On some axiological dilemmas of the educational process in the professional work of teachers

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Abstract. The process of upbringing, as one of many processes, in which a human being participates, is the subject of consideration by representatives of scientific disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, sociology and pedagogy. The process occupies a special place in scientific explorations in the sub-discipline of pedagogy, which is referred to as the theory of upbringing. It takes up a number of important issues related to it, including its understanding, content-scope approaches, properties, levels, and structure, including the place and role of values in this process, among which moral values are most often mentioned. Hence, the axiological character of the process of upbringing is often indicated. Meanwhile, the pluralism that can be seen within the world of values results in the fact that we have to deal with axiological dilemmas, in which this process is entangled, thus the teacher, who is one of its main organisers and implementers, faces a difficult choice of such and not other values that manifest themselves in their professional work. The purpose of this article is an attempt to indicate some of these dilemmas, based on the analysis of the literature on the subject, which may be a contribution to further considerations focused on the axiological approach to the process of upbringing in the professional activity of teachers, thus enriching the previous reflections on the rudimentary issues related to the upbringing of a human being, which cannot be deprived of its reference to the world of values.

Wokół niektórych dylematów aksjologicznych procesu wychowania w pracy zawodowej nauczycieli

Słowa kluczowe: aksjologia, dylemat, praca zawodowa nauczyciela, proces wychowania, wartości

Streszczenie. Proces wychowania jako jeden z wielu procesów, w których uczestniczy człowiek, stanowi przedmiot rozważań przedstawicieli dyscyplin naukowych, takich jak: filozofia, psychologia, socjologia i pedagogika. Szczególne miejsce w eksploracjach naukowych proces ten zajmuje w subdyscyplinie pedagogiki, którą określa się mianem teorii wychowania. Podejmuje ona wiele istotnych kwestii z nim związanych, m.in.: jego pojmowania, ujęć treściowo-zakresowych, właściwości, płaszczyzn, struktury, w tym również miejsca i roli wartości w tym procesie, wśród których najczęściej wymienia się wartości moralne. Stąd też niejednokrotnie wskazuje się na aksjologiczny charakter procesu wychowania. Tymczasem pluralizm, jaki dostrzec można w obrębie świata wartości skutkuje tym, że mamy do czynienia z dylematami aksjologicznymi, w jakie uwikłany jest ten proces, tym samym nauczyciel, będący jednym z jego głównych organizatorów i realizatorów, stojący przed trudnym wyborem takich, a nie innych wartości, które manifestują się w jego pracy zawodowej. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest próba wskazania na niektóre z tych dylematów, oparta na analizie literatury przedmiotu, co może być przyczynkiem do dalszych rozważań skoncentrowanych wokół aksjologicznego ujęcia procesu wychowania w aktywności zawodowej nauczycieli, wzbogacając tym samym dotychczasowe przemyślenia o rudymentarne kwestie związane z wychowaniem człowieka, które nie może być pozbawione swojego odniesienia do świata wartości.

Introduction

Addressing education as a social phenomenon or educational activity inevitably involves thinking about it as a sphere of realizing a specific axiological world. Values are inherently embedded in education, without which it would lose its essence and meaning. Stanisław Ruciński writes, "Education devoid of axiological reference ceases to be education" (1999, p. 19), while Wolfgang Brezinka states, "Every education is directed towards something valuable" (2007, p. 167), and Katarzyna Olbrycht observes, "Education, regardless of its declared ideological assumptions, is always education towards certain values" (2012, p. 91). Issues related to education "primarily concern the sources, selection, organization, and internal coherence of values around which formal and informal educational processes are built" (Olbrycht, 2012, p. 91). The aforementioned positions

encountered in the literature on the subject convincingly argue that there is no education without values. They form the basis of education, the foundation on which educational activities, including those undertaken within the professional work of teachers, are built. Moreover, education is a choice of specific values, and sometimes this choice is not easy, requiring teachers to have a high level of axiological maturity.

The guiding principle of the considerations undertaken is the position that the process of education, being a place of value realization, implies the possibility of encountering axiological dilemmas[1] within its realm. The subject of the presented reflections is to focus attention on the axiological nature of the educational process, particularly the axiological dilemmas with which this process is involved. The aim of the presented considerations is to attempt to penetrate the essence of this process and explore some of the dilemmas that teachers, as its organizers and implementers, are not exempt from due to its nature. The research problem addressed in the presented train of thought revolves around questions such as: What does the educational process mean from an axiological perspective, and what are some of the axiological dilemmas that teachers encounter in their professional work?

