The Instructor-Professional! A Worker or an Animator?

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Young and Flexible, but...

In the last decade, we have witnessed a rejuvenation in the top and middle management positions of some commercial and non-profit organisations. Those positions have traditionally been the domain of older and more experienced workers rather than those young and ambitious.[1] In particular, we can see this situation in organisations where the mission is to develop the personality of individuals and groups in their free time. Nowadays, so-called experiential methods are often used for this purpose; the leaders of such programmes (according to the term introduced in the pioneering organisation of this style of education, the Holiday School of Lipnice) are called instructors.[2]

Nowadays, we meet with young, competent and ambitious instructors, who are very methodically and perhaps also theoretically equipped.[3] They understand the current demand, they are highly flexible, and they are mostly close to members of the target group in the terms of age. Many of them have gone through a large number of related events and they can rightly claim to have rich experience in the field.[4] In this text, however, we want to draw attention to a certain 'instant style' of this experience of young instructors (we use the term analogously to how one of the writers introduced it in connection with instant troubleshooting).[5] An instructor with instant experience means one who is able to quickly and precisely prepare a functional programme, and he or she can also react to current events in a group, but does so only on the basis of learned behavioural patterns or algorithms of methodical procedures. By doing so (de facto) he or she degrades his or her instructive role. Instead of focussing on him or herself, he or she places the method, technique or learned pattern first. In this text (and in accordance with the topic of the journal), we call this instructor an instructor-worker against whom is placed the instructor-animator, i.e., a mature person who is able to apply appropriate methodological methods equally well, however, the target group is primarily influenced by his or her personality, maturity and charisma. The influence is based on a personal relationship with individual

1   Cf. Peter G. NORTHOUSE, *Leadership: Theory and Practice, 6th Edition*, Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2013, p. 210.
2   In the Czech language, we can also find the term 'lektor' (which has the same meaning as a teacher or instructor); both terms for the purposes of this text are interchangeable. Some authors, however, distinguish between those terms when, for example, the 'lektor' is understood as an instructor/teacher in a particular field.
3   Cf. Výroční zprávy Prázdninové školy Lipnice (on-line), available at: https://www.psl.cz/upload/psl/file /vyrocni-zpravy, cited 25th November 2017.
4   Cf. Metodický výcvik Prázdninové školy Lipnice (on-line), available at: https://www.psl.cz/metoda-zazitkove-pedagogiky-certifikovany-vycvik, cited 25th November 2017.
5   Cf. Richard MACKŮ, *Instantní, nebo skutečné řešení problému?* Zlín: Verbum, 2015.

members of the group.[6] An instructor-animator is a personality who, by his or her own example, influences his or her surroundings.

Who Is the Instructor?

At the beginning of our text, we have indicated that there are essentially two demands (professional and personality) when talking about the instructor.[7] In this sense, we could characterise the instructor of the experiential courses (who is the subject of this text in particular) as a leader of educational activity. He or she is responsible for the ideological, organisational, contentual, and methodological level of such an action. In general, instructors carry the intention of instructing someone, in other words, to teach something; an instructor in this sense is a teacher who leads a person or a group to a development goal, but (at the same time) takes care of a wide range of other related activities (for example, activities with an organisational character). However, the role of an instructor of an adventure course may change during the course – he or she can be an organiser, a teacher, a referee, an actor, or even a participant.[8]

This demand for a very wide range of activities may, however, also cause the problem that we have outlined in the preceding chapter – the fulfilment of a number of partial organisational-methodical tasks is easier to control and evaluate (it represents a contrast to a poorly measurable inspirational effect by one's personality). The instructor must therefore be understood above all as an informal leader,[9] not as a well-trained craftsman (as can often be seen in the requirements of organisations and according to the form of various methodological guides).[10] Lukas says that the leader is someone who has the ability to 'incite and inspire others to be beneficial to the group'.[11] In order for the leader to gain his or her supporters, he or she must 'persuade them about "his or her truth", present them a clear vision of the future, but also show the way how to achieve this vision and, if necessary, draw attention to the obstacles on the way'. And if he or she is convincing enough, he or she can gain followers who accept his or her vision for their own and make it a common thing – 'the individual acquires and consolidates those forms of behaviour which he or she understands as corresponding to the principle or the ideology which he or she had accepted and the enforcement of which he or she experiences as highly satisfying'.[12] In addition, the instructor of experiential courses can also use social learning methods that work on the principle of interacting with others. It is known that 'a specific personality characteristic develops primarily in those activities that place increased demands on this particular characteristic'.[13]

