

# Social pedagogy as science and its axiological dimension<sup>1</sup>

Pedagogika społeczna jako nauka i jej wymiar aksjologiczny

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## Introduction

Pedagogy, also as scientific reflection, has a long and rich tradition. Consecutive years of its existence and development also entailed specific changes such as the adoption and appearance of specific ideas and concepts as well as working out new ways to recognise and study indicated processes related to the upbringing. Along the way, in examining the development of pedagogy, we will always ask ourselves about these changes, their nature, extent and specificity.

These deliberations tackle two threads accepted here as fundamental irrespectively of the occurring changes, always indicated as areas of key importance for the development of pedagogy. The first thread is contained in the question (about social pedagogy in this case) on what type of science pedagogy actually is and what its specifics are. The second question, also fundamental, results from the specifics of each pedagogy and asks about the place of value in pedagogy. It asks in what areas of the indicated matter of interest these values are indicated and identified and what role they play there.

The goal adopted for the purpose of this article is to present related knowledge developed in social pedagogy in the course of the last few de-

<sup>1</sup> The article refers to the research that I conducted in the last few years. The research have been focusing on the development of Polish social pedagogy. However, this is not historical research – it is the research into the development of ideas ultimately captured in the concepts and theories that make up the discipline and set the direction of its development as a science. In this sense, they also show its specificity. In particular, I would like to draw attention to those of my publications that I refer to and cite in this paper: Cichosz M. (2014), *Pedagogika społeczna. Zarys problematyki*, Kraków, also: Cichosz M. (2006), *Pedagogika społeczna w Polsce w latach 1945–2005. Rozwój – obszary refleksji i badań – koncepcje*, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek.

cares. In turn, the presented hermeneutic analysis was based on the selected representative literature on this topic, thoroughly analysed and used by the author of the article.

### Social pedagogy as science

Despite the currently changing ways to recognise or identify scientific reflection, also in terms of individual sciences and the blurring of differences between them, their specifics remain important. They describe different worlds and their different aspects. Therefore, the interdisciplinarity so evident in research today does not invalidate questions about the distinctiveness of the sciences. It is so also in the case of social sciences and the humanities such as pedagogy and social pedagogy.

Nowadays, a methodological characterisation of social pedagogy can be made relatively precise – its entire body of work to date in this respect has been and is quite distinct and relatively homogeneous. This has allowed and still allows to maintain the status of social pedagogy as an important subdiscipline focused on the specific area of factors determining a person's upbringing, i.e. environmental factors. Developing from the very beginning, social pedagogy quite clearly and unambiguously located itself in the stream of empirical scientific pedagogy (see the works of its forerunners such as J. Wł. Dawid and St. Karpowicz), which was then the prevailing direction of investigation in the Polish pedagogy in general (see the positions of S. Wołoszyn or F.W. Araszkiewicz on this matter). Similarly, empirical sociology, especially the sociology of upbringing, had a strong influence on the then developing Polish social pedagogy<sup>2</sup>. These sciences, generally practiced in line with the positivistic model of science, methodologically preferred the empirical approach to research: descriptive and explicative, as well as its practical and praxeological nature. It seems that such methodological characteristics adopted at the beginning of the discipline defined its future development and position among other social sci-

<sup>2</sup> See: e.g. Drynda D., *Orientacja socjologizująca w pedagogice II Rzeczypospolitej (1918–1939)*, in: Radziewicz-Winnicki A. (ed.), *Pedagogika a socjologia wychowania (szkice socjopedagogiczne)*, Katowice 1986. Sociology of the upbringing shaped in Poland obviously has its deep and varied determinants. Leaving aside the key role of humanistic sociology of Florian Znaniecki and his disciples, one can also point to the works of E. Durkheim or F. Tönnies assimilated from the very beginning in the scientific literature in Poland.

ences. However, one should also remember that the discipline was not and still isn't so uniform in its axiological aspect.

The development of Polish social pedagogy, which took place after the World War II in particular, up to the present time, the research areas indicated by it and the methodological characteristics indicated above and finally adopted, are at the same time so specific and visible that the discipline has been and is included in the accepted classifications and typologies of pedagogical disciplines. In the existing classifications, social pedagogy has usually occupied and still occupies a rather 'high' and often one of the key positions even though it eventually depends on the adopted classification criteria.

