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AN EMANCIPATORY-CRITICAL PARADIGM OF STUDENT EDUCATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO CORPORATE EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

The processes and phenomena which are crucial for the shape of the modern world influence the functioning of universities (and at the same time the university education which happens there) in a more and more significant manner. The changes in the functioning of universities taking place in the 1980s – initially in the United States, later in western Europe and now also in Poland – and which were linked with those institutions of loosing the monopoly for higher education and the need to become competitive elements of the existing educational services market, are a source of special worry for pedagogues, sociologists and philosophers of education¹.

This article presents concepts of university education which go beyond the expectations of market economy. It describes the specifics of the emancipatory-critical paradigm of university education as well as responds to the challenges and possibilities which this paradigm poses to university teachers. The final part of the text puts forward the thesis that building a university education process based on the emancipatory-critical paradigm and around content commonly associated with the reconstructive function of education may increase its efficiency.

HUMANISTIC CONCEPTS OF ACADEMIC EDUCATION

The authors who consider the condition of modern universities see a chance for the higher education entities to keep their identity while realizing the

¹ E. Wołodźko, *Ku autonomii studiowania. Procesy, znaczenia, konteksty, zmiana*, Olsztyn 2013, p. 54.

tasks arising from the particularities of the modern world in exploring solutions which "(...) are a counterweight, opposition or alternative to a dehumanized corporate education (...)"², solutions which could allow the students to go beyond the practical education and at the same time to stop closing them "(...) in narrow patterns of roles written with a view to adjust to the modern day requirements"³. The solutions they put forward in regard the construction of the process of academic education are humanistically inclined. They clearly refer to the basic university traditions and ideas, including the academic ethos as well the shift from teaching to learning⁴, which is expressed among other things by the focus on the need to allow students to: achieve cognitive autonomy, de- and reconstruction of meanings and interpretations, creation of individually profiled education paths⁵.

The creators of these types of solutions assume that the process of academic education can be based for example on reflective and autonomous learning, which makes it easier for students to get to know themselves. They put particular emphasis on making humanity true, among other by interacting with the legacy of the humanities, socio-cultural studies but also with culture as an independent entity⁶ – also when it comes to science studies. They underline the need to make it easier for students to immerse themselves in the world of universal values and ideas⁷, making it possible for them to gain "historic self-knowledge"⁸ as well as knowing and (auto) reflectively looking at the legacy of one's own community, nation as well as the legacy of other individuals and this along with the discussion and

² Ibidem, p. 18.

³ J. Brzeziński, *O osobliwościach kształcenia uniwersyteckiego*, [in:] W. Ambroziak, K. Przyszczypkowski (ed.), *Uniwersytet. Społeczeństwo. Edukacja*, Poznań 2004, p. 52.

⁴ B. D. Gołębiak, *Poszukiwanie – refleksyjność – dialektyczne uczenie się. Nowe praktyki edukacyjne w szkole wyższej*, [in:] J. Piekarski, D. Urbaniak-Zajac (ed.), *Innowacje w edukacji akademickiej. Szkolnictwo wyższe w procesie zmiany*, Łódź 2010, p. 258.

⁵ E. Wołodźko, op. cit., p. 25.

⁶ L. Witkowski, *Jaka kultura? (tezy, wypowiedzenia i podsumowania)*, [in:] J. Rutkowiak, D. Kubinowski, M. Nowak (ed.), *Edukacja – Moralność – Sfera publiczna*, Lublin 2007, p. 266.

⁷ Z. Kwieciński, *O edukację i pedagogikę radykalnie humanistyczną*, [in:] B. Suchochodolski (red.), *Alternatywna pedagogika humanistyczna*, Kraków 1990, p. 331–335.

⁸ S. Wołoszyn, *Wstęp – pochwała historii i wykształcenia historycznego*, [in:] Z. Kwieciński, B. Śliwerski (ed.), *Pedagogika. Podręcznik akademicki*, t. 1, Warszawa 2009, p. 74–76.

dialogue disregarding differences may lead to acquiring mutual respect and tolerance as well as a readiness to coexist and cooperate without aggression⁹. This statements seem to be particularly important given that in a reality characterised by openness and at the same time a high degree of risk and temporariness, the ones who do best are, according to Z. Kwieciński: "(...) thoroughly educated, understanding their roots and current dilemmas of cultural diversity, tolerant but critical and brave, able to react flexibly to the variability of the conditions of life, open to meeting and speaking to their own and others"¹⁰.

It should, however, be stressed at this point that it is not the assimilation of certain content should be the core of the academic education process that goes beyond adapting to conditions of life which quickly become obsolete but skilfully work with them using methods which give a chance for a polemic with the presented material, inspiring further research, critical thinking and (auto)reflection. These methods should be selected in such a way as to enable not only to broaden the scope of knowledge but also to construct varied competences and attitudes, to inspire created thinking and going beyond studied patterns and even questioning the known reality.

