## PRIMA EDUCATIONE 2021

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# The Contemporary Teacher in the Lenses of Influences of the Educational Traditions

Współczesny nauczyciel w soczewce oświatowych tradycji

**Abstract:** The aim of the text is, on the one hand, to realize the existence of a contemporary model of functioning of the teacher inherent in the resources of traditional pedagogy, and on the other hand, the possibility of introducing changes in it and adapting to new social conditions. In the undertaken explorations there were indicated the roots of the educational present perpetuating the old Prussian Model developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its evaluation and criticism contributed to the emergence of currents of new education, which are reformist pedagogical movement. It left its mark on the teaching profession, selected elements and ideas of which appeared in Paulo Freire's model combining past and present solutions. It illustrates the persistence of a hierarchical school structure that requires the school and the teacher to undertake modernization. Therefore, an authorial diagram showing selected components of the discussed models coming from the stream of new education, which enables transforming the teacher's work and thinking favoring leaving the conservative approach, was developed.

Keywords: teacher; tradition; Prussian Model; Gestalt's; emancipation; transgression; Freire's model; contemporary times

Abstrakt: Celem artykułu z jednej strony jest pobudzenie oświatowego środowiska do refleksji na temat współczesnego modelu funkcjonowania nauczyciela, który tkwi w zasobach tradycyjnej pedagogiki, a z drugiej wskazanie możliwości zmian nauczycielskiego funkcjonowania poprzez zaistnienie nowych społecznych warunków. W podjętych rozważaniach zwrócono uwagę na utrwalenie się we współczesnych czasach elementów dawnego pruskiego modelu, opracowanego w XIX w. Jego ewaluacja i krytyka przyczyniła się do powstania odmiennych strategii i sposobów pełnienia nauczycielskich obowiązków, które są efektem dokonujących się zmian. Obszar poszukiwań zawężono do krótkiego wyeksponowania wybranych koncepcji wynikających z nurtu nowego wychowania, będącego reformatorskim ruchem pedagogicznym. Odcisnął on swoje piętno na nauczycielskiej profesji, która zaistniała m.in. w modelu Paula Freire'a, łączącego dawne i obecne rozwiązania. Ilustruje on głębszą perspektywę utrzymywania się zhierarchizowanej szkolnej struktury określającej aktywność nauczyciela w odmiennych warunkach społeczeństwa informacyjnego. Będzie on stanowił inspirację do podjęcia przez nauczyciela modernizacji swego zawodu i warsztatu pracy. W podsumowaniu zamieszczono autorskie opracowanie schematu zawierającego wybrane składniki z modeli nurtu nowego wychowania kształtujące aktywną postawę umożliwiającą odejście od zachowawczego podejścia.

Słowa kluczowe: nauczyciel; tradycja; model pruski; Gestalt; emancypacja; transgresja; model Freire'a; współczesność

Człowiek się zmienia, wyrasta ze starych sytuacji, jak dziecko, a z czasem płynie i zmienia wszystko.<sup>1</sup>

Olga Tokarczuk

### INTRODUCTION

Today's educational reality is characterized by repetitive and systematic situations rising from the timetable and those occurring irregularly and containing unforeseen events and tasks. This reality requires from the school and teachers an appropriate approach and the need to cope with many responsibilities and circumstances. A detailed analysis of them indicates a preference for a flexible and open approach to professional activity. Just as the external environment experiencing the acceleration syndrome is reorganized, the teacher should also transform the sphere of his professional functioning. In practice, one can notice a varied approach towards this issue. The daily teaching practice, despite the transformations, experiences a delay. It is confronted with various pedagogical problems, visions, models created in the past and currently, and with individual professional attitudes. It is essential to read and understand the teaching duties one ought to fulfil as well as the duties to solve specific problems arising in the present educational conditions. Competencies and predispositions acquired by the teacher supported by modern technologies that enable educational progress act as the source of support in confronting the above mentioned. However, the questions are whether to popularise what is known in new conditions or use completely different strategies or maybe analyze educational activities and select valuable elements from previously developed pedagogical thoughts and give them a new dimension fitting into contemporary reality?

