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The Teacher as an Adaptive Technician, a Reflective Practician and a Transformative Intellectual (an Attempt at the Outline of the Problem Field)

By referring to the recently emerged ways of thinking about the teacher as an adaptive technician, a reflective practician and a transformative intellectual, the author outlines the problem field (as understood by Henry A. Giroux) where he specifies the pulsation of ten categories which make up this field.

Keywords: teacher, adaptive technician, reflective practician, transformative intellectual, problem field, pulsating categories

Nauczyciel jako adaptacyjny technik, refleksyjny praktyk, transformatywny intelektualista (próba zarysowania pola problemowego)

Autor, nawiązując do wyodrębnionych w ostatnim okresie sposobów myślenia o nauczycielu jako: adaptacyjnym techniku, refleksyjnym praktyku i transformatywnym intelektualistcie, zakreśla pole problemowe (w rozumieniu Henry'ego A. Giroux), w którym wyodrębnia pulsowanie dziesięciu kategorii, to pole tworzących.

Słowa kluczowe: nauczyciel, adaptacyjny technik, refleksyjny praktyk, transformatywny intelektualista, pole problemowe, pulsujące kategorie

The analysis of pedeutological publications from the last decade supports the conclusion that **three ways of thinking** (models, paradigms, conceptions) **about the teacher** and his/her role have been formulated. The categories in the title of this paper can provide the names for these models.

The teacher conceived as an **adaptive technician** is a person who “produces” the mind contents of his/her pupils by using blueprints and standards of which the teacher is not the author or creator. Ewa Rodziewicz (1994) defines such a teacher as the “applicator of predefined top-down assumptions”. This teacher perceives education as a kind of applied science and himself/herself as the “enforcer” of the laws and rules of effective teaching.

A **reflective practitioner** is someone who thinks about what he or she is currently doing as part of the role. Such a teacher reflects on his/her own functioning by focusing on the structure of his/her own beliefs which define the way s/he thinks and acts. This reflection covers the methods of work, the adopted assumptions and the results achieved, the experiences as well as changes which should be implemented in the teaching role (see Taraszkiewicz, 1996).

The teacher understood as a **transformative intellectual** is a well-educated person who can think independently and is committed to developing wisdom in others along with the competences which allow for making changes in the social world (Giroux, 1988).

This description of the teacher models is only general and by no means exhaustive. One may elaborate on it by choosing three different directions:

- searching, discovering and revealing the assumptions (premises and sources on which the models are based);
- describing how the teacher actually functions within each model;
- presenting consequences as well as (desired, unintended, incidental and unwanted) outcomes which result from being an adaptive technician, a reflective practitioner or a transformative intellectual.

The authors of pedeutological texts usually focus on the second option, there it will be intentionally outside the scope of my analysis here. The possibilities of demonstrating the consequences of the models in question are incomparably wider. While the results of the objectification of the teacher as an adaptive technician have been relatively well recognized, we still do not know much about the role described as “professional mastery” and the transformative intellectual model is only discussed within the academic discourse in Poland. This means that the third direction of the pedeutological reflection is infeasible at the moment.

Below, I will try to reveal the assumptions on which the models have been founded. This task can be seen as the attempt at outlining the problem field of the reflection on the teacher. Following Henry A. Giroux (1993, p. 107), the problem field is understood as the conceptual structure identified through the questions which it poses and the questions which it is unable to formulate.

When making this attempt, one must point to the premises which organize the activity of the one who outlines the problem field. There are two types of such assumptions:

- substantive (content-related) – by referring to the concept of pulsating categories put forward by Joanna Rutkowiak (1995);
- formal – referring to the method of outlining the problem field by using the mapping concept (the phenomenographic method) (Paulston, 1993).

The substantive premises allowing to define the pulsating categories within the problem field relate to the mechanism which triggers the educational changes and the way in which pedagogy is conceived.

