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On the Evolution and Problems of Defining General Pedagogy in Pedagogical Lexicography

Abstract

The article addresses the issue of the evolution of the status of pedagogy in the Polish context. Historically, the boundaries between general pedagogy and its subdisciplines, such as the theory of education, have become blurred, reflecting changes in research dynamics and socio-political transformations. After 1989, discussions on the identity and methodology of general pedagogy were replaced by broader debates on the identity of pedagogy as a discipline. The article highlights the challenges in analyzing contemporary and historical literature on general pedagogy, particularly in the context of hidden ideological influences or undisclosed worldviews of authors. General pedagogy, as a foundation for empirical and theoretical research, is aimed at understanding education. This knowledge contributes to identifying the relationship between scientific and everyday conceptualizations of education, especially in the context of systemic transformation and cultural changes. It thus calls for the revision and enhancement of the framework of general pedagogy to address contemporary challenges and developmental barriers effectively.

Keywords: general pedagogy, educational theory, identity of the discipline.

O ewolucji i problemach definiowania pedagogiki ogólnej w leksykografii pedagogicznej

Abstrakt

Artykuł celuje w zagadnienie ewolucji statusu pedagogiki w kontekście polskim. Historycznie granice między pedagogiką ogólną a subdyscyplinami, takimi jak teoria wychowania, uległy zatarciu, co odzwierciedla zmiany w dynamice badań oraz transformacje społeczno-polityczne. Po 1989 roku dyskusje na temat tożsamości i metodologii

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pedagogiki ogólnej ustąpiły miejsca szerszym debatom o tożsamości pedagogiki jako dyscypliny. W artykule podkreślono trudności w analizie współczesnej i historycznej literatury poświęconej zagadnieniu pedagogiki ogólnej, zwłaszcza w kontekście ukrytych wpływów ideologicznych lub nieujawnionych światopoglądów autorów. Pedagogika ogólna, jako podstawa badań empirycznych i teoretycznych, ukierunkowana jest na poznanie wychowania. Wiedza ta przyczynia się do identyfikacji relacji między naukowym a potocznym pojmowaniem wychowania, szczególnie w kontekście transformacji systemowej i zmian kulturowych. Wnosi tym samym postulat rewizji i doskonalenia ram pedagogiki ogólnej, aby sprostać współczesnym wyzwaniom i barierom rozwojowym.

Słowa kluczowe: pedagogika ogólna, teoria wychowania, tożsamość dyscypliny.

Introduction

In the numerous attempts and internal classifications of pedagogy as a science, which are made most often from a positivist perspective, educational theory occupies a place equivalent to general pedagogy as one among its many detailed sub-disciplines. From the mid-twentieth century onwards, not only did the distinctions between the two begin to fade, but a noticeable shift in the dynamics of their development also took place. There was a clear inhibition of research work in the area of general pedagogy in favor of greater interest in theories of upbringing, despite the methodological rapprochement between them (Śliwerski 2019).

Emerging from general pedagogy as one of the first pedagogical sub-disciplines of the period of the People's Republic of Poland, it was referred to as the theory of general upbringing (Muszyński 1977) or the theory of field upbringing, such as the theory of aesthetic upbringing (Wojnar 1980), the theory of patriotic upbringing (Kotłowski, 1976), and the theory of physical upbringing (Demel 1980). Thus, it is difficult to separate the ongoing dispute on the pages of scientific journals or monographs on the methodological and theoretical identity of pedagogy, which occurred after Poland regained full political sovereignty in 1989, from the scientific works of authors who exclusively addressed the status of educational theory as a separate pedagogical sub-discipline. This, however, made the discussion of general pedagogy disappear and be replaced by research on the identity of pedagogy as a science (ed. Kwiatkowska 1994).

