Individual, family and environment as the subject of research in social pedagogy – development and transformations

Abstract
The cognitive specificity of social pedagogy is its interest in the issues related to social conditionings of human development and, respectively, the specific social conditionings of the upbringing process. The notion has been developed in various directions since the very beginning of the discipline, yet the most clearly visible area seems to be the functioning of individuals, families and broader environment. Simultaneously, it is possible to observe that the issues have been entangled in certain socio-political conditions, the knowledge of which is substantial for the reconstruction and identification of the research heritage of social pedagogy. All these interrelationships allowed to distinguish particular stages of development of social pedagogy. Contemporarily, it is a discipline with descent scientific achievements which marks out and indicates new perspectives both in the field of educational practice and the theory of social activity.

Keywords: social pedagogy, individual, family, environment

Introduction
Social pedagogy, similarly to other areas (subdisciplines) of pedagogy, deals with the notion of upbringing in a certain aspect – in a certain problem inclination. It specializes in social and environmental conditionings of the upbringing process. It is the thread of the social context of upbringing what proves to be the crucial, basic and fundamental determinant of upbringing and, thus, decisive factor for human development. This notion was always present in the general pedagogical thought however, its organized and rationalized character surfaced only when the social pedagogy was distinguished as a separate, systematic area of pedagogy. It occurred in Poland only at the beginning of the 19th century. From the very beginning the creators and precursors of this subdiscipline pointed out its relatively wide range. It has been
the notion of individual – social conditionings of human development, yet, social pedagogists were interested in human at every stage of their lives i.e. childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age. Another area of interest were the issues related to family as the most important “place” of human development and, in this respect, the issues connected with institutions undertaking various activities: help, care, support and animation. Finally, the scope of interest included issues related to the environment as the place where the upbringing process is supposed to realize and realizes.

Since the very beginning of social pedagogy these have been the prominent threads for exploration. At the same time it ought to be stated that these threads have always been interwoven with various social-political conditions both with regards to their interpretation as well as possible and planned educational practice. Therefore social pedagogy and its findings must be always “read” in the context of social-political conditions which accompanied the creation of a given thought or realization of some educational practice. As these conditions have constantly been undergoing certain transformations one may clearly distinguish particular stages of development of social pedagogy. The stages reflect various approaches to exploring and describing the above-mentioned areas of this discipline. Following the assumptions regarding the chronology of social pedagogy development and the three distinguished stages of development, it seems worthwhile to study how the issues related to an individual, family and environment were shaped at these stages.

Research
The first stage when the social psychology was arising was mainly the time of Helena Radlińska’s activities as well as less popular and already forgotten Polish pedagogists – precursors of this discipline such as: Anna Chmielewska, Irena Jurgielewiczowa, Zofia Gulińska or Maria Korytowska.

In that period social pedagogists mainly dealt with individuals, families and the functioning of environments in the context of educational activities aimed at arousing national identity and consciousness. However, their work did no focus on indicating the layers of threats and deficits in functioning of individuals, social groups or families but on the possibilities to stimulate their development and cultural life. Therefore social pedagogy of those times was not as strongly related to social work as it currently is but dealt mainly with educational work. The classic example of such approach in the research carried out in the social pedagogy of that time may be the early works by Helena Radlińska who undertook the narrow field of cultural-educational work targeted to all categories of people. The works
described such issues as the organization of libraries, organizing extra-school education (H. Orsza, 1922, H. Orsza-Radlińska, 1925). It ought to be stated that this kind of work was regarded as public and educational work, whereas currently it exists under the name of social work.

Frequently quoted works related to the issues of arising social pedagogy were also the works by Eustachy Nowicki e.g. “Extra-school education and its social-educational role in the contemporary Polish life” from 1923 or the works by Stefania Sempołowska, Jerzy Grodecki or Jadwiga Dziubińska.

Such an approach and tendencies are clearly visible in a book from 1913 (a book which has been regarded by some pedagogists as the first synthetic presentation of social pedagogy). It is a group work entitled “Educational work – its tasks, methods and organization” (T. Bobrowski, Z. Daszyńska-Golińska, J. Dziubińska, Z. Gargasa, M. Heilperna, Z. Kruszewska, L. Krzywicki, M. Orsetti, H. Orsza, St. Posner, M. Stępkowski, T. Szydlowski, Wł. Weychert-Szymanowska, 1913).

The problem of indicated and undertaken research areas and hence, the topics of works realized by the social pedagogists of that times changed immediately after regaining independence and before World War II.