Instructors become personal models for a number of participants, especially for younger ages (up to 20 years). These young people often accept – mostly uncritically – the habits, opinions and attitudes of the instructors for a long time. However, between the incentive to be active in favour

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6   Cf. Michal KAPLÁNEK, *Animace. Studijní text pro přípravu animátorů mládeže*, Praha: Portál, 2013, p. 64.
7   This requirement can be compared with the demands on teachers described by Pruss, Walter, and Mares in the Pedagogical Dictionary: 'A teacher's competence is a set of professional skills and dispositions which a teacher should have in order to effectively carry out his or her profession. (…) Personality and professional competence are usually referred to as the core competencies.' in: Jan PRŮCHA – Eliška WALTEROVÁ – Jiří MAREŠ, *Pedagogický slovník*, Praha: Portál, 2003, p. 103.
8   Cf. Radek PELÁNEK, *Příručka instruktora zážitkových akcí*, Praha: Portál, 2008, pp. 39–40.
9   Leaders are formal and informal. The formal leader is someone who is in this role because of his or her position (e.g., the manager), and the informal leader is then someone who is perceived as the leader on the basis of ideas, attitudes, and the ability to interpret things appropriately and attractively without having the official position.
10 For example, a methodical publication called *Zlatý fond her* (*the Golden Fund of the Games*) states that 'the art of how to prepare and organise games is (as a skill) mostly about rehearsing and training'.
11 Josef LUKAS – Josef SMOLÍK, *Psychologie vůdcovství*, Brno: Computer Press, 2008, p. 58.
12 Jan ČÁP – Jiří MAREŠ, *Psychologie pro učitele*, Praha: Portál, 2001, p. 195.
13 ČÁP – MAREŠ, *Psychologie pro učitele…*, p. 282.

of others (motivation) and manipulation (influencing for the own benefit of the leader), there is a very narrow beam on which the leader (instructor), having a strong influence on the course participants, balances.[14] In addition, during the course, very deep and firm relationships are formed between participants and instructors. When thinking about the influence on the future life of the participants, there is a purely traditional imperative of excellent character, clear world views, and widely developed cultural interests of the instructor.[15]

The Development and Growth of the Instructor

According to Plamínek, three phases in the development of the instructor can be distinguished. This regards a way from offering specific modes towards giving incentives to think. He also mentions that 'there is no guarantee that every trainer must enter the third or even the second phase of this development'.[16] These three phases he divides (according to the instructor's focus) into *I - they - it*. Due to the fact that we consider this distribution to be fundamental for understanding the other parts of the text, let us briefly summarise the description of the phases.

In the first phase, the so-called 'I-phase', the instructor focuses primarily on him or herself and evaluates him or herself according to the chosen pattern. According to Plamínek, two outputs can be derived from this phase: escalating anxiety or content certainty, and procedural skill. The instructor is heavily focused on the process, trying to proceed as planned. Process focus can create a gap between the instructor's goal and the needs of the participants. Plamínek calls the second phase the 'they-phase'. The instructor focuses more on feedback from participants and organisers during his or her self-assessment. Again, there may be two opposition outcomes – trying to gain the sympathy of participants (even at the expense of the programme) or developing empathetic habits and a good image. The instructor relies on skills and motivational considerations; the activity may sometimes cause chaos. The third stage, the so-called 'it-phase', is characterised by focussing on the issue and by the effort to make it easier and good for participants rather than just to make the instructor look good in front of them. The instructor evaluates him or herself on the basis of his or her belief in the usefulness of his or her activities. The output is often the personality of the instructor, who has both his or her bright and dark side. A personal approach is often used, with the intention to gain usefulness. Participants with a certain awareness of the subject and personal curiosity can obtain more value from the instructor at this stage. However (for slower and more passive participants) such a lecturer can seem to act distractedly and incomprehensibly.[17]