The answer to each question is not equivocal. It is determined by the number and variety of factors included in the theoretical, practical and research concepts penetrating educational meanders. It is superimposed by the personal and social aspirations of the teachers, students and society, contributing to the increase of tangible and intangible resources. The achievement of social well-being requires the modernization of education, which will have to undertake didactic and educational tasks "here and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> "A human changes, grows out of old situations, just like a child, and, with time, flows and changes everything".

now", and focus, as in a lens, the existing pedagogical options and develop different innovative ideas that give a competitive advantage over others in the current information society (Dobrowolski 2005, p. 87).

# TRADITION AND ITS MEANING IN EDUCATION

The content of this part of the text will initially focus on synthetically selected information on the concept of "tradition". In Latin, "*traditio* meant passing from generation to generation the contents of culture, customs, views, beliefs, ways of thinking and maintaining social norms, considered by the community as socially significant for the present and the future" (Sikorska-Michnik, Wojnilko 1998, p. 433). Ludwik Stomma (1986) complemented the cited explanation by writing that tradition is intertwined with religion, beliefs, the sphere of sacrum providing happiness, health and safety. It is passed from generation to generation through language, dialect, interpretation of the world by people who give it various names. It is connected to the memory of people, events that serve as witnesses of history, covering the time continuity which consists of three crucial aspects:

- memory,
- community and accumulation of resources,
- inheritance and transmission (Pelcowa 2009, pp. 89-100).

The above-mentioned properties justify the importance of social heritage, providing a solid foundation for the accumulation of knowledge and building a climate conducive to the construction of civilization. Probably this idea accompanied Frederick William III in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when he developed the characteristics of the educational system we use till this today. It was called "the Prussian Model". It was adopted not only by all of Europe but even by America and the Far East. This model was based on the so-called Enlightenment absolutism oriented towards the introduction of compulsory school discipline and hierarchy. Instead of subjective feeling, development of interests and creativity (Kabat 2013), there appears top-down execution of imposed curricular content, with a division of lessons into 45-minute units, with short breaks signalled by a bell, grades for knowledge, a significant role of the teacher and the textbook as a provider of knowledge and compulsory examinations (Holmes 1981, pp. 24-25; Łukasiewicz 2004, pp. 62-63). The said key elements were adopted by both public and private schools, and their graduates could choose higher education after passing the matriculation examination legalized in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Prussian Model was adapted to our Polish reality after regaining independence in 1919 (Stowe 1836; Salmonowicz 1987) making education compulsory for children. After World War II, school structure and teacher's activity submitted to ideological thoughts and tools selected for it. They include:

- realization of top-down imposed teaching and educational contents including its testing,
- preparation of the student for acquiring professional qualifications, just as it is done in the factory,
- assimilating of information from various subjects by memory coupled with narrowing the individual search for it,
- limited duration of learning, examinations and their measurement, which is reflected in the activities of the teacher and students, perpetuating the Newtonian concept of time,
- the work of the teacher and the school referring to the idealistic mission of human development and, as a result, its bureaucratization,
- ritualization of timetable and events rooted in educational consciousness,
- the achievement of goals in social, economic, cultural dimensions in which the roles of teacher and student are strictly defined (Wołoszyn 1998).

The developed traditional structure of education with the components highlighted above was hailed as innovative for the conditions and times in which it was created. This system guaranteed then and now the acquisition of appropriate qualifications and skills by all members of society. Later, the acceleration of civilization and technology in a way forced the introduction of reforms and adequate adaptation to the actual needs. Usually, modern approaches do not go hand in hand with the already accepted ones. The new paves its way through criticism of the known ways finding itself on the border of what used to be with something new or manifesting itself with entirely different components. This is the case with many pedagogical models developed within the new education movement (Sośnicki 1967; Sztobryn 2004, p. 229). They are a reformatory project implemented in the educational system, which promotes its modernization.

