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Special pedagogy in the context of contemporary theory of education

Pedagogika specjalna w kontekście współczesnej teorii wychowania

Abstract: The text presents the link between special pedagogy and the theory of education. The basic questions asked are what are the reflections in this scientific sub-discipline on the educational impact concerning a person with disabilities? A well-known problem in special pedagogy is the dominance of rehabilitation and therapy in working with the child. The question is whether this affects the issues of educating such a child in the context of limiting his or her autonomy and right of emancipation. The article considers the adaptation and emancipation balance in the education of a child with a disability.

Keywords: special pedagogy, education, disability, adaptation, emancipation.

Introduction

Based on contemporary theories of education, several questions can be raised about the condition of the theoretical background of Polish special pedagogy. Assuming that pedagogy is a scientific discipline about education, we will ask to what extent thinking about this process is present in its sub-disciplines, which include special pedagogy. Going further, we will ask about strategies for such thinking. Here, the question of pluralism, reflexivity and criticality in thinking about education will be important. Is this multifaceted reflection present in special pedagogy; or, on the contrary, does the specificity of the disabled subject dictate a positivist, normative-adaptive model of influencing the pupil? In this sense, the question of the possible

subordination of education in special pedagogy to the process of rehabilitation with all its consequences, including a simplified and transmissive vision of the adaptation of persons with disabilities to the requirements of the society of non-disabled people, becomes mandated.

Theory of education and its implications for the sub-disciplines of pedagogy

The answer to the question of the theory of education in special pedagogy should be preceded by an explanation of the complexity of the contemporary understanding of this process and its consequences. In the first step, it is necessary to become aware of the evolution of the knowledge of education that has taken place in pedagogy in the last decade; in the second step, it is necessary to point out the burdens that accompany it. This knowledge allows one to distance oneself from personal and colloquial visions of education. Awareness of the terminological, ideological, social and cultural burdens in the perception of education makes it easier to see contexts and aspects of interaction with the other person that we would not always wish to associate with education. The theory of education cannot be separated from the concept of education itself. It would seem that after years of terminological and methodological inquiries, it is easy to come to a conceptual consensus on this point. Nothing could be further from the truth. In Andrzej de Tchorzewski's work "Wstęp do teorii wychowania" [Introduction to the theory of education], we see that most of the significant pedagogues of the last century favoured their specific understanding of education, creating dozens of different definitions of it. The author himself remarks upon this multiplicity, claiming that pedagogy does not have an unambiguous answer as to what education is, the concepts used are too general or too narrow, and most approaches emphasise selected aspects of the process, at the expense of other or different aspects (Tchorzewski, 2018, p. 57).

Despite the multiplicity of positions presented, Tchorzewski does not give up his attempt to determine the meanings of what he calls the potential conceptual grid of pedagogical science. Quoting the definition of education in scientific concepts, he uses, among others, classifications of various researchers, e.g. Mieczysław Łobocki, Stefan Kunowski or Katarzyna Olbrycht (2018, pp. 58–68). The author presents differences in the approach to education in behaviourist, humanistic, psychosocial and pedagogical concepts. Based on these concepts, Tchorzewski considers education as an activity, a process and the result of pedagogical interactions, and locates the process itself in theories of education of different scopes and ranges (2018, p. 82).

Studying the most recent work in this field, one does not find a terminological consensus. On the contrary, one has the impression that with the development of pedagogy as a science, defining basic concepts of education is becoming increasingly difficult. “The operation of education as a scientific concept,” writes Bogusław Śliwerski (2011a, p. 11), “is a derivative of the positivist conception of science, in the light of which language is treated as an objective fact, given and studied empirically. The problem is, as the author himself admits, that different approaches to education entail quite divergent pedagogical concepts. The multiplicity of concepts does not mean, however, that one can interpret the process of education freely or limit oneself to its colloquial simplifications.

The notion of education, which is crucial for pedagogy,” writes Śliwerski, “should – in the light of the complexity and paradigmatic diversity – be treated as ambiguous, without giving rise to the conviction that, as a consequence, we are dealing with interpretative freedom. (...) Similarly, when reconstructing a particular pedagogical approach or trend after some time, we create it in a sense anew, because we inscribe in it a contemporary point of view, which may, after all, take into account some part of the past cognitive perspective, but at the same time re-evaluates it through a new interpretation (Śliwerski, 2015, p. 36).