The presented reflections only represent an attempt to provide answers to the aforementioned questions to some extent and can serve as a starting point for further scientific explorations undertaken by representatives of social sciences, particularly pedagogy. They can also serve as inspiration for educational practitioners, especially teachers, who are tasked with realizing the educational process in a way that minimizes any significant axiological concerns.

The dilemma as a cognitive category in pedagogy

As Roman Schulz aptly observes, "Experiencing dilemmas and making choices between equally attractive possibilities is an organic component of conscious human existence" (2017, p. 301). Dilemmas accompany individuals in many areas of their activities, ranging from professional to family, social, and personal spheres. Decision-making and making choices are inherent in both professional and non-professional aspects of human life because, as rightly recognized by Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress, "The characteristic feature of human life

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[1] The author addressed the dilemmas of contemporary education in a previous work (2013), and some of these dilemmas are referred to in the present text.

is the presence of dilemmas that require mental effort, moral conclusions, and choices" (1996, p. 19).

According to dictionary definitions, a dilemma is "a problem that involves a difficult choice between two equally important reasons" (Słownik języka polskiego, 2006, p. 170), "the need to choose between two available possibilities" (Julia, 2006, p. 84), or "a predicament that arises from the forced necessity of choosing between two alternatives, where neither is satisfactory" (Aduszkiewicz, 2004, p. 147). However, equating a dilemma with a predicament or problem is not entirely accurate, as pointed out by Schulz, referring to the Encyklopedia WIEM (onet.pl portal), which indicates that "we can speak of a dilemma only when a choice is necessary, while a problem or predicament is simply a difficult situation that requires finding a solution" (cited in Schulz, 2017, p. 301). The same applies to conflicts, which are often mistakenly equated with dilemmas. Barbara Chyrowicz notes that unlike a dilemma, a conflict plays out only on an objective level, which means it does not involve internal engagement in resolving the disputed issue. Furthermore, conflicts do not always have a difficult-to-resolve nature (Chyrowicz, 2008, p. 70). Setting aside further terminological considerations, one can agree, drawing on the thoughts of Roman Ossowski, that "Dilemma refers to the need to choose between two mutually exclusive possibilities or values. Often, each possibility or value is attractive or repulsive; there are arguments for and against. Choosing one option involves giving up the other. Sometimes, this difficult choice is described as dramatic, aiming to capture the emotional dimension of the decision. Fortunately, not every choice is associated with a strong emotional response" (Ossowski, 1995, p. 230).

Identifying the dilemmas present in the educational reality surrounding human beings can be an interesting subject of research for representatives of disciplines within the field of social sciences. This also applies to the representatives of the discipline of pedagogy, along with its sub-disciplines, such as the theory of education. Researchers studying axiological issues strive to recognize the dilemmas faced by those engaged in educational activities. Depending on whom these dilemmas affect, the area of activity or dimension of the undertaken efforts, they will take on different forms, and their importance and significance in the educational world will vary. These dilemmas are not foreign to teachers, given that they are inherent in the professional work of individuals in this social-professional category.

As early as 1991, Katarzyna Olbrycht drew attention to the emerging dilemmas in education, which, as she stated eight years later, have not lost their

relevance. Moreover, new dilemmas have begun to manifest themselves. The author formulated these dilemmas in the form of the following questions:

1) Should the emphasis in education be placed on universalism or rather on developing cultural identity?
2) Should we cultivate sensitivity towards others or foster resilience in the face of others' suffering?
3) Should we accept our limitations or fight for success at all costs?
4) Should we reveal the meaning of life or leave the learner in a pedagogically neutral situation that allows for freedom of choice?
5) Should the focus in education be on competencies or rather on the personality of the educator?
6) Should the state interfere in education or leave responsibility to the family?
7) Should we protect learners from contemporary culture, especially from the negative influence of the media, or teach them to live in the world of the information revolution?
8) Should we impose and enforce norms or duties in education, or rather leave freedom of choice regarding attitudes?
9) Should we transmit certain values in education or allow for the free selection of values? (Olbrycht, 1999, pp. 11‑12).