The most fundamental and characteristic classification for social pedagogy is the classification with its hierarchically arranged pedagogical disciplines distinguishes four sections, each of them covering sequentially structured pedagogical disciplines. It distinguishes: I. basic pedagogical disciplines: 1) general pedagogy, 2) history of education and upbringing and pedagogical doctrines, 3) theory of upbringing (moral and social, aesthetic, physical), 4) didactics (and the technology of education); II. Detailed pedagogical disciplines (determined by human development), for example: 1) the theory of family upbringing, 2) pre-school and early school pedagogy, 3) school pedagogy (including high schools and vocational schools, etc., III. pedagogical disciplines corresponding to main areas of human activity, e.g.: 1) social pedagogy (including childcare and social pedagogy), 2) culture and education pedagogy, 3) work education (including the theories of pre-vocational education, vocational education and vocational in-service training), etc. IV. auxiliary and border disciplines, e.g.: 1) comparative pedagogy, 2) pedeutology, 3) educational policy, etc.<sup>3</sup>. According to the above criterion, social pedagogy is assigned to fairly widely identified areas of human activity.

Having adopted slightly different criteria of division of pedagogical disciplines, Teresa Hejnicka-Bezwińska has more recently placed social pedagogy against the background of other criteria, i.e. by tackled research issues. The author adopted the division of pedagogy according to the following criteria: I. the methodological criterion (the degree of generality); II. the goals of educational activities; III. the age criterion; IV. the criterion of types of activities; V. by

<sup>3</sup> The classification given here is as modified by Z. Wiatrowski, see: Wiatrowski Z., *Miejsce pedagogiki ogólnej w kompleksie nauk pedagogicznych*, in: Hejnicka-Bezwińska T. (ed.), *Pedagogika ogólna. Tradycja – terażniejszość – nowe wyzwania*, Bydgoszcz 1995, pp. 55–61.

types of developmental defects and deviations; VI. Tackled research problems (including social pedagogy among others)<sup>4</sup>.

While using the concept of 'detailed pedagogies' when referring to individual areas and aspects of the upbringing, its locations and circumstances and the specificity of issues, Marian Nowak offered the following classification: 1) according to the age and development criterion (corresponding to age groups); 2) according to individuals, places and institutions linked to educational activity; 3) according to situations and interpersonal relationships (including social pedagogy); 4) according to the research perspective<sup>5</sup>. It seems that social pedagogy is seen in the above classification from the perspective of the specific interpersonal relations that make up the educational process in a specific situation.

The classification of detailed areas of pedagogy adopted by Stanisław Kawula is another classification of pedagogical disciplines that also distinguishes social pedagogy and is a classification that is the closest and most relevant to the way social pedagogy is understood among contemporary social educators. The author adopts seven classification criteria. These are: 1) the criterion of goals of an educational activity, 2) the methodological criterion – this point distinguishes general pedagogy, the history of upbringing and social pedagogy, 3) the developmental criterion, 4) the criterion of human deviations and developmental defects, 5) the institutional criterion, 6) the problem criterion, 7) the criterion of areas of human activity<sup>6</sup>. According to the above classification, social pedagogy appears at the level of the methodological criterion as the most fundamental division of pedagogy as a science. This division indicates two key areas of pedagogy: the first one covers the general analyses of all conditions, processes and upbringing (educational) activities; these areas of the theoretical and educational reality are covered by the subdiscipline of pedagogy called general pedagogy as well as by the methodology of pedagogy and the history of upbringing. The second area encompassing analyses of social educational (educational) processes and factors, i.e. the interactions of educational environments, is to be dealt with by another sub-discipline of pedagogy called social pedagogy. Therefore, this

<sup>4</sup> See: Hejnicka-Bezwińska T. (1989), *W poszukiwaniu tożsamości pedagogiki. Świadomość teoretyczno-metodologiczna współczesnej pedagogiki polskiej (geneza i stan)*, Bydgoszcz, p. 250. The criteria applied by that author were borrowed in a modified version from S. Kawula.

<sup>5</sup> See: Nowak M. (1999), *Podstawy pedagogiki otwartej*, p. 103–104, Lublin: Wydawnictwo RW KUL.