While there is no problem in undertaking studies of scientific literature whose authors are no longer alive, but were a source of pedagogical mastery at the time of their own life and work, it is much more difficult to take into account the latest sources whose authors or heirs to their thought are alive, having the opportunity to respond to the reception of their works or further develop them. Their pedagogy need not at all be a state of closed knowledge. The selection of specific sources of knowledge is undoubtedly determined not only by their researcher's own skill, but should also take into account the distance, as far as possible, from the analyzed state

of knowledge with the full recognition and humility that this is probably neither the only, nor the exclusion of any other take on the analysis of the state of general pedagogy. However, it is necessary to adopt a criterion for conducting a study of the literature on this subject. This is because the optics of viewing dissertations in general pedagogy from the point of view of the descriptive-postulatory approach, as locating them in a specific historical, systemic era, and therefore also determined by legal and political processes, are changing. And the most difficult to take into account in the study of the third approach to the mastery of general pedagogy, since not every author reveals their own credo, their own worldview or ideological perspective in the construction of this pedagogy, since some present their dubio, and therefore hidden metanorm in it.

> Various pedagogical "theories" and "discoveries" mask their political face either with slogans of social solidarity, "civic upbringing", "state upbringing", "national upbringing", etc..., or by claiming that children cannot be brought up in a certain direction, that a "political" or "ideological" direction in upbringing distorts them, because it breaks their individual development, which is a purely "spontaneous" process, the only one and, as a result, of the greatest value for the development and formation of an undefined, rather abstractly conceived human "personality" (Wołoszyn 1964: 400).

From the perspective of the reader, dissertations in general pedagogy are probably also taken into account in those studies, which are characterized by proximity to their spiritual life, internal anthropological-cultural and axiological formation, and not just reception in the intellectual sphere. Each generation of academic pedagogues is faced with the challenge or obligation to make a sovereign decision about whom and whose works they consider relevant to their pedagogical research, let alone when it comes to referring to the definition of this scientific sub-discipline. The Committee on Pedagogical Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences, which has been operating in the country since 1954, was not and is not – despite its membership – a body that, after 1989, would oblige pedagogues to accept, prefer or exclude an existing or for some time absent (someone else's) definition of general pedagogy. This article does not constitute a synthetic analysis of the evolution of dissertations and scholarly schools of Polish general pedagogy, as this requires a separate and much broader treatment, so the subject of analysis remains only works from pedagogical lexicography and academic textbooks. Therefore, significant and synthetic treatises of the author's approach to general pedagogy, represented by such scholars, creators of scientific schools in this discipline, as Andrzej Bogaj (ed. 2001), Krystyna Duraj-Nowakowa (1992; 1997; 2005), Janusz Gnitecki (1989a; 1989b; 2006), Teresa Hejnicka-Bezwińska (1989; 1994; 1996; 1997; 2008; ed. 1995), Andrea Folkierska (1983), Sergiusz Hessen (1931), Karol Kotłowski (1964), Stefan Kunowski (1981; 2000), Robert Kwaśnica (1987), Astrid Męczkowska (2006), Zygmunt Mysłakowski (1964; 1970), Andrzej Niesiołowski (2017), Marian Nowak (1999), Stanisław Palka (1999; 2003; 2018), Paweł Piotrowski (2012; 2019), Andrzej Pluta (1996; ed. 1997), Stanisław Podoleński (1921), Andrzej Ryk (2012), Roman Schulz (2003; 2007; 2009;

2016; 2018; 2020), Kazimierz Sośnicki (1946; 1949), Bogusław Śliwerski (2009; 2010; 2012; 2020), Lech Witkowski (2007a; 2007b; 2009; 2013; 2018) or Lucjan Zarzecki (1922).

The origins of the lexicographic approach to general pedagogy

Scientific treatises on the essence and conditions of upbringing were written before the establishment of the first chairs or pedagogical institutes in the Polish lands under the partitions (e.g. Seredyński 1868; Kulczyński 1911; Kupisiewicz 2012), but I leave this subject of research to the historians of upbringing. I will note, however, that in 1868 Władysław Seredyński published a dissertation in Lviv, which today we would undoubtedly assign to general pedagogy, and not to the theory of upbringing, since it contains the term "pedagogy" in its title. This is because its author – a philosopher, historian – created his own system of general pedagogy to provide a basis for the education of young people preparing for the teaching profession. As he wrote:

> I give, therefore, an organic work, which, if for the public spoiled with literary delicacies, after all, cannot be without a certain allure, then for the teaching establishments now about to enter into life, it can become a desirable phenomenon. The physiology of the body with an anthropological outline – the physiology of the spirit with logic – pedagogy – didactics – and finally the history of upbringing, this is a series of sciences exhaustive of pedagogy. From such a series we present the third volume in the belief that it most clearly illuminates our view and will direct the lecturers to accurately apply the lectures of the rest of the sciences according to our view of things (Seredyński 1868: VIII).

