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Humanistic paradigm in the research on studying

In the course of changes taking place in the higher education, particularly in the situation of creating the education orientated to the student, a need to do a thorough analysis of the process of studying appears. In the proposed text I would like to present the significance of theoretical and empirical reflection on the process of studying. I am going to outline a theoretical context of research being placed in the current of the humanistic paradigm and a research project according to the assumptions of humanistic methodological knowledge.

Key words: studying, student, higher education, humanistic paradigm, methodological orientation.

Some terms and theoretical basis

The changes taking place in higher education relating to the implementation of the Bologna Process lead to the student-oriented university education. The student and his/her activity, commonly called studying becomes the centre of interest.

In the Dictionary of the Polish Language, there is no term 'studying', there is the term: to study, which means:

to study at university; to get to know thoroughly, to examine something; to familiarize oneself with something by watching something carefully or reading something¹.

According to the Dictionary of Pedagogy,

¹ *Słownik Języka Polskiego*, <http://sjp.pwn.pl>.

studying (Latin: *stadium*- examining, learning) learning at higher level – beginning from the first years at university – with the utmost participation of one’s own initiative and independence².

According to Józef Półturzycki, “studying is independent gaining of knowledge in the forms of classes organized by university”³.

Franciszek Bereźnicki writes

studying as a specific form of activity requires a large degree of independence. (...) – independence expressed by elements of one’s own search for appropriate knowledge, transforming it in a creative way, and even conducting research. A significant feature that makes studying different from learning is intellectual independence during gaining and using knowledge⁴.

Student’s independence and activity are stressed in definitions of the term ‘studying’. Cognitive independence is, according to Stanisław Palka,

a complex of interconnected skills of solving research problems (formulating problems, designing research, analyzing and interpreting its results), and also selecting sources and storing information relating to a new problem (analyzing the contents of specialist literature, journal articles, radio and television programmes and others)⁵.

According to Maria Czerepaniak-Walczak⁶, studying is developing critical competences, independence in search of new solutions, resolving ethical dilemmas. Studying is conducting research, developing new projects, discovering new interdisciplinary spheres.

For the purposes of the presented study, it can be assumed that studying is the independent gaining/constructing of knowledge, acquiring skills and forming all sorts of competences, and above all critical, creative competences, and shaping the system of values, attitudes and beliefs. Studying is the process of independent care of full personal development of the student.

² W. Okoń, *Nowy słownik pedagogiczny*, PWN, Warszawa 1992, p. 196.

³ J. Półturzycki, *Jak studiować zaocznie. Poradnik metodyczny*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe NOVUM, Płock 2001, p. 7.

⁴ Bereźnicki, *Zagadnienia dydaktyki szkoły wyższej*, Wydawnictwo OR TWP, Szczecin 2009, p. 106.

⁵ S. Palka, *Pedagogika w stanie tworzenia*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 1999.

⁶ M. Czerepaniak-Walczak, *Uczenie się czy studiowanie? Niektóre aspekty procesu bolońskiego*, in: K. Jaskot (ed.), *Wprowadzenie do pedagogiki szkoły wyższej*, Oficyna IN PLUS, Szczecin 2006.

On the basis of the way that man is understood, the approach to the process of gaining and presenting knowledge, at least four modes of studying can be distinguished:

- studying as acquiring knowledge (man machine, objective knowledge)
- studying as constructing knowledge and negotiating meanings (man constructor, subjective knowledge)
- studying as realization of individual potential, self-realization (autonomous man, subjective knowledge)
- studying as releasing and changing social reality (man de-structor, subjective knowledge)

The inspiration for distinguishing the above strategies of studying comes from a study concerning paradigms in teaching⁷, and particularly paradigms of teaching students, that is paradigms of academic teaching⁸.

