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Design thinking in fulfilling the parental role**

Design thinking w pełnieniu roli rodzicielskiej

Abstract

Introduction. The design thinking method, originating in the creative industry, and increasingly applied in management (Studzińska, 2017), is now finding its place in social sciences (Gołębiowska, Józwiak, Kwiatkowski, Czerniak, & Kamiński, 2022) and education (Kwieciński, 2016).

Aim. This study aims to demonstrate how design thinking can be applied to the process of forming the social role of a parent. The primary objective of the article is to demonstrate how this method can facilitate parents in implementing changes, addressing challenges, and fulfilling their parental responsibilities.

Methods and materials. The article is based on a literature review of design thinking, particularly in the context of its methodology and potential applications. A literature ana-

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lysis relating to parenting is conducted, focusing on perspectives that enable an understanding of the numerous ways of fulfilling the parental role and its dynamic nature. The author suggests using the design thinking methodology for the parental role to be formed by parents in collaboration with experts, providing guidelines for each stage of the design process.

Results and conclusion. The use of design thinking in designing the parental role can contribute to a deeper understanding of parents' needs and offer adequate, purposeful, and effective solutions. Parents involved in this process may experience an increase in their sense of competence and empowerment in fulfilling their role. The usage of design thinking in the design of parenthood promotes its perception as a process subject to continuous creation and development (Bakiera, 2023; Wąsiński, 2018).

Keywords: parents, design, parental role, design thinking, shaping the parental role.

Abstrakt

Wstęp. Metoda *design thinking*, wywodząca się z branży kreatywnej i stosowana w zarządzaniu (Studzińska, 2017), znajduje coraz szersze zastosowanie również w naukach społecznych (Gołębiowska, Józwik, Kwiatkowski, Czerniak, Kamiński, 2022) i edukacji (Kwieciński, 2016).

Cel. Niniejsze opracowanie ma na celu ukazanie możliwości zastosowania *design thinking* w procesie kształtowania roli społecznej rodzica. Głównym celem artykułu jest przedstawienie, jak metoda ta może wspierać rodziców we wprowadzaniu zmian, rozwiązywaniu problemów oraz pełnieniu ich zadań rodzicielskich.

Metody i materiały. Artykuł bazuje na analizie literatury przedmiotu dotyczącej *design thinking*, szczególnie w kontekście metodyki i możliwości jej zastosowań. Przeprowadzono również analizę literatury odnoszącej się do rodzicielstwa, skupiając się na perspektywach, które umożliwiają zrozumienie różnych sposobów pełnienia roli rodzicielskiej oraz jej zmiennej natury. Autor proponuje wykorzystanie metodologii *design thinking* do kształtowania roli rodzicielskiej przez rodziców we współpracy ze specjalistami, prezentując wskazówki dla każdego etapu projektowania. W artykule zaprezentowane są propozycje, które demonstrują, jak metoda ta może być stosowana do rozwiązywania konkretnych problemów rodzicielskich, takich jak zarządzanie stresem, kształtowanie postaw wobec dzieci czy adaptacja do zmian życiowych.

Wyniki i wnioski. Zastosowanie *design thinking* w projektowaniu roli rodzicielskiej, może przyczynić się do głębszego zrozumienia potrzeb rodziców oraz zaoferować adekwatne, celowe i skuteczne rozwiązania. Rodzice zaangażowani w ten proces mogą doświadczyć wzrostu poczucia sprawności i wzmocnienia w pełnieniu swojej roli. Użycie *design thinking* w projektowaniu rodzicielstwa sprzyja postrzeganiu go jako procesu podlegającego ciągłej kreacji i rozwojowi (Bakiera, 2023; Wąsiński, 2018).

Słowa kluczowe: rodzice, projektowanie, rola rodzicielska, design thinking, kształtowanie roli rodzicielskiej.

Introduction

Throughout life, individuals assume many social roles, one of them being the parental role. This role is shaped within the family of origin, where individuals observe, model, and imitate parental behaviours. The development of this role is influenced by various factors, including those operating in the newly established family (Rostowska, 1995), individual personality traits (Bakiera, 2013), socio-cultural influences (Błasiak, 2015), personal agency, and self-conception regarding parenthood (Wąsiński, 2018), and biographical learning, which involves reflecting on one's own experiences and those of others (Puszcz, Kalus, & Mazurek, 2023).

