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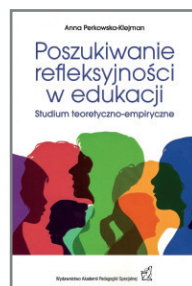ORCID: 0000-0003-3309-6574
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In Search of Reflective Practices in Education

Anna Perkowska-Klejman, *Poszukiwanie refleksyjności w edukacji. Studium teoretyczno-empiryczne* [*In Search of Reflective Practices in Education: A Theoretical-Empirical Study*], Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Warszawa 2019, pp. 362

Reflectiveness is a category that is complex, interpreted in different ways, and difficult to specify, define, analyse and measure in an objective manner. We cannot see it directly, but it is definitely connected with studying, and it exerts influence on education. That is why, it is worth emphasizing that Anna Perkowska-Klejman presented a very important and interesting issue of reflectiveness in education. The author specifies reflectiveness as "a category that describes self-reference to one's own learning and studying." It is a careful, thorough, conscious reflection on one's own knowledge, beliefs, convictions, cognitive processes and other educational experiences. It refers both to a person and to contexts of studying; it also takes into account learning about other opinions and points of view. Reflectiveness leads (may lead) to transformations in one's own learning and perceiving the world. It also influences the system of education" (p. 11).

The book consists of nine chapters preceded with an introduction and concluded with the bibliography and the index of tables and figures. The subtitle: *Studium teoretyczno-empiryczne* [*Theoretical-Empirical Study*] suggests that the book may be divided into two parts: theoretical and empirical one. In the first four chapters, in the theoretical aspect the author of the book presented various perspectives, multiple approaches, contexts and areas of reflectiveness, paying special attention to the issue of reflectiveness in the process of studying.

In the first chapter, entitled "Contemporary Contexts of University Studies," Polish students were characterized taking into account statistical data. According to the author, this analysis shows that "the environment of academic youth is very diversified. Students have various talents, aspirations, socioeconomic statuses and origins" (p. 17). While describing a typical modern student, in turn, she wrote as follows: "A 2020 student is from the generation born after 1990 called the 'C generation'. Members of this generation are *connected*, *communicating*, *content-centric*, *computerized*, *community-oriented*, and *always clicking*. They are characterized by materialistic and realistic approach to life; they are culturally liberal. They spend a large part of social life in the Internet where they feel very freely, and where they often express their opinions and attitudes. Technology is strictly connected with their lives from the very beginning. They have smartphones, but instead of talking, they prefer communicating through text and image messages" (p. 24). There is no doubt that this description is accurate and true.

Then, the author carefully discussed the process of educating students in the time of the postmodern crisis, emphasizing that "this time is full of unrest. We can sense the crisis of values, and social norms become unstable. We are faced with the emancipation of different arguments which are sometimes contradictory in moral terms. A person feels lost and terrified with non-transparency that surrounds him/her" (p. 28). Cotemporary education faces very important challenges, which is why the author also presented the meaning of education in the world of technologization, showing the advantages and disadvantages of new technologies. She emphasized that "a modern person is to be reflective and creative, and education should prevent his/her passiveness and marginalization" (p. 35). Since globalization is an irreversible stage of civilization changes, the author presented

the issue of globalization with reference to studies and studying. She indicated that "the idea of studying abroad is nothing new" (p. 41) and she discussed campaigns that support students' mobility. While discussing neoliberal attitudes to studying, the author concluded that "the reflection on the negative influence of the neoliberal policy on Polish education is mainly undertaken in academic environments" (p. 47). She described key competences with great insight, and she emphasized that reflectiveness is called "the core of key competences" (p. 49).