The education orientated to the student results above all from the foundations of humanistic psychology⁹, according to which it is possible to explain studying as fulfilling the individual potential, the self-realization of the student. The process of studying consists in the activity, personal commitment of the entire person. The student reveals his own interests, abilities, possibilities (his own potential). He formulates his own programme of studying or seeks help. He makes the choice of his own way of learning with the full awareness of bearing responsibility and consequences of taken decisions. In the process of studying according to the humanistic paradigm, the student on his own determines the area of his activity (defines learning objectives), establishes the programme of learning (decides on the content), designs his own education environment (he selects methods and means, he establishes forms of the organization of his classes), and also carries out self-control and self-assessment. The main activities of the process of studying include: discovering, perceiving, understanding, interpreting, acting. The assessment of the learning process can be made only by the studying person who is aware of his own needs and who can judge whether the taken actions led to fulfilling them. The portrait of the

⁷ D. Klus-Stańska, *Dydaktyka wobec chaosu pojęć i zdarzeń*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie „Żak”, Warszawa 2010.

⁸ A. Sajdak, *Paradygmaty kształcenia studentów i wspierania rozwoju nauczycieli akademickich. Teoretyczne podstawy dydaktyki akademickiej*, Impuls, Kraków 2013.

⁹ C. Rogers, *Sposób bycia w świecie*, trans. M. Karpiński, Rebis, Poznań 2002; A. Maslow, *Motywacja i osobowość*, trans. Józef Radzicki, (ed.) Teresa Rzepa, PWN, Warszawa 2006.

autonomous man drawn by representatives of humanistic theories in the version of the person functioning fully¹⁰ or the mature personality¹¹ requires constant care for the individual development. Man created in accordance with humanistic theories is open to experience, he has confidence in his own powers and possibilities, he fulfils himself in contacts with other people.

According to the assumptions of humanistic paradigm, the process of studying can be supported by different people who will be creating the appropriate climate and will be offering help at all stages of student's activity.

The need of research on studying

Due to the changes taking place in higher education, there is a need to identify the essence and course of studying, the level of students' learning awareness. The introduction of the National Qualifications Framework at university and design of teaching programmes will be successful if the main participants of the process of academic education, that is students are included in the process of changes. Students' knowledge, understanding and commitment to the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework ensures the achievement of outcomes, which are used to describe the teaching programme in a specific field. It is important to identify students' knowledge of the National Qualifications Framework and their commitment to achieving learning outcomes.

Working out a theory of studying, according to which the student aspires to the individual development is a real necessity. The research also should strive to develop practical guidelines for students oriented to achieving high results, to shape the awareness and to increase the involvement of students in the process of studying. The research should allow for defining proposals for academic teachers aimed at raising the level of education quality in the higher education institution and, in particular, should allow for increasing a positive motivation of students for self-study and the achievement of learning outcomes as well as supporting students in their personal development.

Very important argument in support of the need for raising the issue of studying is the worrying situation of a low level of education at

¹⁰ C. Rogers, *Sposób bycia...*, op. cit.

¹¹ A. H. Maslow, *Motywacja i ...* op. cit.; *Allportowska psychologia jednostki*, in: C. S. Hall, G. Lindzey, *Teorie osobowości*, PWN, Warszawa 2001, p. 404 and the following.

university. Many actions are taken to improve the quality of academic education. Most of them concern organizational solutions, the activity of academic teachers. I notice a lack of students' commitment to the implementation of changes at university and inclusion in the activities aimed at improving the level of education quality. I think that the education quality at university depends largely on the students' commitment, the quality of their work and the quality of the process of studying.

The presented research project was shaped under the influence of my previous constant research conducted among students. I would like to refer to my latest research pertaining to students' knowledge about changes taking place in higher education, resulting from the implementation of the Bologna Process¹². I attempted to identify students' opinion of the changes taking place in higher education, define their level of knowledge with regard to the changes.

