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## **THE MISSION AND VISION OF PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCE**

### **Misja i wizja nauk pedagogicznych**

#### **Streszczenie**

W artykule przedstawiono refleksje na temat misji i wizji nauk pedagogicznych, koncentrując się na ich humanistycznym i personalistycznym, a nie naturalistycznym, fundamencie. Stosując metodę rekonstrukcji pozytywnej, przyjęto, że istotą nauk pedagogicznych jest wypracowywanie efektywnych oraz godziwych systemów strategii i procesów wspomagania człowieka w jego dążeniach do osiągnięcia pełni człowieczeństwa. Z tak sformułowanego zapisu wprowadzono kategorie pojęciowe wymagające wyjaśnienia i interpretacji. Autorzy szczególną uwagę poświęcili zagadnieniom: człowieka, człowieczeństwa oraz wspomagania – kluczowym dla szeroko rozumianej działalności pedagogicznej realizowanej we współczesnych uwarunkowaniach społeczno-kulturowych. Analizy te zostały zaprezentowane na takim poziomie ogólności, aby tematy dopełniające ich treść mogły być zaakceptowane przez przedstawicieli wszystkich subdyscyplin naukowych będących częścią systemu nauk pedagogicznych.

Słowa kluczowe: pedagogika, człowiek, człowieczeństwo, wspomaganie, misja, wizja

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### Abstract

The article reflects on the mission and vision of pedagogical science, based on its humanistic and personalistic, rather than naturalistic foundation. Based on the method of positive reconstruction, it has been assumed that, at present, the essence of pedagogical science comprises developing effective and fair strategy systems and strategies to support people in their endeavour to enjoy their humanity to the fullest. This way of presenting the subject requires explaining and interpreting some conceptual categories. The authors have focused on the concepts of human, humanity and support, which are essential to the broadly-understood pedagogical activity. The analyses have been presented at a general level, which enables the representatives of all the scientific disciplines and subdisciplines that are part of the pedagogical science system to accept them.

Key words: pedagogy, human, humanity, support, mission, vision

### Introduction

Joining the scientific discourse on the present state of Polish pedagogical thought and its future, this article presents the author's reflections on the mission and vision of pedagogical science.

Mission and vision are functionally related terms. "Mission" is a record of conclusions resulting from reflection on the state of pedagogical science today and in the future. It constitutes a generalised postulative and value judgment. The term "vision" can be defined as a general description of all the activities aiming at and contributing to the realisation of the strategic goal embedded in the mission. The vision is a projection of the most important objective and indicates the strategy for achieving it, considering the initial situation.

Reflecting on the indicated topic, we consider pedagogy as a system of pedagogical science. It means that the mission and vision of these sciences should be so general that the topics complementing their

content can be accepted by the representatives of particular pedagogical sub-disciplines. Pedagogy should be poly-paradigmatic. The prefix “poly” means multiple; a “paradigm” is a basic claim in the light of which the problems concerning the object of research of a given scientific discipline are studied and analysed. Referring both to contemporary pedagogical thought, it can be seen at the beginning of the article, that according to the authors, the essence of the mission and vision mentioned in the title is *working out effective and fair systems of strategies and processes of supporting human beings in their endeavour to achieve the fullness of their humanity*.

Each of the terms used in the aforesaid statement requires explanation and interpretations that will enable an unambiguous understanding of these concepts.

First of all, it should be noted that a *human* is a basic category here. The problems of all pedagogical sub-disciplines concentrate on this object of research of pedagogical science and its functioning in personal and social life.

Secondly, the *support* of the human includes aid in their aspirations in the forms of activity undertaken and therefore considered important by them.

Third, the goal of developmental processes is mature *humanity*. From the viewpoint of pedagogy, shaping humanity is, on the one hand, a conscious effort to work on oneself, to build oneself within oneself by engaging the intellectual and emotional spheres, one’s will and imagination. On the other hand, it is the main and responsible task of education.<sup>1</sup>

Fourthly, the particular forms of activity need selecting and realising relevant *systems of strategies*.