This mechanism formulated by Barbara Żechowska (1997, p. 43) can be described as follows:

Teachers have always been subject to demands and requirements. They result from social needs and/or individual needs which were and are translated into educational systems and models of education. These, in turn, were and are based on explicitly or implicitly articulated philosophy of education, i.e. the way of thinking about education. Usually, the philosophy of education is closely related to the ideology of the elites that hold the power, the state policy as well as the dominating and accepted philosophical and theoretical ideas at any given time.

As regards the way in which pedagogy is conceived, I will limit my approach to the general statement that we focus on the knowledge (science) of education of people (see Konarzewski, 1995).

The pulsating categories (seen as landmarks on the map) of the problem field of the reflection on the teacher remain within the framework of the above substantive premises. It should be added that the author of the map recognizes them as significant and forming a potential basis for theories. They express the attitude of the cartographer and the qualities to which the cartographer is sensitive based on personal experiences.

The method for outlining the problem field is the pedagogical mapping concept used in comparative pedagogy since the 1960s. As noted by Rutkowiak (1995, p. 13), a map “can be created in a disciplined manner based on logically grounded and substantive coordinates, adopting specific theoretical assumptions, but it can also be supported by the empirical criterion with the focus on the living and actual experience and by making this experience the preparatory ground for constructing theories.” The present attempt at outlining the problem field of the reflection on the teacher uses the latter method based on the actual empirical education.

In line with the above-mentioned formulation by Giroux, the structure constituted by the problem field is identified by the questions it poses. Therefore, let us consider the questions which can be posed within the problem field delineated

by conceiving the teacher as an adaptive technician, a reflective practitioner and a transformative intellectual.

The first question concerns the **philosophical assumptions** (ontological, epistemological, axiological) which constitute the points of reference and the foundations for particular models.

The pulsation of the category of philosophical assumptions is expressed in the transition from **fundamentalism** towards **anti-fundamentalism** (Buksiński, 1994; Bronk, 1995). The contemporary philosophy is dominated by the anti-fundamentalist attitude which leads to the social depreciation of the position of philosophy and philosophers. When describing the dispute between fundamentalists and anti-fundamentalists, Andrzej Bronk (1995, pp. 48–49) said:

Convinced that it is impossible to pursue metaphysics and epistemology in their traditional sense, a contemporary philosopher puts aside any fundamentalist questions by default. The view of the mediated nature of cognition ('it is impossible to go beyond language') results in the rejection of the 'myth of universal truth', the idea of cognition as representation as well as the existence of reality independently of cognition. There are no facts ('there is nothing outside the text'), there are only consecutive, alternative and equally valid interpretations, as asserted by deconstructionists who evoke Nietzsche.

The suggested continuum of philosophical fundamentalism/anti-fundamentalism comprises assumptions related to being, cognition, values etc., i.e. philosophical assumptions which lead to different ways of conceiving the role of the teacher.

The second question which can be posed within the outlined problem field concerns the types of rationality which are revealed in the three models of the teacher.

When reflecting on the pulsation of the category of "rationality", one can point to interests which constitute cognition, as defined by Jürgen Habermas: technical, practical and emancipatory, as well as the corresponding types of knowledge: instrumental, practical and emancipatory (Evert, 1993). On this basis one can identify:

- **technical rationality**, related to the principles of control and certainty;
- **hermeneutic rationality**, focused on understanding the communicative and symbolic models of interaction;
- **emancipatory rationality**, based on the principles of criticism and action (Giroux, 1993).

Publications related to pedeutology formulate answers to the question posed above. Alicja A. Kotusiewicz observes that the **methodical trend** (here: adaptive)

refers to the **empirical rationality** (technical) which is based on the rigours of precision and scientific exactitude. The **critical trend**, associated with the teacher as a transformative intellectual, refers to the **emancipatory rationality** which “gives the teacher the opportunity to break free from the ‘school in himself’ and to attain a critical and reflective perspective” (Kotusiewicz, 1993, p. 79).

