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The conditioning of hermeneutic competences of students of pedagogy²

Uwarunkowania kompetencji hermeneutycznych studentów pedagogiki

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Introduction

This text resulted from the belief that the students of pedagogy should acquire, on top of other competences contributing to the improvement of the quality of their professional skills, the hermeneutical competences, which in essence mean understanding of exceptional situations and people, as well as applying general knowledge in specific circumstances. They are expressed both in rational and reflective adaptation and continuation as well as in willingness to change, in a critical evaluation of the current affairs and confident design and responsible implementation of new ideas. In the case of students these include various skills that affect both the process of studying and the future performance in their profession, such as understanding and interpreting the situation bearing forming qualities, empathy, reflectiveness, recognizing duality, handling closeness and distance, oscillating between knowledge and ignorance, certainty and uncertainty, between theory and practice. The action research and participant observation described in the article enabled the author to distinguish significant determinants facilitating (or impeding) the acquisition of hermeneutical competences by the students during classes.

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The meaning and functions of hermeneutical competences in the light of reference literature

As the description of the hermeneutical competences of the (future) guidance counsellors is not very frequently encountered in the reference literature the first step was to determine its meaning. Therefore the theoretical premises behind the acquisition and improvement of these competences state that one of the propedeutic, but also essential postulates, is not only the one claiming the competences should be perfected in academic training, but above all the one stating that the essence of the above is found in the harmonious, vertical and horizontal combination of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, interests, talents and physical as well as mental aptitude (Gołębniak 1998; Krajewska 2004).

The reference literature in Poland does not distinguish these competences by their name, they exist and are assigned to different groups of skills and capabilities, although the term did appear several times as self-evident, rather in popular understanding in a few studies related to philosophy, translatology and computer games (Piecychna 2014; Bukowski 2012). Their description was also a part of a cognitive study on the philosophy of nature, where these competences are of non-anthropocentric character (Urbaniak 2017).

Marcin Urbaniak asserted that according to Heidegger

each human being is a priori hermeneutical, because he always somehow understands himself in terms of its own existence and the reality around him. Only then this individual asks questions (understanding at least the context of they are asking about), explains, defines and describes whatever has been understood. Understanding as grasping the meaning seems to be the primary act or process continuously present as part of the cognitive activity. Only the second step is (2) to focus on a given phenomenon or fact and provide an explanatory description of it, e.g. by the means of phenomenological reduction. The last step would be to reduce the described facts to its general nature or sense in order to develop the knowledge up-to-date. While (1) the primordial state of understanding of the world (given to the subject passively) is the specificity of human existence, (2) the second step is made possible by the intentional nature of the objective activity (Urbaniak 2017).

Moreover, Heidegger claims that hermeneutical competences are not epistemological, but ontological. We can mention the following: an understanding of the way of life, involvement in the world, its meaningful ordering, a tendency to anticipate, apply the assumptions and preliminary pre-understanding, “these are exploratory behaviours (capturing or establishing

the meanings); species-specific understanding of the surroundings; an ability to establish dialogue, understanding, cooperation, and thus activities, which H.G. Gadamer defined as “hermeneutical approach” (Urbaniak 2017, p. 28).

Urbaniak claims that in the light of literature provided by outstanding hermeneutics researchers, “hermeneutical competences can also be defined as a collective term for the cognitive and living abilities, enabling ‘a vivid/intense movement of thoughts constantly going beyond themselves’” (Urbaniak 2017, p. 28). Gadamer distinguishes: conveying the acts of cognition by the linguistic and cultural media, circular and interpretative consciousness, entering relations based on dialogue (Urbaniak 2017, p. 31).