In the described stages of the instructor's development, we can clearly observe the similarity with the instructor characteristics described above. His or her behaviour is based on the so-called instant experience, and then he or she gradually comes to resemble an instructor more who acts as an animator to the participants. It should be noted that, just as not all instructors reach the third stage of development,[18] in the same way not every instructor is capable of fulfilling the requirements to act like an animator with respect to the group. Plamínek's phases of *I - they - it* have inspired us to name themes and subtopics in the so-called index during the processing of the

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14 Cf. LUKAS – SMOLÍK, *Psychologie vůdcovství…*, p. 66.
15 Cf. Petr HOLEC, Problematika metodického využití moderních forem pobytu v přírodě v SSM, *Metodické listy pro tělovýchovně brannou činnost* 7/1977, p. 9.
16 Jiří PLAMÍNEK, *Vzdělávání dospělých: průvodce pro lektory, účastníky a zadavatele*, Praha: Grada, 2010, p. 268.
17 Cf. ibid., pp. 268–271.
18 Cf. ibid., p. 268.

frame analysis. It was focused on a deeper understanding of the instructor's work on experiential courses and it was possible to observe the instructor's development as described above.

An Animator or a Worker?

While most of the existing publications and research concern specific instructor professions (in the Czech environment, for example, ski instructors, etc.) and thus develop knowledge about the work of the instructor-worker, publications considering the personality of instructors are difficult to find. However, we can find an extensive amount of titles dealing with a related topic of leadership, for example, a title by P. G. Northouse.[19] A unique piece of research that focused directly on our target group, i.e., the instructors of experiential courses, was that conducted by T. Valenta and published in 2011.[20] This research was biographical in nature and its purpose was to find out what role the instructor phenomenon plays in the human path of life.

Inspired by the research and motivated by the contradiction in the possible concept of the instructor's work, we conducted a qualitative empirical survey.[21] Its aim was to map the perception of issues related to instructorship among the instructors of experiential events themselves. While Valenta's research on instructor education focused on the continuity of changes in the instructor's work during his or her life,[22] our research focused on various concepts of instructor work across instructor positions in several organisations.

During the interviews, we focused on the topics of self-perception of instructors, and what they consider to be important with regard to individual positions (starting instructor – chief instructor). Another topic was collaboration with other team members, as well as themes that helped us to better distinguish between the designator instructor-worker and instructor-animator.

The partial objectives of the research that helped us to structure interviews with instructors were:

- What do the instructors perceive as their strengths?
- What requirements for individual positions in an organisation are considered important by the instructors?
- What conditions do the instructors require to be willing to cooperate?
- What differences do the instructors perceive between the work done by the instructor-worker and instructor-personality?[23]

The main technique of data collection was a semi-structured interview. The interview is an appropriate way to examine members of a particular environment, a specific group, and the instructor community represents such a group.[24] The above-mentioned questions, based on the partial ob-

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19 NORTHOUSE, *Leadership: Theory and Practice…*
20 Tomáš VALENTA, Fenomén instruktorství v životní dráze člověka (the presentation of research results), *Gymnos Akadémos* 1/2011, pp. 12–22.
21 As Valenta states in ibid., the phenomenon of instructor education is usually viewed in the spirit of the hermeneutical-phenomenological research tradition, which belongs to qualitatively conceived research. It is often not an explanation of this term, but rather a description and understanding of the breadth of the whole phenomenon of instructor.
22 VALENTA, Fenomén instruktorství v životní dráze…, pp. 12–22.
23 During the interviews with instructors, we used the term 'personality' instead of the term 'animator' in order to distinguish this approach of the instructor's work (versus the instant-worker concept); during the preparatory work, we encountered substantial contradictions in the framework understanding of the word animator, which could lead to a substantial distortion of the data found and, consequently, of the facts examined.
24 Cf. Roman ŠVAŘÍČEK – Klára ŠEĎOVÁ, *Kvalitativní výzkum v pedagogických vědách*, Praha: Portál, 2007, p. 159.

jectives of the survey, have become the basis of the so-called questionnaire scheme, the basic axis of the interview with the informants; for individual positions (see below), however, partial sets of different questions were prepared. The interviewees were selected from three different organisations dedicated to the use of experiential methods to develop the personality of an individual or a group. The intention was to conduct conversations with people in different positions from each selected organisation (starting instructor, advanced instructor, chief instructor); this made it possible to compare data across positions and across different organisations. The interviewees were four men and four women, all of whom are active instructors, and all have university degrees or are studying in order to gain one. In order to analyse the obtained data, a qualitative framework analysis[25] was used, mainly because the data had a certain trace of enquiries and was therefore quite significantly structured.

