

Bogusław Śliwerski

The Maria Grzegorzewska University in Warsaw

Pedagogy Trapped Between the Humanities and the Social Sciences

Pedagogy, having been for over a century seeking its autonomy, exclusivity, and the ability to differentiate itself from other sciences, has effected a situation in which it exists today in two forms: the first one is a self-determined sovereign scientific discipline, and the other one is defined by other disciplines of knowledge incorporated by it; as a result, either they have to live together in dialogue or marginalise each other. Therefore, pedagogy has a continuous problem with its own identity which is not experienced by sociology or psychology, although they also belong to the same field of the social sciences – or, until recently, the humanities.

The lack of satisfying results of the described procedures of transferring fixed theories to pedagogy and, above all, its ambiguous scientific condition, have had to result in pedagogues' shifting away from the concept of pedagogy as a complex of derived knowledge, and turning to facts, to studying them with reserve and mistrust for all general opinions "obtained" as ready for use from other scientific fields. The pedagogues' unease connected with the perception of pedagogy as a "complex of derived knowledge" could have been compensated by scientism, which has been reached for willingly since the beginning of our [the 20th – B.Ś.] century¹.

Does not the scientific level achieved by OTHER sciences, which is higher in comparison with pedagogy, lead to a threat that the latter will lose its chance for further development, for joining the race for primacy or a high position? The confrontation of the scientific level of pedagogy is partially enforced by the authorities of the ministry of science and higher education, which has classified it among the problematic scientific panels of the National Centre of Science, together with psychology and sociology². When applying for means to finance their

¹ W.P. Zaczyński, *O potrzebie teorii w badaniach pedagogicznych dydaktycznych* [About the Necessity of Theory in Didactic Pedagogical Research], "Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny" 1991, No. 3, p. 100.

² B. Śliwerski, *Anomia akademickiej pedagogiki z jej własnym udziałem* [The Anomie of Academic Pedagogy with Its own Involvement], [in:] *Przeszkody dla rozwoju humanistyki w szkołach wyższych (z pedagogiką w tle). W perspektywie troski o uniwersytet, kulturę humanistyczną i podręczniki* [Obstacles for the

research projects, pedagogues have a worse position from the very beginning, because they are not able to compete with psychologists or sociologists either in terms of a better research methodology (since pedagogues themselves use the same methodology as well) or a high citation index. In this methodological “arms race”, pedagogy constitutes a “slow” or still “immature” world, making scientists realise their “disability”.

Pedagogy primarily belongs to the humanities but also to the social sciences. It is sufficient to consult the history of child-rearing in order to see that from its beginning it has been treated as a source of reflective and normative knowledge about child-rearing and education. The fact that pedagogy is a normative science does not mean it is not a science, as the methodology of pedagogical research has to be accordant with the non-normative methodology of the sciences and the theory of scientific cognition or general methodology, which means it has to use the logical and epistemological theory of the empirical sciences, which deal for instance with the analysis of language, methods, structures and the dynamics of the studied processes or phenomena. When studying phenomena of a social nature, pedagogues consequently use formal methods and techniques, which are justifiable in the methodology of social research. Even in the research which is normative when it analyses notions, hypotheses, theories or the evolution of thought etc., it is obligatory to use proper methodology, which, after all, is ruled by the criteria of formal correctness. However, both approaches to research in science, descriptive as well as normative, are fully justifiable in the modern methodology of science. It is therefore incomprehensible why pedagogy, as one of the humanities, is denied having a right to be a science in a situation when competent scholars correctly use a methodology of research identical to: philosophy (in the case of the philosophy of child-rearing, general pedagogy, the theory of child-rearing), history (in the case of the history of education and of ideas), psychology (in the case of studying didactics, resocialisation, special education, pedagogy of creativity, pedeutology, etc.), sociology (in the case of the sociology of education, social pedagogy, childcare education, etc.) or the health sciences (e.g. the pedagogy of health, gerontology, sport pedagogy, etc.).

In the humanities and the social sciences, the treatment of scientific disciplines as progressing should not be based merely on the cumulative development of knowledge and the general consent as to the basic research problems and methods. This is because there are anomalies in science which cannot be explained by the existing theories, which leads to scientific revolutions. It is precisely as a result of a rejection of the heretofore existing paradigm and the constitution of a new research tradition and style that changes which undermine tradition and generate new research approaches appear. Thus, a new paradigm of doing science

emerges, referred to as “*post-academic science*” (J. Ziman), “*triple helix*” (H. Etzkowitz and L. Leydesdorff), “*technoscience*” (B. Latour), “*post-normal science*” (P. Weingart), “*grassroots science*” (T. Hansen), and “*academic capitalism*” (S. Slaughter and L. Leslie). Differences among the concepts mentioned above do not refer only to terminology, but are also of a substantive nature³.

Scientific research is no longer an “objective” study of the natural or social world by an isolated cognitive subject, for the borders between the sciences have been opened and the hierarchically functioning research communities are declining for the benefit of teams, created on ad hoc basis, which carry out short-term scientific projects sometimes involving a new type of organisation – a think-tank – in solving their research problems.

