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Family in social pedagogy: studies and research directions

Rodzina w pedagogice społecznej: badania i kierunki poszukiwań

Abstract

Introduction. The article deals with the concept of the family - it presents and analyses the ways of understanding it, which have been shaped over the years in social pedagogy from the beginning of this pedagogical subdiscipline to the present day.

Aim. The research aim is to show the contexts in which research relating to the family has been, and continues to be, conducted in social pedagogy.

Method. To answer the problem posed, the analysis of the texts was used, so the methods were of a more qualitative nature - leading to the understanding of the issue.

Conclusion. Based on the analysis, it can be said that research on the family that has been conducted so far, and is still being conducted, in social pedagogy, primarily focuses and emphasizes the social dimension of its existence. Emphasizing its community, and its inalienable character, they indicate the external, social conditions of its existence.

Keywords: family, educational environment, out-of-school education, social assistance, culture, values.

Abstrakt

Wprowadzenie. W artykule omówiono problematykę rodziny. Dokonano analizy sposobów poznania i rozumienia tego zagadnienia, jakie kształtowały się na przestrzeni lat - od początku istnienia pedagogiki społecznej, aż do współczesności.

Cel badań. Celem badań jest wskazanie kontekstów problemowych odnoszących się do rodziny, jakie na przestrzeni lat są realizowane w pedagogice społecznej.

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Metoda. Odpowiadając na postawiony problem posłużono się, przede wszystkim, analizą tekstów. Badania miały charakter jakościowy, prowadzący do zrozumienia omawianego zagadnienia.

Wyniki i wnioski. Na podstawie przeprowadzonej analizy można stwierdzić, że badania nad rodziną prowadzone na gruncie pedagogiki społecznej, aktualnie oraz w przeszłości, koncentrują się zwłaszcza na społecznym wymiarze jej istnienia. Podkreślając wspólnotowy i niezbywalny charakter rodziny, w badaniach wskazuje się na zewnętrzne, społeczne uwarunkowania jej istnienia.

Słowa kluczowe: rodzina, środowisko wychowawcze, wychowanie pozaszkolne, pomoc społeczna, kultura, wartości.

Introduction

Tackling the issue of a family means tackling a vital and fundamental subject as far as a man's life is concerned. A family is the basic space of a specific physical presence and actions of every human being; it is a presence that affects the course of the entire life of a person, and also choices made in life and axiological identifications. This is also an inalienable space: by the nature of things, there is no other way for the functioning and the formation of man, with the obvious exceptions of atypical situations. Such existential and, at the same time, universal character of a family cannot simultaneously be changed by the fact that as such, i.e., universal and inalienable (in the sense of necessary), it may function, and has always functioned, in diverse, often differing conditions: social, cultural, world-view (religious) – extensively ideological, as well as, more narrowly, in different material and geographic (climatic) conditions, which ultimately greatly affect its shape, image and, in effect, its specific functioning. All of this leads to a broad array of descriptions and definitions of a family. The diversity of such descriptions is so extensive that it would be difficult to present, review, and ultimately classify all of them.

Most of such definitions are prepared in social sciences, which deal with social life – also relations in which a man functions in such social context. Here, one may encounter definitions ranging from detailed to general ones and such that indicate a certain difficulty, or even inability, to make more precise identifications and determinations in this respect. The definitions quoted below may portray this diversity:

- a family in the humanistic and personalistic approach, also emphasising the aspect of the religious life of a man:

A family is a community of persons connected by bonds of marriage and kinship (sometimes adoption), which is realised in giving life, educating and introducing new generations to the cultural and religious heritage; it is protected by the legal order and socio-religious standards, it implements the tasks and individual

and community-related objectives and satisfies the need for love, affiliation and development; as a social group significant for the society, it is assisted in compliance with the principle of assistance by the state and the church within the scope of fulfilment of rights and obligations resulting from its nature and formal and institutional status (Cynarzewska-Właźlik, 2012, p. 178).

