

# The Psychopedagogical Intervention for the Development of Children's Spiritual Intelligence: The Quest for the Theoretical Framework

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**Abstract.** The scientific topicality of this study undergirds the demand for innovative, theoretically and empirically grounded program of psychopedagogical intervention for the development of children's spiritual intelligence. The task for the spirituality research today is building of scientifically sound definitions, theoretical models and constructs of spiritual development. Currently the terminology in this field is rather vague; guidelines for the application of spiritually oriented terminology in research and intervention practice are missing. The paper aims toward the theoretical analysis of concepts like spirituality, spiritual intelligence and spiritual development as well as toward the description of the theoretical approaches determining the up-to-date research related to phenomena and processes in the field of spiritual development. The authors focus on cognitive-developmental, social ecology and dynamic systemic approach to the theoretical analysis of the spiritual development. Thus, the envisaged psychopedagogical intervention will be grounded on comprehensive investigation in relation to the concepts of spirituality, spiritual intelligence, and spiritual development as well as on determination of targets and methods for the development of spiritual intelligence.

**Keywords:** spirituality, spiritual development, spiritual intelligence, psychopedagogical intervention.

## Psichopedagoginė intervencija kaip vaikų dvasinio intelekto vystymasis: teorinio pagrindo paieška

**Santrauka.** Mokslinis šio darbo aktualumas susijęs su poreikiu paruošti inovatyvią, teoriškai ir empiriškai pagrįstą psichopedagoginės intervencijos programą, skirtą vaikų dvasinio intelekto vystymuisi. Dvasingumo tyrimai šiuo metu remiasi moksliniais pagrindais apibrėžimais, teoriniais modeliais ir dvasinio vystymosi konstruktais. Tačiau terminologija šiame lauke nėra visiškai apibrėžta, trūksta su dvasingumu susijusios terminologijos, skirtos tyrimų ir praktikos sritims. Šiame straipsnyje orientuojamasi į teorinę dvasingumo, dvasinio intelekto ir dvasinio vystymosi konceptų analizę bei aprašomos teorinės priegios, kurios lemia naujausius tyrimus, orientuotus į dvasinio vystymosi procesus. Autorės orientuojasi į teorinę dvasinio vystymosi analizę remiantis kognityvine-pažintine, socialinės ekologijos bei dinaminių sistemų priegiomis. Psichopedagoginė intervencija bus pagrįsta remiantis išsamium dvasingumo, dvasinio intelekto ir dvasinio vystymosi konceptų nagrinėjimu bei remsis siekinių ir metodų, skirtų dvasinio intelekto vystymuisi, apibrėžimu.

**Pagrindiniai žodžiai:** dvasingumas, dvasinis vystymasis, dvasinis intelektas, psichopedagoginė intervencija.

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## 1. Introduction

Nowadays education faces new challenges as it is not only called to endow the learners with up-to-date knowledge, but also to assist in the development of well-rounded personality, thus laying the foundation for self-actualized human life. The young generation of the 21st century has not only already encountered informational abundance and rapid technological development, but also is forced to answer the question – in this age, when human society needs to deal with such an array of complex problems – of how we can preserve humanity, respect toward self and others, and sustain genuine connection with oneself and one's deepest, truthful and unique potential.

A fundamental task of spirituality-related research today is to establish conceptually valid definitions, theoretical models, and constructs of spiritual development. At the present moment, the terminology suffers from vagueness and the guidelines for the application of spirituality-related concepts in research practice are missing.

An urgent direction in contemporary educational psychology is a pursuit for the tools to promote children's and youngsters' spiritual development. As shown by the literature analysis, focusing on spirituality as a phenomenon can help in grounding the development of a genuinely self-actualized personality of the child. School needs to educate not only a person with a developed cognitive potential, but also with the spiritual capacities, determining his/her personality and ensuring a more stable society (Baxen, Nsubuga, Botha, & Johanson, 2014).

In the context of developmental psychology, it appears that a very small part of research on psychological development is related to the models of spiritual development. However, the common view prevails that the imminent task of psychological science is to explore spirituality, spiritual development, and their impact on human wellbeing (Benson, 2004). Focusing on childhood, less than half of 1% of studies in child development are related to children's spiritual development (Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude, 2003; Boyatzis, 2003). An essential task of modern psychology in this context is the investigation of opportunities, determinants, and developmental mechanisms of spiritual intelligence (SI).

The scientific urgency of the present paper has been determined by the need to elaborate a new, theoretically and empirically verified program of psychopedagogical intervention for the development of children's spiritual intelligence. According to the literature analysis and practical experience, such programs of psychopedagogical intervention can be viewed as one of the most efficient tools for the development of spiritual intelligence in elementary school children (Grasmane, 2019).