New forms of controlling the quality of research are being developed and the theoretical criteria of the quality of knowledge are merging with the practical ones. Traditionally, the quality of research and its results were evaluated by colleagues representing the same discipline with such mechanisms as peer review; [...] there is no stable taxonomy of disciplines from which the evaluating “experts” would originate, while the known forms of quality control cannot be easily applied to problems solved by various “producers” of knowledge as well as “conductors”, “knowledge sellers” or “knowledge distributors”. There are no clear criteria which could be used for the assessment of the quality of research and the knowledge acquired, as there are many dimensions of quality⁴.

Krzysztof Rubacha does not get involved in a divagation about what pedagogy is, whether or not it is a field of science, only because pedagogues have to study education as “a form of social practice focused on the formation of human life skills, and thus covering child-rearing, care, education, teaching, learning and socialisation”, similarly to psychology and sociology, which are also interested in them⁵. A pedagogue should therefore focus on the methodology of education studies understood as the norms of research accepted by the scientific community, for his/her conceptualisation and research execution to be considered scientific. The author clearly indicates that he refers here to the methodology of the social sciences, and that therefore, there is no reason to singularise a distinct methodology of pedagogical studies. Thus, the approach proposed by him points to – not without reason – the theoretical and practical methodology of education studies which can be used by representatives of all the disciplines found within social studies, not only pedagogues.

It turns out, however, that the situation is not as simple, for, in J. Górniewicz’s opinion:

³ A. Lekka-Kowalik, *Nauka jako zawód i powołanie – sto lat po analizach Maxa Webera* [Science as a Profession and Vocation – a Hundred Years After Max Weber’s Analyses], [in:] *Metodologia: Tradycja i perspektywy* [Methodology: Tradition and Perspectives], ed. M. Walczak, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2010, p. 79.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁵ K. Rubacha, *Metodologia badań nad edukacją* [Methodology of Education Studies], WaiP, Warszawa 2008, p. 9.

[...] empirical research based on principles accepted in other disciplines within the social sciences encounters some difficulties. They are, it seems, the basic methodological problems of pedagogy. These barriers derive from academic tradition, the personalities of the researchers themselves, the level of their self-confidence, the evoked status of the scientific discipline as well as the criticism of pedagogues' scientific achievements by representatives of other humanistic and social disciplines⁶.

It is therefore pointless to discuss the methodology of pedagogical research from the positivist perspective if this discipline does not have a subject of research distinct in relation to other sciences (other social sciences also deal with child-rearing, care, education, socialisation, etc.) and, moreover, the conditions of the studied processes and theoretical interpretations which justify them change ceaselessly.

However, according to Teresa Bauman:

[...] the adoption of the thesis about excluding the subject of research in the social sciences results in methodological purity, a sense that one functions in a discipline with diligently defined border areas and studies whatever belongs to the subject of a given field. The adoption of such an attitude results in inaccessibility, closing oneself within a single discipline of knowledge, and a lack of interest in research done as a part of other sciences. [...] The undertaking of research problems in areas belonging to other disciplines of knowledge and the acceptance of researchers from other disciplines entering the field traditionally belonging to the area of our science are considered legitimate practices. Although this results in the loss of legibility of our own subject of research, we benefit in that the perspective of the insight into a given phenomenon is broadened⁷.

We are right when criticising the low level of research in pedagogy, as it does not comply with the standards either in the quantitative or the qualitative paradigm, although in the latter case, they are strongly disputable. How are things to be standardised if at every stage of the research procedure it is necessary to follow the principle of openness? The difference between qualitative and quantitative research lies in the fact that in the case of the former, the researcher resigns from any standardisation of the collection of the research material. However, for fear of being rejected by reviewers favouring the quantitative type of research, pedagogues began to prove that they are also ruled by definite procedures – only that a different procedure is applied to every method. However, D. Kubinowski comes to their aid, emphasising that

⁶ J. Górniewicz, *Metodologiczne problemy empirycznej pedagogiki – spór o status naukowy* [Methodological Issues of Empirical Pedagogy – Dispute about Scientific Status], "Wychowanie na co dzień" 2011, no. 3, p. 3.

⁷ T. Bauman, *Komplikacje i dylematy przy określaniu przedmiotu badań pedagogicznych* [Complications and Dilemmas in Defining the Subject of Pedagogical Research], [in:] *Konceptualizacje przedmiotu badań pedagogiki* [Conceptualisations of the Subject of Pedagogical Research], ed. K. Rubacha, Oficyna Wydawnicza "Impuls", Kraków 2008, p. 61.

[...] in the humanities-oriented pedagogy there are no [...] ready-made methodological solutions, but only a set of descriptions of the use of various research procedures and a focus on the construction/creation of the course of cognitive procedure⁸.