Fifth, it is important to value these strategies and activities from the perspective of axiology, especially their connection with the catalogue of constitutive human properties.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Gajda, *Honor. Godność. Człowieczeństwo*, Lublin 2000.

The development of the spiritual sphere and supporting the individual in their efforts to achieve the fullness of humanity are recognised as the basic mission and vision of pedagogical science.

This article develops these indicated, selected issues resulting from the above provision.

## **1. Human as an object of research in pedagogical science**

In developing the presented reflection, one should refer to philosophy, especially philosophical anthropology. In fact, all the concepts that have arisen within its framework seek the answer to the question about the mystery of humans. The task of philosophy is to answer the question: *How to define humanity?* The task of pedagogy, on the other hand, is to seek the answer to the question: *How to build humanity in a human?*<sup>2</sup>

Pedagogy, which emerged from philosophy, is concerned with the development of the whole human in their historical, cultural, and social perspectives. By the term “whole” human, we indicate that pedagogues are interested in all the spheres of a human as a “person” in their systemic view. It is about the unity of the biotic, psychic and spiritual spheres. The explanation of who a person is can be based on the following statements:

- They are beings who experience themselves as a person, who experience the world and their existence in it, especially concerning values (existence);
- They are characterised by the so-called inner life, spirituality and uniqueness or individuality (singularity called individualism);
- The special attributes of a human person comprise dignity – as a sense of one’s own value, self-awareness of values, openness, and the continuous process of becoming a human being (historicity, changeability in time, transgression).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> W. Furmanek, *Człowiek jako obiekt badań humanistycznej pedagogiki pracy*, “Labor et Educatio,” 2014 no. 2, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> W. Furmanek, *Człowiek w badaniach współczesnej pedagogiki zorientowanej personalistycznie*, Rzeszów 2019.

The human being who becomes a “person” cannot have only the inner capacity that conditions the very process of becoming and change. They must also have a predetermined goal, an idea according to which and toward which this becoming must be directed. This idea is *humanity*. But how to describe and operationalise it, so that it could have the character of a practical directive in the processes of education?

In this context, it should be stressed that at the current stage of development of pedagogical science, the necessity of undertaking systemic research in an anti-naturalistic approach is more and more clearly emphasised.<sup>4</sup> It results from the popularisation of the view that pedagogy has an axiological dimension and keeps discussing humans living in the world of values, becoming increasingly mature axiologically. This dimension of the analysed problem requires completing the interpretation of the phrase “to work out fair strategies of supporting a human being.”

When we speak of the necessity of “working out fair strategies of supporting a human being” and we refer to axiology, we should point out the constitutive features – important from the perspective of pedagogy – defining an individual situated in the world of values:

- “a unique person, distinguished from all the other entities by the highest development of the psyche and social life, as well as the capacity for abstract thinking and reconstruction, for conscious decision-making about one’s actions and for higher feelings;
  - an individual capable of reflecting on and understanding their own existence,
- a sense of moral responsibility for actions taken or not taken;
- a being characterised by a capacity for internal self-control and moral self-reflection, possessing inalienable dignity – the *dignitas hominis* – which defines the particular status of human beings;

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<sup>4</sup> At different stages of development, pedagogues have understood the essence of a human and their development differently. From the viewpoint of the methodology of scientific research, let us note (in simplified terms) the naturalistic and anti-naturalistic approaches. Each of them exposes an additive or vitalistic, or systemic approach.