The process of data analysis itself can be divided into five phases described by J. Ritchie and L. Spencer:[26]

1. *Introduction to Data Management*
   At this stage, the researcher is thoroughly acquainted with the data material during which we identify the recurring themes and ideas that are used in the following phase.
2. *Identification of the Thematic Framework*
   Here is the main task to compile the so-called thematic framework – the index (see Figure 1), on the basis of which (in the next steps) the data will be identified, sorted, and compared.
3. *Indexing*
   In the indexing phase, there is the application of the thematic frame to the original data, during which the researcher reads in detail the data of a textual nature and assigns them a numerical designation based on the index – i.e., the outlines of the main and sub-themes.
4. *Thematic Mapping*
   It consists of summarising the points of each part of the data and placing it in a table. A separate table is created for each topic, which contains a subtopic in the column, then individual cases in rows.
5. *Mapping and Interpretation*
   The final step is to illustrate all the information that has been identified and the interconnection of related knowledge.

By applying the first two steps we obtained the index shown in Figure 1. It indicates the development of the main topics and subtopics, where the naming (as we have already mentioned) was inspired by Plamínek's division of the instructor development phase and was further specified. Subsequently, we used the index for further data processing: individual responses were assigned to individual topics. At this stage of data organisation (sorting participants' testimonies by sub-themes), the thematic mapping phase is established.

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25 This scheme of qualitative data analysis was developed in the 1980s. The authors of the framework analysis sought to facilitate the systematic examination of qualitative data. Framework analysis is not very thoroughly described in the Czech Republic, the basic overview being provided by HENDL (2005), and a more detailed one can be found in Richard MACKŮ, *Instantní, nebo skutečné řešení problému?* Zlín: Verbum, 2015.

26 Jane RITCHIE – Liz SPENCER, Qualitative data analysis for applied policy research, in: *Analyzing qualitative data*, eds. Alan Bryman – Robert G. Burgess, New York: Routledge, 1994, pp.173–194.
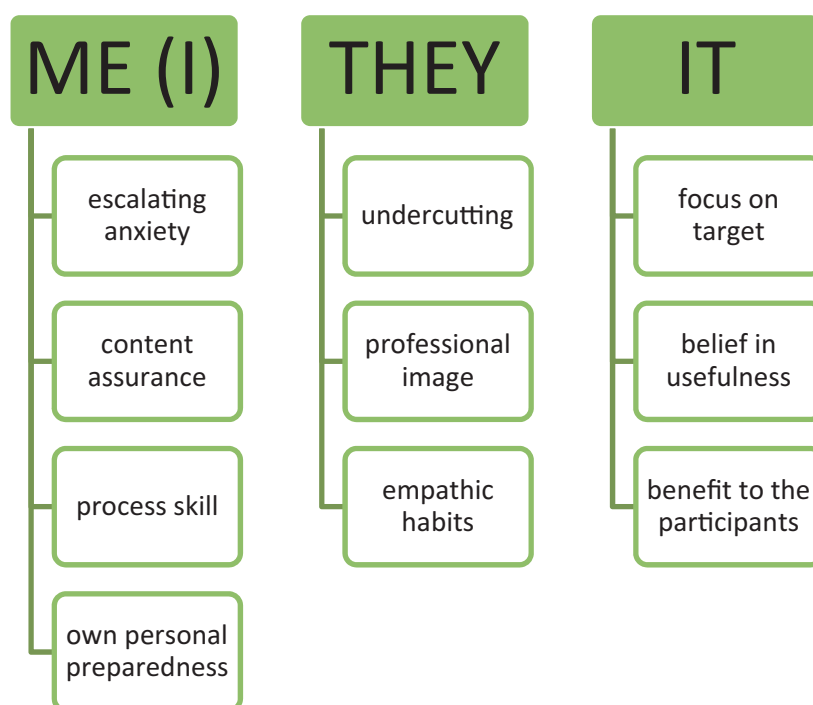
ME (I)	THEY	IT
escalating anxiety	undercutting	focus on target
content assurance	professional image	belief in usefulness
process skill	empathic habits	benefit to the participants
own personal preparedness		