<sup>6</sup> See: Kawula S. (2000), *Pedagogika a kompleks i system nauk o wychowaniu*, in: "Ruch Pedagogiczny", No. 3–4, p. 27–51.

classification defines social pedagogy mainly from the perspective of the indication of the basic area, which is the environment, the area relevant to this subdiscipline in which the process of upbringing takes place. The 'positioning' of social pedagogy by Zygmunt Wiatrowski follows the same classification trend as he also points out the important and inspiring place of social pedagogy against the background of other pedagogical sub-disciplines and other social disciplines, as well as its problem proximity in this arrangement.

The same author mentions social sciences on the one hand, e.g.:

- Psychology of upbringing,
- Sociology of upbringing,
- Social policy.

Lists pedagogical subdisciplines on the other hand:

- Special education,
- Work education,
- Andragogy,
- Pedagogical gerontology.

He also places the following pedagogies in the central position:

- Childcare pedagogy,
- Social pedagogy.

He places social pedagogy at the centre as a kind of glue connecting all the sciences mentioned here – as the leading and unifying thought of all the mentioned social sciences and pedagogical sub-disciplines<sup>7</sup>.

With such a position of social pedagogy, the author also rather aptly characterises its subject area of interest and research areas;

‘... Let us remember again that social pedagogy is a pedagogical subdiscipline that studies environmental conditions in which childcare and upbringing processes take place from a person's birth till the end of their life. In particular, such studies consider social, cultural, environmental and biamental conditions as well as conditions related to the development of the contemporary civilisation. Fundamental objectives of social pedagogy include prophylaxis, which covers limiting the effects of environmental influences that are incompatible with the

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<sup>7</sup> Wiatrowski Z. (2007), *Pedagogika społeczna a inne obszary wiedzy naukowej*, in: Marynowicz-Hetka E. (ed.), *Pedagogika społeczna*, t. II, p. 190, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

aims of upbringing and stimulating desirable actions, as well as educational and caring compensation, especially in cases of hardship (e.g.; orphanhood, poor family upbringing conditions). Social pedagogy is also interested in theoretical problems of upbringing in an environment, including ways to transform the environment as well as methods of educational, childcare and social work ...'<sup>8</sup>

All the classifications presented above, while including social pedagogy as a pedagogical discipline or subdiscipline, define it mostly as a specific type of activities taken up and executed in the context of a specific type of interpersonal relations with a clear highlight on their social or environmental nature. Such a perception of social pedagogy seems to reflect to a large extent the characteristics adopted by social educators themselves as a specific type of practice or social action, undertaken in an environmental context and environmentally/socially conditioned. Referring to the findings of the General Methodology of Sciences, social pedagogy should ultimately be classified as a humanistic practical and praxeological science, which is concerned with what can occur under the influence of intentional human actions that, in the way of seeking justifications for these actions, have their explicit reference to axiology<sup>9</sup>.

Such characteristics of social pedagogy has two types of consequences:

- Firstly, the approach presented here does not rule out but rather assumes a specific interdisciplinary nature of social pedagogy, in particular, that it draws from and refers to other humanities and social sciences. This is the feature of any pedagogical practice, not only one related to social pedagogy, that contemporary representatives of pedagogy draw attention to. This is what B. Śliwerski writes about it: '... The reorientation of research in pedagogy towards an interdisciplinary and multi-paradigmatic direction open to differences and at the same time utilising the already established and internationally recognised research methodologies of the social sciences and the humanities has meant that pedagogy has not only started to catch up with its development, but has also begun to regain the title of an integral science...' <sup>10</sup>
- Secondly, the continuously changing social reality reveals and generates new problems/challenges in social life. Such problems/challenges always need to be treated differently not only on the level of pedagogical practice.

<sup>8</sup> Wiatrowski Z., *ibidem*, s. 189–190.

<sup>9</sup> See: Kamiński S. (1981), *Pojęcie nauki i klasyfikacja nauk*, p. 273–277, Lublin: TN KUL, see: Pilch T. (1995), *Zasady badań pedagogicznych*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak.

<sup>10</sup> See: Śliwerski B. (2012), *Pedagogika jako nauka bez kompleksów*, "Rocznik Lubelski", t. 38, part 2, p. 16.