The parental role is a complex, multidimensional category that presents various challenges for parents, requiring their commitment, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. One effective method for addressing these challenges is design thinking (Kelley, Kelley, 2019). This article aims not only to illustrate how parents can utilize design thinking to enhance their parenting skills and strategies but also to promote awareness and engagement in their ongoing development within this role. Design thinking offers a structured approach that is particularly beneficial in the dynamic context of parenting, where constant adaptation and innovative thinking are essential.

Variability and multidimensionality of the parental role

Fulfilling the parental role can be examined from several perspectives. Firstly, from the interpersonal aspect of parenting which concerns the entirety of the parent's influence on the child and the activities undertaken for the child's care, upbringing, and development. It also includes the determinants of the parent-child relationship and the importance of the parental presence, their attitudes and parenting styles in a child's life. The second perspective is the contextual aspect of parenting, referring to recognizing and describing the various contexts in which parents raise their children: from geographical, through socio-cultural, to relationships with the other parent and extended family members. Lastly, it is also important to analyse parenting from an intrapsychic point of view, including learning about various experiences resulting from being a parent. This encompasses subjective impressions, emotions, levels of parental stress, parental identity, self-assessment as a parent, and the evolving vision of parenthood (Bakiera, 2020, 2023).

The parental role is a category undergoing change and development, influenced by various factors, including family dynamics, personal experiences, and external circumstances. It evolves throughout the family life cycle, child development, the presence of other children, the changing needs of children, and shifts in parenting methods and role arrangements between parents (Bakiera, 2023). Changes in interactions among family members, as well as evolving circumstances—whether normative, typical, or sudden and unexpected—require adaptation. Furthermore, the parental role is transformed under the influence of social, cultural, and economic changes (Adamski, 2002; Bakiera, 2020; Błasiak, 2015; Kwak, 2005), as well as other factors determining social expectations surrounding the roles of mothers and fathers (Wałęcka-Matyja, 2014).

Fulfilling the parental role requires introducing various changes into the parent's life. They must constantly improve their competencies and transform their behaviours. This requires continuous development, flexibility, and adaptation to changes falling under the concept of “lifelong learning,” which emphasizes the need to acquire new skills and competencies essential in our rapidly evolving world. The process of shaping the parental role is continuous and involves creative engagement in learning (Puszcz, Kalus, & Mazurek, 2023). It also requires personal self-creation in parenting. As a result, the parental role is actively and perpetually being constructed and refined by the adults (Wąsiński, 2018, 2021).

Supporting parents in introducing changes to their parental roles requires a deep understanding of the complexity of their role, various areas of their functioning, and the needs they experience. It is crucial to support parents with their involvement while planning and assessing actions aimed at enhancing their effectiveness in this role. Traditional methods of education and support for parents may prove insufficient in an era marked by rapid social, cultural, and technological transformations. One of the methods of introducing changes in the social life of individuals and social groups is “design thinking,” *i.e.*, designing according to clearly defined principles.

The essence, main principles, and stages of design thinking

Design thinking (Kelley, Kelley, 2019; Kimbell, 2011) is currently understood very broadly. Originally developed within the creative sector, it pertains to the creation of products, services, as well as arts and crafts. Within this framework, design methodology has evolved to emphasize functionality, accessibility, and adaptability to the needs of potential users (Wszolek, Moszczyński, & Lewe, 2022). Design thinking is also used in business and entrepreneurial activities (Kelley, Kelley, 2019). However, this approach goes beyond just creating new product forms. It is used in education and other areas of life related to introducing changes. In the humanities and social scien-

ces, design thinking is perceived as a form of activity based on readiness, creativity, and commitment to implement changes in various areas of life. This process fosters personal and collective development and is considered a vital life competence, which, thanks to humility, perseverance, consistency, and reflection, enables improvement, transformation, and (re)interpretation of the *status quo*. Ultimately, design thinking requires maturity, achieving early adulthood (Appelt, Jabłoński, Smykowski, Wojciechowska, & Ziółkowska, 2010).