In this paper, the authors aim to bring forward the theoretical analysis of the concepts like spirituality, spiritual intelligence, and spiritual development, as well as to illustrate the theoretical approaches determining the current research related to the phenomena and processes in the field of spiritual development. The theoretical background of the spiritual development will be illustrated by three main approaches – cognitive-developmental, social ecology, and dynamic systemic approach to the conceptualization of this

field. The further presentation consists of three main chapters: next two chapters will advance the analysis of spirituality and spiritual intelligence, while the following chapter will address theoretical approaches to the spiritual development, thus laying the foundations for the conceptual background of envisaged psychopedagogical intervention.

## **2. Spirituality**

Spirituality has been described as a philosophical, psychological, and pedagogical concept and, in line with the literature review. Different definitions of spirituality consistently emphasise that human being primarily is a spiritual being and spiritual development is the natural need of a human. We are spiritual beings as we are directed and motivated by the need to ask ourselves some existential questions: Why I was born? Who am I in reality? What do I want? How can I fulfil my wishes? How can I change something in my life? What is the meaning of life? Going through one's life, a person wants to grasp his/her space of life in a wider context.

A person intuitively engages in a spiritual experience, searches answers to his/her own questions in relation to spiritual matters. This intuitive spirituality is reflected in questions articulated regarding the meaning of life and the unique nature of each person. Spirituality is the capacity of a person to be in contact with the supreme reality and ability to use this contact in search for the answers regarding the personal meaning of life.

Spirituality can be defined in different ways, it can be viewed 1) both from a religious and a secular point of view, 2) from a religious point of view, 3) from a secular point of view. In a scientific discourse, it can be detached from religion, focusing more on the investigation of a human's individual spiritual experience. Keeping the distance between the scientific research on an individual spiritual experience and the experience of spiritual studies by traditional religious confessions, we reach greater freedom and scientific autonomy in articulation of the scientific understanding of spirituality (Sinnott, 1998).

Scientific exploration of spirituality is inevitably connected to the scholarly discussion regarding the central feature of spirituality. It should be noted that central indicators of spirituality are viewed differently by different scholars of this field. For instance, Fowler, famous for the investigation of the theoretical underpinnings of this scientific construct, considers faith as the central feature of spirituality and argues that the development of faith stimulates the awareness of the meaning of life, the uniqueness of personality, values and capacity to live in harmony with one's internal values (Fowler & Levin, 1984). On the other hand, Oser and Gmünder see the relationships with the Divine as the main feature of spirituality (Oser & Gmünder, 1991). In his turn, Conn argues that the central characteristics of spirituality are ego development, autonomy, and self-awareness, as they affect and are affected by relationships with others (Conn, 1992). Other theories, related to spiritual development, focus on the development of moral understanding. Representatives of this direction admit that indicators of moral understanding influence the quality of human interaction that can also be regarded as an essential trait of spirituality (Mitchell, 1988).

The urgency of children's spirituality and spiritual development investigation nowadays is specifically determined by the fact that the development of a harmonious personality and its facilitation are major goals of education in many countries worldwide. The contribution of psychology in this context is studying the opportunities, prerequisites, and mechanisms of children's spirituality development. Scholar of children's spirituality, Boyatzis characterizes spirituality as faith, beliefs, values, and ability of practical application of these aspects in life. Studying the forms of children's spirituality expression, the author writes that children's spirituality is manifested in their philosophical and spiritual beliefs of life and its processes, in daily expressions of children's personality, as well as children's free drawings and other free creative works (Boyatzis, 2005; Reich, Oser, & Scarlett, 1999). Woolley states that children's spirituality has a combined character – it entails both rational and mythological aspects. The mythological, intuitive, and imaginary constitute the bases for child's spirituality (Woolley, 2000).

To sum up the ideas by spirituality researchers, it seems that, regardless of already elaborated scientific guidelines, we are still missing a satisfactory answer to the questions: what exactly is the research object in the studies of spirituality, and what research methods are suitable to make scientifically correct inquiry in this field (Francis, 1998)?

Starting elaboration of the psychopedagogical intervention for spirituality for children we need to clarify the understanding of forms and traits of spirituality and answer the question – what exactly needs to be developed by the newly designed program? What specific features or aspects should be developed in order to claim that the given program develops spirituality? One of the possible answers to this question is spiritual intelligence (SI) – a construct that can be successfully conceptualized and empirically studied as the central phenomenon developed by means of psychopedagogical intervention. We will have a short insight in this phenomenon in the next chapter of the paper.