- cand further, more general and specific determination of a family in the social policy – from the point of view of offering it a specific form of assistance, important for social development:

A family is a basic form of communal life, a universal structure with a great significance for the functioning of broader communities and an important component of social development. Understood as a social group and a social institution (...) for which functioning according to specific social standards is important, it performs functions that are indispensable for social development. It is a realm of social intervention, where it is a recipient of social benefits (Rysz-Kowalczyk, 2001, pp. 181-183).

- as well as a more comprehensive approach to the family, the sociological one, more descriptive on account of the understanding of the specific nature of social life:

This is the basic type of a social group present in all types of society. It may adopt diverse forms. Its primary function as an institution consists in maintaining a biological continuity of a society, maintaining continuity and cultural development of society, introducing the principles of social co-existence and control of the behaviour of its members... (Pacholski & Słaboń, 2001; Załęcki & Olechnicki, 1997, p. 178).

- eventually, without delving into the definition of a family worked out in individual social sciences and referring to the definition presented in the PWN publication, which offers a certain type of a universal breakdown, and a tag line for the modern scientific searches in this respect, the following definition should be presented as a family is a form of a collective life, manifested in historically and culturally diversified forms. An unequivocal definition of a family is a difficult and controversial issue (*Encyklopedia PWN*, n.d.).

All of the aforementioned definitions of a family indicate and highlight different aspects of its essence and functioning, also in the ideological/ world-view dimension. This shows the complexity of this reality, when the understanding of its genesis, structure, defined and realised goals, tasks, and functions, social position and location, along with cultural “rooting”, and identity are concerned.

Pedagogy also contributes to this quest, where the issue of the functioning of a family as an educational reality is addressed.

Family in social pedagogy: development of studies

The purpose of this discussion is to show how the knowledge about a family in the area of social pedagogy, one of the sub-disciplines of pedagogy, has been shaped; social pedagogy addresses this subject matter relatively frequently as compared to other sub-disciplines. Studies conducted in this respect and their directions are building a specific mode of understanding the family and, in effect, lead to its specific definitions proper for such pedagogy.

Within the scope of such quest— studies— social pedagogy has quite a wealthy tradition. Here, it is going to be examined with respect to a specific chronology pertaining to the development of such pedagogy: the first stage, i.e., the times of its forerunners; the second stage: the 1950s to the 1970s, when it reached its peak institutional development (also within the scope of the publications); the third stage: the modern times¹. Thence, there will be an analysis relying on the accomplishments of social pedagogy within the realm of family studies². These are research accomplishments of pedagogues whose works are positioned within the realm of social pedagogy. The proposed analysis takes into account the research works, most often concise monographic studies of those authors who consciously and directly ascribed them to social pedagogy, or who did not make such declarations, yet created them in the milieu (chairs and faculties of universities or research institutions) that operate under the banner of social pedagogy or that identify with this sub-discipline of pedagogy in the sphere of problems addressed by them. Hence, the criterion of selection of works is primarily institutional: their institutional and problem-related affiliation to the specific discipline.

– The period when social pedagogy was born in the time of the life and work of Helena Radlińska, but also other less well known, and already forgotten, Polish pedagogues – forerunners of this discipline, such as Anna Chmielewska, Irena Jur-gielewiczowa, Zofia Gulińska and Maria Korytowska. In this period, social pedagogues studied the family and, in general, the functioning of environments primarily in the context of educational activities that were going to stir the national awareness and identity. However, such works were not about indicating the areas of threats and failures in the functioning of individuals and social groups and families, but

¹ The author discusses the stages of development of social pedagogy in the following publications: Cichosz, M. (2014). *Pedagogika społeczna. Zarys problematyki*. Kraków: Impuls.

² The analysis of studies that are being conducted on family in social pedagogy has been tackled a number of times - also in the author's publications. This discussion, currently partially modified, was contained in the paper: Deptuła, M. (Ed.). (2006). *Diagnostyka i profilaktyka w teorii i praktyce pedagogicznej*. Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego.

more about stimulating development and cultural life. Therefore, at that time, social pedagogy was related not so much to the issues of social work, which forms its dominant dimension now, but the problems of educational work. A classic example of such direction of studies conducted in the contemporary social pedagogy may be the early works of Helena Radlińska, where she often focused on the issues of cultural and educational activities, aimed at all categories of persons – ultimately also in reference to specific families. These were works devoted to the organisation of libraries and forms of out-of-school education (Orsza, 1922, 1925). At the same time, it is worth noting that this type of work was called – even though without actual use of the term – social work.