Literally translated, “design thinking” refers to a conceptual framework that encompasses various terms such as approach, philosophy, method, methodology, and creativity (Okraj, 2020). A widely accepted definition describes it as a “people-centred approach to problem solving” (Kimbell, 2011, p. 3). Another valuable definition indicates that it is “an ordered, methodically creative approach to the design process: service items/action strategies, aimed at creating innovative solutions taking into account the perspectives of future recipients” (Okraj, 2020, p. 22). In this context, problems are understood as new situations that require overcoming difficulties and generate the need to find new means to achieve the goal (Klus-Stańska, Nowicka, 2014; Nosal, 2001). Design thinking often addresses so-called “wicked problems,” *i.e.*, complex, multi-dimensional, open problems which lack a clear solution, are diverse and, as a result, must be tailored to the recipients’ specific needs. The design thinking methodology is based on the purposefulness of action, *i.e.*, starting work by specifying the purpose of the design activity (Studzińska, 2017). The actions undertaken should be based on the cooperation of an interdisciplinary team, ensuring that proposed solutions are both practical and aligned with the needs of stakeholders (Kwieciński, 2016; Okraj, 2020).

The design thinking process, as proposed by Julia Thienen, Christoph Meinel, and Claudia Nicolai (2014), is structured around five key stages:

- empathizing,
- defining the problem,
- generating ideas,
- building prototypes,
- testing.

A characteristic feature in the problem-solving strategy using design thinking is empathy, understood as a deep recognition of the needs, problems, and expectations of recipients, and several factors influencing their decisions and behaviours. Searching for solutions that meet the real needs and desires of recipients is crucial. Therefore, the first step in design thinking is understanding: deep empathy towards the people/institutions for which the project is prepared (Okraj, 2020; Thienen, Meinel, & Nicolai, 2014). Following this, the process moves to the problem definition stage, during which the collected information is analysed and synthesized to formulate clear problems that

need to be solved (Okraj, 2020). The process of generating solutions is also known as the ideation stage. Participants are encouraged to think creatively and outside the box during the ideation stage, with the primary goal of generating a wide array of diverse and original ideas to address the identified problem (Kwieciński, 2016). The next step is prototyping, where these ideas are transformed into tangible, testable solutions. Prototypes can take various forms, including objects, models, diagrams, storyboards (visual representations of action steps), role-plays, and instructions (Okraj, 2020; Helman, Rosienkiewicz, 2016). Next, in the testing phase, prototypes are implemented and evaluated. Feedback is gathered from participants regarding the effectiveness of the proposed solutions, leading to decisions about improvements or adaptations to better meet real needs, or ultimately to the implementation of the solutions (Okraj, 2020). The resulting project should aim to achieve its intended goals and provide solutions that align with the recipients' needs. The project should exhibit creativity, ensuring that the proposed and implemented solutions are new, innovative, unconventional, applicable, and valuable (Helman, Rosienkiewicz, 2016; Kimbell, 2011; Okraj, 2020; Thienen et al., 2014).

The use and effectiveness of design thinking in social sciences and parenting

The effectiveness of problem solving using the design thinking method requires monitoring. Some studies confirm the effectiveness of using design thinking in, among other things, education, health care and the IT industry. For example, in education, they were used in the design of a new higher education teacher education program, which, according to its creators and recipients, responded to important issues in education compared to previous programs using other forms of change planning (Leonard, Fitzgerald, & Riordan, 2016). Then, the use of the design thinking method contributed to the development of forms of tutoring and support for students tailored to their needs by involving them in the process of creating services at the university (Mann, 2020); and influenced the development of entrepreneurial attitudes among students (Kwieciński, 2016), the development of effective ways of supporting people struggling with eating disorders (Heafala, Rundle-Thiele, Ball, & Mitchell, 2024), the development of creative thinking in problem solving (Hatt, Davidson, & Carrion-Weiss, 2023; Liu et al., 2024). In the IT industry this method turns out to be useful, for example, in solving software problems and creating new applications that meet the needs of users, such as applications for the adaptation of former prisoners (Canedo et al., 2024) and developing social skills among children on the autism spectrum (Constain Moreno, Collazos, Blasco, & Moreira, 2023).