### **3. Spiritual intelligence**

Development of SI is essential for humans to have a successful life as a personality and to reach the goals of one's life. The input of psychology in this context could be the exploration of possibilities, determinants, and mechanisms for the development of SI. The concept of SI is closely connected with the concept of spirituality, but in the context of the given paper, it has a scientific connotation and in psychology it is detached from the straightforwardly religious approach to the understanding of spirituality.

At the end of the last century, reacting to the studies by Gardner in relation to the multidimensional nature of intelligence, the scientific community observed the blossoming of the research on separate dimensions of intelligence – social, emotional, moral intelligence. Social and emotional intelligence encompasses the capacities of social and emotional perception – a specific level of intrapersonal and interpersonal capacities (Gardner, 2000; Goleman, 1995; Wigglesworth, 2011). Initially, SI in these studies was described as moral intelligence, later it was substituted by the specific name of spiritual intelligence. Let us review several most significant explanations of SI in order to aggregate the provisional list of targets for the envisaged intervention program.

Thus, Vaughan describes the development of SI as going beyond the direct psychological development in the traditional sense. Besides the development of self-awareness, SI can be grasped as a transcendent, mystical, or spiritual attitude toward life, thinking, relationships, and world. Working as a psychotherapist, he observed that a high level of SI opens human heart, enlightens one's mind, inspires the soul, connects the individual, unique part of personality with human mind, and enables ways to express this uniqueness. SI can be developed by means of spiritual exercises and the development of SI can help us to avoid the delusional perspective of the world. Cultural expressions of SI are love, wisdom, and service (Vaughan, 2003). Grounding on the studies and definitions by Vaughan, we can discern several important indicators of SI – spiritual self-awareness, acquaintance with different states of consciousness, ability to switch between these states, intuition, meditation, and visualization, enabling to grasp and unveil the wisdom of the inner world (Vaughan, 2003).

On the other hand, Emmon describes SI as adaptive skills and discerns five faculties of SI, namely, to 1) rise above the physical and material perception of the world in a transcendental way, 2) deliberately switch between different states of mind, 3) sanctify daily experience, 4) use the spiritual resources to solve problems, and 5) be (Emmon, 1999, 2000). Based on Emmon's definition of SI, we can distinguish one more essential aspect of SI – adaptive skills – that allows using spiritual capacities and information, efficiently dealing with daily problems and reaching set goals (Emmon, 2000).

One of the leading researchers of SI, King similarly pictures SI as a collection of adaptive mental capacities, grounded on the spiritual, transcendental, and immaterial perception of the world, especially stressing those capacities that help to access the unique human nature, determine the meaning of human life, transcendence, and assist in widening the limits of self-awareness. These processes play an adaptive role in the awareness of personal meaning, thus helping to solve different problems and developing the ability for abstract argumentation. The author distinguishes five features of SI: understanding and awareness of personal meaning, transcendental awareness, critical existential thinking, high level of general awareness (King, 2010). Theory elaborated by King, among other things, stresses one more essential feature of SI – the awareness of one's uniqueness.

Zohar and Marshall, in their turn, explicate SI as a possibility to ask yourself – how to change my life if I want to? SI helps to make decisions in tune with one's inner world and values. The authors discern the following features of SI: self-awareness, spontaneity, creativity, holism, vision of life and values, ability to accept diversity, sense of independence, ability to create, re-create, awareness of resources, mission and awareness of one's self as a self-respecting and humble personality. Based on this definition, SI can be explained also as the development of universal awareness in terms of the idea that a human being is a responsible part of a greater whole and his/her decisions influence the surrounding world (Zohar & Marshall, 2011).

Researcher of SI, Wigglesworth defines SI as a human's inner need and ability to encounter something greater than him/herself. The researcher emphasizes that a person with SI is calm, focused, aware of one's mission and calling, loving, compassionate, able

to take care of others, faithful, courageous, trustful, forgiving, generous, a great teacher, leader and mentor, humble, wise, non-violent, open-minded, persistent, oriented toward values, able to devote him/herself to others and serve others. This definition highlights one more trait of SI – ability to accept and engage with something greater, entailing the awareness of mission and calling, the unity of heart and mind, understanding of one’s personal meaning of life, and development of mature personality (Wigglesworth, 2011).

Moldavian researcher Gheorghita depicts SI as healthy and powerful self-awareness that enables one to rise above the cognitive and emotional intelligence, in this way helping to find solutions for the tasks of one’s life in a more efficient way, being in a state of emotional balance and stability. SI connects the cognitive and emotional intelligence and fosters the development of these two dimensions of intelligence (Gheorghita, 2014). According to the theoretical exploration of SI by Gheorghita, one more feature of SI is the development of a self-aware personality. Such a personality displays self-respect, ability to live in the present moment, “here and now”, as well as the sense of independence, ability to oppose the views of the crowd and defend one’s own standpoint (Gheorghita, 2014; Zohar & Marshall, 2000).