On the other hand, according to Ricoeur, hermeneutical competence is all about “the practical area – they are an active interpretation of cultural acts, such as symbols, discourses, narratives or myths” (Urbaniak 2017, p. 35). We can then say, in a more general sense, that hermeneutic competences

are the link between the cognitive experiences of institutionalisation, codification, normativisation and notionalisation of the world (the effect of the competence functioning), and the primeval, existential features of the object of natural origin (primary pre-understanding, being-in-the-world, linguistic cognition). This constitutes an everyday experience of creative interpretation of stimuli arriving from the surrounding, the interpretation of which is not a creative autonomy and freedom – it is developed by individual framework of experiences the object has gained so far as well as its knowledge (Urbaniak 2017, p. 43).

However, in the theory and practice of translation we do not find a definition, yet we do come across explanations, which indicate that the competence is called either a translation or expert competence, and that from the point of view of hermeneutics values are an integral part of the aforementioned and must be reflected upon by the translator. Moreover, they are expected to be hermeneutically engaged, be familiar with the culture of the country the language of which they are translating, be able to connect with the text, listen to it attentively in order to understand its message (Bukowski 2012).

Some definitions and descriptions of hermeneutical competences and examples of their meaning and measures of development can be found in German literature. According to the sociologist and pedagogue H.-Ch. Koller, the essence of hermeneutical competences is the understanding of the subjective and objective sense or the interpretation of meanings (contextuality, subjectivity) (Koller 2015) while in regard to sports pedagogy “seeing, understanding and properly interpreting the dilemmas between theory and

practice; this is the ability to use scientific knowledge in reaching the solution” (Schierz, Thiele 2002). Whereas in the pedagogy of religion: “The ability to understand the testimony of the past and contemporary generations and other cultures, especially biblical texts and reflecting this ability in the present and future” (Zimmerman 2005).

Renate Schwarz (2009) described hermeneutical competences in the aspect of care for the sick in a broad sense: She listed a number of behaviours characteristic of professional caretakers aimed at the person under their care as well as interactive actions towards them. There is a broad spectrum of knowledge concerning the interpretation of situations suspended between certainty and uncertainty and between scientific knowledge, based on experience and practical professional skills. It is also the capacity for in-depth reflection, both in terms of care and the following period, and the resilience manifested in accepting the reality even when it is not fully transparent and plannable, in enduring uncertainty and the ability to live in it, and in not trying to convince ourselves and others that we have everything under control. Moreover hermeneutical competences are not only limited to the individual elements listed here (Schwarz 2009, pp. 116–121), but are also a vertical-horizontal system composed of them. It is in their essence then to apply the knowledge not only routinely, but to reflect on it a little more, teeter between knowledge, and often also ignorance, being aware of the ambivalence found in the knowledge we have as well as being aware of paradoxes and ambivalences encountered in life and work, which are nevertheless continuously contributing to the permanent updating of our professional knowledge. These competences should lead to achieving enhanced skills and readiness for self-reflection, understanding of self as an active object, experiencing empathy and empathetic understanding of the Other. They should also be more conducive to a subjective/personal concentration on the person under care and on interpreting care as a feedback activity, as well as a dialogue and hermeneutical understanding of the circumstances of care. In brief, it is a question of **applying the professional and methodical knowledge available in various forms, to specific, and even exceptional circumstances and participating people and understanding them** (Koller 2006).

Professional action is based on many harmonized competences, therefore hermeneutical competences of different types are usually referred to in plural, although they also appear individually, which perhaps is the result of treating this competence either integrally (so in singular, e.g. without going into the resources of specific competences and skills and their interrelationships), or in a modular manner, recognising the different needs of different social oriented

professions for hermeneutical competences of various types and distinguishing in them the different stages of development or scientific detail, at the same time taking into account their mutual dependence, as none of the competences is ever isolated from others. Renate Schwarz comments on the subject as follows:

In fact, these competences are closely interlinked (...). For example, hermeneutical competence cannot be achieved without the social competence. Socio-structural competence requires a high capacity for reflection, which is also attributed to social competence. Social competence in turn implies the ability to think ethically and act morally. It is not possible to acquire professional care competencies without cognitive and ethical competencies, etc. The areas of competence overlap and only in combination enable professional action (Schwarz 2009, p. 110).