It was the time when the area of social pedagogists interests started to include the issues of social inequality, poverty and, subsequently, the possibility of helping (with regards to the practical character of social pedagogy). The research works undertaken by social pedagogists were clearly of diagnostic, practical and praxeological character. They were aimed at seeking the causes of these phenomena with simultaneous identification and exploration of certain environmental factors as their sources. A classic example of such a paper – created before the war – under the editorial management of H. Radlińska was the work entitled “Social causes of school successes and failures” from 1937 (H. Radlińska, 1937).

Well known are also the pre-war works written by the students of H. Radlińska which revealed diagnostic character such as: “The harm of a child” by Maria Korytowska (1937) or “A child of Polish countryside” edited by M. Librachowa and published in Warsaw in 1934 (M. Librachowa, 1934).

Worthwhile are also the works by Czesław Wroczyński from 1935 entitled “Care of an unmarried mother and struggle against abandoning infants in Warsaw” or the research papers by E. Hryniewicz, J. Ryngmanowa and J. Czarnecka which touched upon the problem of
neglected urban and rural families and the situation of an urban and rural child – frequently an orphaned child.

As it may be inferred, the issues of poverty, inefficient families, single-parent families remain current and valid also after the World War II. These phenomena where nothing but an outcome of various war events and became the main point of interest for researchers. Example works created in the circle of social pedagogists and dealing with these issues may be two books written in the closest scientific environment of Helena Radlińska – with her immense editorial impact. They are “Orphanage – scope and compensation” (H. Radlińska, J. Wojtyniak, 1964) and “Foster families in Łódź” (A. Majewska, 1948), both published immediately after the war.

Following the chronological approach I adopted, the next years mark the beginning of a relative stagnation in the research undertaken in the field of social pedagogy. Especially the 50’s – the years of notably strong political indoctrination and the Marxist ideological offensive which involved building the so called socialist educational society – by definition free from socio-educational problems in public life.

The creation and conduction of research in this period was also hindered due to organizational and institutional reasons. The effect of the mentioned policy was also the liquidation of the majority of social sciences including research facilities – institutes, departments and units.

An interesting and characteristic description of the situation may be the statement given by Professor J. Auletner who described the period from the perspective of development of social policy and said that:

“During the Stalinist years scientific cultivation of social policy was factually forbidden”. During the period of real socialism it becomes truly difficult to explore the science of social policy. The name became mainly the synonym of the current activity of the state and a manifestation of struggles aimed at maintaining the existing status quo. The state authorities clearly wanted to subdue the science of social activities of the state […] During the real socialism neither the freedom for scientific criticism of the reality nor the freedom of research in the field of social sciences existed. It was impossible (yet deliberated) to carry out a review of poverty and other drastic social issues” (J. Auletner, 2000).

The situation changes at the beginning of the 60’s (which marks the second stage of development of social pedagogy) when certain socio-political transformations – on the one hand abandoning the limitation of the Stalinist period (1953 – the death of Stalin and political thaw), on the other – reinforcement of the idea of socialist education in social sciences lead to
resuming environmental research. It was simultaneously the period of revival of Polish social pedagogy with regards to its institutional dimension as well as its ideological self-determination (M. Cichosz, 2006, 2014).

The issues of individuals, families and environments was at that time explored with regards to the functioning of educational environments and in the context of exploring the environmental conditionings of the upbringing process.

Typical examples here may be the research by Helena Izdebska entitled “The functioning of a family and childcare tasks” (H. Izdebska, 1967) and “The causes of conflicts in a family” (H. Izdebska, 1975) or research conducted by Anna Przeclawska on adolescents and their participation in culture: “Book, youth and cultural transformations” (A. Przeclawska, 1967) or e.g. “Cultural diversity of adolescents against upbringing problems” (A. Przeclawska, 1976).

A very frequent notion undertaken at that time and remaining within the scope of the indicated areas were the issues connected with organization and use of free time. This may be observed through research by T. Wujek: “Homework and active leisure of a student” (T. Wujek, 1969). Another frequently explored area was the problem of looking after children mainly in the papers by Albin Kelm or Marian Balcerek.

It is worthwhile that the research on individuals, families or environments were carried out as part of the current pedagogical concepts of that time like: parallel education, permanent education, lifelong learning or the education of adults, whereas, the places indicated as the areas of human social functioning in which the environmental education took place were: family, school, housing estate, workplace, social associations. It may be inferred that from a certain (ideological) perspective at that time we witnessed a kind of modeling of social reality as, on the one hand particular areas were diagnosed, on the other – a desired (expected) model was built (designed) (with respect to the pragmatic function of practical pedagogy).

A group work entitled “Upbringing and environment” edited by B. Passini and T. Pilch (B. Passini, T. Pilch, 1979) published in 1979 was a perfect illustration of these research areas.