Out of many valuable models, several were selected. A theoretical-historical criterion was applied to them (Creswell 2014), which includes specific conditions serving the social collective, as well as the individual. Gestalt pedagogy has been included in them (Okoń 1999). The original assumptions were presented by Serge Ginger. He used a five-pointed star symbolizing man and his character. It reflects the multidimensional approach connected with the approval of five main dimensions referring to human activity. These are:

- a physical dimension involving the body, the senses and movement,
- an emotional dimension involving the heart, feelings, love, empathy,
- a rational dimension involving the brain with its two hemispheres supporting creativity and imagination,
- a social dimension involving other people, the environment, culture,
- a spiritual dimension that draws attention to man's place in the world and in the global ecosystem (Ginger 1995, p. 8).

Each of these dimensions balances one another. It is about balancing materiality and spirituality to indicate a holistic view of the matched dimensions as essential components of the contemporary educational process. It sanctions three rules. The first one: educational fusion in which one experiences different emotionally perceived priorities, which allow for the independent activity of educational partners. The second one connected with work with pupils, where the teacher strives to unify the curriculum's content with the subject paying attention to all dimensions and needs. Lastly, the third one indicating integration of the sphere of body, soul and psyche with the environment (Konarzewski 1982, pp. 173-202). According to this model, the teacher must be a model of a good educator seeking self-fulfilment in his chosen profession. Unfortunately, this postulate is sometimes far from the contemporary reality in which a part of the teaching staff refers to it differently. Hence, every teacher is encouraged to reflect on and restructure the fulfillment of their responsibilities.

Another alternative model developed as a result of criticism of the social order prevailing in education was the Model of Emancipatory Pedagogy. According to the principles adopted in it, the concepts of justice and freedom should be implemented into the educational process to free oneself from dependency, fear and to achieve independence. The cited slogans were adapted from the times of class conflict and the existence of inequality. They still appear in education, although they take different forms, e.g. rat race being a strong sign of competition eliminating weak or vulnerable people. Regardless of the existence of negative phenomena, we remember that the task of education is to provide the pupils not only with factual knowledge but also with knowledge counteracting various forms of oppression while developing the sense of justice and subjective treatment by others, as Maria Czerepaniak-Walczak (2006, pp. 27-29) emphasizes. This helps to reduce the power of oppression and social pressure felt by the individual, which leads to the liberation of individual and group consciousness. On the other hand, Peter McLaren (1995, pp. 55-60) refers to emancipation as liberation from suffering and limitations of independence experienced due to, e.g. age, race, economic status, language, belonging to a particular ethnic group or country, etc. The said factors may overlap and stimulate emancipatory activity, which develops in the teacher looking for solutions in pedagogical approaches supporting the processes of upbringing and self-education of a human being. As Bogusław Śliwerski wrote, "(...) the essence of upbringing, teaching and pedagogical theory is liberation, which includes the liberation of the person, his/her mind, as well as the associated sphere of social behaviour" (Śliwerski 2009, p. 106).

Some researchers such as Pierre Bourdieu and Jean C. Passeron (2003) believe that pedagogical influence tends to be linked to symbolic violence and the imposition of cultural awareness. They argue that pedagogical models, guidelines or ideologies contain content that disrupts the acquisition of emancipatory experiences by educational partners. They note that everyone in an individual way wants to free themselves from imposed opinions or views by developing their own standpoint. Sometimes it is difficult to carry out an ideological reduction of information. A critical approach can help. Critical thinking can be helpful, for example, in direct relationships during the teaching and learning process, in mutual respecting the rules of communication between teachers and students, in creating a school climate, and much more. These activities can foster personal fulfilment by revealing the intellectual abilities of the teacher (Giroux 2005, pp. 82–87, 201–202), who will use them to develop a creative educational path that breaks all scientific conventions of knowledge acquisition and taking action. Such a teacher will gain the acceptance of his/her environment as a person emancipated from external opinions and judgments.