Among the frequently referenced works also created in the realm of social pedagogy that was formed at that time, it is necessary to mention the publications of Eustachy Nowicki (1928), e.g.: *Polska oświata pozaszkolna* [Out-of-school education in Poland] of 1928 and the publications of Stefania Sempołowska, Jerzy Grodecki, and Jadwiga Dziubińska.

Such a direction of studies and such tendencies are clearly shown in a book of 1913 (a book which in the studies of some social pedagogues is considered the first synthetic approach to the social pedagogy). It is a collective work titled: *Praca oświatowa – jej zadania, metody, organizacja* [Educational work: tasks, methods and organisation] (Bobrowski et al., 1913). In this work, the authors deal with the issue of access of individuals and families to cultural assets, the issue of readership, but also the issue of “combating alcoholism”.

The designated and studied areas, and thus the subject matter of the work performed at that time by social pedagogues, changes after Poland regained its independence before World War II [WWII].

At that time, the area of interests of social pedagogues encompassed, more and more clearly, the issue of social inequality, poverty and – in relation to it (in connection to the practical dimension of social pedagogy) – the possibilities of assistance. Research work performed at that time by social pedagogues had a diagnostic, practical, and praxeological nature. The researchers were intent on looking for the causes of these phenomena, simultaneously indicating and penetrating specific environmental factors as sources thereof. A classic example of such work, written before the war, edited by H. Radlińska (1937), is the publication *Społeczne przyczyny powodzeń i niepowodzeń szkolnych* [Social causes of school failures] of 1937.

Works written in the milieu of H. Radlińska’s students are also known from this period; these are works of a diagnostic nature, for example the work of the aforementioned Maria Korytowska (1937) titled *Krzywda dziecka* [Child’s harm], or the book titled *Dziecko wsi polskiej* [Child of the Polish countryside] edited by Maria Librachowa (1934) and published in Warszawa [Warsaw] in 1934.

It is also necessary to mention the work of Czesław Wroczyński (1935) titled *Opieka nad matką nieślubną i walka z porzucaniem niemowląt w Warszawie* [Care for single mothers and preventing abandonment of infants in Warsaw], as well as the works of E. Hryniewicz, J. Ryngmanowa, and J. Czarnecka, who tackled the issue of neglected urban and rural families and the situation of city, and village, children, often orphaned.

As may be expected, the issues of poverty, the incapability of families, and single-parent families also remained valid issues after WWII. These phenomena were the direct outcome of wartime activities, and they were studied. As an example of works devoted to this issue and created in the environment of social pedagogues, it is necessary to list two books written directly in the milieu of social pedagogues; these were books prepared in the academic environment of H. Radlińska, with her participation as the editor. These are works published directly after WWII: *Sieroctwo – zasięg i wyrównywanie* [Orphans: range and remediation] (Radlińska & Wojtyniak, 1946), and *Rodziny zastępcze Łodzi* [Foster families in Łódź] (Majewska, 1948).

If the adopted chronology is followed closely, given that such a chronological point of view was proposed by the author with respect to the review of studies on the functioning of individuals and families, the next years are the beginning of a certain slowdown in studies conducted in social pedagogy. These were the 1950s, i.e., the time of radical political indoctrination, when the so-called socialist upbringing society was built on the path of a specific (Marxist) ideological offensive, by definition free from social and care-related problems in the social life.

Initiation and performance of studies in this period was also hindered on account of organisational and institutional reasons, as the aforementioned policy of the authorities also entailed liquidation of the majority of social sciences, including research units – institutes, chairs, and faculties, including units where social pedagogy was studied.

– The situation described above changed at the beginning of the 1960s; this is the time when the second period of development of social pedagogy starts, when after specific socio-political changes – on the one hand, abandonment of the restrictions of the Stalinist times (Stalin's death and a political thaw in 1953) and on the other, solidification of the ideas of socialist education in social sciences – community studies were resumed. Simultaneously, this was the time when the Polish social pedagogy in the institutional dimension, and the dimension of its ideological self-determination, was revived (Cichosz, 2006).