It ought to be stated that in those years a certain model of social diagnosis proper for undertaken social-pedagogical research was reinforced (M. Deptula, 2005). Example paper could be the work by I. Lepalczyk and J. Badura entitled: “Elements of pedagogical diagnostics” (I. Lepalczyk, J. Badura, 1987).
Finally, the social turning point in the 80’s and 90’s brought new approaches to the research on individuals, families and environments which may be considered as the beginning of the third stage of the development of social pedagogy.

Breaking off the idea of socialist education meant abandoning the specific approach to research on the educational environment previously carried out within a holistic system of socio-educational influences (A. Przecławska, w. Theiss, 1995).

The issues which dominated in the 90’s and still dominate in social pedagogy with regards to the functioning of individuals, families and local environments have been the issues connected with social welfare and security as well as education of adults.

Research papers related to such approach may be the work by Józefa Brągiel: “Upbringing in a single-parent family” from 1990; the work edited by Zofia Braunka “The subjects of care and upbringing” from 2002 or a previous paper written in 1998 by the same author in collaboration with Mirosław Szymbański “Aggression and violence in modern world” published in 1999 as well as the work by Danuta Marzec “Childcare at the time of social transformations” from 1999 or numerous works by St. Kawula, A. Janke. Also a growing interest in social welfare and social work is visible in the papers by J. Brągiel and P. Sikora “Social work, multiplicity of perspectives, family – multiculturalism – education” from 2004, E. Kanwicz and A. Olubiński: “Social activity in social welfare at the threshold of 21st century” from 2004 or numerous works on this topic created by the circles gathered around the Social Pedagogy Faculty in Łódź under the management of E. Marynowicz-Hetka. Current researchers also undertake the issues related to childhood (B. Smolińska-Theiss, 2014, B. Matyjas, 2014) and the conditionings of the lives of seniors (A. Baranowska, E. Kościńska, 2013).

**Research areas**

Ultimately, among the presented, yet not exclusive, research areas related to particular activities undertaken in human life environment (individuals, families) and fulfilled within the field of caregiving, social welfare, adult education, socio-cultural animation or health education one may distinguish the following notions:

- the functioning of extra-school education institutions, most frequently caregiving or providing help such as: orphanage, residential home, dormitory, community centre but also facilities aimed at animating culture like youth cultural centres, cultural centres, clubs etc.,
the functioning of school, the realization of its functions (especially educational care), fulfilling and conditioning roles of student/teacher, the functioning of peer groups, collaboration with other institutions,

the functioning (social conditionings) of family including various forms of families e.g. full families, single-parent families, separated families, families at risk (unemployment) and their functioning in the context of other institutions e.g. school,
social pathologies, the issues of violence and aggression, youth subcultures,
participation in culture, leisure time, the role of media,
the functioning of the seniors – animation of activities in this field,
various dimensions of social welfare, support, providing help, the conditionings of functioning of such jobs as the social welfare worker, culture animator, voluntary work.

It might be concluded that the issues connected with individuals, families and environment have been the centre of interest of social pedagogy since the very beginning of this discipline. These were the planes on which social pedagogists most often identified and described social life – from the perspective of human participation. On the course of describing the lives of individuals, families and broader educational environments social pedagogists figured out and elaborated on particular methods and ways of diagnosing social life. Is it possible to determine any regularities or tendencies in this respect?

Unquestionably, at the initial stage of existence of this discipline, aimed at stimulating national consciousness and subsequent popularization of cultural achievements through certain activities – social and educational work, social pedagogists built certain models of these undertakings which were focused on stimulating particular social activity and conscious participation in social life. The issues concerning social diagnosis, though not as significant as during other stages, served these purposes and hence were, to a certain extent, ideologically engaged. The situation changed significantly before and shortly after the World War II. Facing particular conditions of social life – increase in many unfavourable phenomena, social pedagogists attempted to diagnose and describe them. It seems to have been the period of clear shaping and consolidation of the accepted model of empirical research in this respect.

The model was widely accepted as dominating and has been developed in Polish social pedagogy during the second and subsequent stages of developing of this discipline. Practical and praxeological character of social pedagogy became the main direction of this development. Consequently, social diagnosis realized and undertaken with regard to social
pedagogy was associated with the idea of a holistic system of education and extra-school educational influences and related educational environments. Therefore, the more and more clearly emphasized goal of environmental research – forecasting, was associated with the idea of building holistic, uniform educational impacts.

After the systemic transformation which occurred in Poland in the 90’s, i.e. the third stage of social pedagogy development, abandoning the previous ideological solutions, environmental research including diagnosis was reassigned with social life problems mainly regarding social welfare and security. Individuals, families and environment have been and still seem to be the subject of research in the field of social pedagogy in Poland. These research areas are structurally bound with its acquired paradigm – of a science describing transformations of social life and formulating a directive of practical conduct regarding these transformations.