Figure 1 Index

For the final interpretation and compilation of the resulting mental map it was necessary to carry out a so-called descriptive analysis. The aim was to distinguish essential information and to present the content to make the message clear. The descriptive analysis contained three steps leading to the gradual abstraction and acquisition of the final categories:[27]

1. Identifying the substantial content and dimensions of the phenomenon under investigation;
2. Specification and assignment of descriptive data to categories (first degree of abstraction);
3. A classification with a framework in which each category group is assigned to a more abstract class (second degree of abstraction) – in our case, on the basis of previous characteristics, we divided the categories into two basic classes, that is, the category belonging more to the instructor-animator's behaviour and the category belonging more to the instructor-worker's behaviour.

The final phase of the framework analysis (mapping and interpretation) was (in our survey) taken up by the creation of so-called mental maps, which carry the advantage of the graphical arrangement of key concepts, indicating mutual relationships and contexts. As can be seen from Figure 2, we completely disagree with the original thesis that the instructor evolves over time towards an animator's conception of work because it includes (besides focusing on the target) also a strong preparation of the personality. But that is (according to Plamínek) a part of the 'I' phase.
The resulting mental maps reveal, in essence, the basic profile of both instructor roles, i.e., the in-

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27   These three steps are commonly recorded in so-called generalisation tables, where the first column contains text from a specific column of thematic tables, the second column is then a more general formulation, and in the third column we add the final sub-category: Cf. Jane RITCHIE – Jane LEWIS, *Qualitative research practice*, London: Sage Publications, 2003, p. 243.

structor-animator and the instructor-worker. These are two hypothetical constructs, model profiles, which are more or less approached by real instructors in some respects. In terms of the results of this qualitative survey, however, it may be interesting that both profiles have been prepared in a mirror-like manner. It has been possible due to the fact that enough pairing categories have been found, and thus there is now an easier way to compare each. Only in comparison can we often find significant differences between the two profiles. For example, let us name a category labelled Positive Tune; we can find this subcategory in both classes (profiles), while in the instructor-animator profile the positive tuning is included in the category called psychological features, in the instructor-worker profile it is a skill (i.e., it is not a natural thing but a learned part of the work). Similarly, interesting nuances can be found in other examples: while the instructor-worker enjoys the work being done, the instructor-animator has fun while working; and the instructor-worker uses a steady procedure, while the instructor-animator uses the best practice. We can see, therefore, that some of the very positive characteristics of the instructor-worker have an even more positive effect (when generally perceived) in the case of the instructor-animator: when the instructor-worker *tries to imitate his or her patterns*, it is certainly very praiseworthy, but only in conjunction with the partner category (the instructor-animator *as a model*) is a significant difference present.
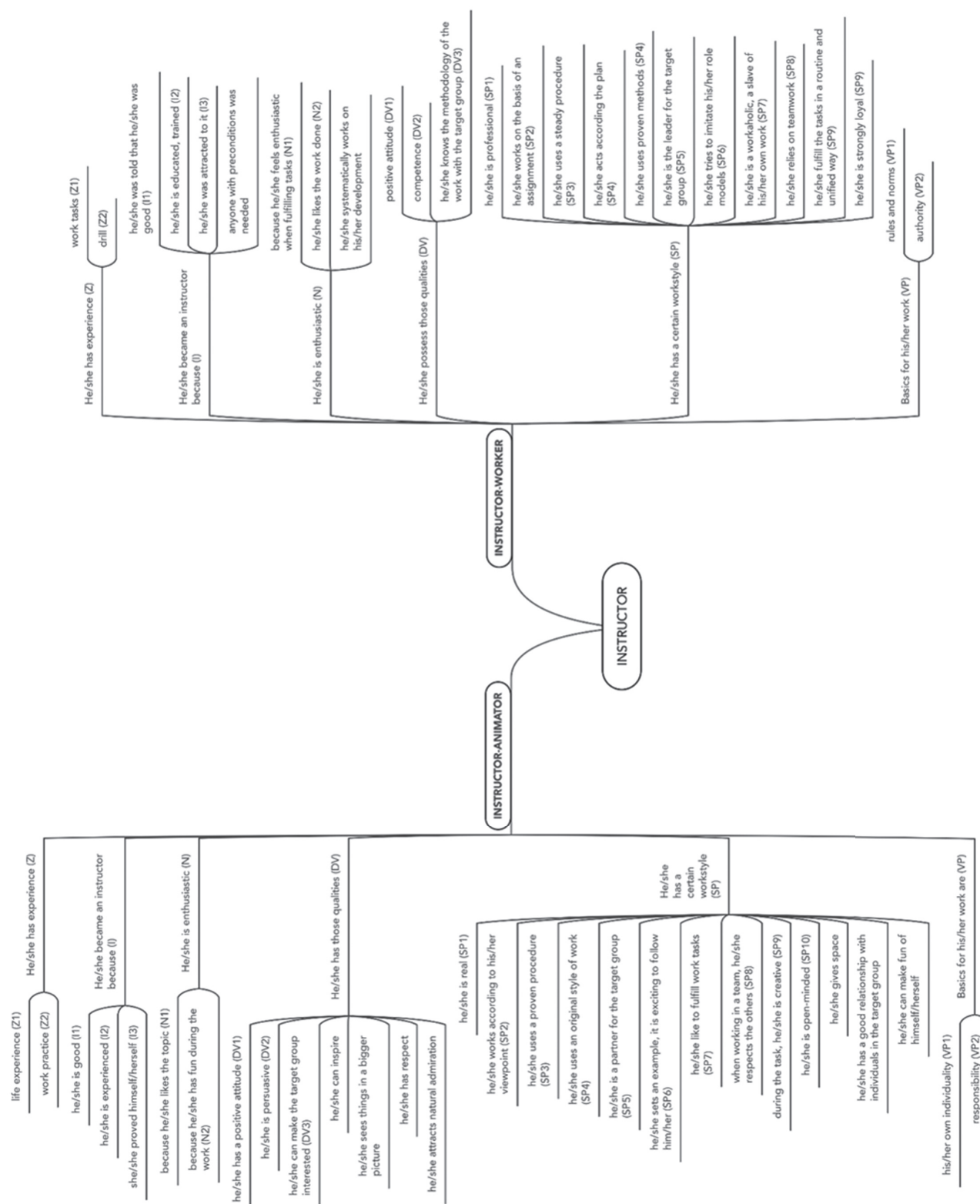
Figure 2. The conceptual map showing the links of the categories to the topic (instructor-worker vs. instructor-animator)