In her turn, researcher and children therapist Painton writes that, in the course of her 20 years of experience of working with children’s psychopathologies, she has observed that, by helping children to reach self-awareness, awareness of their inner world – talents, power, peace, faith and, thus, developing their SI, she was able to improve children’s psychological health and reduce their pathologies. Painton defines SI as the level of awareness of one’s own inner world: SI is the capacity of a child to sense the deepest dimensions of being, bringing him/her freedom, developing his/her intuition, faith, empathy, and other spiritual qualities. High SI builds the child’s awareness of self-worth, understanding of the meaning of life, awareness of vision and goals of life (Painton, 2009).

All research mentioned above point to the significance of SI development, however, the pressing question remains – in what way and with what tools can we foster the development of SI? The research literature does not represent ready-made programs and methods for the development of SI. The same problem appears in relation to the ways of integration of SI development in educational process, albeit it is known that maturation of SI stimulates the development of rational intelligence (Bhatia & Safara, 2013).

To sum up the features of SI mentioned above, we can outline five targets that should be reached by the psychopedagogical intervention program for the development of children’s SI:

- 1) to develop universal awareness and ability to be in *contact with supreme reality* (Zohar & Marshall, 2000; Wigglesworth, 2011);
- 2) to develop *spiritual self-awareness* – different states of consciousness, ability to switch between these states, intuition, meditation and visualization, enabling to grasp and unveil the wisdom of the inner world in order to use it in solving real life problems (Emmon, 2000; Goleman, 1995; Vaughan, 2003; Zohar & Marshall, 2000);
- 3) to develop skills of adaptation, enabling the usage of spiritual capacities and information for efficient *dealing with daily problems and reaching set goals* (Emmon, 2000; Vaughan, 2003; Wigglesworth, 2011; Zohar & Marshall, 2000);

- 4) to teach *awareness of human uniqueness*, fostering access to one's own unique nature and shaping meaning of life, transcendence, enhancing limits of self-awareness (King, 2010; Wigglesworth, 2011);
- 5) to develop a *self-aware personality*, able to live in the present moment, with a sense of independence, ability to oppose the view of the crowd and defend one's own perspective, to develop authenticity, skills to feel, hear oneself and express it verbally, ability to ask questions and search for personal answers regarding the meaning of life, to evaluate personal resources and develop the sense of self-sufficiency (Gheorghita, 2014; King, 2010; Wigglesworth, 2011; Zohar & Marshall, 2000).

The next chapter of the paper will focus on spiritual development and its theoretical approaches. The analysis of these approaches will allow designing the theoretical background of psychopedagogical intervention not only on the level of goals, but also in terms of methods and approaches.

#### **4. Spiritual development: looking for the theoretical approaches**

As it was mentioned above, spirituality and, in the same vein, spiritual development is a multi-functional concept, therefore, spiritual development, as well as the spirituality, can be analysed from different angles (Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude, 2003). Reaching agreement over the definition of spiritual development has been a hard and complex task. The main problem is to find the common response to the scientific question – what should be developed in order to identify this development as a spiritual development in scholarly research? Even in scientific literature oriented toward the problems of spiritual development, for instance, *Handbook of Spiritual Development of Childhood and Adolescence* (Roehlkepartain, King, Wagener, & Benson, 2006), scientists view the construct of spiritual development from different perspectives. Again, these difficulties in explanation of the construct testify to the multi-functional character of spirituality and spiritual development. To deal with this problem, The Center for Spiritual Development, situated within the Search Institute in Minnesota, USA, suggested the following definition of spiritual development: it is growth in “intrinsic capacity for self-transcendence, in which the self is embedded in something greater than the self, including the sacred... it is shaped both within and outside of religious traditions, beliefs and practices” (Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude, 2003, pp. 205–206). According to Boyatzis (2003), the spiritual development, thus, can be viewed as 1) a natural propensity (Hay, Reich, & Utsch, 2006), b) a form of socialization shaped by different experiences within and outside religion (e.g., family, education, etc.), 3) connection and relationality to what is beyond the self.

The literature analysis shows several theoretical approaches to the issues of spiritual development offering different perspectives on this phenomenon. The further presentation will elaborate three most important views in this regard: 1) the cognitive-developmental approach, 2) the dynamic systemic theory, and 3) the social ecology approach.