The conducted research indicates that students' knowledge about the changes is at medium level and does not depend on the respondents' field of studies, year, level or mode of studies¹³. Besides, over half of the respondents did not notice any changes, and did not feel the need to introduce changes at university, which can indicate students' indifference, passivity, lack of the sense of subjectivity and agency. In general, this state can be described as very alarming because changes in the higher education institution take place without students' awareness and participation. Particularly worrying is the fact that the changes should be aimed at the student, academic education should be oriented towards the student. Students should consciously participate in creating the process of academic education, should take more interest in the things which concern them. Only then can they make full use of the rights they are entitled to, take actions of their own free will, take full responsibility for their decisions. This will enable reflection on actions taken by members of the academic community. The situation becomes an important factor of raising the quality of academic education.

¹² I carry out a detailed analysis of the research in the article: W. Wróblewska, *W poszukiwaniu uwarunkowań podwyższania jakości kształcenia w szkole wyższej*, in: J. Grzesiak (ed.), *Ewaluacja poprawy jakości kształcenia*, WPA UAM w Kaliszu & PWSZ w Koninie, Kalisz-Konin 2014, pp. 345-353.

¹³ I verified the relationship between the respondents' year, degree and mode of studies and the level of their knowledge about the changes taking place at university with the use of the chi-square test of independence. The analysis results showed that the mentioned variables do not differentiate the level of students' knowledge about the changes taking place at university.

The changes taking place in the higher education lead to many contradictions and tensions. The provisions of changes within the Bologna process emphasize student-oriented academic education, and the ways of implementing them cause that universities become diploma factories¹⁴. What is it really like? Is studying a chance for the full development of young people? This is the question, which requires undertaking research in order to answer it.

It can be noticed that higher education is more and more oriented only towards jobs in a certain narrow specialization. It seems that gaining narrow professional qualifications can be dangerous when the labour market changes so dynamically. The job is a very desired value, which allows young people to become independent and settle down. Today jobs are not available for all, particularly jobs in accordance with qualifications¹⁵. Moreover, the orientation only towards gaining narrow professional qualifications in the process of studying can restrict the student's many-sided development, and especially the development of emotional sphere, the shaping of the system of values, critical and creative attitudes.

Another important point in favour of the scientific significance of the project issues is the fact that research in the field of academic teaching is situated in the socio-theoretical current and focuses on supporting the development of students' whole personality. Human personality as a harmonious whole reveals its basic functions due to which man can exist and develop (knowing the world and oneself, experiencing the world and the values accumulated in it and transforming the world). The analysis of literature concerning research in the field of academic teaching shows a shortage of research within this current.

Another argument is the relationship of the raised issues with the developing trend of lifelong learning. Independence developed in the process of learning, a need for constant learning, a habit of constant tracing of scientific progress, reaching out to different sources of knowledge and interpreting them independently¹⁶ determine the

¹⁴ M. Czerepaniak-Walczak (ed.), *Fabryki dyplomów czy universitas?*, Impuls, Kraków 2013.

¹⁵ J. Saran, *Nowa sytuacja edukacyjna studenta we współczesnej uczelni*, in: J. Saran, M. Żmigrodzki (ed.), *Student jako podmiot edukacji we współczesnej uczelni wyższej*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Ekonomii i Innowacji, Lublin 2011, p. 179.

¹⁶ R. Stępień, *Ukierunkowanie na studenta w dydaktyce uniwersyteckiej jako warunek jakości kształcenia*, in: H. Kwiatkowska, R. Stępień (ed.), *Jakość kształcenia akademickiego w świecie mobilności i ryzyka*, Akademia Humanistyczna im. A. Gieysztor, Pułtusk 2011, p. 156.

effectiveness of constant lifelong learning, creating the learning society, society of knowledge and wisdom.

The presented research project is a result of many years of work with students, participant observation, literature studies in the field of higher school didactics, and above all continuation of many years of research on students. My research activity constantly concentrates on the participants of process of academic education, especially students. I completed two stages of research pertaining to students' educational aspirations (2001, 2004)¹⁷, and the third stage included students' auto-educational activities at university (2008)¹⁸.