In chapter two: "Constructs of Reflectiveness: Concepts and Opinions," the author carefully and precisely explained the terms: reflectiveness, reflective thinking, and critical reflection. She presented the issue of reflectiveness in social and humanist sciences, and she discussed the philosophical, anthropological, psychological and social foundations of reflectiveness. In the third chapter, in turn, she described the theoretical dimensions of reflectiveness in education. She presented reflectiveness in a pedagogical perspective, along with the main ideas of constructivism and pragmatism as the background of this perspective, emphasizing the fact that they are going to determine the methodological frames of her own empirical studies. According to the author, "the subject of Polish publications on reflectiveness usually refers to a teacher although it also includes some aspects of educating children and youth. Reflectiveness in education may be considered to be a new issue" (p. 115). That is why, the author carefully discussed selected theories and concepts related to reflectiveness in the education of students: the theory of transformative learning by Jack Mezirow, the epistemological model of reflection by Marcia Baxter Magoldy, the reflective education by Jerome Bruner, and the concept of adults' reflective practice by Donald Schön. Using these concepts, the author prepared a very interesting and multidimensional description of reflectiveness. Also, they became a significant theoretical basis for her analysis of reflectiveness among students. Anna Perkowska-Klejman suggested that "we can specify at least a few approaches to reflectiveness by referring it to: (1) reflection, the depth of thinking and its analysis, as well as self-reference, (2) action, but also thorough analysis of this action, (3) description of the relationships between a person and social life, as well as deepened understanding of these relationships. Pedagogy refers to these

approaches, without limiting the meaning of reflectiveness. On the contrary: it perceives reflectiveness in a very broad manner, e.g.: as the category of moral behaviour, the category connected with studying, the concept of educating teachers, etc." (p. 153).

In chapter four, "The Reflective Education of Students," the author formulated a very important question on what should modern education of students look like. She discussed selected modern orientations in students' ways of learning, as well as selected methodologies of reflective studying. Also, she showed the space of informal education of students. She was right to say that "in terms of developing reflectiveness, studies are full of contradictions. One of such paradoxes is submitting a university's work to complete standardization" (p. 168). Also, "the national frames of qualifying education reduce universities to practical mentality, which is void of reflectiveness. Practicality is the opposite of originality, and its antonyms also include theoreticalness" (p. 170).

In the fifth chapter: "Researcher's Tools and the Culture of Doubting," the author adopted a multi-paradigm approach. She specified the research subject, which included "reflectiveness as a theoretical and empirical category that refers to education, in particular that of students" (p. 197). Therefore, one of her objectives was to present reflectiveness in the perspective of studying. In the research she used a mixed, quantitative-qualitative model, measurement, and qualitative assessments expressed by competent evaluators. The empirical research was carried out in two stages. In order to collect data, the author used a questionnaire for measuring reflective thinking, as well as interviews with some experts: scientists, university teachers, and pedagogical authorities in reflectiveness. Their role was twofold: to explain the concept of students' reflectiveness and to comment on the results of the quantitative research. Quota sampling of people was applied, which took into account the level, area and system of studies. Four hundred and fifteen students from various parts of Poland and 15 different universities took part in the analysis.

In the next three chapters, the author presented detailed results from the research. Chapter six shows the students' reflectiveness in the opinions of experts. The author categorized the experts' utterances concerning the students, as a result of which she concluded that "we can distinguish three main concepts that are typical of this

group. The first one is variety, i.e. diversity of the members of the group; the second one—good adjustment to living in today's technologized world; the third one—disappointment which occurred as a certain "discourse of complaining" (p. 235). In chapter seven, the author discussed the research results referring to educational conditions of the students' reflectiveness, taking into account such variables as: the level, area and system of studies. Chapter eight includes the description of social factors that determine the students' reflectiveness, such as: family background, their own professional activity, local environment, social-educational experiences, sex and sex socialization. The tenth chapter: "Students' Reflectiveness: Final Questions about Theory and Practice" refers to the students' grades. The author took into account the grades they get during the studies as an important variable which is related to reflectiveness. The final conclusion with this respect is both very interesting and inspiring. The author said: if studying is to be reflective, we do not need a change but transformation in the system of grading. Reflectiveness in studying is expressed in, e.g. independent learning, taking responsibility for this process, and analysing the process. If the idea of reflectiveness was fulfilled at universities, the assessment in the form of a grade would have to be replaced with individualized feedback that a student could receive from the teacher, from another student, or from himself/herself" (p. 315).

It should be emphasized that reflectiveness should be a necessary important element of academic education. That is why, the strong point of the book in question is the fact that it discusses a very interesting and significant problem of reflectiveness, and the author's empirical research complements, i.a., our knowledge of the levels of students' reflectiveness. There is no doubt that the monograph by Anna Perkowska-Klejman is valuable for the Polish pedagogical thought and constitutes a very important element in the discourse on the quality of education. That is why, we hope that it will be the source of reflection and inspiration for pedagogues and teachers, students, and all to whom the development of education is important.

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