### *Cognitive-developmental approach*

The cognitive-developmental approach was initiated by two types of discussions in the research field of religious concepts. The first discussion started already in the 1960s, when spirituality and spiritual development, according to the theories by Piaget, were defined using the concepts of God and prayers (Elkid, 1970; Goldman, 1965; Long, Elkid, & Spilka, 1967). The second wave of discussions in the 1990s emphasised the intuitive, domain-specific nature of thinking (Boyer, 1994). Both of these discussions explicitly suggest an idea that spirituality can be developed. Later on, Johnson (2000) and Boyatzis (2003) implicated that spirituality can be developed if a person gets assistance in reaching self-awareness of his/her intuitive natural spirituality, gradually infusing it in the process of deliberate thinking.

Similarly to an individual human being, who intuitively searches for and wants to reach awareness of his/her inner spirituality, psychology as a social science has already for several centuries explicitly tried to describe the path of human spiritual development. Starting with C. G. Jung, who described a transformative journey of personal awareness from personal and collective unconscious to individuation, this is evident in E. Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, pointing to the awareness of personal identity in social context, and in six stages of moral development conceived by L. Kolberg, from egocentrism to democracy and awareness of universal ethical principles. In addition, C. Gilligan, who has suggested the ethics of care, has elaborated the stages, which in their essence are very close to the stages of spiritual development. She distinguishes three levels of human development, starting with the awareness of purely individual and egocentric needs and submission to them, to a person of high moral standards, able to consider one's own needs on the one hand, and care for the needs of others on the other (Gilligan, 2003). In addition, the theory by R. Kegan on the evolution of consciousness draws close to the essence of spiritual development. He discerns five stages considering the order of mind: 1) impulsive mind (2–6 years of age), 2) instrumental mind (6 years old through adolescence), 3) socialized mind (post-adolescence), 4) self-authoring mind (about 35% of adults), and 5) self-transforming mind (typically after 40 years of age if achieved) (Kegan, 1982).

All these cognitive theories lead to the field of spirituality, spiritual development, and SI. However, since spiritual development as a deliberately studied phenomenon appeared in the psychological research only at the end of the 20th century, scientific literature is still scarce of empirically grounded and well-described models featuring different aspects of spiritual development, in line with stages of cognitive development.

Human development is usually conceived in a multifunctional context and researchers try to analyse diverse aspects of development. For instance, Kartwright describes the link between two aspects of development – cognitive and spiritual development, integrating Piagetian approach to cognitive development with spiritual development (Kartwright, 2001). Sensomotoric stage is the first developmental stage, where a child still cannot detach him/herself from the surrounding world. Children cognize the world through their senses. At this stage, in the context of spiritual development, a person un-

consciously senses spirituality or, possibly, receives some kind of spiritual information but is unaware of spirituality as a fundamental reality that, though immaterial, is an essential human life quality prerequisite (Koplowitz, 1990). Like a sensomotoric infant who is not aware of other individuals as separate entities, also as concerns the spiritual development, at this stage an individual is not aware of spiritual experience that s/he lives through unconsciously.

At the next, pre-operational development stage, a child perceives the world in a symbolical and mythical way. In addition, at this stage in one's spiritual development, an individual cannot consciously apply spiritual development mechanisms. S/he has started the route of inner transformation, but is treating any changes more like a miracle. A child does not know the prerequisites of spiritual development and cannot use them consciously in spiritual development. This stage is dominated by mystically mythological thinking and mythological symbolical perception of spirituality.

The stage of concrete operations with the beginning of the development of child's logic, applying visible objects and observing regularities, practically creates a similar effect in child's spiritual development. An individual develops inner transition and starts admitting generally accepted concrete accounts of spiritual development and consciously applying them in one's life and subjective experience (Labouvie-Vief, 1999). As the stage of concrete operations in spiritual development is marked by forming logical conclusions based on visible experience and general explanations, at this stage a human starts searching for logical explanations for his/her relation with God. This stage ensues when an individual is no longer satisfied with a purely symbolical mythological and mythical account of the spiritual world and starts searching for explanation of what happens in his/her life. Hence, unified social norms provide support for both intellectual and emotional, as well as spiritual world cognition and development. At this stage, an individual may reveal concrete significance and meaning of particular spiritual regularity and most often this concerns human conduct, social control, values, and beliefs. A human focuses on a concrete action proceeding from moral norms or values assumed by the individual as his/her own. Hence, at this stage he/she may focus on developing communication of kindness and love in oneself and relations with others in one's social milieu, at the same time absolutely ignoring someone in need asking for help, if this value has not been socially suggested as necessary (Fowler, 1994).

At the stage of concrete operations, an individual starts objectively and logically differentiating between subjective and objective opinions in perceiving and interpreting various phenomena. At this stage, an individual can get more and more distanced from the collective knowledge of culture, family, and community and is able to notice different opinions and beliefs accepting several opinions instead of accepting one opinion as the only truth.

Thus, a human gradually reaches the stage of formal development. The ability to regard and consider different versions of reality, classifying them in accordance with personal values and beliefs, is a typical model of formal thinking characteristic of this stage of cognitive development (Sinnott, 1998).