When it comes to international research, a cognitively interesting concept of academic education inscribed in the presented assumptions has been presented by Martha C. Nussbaum, who opposes education for gain with education for human development/for freedom¹¹. Her article claims that the aim of the academic process realized on universities but also education in general should focus on supporting the three basic human capacities. The first of these is the ability of (Socratic) critical thinking that triggers the intellectual autonomy of each person¹², "(,,) questioning everything that cannot be reasonably justified, speaking in an own voice but with listening to the voice of others"¹³.

⁹ E. Wołodźko, op. cit., p. 33.

¹⁰ Z. Kwieciński, *Szkoła do/dla zmiany społecznej – warunki konieczne*, [in:] Idem, *Pedagogie postu. Preteksty. Konteksty. Podteksty*, Kraków 2012, p. 407.

¹¹ M. C. Nussbaum, *Kształcenie dla zysku, kształcenie dla wolności*, [in:] B. D. Gołębiak (ed.), *Pytanie o szkołę wyższą w trosce o społeczeństwo*, Wrocław 2008, p. 65–99.

¹² Idem, *W trosce o społeczeństwo. Klasyczna obrona reformy kształcenia ogólnego*, Wrocław 2008, p. 29.

¹³ Idem, *Kształcenie dla zysku, kształcenie dla wolności...*, op. cit., p. 71.

The second key ability mentioned by M. C. Nussbaum is the readiness to define oneself as a member of a heterogeneous nation and the world. Achieving this is impossible without the need and ability to explore the specifics of diverse communities, while at least trying to understand them without seeing the members of these groups as citizens equal to oneself, combating – also one own – all kinds of stereotypes. That is why, according to M. C. Nussbaum, it is so important to give students a chance to encounter and get to know the history and culture of many different social, ethnic, religious and gender groups¹⁴.

The third of the abilities mentioned by M. C. Nussbaum stems from a need to shape a narrative imagination, which the author understands as “(...) the ability to put oneself in the position of the other person, the ability to intelligently read the life story of that person and understand the emotions, wishes and desires a person could have in such a situation¹⁵. In other words this is the “(...) ability of emphatic imagination, allowing for an understanding of the intentions and choices of people different from us”¹⁶.

Traces of similar thinking can also be found in Polish literature of the subject, including the work of Teresa Bauman, in which she described two models of academic education¹⁷. The first of these is “study as acquisition of meanings”, which means a process of teaching/learning which is reduced to a “transfer of knowledge accumulated through generations which has its importance and weight”¹⁸, knowledge understood as sure, closed, not open for interpretation different from that in accordance with externally formulated definitions. In this model lectures understood as a “transfer of information” are the most popular method of teaching¹⁹. The second model is the “study as creating meanings”. Its goal is to support the ability of critical thinking, including mainly the ability to critically use knowledge and the skill of critically understanding and interpreting reality. The path to this goal can make emancipatory education possible which is one that “(...) can make people capable of freeing themselves from dependences and

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 84.

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ Idem, *W trosce o społeczeństwo...*, op. cit., p. 84.

¹⁷ T. Bauman, *Uniwersytet wobec zmian społeczno-kulturowych. Casus Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego*, Gdańsk 2001, p. 112–130.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 114.

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 122–123.

limits. This is because it is about preparing for independent action, autonomous decisions, designing problem-solving strategies, which is linked to co-deciding about the content of learning and the student's own activity²⁰. A. Sajdak referred to this concept and wrote: "T. Bauman, referring to the theory of J. Habermas and underlining the value of scientific criticism in student education, writes that the purpose of the shaping of criticality of thinking should be to point out the contradictions in the knowledge, its falseness and to expose the difficult assumptions, ideologies and interests behind its design"²¹.

THE CHARACTERISTIC OF THE CRITICAL-EMANCIPATORY STUDENT EDUCATION PARADIGM

An analysis of the literature of the subject allows one to confirm that the realisation of the goal to prepare students to take an informed part in shaping their own education and their closer and farther environment for better, make it easier to base didactic processes taking place within the framework of academic education in this critical-emancipatory paradigm²².

On a theoretical level the critical-emancipatory paradigm is based around the assumption that humans are free entities, able to shape reality, to make it better. This paradigm is also wrapped in the thesis of the idea of the occurrence of mutual relationships between knowledge, power and the condition of human freedom²³ which is directly related to the negation of a positivist approach to knowledge – polemic with its absolute objectivity. Thereby the critical-emancipatory paradigm assumes that only a properly planned and realized educational process may lead to freedom which is linked to the need to face specific challenges on each of its stages.