Conclusion

As can be seen from our introductory description and also from the categories listed in the conceptual map, there are fundamental differences in the concept of the work of the instructor-animator and the instructor-worker. These differences are particularly evident when looking closer and comparing categories in pairs. While the instructor-worker turns out to be a professional in the use of methods and precise application of the principles assumed, the instructor-animator is an inspirational personality that influences the group primarily informally. The advantage of an instructor-animator is his or her attractivity for the participants, and thanks to this he or she can better fulfil the purpose and objectives of the course.

These results are an attempt to identify fundamental differences and tendencies in the work of instructors in the field of experiential development and learning; it is about revealing basic paradigms of approach to the role of instructor. Any further generalisation of our results is not possible due to the methodology used; the investigation was based on the personal testimony of the instructors themselves, who expressed their own conception of their work. If we wanted to dig deeper into the starting point of these problems, it would also be necessary to carry out a psychological investigation. Similarly, it would be necessary to consider developing a diagnostic tool that would allow a more precise assignment of the instructor to a specific profile.

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Abstract

The paper responds to the current phenomenon of young instructors working in organisations that are engaged in the development of individuals and groups using experiential methods. These young instructors are methodically well-equipped, but their experience often has only 'instant nature'. Therefore, the text deals with the differences in the concept of the instructor working in the role of the animator on one hand and the instantly working instructor-worker on the other.

The aim of the qualitatively conceived empirical probe was to map the perception of issues related to instructorship among the instructors of experiential events themselves. Semi-structured interviews were subjected to a framework analysis; its output is a pair of conceptual maps that indicate the differences between the two methods of instructor work. The findings of this investigation can be the basis for building a diagnostic tool for instructors.

Key Words: instructor, animator, teacher, experiential pedagogy, experimental course, framework analysis

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