If we agree with Karl R. Popper that the methodology of the sciences is a theory of the rules of scientific method, then adopting them in reference to qualitative research and defining this as a methodology of constructing and performing such research should contribute to confirming its scientific status. However, Dariusz Kubinowski makes the following reservation:

Qualitative research is a difficult art of improvisation and as such cannot be subjected to strict methodological formalisation. On the one hand, its methodology is based on concrete principles determining the admissible ways of thinking about the rules of the cognitive process, which form the general basis for constructing adequate methodological solutions each time resulting from the specific nature of a given research project, while on the other hand, it involves a vast and continuously growing set of specific research traditions, concepts and approaches successfully applied by the particular researchers in their search for answers to the emerging problems or the problems which they formulated⁹.

We have grown to believe and have accepted as a certainty – following the thesis supported by scientifically-oriented psychologists – that pedagogy, failing to meet the methodological rigours of the empirical sciences, is not and has never been a science. As Jerzy Brzeziński put it:

The maturity of an empirical discipline is indicated by the extent to which its statements are verified experimentally. In this respect, it is physics which is the most advanced discipline and some of the social sciences, for example pedagogy, which are the least advanced ones¹⁰.

The humanities, focusing on the human being as their research subject, cannot be included among or compared to exact sciences or life sciences as they explore a different matter. "The indispensable condition of a scientific character of a humanistic discipline is its complete ineffectuality". It is not surprising, then, that the outstanding mathematician considers as suspicious the scientific status of all scientific disciplines such as psychology, sociology, or economics, "[...] which openly or implicitly purport to exercise individual or collective control over the human being [...]"¹¹.

⁸ D. Kubinowski, *Jakościowe badania pedagogiczne. Filozofia. Metodyka. Ewaluacja* [Qualitative Pedagogical Research. Philosophy. Methodology. Evaluation], Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 2010, p. 120.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁰ J. Brzeziński, *Elementy metodologii badań psychologicznych* [Elements of the Methodology of Psychological Research], PWN, Warszawa 1978, p. 60.

¹¹ R. Thom, *O naukowości nauk humanistycznych* [About the Scientific Character of Humanities], [in:] *Rozmowy w Castel Gandolfo* [Discourse in Castel Gandolfo], introduction by K. Michalski, Centrum Myśli Jana Pawła II – Wydawnictwo Znak, Warszawa 2010, p. 38.

The efforts undertaken by the subsequent generations of pedagogues to make their discipline more scientific or even exact, and therefore more useful in the technological sense, owing to the acquisition of the repetitive, the universal and the general, may partially work in didactics, but in other fields of pedagogical research they have come to naught – and it cannot be otherwise. This is because we deal with the entirely unmeasurable, the unquantifiable, with what leaves us one-to-one with the unrecognizability of people and events, determined not only by the quantifiable but also by what in the humanities is described as the humanistic coefficient: transcendence and fate. According to R. Thom:

[...] in the humanities, the truth is achieved only when influence is given up. This is because any influence on the human material has unpredictable consequences. [...] In the humanities, just like in other sciences, it is naturally not impossible to discover a technological innovation which could give an unprecedented advantage to the group which would possess it. However, then the accompanying inequality would become deeper to such a degree that it would result in a division of the social body, making any consensus impossible. In this respect, the effectiveness of technology in the humanities is inevitably limited by ethics, as only ethics is able to preserve the consensus indispensable for the existence of science¹².

Possibly, the backwardness or reluctance to develop comparative research in pedagogical thought is an effect of the fact that some pedagogues are not aware of the high level of the metatheoretical development in the social sciences, including child-rearing studies, as a result of dissipation and concentration of their own research on narrowly understood social, pedagogical, educational or historical problems, but also due to excusing its non-theoreticalness with the existing theoretical chaos. And from the theory of chaos, as Otto Speck rightly points out – “one must not and should not draw any pedagogical conclusions”¹³. This is because today we have such methods of comparative studies in pedagogical thought that we can situate theories, trends or the currents of ideas both of a deterministic and indeterministic nature, those which locate themselves in the perspective of stronger or weaker naturalism or subjectivism (indeterminacy, presuppositionlessness), as well as those which may be located on the axis of positivism or objectivism (necessity, teleologicalness).

The contemporary pedagogical thought is of social significance, since it is a specific form of interpersonal (intergenerational, intercultural, etc.) communication. It provokes some people to reflect on their child-rearing, teaching, learning or self-improvement style, while sensitising others to clichés, stereotypes, ideological conventions or prejudices: all this to make us aware of our narrow-mindedness, to enable us to understand other people’s attitude towards educational processes and to notice their different sources, but also to make us capable of forbidding our

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹³ O. Speck, *Być nauczycielem. Trudności wychowawcze w czasie zmian społeczno-kulturowych* [To Be a Teacher. Child-Rearing Difficulties in the Time of Social and Cultural Changes], transl. E. Cieślak, GWP, Gdansk 2005, p. 22.

own standpoint and seeing the possible consequences of putting it into practice. Pedagogy, thanks to its analyses and comparisons, should make what seems simple, easy or trivial – difficult and requiring effort. It should also make us aware that not all – and all the more that not only – our opinions are right.