This is the case both when it comes to diagnosing and recognising them, adopting and building concepts, but also, ultimately and perhaps above all, when it comes to taking educational action within them. This, in turn, leads to the working out of new research methods and to the adoption of ways of understanding the phenomena of social life and, therefore, the expansion and adoption of new paradigms in this respect. This is what Paweł Czarnecki writes about it: ‘... social pedagogy is an area of continuous progress caused, on the one hand, by an accrual of knowledge (empirical observations and their generalisations in the form of theories explaining individual phenomena) and by changes taking place in the society on the other hand. Such changes make certain problems lose relevance and validity over time, while others gain in importance...’<sup>11</sup>.

However, I believe that the entire situation presented here that indicates changing patterns and models of making science (which is also linked to their typologisation) is more of an example demonstrating that the occurring changes are evolutionary in nature and confirm that in such a case we are dealing more with a pattern of correspondence and coherence when it comes to the acceptance of scientific theories (their development) and therefore their continuous correspondence with each other (remaining more or less in relation to one another) and their coherence rather than with a revolutionary rejection in its course, which is and would be a completely utopian vision leading to chaos and destruction – an ideological move – not a rational cognitive process.

Irrespectively of how the conditions for making science change, how it impacts their condition, perception, typologisation and ultimately the adopted characteristics, it is always possible about a certain constant point of reference, a certain universe or a fixed and unchangeable structure, which can refer, for example, to the fundamental questions about the structure of the world we get to know, what we get to know, how we get to know and why we get to know<sup>12</sup>. In the General Methodology of Sciences, this is an issue contained, among oth-

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<sup>11</sup> See: Czarnecki P. (2012), *Pedagogika społeczna. Podstawowe pojęcia i definicje*, “Społeczeństwo i Edukacja. Międzynarodowe Studia Humanistyczne”, 1/2012, p. 402.

<sup>12</sup> This also raises an important issue that is seldom mentioned nowadays, considered in the General Methodology of Science, i.e. the issue of what the context of justification is and can be (and also what its relationship to the context of discovery is at this level) on the path of scientific cognition. This is also important with regard to pedagogy – it is an issue of cognitive and linguistic schemas (and we also talk about the structure changing in this regard here). See my reflections on this topic: Cichosz M., *Poszukiwania za pomocą analizy kontekstu uzasadnienia twierdzeń. Próba nowego spojrzenia na badania*



er things, within the limits of the basic determinants of each science such as: the subject, the purpose, the method, logical structure and the language, as well as the dynamics of the cognitive process. It is in these areas that we identify each science and in connection with them that it assumes its characteristics, whatever transformations it undergoes<sup>13</sup> – it is an area of objectivisation of scientific knowledge.

In this sense, we should also agree on a certain universally valid point of view to be taken towards social pedagogy, that it will always be concerned with the human being, with the world external to him (the social) – his environment, and that it will be concerned with making changes within this world and this relationship, however they may be defined. The practical dimension of each pedagogy including social pedagogy is the basic and fundamental one here. Always, therefore, the axiological context of this relationship and these activities will also be fundamental here. It entails the search for an answer to the question about what value states we want to realise through the actions we take and the practice we undertake. Therefore, we have another key problem layer here, which is contained in the relationship: social pedagogy – values.

### Social pedagogy and values

The topic of values in social sciences, including pedagogy, is one of the key issues; one can also say that it is the fundamental issue. This is all the more so because these sciences usually have their more or less explicit reference to practice and consequently such structural – teleological (practical and praxeological) translation of the solutions adopted (this is the case, for example, in social policy, economics or social pedagogy, among others). In this sense, they always demand a specific normative location, and therefore reference to specific patterns and benchmarks when it comes to the social practice indicated and undertaken.

This mechanism is very clear in relation to the process of upbringing as the fundamental process about which pedagogy speaks and around which it develops its specific concepts and theories. This is because the upbringing in this sense means indicating directions of influence, delivering specific contents that

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*teorii wychowania*, in: Tchorzewski A. (ed.) (1994), *Z problematyki metodologicznej teorii wychowania*, Bydgoszcz: WSP w Bydgoszczy.

<sup>13</sup> See: Kamiński S. (1981), *Pojęcie nauki i klasyfikacja nauk*, Lublin: RW KUL.



stimulate and build up the most optimum development of man in all areas of his life – also in the area of behaviour and interpersonal relationships. Considering such a fundamental importance and role of values in the process of upbringing, one can say that they constitute the basis for the process.