The Model of Transgressive and Humanistic Pedagogy appeared on the educational scene in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The core point was the definition of "transgression". It meant "(...) the existential state of people in education caused by the change of internal determinants identifying their own experiences through the introduction of other socio-cultural and semantic domains" (Jenks 2003; Kozielecki 2002, pp. 118-119). In the explanation given, the boundary of choosing an educational path and acquiring socio-cultural properties is outlined. These are developed according to Abraham Maslow's theory. Hence, transgression plays a significant role in allowing one to find the direction of personal fulfillment. In this way, one strives to satisfy all needs at a given level until they cease to exist. A gap is created that is conducive to learning by creatively transgressing the limits of one's own abilities, which is the case, for example, in super-teaching, described by Janusz Gnitecki (1997). The empowerment of the emerging situation is the teacher's finding himself in the role of a transgressive educator who organizes conditions conducive to his own work, as well as that of his students, multiplying the social potential.

Presented selected models being the aftermath of the current of new education will enable to understand the past and present creation of school environment. Past and present pedagogical methods and models, which have evolved over time and adapted to the surrounding world, are concentrated there as if in a lens. Thus, a key element of the transgressive model adopted by the teacher is dialogue and faith in the mutual learning capacity of teacher and student. This is observed in the ongoing pandemic where flipped classroom or anticipatory strategy or city-based learning has been used in remote learning (Land, Zimmerman 2015). Integral to both modern methods is the cognitive activity and engagement of students in exploring a topic in a particular subject of study using mobile technology. The teacher, on the other hand, experiences the transformation of his job and begins to assume the role of a good planner and logistician who carefully designs the organizational cycle. The teacher supports the students in their activities by engaging in discussions with them during interactive activities. This is conducive to the further development of the information society, in which an important role is played by all kinds of quizzes, e-books, video materials used in teaching, allowing you to work at an individual pace, allowing you to acquire knowledge and focus on incomprehensible topics.

The traditional model overlooks this, as it places the teacher as the central figure and the students as passive recipients of the information. Thus, we see a fundamental transformation of teacher's functioning. The future of these types of teaching is seen in the further development of communication and organizational skills of the teacher's work supported by modern technology. At the same time, the abandonment of the superior role in the process of teaching and learning will be revealed, and the degree of manifestation of mutual cooperation with students will increase. While it takes place, the process of students independently taking responsibility for their own learning solidifies. These words were confirmed by the precursor of one of the models, Aaron Sams. He wrote that "(...) the flipped classroom is focused on diverting attention from the teacher and turning attention to the student and the learning process" (Sams 2021).

# PAULO FREIRE'S MODEL AS A VARIANT OF CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

Contemporaneity and its temporal dimension are defined as

(...) the whole of conditions and interdependencies of various elements (including other organizations), spheres, phenomena, processes, trends, which are not part of the considered organizational system and remain outside its direct control but are related to it, that is, they exert influence on a given organization and/or are influenced by behaviors, taken actions and decisions. (Matejun, Nowicki 2013, p. 152)

It is entering the current education system realizing the transition from the industrial society as it was before to the information society. This transition is marked by the extremely rapid dynamics of changes observed in the Polish school and teacher's duties (Borawska-Kalbarczyk 2009, p. 162). The result is an emphasis on the importance of modern education, followed by an increase in tasks and intensification of scientific activities that contribute to the enrichment of modern civilization.