- an individual having culture and the ability to create it, and at the same time being *homo loquens* in a specifically human way – using language that has a stimulating effect on humanity to achieving creative fulfillment in the ability to create unmetrified linguistic forms and a vast horizon of interpersonal communication.”<sup>5</sup>

This set of features that distinguishes a human from all other beings is evidently saturated with values. The human being – as a complex *compositum* of body, spirit, will and intellect – functions in the immense wealth of various values of the anthropospheric universe, valuing the surrounding reality. The processes of valuing, permeating the whole existence of humans, occur in all areas of life. Humans are the only subjects capable of making conscious evaluations and reflections. This uniqueness of a human among living beings is a privilege that distinguishes the human species. Human life appears to be more valuable, the more it is saturated with values and the processes of valuing, as well as the realisation of declared values and the relative results experienced.<sup>6</sup>

The aforesaid problems, to a significant extent, force a proper interpretation of the content of the mission and vision of pedagogical science. As it seems, a human should learn to be a human. Learning how to be a human being is the mission of every person. The processes of self-consciousness connected with the processes of self-knowledge, self-description and self-assessment should initiate the processes of self-possession, self-education, self-determination and self-training. The regularities indicating the conditions of their effectiveness should be inscribed in the expected strategies of pedagogical activities, thus specifying the mission and vision of pedagogical science.

The highlighted issues throw up new challenges for pedagogical activity. It is necessary to teach people – regardless of their state of health and stage of development – to become humans, to perceive and see the world in its kaleidoscopic phenomena, to perceive the axiological space, to understand oneself and the world and to prepare to take me-

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<sup>5</sup> U. Ostrowska, *Fenomen pracy ludzkiej z perspektywy aksjologicznej*, in: *Wokół podstawowych zagadnień pedagogiki pracy*, eds. R. Gerlach, R. Tomaszewska-Lipiec, Bydgoszcz 2017, p. 139.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 139–140.

aningful actions. The indicated tasks should comprise the said mission and vision.

Pedagogy should support and assist a developing person in their efforts to achieve a level of competence that will enable them to live adequately and act in the world, to understand themselves and others and to be able to transform this understanding into appropriate action. “To support,” and not “to help,” means to fully respect the subjectivity of a person-student. Pedagogical activity should also support a human in all their efforts on their way to the fullness of their humanity. It is a long way from birth to natural death. After all, with the passing of our lifetime, we change; the palette of our needs changes, our worldview changes, and we become “full humans” very slowly. These processes are not always positive in the course of life. *En route*, there appear various developmental difficulties resulting from external factors (e.g. civilisation changes), and personal factors (e.g. illnesses, dysfunctional phenomena). Hence, people should be taught to become humans. And this is the task that educators should be reminded of.

## **2. “Support” as a key category of pedagogical science**

How we interpret the conceptual category of a “human” directs our further thinking and conceptual grid. The adopted model of a human being constitutes the peculiarity of the object of any pedagogical research. To illustrate this point, let us note only that accepting the assumptions of naturalism, that is, the naturalistic paradigm in the view of a human as the object of research, influences our further vision of pedagogics. On the other hand, accepting the humanistic, anti-naturalistic paradigm (even only complementing the image of a human) changes the perception of the whole issue of pedagogical science.

Consequent to research and pedagogical activity, a scientifically positive way of influencing the (so-understood) human being is worked out to achieve the desired changes. These developmental changes, which are also the result of the pedagogical activity, are variously perceived; for instance, in humanistic pedagogy, they are seen as the development of the humanity of a human individual. This influence (in its essence:

such an activity) results from the absolute necessity to support a person in their life and development, in the process of becoming a human. This constitutes the most distinct and characteristic mission and vision of pedagogical science.

The question of why there is such an absolute necessity for supporting humans results from the very nature of their being born into this world. It is so, as humans are born unsuited to life, in all the dimensions of their existence. For them to survive and develop, a multitude and variety of activities performed by other adults are necessary. Though the scope, content, efficiency and effectiveness of the activity depend on different factors, it is necessary. If humans were born as finite beings, that is, fully developed, they would not require this support. Then, pedagogy, with its variety of scientific sub-disciplines, would not be needed as well. Such a position is presented in Poland by many pedagogues like Antonina Gurycka, Teresa M. Kukułowicz, Teresa Hejnicka-Bezwińska and Fr. Marian Nowak.<sup>7</sup>

What should be particularly emphasised in the presented article is “support” as a key category of pedagogical science.