An example of the use of the design thinking method in addressing parenting challenges is presented by Thai researchers (Yam-Ubon, Thongseiratch, 2023). The authors describe the process of creating a support program for parents of children with ADHD, based on social media and using the design thinking method. The objective of the study was to develop a program that would respond to the needs of parents facing difficulties in raising children with ADHD, especially in the context of restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Traditional forms of support, such as group therapy sessions, proved difficult to implement due to time constraints, professional obligations, and difficult access to health facilities. Therefore, the authors decided to develop a solution based on an easily accessible communication platform. Based on interviews with parents of children with ADHD, researchers identified several key challenges such as difficulties in dealing with impulsive behaviour, lack of skills for addressing children's emotional regulation, and the need for emotional support for parents themselves. In response to these needs, a program was created based on the LINE mobile application—a widely used communication platform in Thailand, where the study was conducted. The program comprised several educational modules designed to equip parents with knowledge and tools for effectively managing their children's behaviour. Additionally, it offered emotional support through opportunities for interaction with both peers and experts. Evaluation of the program revealed that parents valued its accessibility and flexibility, particularly the option to engage with the content at their own convenience. The use of social media facilitated the overcoming of numerous barriers related to participation in traditional support programs. Parents indicated that the program not only provided them with effective parenting techniques but also enhanced their understanding of their children's behaviours. Another important aspect of the program was emotional support for parents who often feel overwhelmed by the difficulties of raising children with ADHD. The research findings indicated that the design thinking method was effective in creating a program tailored to the actual needs of parents. Not only was the program well received, but it also had a high completion rate among the participants. The authors pointed out that similar solutions can be successfully applied on a larger scale, both in low- and middle-income countries and in diverse cultural contexts. The need for further development of the program was also indicated, particularly concerning content personalization, to better meet the individual needs of various families (Yam-Ubon, Thongseiratch, 2023).

A slightly different example pertaining to supporting parents is research conducted by Canadian researchers that examines the engagement of parents in the development of a health program from which they are both the beneficiaries and partial implementers (Vanderloo et al., 2021). The article describes the involvement of parents in designing a clinical program on the prevention of obesity among children through the design thinking method. The process involved several steps, including gathering feedback

from parents through focus groups, analysing the results, and making changes to the study design based on the information gathered. As part of cooperation with parents, the so-called “PARENT Panel,” which played a key role in co-creating and refining the PARENT Trial. The aim of this study was to assess whether participating in sessions with a public health nurse and home visits focused on children’s health behaviours (such as physical activity, sleep, and diet) could provide benefits in improving children’s health. Parents actively participated in establishing research priorities, providing invaluable insights that helped determine what elements of the intervention would be most effective and acceptable. One of the most important conclusions drawn from this project was that parents need tools and support that are practical and tailored to their real needs. The opportunity to interact with public health nurses in their homes was especially appreciated, as it facilitated a better understanding and implementation of health recommendations for their children. Additionally, parents highlighted the importance of emotional support and the opportunity to share experiences with other parents, which contributed to a sense of community and mutual support. Another essential element was the flexibility of the program, allowing parents to participate in sessions either online or at times that suited their schedules – an essential consideration given their tight schedules and professional commitments. The implementation of changes such as reducing the number of sessions and the ability to join them remotely proved crucial to increasing parent involvement. Findings from the application of the design thinking method to support parents indicate that this approach not only allows the measures to be tailored to parents’ needs but also increases their involvement and satisfaction with the process. Collaborative development of health programs with parents leads to a better understanding of the challenges they face and to the implementation of more effective and useful tools that support them in their parenting roles (Vanderloo et al., 2021).

