that I decided to complete master studies in art-therapy with creative social rehabilitation. Creativity is an important element that defines me. Whenever I work with children, I always choose various forms of activities that are connected with art, music or theatre.* In case of Natalia, individual interests that appeared spontaneously in her childhood were not clearly specified although they oscillated around painting. Then, they were triggered in a situational manner and developed in a multifaceted way in adulthood, when she started pedagogical studies oriented at helping other people. Connecting that specialization of studies with her own talents made it possible for her to further develop personally and professionally, which was related to social development. Natalia also used her interest in fine arts in her family life, stimulating developmental activity of her child and husband. In her essay she notices: *I also share my artistic interests with my family, when I spend time with my daughter. We like painting on canvas, drawing, cutting out, and making recycled crafts. Reading books is our special moment which we celebrate before our daughter goes to sleep. The world of fairytales is, in many ways, valuable for the child's development, but – apart from developing imagination – I was looking for something different, something new that would enable us to connect tradition with creative nature.* In this case, an important element is the emergence of the meaning and necessity of building family traditions through shared creative activities that reinforce family relationships. Interestingly, reinforcement of Natalia's relationships was obtained in a cognitive-empirical manner, which is a phase that was "added" to the four-phase model of interest development by Hidi and Renninger. According to Natalia, *this process started with learning the theory, and, to be exact, it actually developed during the analysis and interpretation of the collected material. Further interpretations and reflections, as well as emerging statements, directed my attention towards family bonds as the key element of the family's functioning.* Thus, individual interests take a specific social-situational form and become further developed and reinforced in the empirical phase, which indicates the meaning of connecting "private", i.e. informal interests with empirical ones.

The above narrative -biographical analysis and interpretation of the collected material makes it possible to answer the research problem, showing the positive correlation between individual and empirical interests. In the light of the four-phase model of interest development by Hidi and Renninger, one may notice that phases of development of those interests proceed in different ways, but individual interests are explored in terms of further areas and directions taking into account professional and empirical aspects. An important element added to the above-mentioned model is a scientific phase, both epistemological and empirical one, in which previous phases are merged and interests are reinforced as they are given a new quality in the hierarchy of values.

Conclusion

The above-mentioned theoretical and empirical material referring to well-developed individual and social interests, which was analysed in the context of the four-phase model of interest development by Hidi and Renninger, leads us towards the reflection on the value of interests for the fulfilment of the vocation of a person's life. We may assume that interests which require affective, cognitive, interactive and intra-active engagement may be fulfilled and improved in a multidirectional manner. The first direction of development of personal interests may take linear dimension, just like in the case of, e.g. interests developed in childhood and adolescence, which are strictly connected with the fulfilment of broadly understood vocation of one's life, when intrinsic and extrinsic conditions for updating the developmental-creative potentiality will facilitate it. The second direction of interest development may proceed in a parallel manner. This means that individual interests are merged with situational-social ones which they enrich in a specific way, and that leads to the "centre" of the fulfilment of the vocation of a person rooted in a specific social context. Such interests perform the function of service to values such as building family relationships, etc. Finally, the third direction of interest development, which includes and merges different kinds of them, gives those interests a new – developed and intensified – perspective of the fulfilment of the vocation of one's life. It indicates the transformational value of an individual and social attitude which is based on axiology where the emphasis is put on the fulfilment of interests as a way of serving other people. In the cases described above the qualitative meaning of interests is particularly important, as they give a teacher specific charismatic features in his/her divergent approach to the subject and object of education and upbringing, which, nowadays, is a challenge for the teachers who have such an attribute that can be considered in the categories of pedagogical creative identity (Szymańska, 2019). That is why, focusing attention on the correlation of interests with discovering and reinforcing one's life vocation, including the professional one, especially through empirical analyses, seems justified. Therefore, we conclude that in the curricula at all educational levels we should separate the aspect of interest development in the individual and social dimension as the factor that integrates educational content in terms of creative education, including creative problem-solving.

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