Despite the fact that these dilemmas were verbalized at the end of the last century, they have not lost their relevance in the 21st century. Moreover, the increasingly complex social reality, including the educational context, lends them new significance and importance. K. Olbrycht confirms this in another of her texts dedicated to the axiological aspects of education (Olbrycht, 2012, pp. 89‑104).

When considering the issue of pedagogical dilemmas, it is impossible not to pay attention to those mentioned by R. Schulz. As history and the theory of education have established, these dilemmas revolve around questions such as "liberal or conservative education", "education for the past or the future", "traditional or modern schools", "autocratic or democratic education", "instrumental or subjective education", "reproductive or creative teachers", "repressive or liberating schools", "autocratic or democratic leadership", and so on (Schulz, 2017, p. 302). This broad understanding of pedagogical dilemmas convinces us that they relate not only to the essence and character of education itself but also to the institutions in which education takes place and the individuals responsible for educating others.

Krzysztof Konarzewski draws attention to the multi-dimensionality of pedagogical dilemmas, particularly those related to the act of upbringing. He identifies four of them:

1) Is education an intergenerational interaction, or does the age of the recipient not matter?
2) Should education be based on coercion or on nurturing the development of the learner?
3) Should education emphasize the formation of instrumental psychological dispositions or prioritize directive psychological dispositions?
4) Should education aim to fulfil the individual's potential or focus on their social utility? (Konarzewski, 1992, pp. 290–295).

These questions confirm that education is inherently entangled with dilemmas that pedagogy cannot escape, especially those concerning its anthropological, teleological, praxeological, and, importantly for the current deliberations, axiological aspects.

Undoubtedly, these are not the only dilemmas that arise in the field of educational reality, especially in the professional work of teachers. Many more examples could be provided, and the transformations taking place within contemporary social world contribute to their emergence. Nevertheless, the presented examples of dilemmas convincingly illustrate the complex and problematic nature of the educational reality in which the process of education, in its various approaches, is embedded. This also applies to its axiological perception.

The process of education in an axiological perspective

The process of education is an interdisciplinary category. It constitutes the subject of considerations undertaken within the realms of philosophy, psychology, and sociology. However, it holds a particular significance in the field of pedagogy, primarily within the domain of its sub-discipline known as the theory of education. It is within this framework that various ways of understanding this term, its content and scope, and attempts to contextualize it against other processes in which humans participate are analysed. Additionally, the structure of the educational process, its dimensions, and properties are also examined. Attention is also directed towards its axiological character, thereby highlighting the role and significance of values in this process.

As a process of realizing specific values, it becomes the subject of special considerations undertaken by pedagogical axiology as well. According to Urszula

Ostrowska, pedagogical axiology is a scientific sub-discipline of pedagogy that is currently in the state of "in statu nascendi" (Ostrowska, 2017, pp. 11–30; 2020, pp. 72–77). It is described as "[...] a branch of general pedagogy that deals with values in socialization and human upbringing, providing theoretical premises for pedagogical interactions and the formulation of educational content and programs" (Milerski, Śliwerski, 2000, p. 11). Therefore, the rudimentary category within the scope of pedagogical axiology revolves around the concept of "value."

This term is understood in the literature of the field in an ambiguous manner, as evidenced by the interesting overview of diverse ways of defining this category by scholars such as Urszula Ostrowska (2006, pp. 396–403; 2020, pp. 66–72), Anna Błasiak (2009, pp. 14–50), Krystyna Chałas and Małgorzata Łobacz (2020, pp. 14-23), and Mieczysław Łobocki (2003, pp. 95–98; 2007, pp. 55–64). The limited scope of this article prevents a more in-depth analysis of the positions of these renowned experts in the axiological field within pedagogy, as well as numerous other individuals not mentioned here, who have conducted their research within the realm of pedagogical axiology.

Considering the discussions presented in this text, the most relevant are the ways of understanding values that are adopted within pedagogy. It is within this domain that values are considered to encompass "[...] everything that is considered important and valuable for individuals and society, that which is desirable and associated with positive experiences, and that forms the basis for formulating educational goals, thereby serving as a deeper justification for socially and morally desirable human aspirations" (Łobocki, 2003, p. 96; 2007, pp. 60-61). Such an understanding of values allows for attributing a key place and significance to this category within the realm of considerations centred around the educational process, particularly when conducting its axiological characterization.