It is important to note that design thinking is widely known among family assistants and social workers who, as part of their professional duties, create plans for working with families or parents. The development of these plans occurs after establishing contact with families, building relationships, identifying their needs, diagnosing the educational environment, analysing available resources, and recognizing existing challenges. Family assistants and social workers utilize standardized forms to facilitate this planning process. Once a plan is developed, its implementation is monitored, followed by periodic and final assessments of outcomes, progress toward family independence, and evaluations of collaboration with specialists (Krasiejko, 2016). In Poland, family assistants operate based on a detailed and broadly developed methodology. Therefore, considering the above context, it can be concluded that they apply the design thinking method and there are a few arguments supporting this conclusion. Firstly, due to the in-depth understanding of the needs of the families one works with (empathizing

stage). Rather than relying on universal solutions, family assistants can develop programs tailored to the unique circumstances of each family. Secondly, design thinking promotes an unconventional approach to problem solving. Family assistants often deal with complex problems that require innovative solutions. The design thinking method allows the generating of many different ideas and then testing them in practice, which may lead to the development of effective solutions tailored to a specific family. Lastly, design thinking is based on cooperation and involvement of all stakeholders in the problem-solving process. In the work of a family assistant, it is particularly important that the family is an active participant in the support process. Thanks to the design thinking method, parents and other people involved in family life can participate in creating solutions, which increases their sense of responsibility and involvement in the change process.

Family assistants frequently need to adapt their support plans to the dynamic situations within families. Thanks to an iterative approach, they can constantly modify their actions to better respond to the family's evolving needs. One of the objectives of design thinking is learning through experience and testing various solutions. By involving parents in decision-making processes and encouraging them to experiment with different strategies, family assistants can support the development of essential parenting and home management skills. Thanks to this, parents gain not only theoretical knowledge but also practical experience, which increases their confidence and strengths.

The literature on the subject includes noteworthy examples of designing social changes in Poland. Representatives of the State Fund for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled, the Institute of Sociology of the University of Wrocław, and SWPS University in Warsaw provided a theoretical framework for constructing and evaluating projects (Appelt, Jabłoński, Smykowski, Wojciechowska, & Ziółkowska, 2010). The framework is based on examples of improving the functioning of people with disabilities and their environments.

The aim of the project was to develop recommendations for the National Strategy for increasing the socio-professional activity of people with rare forms of disability (including multiple disabilities) referring to the diagnosis carried out on a sample of 100000 people with disabilities, as well as recommendations for the draft of PO KL [*Program Operacyjny Kapitał Ludzki* – operating program “human capital”] for Priority and Employment and social integration (Appelt, Jabłoński, Smykowski, Wojciechowska, & Ziółkowska, 2010, p. 140).

The project resulted in the formulation of several recommendations at the national level. Key recommendations included adapting legal and systemic regulations to better meet the needs of individuals with disabilities, addressing gaps in existing databases

concerning the population of people with disabilities—particularly those with rare and multiple forms—and enhancing access to healthcare and infrastructure. Attention was drawn to the lack of social awareness regarding the challenges faced by these individuals and the need to individualize support (Appelt, Jabłoński, Smykowski, Wojciechowska, & Ziółkowska, 2010).

The above examples may constitute an attempt to justify the use of this design strategy to shape, develop, and transform parental roles. The method has the potential to assist parents struggling with various challenges.

Design thinking of a parental role

Designing the parental role can serve as a vital tool to support parents in the effective tackling of parental challenges. This approach may incorporate design strategies, such as design thinking, to identify and address issues related to the parenting experience. By employing design thinking, practitioners can understand and meet the needs of parents, children, and the entire family in an innovative and effective ways.

The design thinking methodology can be applied across various aspects of parenting, including the development of solutions for parents facing challenges such as disrupted parental identity, parental burnout, difficulties in organizing family life, and the challenges of balancing family and professional roles. Designing parenting can be used in initiating programs aimed at supporting parents' mental health, designing educational paths that develop parenting skills and knowledge about child development, and effective parenting strategies. This approach may also encompass the development of activities that foster children's growth, strengthen relationships with them, and implement necessary educational solutions. Furthermore, it involves creating methods and tools to support family communication, resolve conflicts, and build strong familial bonds. The application of design thinking in parenting includes several stages, which are outlined below.