Also published by the author – Leon Kulczyński – in the form of a book edition was the article *General Principles of Pedagogy: A reprint of the article of the Warsaw Educational Encyclopedia – with minor revisions* (1911) [original: *Ogólne zasady pedagogiki: Przedruk artykułu Encyklopedyi Wychowawczej Warszawskiej – z małemi poprawkami*], which contains writing on, among other things, the psychological and ethical bases for practicing the goals of upbringing:

> Serious pedagogy, however, must, out of duty, speak about them, must deal with them, because the upbringing of youth is too serious a matter to leave anything in it to uncertainty or on the sidelines. It cannot be indifferent to, how the moral side will be arranged, it must be clear what it is necessary to strive for and clearly mark its direction and lead the youth; it must consider what qualities the will should have, what directions are desirable so that a person's life becomes the best possible (Kulczyński 1911: 30).

In the Handy Encyclopedia of Pedagogy edited by Feliks Kierski, which was published in 1925 in Lviv and Warsaw, the concept of general pedagogy was included in the

category "Pedagogy," and thus, being a part of it, general pedagogy "is a normative science, like logic or ethics. Its task is to demonstrate the most general educational ideals that should be put into practice" (Kierski 1925: 369). Historiographical studies of education and upbringing in Poland in the years 1918-1939 do not show that educational politicians were guided by general pedagogy conceived in this way as postulating educational ideals, and thus intended to constitute a kind of "conscience of the nation" in the sphere of incorporating the works of its authors into educational practice.

"The first years after regaining independence were marked by discussions and various initiatives aimed at the development of Polish science" (Szulakiewicz 2000: 31). It was a period of focusing attention on the metahistorical reconstruction of the guiding ideas in the studies of Polish authors of dissertations on the history of trends and directions in pedagogical thought, as well as the research undertaken in this context on the meaning of basic pedagogical concepts and the goals of education.

> Sometimes this unity caused classification problems, because it was not always possible to separate the historical-pedagogical literature from the theoretical-pedagogical literature. This was the result of viewing contemporary phenomena in the context of their genetic development (Sztobryn 2000: 304).

Contemporary dilemmas of the need to define general pedagogy

After more than a century, we still have a problem when answering the question of what general pedagogy is and what is its scope and relationship with pedagogy in general and with other humanities and social sciences, since it does not make only upbringing the subject of its research. Therefore, should general pedagogy be narrowed only to the study of the phenomenon of upbringing, even in its broad connection with culture, civilization, world history, other sciences whose authors make upbringing, even fragmentarily or marginally, the object of their research? Is it, then, to study only the essence, scope, indicators of upbringing, in its connectivity with all pedagogical knowledge, but also with the other humanities, social sciences, or even technical sciences? Such an approach is exposed by Marian Nowak (1999) following Zygmunt Mysłakowski (1935), preceding this position with such an approach to the study of upbringing by the classics of general pedagogy, such as Henryk Rowid and Sergey Hessen, citing after the former:

> On the other hand, „general pedagogy":
> 1) carries out a selection of facts into significant and insignificant, repetitive and unique, essential and non-essential, foreground and background;
> 2) seeks to synthesize meaningful facts;
> 3) seeks to detect the role, or function, that education plays in the entirety of social life (Mysłakowski 1935: 701, after Nowak 1999: 45).