At that time, the issue of families was studied primarily in the context of the functioning of educational milieus and in the context of analysing such community-related determinants of the process of education.

Here, it is necessary to mention the studies of Helena Izdebska (1967a, 1967b), among others, regarding the *Funkcjonowanie rodziny a zadania opieki nad dzieckiem* [Functioning of the family and the tasks of child care], and *Przyczyny konfliktów w rodzinie* [Causes of conflicts in families] by the same author of 1975, but also the studies of Anna Przeclawska (1967) on youth and its participation in culture: *Książka, młodzież i przeobrażenia kultury* [Book, youth and cultural transformations] and, for example, *Zróżnicowanie kulturalne młodzieży a problem wychowania* [Cultural diversification of youth and the problem of education] of 1976 (Przeclawska, 1976).

An issue that was often discussed at that time, and that remained within the limits of areas indicated here, was the organisation and use of leisure time, e.g., the studies of Tadeusz Wujek (1969): *Praca domowa i czynny wypoczynek ucznia* [Homework and active leisure of pupils], or the problem of child care, in particular the works of Albin Kelm and Marian Balcerek.

At the same time, it must be added that the contemporary works and studies on the family were incorporated into the concepts derived from social pedagogy, such as parallel education, permanent education, lifelong learning, and the education of adults. The places indicated as the places of social functioning of man – and community education performed there – encompassed: family, school, housing estate, workplace, and social associations. From a certain (ideological) point of view, it may be stated that at that time, we were dealing with the so-called modelling of social reality, as, on the one hand, specific areas were diagnosed, and on the other, its desired (expected) model was built (designed) (here, the pragmatic function in practical pedagogy is meant). In such a model, a family was – or was meant to be – the recipient of educational activities designed top-down: its task was good cooperation in the area of education, primarily with respect to the institutions established to this aim.

A good picture of these research areas may be seen in the collective work published in 1979 titled *Wychowanie i środowisko* [Education and community] edited by Barbara Passini and Tadeusz Pilch (1979).

It should also be added here that a specific model of social diagnosis was formed at that time: proper for the studies undertaken in social pedagogy, which left its mark on family studies (Deptuła, 2005). Here, it is necessary to mention the tools used to measure the family environment that was worked out back then (Wroczyński & Pilch, 1974).

– And ultimately, there is the third period in the formation of studies on the family, the period related to the third stage of development of social pedagogy. This time, the specific threshold that resulted in the creation of new approaches, as far as the designated research areas are concerned, was the social transformation which took place in the 1980s and the 1990s.

Breaking away from the idea of the so-called socialist education simultaneously entailed abandonment of the specifically performed studies on the educational environment, carried out then and built as part of the entire system of social and educational impacts (Przećławska & Theiss, 1995).

The issues dominating the 1990s and the present times in social pedagogy in the perspective of functioning of individuals and families include care, social assistance, and the education of adults.

Here, it is necessary to mention the work of Józefa Brągiel (1990): *Wychowanie w rodzinie niepełnej* [Education in single-parent families] and the work written under the editorship of Zofia Brańka (2002): *Podmioty opieki i wychowania* [Care and education entities] of 2002, along with an earlier work by the same author, of 1998, written together with Mirosław Szymański, *Agresja i przemoc we współczesnym świecie* [Aggression and violence in modern World] of 1998 (Brańka & Szymański, 1998), but also the work of Danuta Marzec (1999) *Opieka nad dzieckiem w dobie przemian społecznych* [Care of children in the era of social transformations] of 1999 and numerous works of Stanisław Kawula, Andrzej Janke, and the frequently tackled issue of social assistance and social work, such as the paper of J. Brągiel and Piotr Sikora (2004) *Praca socjalna, wielość perspektyw, rodzina – multikulturowość – edukacja* [Social work, multiple perspectives, family – multiculturalism – education] of 2004, and the work of Ewa Kantowicz and Andrzej Olubiński of 2003: *Działanie społeczne w pracy socjalnej na progu XXI wieku* [Social activity in social work at the turn of the 21st century], and numerous works on this subject written in the milieu of the Łódź Chair of Social Pedagogy, in particular under the supervision of Ewa Marynowicz-Hetka.