A certain solution, according to Janusz Tomiło, is becoming a combination of descriptive and contextual definitions. As an example, he gives the proposal of Bogusław Milerski and Bogusław Śliwerski contained in the “Pedagogika. Leksykon” of 2000. These authors, avoiding the traditional normativity of the definition of education, combine the old understanding of it (influencing, changing, forming, shaping personality) with the contemporary approach, understood as a totality of processes of influence in the course of interpersonal relations, assuming the recognition and affirmation of freedom (as cited in Tomiło, 2019, p. 59).

While contemporary pedagogy generally avoids the unification postulated by researchers of what education is, it answers much more important questions – what pedagogy is, what theories of education are, and what contexts of meaning can be attributed to education in the various concepts.

Today our knowledge of teaching, learning and education, writes Bogusław Śliwerski, “is incomparably greater, and yet it is quite rare to find dissertations that would become syntheses of the achievements

of successive generations of scholars bringing us closer to an understanding of the complex interrelationships between variables that are important for the quality of pedagogical phenomena. Changing societies introduce into everyday life not only their own needs, aspirations, and goals, but also modify education, and with it meaning, goals and values. (...). Pedagogy as a philosophical reflection is no longer just a science of education, but the thinking of this process, because it studies education, teaching and learning not only as a historical, psychological or social process but also as a cultural process. It thus has the task of revealing the philosophical premises of pedagogical theories and practices, and of raising awareness of the conditions that generate the knowledge and experience that form subjective identity” (Śliwerski, 2011a, p. 13).

According to Śliwerski, by examining the methods of cognition of teaching, learning and education, we achieve knowledge that enables us to reflect critically on the systems and ways of doing pedagogy in particular disciplines. The problem researchers argue about is the question of the manner of this critical reflection. In many of his works, Śliwerski gives us clues as to the criteria for such an evaluation, including through positive reconstruction of theories of education, hermeneutic criticism, or comparative studies of theories of education (2011b, p. 124; 2015, p. 24). Without going into these extensive considerations, I will highlight the hermeneutic study of theories of education illustrated by Śliwerski with Robert Kwaśnica’s dissertation “Dwie racjonalności. Od filozofii sensu ku pedagogice ogólnej” [Two Rationalities. From Philosophy of Sense to General Pedagogy] (2007). Kwaśnica’s model will later serve me for some micro-analysis of the process of education in special pedagogy

Special pedagogy – the science of education, wherein there is little education (?)

A few preliminary remarks will be necessary to attempt an answer based on the contemporary theory of education in special pedagogy. Due to the peculiarities of the development of pedagogy, it is understandable that certain issues in the sub-discipline are more emphasised, while others are accepted as some background knowledge that is not subject to deeper reflection. In special pedagogy, the dominant issues are related to disability and its consequences, which means developing rehabilitation and therapy processes, meeting specific educational needs, counteracting marginalisation, supporting the process of social inclusion, etc. Education as a process and

action is given less attention here. This is not a phenomenon foreign to the sub-disciplines of pedagogy. Śliwerski writes about such a peculiar problem of selectivity in pedagogy as follows:

The unbalanced development of the educational sciences is due to the degree of theoretical differentiation in the various scientific disciplines and sub-disciplines of the pedagogical sciences with their appropriation of specific research problems or their marginalisation. This process has been increasingly affected in recent years as a result of globalisation and fragmentation of knowledge, reinforcing the suspicion or problematisation of existing theories. Any attempt to reconstruct existing theories in a given science, its typology, is to some extent arbitrary and does not result from comparing them with each other in an interdisciplinary perspective” (Śliwerski, 2015, p. 36).

In addition to the phenomenon of selectivity, there is a certain problematic hermeticism of the sub-disciplines. In 2007, Grzegorz Szumski was rather sceptical about the theoretical background of special pedagogy, writing:

Special pedagogy,” as Grzegorz Szumski states, “has a peculiar relation to scientific theories, unprecedented in contemporary social sciences. While in these sciences theories occupy an increasingly substantial place and play an increasingly important role, in special pedagogy the theoretical effort is relatively small. The atheoretical orientation of special pedagogy can be observed both at the level of the most general theoretical and methodological orientations, which in pedagogy are usually called paradigms [...], as well as at the level of more narrow empirical theories (Szumski, 2007, p. 107).