When formulating the goals of the didactic process based on the critical-emancipatory approach, one should consider the subjective determinants, take into account for example the past experiences of the ones taking part,

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 117.

²¹ A. Sajdak, *Paradygmaty kształcenia studentów i wspierania rozwoju nauczycieli akademickich. Teoretyczne podstawy dydaktyki akademickiej*, Kraków 2013, p. 444.

²² See: A. Sajdak, op. cit., p. 429–467.

²³ See: P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Nowy Jork 1970; Ibid., *Bildung und Hufnung*, Munster 2007.

their emancipatory potential. In other words these objectives should be designed in such a way so they become "(...) a reflection of the concept of individual, personal effort undertaken by students as part of their development in the direction of increasing autonomy. This is why they should be an open project, unrelated to any dominating world order nor ideology"²⁴.

The choice of content and training methods as well as an appropriate approach to them is important in the critical-emancipatory paradigm. This means that when choosing what content will be analyzed during the didactic process, one should be open to diversity and the multiplicity of meanings, to accept the possibility of crossing boundaries set by the academic subjects, learning interdisciplinary or "across" disciplines²⁵. Therefore, it should be remembered that every standardization made in the field of selection of the learning content can be a potential source of enslavement, and one should follow the rule according to which: "there are no correct interpretations, every interpretation is one of the possible narratives, it is important to shape the awareness of many perspective of the imaging of reality and the awareness of its entwining in many types of social, cultural, economic, political, etc. contexts"²⁶.

The critical-emancipatory paradigm implies the use of the methods aimed at the support of critical thinking and in the broader context "(...) the emancipatory potential of a student"²⁷. Methods, enabling open and fearless exchange of views, based on dialogue, which can happen only in an "ideal communicational situation" which "(...) is full of symmetry of relationships between the participants of discourse and this means that each of them has the same right to meet to perform act of speech, as well question the claims to freedom connected with them"²⁸. At the same time methods which foster the process of deconstruction²⁹, casual asking of questions

²⁴ A. Sajdak, op. cit., p. 449.

²⁵ B. D. Gołębiak, *Stawanie się refleksyjnym nauczycielem akademickim*, [in:] A. Szela (ed.), *Problemy edukacji w szkole wyższej*, Kraków 2006, p. 135.

²⁶ A. Sajdak, op. cit., p. 457.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 449.

²⁸ A. Szahaj, *O komunikacyjnym zwrocie w teorii krytycznej J. Habermasa*, [in:] L. Witkowski (ed.), *Dyskursy rozumu: między przemocą i emancypacją. Z recepcji Jürgena Habermasa w Polsce*, Toruń 1990, p. 144.

²⁹ See: Z. Kwieciński, *Pedagogika przejścia i pogranicza. Zamiast wstępu*, [in:] Ibidem (ed.), *Tropy – Ślady – Próby. Studia i szkice z pedagogiki pogranicza*, Poznań –

and looking for answers, as well as discovering the regularities related to the hidden program within the different spheres of human life, including the education.³⁰ At this point it is worth to point out that it is assumed that the educational interactions which meet the above mentioned criteria may also happen in virtual space, using internet forums, chats and blogs³¹.

A. Sajdak includes the following as the methods in the critical-emancipatory paradigm: the polemic essay writing method³², dialogue, Socratic community of inquiry and discussion, asking open questions supporting critical thinking (the devil's advocate strategy), synectics³³. At the same time the author notes, referring to the claim of M. Czerepaniak-Walczak, that special attention should be paid to the method of learning through research³⁴ and especially research in action, which is also confirmed by other authors³⁵. This may be due to the fact that these studies are in line with the trend of resistance against the neoliberal academic education crisis and thus enable the shift towards universities which function "for the good of humanity", towards a critical and conscious participation both in the process of teaching and learning, as well as in the broadly understood social life, towards education aiming to personal and social change³⁶.

Another important issue related to the critical-emancipatory paradigm is that it requires a real commitment and readiness to work on oneself and to overcome limitations not only on the hand of the students but also the teachers/people doing lectures. Taking into account the considerations of

Olsztyn 2000, p. 24–25; K. Reich, *Konstruktivistische Didaktik. Lehr- und Studienbuch mit Methodenpool*, Weinheim – Basel 2006.

³⁰ See: M. Pryszmont-Ciesielska, *Ukryty program edukacji akademickiej*, Wrocław 2010; W. Żłobicki, *Ukryty program w edukacji. Między niewiedzą a manipulacją*, Kraków 2002.

³¹ A. Sajdak, op. cit., p. 453.

³² Ibidem, p. 451.

³³ Ibidem, p. 458.