However, problems with the methodology of scientific research are also experienced by philosophers, and their interest in this discipline of knowledge is diminishing, which results in the lowering of

[...] the scientific level and the level of teaching in higher education institutions, including universities. They are increasingly oriented at increasingly ad-hoc didactics and practicality, as well as higher professionalisation. Such a tendency does not foster the development of philosophy or philosophising, even if it is a “practical” kind of philosophy. In particular, the omission of methodological didactics in the curricula of the philosophy as well as the introduction of two levels of studies in this field fail to guarantee thorough education in this scope, and sound and practical methodological formation¹⁴.

As a result, as Andrzej Bronk and Stanisław Majdański write:

The pro-methodological approach is not obvious to all “wisdom lovers”, in particular when we think about the so-called pure methodology. It is possible that it is an effect of a postmodernist attitude towards philosophy, as well as towards the humanities and social sciences among which philosophy is “administratively” counted, although the Polish tradition has been the reverse in this regard. It is also about the modern anti-fundamentalism, anti-demarcationism and “post-disciplinarity”, which neglect the allegedly redundant methodological rigours, which does not make methodological issues cool¹⁵.

Pedagogy experiences problems, exactly like other social sciences, with its own notional apparatus, which is created on the basis of both scientific language, and derives from various philosophical, psychological, sociological and even economic theories, and the colloquial language (similarly as in sociology or psychology). Subjecting the subject of pedagogical research to the procedure of explication, Janusz Gnitecki demonstrated its multifacetedness and the ambiguity of both scientific understanding and the meaning of its basic notions. The meanings of the basic notions

[...] are not homogeneous and result from various premises of pedagogy. A very significant role is played by diverse premises, paradigms, ways of synthesising and making generalisations of the accuracy of child-rearing processes in the stable and changeable cultural context¹⁶.

How are pedagogues supposed to measure and improve the quality of didactic, child-rearing or care-related impacts if psychologists themselves are continu-

¹⁴ A. Bronk, S. Majdański, *Metodologia nauk: Jej zadania i potrzeby wczoraj i dziś* [Methodology of Sciences: its Tasks and Needs Yesterday and Today], [in:] *Metodologia: Tradycja i perspektywy* [Methodology: Tradition and Perspectives], ed. M. Walczak, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2010, p. 11.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁶ J. Gnitecki, *Eksplikacja pojęcia „przedmiot badań pedagogiki”* [Explication of the Notion of the “Subject of Pedagogical Research”], [in:] *Konceptualizacje przedmiotu badań pedagogiki* [Conceptualisations of the Subject of Pedagogical Research], ed. K. Rubacha, Oficyna Wydawnicza “Impuls”, Kraków 2008, p. 35.

ally struggling to define personality as the subject of their research? We are not worse than psychologists if they have a dilemma how to deal with an abundance of theories, in this case such as theories of personality, the prospect of the accumulation of knowledge and its interpretation. Piotr Oleś writes:

Although almost 70 years have passed since the emergence of personality psychology, it is still debated how it should be practiced and how personality should be understood. Should the structure of personality be determined in terms of features, or should personality be understood as a system of information, habits or personal meanings, or perhaps should the fundamental and unconscious conflict determining human behaviour be sought, as psychodynamic theories proposed? Should we make references to the rules governing the world of nature, as sociobiology suggests, or are the specifically human predispositions for development and intentional activity to be searched for, as humanistic, phenomenological and existential theories propose? Should we study the potential for creative changes and development throughout one's lifetime or focus on achieving competences, the regulatory force of beliefs concerning the "ego", or perhaps on conscious and unconscious conflicts?¹⁷

The philosopher Włodzimierz Prokopiuk reproaches pedagogues for the multitude of languages and knowledge about child-rearing, believing that their frequent mixing of "[...] scientific, philosophical, colloquial, religious, mythical, journalistic, and art-inspired statements [...] results in borderline or eclectic forms, as well as pseudo- and para-languages"¹⁸. Stanisław Kawula, too, points to the fact that representatives of other sciences depreciate pedagogy for the language it uses and the way pedagogues formulate their statements. "It is believed that its language is still pre-scientific: rather literary or even mythical, and that pedagogy merely 'speaks beautifully', but does not have much influence on educational and child-rearing practice and its effects"¹⁹.

Although the knowledge about child-rearing and education collected and broadened by the subsequent generations of scholars, has many variants, a question emerges whether thanks to it we know much more about the principles governing those processes than our predecessors did a hundred or two hundred years ago? Is it not so that, continuously returning to past descriptions, categories and explanations, we only use their modern terminological substitutes, but otherwise

¹⁷ P. Oleś, *Perspektywa integracji nauki o osobowości czy metateoria?* [The Perspective of the Integration of Personality Studies or Metatheory?], [in:] *Psychologia w perspektywie XXI wieku* [Psychology in the Perspective of the 21st Century], eds. Z. Chlewiński, A. E. Sękowski, TN KUL, Lublin 2004, p. 143.