This was not an isolated voice, similar accusations can also be found in other works (cf. Krause, 2010, p. 13). Krystyna Baranowicz in a significant text about the essence of special pedagogy points out that none of the textbooks of special pedagogy address the methodological issues or the methodology of research in the technical and ethical dimension, and the issues of education are dominated by rehabilitation. According to her, special pedagogy must become first and foremost a discipline that studies the process of educating people with developmental disorders (2011, p. 5). In this context, Baranowicz poses the key question:

What is the relationship between education, a primary term for general pedagogy, and revalidation – a primary term for special pedagogy? This question requires study, perhaps of fundamental importance for special pedagogy, in the search for its identity. Is the practice of the special educator to educate or revalidate, or to educate and revalidate? (Baranowicz, 2011, p. 10).

The question of problem selectivity and theoretical hermeticism in special pedagogy is not novel. This problem was already pointed out by Maria Grzegorzewska, who wrote in 1959:

Special pedagogy sees more and more the danger of closing its work within the limits of the removal of obstacles to development, i.e. with the removal by compensation and correction of negative conditions, and begins at the same time to develop the positive conditions of education, i.e. to educate everyone to such fullness of life as he or she can achieve, and thus to socialise as deeply as possible and in general to serve the aims of general pedagogy (Grzegorzewska, 1959, p. 6).

The question is, to what extent was Grzegorzewska's voice listened to and contributed to the development of the direction she called positive education? Here, the answer is not clear. Certainly, the humanistic message of education and the person of the educator emerging from *Listy do Młodego Nauczyciela* [Letters to a Young Teacher] has influenced generations of special educators and, according to some, initiated a paradigmatic shift in special education pedagogy (Krause, 2010). However, the parallel development of rehabilitation and correction pedagogy in the strong current of positivist pedagogy steered special pedagogy over the years into the socialising normative and adaptive currents. The important breakthrough of posing questions about the essence of educating a child with disabilities came with the systemic breakthrough in Polish special pedagogy, and rather with a significant delay to general pedagogy and the theory of education.

The problem I find with the theory of education in special pedagogy is that while the very concept of education can be found in dozens of titles of monographs and articles, the very reflection on the essence and its specificity towards a person with a disability is rare in these works. Most of them assume the obviousness of the notion of education and, as such, pay no attention to it at all or adopt a simplistic vision of it, i.e. a certain interaction with intended effects, the shaping of certain foundations, the reinforcement of certain personality traits, and so on. Texts on education are subordinated to the problems and peculiarities of education in a specific situation of

disability, e.g. from the point of view of the difficulty of parental influence; the low or high effectiveness of certain forms, methods of influence; the disruption of channels of influence with certain disabilities (e.g. difficulty of perception, loss of senses); all kinds of disorders affecting education, or specific difficulties in this process. Education itself focuses mainly on difficulties related to disabilities or on typical practices of special pedagogy, such as care, socialisation or rehabilitation activities (cf. Baran, 2012; Gałuszka, 2019; Plichta, 2017; Ploch, 1997).

The above does not imply that education as a process is absent in special education. Rather, it is implicit, indirect and entwined with the process of rehabilitation, care and social adaptation. References to education can be found in the works of significant special educators of the twentieth century, including most definitions or attempts to define the object of research in special pedagogy. In the work of Maria Grzegorzewska, education is most evident in the empowerment of educational interventions and the deep reflection on the personality patterns of the educator (Grzegorzewska, 1957). For Aleksander Hulek, education, teaching and learning were the basis of revalidation pedagogy (1977, p. 17); for Otto Lipkowski, special pedagogy was the theory and practice of educating disabled individuals (1981, p. 7); for Janina Doroszevska, pedagogical influence served to achieve an accessible norm and to remove or reduce impairments (1989, p. 67); for Władysław Dykcik it was the care, education, teaching and learning of individuals with a deviation from the norm (1997, p. 17).