Urszula Ostrowska is correct in stating that, "Values are the subject of numerous scientific studies in relation to the process of education, constituting an extremely important but not always duly appreciated normative system that shapes educational practice, especially interpersonal relationships: educator-student. The process of education revolves around the world of values in interpersonal relationships between the participating subjects, thereby filling the space of the axiological anthroposphere of education" (Ostrowska, 2006, pp. 400–401). Władysław Cichoń expresses the need for considerations regarding the axiological nature of the educational process in the following manner: "In addition to the pedagogical, psychological, and sociological aspects emphasized in various

pedagogical literature accounts of the educational process, it seems useful to also highlight its *axiological* character [emphasized by W.C.]. The lack of axiological orientation in many well-known concepts of the educational process likely stems from a failure to recognize and appreciate the fact that education itself is a process of realizing specific values. Attempting to address the axiological aspects of the educational process requires reflection, particularly on moral values, due to their place and role in educational activities" (Cichoń, 1996, pp. 118–119). As emphasized by W. Cichoń, moral values manifest in the educational process through its content, methods, and goals. The educational content is the element within the educational process in which moral values directly manifest, as seen in the teaching of morality and in contexts where moral content is intertwined with the teaching of other subjects. These values also appear in educational methods, which can be considered good or bad in terms of their effectiveness but also in moral terms. Moral values can also manifest directly or indirectly in the goals of education (Cichoń, 1996, pp. 120–121). This is significant because values are often regarded as the source of educational goals, both in classical and contemporary approaches (Górniewicz, 1996, p. 60; Śliwerski, 2001, p. 87; Kubiak-Szymborska, 2002, p. 103; 2006, p. 190). However, it is important not to forget that the fundamental subjects within the educational process are the educator and the student, who also represent certain values, including moral values (Cichoń, 1996, p. 120). It can be argued that values permeate the entire educational process, from its personal, teleological, substantive, praxeological, to organizational dimensions. Such wide-ranging manifestation of values in the educational process implies debates about their place and role in this process, including axiological preferences.

Debates on values in the process of education

Controversies surrounding the axiological approach to the educational process are not solely characteristic of scientific explorations aligned with contemporary pedagogical thought. Many of these controversies have historical antecedents and have accompanied all those who engage in reflections on human upbringing. However, due to the existing axiological chaos in contemporary reality, their significance, importance, and scope have increased. As Ireneusz M. Świtała aptly observes: "We currently live in an era of axiological and ideological pluralism, where various, often conflicting values coexist and intermingle, forming the foundations of educational systems" (Świtała, 2019, p. 170).

It is even suggested that the fluidity and variability of values have become not only a historical necessity but also something beneficial for human development (Siewiora, 2017, p. 31). This does not make it easier to establish a definitive set of values that will not only be accepted but, more importantly, realized, particularly by those responsible for human development and upbringing. Hence, the answer to the question of which values, especially moral ones but not exclusively, are relevant during the initiation and implementation of the educational process is not an easy one, let alone a clear-cut one. The teacher's involvement in a specific axiological realm within their professional activities always involves making value choices. These choices depend, among other things, on the adopted axiological position, the chosen conception of the human being, and education. The personal axiological views of teachers who undertake the effort of educating individuals are also of significance.

The mentioned pluralism of axiological reality implies the necessity of selecting values, both at the decision-making and implementation levels. The diversity and richness of the content they carry place the teacher in the position of having to choose those that will best serve the student's development and education in an optimal way. Interpersonal dialogue can be helpful in this regard, wherein the teacher and the student not only speak but also remain silent in order to better understand themselves and the changes occurring around them, including within the axiological realm (de Tchorzewski, 1999, p. 37). When certain axiological dilemmas arise during the work of teachers in implementing the educational process, such dialogue can also benefit the teacher themselves and the quality of their profession. It encourages deeper reflection on the professional activities undertaken.

In the process of upbringing, an important axiological dilemma may revolve around the question of which values should be pursued in this process – universal human values or Christian values. However, this raises another question: is it actually an axiological dilemma of the upbringing process (Kubiak-Szymborska, 2002, p. 105). Ewa Kubiak-Szymborska quotes the words of Cardinal Józef Glemp, expressed in a passion sermon about Christian values, namely: "Christian values are a universal human system enriched with gospel truths that, along with European culture, have become ingrained in our being [...] They are based on universal human values but give them their own depth and colour, without diminishing their content in any way" (cited in Kubiak-Szymborska, 2002, p. 105). Such an understanding of Christian values does not oppose them to universal

human values. However, the extent to which and in what scope their contamination is possible is a separate epistemological issue.