¹⁸ W. Prokopiuk, *Wprowadzenie do rozważań nad humanizacją pedagogiki (edukacji) w kontekście filozoficznych aspektów przestrzeni pedagogicznej przelomu wieków* [An Introduction to Reflections on Humanisation of Pedagogy (Education) in the Context of Philosophical Aspects of Pedagogical Space at the Turn of the Century], [in:] *Metodologia pedagogiki zorientowanej humanistycznie* [Methodology of Humanistically-Oriented Pedagogy], eds. D. Kubinowski, M. Nowak, Oficyna Wydawnicza "Impuls", Kraków 2006, p. 130.

¹⁹ S. Kawula, *Pedagogika jako swoista nauka o człowieku* [Pedagogy as a Specific Human Science], [in:] *Prace promocyjne z pedagogiki. Skrypt dla uczestników seminariów: licencjackiego, magisterskiego i doktoranckiego* [Dissertations in Pedagogy. Academic Book for Participants of BA, MA and PhD Seminars], Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego, Olsztyn 2000, p. 15.

we have not moved forward much? It is far easier to accept a statement about progress in technology, medicine or natural science than in the humanities. If the history of pedagogical knowledge had a significant impact on the social, cultural and political life of the societies in which it is developed, we might be witnessing progress expressed by better manners or higher education of the subsequent generations. However, the increase in pedagogical knowledge has not prevented and is not countering the subsequent failures of humankind, and individual or collective tragedies. Unfortunately, despite such a dynamic development of human and social sciences, our general knowledge about human functioning, conditions and ways of behaviour, to some extent is still questionable, and probabilistic. I wonder if pedagogy has not been trapped by ideonomy, i.e. discovering knowledge which already exists hidden in words used by previous generations, and thus does not bring anything new to our knowledge about the studied phenomena, despite it perhaps being interesting and tentatively fruitful in practice²⁰.

Child-rearing studies do not have their own pedagogical theories and representatives of this discipline reluctantly use theories formed by the sciences which cooperate with it. Moreover, pedagogues are not interested in building their own theories, which should be their main task.

However, the building of theoretical pedagogy could be considered a specific "to be or not to be" of this discipline as one equivalent of significance to other social sciences. [...] Regretfully, when one is looking at the newest history and today's condition of Polish (but not only Polish) pedagogy, one can easily have the impression that it is not progressing towards a more mature form, whose significant feature would be its "theorisation"²¹.

However, it is impossible to agree with the author's thesis that the highest level of development of pedagogy as a distinct scientific discipline is its achievement of a state defined as the formation of a homogeneous, integrated, consolidated and systematised theoretical scientific discipline²².

Such an expectation was perhaps valuable and important at the time when only one pedagogy was to be in effect. However, the systematisation of pedagogy should not consist in this kind of its finalisation, but in the pedagogues' identification and self-determination of the current or theoretical paradigm of humanistic and/or social sciences in which they locate their research. The search for and the call for the creation of a single synthesis of knowledge about child-rearing and education is a return to the state of development of sciences in the merely positivist paradigm.

²⁰ Ch. Van Doren, *A History of Knowledge: Past, Present and Future*, Ballantine Books, New York, 1992, p. 386.

²¹ H. Muszyński, *Teoria w pedagogice* [Theory in Pedagogy], [in:] *Uniwersytet. Społeczeństwo. Edukacja, Materiały konferencji naukowej z okazji X-lecia Wydziału Studiów Edukacyjnych Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, Poznań 13–14 października 2003* [University. Society. Education. Materials from the Scientific Conference Marking the 10th Anniversary of the Faculty of Educational Studies, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, 13th–14th Oct. 2003], eds. W. Ambroziak and K. Przyszczykowski, Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, Poznań 2004, p. 89.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 91.

It is not true that knowledge about child-rearing and education, which is based on a current, orientation, theory or paradigm clearly selected by the researcher, will be useless for practice. On the contrary. It is precisely thanks to this that the particular processes and facts are not only explained better but also better interpreted.

Pedagogy does not possess any particular research methods, and even in methodological textbooks presented by their authors-pedagogues, there are great differences which concern the understanding of science itself, locating pedagogy within it, and the classification of paradigms, methods and research techniques. Pedagogical research should therefore be interdisciplinary, liberating itself – as Marian Nowak put it:

[...] from being monopolised by a single dominating aspect of the knowledge about child-rearing, either philosophical or another [...]. The pedagogue should strive to achieve scientific understanding of child-rearing practice and at the same time be open to the world of ideas (child-rearing philosophy) and to standpoints originating from the perspectives of other sciences interested in the knowledge of child-rearing such as psychology of child-rearing, sociology of child-rearing, politics of child-rearing, etc.²³

Let us see how pedagogues – authors of textbooks devoted to the methodology of research in this discipline – reinforce our sense of self-confidence (distinctiveness of competence) or the sense of inferiority or the necessity of submission they consider deserved. In his textbook discussing the basics of research methodology in pedagogy, Marian Nowak describes this discipline as a “philosophical-empirical-practical science covering the entire content of these individual words and their tradition in the history of scientific research methodology”²⁴. Following Wilhelm Flitner, I assume that pedagogy

[...] is tantamount to engaged thinking originating from a responsible pedagogue. Essentially, it is a humanistic science and this forces it to adopt a particular scientific approach²⁵. Although – he adds – its problems fit the general methodology of scientific research, it is primarily related to the tradition of the humanistic and social sciences, with the latter also using the methods of cognition applied by the natural sciences. However, since pedagogues deal with open situations, then, when studying processes which occur as a part of them, they are not always able to indicate their real causes, the relationships between them or their consequences”.