Another attempt can be found in the texts of Robert Kwaśnica (1990, 1993).

The next question concerns **educational ideologies** which make up the foundations of the three models. The **polysemy** of the term “ideology” (see Szacki, 1991) intensifies the pulsation of the category of the “educational ideology”. It suffices to the concept of Lawrence Kohlberg and Rochelle Mayer (1993) who identify:

- **ideology of cultural transmission** which sees the key task of education in providing the present generation with the resources of knowledge, norms and values from the repository of the past;
- **Romantic ideology**, maintaining that the key aspect of development is what comes directly from the child, while the task of education is to cultivate the inner, spontaneous tendencies of the positive kind;
- **progressive ideology**, claiming that education is supposed to support the natural interactions of the child with the society or the environment in which the child develops.

One may also mention the approach of Roland Meighan (1993) who places educational ideologies within the continuum of **authoritarian – non-authoritarian**. Each of these extremities comprises a spectrum of forms. For instance, the authoritarian ideology can take the forms of autocratic, paternalist, charismatic, organizational, specialist or consulting ideologies. How do the teacher models in question relate to these forms? That is one of the questions that may be asked.

The outlined problem field also gives rise to the question of the **type of the social order**, analysed by Stanisław Ossowski (1983). He identified:

- **the order of collective representations**, consisting in the unreflective surrender by individuals and social groups to the traditional customs and norms of conduct;
- **the polycentric order**, based on the assertion that when the shared rules of the game are observed, the interactions between individuals and groups lead naturally to the social balance;
- **the monocentric order**, consisting in the surrender of individuals and groups to the instructions from one decision centre;
- **the system of agreements**, based on the network of multi-layered negotiations and agreements between individuals and groups, establishing social ties.

One may also refer to the typology which differentiates between centralism, community and individualism (Śpiewak, 1991) and then identify the type of social order corresponding to the particular models.

The fifth question, to which the map's author is particularly sensitive, concerns the conception of the **human being**, regardless of the performed role (here: the teacher or the learner). In the process of answering this question, one may consider the **anthropological philosophy** which is

the metaphysics of a specific category of beings and addresses these beings with typically metaphysical questions: what is the essence and the mode of existence of human beings? what is the position of human beings within reality? what constitutes and determines this position? [...] In order to correctly express and explain the position of human beings among other beings, one must put the reflection on people against the considerations of being in general. The anthropological philosophy assumes the philosophy of being (Stępień, 1995, p. 90).

In the context of the above formulation, one may assert that the fundamentalist (classical) philosophy of the human person contains a series of anthropological problems, e.g.:

- the dispute between monism and pluralism with respect to the essence of the human being;
- the approach to the nature and mutual relations of the basic elements (factors) of human existence;
- the dispute between mortalism and immortalism;
- the dispute between optimalism and anthropological minimalism (regarding the position of the human being among other beings).

On the other hand, in the context of epistemological anti-fundamentalism, one may consider **modern** (pilgrim) and **post-modern** (tourist, stroller, vagabond, player) **personal models** (Bauman, 1994), the object-based and the subject-based standard of evaluation (Obuchowski, 1993) etc.

The next question concerns the approach which can be used to describe **education**. The pulsation of this category in sociological sources allows to identify three such approaches:

- **functional and structural**, where the educational system is analysed in terms of its functions, in particular the function of providing, maintaining, legitimizing, transferring and internalizing the “collective conscience”;
- **interpretative**, where the analysis of education starts with its subjective dimension on which researchers focus
- **critical** – the key task of this analysis is to facilitate the creative development of people through the increasing understanding of how the system functions

socially and it consists in demystification of the world in terms of action and structure (Meighan, 1993).

When posing the question about the approach to education which would describe the activity of particular types of teachers, it is worth referring to the proposition by Anna Sawisz (1989), Zbyszko Melosik (1994), Mariusz Zemło (1996).