Focusing on the essential aspects of today's digital environment is an essential matter in organizing an even better basis for developing the potential of education partners. Thereupon, Krzysztof Wach proposed

(...) a typical division of the subjective environment, which is a spatial approach taking into account: macro-setting (called "general" or "distant environment") covering general economic factors affecting the development of the institution (...), as well as technological, political and legal, socio-cultural and environmental factors; meso-setting covering factors affecting in the regional system, which take into account specific features of individual regions, provinces, districts, municipalities or border areas; micro-setting (called "competitive" or "closer environment") covering the actual situation (...). (Wach 2004, p. 184) The distinguished division of the environment is analysed in terms of the socio-economic model, in which the central point is the relationship between education and the economy. They influence each other, mutually contributing to more dynamic and innovative transformations in the school environment and teacher's work. This mobilizes all forces to engage in creating a learning society, just as it happens in a learning organization which is precisely the school (Rabiej 2013). In such a context of the long-term influencing the society by the education, it seems justified to recall the banking model of the teacher bringing together past and modern currents of pedagogical thinking.

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was published (Demertio 2006, p. 183). As a radical activist of the emancipation movement, he stated that it carried the message of liberation from all oppression. A necessary and reachable tool in this regard, according to the author, is education. Education has been connected to man and society since the dawn of time. It has been updated along with changes in the external environment. It became the basis for the author's assumptions based on Plato's views, postulates formulated by modern Marxists, anti-colonialists and Christianity. He believes that the achievement of real liberation can be done in an educational community. The knowledge gained by the individual in the process of education has the potential to liberate him/her from suffering and pain. He assigned a special role to emancipation, which he understood as the involvement of specific individuals in the processes of changing their own and society's position. The stimulus for these actions is to come from education providing a decent life in freedom. The knowledge acquired there will affect not only the individual but also group changes that will enable creating better conditions for the oppressed class. This will lay the groundwork for a completely new social structure, as Teresa Hejnicka-Bezwińska (2008), among others, writes. The new social structure will offer the introduction of benefits, including "a location endowed with personal or cultural meaning" (Danilewicz 2016, p. 83). The postulate can be fulfilled, in Freire's opinion, when an entire literacy program is actually carried out, allowing illiterate and backward people to obtain an education that makes them independent.

The glaring exclusion of individuals from participating and enjoying the benefits of the world inspired the author to develop guidelines for education in the modernist spirit. The author's decision was partially justified by the cultural embeddedness evident in the school environment and the teacher's work. He identifies with the place, institution, region, country, etc., in which the future present is embedded. It creates all the teacher's activity, resulting from the experience of events, accumulated professional experience documented by school celebrations recorded in the chronicle, on film or taken photos. It consolidates the pedagogy of place, showing the achievements of the educational institution, as well as individuals contributing to it (Copik 2013, p. 182).

The uniqueness and character of the teacher's workplace created today is part of a learning environment that can be filled with cognitive activity that liberates each person from various oppressions or encountered pressure. This is especially important when education takes place in totalitarian states that prohibit freedom aspirations. Hence, the appearance on the publishing market of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* has won the minds and driving power of many people around the world. The author of this textbook was born in Brazil, that is, a country in which reigned the so-called time of lead associated with very high censorship against independent thinking of scholars and teachers. It affected society and education, similarly to Poland before 1989. The socialist nomenclature of that time took over the Prussian Model, strengthening the top-down imposed content of teaching and learning as well as the teaching profession in accordance with the prevailing ideology. Both teachers and students suffered as they obediently conformed to the ruling system. With time, the ideas of freedom and the resistance of all professional and social groups grew stronger, leading to a break-through in Poland in 1989.

Freire was able to publish his freedom thoughts and ideas in a volume printed in London after being exiled from his homeland. He became an oppressed person who experienced dehumanization. He noted that dehumanization is historically conditioned. Liberation from this hopeless situation is to bring praxis about, which involves intellectual action "(...) to reject the myths created and developed in the old order" (Freire 1972, p. 42). This will result in the awakening of consciousness through the dialogue undertaken by the individual. Dialogue is to be taught by the educational worker, who is both the subject and the narrator of the content placed in the curricula of the subjects, and the students are to be only passive recipients. The teacher, as a free person, makes the choice of language, methods, forms and means of teaching, which remains in line with the traditional way, which in modern conditions has taken a mass form favoring the return of old practices.