When an individual reaches the formal development stage, according to Piaget, he/she develops the ability of abstract judgement of processes and matters. In relation to the spiritual development, at this stage, a person gains the ability to guide his/her conduct in accordance with abstract principles and values. For instance, a person may focus on developing kindness or love as values in oneself and looking for opportunities to express them in one's life. A person explores and cognizes particular forms of expressing love or kindness and tries to put them to practice in his/her life. Relations with the highest force or God at this stage are formed through actual expressions of love and kindness towards other people. At both the concrete and the formal stage, a person makes judgements on the bases of objective, logical explanations and avoids any subjective interpretation.

However, at some moment of the individual's development, s/he may start doubting values of culture, religion, and family as the only truth and begin to consider various alternative versions of reality and assume more appropriate versions matching them with one's deepest, unique world vision. At this moment, an individual reaches a post-formal development stage (Sinnot, 1998). In this way, a new subjectively objective world vision is formed that is characteristic of the post-formal stage of spiritual development.

J. Fowler is another scholar of spiritual development who attempted at integrating Piaget's theory of cognitive development with spiritual development. He places faith at the heart of spiritual development that is regarded by other scholars as an essential component of spirituality and SI (Emmon, 2000; King & DeCicco, 2009; Vaughan, 2003; Wigglesworth, 2011). Based on Piaget's stages of cognitive development, he distinguished seven stages of faith development: 1) primary or non-differentiated stage (from birth to 4 years of age) – natural faith, the development whereof depends on the impact of the surrounding environment on child's natural faith manifestations; 2) intuitively projective faith (3–7 years of age) – a great role is attributed to imagination and symbols, faith develops through spiritual tales and bears a magical character in child's perception; child's thinking of faith is more intuitive than rational; 3) mystical literary faith (6–12 years of age) – critical thinking abilities develop, a child gains life experience and starts separating the truth from mythical literary art works; at this age children ask the question: "What is the truth?" 4) synthetically conventional faith (11–18 years of age and many adults) – adolescents start thinking abstractly and reflecting on the way peers and family practice their faith values, compare themselves to others, marked by conformism, generalized thinking of values and faith; 5) individually reflective faith (18–27 years and any other age) – growth of individual faith, personal opinions, and ability to respect different viewpoints; suffering may test a person's world view and faith, and person's spiritual development is determined by whether a person can remain faithful to his/her belief and opinion; 6) conjunctive faith – this stage is reached before 30 years of age by just 7% of people and on the whole far fewer people ever reach this stage as compared to the previous one; in stage 5, faith is confirmed by suffering giving rise to control, discipline, and complete awareness of one's faith, whereas in stage 6 a new opinion is formed and a new, much more mature experience of faith is developed that is able to process the tension created by life and negativity; a person undergoes a process of transformation, is

aware of it and accepts it; at this stage a person, being fully aware of one's world view, can humbly accept completely different world view; 7) universal faith – the highest degree of faith development that, according to Fowler, is reached by just 0.3% of humans, stage of sanctity, enlightenment, and highest development in which a person gains the fruit of faith; a person sees, hears, realizes, and applies spiritual gifts of supernatural character (Fowler, 1981).

The cognitive approach bears an inner focus characterizing inner spiritual development. To elaborate psychopedagogical intervention for SI development, it is essential to investigate and take into account these inner psychological aspects of spiritual development as they help to set objectives of SI development and search for the most appropriate methods to reach them. Thus, cognitive theories of spiritual development reveal that: 1) as spirituality is prone to development, eventually, such intervention is meaningful, 2) spirituality is an inner intuitive phenomenon, the development whereof is related to raising intuitive thinking to awareness and rational thinking, 3) spirituality is the ability to communicate with the transcendent, 4) spirituality is related to the quality of contact with oneself, one's intuitive, unique nature, quality of relations with other people, ability to respect nature and the surrounding environment as well as the quality of relations with the supreme reality.