Support is a process of engaging in conscious actions directed towards the well-being of a person. This process includes recognising, diagnosing, choosing a course of action and its programming, realisation, evaluation of effects and optimisation of the next phase of activities. The foundation of support is the recognition of humans’ interest and good as the basic idea.

In our analyses, we understand “supporting a person in their development” as conscious activities of adults aimed at enabling the individual to develop in the direction of their choice. Understood this way, it is supposed to promote the individual’s control over themselves and the situation in which they undertake their activity, their ability to cross the barriers of their lives and bind them to the aspirations of achieving a higher unity, more beneficial well-being. In such an approach, for example, positive psychology indicates that a person strives for per-

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<sup>7</sup> M. Nowak, *Pedagogika otwarta*, Lublin 1999; idem, *Teorie i koncepcje wychowania*, Warszawa 2008.



sonal happiness,<sup>8</sup> for such a meaningful transformation of the quality of the world, to provide them with the conditions for further development.

Support through pedagogical activity means, *inter alia*,

1. supporting natural development by creating an optimal educational environment, which requires referring to the basic regularities of human development. These activities are of a creative character (when we intend, for example, to induce, to shape).
2. planning and correcting, which require diagnosing the level of development and identifying deficits and injuries. Such activities are of optimising character (when we intend, for example, to intensify, increase).
3. shaping and developing the human psyche by inducing and consolidating the desired changes in the system of activities, behaviours and actions. Here, it becomes necessary to refer to values. Often, such actions are corrective (e.g. when we intend to transform, or change).
4. prevention of threats based on the knowledge of negative phenomena and their impact on a person. Such activities should be based on regularities concerning the functioning of threats. They are also of a minimising character (e.g. when we intend to weaken, or limit).

In light of the above, it seems that the mission and vision of modern pedagogical science are primarily related to supporting the development of all dimensions of the human being and preventing the hurdles that may appear in this way concerning the dynamically changing conditions of life and work of people.<sup>9</sup> Concerning the widely understood pedagogical activity, it is necessary to point out the multiple ways of

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<sup>8</sup> R. Tomaszewska, *Jednostka na rozdrożu. O wyzwaniach życia i poszukiwaniu szczęścia w ponowoczesnej rzeczywistości*, in: *Wspieranie jednostek i grup w różnych wymiarach życia społecznego. Aspekty teoretyczno-praktyczne*, eds. M. Piórunek, J. Nawój-Połoczańska, A. Skowrońska-Pućka, Poznań 2021, pp. 81–105.

<sup>9</sup> W. Furmanek, *Humanistyczne aspekty współczesnej pedagogiki pracy*, in: *Pedagogika pracy – tradycja i wyzwania współczesności*, ed. S.M. Kwiatkowski, Radom–Warszawa–Bydgoszcz 2012, pp. 107–129.

supporting human development processes on one's way to the fullness of humanity: "No more and no less. This means that the sense of pedagogical activity is expressed through the participation of the pedagogue in the processes of becoming a human being."<sup>10</sup>

Considering the signalised axiological dimension of support, it can also be said that it concerns the processes of introducing and functioning of a person in the world of values, and it aims to reach full axiological maturity. Thus understood, it should include identifying and understanding values, determining their sources, internalisation and realisation of values in the processes of participation in the life of a person.

In light of the above, it can be assumed that the mission of upbringing is also to support humans in the processes of their introduction and functioning in the axiological space, in their reaching the fullness of humanity, as already mentioned.

Nowadays, educators too rarely consider the kind of mission and vision they have to realise. We would like to emphasise this fact in this article.

## Conclusions

The constraint of having to present the material devoted to the analysis of the mission and vision of pedagogical science in a limited number of pages forced us to be concise. As authors, we are aware that separate analyses can and should be devoted to the particular threads in this problem area; nor do we consider the presented studies as completed works. It will never be possible, for humans continue to remain a mystery. Pedagogical science must not stop in its endless endeavour to explore it.

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<sup>10</sup> W. Furmanek, *Człowiek w badaniach współczesnej pedagogiki zorientowanej personalistycznie*, Rzeszów 2019, p. 276.

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