The descriptions of hermeneutical competences presented here simultaneously show the fundamental problems of social professions, which result from the dual, unclear and uncertain image of the contemporary world and the emergence of new aspects of social professions, related to coping with dilemmas and uncertainty in their performance. As a result, since the 1960s there has been a discourse pertaining to these professions, presenting the structural duality in professional action (Witkowski 2018). Slowly, instead of expert professionalism, we start having “professionalism enlightened by hermeneutics” (Dewe et al. 2001; Schwarz 2008).

This understanding of hermeneutical competences raises new challenges for authors and innovators of the educational process, if they want hermeneutics to find a new place in academic didactics and not be reduced only to text analysis techniques, but to enhance professionalism with new aspects and values.

Bogusław Milerski, a Polish pedagogue, recognizing the multitude of theoretical approaches to the process of education, included in his publications and especially his monograph (2010) references to the hermeneutical foundations of this process and categories such as understanding, interpretation and sense/meaning, which he considers to be a requirement of education meant to convey humanity, Education in this sense will not only teach measurable competences, “but also the hermeneutical ones linked to responsibility and capability to understand, read and form oneself and the world as meaningful wholes constituted by sense” (Milerski 2010, p. 11). This sentence from the first pages of the book became a direct impulse not only to search for descriptions of these competences, but also ways of complementing academic teaching with these important human “skills”, becoming significant as well in the university graduates professional career.

Types and varieties of hermeneutical competence levels of people at different stages of life

Although we deal with hermeneutical competences of students of pedagogy and candidates for other social oriented professions, we must also realize that these competences are created at different stages of human life, so they are at different levels of generality and development.

As M. Urbaniak claims, hermeneutical competences are “above all the daily experience of creative interpretation of stimuli arriving from the surroundings” (Urbaniak 2017, p. 43), it is in his opinion limited (formed) by individual framework of the up-to-date experience and knowledge, by collective framework of cultural environment shared with others and “hermeneutic predispositions” identical for the entire human species as we have the “same phylogenetic source, structure and functions” (Urbaniak 2017, p. 43). The phylogenetic perspective is sometimes interesting and surprising for man.

However, in the ontogenetic perspective, i.e. individual human development the researchers have observed that some elements of hermeneutical competences are already present among primates and in the earliest stages of human childhood (Urbaniak 2017) and point to a great significance of the ninth month of a child’s life, as it is then we see the “Biologically inherent ability for cultural life (...), the ability to understand individuals of one’s own species emerges” (Tomasello 1999, p. 75, transl. by Urbaniak 2017, p. 75). The ability to understand the intentional actions of oneself and the other person and the ability to identify oneself with another person are features that indicate the uniqueness of a human being from the first months of life. Between the ninth and twelfth month of life, babies themselves seek to share their attention with adults when they see an object. In short, the human ontogenesis of hermeneutical structures emerges from the “biological ground”, but then develops and transforms on the cultural ground. Therefore, the development and improvement of hermeneutical competences requires correlation with the cultural environment (Urbaniak 2017, pp. 77, 78, 93).

The first turn in the ontogenetic development of hermeneutical competences takes place around the age of one and consists in the ability to identify with persons from the child’s environment, in order to understand causal agency. The next change occurs between the second and third year of life, and consists of uttering first words. What follows is the development of ability to ask questions and understand linguistic symbols, and around the age of four we observe the emergence of the ability called “the theory of the

mind". In the early-school period further hermeneutical competences emerge, allowing children to reflect, acquire self-knowledge and re-describe their own representations (Urbaniak 2017, pp. 119, 120, 123).

As we can see, hermeneutical competences evolve in stages along the course of human development and are impacted by both biological and cultural factors. The author wonders whether the hermeneutic theory considered in academia should be supplemented by the knowledge on the biological and cultural dimension of constructing, recognising, interpreting and communicating meanings, i.e. hermeneutical competences of a human (Urbaniak 2017, p. 133).