### ***The dynamic systemic spiritual development theory***

The leading scholars of developmental psychology indicate that inability of cognitive stage theories of listing variables that affect the research results gives an opportunity for emergence of a new theoretical base of spiritual development studies named dynamic systemic theory (Boyatzis, 2005; Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 2003). The cognitive approach treats development in relation to the age periods, whereas the dynamic systemic approach investigates the development of spirituality irrespective of a particular age of a person (Overton, 1998). The cognitive approach conditionally forms the general theoretical base of the understanding of spirituality; whereas the dynamic systemic theory is applicable in untypical situations (e.g., child's SI development is impeded or temporarily blocked due to a psychic trauma). In cases of untypical experience, scholars regard stages of spiritual development of a particular person irrespective of his/her age (Boyatzis, 2005). Scholar of spiritual development, Spilka writes that the obsession with formulating particular age stages interferes with the understanding of a human's unique nature and unique spiritual development (Spilka et al., 2003). The theoretical basis of this approach is supplemented by G. Siegler who investigated children's individual mathematical abilities and elaborated methods of helping children to do sums. Within this research, G. Siegler revealed that each child at a particular stage of his/her development has a command of a different thinking strategy. Various thinking strategies of a child compete and one of them dominates at a time. For this reason, the researcher noted that children of a similar age cannot be compared, but it is important to search for the dominating thinking strategy for a particular child. Similarly, G. Siegler discusses children's SI development. She writes that, when observing children's and adults' doubts of

their faith, one should not ignore that at each moment another spiritual thinking strategy is dominating and it is more sensible to study these thinking strategies and the way they replace one another than elaborate static spiritual development models (Siegler, 1996).

The most popular of the dynamic systemic theories is that by J. Fowler who describes faith development stages in relation to not only a person's age but also proceeding from qualities of the formation of the living faith. Fowler distinguishes seven aspects of faith that he calls "faith structure consciousness windows" and analyses them regarding person's awareness of faith and its maturity. Faith consciousness windows are characterized as follows:

Aspect 1 – form of logic. This aspect describes the most characteristic model that constitutes a person's worldview. This entails faith development stages 1–4 as formulated by Fowler that comply with Piaget's cognitive development stages from chaotic to abstract thinking (Fowler, 1981; Piaget, 1972).

Aspect 2 – impact of social perspective. This aspect considers the way one person's inner construct affects another person. This construct invites to look deeper into oneself and through another person learn more deeply about one's inner world. This aspect develops more slowly as people tend to perceive others not relating that to learning about themselves.

Aspect 3 – formation of moral judgements. This aspect emphasizes what a person thinks of morality and how s/he can make decisions based on inner morality.

Aspect 4 – limits of social awareness. Faith develops in the social context and is related to community, family, and church. Community facilitates faith development and this aspect focuses on a person's ability and quality of being within a community.

Aspect 5 – focus on authority. This aspect describes the impact of authority on the development of faith and the way faith is related to authority, for instance, how authority can affect a person's understanding of the meaning of life.

Aspect 6 – awareness of the world coherence. This aspect investigates the way of the formation of a person's worldview assumed collectively or individually by undergoing diverse experiences.

Aspect 7 – symbolical function. This aspect considers the way a person realizes and applies symbols (Astley, 2009).

Teachers of Sunday schools and Christian teaching point out that about 70% of children develop their faith in a particular way and 30% of children undergo untypical development concerning their faith (Fowler, 1981). In such cases, Fowler's faith structure of consciousness windows help teachers to better understand children and develop an individual teaching approach (Fowler & Dell, 2006). The majority of representatives of this trend prefer a deeper investigation of a child's development taking into consideration individual indicators (Overton, 1998).

Hence, the dynamically systemic spirituality development theory emphasizes the significance of a child's unique and individually specific spiritual development. Thus,

working out the psychopedagogical intervention for the development of children's SI, it is essential to define spiritual thinking strategies and qualities that are not related to a particular age, but characterize the quality of SI development.

### ***The social ecology approach to child's spirituality development***

The first to lay the theoretical ground for this idea in 1978 was Vygotsky who suggested that children develop in a socio-cultural environment where most important factors are parents' knowledge and the way they practically apply knowledge models created by social and culture life to help children develop and grow (Vygotsky, 1978). At the same time, Bronfenbrenner elaborated the ecological development theory that emphasizes the necessity to study development in diverse environments and understand the ecological system of human living, growth, and development. According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory, humans are included in various ecosystems, starting with the most intimate family ecosystem, then a broader school system, finally the broadest system entailing society and culture. Each of these systems interacts with and influences one another in all aspects of human life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Later on, the social ecology approach was used in studies of spiritual development, assessing the impact of the social context on a child's spiritual development (Boyatzis, Dollahite, & Marks, 2006). Within this approach, the focus is on the impact of social systems close to a person (family, peer groups, church, and school) on spiritual development and various interactions among these groups as well as impact of these interactions on a person's spiritual development. According to scholars, development happens in various social contexts and, like Bronfenbrenner, researchers of spirituality regard the family as the primary social context. Outside the social impact of the family, other social contexts affect a person and they are compared to the influence of the family context.