Nowadays, among the works published in the realm of social pedagogy, tackling the issue of the family, the ones where this issue is discussed in the context of social work are dominant, e.g., a publication edited by Bożena Matyjas and Jolanta Biała (2007), *Rodzina, jako środowisko pracy socjalnej. Teoria i praktyka* [Family as the social work environment. Theory and practice], and the work edited by Tomasz Biernat, Jan Malinowski and Katarzyna Wasilewska-Ostrowska (2015) *Rodzina w pracy socjalnej – aktualne wyzwania i rozwiązania* [Family in social work: Current challenges and solutions]. Thus, it seems to be a traditional thread of assistance to the family that has also been tackled outside of the milieu of researchers discussing social work, e.g., Agnieszka Regulska and Andrzej Jacek Najda (2017) - *Wsparcie rodziny. Założenia i praktyka* [Family support. Assumptions and practice].

Furthermore, the period of the modern studies on the family discussed here, also bore fruit in the noticeable extension of the research perspective – outside of the clearly defined care and assistance related threads. Thus, there are also family studies carried out in different environments, e.g., Renata Doniec (2001) *Rodzina wielkiego*

miasta [A large city family] or B. Matyjas (2012) *Dzieciństwo na wsi* [Childhood in the country]. There are also studies on a family as an educational environment – in a specific situation in life, such as, e.g., Paulina Forma (2011), *Rodzina wielodzietna* [A large family], and Arkadiusz Wąsiński (2006) *Dziecko, rodzice, adopcja* [Child, parents, adoption], and the slightly earlier - Barbara Kromolicka (1998), *Rodziny zrekonstruowane* [Reconstructed families].

Eventually, it may be concluded that family studies that were, and are carried out in social pedagogy have always referred to the family as the basic educational environment. Taking into account the subsequent periods of development of such studies, it may be said that they have always formed a part of the current socio-cultural, and even political, context, which is important, and affects the shape of a family. Thus, we can talk about studies on the access to cultural assets and possibilities of participating in it and, in this respect, about the demand for social and educational work with a family. This refers, in particular, to the first period of the existence of social pedagogy. On the other hand, the necessity for work in the situation of threats to the family, poverty, and other forms of exclusion and marginalisation, have always been discussed. Since the very beginning, a specific direction of studies on the family has been perceptible in social pedagogy, where the family is, in a sense, an element of the social and educational system and, as such, the recipient of institutional education. In this sense, it may be said that a family has been an effect of certain social modelling, which became particularly clear in the second period of its development. All these threads are more and more often extended onto the specific and more specifically defined problems referring to the functioning of a family – nevertheless always seen as the basic educational environment.

Eventually, one may also indicate the following context of family studies – worked out in the area of social pedagogy over the years of existence of this sub-discipline of pedagogy:

- family in the context of operation of out-of-school education institutions; clubs, after-school play centres, etc.;
- family in the context of assistance institutions: counselling centres, social aid, children's care homes, etc.;
- family as a recipient and participant in culture: use of cultural institutions, the media;
- family in a specific situation and social determinants: poverty, homelessness, etc.;
- family and its structure: complete and single-parent family, large family, migration family;
- family in the context of operation of schools: cooperation with the school, peer groups.

Recapitulation: the mode of understanding social pedagogy

Thus, how can a family be ultimately defined in the realm of social pedagogy? The research accomplishments of many years that have been worked out in this sub-discipline seem quite unambiguous in this respect. In this perspective, a family is space of social presence and social experiences of persons with a specific bond, whereas the context of education is given special attention here, as it conditions this space, also understood more narrowly, as the educational environment. As such, a family is also a part of a specific context of social, cultural, and political influences, which condition its functioning – including in the educational context. Thus, the following definition of a family proper for this type of pedagogy may be adopted: a family is a specific and inseparable social group that makes up a community of persons – parents and children. It functions as a social space, creating the basic educational environment. A family forms a part of the culture and communicates its values, creating proper/expected stances of its members via, and within, the scope of education.

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