The seventh question emerging within the outlined problem field relates to the conception of **science** and the **knowledge** produced by science. To describe the pulsation of this category, one may use the **non-classical concept of the sociology of knowledge** with the two related models of cognition: **objectivism** and **constructivism** (Zybertowicz, 1995).

The **objectivist model of cognition** (and the related concept of knowledge) can be described as fundamentalist, realist, empiricist, positivist, representational, mirror-like, container-based, rational, ahistorical, epistemological, philosophical or modernist.

The **constructivist model** is perceived to be anti-fundamentalist, relativist, anti-realist, post-empiricist, post-positivist, pragmatic, post-structural, historical, conventionalist, sociological or post-modernist (Zybertowicz, 1995, pp. 58–59).

What type of knowledge is possessed, conveyed and demanded by the teacher? What type of knowledge about the teacher can be acquired? When looking for answers to these and other questions, one may also mention the concept of knowledge as the privileged type of cognition that generates positive knowledge, a local paradigm, and a specific social discourse (Chalmers, 1993).

The next question concerns the concept of **pedagogy** which corresponds to the teacher models in question. It seems infeasible to describe the pulsation of the term “pedagogy”. For this reason I limit its semantics to the meanings listed by Christoph Wulf (1993). He identifies three paradigms of the science of education in the 20th century: **hermeneutic, empirical, critical**.

Reducing the present diversity in the concepts of pedagogy and indicating the pulsation of this category, one should also refer to the typology suggested by Tadeusz Lewowicki (1996) who perceives the discipline in question as:

- science of education – associated with the scientific model of pursuing sciences;
- a part of social sciences (science of human behaviour);
- reflection on education with the dominating hermeneutic approach;
- reflection on education, including both pedagogical theories and practices;
- an area of social practice.

Which are the concepts of pedagogy one can identify in the teacher models defined by pedeutology?

The ninth question in the outlined problem field concerns the **intellectual dimension** of the teacher's role. The question is important "if it is assumed that the mental condition of the society is significant for the direction and process of the cultural and political transformation and that teachers have a certain impact on this condition" (Rutkowiak, 1995, p. 285).

The pulsation of the category of the **intellectual** is expressed in Zygmunt Bauman's distinction: **legislators – interpreters**. According to this author, at the end of the 20th century there is no point which could be the focus of the hopes to make the world a safe and comfortable place for the intellectual work of the traditional, legislating type (Bauman, 1990, p. 32). Can, therefore, the teacher be only an interpreter? A travel companion? Alternatively, the teacher can be seen as an impartial observer who is not involved in the observed situation, thus being interested in the situation intellectually, but not practically (Schütz, 1984).

The final question concerns the way in which the teacher is **prepared** for the role. It is impossible to present a full overview of the concepts of teacher education. I will only mention the propositions which explicitly indicate the pulsation of this category. For this purpose, one should refer to:

- **the scientific concept of teacher education**, defined by Rutkowiak as the 'model of disappointed hopes' which asserts that "a candidate for a teacher receives the professional education convinced that in the future s/he will shape, develop, convey, direct and solve didactic and educational problems, which constitutes a quasi-technical approach to the learner" (1986, p. 13);
- **the humanist orientation** which, despite its internal diversity, combines the belief that "teacher education is a process of becoming a professional master, a process of helping in direction from within, in the teacher's personal development, rather than a series of situations in which the teacher is taught how to teach" (Mizerek, 1995, p. 399);
- **the reflective paradigm** put forward by Kenneth M. Zeichner, asserting that the task of teacher education is "development by candidates [...] of what J. Dewey [...] calls reflective actions [...] and helping them in solving moral, ethical and political dilemmas they face (and will face) in their daily practice (Mizerek, 1995, p. 400).

It should be noted that the conceptions referred to above do not exhaust the list of methods for preparing to become a teacher.

Returning, in conclusion, to the definition of the problem field suggested by Giroux, it would be of interest to consider the questions which **could not be included** in the present sketch. I shall leave this, however, to a separate analysis.

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