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 452

³⁵ See: M. Czerepaniak-Walczak, *Badania w działaniu akademickim. Możliwości zastosowań w procesie podnoszenia jakości pracy uczelni*, „Rocznik Pedagogiczny” 2001, issue 24, p. 69–82; B. D. Gołębiak, *Między naturalnym eksperymentowaniem a przygodnym aktywizmem. „Realizacja” badań w działaniu w „przełomowej przyszłości”*, [in:] M.M. Urlińska, A. Uniewska, J. Horowski (ed.) „Po życie sięgać nowe...” Teoria a praktyka edukacyjna, Toruń 2011, p. 490–510.

³⁶ E. Wołodźko, op. cit., p. 35.

B. D. Gołębnik it can be stated that an academic teacher, when deciding to base his/her actions in a perspective set by the critical-emancipatory paradigm, should in the first place drop the role of the cool, emotionally uninvolved expert who reveals bits of secret knowledge to students.³⁷ In this perspective the teacher should be: "(...) a creator of common experiences, organizer of explorations which takes the role of the person assisting in the process of autonomous learning"³⁸. The teacher needs to focus on the educational process and over the individual explorations and creation of personal meaning happening as part of it and not on the planned results³⁹. Treat students subjectively⁴⁰. Affirm the value of the students' freedom with all the consequences, which means not only accepting views different from their own but also rebellion and resistance on the part of the student as important in the perspective of the process of their liberation from the perceived cages, exercising critical and independent thinking⁴¹.

Carrying out classes in the critical-emancipatory perspective one should dispense with traditional methods of control and evaluation and use different form of self-assessment and critical reflection on the progress made⁴². Motivate students by means of showing them their own involvement and share with them their own fascination or research fails, energize them, enable them to participate in the process of metacognition "(...) by conducting open talks about how we work (meaning: how we teach), what disturbs us, what should be reinforced, what should be avoided" and inevitably aim at the "deformalization of contacts"⁴³.

The effort of facing the requirements of the critical-emancipatory paradigm may bring the academic teacher tangible benefits, mainly including enabling their professional development. One of the ways to achieve so formulated results, A. Sajdak pointed to – apart from study trips and dis-

³⁷ B. D. Gołębnik, *Stawanie się refleksyjnym nauczycielem akademickim...*, op. cit., p. 128.

³⁸ Ibidem.

³⁹ Ibidem, p. 133.

⁴⁰ M. Czerepaniak-Walczak, *Pedagogika emancypacyjna. Rozwój świadomości krytycznej*, Gdańsk 2006, p. 112–117.

⁴¹ A. Sajdak, op. cit., p. 446.

⁴² Ibidem, p. 456–457.

⁴³ B. D. Gołębnik, *Stawanie się refleksyjnym nauczycielem akademickim...*, op. cit., p. 135.

cussion classes, coaching and consulting – the aforementioned research in actions which allows for a reflective look at their own practice⁴⁴. Conducting such research may support the growth of (self)awareness of the professional role which “(...) is the core of personal competence (one of the areas making up teaching competences)”⁴⁵. Allow for the experiencing of the areas of ambivalence of one’s own professional role and the sources of pedagogical style represented as part of it, which in consequence leads to the broadening of knowledge in this field and maybe even make changes, because as D. Klus-Stańska states: “(...) realizing the ambiguity and discursiveness of the assumptions at the base of the methods used by the teacher opens up a chance for the teacher to conduct new, more radical explorations”⁴⁶.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, it can be assumed that a properly planned and conducted process of student education based on the critical-emancipatory paradigm may foster the shaping of open attitude towards problematic situations and different interpretations and ways of thinking, preparing to take alternative, creative, innovative action in relation to the current patterns, taking responsibility for choices made, achieve an optimal level of operational activity, cooperate in groups as well as enhance the ability to plan one’s development. And thereby equip students with universal competences. Allow for the development of knowledge, abilities and attitudes which will enable the learning entities to act not only in the reality to which the corporate education is fitting but most of all to the individually created realities of tomorrow.

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⁴⁴ A. Sajdak, op. cit., p. 460–467.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 460.

⁴⁶ D. Klus-Stańska, *O profesjonalnej świadomości nauczyciela*, [in:] A. Brzezińska, D. Klus-Stańska, A. Strzelacka, *O nowe podejście w kształceniu nauczycieli*, Warszawa 1999, p. 10.

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SUMMARY

This article analyzes the possibilities that are offered by basing the university education process on an emancipatory-critical paradigm. It presents concepts of university education which go beyond the expectations of market economy. It describes the specifics of the emancipatory-critical paradigm of university education as well as responds to the challenges and perspectives

which this paradigm poses to university teachers. The final part of the paper puts forward the thesis that building a university education process based on the emancipatory-critical paradigm and around content commonly associated with the reconstructive function of education may increase its efficiency.

Key words: university education, emancipatory-critical paradigm of student education, research in action, educating for development for freedom, studying as creation of meanings, functions of education.