In the area of professional activities concerning the competence for translation, reaching the highest level of competence has been divided into the following stages: initial, intermediate, the competence phase, proficiency and knowledge (Piecychna 2014). In turn, the religious education distinguishes competence at the level of the work, at the level of its origins, at the conceptual level and at the level of the recipient (Zimmermann, Zimmermann 2005). This information proved valuable at the moment of planning the studies, as it made us aware of the heterogeneity of these competences and their dynamic nature.

Conditions for the improvement of hermeneutical competences in academic education

The planned research was preceded by literature studies which inspired the authorship of a number of publications (Kaliszewska 2016a, 2016b; Kaliszewska, Klasińska 2018; Klasińska 2017, 2018). In the action research conducted during classes with social work students on an elective subject enhancing their learning process, methods of activation as well as contact with philosophy and art were used to show duality of the world and selected professional aspects involving making responsible choices in uncertain and unclear situations, which required having hermeneutical competences.

Action research in academia can involve the following: 1) a tool for cognition and improvement of this research procedure within the framework of the university, 2) a factor of personal development of academic staff (as a method of evaluation of their own practice), 3) a method of self-evaluation of science and own practice of students and 4) influence changes in their scientific and professional workshop, as well as 5) become an intermediary in contacts with the local community (Červinková, Gołębiak 2010; 2013; Czerepaniak-Walczak 2001). Among the aforementioned we focused on two:

1) inducing changes in the students' scientific and professional skills and their motivation to learn, and 2) personal development of academic staff and their methodological skills.

Before we move on to the discussion of research results, it should first be noted that in the process of formulating hermeneutical competences in higher education it is extremely important to optimize their subjective and non-objective conditions – environmental and organizational. As biological and cultural roots, innate and unchangeable, as well as the acquired and developmental character of competences impact their profiling, so both the environment and the characteristics of each individual are sources of their experience (Martowska 2012; Urbaniak 2017).

Let us further discuss a few important postulates. First of all, we accept the claim that the understanding of the way of life is not only given to people, and the forms of understanding are manifold. “Today we cannot ignore the achievements of natural sciences and fail to notice the ‘human animalism’, (...) human conditions of existence and cognition and relations with nature seem to demand rethinking” (Urbaniak 2017, pp. 8–9).

Secondly, at the same time we focus on adults who are learning, consciously improving their knowledge, skills and attitudes; on their competences and their quality. Therefore, we are dealing with people who consciously undertake the effort of improving their qualifications and non-measurable competences, whose resources can be abundant due to their experience, previous knowledge and learning.

Thirdly – M. Urbaniak states that “Probably from their birth men are ‘tuned’ to understand their surroundings through being ‘immersed’ in their surroundings on an ongoing basis. Constant curiosity about the world, asking questions and searching for further answers, transcending obtained explanations is an expression of the human way of life” (Urbaniak 2018, p. 118). To become aware of this fact required efforts to reinforce curiosity about the world and new knowledge, to motivate and encourage students to form their own judgements and opinions.

And fourthly – after Bogusław Milerski, we observe that

from the humanistic perspective, man (the subject of cognition) cannot completely distance himself from the reality he is becoming to understand. He is involved in the experience of what he learns in the process of understanding. A work of art, a literary text, a statement or the behaviour of another person are not something neutral for the one who learns. (...) Pedagogical hermeneutics therefore indicates

the existential character of understanding, the object of which are not objective abstracts but existentially significant reality (Milerski 2011, p. 209).

This means that theory and practice in the educational process are more closely linked to social professions.

Therefore, it is not difficult to observe that the list of factors determining hermeneutical competences is very extensive. In general, they depend on knowledge, skills, values and norms, attitudes, motivation, external environment and individual abilities, as well as one's own personal traits (such as temperament and intelligence, especially social and emotional, as well as biologically determined personality traits, such as introversion, extroversion, neuroticism or amicability, conscientiousness and openness to experience) (Matczak, Martowska 2011; Rogozińska-Pawelczyk 2006). We can then distinguish subjective, internal and non subjective, environmental and organisational determinants (Bajcar 2013), which together influence the intensity of experience and the manner of using it.