The boundary between past and present models of the teacher's functioning and professional activity is blurring. There appears a compilation of existing solutions suggesting various approaches. Both the liberation from a particular way or pedagogical concept and the striving for authorization of an individual strategy is noticed. In such a system, education with modernist features advocated by Paulo Freire must learn to learn and the teacher to teach. Meanwhile, contemporary times demand that it is the student who acquires knowledge and the teacher who supports and facilitates this process. Therefore, the slogan "lifelong learning" is realized in education today (Aspin, Chapman 2000, pp. 2-19). This also applies to the teacher, who should not only update his/her knowledge but also develop internal motivation leading to the transformation of his/her workshop. In his/her duties, one should be guided by a professional passion for helping students develop their thinking, imagination, combine knowledge with truth, learn information about freedom, justice and democracy, which appeared in the above-mentioned model of emancipatory pedagogy.

Freire used the terminology of transgressive pedagogy, in which the liberation of the teacher and student occurs through personal fulfillment. The most important

element is the motivation to meet many needs, which then results in transgressing the limits of one's abilities. The creative activities of the partners of education so characteristic of modern times are then revealed. A characteristic feature of education is that students search for knowledge rather than filling their heads with information like containers, as Freire wrote. He likened this process to creating bank deposits that are slowly but steadily filled. Therefore, he called the model he developed banking model of education in which "(...) the teacher, instead of establishing a relationship with the students, sends messages by establishing deposits, and the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat them (...)" (Freire 1972, p. 45).

The described author's approach solidifies a social structure of inequality and oppression instead of endorsing subjectivity and partnership. Some compensation for Freire's modernism is "(...) dialogue and love which is an act of courage, but love cannot be sentimental and an act of manipulation (...) but must take place in humility (...) to achieve the fullness of humanity, which is not the privilege of a select few but an inherent right of all human beings" (*ibid.*, pp. 62–63). According to the researcher, an indispensable ingredient of dialogue is Christian love and humility, as well as critical thinking providing a sense of human solidarity between the world and other people. The bridge is communication realized during the process of teaching and learning, in which students get to know objective information, which they try to understand properly and use in practice later on.

### CONCLUSIONS

The considerations presented above covering traditional and contemporary models of the teacher's functioning being the aftermath of the new upbringing, have been distinguished on the basis of theoretical and historical criterion relating more or less to the combination of education, society and economy. It dictates the need for educated workers in many sectors who work in the professional field multiplying the material and non-material resources of a particular community. It dictates the need for educated workers in many sectors who work in the professional field multiplying the tangible and intangible resources of a particular society. They make use of the latest technological advances, which are first learned by the teacher in order to pass on the knowledge in this field to the pupils. There is a noticeable change in the contemporary educational environment, which creates a mobile teaching and learning space. It spreads the energy and potential of education partners who use the given pedagogical solution and teacher model like a mosaic to keep up with the times and challenges they are facing, as illustrated in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Context and notions concerning interaction



The diagram shows the complexity of the presented considerations, for which selected models were used. They contain components resulting from the conditions and situation prevailing in education. They serve the partners of education at a certain time, as well as the society to multiply competence and civilization resources. However, each model also pointed to the individual improvement of the quality and standard of the teaching profession by introducing appropriate modernizations and rules. The implementation of the models listed in the figure into practice contributed, on the one hand, to the criticism of the existing conditions of education, and on the other hand, introduced innovations conducive to the performance of different activities and professional functions by the teacher, creating something new at the same time. In this way, valuable initiatives were allowed to speak, not concentrating, as in a lens, old solutions. In this way, new possibilities and concepts enter the system of education and teacher activity. Therefore, we can assume that the progressive changes will probably go in the direction of building a more sustainable education that gives a sense of belonging to a particular social community. It affects each person, their attitudes, views, strengthening the attachment to the place, the institution in which it comes to education, and then to work in the professional field.

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