Empathizing

The first step is to deeply understand the experiences, challenges, and needs of parents to create solutions adequate to their real needs. It is crucial for specialists who support parents to not only understand them but also to assist parents in gaining a better understanding of themselves. The key to supporting parents is understanding the intrapsychic dimension of parenting, i.e., the individual conditions of being a mother or father and the personal experience of the parental role. Focusing on the subjective experiences of

parents is the first step to supporting them in better fulfilling their parental responsibilities. However, to get a complete picture of parenting, it is necessary to understand all its dimensions: intrapsychic, interpersonal, and contextual. At this stage, it is important to collect as much information as possible about the challenges parents face.

In-depth interviews with parents, existing questionnaires from the subject literature and surveys created for interviews with parents may be useful. A proposal of areas to investigate needs and problems, including relevant questions and tools is presented below (Table 1).

Table 1

Areas for identifying parents' needs and problems

Area	Detailed Areas/Questions	Tools
Intrapsychic Aspect of Parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identification with the parental role. Does the parent feel they fit into the role and identify with it? – Emotions and feelings experienced in relation to fulfilling the parental role. – Areas of satisfaction, stress, and difficulties related to the parental experience. – Self-image in the parental role – how it was, how it is, and how the parent would like it to be. – Individual resources in the parental role (emotional, personality traits, skills, competencies, and experience). – What parental role models were present in the family of origin, and how do they influence the parents' own lives? – What are the personal beliefs regarding the parental role? – What actions have been taken so far to develop in the parental role? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In-depth interviews – Focus groups with two parents simultaneously – SWOT analysis – Questionnaires, <i>e.g.</i>, Parental Burnout (Szczygieł, Sekulowicz, Kwiatkowski, Roskam, & Mikolajczak, 2020), Parenting Attitudes in Family of Origin and Own Family (Plopa, 2008), Parenting Styles in Family of Origin and Own Family (Ryś, 2001) – Observation – Surveys – Thematic discussion sessions
Interpersonal Aspect of Parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Represented parenting attitudes and styles. – Nature of the relationships between the parent and child(ren) and among parents. 	

Area	Detailed Areas/Questions	Tools
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Challenges and difficulties in the parent-child relationship. – Perception of support received from spouse/partner and immediate surroundings. 	
Contextual Aspect of Parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Analysis of the environment. – External resources (relational, social, financial). 	

Source: Author's own study.

Problem definition

At this stage, the collected diverse, multidimensional, and complex information should be analysed to identify the main problems and needs of parents. The objective is to identify specific issues that can be addressed effectively. However, a key consideration is how to prioritize these problems. The subjective perspectives of parents and the significance they attribute to the identified issues are crucial, complemented by the expertise of specialists who recognize essential categories relevant to the parental role. Problem analysis and categorization can facilitate the identification of recurring similar problems and needs, the frequency of their occurrence, as well as their importance in the lives of parents and children. It may also be useful to quantify problems, *i.e.*, to assign numerical values to each problem based on selected criteria, for example, the time needed to solve it or the impact on the satisfaction of parents and children.

Prioritizing and triaging the identified needs based on their urgency and importance is essential for enhancing the lives of both parents and children. It is important to identify the few most critical issues from the parent's perspective within each dimension of functioning – intrapsychic, interpersonal, and contextual. This analysis allows for the transformation of collected information into clearly defined challenges that can be addressed in subsequent stages of the process. For example, if analysis reveals that a lack of personal time and difficulty managing household responsibilities are the two main problems, focusing on solutions that can improve these two aspects may bring the greatest benefits. The number of problems to be solved depends on many factors, including the time in which the project will be implemented.

Generating ideas

This stage emphasizes the generation of a multitude of ideas aimed at addressing the identified problems. It entails an imaginative and exploratory search for solutions that effectively meet the genuine needs of parents. Initially, it is crucial to compile an extensive list of diverse ideas without prematurely assessing their potential utility. Participants should be encouraged to rely on intuition, embrace boldness, and adopt unconventional thinking (Grocholiński, Just, Kołodziejczak, Michalska-Dominiak, & Michalska-Żyła, 2021).