Focusing on one of the participants of academic community, the student, it should be noticed that nowadays being a student involves performing many roles, and the university is to support the fulfillment of students' personal objectives. These days there is an evident departure from the traditional model of learning in support of students' autonomous learning. Students acquire knowledge and competences not only at university, but also outside the university. The academic teacher ceases performing the role of an expert in favour of a facilitator, shaping students' learning environment. There is a fall of the traditional model of closed learning in support of the style of general and negotiating learning. There is a preference for the model of constant learning, learning everywhere, in different places, in different ways, ensuring the fulfillment of students' needs and preferences in learning. The university acknowledges competences and knowledge gained outside educational institutions. It creates conditions so that previous experience and knowledge could be recognized and used in students further education, or organizes support for students who lack formal knowledge or competences. The possibility of choosing the course, subject and learning space by the student becomes a necessary element of higher education.

Miscellanea

Humanistic paradigm in the research on studying

If the process of studying is understood in keeping with the humanistic paradigm, then the research should be undertaken in accordance with the humanistic model. It is necessary to recognize the process of studying from students' perspective, who should understand and be

¹⁷ W. Wróblewska, *Aspiracje edukacyjne studentów*, Trans Humana, Białystok 2001; by the same author, *Dynamika aspiracji edukacyjnych studentów w obliczu zmian*, Trans Humana, Białystok 2004.

¹⁸ W. Wróblewska, *Autoedukacja studentów w uniwersytecie-ujęcie z perspektywy podmiotu*, Trans Humana, Białystok 2008.

aware of learning outcomes. Students' commitment and independence in undertaking activities aimed at achieving learning outcomes as well as verifying them is of great importance. Motives for undertaking studies and satisfaction derived from studying are worth recognizing in the research. Identifying the process of studying and interpreting the data will allow for developing the theory of studying and practical guidelines for students and university teachers aimed at raising the quality level of academic teaching. The personal contact of the researcher with the respondents will enable shaping their awareness and commitment and increasing self-reliance in the process of studying. In consequence the research to some extent will contribute to the development of the idea of lifelong learning. The analysis of documents such as the study programme in the chosen field and particularly the learning outcomes will be an essential element in the research project. The aim of the analysis will be to find out whether the defined learning outcomes contribute to the students' individual development.

It is planned to complete the prepared research project with the use of humanistic model of teaching research¹⁹, which consists in understanding and interpreting. I would like to focus on the points of view of the participants of the education process, their everyday practices and knowledge of the research subject. I think that the hermeneutic, interpretative approach should be applied in order to understand the process of studying.

In this kind of research, the researcher constitutes an essential part of the research process through his/her personal participation in the research and the knowledge of the research area. Accordingly, I will apply a methodological orientation with the elements of action research, which was formed on the grounds of critic theory. Owing to the elements of action research, it is possible not only to identify and understand the process of studying and students in the process, but also to bring about changes in the respondents' awareness. This approach is characteristic of idiomodific sciences, whose aim is to modify the research subject, not only its cognition²⁰.

I adopt an approach based on the respondents' point of view of the analyzed subject in the project of qualitative research. The theoretical references to this perspective come from the tradition of symbolic

¹⁹ U. Flick, *Projektowanie badania jakościowego*, trans. Paweł Tomanek, PWN, Warszawa 2010.

²⁰ D. Kubinowski, *Od poznawania do zmieniania. Czy „zwrot pedagogiczny” w praktykach badawczych nauk społecznych?*, in: T. Bauman (ed.), *Praktyka badań pedagogicznych*, IMPULS, Kraków 2013, p. 56.

interactionism and phenomenological tradition. The chosen perspective is oriented towards building a theory, deriving a theory from the data. The grounded theory is an example of “grassroots” perspective, leads from occurrences and practice to the theory and explanation.

The success of the research depends on the clearly and accurately formulated research question, which determines what is important, and what is unimportant. I realize that qualitative research requires the approach in which actions begin from general observations and then research questions are gradually defined.

In order to find an answer to the formulated research question, I will apply qualitative methods such as the method of individual cases, the analyses of documents with different techniques (e.g. semi-structured interview, participant observation etc.) and author’s research tools²¹.