The foremost factor among the environmental determinants is family, which has the earliest and longest impact on the human being, its impact is natural, manifold, characterized by a strong emotional and relatively autonomous context (Martowska 2012). However, the area of conditioning within the family was not taken into account during the research, as it would require a longer duration of the research, appropriate research tools and sensible justification for adults who are reluctant to provide any personal information.

Important external conditions at a university include the responsiveness of students, the nature of curriculum classes, the way they are conducted, the atmosphere of classes, motivation of students to learn, motivation of employees, self-awareness of people interested in the educational process (students and academic teachers), mobility of participants in the educational process, equipment of institutions implementing the educational process. Apart from that, factors such as the environment and type of an individual – institution implementing the education process. Therefore, culture, tradition, mentality, economy and politics, as well as the influence of educational decision-makers, reformers or politicians, play an important role (Kocór 2013).

However, during the process of educating future pedagogues, the conditions in higher education play an exceptional role. It is more precisely about the organization of studies, study plans and programs, the atmosphere at the university and during classes, relations in student groups, between students and academic teachers, infrastructure and code of conduct (people of science to which students also aspire) and customs and practices prevailing in higher

education, the skills of scientific and professional work of academic teachers, as well as the skills students themselves display in their work and learning processes (Duraj-Nowakowa 2000). The next *conditio sine qua non* include careful preparation of (taught) classes, students' awareness and activity, the system of lectures and practical exercises, the relationship between theory and practice, accessibility and individualization in the transfer of knowledge (Duraj-Nowakowa 2006; Apanowicz 2000), as well as the choice of diploma thesis orientation by academic teacher, depending on his/her abilities and invention, expected problems and needs, as well as group progression (Zubrzycka-Maciąg 2007).

As a result of analysing literature on the subject, for the purpose of research we have formulated an original definition, adapted to the area of academic didactics. We assume that each time the set of components it is comprised of may be different, depending on the specific requirements of the profession, preferences and abilities of individual students and academic teachers.

The hermeneutical competence of a student, a future employee in social professions, is a system of knowledge, skills, psychological, mental and action abilities and aptitudes, as well as attitudes that enable him/her to: 1) understand the hermeneutical sense of the social meaning and specific needs of a chosen social profession, including the recognition of the origin of the profession and its scientific foundations and historical contexts, aspects of uncertainty, duality, ambivalence, values and anti-values, links between theory and practice, needs and conditions in working with another person and their family and the social environment; 2) independently study a selected academic specialization through purposeful, spontaneous and active (in the sense of active listening, notation, verbal statements) participation in classes, reading with understanding, analysing (also critical) and interpreting cultural texts (including specialist ones), understanding symbolic messages and the world of values; empathetic listening; independent writing of shorter or longer academic texts, reflectiveness, conscious successive creation and development of own professional and scientific skills; 3) be able to make decisions and to act and take responsibility for decisions made despite the perceived inconsistencies between theory and practice, despite the being aware of uncertainty and possible duality in the situation of contact with another person: students, pupils, clients, their world of values, language and communication competence; empathy, dialogue, respect for the need for distance or closeness in mutual contacts; to be able to reflect in action and after action, make changes in oneself and verify one's own behaviour, improve one's own practice on the basis of the hermeneutical circle (Kaliszewska, Klasińska 2018, pp. 333–334).

In this case, the quality of vocational skills would be the result of this existential transformation, which is a phenomenon occurring as a result of didactic actions aimed at it. We understand that education, the aims and contents of which include hermeneutic competences in a broad sense, may in effect cause this transformation, resulting in an empathetic and understanding presence of caregivers, teachers, educators, creating relations based on dialogue, immersed in empathy, providing developmental impulses.