As the process of upbringing is rather complex, has various levels and areas, the issue of values can be and is analysed differently on the grounds of this process. It is also the case that each pedagogy (sub-disciplines of pedagogy) does so in a specific way by indicating, identifying and defining its areas of inquiry in this respect always considering them aspectually. This is also the case in social pedagogy.

However, it should be mentioned here that the issue of values in such pedagogy has relatively rarely been discussed or at least straightforwardly explicated. It is rather difficult to talk about fixed ontological or epistemological models worked out in it. In this respect, the works of the first social educators and those from the school of Helena Radlińska – the humanistic and clearly anthropological trends of the discipline – are more expressive. In contrast, the tradition of social pedagogy that seems dominant nowadays, often inspired by Marxism (real socialism) and clearly functionally interpreted in the spirit of systemic sociology and deterministically conceived social relations does not (or rarely and not explicitly/explicitly does) expand the sphere of values and the axiological bases of this discipline. Somewhat different in this respect was the social thought on upbringing, which could be attributed to social pedagogy – the thought developed on the basis of Catholic social teaching. There it was and is being developed in the currents of neo-Thomism and social personalism and axiology developed on that basis. However, it seems that these were and still are two paths of development of social pedagogy – developed rather separately even though in parallel to each other.

The area of relations between man and the society (the environment) is the basic area indicated as fundamental for social pedagogy and characterising it – specific for it – and, as a consequence, defining the discipline. Anna Przecławska and Wiesław Theisse were one of the leading contemporary representatives of this pedagogical discipline who wrote about it, as follows: ‘... the discipline deals with the theory of environmental determinants of education and human development and with the theory and practice of environmental design. Social work and cultural work that often occur in this context are seen as forms of environmental transformation [...]. Social educators have also always agreed that the environment’s own capacities are the driving force behind the change and construction of reality, i.e. social (human) forces understood as a dynamic

aimed at “making things better ...”<sup>14</sup>. Paweł Czarnecki similarly writes about the object of interest of social pedagogy and its specificity in this regard: ‘... Social pedagogy is part of detailed pedagogy and its subject matter covers the social environment and its influence on the upbringing process. [...] the purpose of social pedagogy as a practice is to shape an individual in such a manner that he/she is able to live in the society, i.e. establish correct social bonds and satisfy his/her needs without coming into conflict with values accepted by that society...’<sup>15</sup>.

Therefore, axiological issues tackled by social pedagogy are consistently reduced to such a source ontological and structural perspective in the subjective sense (indicated research areas). It is the subject matter clearly related to the topic of the relationship between an individual/man and the environment/society<sup>16</sup>.

This relationship is also described axiologically and requires such a description as a relationship of a teleological nature, i.e. with its necessary translation into practice – where we ask ourselves what values are to be implemented<sup>17</sup>. The concept of man adopted here as well as the concept of the very structure of social life (society) that, in social pedagogy, most clearly refers to (finds itself in) the concept of the environment as key elements of this relationship has to be looked for and defined in this complex relational context – in this link.

Therefore, the issue of values has been in a way hidden (contained) in this relationship and refers to it in social pedagogy. In this sense, it is difficult to say unequivocally here that, for example, the subjective character of social education consists of such and such an understanding of the subjectivity of the human being, the individual, including, for example, his or her capacity for creative social action or cultural activity. This is because such actions are always ‘entangled’ or constitute the resultant of wider social, environmental relations

<sup>14</sup> Przeclawska A., Theiss W. (1993), *Pedagogika społeczna: nowe zadania i szanse*, in: Przeclawska A. (ed.) *Pedagogika społeczna. Kąty poszukiwań*, p. 6, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak.

<sup>15</sup> See: Czarnecki P., op. cit. pp. 395–397.

<sup>16</sup> See: Cichosz M. (2014), *Pedagogika społeczna. Zarys problematyki*, Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls.