In special pedagogy, we have a situation similar to that in general pedagogy – with the development of the discipline the reflection on the conditions of the educational process increases. The theories of the last century have been dominated by a positivist pedagogy with a traditional vision of normative education, aimed at rehabilitation towards certain social attitudes and adaptation to the requirements of the world of non-disabled people, e.g. in the process of integration or normalisation. So-called correct education has over the years been not only one of the main aims of revalidation but of the forms and methods of revalidation. While it seems to have been burdened by ideological indoctrination to a lesser extent than in general pedagogy, the revalidation goal of correct functioning, or the reduction of deviations from the norm, is unacceptable in today's understanding of education. The role of special pedagogy in the context of the theory of education was most appreciated by the prominent special educator, Władysław Dykcik, who wrote:

Contemporary special pedagogy” – Władysław Dykcik wrote in 2002 – “as a theoretical and practical science in the field of care, education, teaching and learning of persons with disabilities is critical of the technological-manipulative tendencies of shaping the personality of the disabled, treating them as objects rather than inner-directed subjects; a modern system of therapy, rehabilitation and re-socialisation of people with disabilities and socially maladjusted persons should take into account new scientific and research achievements, aiming at searching for positive human-world interaction, seeing the world in a person, and a person in the world (...) the special educator aims to create knowledge in action, to define the social conditions for an independent, active, inner effort in the formation of personal identity (...) (Dykcik, 2002, p. 35).

It is difficult to assess unambiguously when there was a shift in special education away from a vision of education as a transmission belt of appropriate social attitudes and behaviours, towards attempts to understand the contextual, socio-cultural conditions of pedagogical practices; towards pluralism, openness, and variability. In some works, particularly those of a clinical-therapeutic nature, the vision of educational interaction to restore performance and achieve the desired social norm is still visible today. Clinical work, however, is accompanied by an increasing number of studies with a deeper reflection on the nature of social interaction and interaction with the person with a disability. This process can be considered as building a contemporary theory of education in special education.

Contemporary theory of education in special pedagogy

Analysing the scientific output of special pedagogy in recent years, it can be said with certainty that the level of atheoreticalism which Szumski wrote about in 2007 is no longer the case. With the increasing methodological requirements of advancement works, the development of strong currents of qualitative research, discursive, hermeneutic analyses, and the penetration of philosophical reflection into special pedagogy, several works building the *special* theory of education based on its latest understanding have been created. This does not change the fact that it is difficult to find works devoted exclusively to in-depth reflection on the education of a child with disabilities. These achievements can be seen indirectly in the paradigmatic shift that has taken place in special pedagogy (Krause, 2010; Chrzanowska, 2015, pp. 387–421); in the theories and concepts from which researchers draw outside the traditional theoretical base of special pedagogy (e.g. Antosz, 2018;

Gajdzica, 2013; Głodkowska, 2012; Krzemińska, 2012, 2019; Rzedzicka-Krupa, 2007; Twardowski, 2012; Woynarowska, 2010; Żółkowska, 2023); in the categories of description of educational, learning and teaching reality (e.g. Jachimczak, 2011; Szumski, 2010; 17 books in the series *Problemy edukacji, rehabilitacji i socjalizacji osób niepełnosprawnych* [Problems of education, rehabilitation and socialisation of people with disabilities], Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, 2011–2016); in the preferred models of understanding disability (cf. Chrzanowska, 2019); and finally, in the improvement of practices of educational interaction with a person with a disability (e.g. Fornalik, 2017; Wiśniewska, 2021). Added to this are all analyses of the context of the educational process itself in contemporary disability studies, unmasking attempts to socially determine a person on account of their disability (cf. Rzeznicka-Krupa, 2019).

How is the contemporary theory of education in special pedagogy developed? Here, Andrzej M. de Tchorzewski's multi-level model of building the theory of education in pedagogy may be helpful. He describes it as follows:

The first level consists of general theories of education, i.e. the theories with the broadest scope, built in different philosophical, world-view and methodological orientations. Their authors are usually prominent thinkers, scholars, philosophers and educators living in different historical epochs. (...) Their views have influenced the formation of many different theoretical systems, directions and pedagogical currents, having their full or partial reflection in educational, learning and teaching practice. General theories of education, depending on the recognised ontological and epistemological assumptions, often take the form of pedagogical systems and appear under various names. These arguably include Catholic pedagogy, liberal pedagogy, socialist pedagogy, humanist pedagogy, naturalist pedagogy, personalist pedagogy or cultural pedagogy, emancipatory pedagogy, critical pedagogy, positivist pedagogy, and postmodern pedagogy (Tchorzewski, 2018, p. 79).