In terms of conditioning on the part of an academic teacher, who develops his/her professional skills in accordance with the principle of the hermeneutic circle, one of these conditions became his/her sense of uncertainty related to the implementation of the planned research and within its framework of topics and objectives. This was due to the introduction of a new subject, the unpredictability of the time to be spent on specific topics, as well as their course and effect. The ability to cope with stress is therefore a factor that can help in teaching the classes properly. In this case the stress was overcome. For the first time there was also the opportunity to use a number of deliberately prepared didactic measures, which aroused curiosity among academic teachers about the possible effects of their work. This factor of the new had a very motivating effect.

We encountered the largest number of difficult issues at the point where teachers and students interacted. Academic staff must be impervious to temporary setbacks and carefully prepare for classes in order to use their time effectively. The most valuable moments turned out to be those when someone questioned the teacher's words, inciting a discussion, when they could say that they did not know something, when there was sincere laughter in the course of the tasks performed. As a result it was possible to establish a good relationship with the students, although initially, especially students studying full-time seemed to be indifferent, reluctant and not interested, each suggestion either remained unanswered or deemed as too difficult. Nevertheless it was possible to convince them to perform some of the planned activities, involve them in a discussion and the teacher has had the impression they understood the nature of hermeneutical competences and their use in the course of their studies. They were interested in the methods of work suggested during classes, performed a series of decent art works, and were also eager to create buildings made of blocks as interpretations of philosophical texts. They role played meetings of Heracles with women, although they did encounter some difficulties in improvising dialogues corresponding to the text (Spychała 2018).

Therefore the conditions that to be met by the teacher should include the need for communication skills, creating a good atmosphere of classes conducive

to arousing students' interest in new issues and achieving the planned goals. Motivating students is best by own example: passions, problems, questions to answer together, sharing doubts.

Students must feel secure and establish a relationship with the academic teacher, allowing them express their own views without fear. We are dealing here with synergetic cooperation resulting in positive effects of the classes, understanding the meaning of hermeneutical competence and interest for self-education in this field. They are also responsible for resources of natural skills and abilities, personal culture, empathy, self-confidence, the ability to cooperate and overcome obstacles, changing own features learned at home, motivation to learn and life goals, as well as the state of health and socio-economic circumstances.

Moreover assessment has become an important condition, assessment should not be a factor stifling creativity, differentiating and excluding from the discussion. Therefore, contrary to the initial arrangements found in the subject sheet, formative assessment was applied, allowing for feedback and assessment of both the process of achieving the result and the outcome of the work. Formative assessment "is acquiring of the information by the teacher and learner in the course of the learning process to identify how the learning process develops, for the teacher to modify further teaching, and for the student to receive feedback to help him/her learn" (Sterna 2014, 2016).

Preparing students for some activities in advance proved to be an important condition impacting the course of classes. Those who have never analysed poetic works at school, who have not had solid drawing lessons, who do not read, have clear difficulties in expressing their own thoughts in an unconventional way, are afraid to go beyond known and simple solutions.

Other conditions, perceived as impediments during work, are inadequate equipment of the rooms, which makes it impossible to work in groups, to carry out written and artistic work with the materials brought (heavy benches with slanting desks, which are not possible to move to another area in the room).

Other arrangements included an important aspect of email communication with the students, so that texts, work sheets and information could be transferred.

The conditions relating to expert knowledge issues concerned the selection of learning content, seeking out texts and searching for and studying literature on the subject, as well as arranging activities and tasks for students during classes, i.e. methodology of improving hermeneutical competences.

Action research has then enabled us to confirm the usefulness of the selected methods of working with students and the appeal of the suggested topics of classes. However, the duration of the classes turned out to be too short to see if and which competences can be improved during the classes. As suggested by the students, we also ascertained that only a few appealing, but well-known methods or tools are enough to motivate students to be active. Excessive number of suggestions and little known techniques are perceived as a threat and excessive difficulty to overcome.