<sup>17</sup> I also tackle this matter in my research to which I also refer in this paper, see: Cichosz M. *Aksjologiczne inspiracje w pracy socjalnej – kontekst współczesnych przemian cywilizacyjnych*, in: K. Marzec-Holka (ed.) (2003), *Pomoc społeczna – praca socjalna. Teoria i praktyka*, t.1, p. 81–91, Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo Akademii Bydgoskiej, also: *O strukturze ontologicznej i aksjologicznej pedagogiki społecznej – w poszukiwaniu wartości*, “Wychowanie na co dzień”, 2013, No. 3 (234), p. 12–15.

as mechanisms of social life that influence them. In turn, these mechanisms can be understood in various ways, not necessarily covering or implying the subjective (in the sense of the epistemological, ontological and axiological) role of man. An example of this can be found precisely in social pedagogy – often, however, functionally and deterministically understood (even today) when it comes to the course of social life – with a dominant and declaratively accepted personalistic and humanistic understanding of the human being<sup>18</sup>. At the same time, one should remember that personalism and humanism can have their different interpretations, some of them opposite, which can be found both in extremely individualistic concepts – rather than deterministic ones, while it is also possible to adopt behavioural, instrumental justifications.

Recognising this issue is not easy today, if only against the backdrop of the cognitive relativism currently evident in social analysis – also a multidisciplinary approach always differentiating, introducing different themes and solutions and to some extent also relativising.

This is why the very principles of pedagogical action adopted in social pedagogy, the principles governing social life, clearly interpreted axiologically and of such an axiological ‘nature’ – such as, for example, the principle of the common good, social justice, subsidiarity, support, but also social capital, are also a resultant of the understanding of social life and the understanding of man and his subjectivity – as an active participant in social life<sup>19</sup>.

In addition, each pedagogy, including social pedagogy, entails the immanently, structurally contained imperative of action – the necessity of pursuing a particular educational practice, as mentioned earlier, which is also in this case linked to the need to transform, to organise social life. This raises the issue of

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<sup>18</sup> The functional and deterministic slant of social pedagogy was more clearly accepted, and certainly well-established in the tradition of this discipline in the so-called real socialism period and the related socialist upbringing trend. It seems that contemporary pedagogy, also the social one, remains under the influence of such concepts. However, this matter still requires source and analytical studies and research.

<sup>19</sup> See: Smolińska-Theiss B. (1994), *Od chrześcijańskiego miłosierdzia do liberalnej demokracji*, in: “Problemy Opiekuńczo-Wychowawcze”, 1994, No. 5. A wide range of interpretations in this axiological perspective of reading the social life, also from the perspective of understanding of subjectivity, can be found, e.g. in the published works based on social pedagogy and focusing on the issue of the “social capital”, see: Marzec-Holka K. (ed) (2005), *Kapitał społeczny a nierówności. Kumulacja i redystrybucja*, Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo Akademii Bydgoskiej. Also: Theiss M. (2007), *Krewni, znajomi, obywatele. Kapitał społeczny a lokalna polityka społeczna*, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek.

the aforementioned principles under which this transformation is to take place. It is, therefore, about the principles of organising social life. This is the third interpretational layer, in a way, of the issue of values. At the same time, another area of concepts adopted in this field, which are of course closely linked to the concept of man and the concept of social relations (social life, in effect and source understanding of what the environment is)<sup>20</sup>.

Therefore, the task of identifying social pedagogy in terms of the values present in it on the three levels indicated above is quite complex and ultimately quite difficult to identify unambiguously. There are, moreover, various resolutions and solutions adopted in this respect.

### Conclusion – questions about contemporary social pedagogy

Considering the findings discussed above and the adopted characteristics of social pedagogy identifying it as humanistic and social science, i.e. one that is always concerned with the human being in specific social and environmental relations, and narrowly indicating the need to undertake and implement a specific social practice that aims to transform the social world – it should be assumed that this pedagogy always aims to implement and manifest specific states of value. In view of this nature of social pedagogy, questions arise here about its contemporary conditions, especially when it comes to the social practice being implemented:

- Following the characteristic words already well-known in the circle of social pedagogues and the call of the creator of this pedagogy Helena Radlińska who said that the discipline is an area of activity that is and should be a service provided in the name of an ideal, arises time and again as a source question about what ideals and what ideas a social educator should serve, what ideas such an educator should put into practice.
- To make this question more specific, one can ask what values social educators involved in social action are supposed to pursue today. Should they refer to a certain axiological universe, to a universal value system – and which one if any?