Mieczysław Łobocki, in his scientific explorations, refers to moral values that are preferred by representatives of various orientations, not only religious but also philosophical. As the mentioned author claims, one can advocate for timeless values in the process of upbringing, or for values approved by a particular religion (not necessarily Christianity) or those that are in line with a specific philosophical standpoint (Łobocki, 1993, p. 34). Hence, the question arises: which of these values should teachers prioritize in the implemented process of upbringing? Should it be values derived from a specific religion or those grounded in a particular philosophical standpoint, or perhaps it is worth referring to the universal world of axiology?

If we consider the juxtaposition of universal values and values associated with a particular religion or philosophy as an axiological dilemma, linked to the necessity of choosing between them, then we can also recognize the disputes surrounding two visions of human beings and the values associated with them as part of the process of upbringing. These visions fall within the cognitive interests of Barbara Skarga. In the first vision, the aforementioned author points out that the human of the 21st century is meant to be aware of their rights, open to diversity, responsible for their choices, free, possessing a sense of dignity, showing respect for others, and critical of opinions that are not always justified. On the other hand, in the second vision, it is emphasized that the contemporary human should be obedient to values such as religion, nation, as well as family, show respect for tradition, and respect the teachings of the Church (Skarga, cited in: Kubiak-Szymborska, 2002a, p. 129; Skarga, cited in: Kubiak-Szymborska, 2006, p. 203). This raises the question of which vision of human beings and its associated axiological sphere appears to be the most appropriate, just, and worthy of being realized within the implemented process of upbringing. Should it be the one rooted in tradition or a more contemporary one? Referring to both historical and contemporary pedagogical thought, one can point to many arguments for and against each of these visions.

In the context of the analysed axiological issues, Kazimierz Szmyd poses an important question: which values should we strive for in the educational process? In the face of the degradation of the axiological condition, these values may include "life, health, freedom, and human dignity, justice, responsibility, tolerance, love, a sense of collective duty within a specific social group, goodness, diligence, humanism, care for family, authority, awareness of the human group

within different ethnic, cultural, religious formations, etc." (Szmyd, 2017, p. 116). On the other hand, Tadeusz Lewowicki attempts to address axiological issues and states that contemporary universal values include "human beings, their life, development, self-realization, freedom, identity, subjectivity" (Lewowicki, 1994, p. 23). Undoubtedly, these sets of values cannot be treated as exhaustive or closed. Nevertheless, they can serve as significant guidelines, directing the organization and implementation of the educational process in its axiological dimension. This can contribute to the creation of a specific axiological order in the field of education, which teachers, in particular, should strive for within their professional activities.

Conclusions

The considerations presented, focused on the axiological issues of the educational process, particularly on certain dilemmas concerning values that arise within this process, represent only a modest fragment of reflections embedded in contemporary pedagogy, especially in the theory of education and pedagogical axiology. The attempt to identify these dilemmas, define them, identify the planes of their emergence, and determine their scope and scale, will be an endeavour that may be more or less successful, and undoubtedly open-ended, due to the dynamic nature of the educational reality. This dynamic nature leads to the emergence of increasingly complex and necessary axiological choices. As K. Olbrycht rightly points out: "Axiological dilemmas will always accompany pedagogical actions in which some individuals, functioning in a world of specific values, influence others, affecting what they consider and will consider valuable. This is the most sensitive sphere of pedagogical actions, especially educational actions" (Olbrycht, 2012, p. 103). Making complicated choices regarding specific values, which teachers face in their professional work, is not an easy task. It always requires taking a stance on what is better, more just, what is worth realizing, and what serves human beings in the most optimal way.

This raises the question: to what extent are contemporary teachers prepared for such challenges, and to what extent does academic education equip them with the knowledge, skills, and competencies that facilitate sensitivity to axiological dilemmas they encounter in their professional activities? These are essential issues because in educational practice, the primary goal is to resolve these dilemmas in a way that promotes the development and education of students, while

for teachers, it involves continually improving the quality of their professional work at various levels and dimensions.

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