Another group, according to Tchorzewski, consists of theories of education of medium range, describing and explaining selected fragments of pedagogical reality with references to specific fields and scientific disciplines (e.g. moral, intellectual, aesthetic, physical education theory, etc.). The narrowest range, according to Tchorzewski, is empirical theories of education, i.e. covering important elements of the process of education that are practical (2018, p. 80).

“In pedagogical research,” writes Tchorzewski, “the multifacetedness and the relations that occur between individual theories is a matter of fact. It is natural and at the same time necessary that individual empirical theories of education make use of theorems and hypotheses formulated deductively by theories superior to them. Thanks to this dependence, empirical theories of education retain a scientific character, rationally justifying the results of their research, which can be applied to practical pedagogical activity. It is also worth pointing out that empirical theories of education not only constitute a form of illustration of higher-order theories but also themselves inspire, employing inductive cognition, the construction of new statements and judgements, which can form part of mid-range theories as well as project the content of general theories of education” (Tchorzewski, 2018, p. 81).

What theories of parenting do special educators derive from when building their empirical theories of parenting, then? An analysis of the contemporary work of special educators indicates that they draw from several pedagogical systems that reflect on the subject’s relationship with the nurturing environment and critically analyse social interactions with people with disabilities. The paradigmatic transformation of special education is dominated by the trend of humanistic pedagogy (Krause, 2010). The key processes in special pedagogy are based on this trend. The first is the complementation of the change in the accepted model of disability. I write about complementation because, although the process itself began in the Western literature of the last century, its dissemination in Polish literature took place only in the 2000s. The stages of socialisation of disability and linking it to the humanistic paradigm are well illustrated by Iwona Chrzanowska, showing the path of special pedagogy from the medical model, through the rehabilitation model, to different versions of social models (including economic, integration, normalisation or cultural models (Chrzanowska, 2015, pp. 387–421). In the models presented, the author shows the empowerment of a person with a disability through self-determination, and empowerment through acceptance of the person and his/her family in support activities. The process of empowerment of a person with disabilities also resonated strongly in the works of Władysław Dykcik (1996) and Czesław Kosakowski (2003).

The change in the contemporary model of perceiving disability is now common in the literature of special education and brings with it a change in the treatment of a person with disability as a subject of education. Several studies appear that critically analyse the phenomena of marginalisation and

discrimination of persons with disabilities, show the extent of social, cultural or institutional oppression of these persons, or present forms of liberation, emancipation towards self-determination (e.g. Borowska-Beszta, 2012; Podgórska-Jachnik, 2013; Prokopiak, 2020). The particular role of changing subject relations is shown by analyses of educational practices linked to the process of education. (Gajdzica, 2013; Jachimczak / Podgórska-Jachnik, 2023; Szumski, 2006, 2010). Developed disability studies analyse the place of the person in social ontologies of disability (Rzeźnicka-Krupa, 2019). Analyses of social discourses unmask any attempt to determine the person under their different range of abilities. Analyses of the Other in education, teaching and learning and social support appear (e.g. the series of publications *Miejsce Innego w współczesnych naukach o wychowaniu* [The place of the Other in contemporary education studies] edited by Chrzanowska, Jachimczak, Podgórska Jachnik).

What is the relationship of these changes to the constructed theory of education in special pedagogy? A model for reconstructing a hermeneutic theory of education in special pedagogy, described by Bogusław Śliwerski, would probably be of help in explaining it.

The hermeneutic critique of the theory of education under study manifests a “spiral” structure and aims to bring together the understanding, which is each time a pre-understanding, with what is given to be understood. It is, therefore, necessary to grasp these pre-understandings, prejudices, preconceptions, and assumptions silently made, our hidden, deep knowledge, to “phrase something as something” when faced with a text. The meaning of pedagogical phenomena is never unambiguous, but changes as the horizon of understanding of the educators themselves changes. The reconstruction aims to unmask this “tacit knowledge”, the mystifications and illusions that theories of education bring with them. Hermeneutics as a method of humanistic research in the theory of education can make us aware of the rules to be followed to gain insight into the full meaning of a given text, i.e. how one should proceed to arrive at certain cognitions (Śliwerski, 2015b, p. 29).