The technique of document analysis with the matrix – author’s tool will be used in the analysis of the effects of education programme in the chosen field. Another author’s tool will be an interview questionnaire.

The main technique in identifying the process of studying will be the semi-structured interview²², and in interpreting the data I will use the procedure of coding and contents analysis, methods of collecting and analyzing data prevailing in the adopted research perspective.

The main aspect of the research project is the sample selection, the decision as for the people included in the research and what the research comparative potential will be like. The respondents will be students of the chosen field – pedagogy of two levels of study (bachelor and master), so I would like to make comparisons between groups. The observation and literature analysis show that the first-cycle studies are vocational studies, while the second-cycle studies can be conducive to students’ full development²³. Each group consists of students of different specializations (the second level of intended comparisons). Adopting this group selection, I intended to make comparisons at the level of groups and between groups.

The decision about the size of the group will be taken during the research process. I assume that the grade of my interest in individual groups will depend on the potential of the knowledge growth on the issue of my interest estimated in the course of the research. This approach to theoretical sampling is presented by B. G. Glasser and

²¹ U. Flick, *Projektowanie...*, op. cit.

²² S. Kvale, *Prowadzenie wywiadów*, trans. Agata Dziuban, PWN, Warszawa 2010.

²³ M. Czerepaniak-Walczak, *Uczenie się czy...*, op. cit.

Strauss²⁴, the authors of the grounded theory, who suggest that repeated sampling until the data saturation, that is the situation when the subsequent cases do not bring new knowledge.

Another issue playing a significant role in designing qualitative research is the intended level of generalization. As a matter of fact, generalization is not often emphasized in qualitative research. In spite of this, I think I will be able to make internal generalizations, formulate conclusions and research results in relation to the whole tested group. Due to the adopted perspective of the grounded theory, my objective will be to develop the factual theory (pertaining to a specific area – the process of studying).

While designing the qualitative research, the quality of the research results should be guaranteed which can be achieved by standardization of the research situation. In order to meet the requirements, I plan to use semi-structured interviews, carried out according to the designed author's interview scenario, in all the interviews. The stability of the method increases the probability of tested situations.

The qualitative research can be described as shutter research consisting in describing current states and analyzing processes.

The Dictaphone will be used for recording interviews and the computer for transcribing recordings during the research.

I think that the analysis of the qualitative material, reduction of data, their representation and interpretation will contribute to the formulation of the theory grounded on the data set in the context²⁵.

Summary

The process of studying is a very important phenomenon, particularly in the course of changes taking place in the higher education, but poorly recognized in practice and described in the theory of education. A need to do a lot of research on the process of studying is occurring. The presented research project takes into consideration only one perspective – humanistic. I think that there is a need to analyse the process of studying in the light of different teaching paradigms and to undertake both qualitative and quantitative research.

²⁴ B. G. Glasser, A. L. Strauss, *Odkrywanie teorii ugruntowanej. Strategie badania jakościowego*, trans. Marek Gorzko, Nomos, Kraków 2009; K. Charmaz, *Teoria ugruntowana. Praktyczny przewodnik po analizie jakościowej*, PWN, Warszawa 2009.

²⁵ K. Rubacha, *Metodologia badań nad edukacją*, Warszawa 2008.

HUMANISTYCZNY PARADYGMAT W BADANIACH NAD STUDIOWANIEM

W nurcie zmian dokonujących się w szkolnictwie wyższym, a w szczególności w sytuacji kreowania edukacji zorientowanej na studenta, pojawia się potrzeba wnikliwej analizy procesu studiowania. W proponowanym tekście chciałabym przedstawić znaczenie refleksji teoretycznej i empirycznej nad procesem studiowania. Zamierzam zarysować kontekst teoretyczny badań plasujący się w nurcie paradygmatu humanistycznego oraz projekt badawczy według założeń humanistycznej orientacji metodologicznej.

Słowa kluczowe: studiowanie, student, szkolnictwo wyższe, paradygmat humanistyczny, orientacja metodologiczna.

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