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<sup>20</sup> In the context of such ways of understanding, comprehensive distinct concepts of social pedagogy have also been developed, in which the category of 'action' remains supreme as the interpretative 'base' (at the ontological, epistemological and axiological levels); see: Marynowicz-Hetka E. (2007), *Pedagogika społeczna. Podręcznik akademicki*, t. I and II, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

- The issue of values entails yet another dilemma of our times. The values that operate in social life are always embedded in the world and political messages to a greater or lesser degree. A question arises: to what degree if any, to what extent in our work we can or should engage in a political discourse, and further, as a consequence, to what degree, if any, is ideological compromise possible in the work to change the world?
- Each social presence of a person is their presence in an environment. Another question arises: should a social educator be present and active in all environments of human social activity? Or should such an educator rather be present and engaged in typical educational environment, i.e. should the fields of involvement of social educators be limited in this sense?
- The context of this question brings about another dilemma: perhaps the concept of an educational environment, i.e. where it is, how to be present in it and how to transform and organise such environments, should be re-defined in social pedagogy to focus on the indication of 'new' educational environments?
- The issue of adopted theoretical solutions appears as well in addition to the aspects indicated here in connection with the educational social practice and remains closely linked to them. Therefore, it is possible to ask whether we work out our specific ways, characteristic for social pedagogy, if any, of understanding issues, e.g. pertaining to young people, social participation in culture, etc. This is all the time about concern for the cognitive specifics and the theoretical-conceptual independence of social pedagogy.

#### 'Directional resolution'<sup>21</sup>

Pedagogy as a science deals with the upbringing process. It studies and describes that process from different perspectives and analyses its different aspects. Therefore, we have a multitude of different pedagogies, a multitude of various specific ways of understanding the upbringing. However, the social nature of upbringing is one of the fundamental points of reference. Each pedagogy, each way of un-

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<sup>21</sup> Therefore, I finally accept here as a directional resolution the fundamental and leading role of social pedagogy for pedagogical reflection in general. This is because the social context is decisive for such scientific reflection on the upbringing (pedagogy) – for the findings it adopts at the level of ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological search.

derstanding the upbringing, considers such a social perspective but in its specific manner. Therefore, it seems that it can be assumed – which I do here – that the point of view of social pedagogy is the basic and fundamental point of view for any pedagogical reflection undertaken on education. It remains a matter of detailed research to recognise the specificity of this social gradient of cognitive pedagogical reflection as it is adopted in each pedagogical subdiscipline.

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## SUMMARY

Social pedagogy is one of the pedagogical subdisciplines. As such, it retains its specificity while assuming the characteristics referring to pedagogy in general. In a wider sense, it deals with the upbringing and, in a narrower sense, it deals with the aspect of social and environmental determinants of that process. As it is also practical in nature, it is always about transforming the existing social reality, i.e. improving it. In this respect, it refers to specific value states and also rules supposed to regulate social life. To this end, it adopts specific axiologically defined visions both of man – an individual – as a participant in social life and of the social world itself, i.e. the vision of expected and desirable social relations. All this seems to create the model image of what we call social pedagogy.

**KEYWORDS:** science, social pedagogy, environment, social life, values

## STRESZCZENIE

Pedagogika społeczna jest jedną z subdyscyplin pedagogicznych. Jako taka zachowując swoją specyfikę przyjmuje jednocześnie charakterystykę odnoszącą się do pedagogiki w ogóle. Szeroko, więc zajmuje się wychowaniem, zaś wąsko aspektem społecznym i środowiskowych uwarunkowań tego procesu. Mając też praktyczny charakter zawsze chodzi w niej o przekształcanie zastanej rzeczywistości społecznej – jej ulepszanie. W tym zakresie odwołuje się do określonych stanów wartościowych, także zasad, które mają regulować życie społecznym. W tym zakresie przyjmuje określone, aksjologicz-



nie zdefiniowane wizje zarówno człowieka - jednostki, jako uczestnika życia społecznego, jak i samego świata społecznego, czyli wizję oczekiwanych i pożądaných relacji społecznych. I to wszystko zdaje się tworzyć modelowy obraz tego, co nazywamy pedagogiką społeczną.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** nauka, pedagogika społeczna, środowisko, życie społeczne, wartości