As an example of such an analysis, Śliwerski points to the model of two types of rationality distinguished by Kwaśnica, represented by the theories of authoritarian and anti-authoritarian education. In an in-depth reflection on this model, Śliwerski illustrates the opposing understanding of the aim and tasks of education, the essence of teaching and learning changes, and

pedagogical interactions, and shows the dissimilarity of methods, means and forms of education in these two types of rationality (2015b, p. 32)

Referring to Kwaśnica's model, we see that, based on the axis of adaptive and emancipatory rationality, it shows two pedagogies arguing about the model of education and values. Both pose different questions about education, arguing about the legitimacy of intentionally organised educational activities (Kwaśnica, 2007, p. 143).

Kwaśnica's model should be particularly close to special educators because of the relevance of the adaptation and emancipation dispute axis it uses. In the case of people with disabilities, these categories become crucial in the educational process. The balance between them can be disturbed both by the disability itself and its consequences and by our understanding of disability. In the first case, the process of education may be dominated by the necessity of adaptive processes to the realities and conditions created for and by non-disabled people; in the second, it may be the low emancipatory potential we attribute to certain disabilities. Another advantage of Kwaśnica's model for special educators is that it can be used to analyse the evolution of pedagogical interactions towards a person with a disability that has taken place in the last decade. In no sub-discipline of pedagogy, apart from special education, has such a strong normative (instrumental) pedagogy dominated in regards to rehabilitation goals. It was in the case of the medical model of disability that impairment determined the person and adaptation to developmental and social norms, including educational, learning and teaching norms. What Śliwerski calls *help through control*, i.e. appointing someone as an educator, empowers one to intervene in the affairs of the educated according to one's intention (2015b, p. 32) can be intensified towards people with disabilities in the name of the effectiveness of the rehabilitation process.

Such interactions will be found in the pedagogical theories and practices of classical revalidation. In pedagogical work, we will identify them through the language of description of the person with a disability, and the goals and tasks of education. An example is the description of the pupils in Józef Sowa's "Pedagogika specjalna w zarysie" [Special Pedagogy in Outline].

"The pupils dealt with by special pedagogy," writes J.Sowa, "can be divided most broadly into:

- those who have difficulties in learning about and communicating with the world due to a lack of or damage to their sensory analysers

- those whose cognitive processes are abnormal and whose cognitive image is inadequate as a result (...)
- those who, as a result of damage to the musculoskeletal system or a chronic illness, have a limited ability to act, to express themselves, to take an active part in social life
- those who, as a result of negligence and educational errors (...) require re-socialisation education” (Sowa, 1998, p. 28).

Sowa further presents a classification of the learnability and educability of the pupils and the goals of their education, which he sees as the maximum possible development and adaptation to life in society (1998, p. 30). In the presented model, even the maximisation of the individual's development is considered in terms of normative adaptation to the social environment and its requirements from a non-disabled perspective.

At the other end of the axis of rationality of Kwaśnica's model stands emancipatory pedagogy, a kind of discovery of special educators of the last decade. It is in emancipatory terms that it is easier to describe the empowerment of the pupil, his or her right to autonomy, liberation from social oppression and the restoration of rights that have been taken away from the person due to their disability. Except that it is not a matter of simply changing adaptive measures into emancipatory ones, but of changing the fundamental approach to education.

Emancipatory pedagogy, according to Kwaśnica, “(...) remains in such an axiological perspective which does not allow one to pass over any procedure that makes a human being a creature. This pedagogy, advocating emancipatory values – subjectivity, autonomy, freedom – should note that they are not subject to instrumentalization, that they are not fulfilled in the same (objective and measurable) way as utilitarian values, and that therefore they cannot be made the goals of education in the same sense as adaptive values (Kwaśnica, 2007, p. 143).

Kwaśnica himself admits that the majority of humanistic concepts of education that are in opposition to adaptive values, give emancipatory values the status of aims of education, speak of dialogue as a method of education, and count unconditional acceptance of the pupil, respect for his dignity, and

an empathetic attitude towards him as means of education (p. 145)¹. In analysing the problem of emancipation understood in this way, both Śliwerski and Kwaśnica point to the basic question that the contemporary emancipatory current should ask regarding education, i.e. to what extent can education remain a purposefully organised activity, at the same time oriented towards emancipatory values? (Śliwerski, 2015b, p. 32; Kwaśnica, 2007, p. 145).