> Understood in this way, the task(s) of pedagogy is not just to describe „upbringing", but an effort to „clarify the image of upbringing". This effort calls for taking into account „special pedagogies" (we would say „detailed" today), which deal with individual areas of upbringing. „General pedagogy" has the task of tying these fields of upbringing into a whole, searching for what is common to them, synthesizing the material developed in the various branches of pedagogy and isolating the problems common to the various varieties of upbringing. For this reason, „general pedagogy" would be a very concrete aid to research in the various fields of upbringing, freeing their researchers from the need to create a general theory each time (Mysłakowski 1935: 701, after Nowak 1999: 45).

Thus, M. Nowak affirms the state of theoretical knowledge about upbringing within the framework of intra- rather than interdisciplinary scientific research. However, going beyond the framework of pedagogy itself is possible, as long as, as he points out, pedagogy itself is a science open to other fields and disciplines of science. And if it is not? Can there be different general pedagogies, those that close within, within pedagogy itself, and those that go beyond it?

There is another reason for the systematic study of general pedagogy, including its definition. I am referring to the phenomenon of some authors' departure from the Humboldtian academic culture in favor of an antagonistic (exclusionary) competitive attitude toward other dissertation authors in this discipline of pedagogical science. This attitude manifests itself in the silence, avoidance or omission in the education of pedagogues of dissertations in general pedagogy by authors other than themselves, in order – by exposing their own publications and/or by selecting only those accepted by themselves – to emphasize theoretical preferences or to make them exclusive, obligatory for students, including doctoral students. There are various reasons for this, although it happens, as in the case of Lech Witkowski, that criticism of someone's dissertation or textbook in general pedagogy contains an insult to the slandered author. Should the term "pedagogy" really be introduced into circulation as indicating the faults of general pedagogy in Poland (Witkowski 2009: 601 et seq.)?

General pedagogy, as understood by Józef Górniewicz, is an element of both real reality, since it appears in the lexicography and structure of the sciences of education, and symbolic reality, being a part of theoretical knowledge that explains reality as its being.

> Although a given partial knowledge organically belongs to a given field of science, deprived of this broader context in a new situation, it acquires both a new cognitive status and a different value in explaining a particular fragment of reality (Górniewicz, 1997: 7).

However, it is worth considering whether the scientific community of modern pedagogy is moving towards accepting, not so much valid for all researchers, any of the published definitions of this discipline of pedagogical sciences, or whether, due to the different sources of its establishment, it will remain with the maintenance of diverse approaches to general pedagogy.

In socialist Poland, there were no treatises on general pedagogy, as it was a science banned by the party in power since 1948. Therefore, did it survive as a sub-discipline of pedagogy in its structure, as existing academic textbooks or dictionaries should report? In the period of the People's Republic of Poland, there were textbooks whose editors, although they did not separate a separate part (chapter) on general pedagogy in the structure of pedagogy, but at least signaled its existence by including their own definition of this discipline of knowledge. This was done by Zofia Krzysztoszek (1925-2018), writing in a textbook for teachers:

> Pedagogy that deals with the analysis and description of external, objective life phenomena and the situation of man, living and acting in this world of phenomena, and from this analysis - deriving conclusions and tasks fundamental and general to education, is called *general pedagogy.* It is not difficult to see that this branch of pedagogy is both descriptive and normative. Descriptive tasks are of primary importance. Only on the basis of description and analysis of phenomena does pedagogy move on to specifying conclusions and defining tasks, and so it acquires a normative character (Krzysztoszek 1968: 12).

The concept of general pedagogy in postwar pedagogical lexicography

During the People's Republic of Poland, the *Pedagogical Dictionary* was published only by Wincenty Okoń, recalling in 1975:

> The pedagogical sciences so far in our country do not have any dictionary that would establish - according to some accepted convention - the meaning of the terms used within these sciences. It is understandable that the lack of a pedagogical dictionary is quite a handicap for authors and readers of works on pedagogy and education. Instead of referring to existing terminological proposals and possibly improving them, authors quite often use their own terminology or interpret accepted terms relatively freely. This leads to a far-reaching arbitrariness not found in any scientific discipline, which undoubtedly makes it difficult for readers of pedagogical works to read them (Okoń 1975: 5).