Therefore, M. Nowak suggests that, following Thomas Cook, the term quasi-experimentation be used in the case of the empirical research done in pedagogy,

²³ M. Nowak, *Przedmiot pedagogiki w kontekście jej wyzwań i założeń* [The Subject of Pedagogy in the Context of its Challenges and Assumptions], [in:] *Konceptualizacje przedmiotu badań pedagogiki* [Conceptualisations of the Subject of Pedagogical Research], ed. K. Rubacha, Oficyna Wydawnicza “Impuls”, Kraków 2008, pp. 86–87.

²⁴ M. Nowak, *Epistemologiczne, aksjologiczne i metodologiczne podstawy badań pedagogicznych* [Epistemological, Axiological and Methodological Bases for Pedagogical Research], [in:] *Podstawy metodologii badań w pedagogice* [The Basics of Methodology of Research in Pedagogy], ed. S. Palka, GWP, Gdańsk 2010, p. 15.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

the research approach referring to probabilistic variable determinants. Research of this type

[...] enforces the treatment of the obtained results as trial or anticipated results, and therefore it is realistic probabilistic research, involving the need for a critical debate about the problems, procedures and results of scientific research taking into account various significant perspectives²⁶.

At the same time, the author points out that such a research procedure does not guarantee objectivity or neutrality of the data obtained. Little wonder, then, that he states:

Pedagogy therefore is not a rigorously scientific field of knowledge in the positivist sense, divided and functioning according to definite rules, but is a sort of dynamic knowledge, which makes events considered from an epistemological perspective meaningful²⁷.

In the same textbook, Dariusz Kubinowski distinguishes two scopes of research essential for pedagogy and focusing on the essence of child-rearing, namely: "the studying of contexts of child-rearing in the pedagogical perspective, as well as the studying of child-rearing in the pedagogical perspective"²⁸. Because of the multi-paradigmaticity of pedagogy, the author questions its theoretical-methodological peculiarity, locating this discipline as a borderline science "between"

[...] humanities, art, ethics and action, between theoreticality and practicality, between factuality and potentiality, between philosophy and empiricism, between description and evaluation, between diagnosis, prediction and design, between experience and ideas, between democracy and obligation, between verbalism and commitment, between oneness and diversity, between reflection and methodology, between...²⁹.

Science understood in this way fades away in some space, aiming at the agreement of a complementary and adopted or binding pedagogical paradigm at a given time and place.

Reading this author's textbook devoted to qualitative pedagogical research, as this very approach is the subject of his particular cognitive and practical interest, we will find a thesis which may have been used by the already mentioned J. Górniewicz. What he writes is that if, since the time of J.F. Herbart, pedagogy has not managed to achieve its dream of its "scientification" in compliance with its positivist approach, then it is not surprising that a question emerges:

does such sweeping ambiguity of academic pedagogues' standpoints concerning the identity of their own discipline indicate pedagogy's weakness or does it perhaps show

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²⁸ D. Kubinowski, *Przyrodnicze i humanistyczne podstawy badań pedagogicznych* [Natural and Humanistic Basics of Pedagogical Research], [in:] *Podstawy metodologii badań w pedagogice* [The Basics of Research Methodology in Pedagogy], ed. S. Palka, GWP, Gdańsk 2010, p. 43.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

traits leading to the identification of its specificity – the idiom of pedagogy/education? This state is deepened by the – usually concealed – inferiority complexes of some academic pedagogues, who would like to be considered scholars in the same right as sociologists, psychologists or anthropologists, but who often are not precisely because of this ambiguity, which they themselves also raise; hence possibly their striving for the confirmation of their “scientific quality” through the turning towards positivist traditions. At the same time, they avoid the topic of the specificity and autonomy of pedagogy as a scientific discipline and, respectively, its methodology, declaring that they simply do research on child-rearing/education using various methods, interdisciplinarily, thus resigning from participation in the metatheoretical debate, which is essential for every discipline³⁰.

Child-rearing studies also do not usually obtain the highest marks from institutions and experts when it comes to the evaluation of the quality of research activity conducted by pedagogues and its results – this applies to the assessments carried out not only within academic entities but, first and foremost, by state agencies (the Central Committee for Degrees and Titles; the ministerial parametric assessment of the achievements of scientific entities; the State Accreditation Commission, which evaluates graduate schools; research grant reviewing boards). D. Kubinowski raises an objection against the positivist paradigm which continues to dominate the evaluations of the quality of dissertations in today’s Polish pedagogy, together with the quantitative approach which results in “humanistic quantophobia in pedagogy” (after Pitirim Sorokin). This consists in attempts at the giving of a numerical dimension to the subject of pedagogical research and to uncritically universalising the measurability of partially or entirely unmeasurable phenomena, by enforcing the use of mathematical and statistical methods as the only scientifically validated ones³¹.