Modern concepts – the context of further research

A question arouses about the development of social pedagogy as the one which charts the direction of transformations of practices within the undertaken research areas. If it may be considered as such, then it would be worthwhile to enquire about the directions of the accepted theoretical acknowledgments. On the one hand we may observe a relatively long tradition of specifically elaborated and developed concepts, on the other – there are still new challenges ahead.

Observing the previous and current development of Polish social pedagogy it may be inferred that its achievements are not overextensive with regards to the described and acquired theoretical deliberations. Nevertheless, from the very beginning, it has generated certain, specific theoretical solutions attempting to describe and explain particular areas of social reality. Especially noteworthy is the first period of the existence of this discipline, the period of such social pedagogists like i.a. J.W. Dawid, A. Szycówna, I. Moszczeńska or Helena Radlińska. The variety of the reflections with typically philosophical background undertaken in their works (e.g. E. Abramowski) is stunning. Equally involving is the second stage of development of social pedagogy i.e. shortly after the World War II, when Polish social pedagogy did not fully break with the heritage of previous philosophical reflections (A. Kamiński, R. Wroczyński) yet was developed in the Marxist current. A question arouses whether the area of education and the projects of its functioning of that time were also specific with regards to theory (it seems to be the problem of the whole Socialist pedagogy realised in Poland at that time).
The following years of development of this discipline, especially at the turn of 80’s and 90’s was the period of various social ideas existing in social pedagogy – the influences of various concepts and theories in this field. The extent to which they were creatively adapted and included in the current of specific interpretations still requires detailed analysis, yet remains clearly visible. Another important area is the field of confronting the theories with the existing and undertaken solutions in the world pedagogy. A. Radziewicz-Winnicki refers to the views of the representatives of European and world social thought: P. Bourdieu, U. Beck, J. Baudrillard, Z. Bauman and M. Foucault, and tries to identify possible connections and relationships between these ideas and social pedagogy:

“the ideas undertaken by the mentioned sociologists undoubtedly account for a significant source of inspiration for practical reflection within social pedagogy. Therefore, it is worthwhile to suggest certain propositions of their application in the field of the mentioned subdiscipline of pedagogy” (Radziewicz-Winnicki 2008).

The contemporary social pedagogy in Poland constantly faces numerous challenges. W. Theiss analysed the contemporary social pedagogy with regards to its deficiencies but also the challenges imposed by globalisation and wrote:

“Modern social pedagogy focuses mainly on the narrow empirical research and narrow practical activity and neglects research in the field of theory functioning separately from the realms of the global (or globalising) world or pays insufficient attention to these problems. It leads to a certain self-marginalisation of our discipline which leaves us beyond the current of main socio-educational problems of modern times. In this respect, it seems worthwhile and necessary to carry out intensive conceptual and research work focused on e.g. the following issues:

- metatheory of social pedagogy and its relationship with modern trends in social sciences;
- the concepts of human and the world, the concepts of the hierarchy of values;
- the theory of upbringing, the theory of socialization, the theory of educational environment;
- a conceptual key of the modern reality; new terms and new meanings of classical concepts;
- socio-educational activities with direct and indirect macro range e.g. balanced development and its programmes, global school, intercultural education, inclusive education, professional education of emigrants”.
Considering the currently undertaken research in this field and the accepted theoretical perspectives it is possible to indicate specific and elaborated concepts. They fluctuate around structural spheres of social pedagogy on the axis: human – environment – environmental transformations. It accounts for an ontological sphere of the acknowledged concepts and theories. Below, I am enumerating the concepts which are most commonly discussed in social pedagogy with regards to the acquired and accepted model.

Currently discussed theoretical perspectives (contexts) in social pedagogy and the concepts within.

I. The context of social personal relationships
   - social participation, social presence;
   - social communication, interaction;
   - reciprocity.

II. The context of social activities (the organization of environment)
   - institutionalisation;
   - modernization;
   - urbanization.

III. The context of environment
   - space;
   - place;
   - locality.

The socially conditioned process of human development is a process which constantly undergoes transformations. The pedagogical description of this process ought to include these transformations also at the stage of formulating directives of practical activities – the educational practice. It is a big challenge for social pedagogy to simultaneously do not undergo limitations imposed by current social policy and response to real social needs. It has been and remains a very important task for social pedagogy.

References


Korytowska M. (1937) Krzywda dziecka. Poznań


Librachowa M. (ed), (1934) Dziecko wsi polskiej. Warszawa


Orsza H. (1922) Jak prowadzić biblioteki wędrowne. Wskazówki i przykłady. Warszawa, Towarzystwo Wydawnicze „Ignis”