Although in the keyword "pedagogy" Okoń mentions general pedagogy as one of many separate pedagogical sciences, we do not find a definition of it. There are, however, other subdisciplines, such as adult, cultural, care, comparative, re-socialization and social pedagogy (Okoń 1975: 213-214). The revised and expanded second edition of this author's dictionary, as well as the third and fourth editions, did not include general pedagogy (Okoń 1981; 1992). The dictionary was expanded to include the concept of, among other things, general pedagogy only in the fifth edition, in the first decade of Poland's political transformation in 1996 (Okoń 1996).

Perhaps the publication of the *PWN Lexicon of Pedagogy* (2000) by Bogusław Milerski and Bogusław Śliwerski caused Okoń to include general pedagogy as a discipline of pedagogy for the first time in his new dictionary, which he published four years later. Okoń thanked for the comments on the last version of his 1992 pedagogical dictionary, which contained few, but also factual errors. At the same time, he admitted in the introduction to the new edition:

> Here it is appropriate to mention the Pedagogical Dictionary, compiled by W. Okoń, which was published five times by the State Scientific Publishing House, beginning in 1975 and ending in 1992. The fact that it appeared several times in fairly large print runs testifies to the demand for this type of publication. Since there were huge changes in life and science in the twenty years since its first edition, it was necessary to go much further with these changes. The new pedagogical dictionary is largely based on previous editions of the Pedagogical Dictionary, but it differs so much from the 1975 edition that it can be considered an original item. Compared to the original, the Dictionary has been enriched with hundreds of new entries, it has lost a lot of old entries, and there has been an expansion, renewal and updating of those parts of the text that required it (Okoń 2004: 6).

Indeed – it was not until the 1996 edition, and then in 2004, that Okoń included the slogan "general pedagogy," clarifying the meaning of this discipline of pedagogical science:

> General pedagogy, a scientific discipline concerned with the foundations of education, its structure and goals, as well as the research methodology and philosophical foundations of education, and the analysis of pedagogical doctrines. Sometimes g.p. is identified with theoretical pedagogy or with the philosophy of education (Okoń 2004: 301).

However, the reader will not find an explanation of the term "theoretical pedagogy," but will learn that "philosophy of education" is an ambiguous term, since:

> in English educational science means the most general theory of upbringing, called general pedagogy in our country; German Philosophie der Erziehung is defined (W. Böhm, 2000) as „those areas of pedagogy that require – in a special way – philosophical screening and clarification. These are, generally speaking, those questions that are not directed at the practical „how?" of education, but at the „what?", especially anthropological, teleological and epistemological questions (Okoń 2004:110).

> The emergence of socialist education in the People's Republic of Poland initiated the marginalisation of general education as meta-education in favour of a merely scientific system of theoretical knowledge about upbringing, whose ontological, epistemological, axiological, teleological and methodological assumptions lost their problematic nature with their subordination to the monocentric social order and the Soviet-leaning ideological offensive of state rule. Thus, theoretical knowledge about upbringing

> was intended to exclude and replace the theoretical approaches previously developed in Western countries, including ideological, philosophical, psychological or theological concepts, which had to be challenged as contradicting the scientistic assumptions of progressive, Marxist and Leninist social ideology. In a quasi-totalitarian society, characterised by the drive to unify the elements of the social structure, what was considered obligatory, was a single, monocentric (socialist) theory of upbringing, which legitimised a definitive and unchallengeable ideology of political influence as education while rejecting all alternatives that could only weaken it and disrupt the educational process. It thus fostered the perpetuation of isolation from other currents and movements in the fi eld of upbringing, while simultaneously suppressing the capacity for self-criticism and self-correction. The rejection of the pluralism of theories in the sciences of upbringing was intended to prevent the reasoning that all alternative offers were of different value, while their formation was closely tied to the existing social order, which had a built-in mechanism of its own legitimacy (Śliwerski 2024: 9).