While this problem of the instrumentalization of emancipatory values is not explicitly resolved in contemporary special needs pedagogy, the process of emancipation becomes the narrative axis of significant works on the relations of adaptation and liberation of different groups with disabilities. Examples include Podgórska-Jachnik's monograph "Głusi. Emancypacja" [Deaf. Emancipation] (2013); Beata Cytowska's "Trudne drogi adaptacji" [Difficult Ways of Adaptation] (2013), "Niepełnosprawność intelektualna i praca. Gra w/o emancypację" [Intellectual Disability and Work. The game of/for emancipation] by Agnieszka Woynarowska (2020), or Teresa Żółkowska's excellent text "Dlaczego emancypacja osób niepełnosprawnych powinna być 'pustym znaczącym'" [Why the emancipation of disabled people should be "empty signifier"] (2014). I am also close to the position of Podgórska-Jachnik, who even writes about the emergence of emancipatory special pedagogy.

Despite many doubts and caution in proclaiming a new trend of emancipatory special pedagogy (Krause, 2010, pp. 150–152), through the density of facts and phenomena constituting the two perspectives cited, it is increasingly clear that special pedagogy is creating an expanding discursive and methodological space for activating and supporting processes of emancipation of individuals and groups. It is becoming emancipatory. This means that the understanding of the mission of this science focuses on such resources (personal and social) and such strategies (educational, rehabilitative, therapeutic) that serve the emancipatory interest of its subject: the human being with a disability striving for an independent life. Thus, it becomes an emancipatory pedagogy in the normative sense – recognizing as a value the liberation of the human being (by themselves) from relations of domination and dependence, but also an emancipatory pedagogy in the praxeological sense – providing such experiences, shaping such aspirations and such competences that make this liberation possible (Podgórska-Jachnik, 2018, pp. 15–16).

¹ Such an approach can also be found among some special educators, e.g. Konarska (2015) treats emancipation as a new rehabilitation trend.

It appears that an important problem facing contemporary special education is how to reconcile emancipatory values with the pursuit of social and educational inclusion. Like rehabilitation, social inclusion will not be without adaptive and normative values. The problem lies not so much in the balance of these two values, but in an impact that, while respecting emancipatory values, will also achieve adaptive goals. A pointer in this matter can also be found in Kwaśnica's model, which confirms that emancipatory pedagogy is not the opposite type of reflection on education to adaptive pedagogy. Even though, as the author claims, emancipatory pedagogy, contrary to its declarations, utilises instrumental rationality and technically it is closer to one adaptive-emancipatory pedagogy than to self-management (Kwaśnica, 2007, p. 149), there is undoubtedly a dispute about the concepts of education. Regardless of whether one accepts Kwaśnica's view of the relevance of a pedagogy built by two rationalities, the very consequences of the dispute over education that these rationalities generate should be seen positively, if only by noting authoritarianism in education or posing new questions about education. This is also evident in the constructed theory of education of special pedagogy. It implies, on the one hand, an in-depth reflection on the relationship of the subject with disability in a non-disabled society and the boundaries/conditions of adaptation; on the other hand, it projects liberating actions in the process of education.

Conclusion

While it is difficult to find in-depth reflections on the essence of education in special pedagogy, it is without a doubt that the theory of education is indirectly constructed within it through the analysis of the quality of relations with persons with disabilities. Above all, contemporary Polish special pedagogy asks the question about the forms of instrumentalization of education of a person with disabilities and delimits it, gives critical reflection to all forms of oppression in education and designs subjective actions towards persons with disabilities. While special pedagogy, because to its tasks, does not give up its adaptive and normative aims towards a person with disabilities, it shifts the scope of its action towards emancipatory values. As the language and categories of describing the person of the educator and the educational impact change, the educational and educational practices in special education are changing. The extent of this change can be seen in the textbooks of methodology and special didactics, in the handbooks for teachers and parents, and in the description of pedagogical projects and initiatives. It is hard to judge whether this already marks the emergence of

special emancipatory pedagogy. However, it can certainly be said that the education of a person with a disability in the 21st century is no longer the same education that prevailed in the last century.

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