The social ecology approach focuses on the interaction among various social contexts and different spiritual aspects of human life. Hence, in this context children's perception of various religious activities is studied, e.g.: praising God, spiritual support of Christians and the way it helps them grow spiritually (Regnerus, Smith, C., & Smith, B., 2004). The major emphasis of the theory is on family mechanisms that affect child's spiritual development. From this angle of vision parents and other adults who bring up a child may function as mentors who facilitate the development of child's spirituality and spiritual thinking. The most popular scholar of this trend, K. Hyde investigates the way God's image "lives" in child's thinking and affects other relations in child's life. Alternatively, the other way round, how relations with parents influence child's notion of God in child's thinking and perception (Hyde, 1990). K. Hyde describes children's perception – that a child sees God in an anthropomorphic way, as similar to human. A child sees God as a large person in heaven and the way a child perceives parents does not differ much from the way a child perceives God. Parents are anthropomorphized in child's perception and parental figures act in child's thinking as fundamental cognitive prejudices (Barett & Keil, 1996). Children endow both parents and God with natural and supernatural abilities. However, research shows that God is attributed higher-level

powers as compared to parents. Hence, a 5 years old girl believes that her mother would not be able to understand a crude drawing made by her, but God would be able to do it at once (Wolley & Phelps, 2001). God's supernatural, transcendental power in a child's life is combined with the child's own individual faith and belief.

Another approach within this theory that treats specifically children's spiritual development is the transaction theory that indicates that parents and children influence each other's spiritual development (Kuczynski, 2003). Young researchers of spirituality prefer this model and argue that family aware of just the parent's impact on child's development is directive. It is hard to determine where parents' influence ends and children's self-development starts. It is regarded that a child possesses intuitive, unique, natural spirituality and in families using non-directive approach to upbringing, spirituality is exchanged, thus enriching one another.

The social ecology theory is a theory oriented toward the impact of external factors. Hence, elaborating psychopedagogical intervention for the development of child's SI, one must take into consideration the quality of the mutual interaction between a teacher and a learner. Researchers who already have elaborated similar programs emphasize the significance of this aspect in the implementation of spirituality development program (Lipman, 1988; Stanszus et al., 2016). They also indicate that efficient course of the program implementation and its outcomes depend on teacher's readiness for directing the program.

Regarding the theoretical trends of spiritual development, one may make conclusions useful for the elaboration of psychopedagogical intervention for SI development:

- 1) Elaborating psychopedagogical intervention, it must be precisely defined which spirituality component is developed as well as being clearly aware of its significance and theoretical background. Such an intervention is considered scientific in case the authors precisely define what construct exactly it develops and what specific features of this construct are supposed to be developed.
- 2) The cognitive-developmental approach characterizes spiritual development as an inner quality. To elaborate psychopedagogical intervention for SI development, it is essential to take into consideration these inner psychological aspects of spiritual development as they will help to delineate the objectives of SI development that, in turn, will help in searching for most appropriate methods to reach them. Cognitive theories are useful for SI development by confirming that spirituality can be developed, it is an inner intuitive phenomenon, the development whereof is determined by raising from intuitive to conscious thinking.
- 3) As the dynamic systemic theory highlights the significance of child's unique and individual spiritual development, when elaborating psychopedagogical intervention for children's SI development, it is important to define spiritual thinking strategies and qualities that are not related to a certain age but characterize the quality of the individual SI development. SI program in fact entails developing such thinking strategies, therefore the theoretical framework of the paper defines features of SI and seeks for methods of developing them.

- 4) The social ecology approach to child's spirituality development is a theory of the impact of external factors. To elaborate a psychopedagogical intervention for child's spiritual development, it is essential to take into consideration the quality of the interaction between a teacher and a learner. Researchers who have elaborated this kind of programs emphasize the significance of this aspect in the implementation of the spirituality development program noting that an efficient course of the program implementation and its outcomes depend on teacher's readiness for directing the program.

## 5. Conclusions

The 21st century is characterized by an extremely rapid and broad development of science and technologies. However, while one part of humankind finds this to be an exciting challenge, others, including children, could experience great anxiety, deep loneliness, and fear.

Scholars hold that modern developmental psychology findings and the system of education in general by disregarding the spiritual aspect of human development create grave consequences manifested in the present-day political, social, cultural and other major spheres of society (Souza, Francis, Higgins-Norman, & Scott, 2009). Development of spirituality and its integration into the system of education facilitate the development of a society that serves higher values, is capable of forming mutual relations based on humane attitude and respect to life, both in nature and in human.

Spirituality development is not just an issue of bringing up children to integrate them into society but it is a prerequisite that helps providing children with an opportunity of understanding the surrounding world and becoming responsible for their decisions. The issue of spiritual development is a basic issue of spiritual health, spiritual wellbeing and a happy, sustainable development-oriented society. Hence, elaboration of spirituality development programs, tools, and methods is an essential and significant objective of the contemporary science of psychology.

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