The authors of the first *PWN Lexicon of Pedagogy* in post-socialist Poland introduced a definition of general pedagogy that is projective and regulatory in nature. In their view, general pedagogy is:

> the department of pedagogy dealing with its theoretical foundations; the g.p. issues include the following thematic complexes: 1) contemporary trends and ideologies of pedagogy, 2) philosophy of upbringing, 3) axiology of upbringing, 4) methodological premises of pedagogy, 5) ontic bases of upbringing and its social functions, 6) the language of pedagogy and terminological arrangements, 7) the identity of pedagogy, 8) the metatheory of pedagogy, 9) the relationship between educational theory and practice, 10) the place of education in the context of civilizational changes; the coordination of scientific activities in the g.p. is handled by the General Pedagogy Team of the Committee of Pedagogical Sciences of Polish Academy of Sciences (Milerski, Śliwerski 2000: 154–155).

The authors list the sources of recent literature on general pedagogy used in the construction of the definition, so that the scientific context of the entry can be read. This is because there are treatises on general pedagogy published in the Third Republic between 1995 and 1999 (ed. Hejnicka-Bezwińska 1995; ed. Kukołowicz, Nowak 1997; ed. Jaworska, Leppert 1996).

> The above lexicon contains more than 1,500 entries that present the main pedagogical trends, educational ideas, basic concepts and notions used in educational theory and practice, taking into account pedagogical premises, legal regulations, phenomena or debatable issues related to educational reform in Poland and the education and professional development of teachers (Milerski, Śliwerski 2000: 5).

PWN had a methodology for writing encyclopedic and dictionary entries, which I encountered for the first time, and which is not written about by logicians addressing the issue of defining concepts in the humanities and social sciences. The compiled set of entries in the field of pedagogy, within the volume allocated by the Publisher, had to meet the criteria of the necessary balance between the history of this discipline of knowledge, its tradition and modernity, present the most important biographies, concepts and categories, and take into account the currents, trends and directions occurring in its field. It was also important that the proposed entries reflect the current state of research on basic pedagogical categories and the systemic reform of Polish education, which is entering into force.

Since the authors of the lexicon considered directions of pedagogical thought as a sub-variety of general pedagogy, creating a reporting definition for them, they included the following structural elements for the definition of each pedagogical trend:

- Definition and initial characteristics of current (direction).
- Time frame and territorial coverage.
- The origins of the name and its variants.
- The birth of the current, the preceding (precursor) phenomena, the flowering period, possibly the fading phase and epigonic phenomena, more important dates in the development of the current (direction).
- The ideological and philosophical, psychological, social and cultural premises of a particular current and the conditions of its development.
- Detailed characteristics of the current (direction) including such elements as: basic ideas, main theoretical views forming the program of the current (the essence of upbringing, teleological and axiological premises, the program of upbringing, the role of the educator, practical applications), centers shaping the program of the current (journals, groups, circles, institutions), the most outstanding and characteristic pedagogical achievements (applications) of its creators, representatives and innovative tendencies within the current (direction).
- Relationship to other pedagogical directions (currents) of the period.
- Reception of the current (direction) in Poland, its criticism and polemics.
- Reference literature.

Known for his precision in defining pedagogical terms, Czesław Kupisiewicz published *The Dictionary of Pedagogy* with Małgorzata Kupisiewicz in 2009, justifying in the preface five reasons for writing it and providing criteria for their selection. Indeed, some entries are descriptive in nature, while most were given "the character of an integrated substantive whole" (Kupisiewicz, Kupisiewicz 2009: 5). However, these are not criteria related to the construction of definitions, but to the method of their selection for this publication.

> In preparing their compilation, we first made a list of terms appearing in most pedagogical and psychological dictionaries, including foreign-language ones, at our disposal. Then we selected from them those pedagogical

> entries and those concerning sciences interacting with pedagogy, which most often appeared in these dictionaries, and supplemented them with entries relevant, from our point of view, to pedagogy. In selecting these entries, in turn, we were guided by our experience gained in the course of our teaching work in pedagogical post-secondary schools and academic education. In addition, wherever possible and reasonable, we tried to expose the pedagogical aspects of the entries in question" (Kupisiewicz, Kupisiewicz 2009: 6).