Jacek Piekarski rightly asks to what extent it is still possible in the academic environment, and particularly in the pedagogical circles, to obtain acceptance for specific methodological rules in the situation when they are diverse and multi-paradigmatic and, also, what requirements can be applied, in the light of the broadening phenomenon of methodological tolerantism, to the scientific statements under evaluation when the reviewer wants to be guided by the generally accepted principles of the

continuity of knowledge, its consistency, the quality of referencing to the key pedagogical categories or precisely defining the possible conditions for [their – B.Ś.] further development and use. The detailed criteria accepted in this scope, which are varied also because of the specific kind of methodological orientation, seem to require a constant debate and critical confrontation of the solutions adopted³².

³⁰ D. Kubinowski, *Jakościowe badania...* [Qualitative Research...], p. 92.

³¹ Idem, *Metodologia spod znaku x a humanistyczna tożsamość pedagogiki* [The X Methodology or Humanistic Identity of Pedagogy], [in:] *Metodologiczne problemy tworzenia wiedzy w pedagogice. Oblicza akademickiej praktyki* [Methodological Problems in Creating Pedagogical Knowledge. The Aspects of Academic Practice], eds. J. Piekarski, D. Urbaniak-Zajac, K.J. Szmids, Oficyna Wydawnicza “Impuls”, Kraków 2010, p. 80.

³² J. Piekarski, *Kryteria waloryzacji praktyki badawczej* [The Criteria of Research Practice Valorisation], [in:] *Metodologiczne problemy tworzenia wiedzy w pedagogice...* [Methodological Problems of Creating Knowledge in Pedagogy...], pp. 172–173.

Nowadays, there is no point in undertaking separatist work on the construction of the methodology of pedagogical research, because the phenomena or patterns constituting its subject require knowledge from various scientific domains and disciplines. The studied child-rearing and educational processes are determined by social, humanistic and natural science variables, and therefore, pedagogy, being one of many human sciences, has a supra-specialist and integrative nature. "Thus, pedagogy is a scientific multidiscipline rather than a discipline with a narrow profile. In this sense, it belongs to the group of 'comprehensive' sciences"³³. Scholars should cooperate with each other in this respect, taking into account the borders of their competences. For instance, educational diagnostics, which must involve data processing rather than registration of behaviour, is becoming merely a supplementary field, which is remarkably

[...] useful when combined with knowledge from the area of child-rearing, didactics or administration [...] and especially two other closely related disciplines: psychology and pedagogy³⁴.

In educational research, the voice of pedagogues is less and less important. It is sufficient to see who carries it out on political order today. The beneficiaries of the EU funds designated towards diagnosing the Polish education are mainly sociologists and psychologists. It is enough to read the latest reports and publications about school education to realise who makes these diagnoses and the level they represent, and at the same time, to increase one's own confidence looking at the low level of interpretation and analysis – even those obtained with the help of the best-standardised tools for empirical data. We must, therefore, start from becoming aware of the barriers, limitations and distortions of the scientific dialogue with those among us and, above all, from the other social sciences, who call themselves representatives of the "high" methodology.

The consciously understood situation (social, educational, political, etc.) has to be named in a language stepping beyond its determinants and enabling its explanation (i.e. a reference to what is exterior to it) and the undertaking of change-oriented actions. [...] Such shaping of the critical competency – competency in understanding exceeding situational restrictions, must be grounded in the two domains mentioned above – in direct experience determined by the particular social position, cultural identity and political situation, as well as in the "academic" knowledge. Only critical understanding may in turn be the basis for autonomous, subjective action leading to the change of the situation of enslavement³⁵.

Although fearfulness is one of the components of human nature, since the instinct of self-preservation prevents people from acting when in danger, one should not

³³ S. Kawula, *Pedagogika jako swoista nauka...* [Pedagogy as a Particular Science...], p. 14.

³⁴ B. Niemierko, *Diagnostyka edukacyjna. Podręcznik akademicki* [Educational Diagnostics. Academic Textbook], WN PWN, Warszawa 2009, p. 11.

³⁵ T. Szkudlarek, *Wyzwania pedagogiki krytycznej* [Challenges of Critical Pedagogy], [in:] T. Szkudlarek, B. Śliwerski, *Wyzwania pedagogiki krytycznej i antypedagogiki* [Challenges of Critical Pedagogy and Anti-Pedagogy], third corrected edition, Oficyna Wydawnicza "Impuls", Kraków 2000, p. 29.

give up in the face of a drama with a growing scale of difficulty, but struggle with oneself.