Tools useful for generating ideas are, among others, brainstorming, mind mapping (created for each defined problem), creative team discussions (Gołębiowska, Józwiak, Kwiatkowski, Czerniak, & Kamiński, 2022; Grocholiński et al., 2021; Okraj, 2020), graphic techniques for recording and illustrating ideas, and the 6 hats de bono method.

Collaboration with various specialists is essential while generating ideas (Okraj, 2020). If conditions and opportunities allow an exchange of ideas between an interdisciplinary team supporting parents, which may consist of psychologists, educators, family work specialists, family therapists, educators, and design thinking specialists, valuable insights from diverse perspectives can be provided. Involving parents in this process is equally crucial, as the proposed ideas will be implemented in their personal and family lives. Their presence is important when specialists generate ideas, which also allows them to submit their own proposals. Parents can also meet with specialists after their first meeting to participate in the process of selection, assessment, verification, and evaluation of ideas that will be transformed into a visualized action strategy in the next phase. The involvement of the entire family, including children, is also encouraged.

The selection of suggested ideas can be organized into several categories, *e.g.*, according to the level of difficulty of implementation; ideas with potential, inspiring, and those that do not meet parents' needs; solutions to be applied now, in the near or distant future (Grocholiński et al., 2021). It is also important to categorize solutions that respond to the needs of parents in three areas of parenting: intrapsychic, interpersonal, and contextual, such as supporting parental identity, coping with parental stress, building relationships with the child, improving parenting competencies, or building mutual support between parents.

Building prototypes

Building prototypes in parenting design includes creation of specific action strategies, solution models, educational programs for parents, and support networks. Examples include strategies for dealing with parental stress and difficult parenting situations, be-

haviours supporting closeness in relationships with children, and planners that facilitate the organization of family life. When presenting prototyped solutions, it may be useful to talk about them, create staging, develop written guides or create graphic models, *e.g.*, planners, and allocation of responsibilities tables. Additionally, it is important to define the timeframe, *e.g.*, a minimum period of two-three months, during which the solutions would be applied. It is important to involve parents in the process of creating prototypes, which allows assessing the possibilities of their use during the process.

Testing

Testing is the phase in which parents implement prototyped solutions into their lives and those of their families. This stage provides an opportunity to try the established solutions and evaluate their effectiveness, relevance, and the satisfaction derived from the results. An essential element of testing is evaluation, *i.e.*, collecting feedback from parents, and sometimes children, and analysing the data gathered. It is important to determine whether the proposed solutions address the actual needs of parents. Professionals should evaluate the actions taken in subsequent stages of design and the effects achieved by parents. This stage presents an opportunity to conduct interviews and conversations with parents about their experiences, impressions of implementing solutions, their advantages and disadvantages, potential errors, and useless elements, which allows for improvement or change of the suggested solutions.

Conclusion

This study proposes the application of a distinct method of design thinking – one that differs from those typically employed by family assistants and social workers – in the specific context of shaping the parental role. The integration of design thinking in the development of parental roles has the potential to yield significant benefits for parents, children, and the entire family unit.

This method can be employed by specialists who collaborate with parents and their families to address various challenges. It may prove useful for social welfare centres, family clinics, or independent professionals supporting parents in their role as parents. Implementing solutions responding to their real problems can improve their quality of life as parents, strengthen their satisfaction with the parental role, increase their self-confidence, help them cope with parental stress, develop parenting competences, and strengthen relationships with their children. Children may benefit from increased understanding from their parents, a better grasp of their own and others' emotions,

and improved self-esteem by experiencing success in problem solving experiences. Additionally, this approach supports the entire family system, as the growth of each family member positively influences the development of the entire system (Ryś, 2001). Moreover, cooperation in problem solving activities may enhance family dynamics, improve communication, and increase adaptability to change.

This article represents a significant contribution to the discourse on the parental role in contemporary society, offering an innovative approach to the traditional challenges faced by parents. The presented methodology has the potential not only to transform our understanding of parenting but also to shape practical strategies aimed at supporting parents in their vital social roles.

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