In the case of normative definitions, using the example of pedagogy of religion, Zbigniew Marek and Anna Walulik (2020) proposed the following criteria for their construction: definition – its type; historical analysis of the concept indicating the sources of its construction (philosophical, sociological, psychological, etc.); problematic framing of the concept referring to the scientific discourse on the discipline, the scope of autonomy of the concept and the object of research and systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations. Although Jolanta Karbowniczek did not include the entry "general pedagogy" in the lexicon of the early childhood educator she edited, she emphasizes that "[t]he collection of entries can provide a theoretical foundation for both general and early childhood pedagogy, and the presented biographies of prominent scholars confirm this fact" (Karbowniczek 2014: 3).

The representatives of other sub-disciplines of pedagogy also did not include general pedagogy as significant for their studies and research (ed. Wojciechowski 1986). According to Zygmunt Mysłakowski (1970: 7):

> There are misunderstandings and misconceptions in our country about the relationship of general pedagogy to detailed research, observation and school experiments. [...] That all knowledge has a general theory, more or less advanced, and that it does not consist of detailed empirical research alone, there is nothing to discuss. It was, is, and will be so. The duality is purely methodological, not substantive.

If we take a look at contemporary dictionaries of pedagogical sub-disciplines, or even at the *Encyclopedia of Pedagogy for the 21st Century*, we see that their editors or authors have not included general pedagogy either. Thus, it is not relevant to the pedagogical sub-discipline they represent (see: Suchodolski 1957; 1980; Okoń 1975; Godlewski, Krawcewicz, Wujek 1976; Okoń 1981; 1996; eds. Koczniewska-Zagórska, Nowacki, Wiatrowski 1986; eds. Pomykało 1993; Goźlińska 1997; eds. Lalak, Pilch 1999; Maciarz 2005; Nowacki, Korabiowska-Nowacka, Baraniak 2005; eds. Rogowski 2007; Siegień-Matyjewicz, Guziuk-Tkacz 2012; Kupisiewicz 2013; Balasiewicz, Błaut, Chojnacki 2014; Karbowniczek 2014; Jagieła 2012; Guziuk-Tkacz, Siegień-Matyjewicz 2015; 2016; eds. Chałas, May 2016; Marek, Walulik 2020). Indeed, does general pedagogy not require a supra-subdisciplinary agreement on the need and meaning of its existence?

Conclusion

From a historical point of view, the analysis of the state of development of general pedagogy has been made by many contemporary pedagogues, whose synthetic and comparative studies are important for their continuation to see the changes taking place in a great many areas.

General pedagogy, like educational theory, can be approached in two ways, either as one of the subdisciplines of pedagogy, or as meta-pedagogy, that is, pedagogy that studies all pedagogical knowledge and with its inquiries points to regularities, principles or norms that are general to all subdisciplines. The latter approach to general pedagogy is a way out towards building a comparative-synthetic pedagogy, whose findings could aspire to be considered universally valid and cognitively enriching for all subdisciplines of pedagogical sciences. For the recognition of pedagogy as a science, it is not insignificant what position and role we take towards the object of research. For we can adopt the one that applies to natural, experimental sciences of the *sophia* type, thus eliminating completely from the research process subjective factors, such as the personality of the pupil, their worldview, life attitude, aspirations, political involvement, faith, sympathies and antipathies, etc. Then we are guided in our inquiries by reliable, objective, and therefore metatheoretical or metaparadigmatic criteria for insight and evaluation of specific content and related pedagogical practices. We can also adopt a cognitive orientation characteristic of representatives of the humanities – *phronesis*, for whom it is not fully possible to "neutralize" or completely separate subjective factors in the process of cognition, as they also become a presentable component of inquiry (Śliwerski 2024: 9).

However, general pedagogues of the 21st century will have to study the developmental blockages of this sub-discipline during the People's Republic of Poland and the first decades of political transformation after 1989. General pedagogy can provide a basis for researchers to conduct empirical, exploratory research aimed at identifying adults' understanding and practice of upbringing in their various social or professional roles, in order to compare it with their common knowledge of the phenomenon. Then researchers focus their attention on the penetration of scientific knowledge into the state of social consciousness, or they are interested in confronting colloquial knowledge with the state of science, taking into account the changing conditions of life in the society of political transformation and the cultural changes associated with it, among other things.

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