Conclusions and postulates

In the course of improving hermeneutical competences, it is necessary to use the scientific output of other sciences. We should particularly pay attention not only to the values of philosophy and philosophising at all levels of education, but also, for example, to the concept of humanities management (see: Kostera, Nierenberg 2016; Nierenberg, Batko, Sułkowski 2015), which should be used not only by managers of educational and care institutions, but also by teachers seeking advice and guidance and by students preparing to work in social professions. If there is no understanding of the meaning of applying humanistic approaches in the management of e.g. educations and own self-development, we are not able to appreciate and exploit the potential of hermeneutical competences possessed by people.

In today's world of uncertainty, risk and change (Beck, Giddens, Lash 2009) students educated for social professions should undoubtedly possess and care for the development of their own hermeneutical competences. To this end, the vertical-horizontal (systemic) integration (Duraj-Nowakowa 2006) of hermeneutical competence factors, i.e. internal and external, may be extremely useful, also due to such careful, multilateral, i.e. systemic planning and implementation of educational impact.

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SUMMARY

The main purpose of the research studies presented in the article was first to determine the essence of the hermeneutic competences of students of pedagogy, and then the factors affecting their improvement in the conditions of the university. At the basis of the belief in the need to introduce this type of competences to academic teaching were the contemporary discourses about the new – strong professionalism, additionally enlightened by hermeneutics to improve the quality and depth of the work performed and the postulate that the teaching should focus not only on the measurable competences, but also hermeneutic capabilities, related to the responsibility and ability to understand, interpret and form oneself and the world as meaningful wholes constituted by sense. When analysing contemporary society and education the general conclusion does emphasize the meaning and necessity of specific formation of hermeneutical competences for students of pedagogy (as well as any other social professions) in the course of carefully thought-out process of studying and teaching at universities and as part of learning under the self-education process.

The study consists of three complementary parts, the first one explains the origins and meaning of hermeneutical competences, the second – the structure and levels of these competences, and the third – the factors deciding on the formation of hermeneutical competences of students of pedagogy in the light of our studies in action.

KEYWORDS: hermeneutical competences, students of pedagogy, academic teaching, action research

STRESZCZENIE

Główny cel prezentowanych w artykule badań sprowadzał się wprawdzie do ustalenia istoty kompetencji hermeneutycznych studentów pedagogiki, a następnie czynników ich doskonalenia w warunkach uniwersytetu. U podstaw przekonania o potrzebie wprowadzenia tego typu kompetencji do dydaktyki akademickiej legły współczesne dyskursy o nowym – mocnym profesjonalizmie, dodatkowo oświeconym przez hermeneutykę, w celu podniesienia jakości i głębi wykonywanej pracy, oraz teza, że przedmiotem kształcenia powinny być dzisiaj nie tylko kompetencje mierzalne, lecz także wspólnie z nimi hermeneutyczne, związane z odpowiedzialnością i umiejętnością rozumienia, odczytywania i kształtowania siebie i świata jako znaczących, konstytuowanych przez sensory całości. Na tle przemian współczesnego społeczeństwa i edukacji w konkluzji ogólnej szczególnie wyraźnie trzeba zatem podkreślić sens i konieczność celowego kształtowania kompetencji hermeneutycznych studentów pedagogiki (a także do innych profesji społecznych) w toku starannie przemyślanego procesu studiowania – nauczania w szkole wyższej oraz w ramach uczenia się – samokształcenia.

Opracowanie składa się z trzech wzajemnie dopełniających się ze sobą części, w pierwszej wyjaśniamy genezę i istotę kompetencji hermeneutycznych, w drugiej – strukturę oraz poziomy tychże kompetencji, w trzeciej zaś – czynniki decydujące o kształtowaniu kompetencji hermeneutycznych studentów pedagogiki w świetle podjętych przez nas badań w działaniu.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: badania w działaniu, dydaktyka akademicka, kompetencje hermeneutyczne, studenci pedagogiki

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