When in 1990, together with Tomasz Szkudlarek, I was preparing a book about critical pedagogy and anti-pedagogy, we treated it as a significant impulse (hence the name of the publishing house which published the book) to build the pedagogy of liberation and together with it to construct an emancipatory education and put it into practice. It is likely that no one noticed the thesis formulated by a scholar from Gdansk or bothered about it, although, as it turned out – it was almost prophetic. Let me quote a paragraph essential for these reflections:

The relationship between the pedagogy of liberation (i.e. a theoretical vision of guiding towards freedom) and the liberating, emancipatory education is like between any pedagogy and education – debatable. In the case of the radical critical pedagogy, the debatability is of particular importance. This is because, in a sense, radical pedagogy seemed to be another kind of theorisation, another attempt at grasping the complex realness of child-rearing – one satisfactorily encompassing these of its aspects which previously could not fit any other theoretical system, which had to be considered by any classical pedagogy as accidental, peripheral phenomena, or – at the most – co-existing with (if noticed at all) “decent” child-rearing. It is a group of theories breaking with any connection with scientific objectivism reduced to the translation of data into figures, with an obscure ideology concealed behind the declared appreciation of the universal values of traditional culture, and involving the closing in fossilised frameworks of ideas resistant to confrontation with living experience. Therefore, the perspective of the undermining of the theoretical pretence of this variety of pedagogy is of particular significance – it induces an absolutely fundamental question, one which is finally and radically first: the question about the possibility of the existence of pedagogy in general³⁶.

Today, after over twenty years of Polish transformation, I can see how much we ourselves facilitate the process of not only marginalisation and elimination, but also colonisation of our own scientific discipline. The scientist from Gdansk was not alone when asking whether pedagogy was still possible and necessary in the post-modern world. However, it seemed to him that it was justified to ask whether we are dealing with the end of pedagogy as a result of the death of politics broadly understood as the “[...] demise of social activity oriented towards the achievement of valuable objectives”³⁷. The demise was also to be understood as the end of pedagogy as a science serving the intentional rearing of the human being. In the pedagogue’s opinion, the only possible pedagogy is one which will abandon normativeness, thus submitting itself to the rigours of the social sciences.

[For] many pedagogues such a perspective, limiting the scope of claims raised by theory in relation to description and those raised by education in relation to “contextual” activity not guided by the awareness of the purposes or a conviction about the understanding of the nature of child-rearing, will not be satisfactory. It is very difficult to give up on the belief that what one has to offer to others is important; that our values are universally

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

acclaimed; that the goals of child-rearing stemming from these values may also serve well those who do not see any sense in them. It is difficult to forgo pedagogy³⁸.

After all, science as a part of culture is an area of the perpetual clashing of totalising (stating) and discriminative tendencies, of dominance and resistance; therefore, the struggle to be a DIFFERENT scientific discipline should be focused on the reinforcement of the difference of our knowledge about the subject of our research and the undertaking of an active but transformative resistance to attempts of its depreciation and preclusion from science.

As can be seen, the dichotomy: an other/our own, facilitates the analysis of pedagogy among other sciences, since from the perspective of every discipline of humanistic and social sciences, pedagogy is an other – a stranger, when due to the poor quality of its research, pedagogy excludes itself from the world of the disciplines, whose representatives care for maintaining the highest possible scientific level. Therefore, although it partly derives from philosophy, it no longer belongs to it and, due to its research results, it appears as strange in relation to psychology, sociology, ethnography and political science. The otherness of pedagogy results from the lack of readiness for even as much as the reading of dissertations in this field by scholars representing other disciplines and thus from the incomprehensibility of the scope and value of achievements which are indisputable in terms of methodology and content.

In highly developed countries, pedagogy is treated with respect as a distinct and fully acknowledged science. In one of the youngest scientific disciplines: text linguistics, which has been developing for about a quarter of a century within the interdisciplinary textual science (Germ. *Textwissenschaft*), West European humanists recognise the presence of pedagogy as significant and equivalent to other disciplines (rhetoric, theology, jurisprudence, psychology, literary studies, text linguistics). The subjects of the basic research done by pedagogues include the regularities occurring in the analysed texts, which determine their textuality³⁹.

In pedagogy, attention has been drawn for many years to whether its texts meet the criteria of being scientific or not. Theoretical treatises intrinsically have to comply with the criteria of cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativeness, situationality and intertextuality, whereas empirical dissertations contain theoretical studies which precede the conceptualisation of research and which describe and justify the research problem formulated, as well as are the basis for the defining and operationalisation of variables.

Lech Witkowski's works are extremely interesting attempts at the blurring of borders for the purposes of the integrity of the knowledge developed and of doing

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

³⁹ H. Vater, *Wstęp do lingwistyki tekstu. Struktura i rozumienie tekstu* [Introduction to Textual Linguistics. The Structure and Understanding of Text], transl. E. Blachut, A. Gołębiowski, Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT, Wrocław 2009.

research across all disciplines. In the introduction to his treatise on authority, the philosopher of education emphasised:

This treatise has been written across currents, traditions, perspectives and fields of activity, rebelling against the habit-honoured divisions, closures and symptoms of ignorance among them. Of course, I apologise again for tarnishing the “sanctities” of disciplinary specialisations, which at the very most deserve interdisciplinary debates⁴⁰.

Pedagogy, therefore, as any other humanistic science, should be an integral space for reflection, obliging pedagogues to avoid stiff adherence to their own scientific disciplines and subdisciplines as well as the pigeonholing of knowledge in them instead of problematizing it.

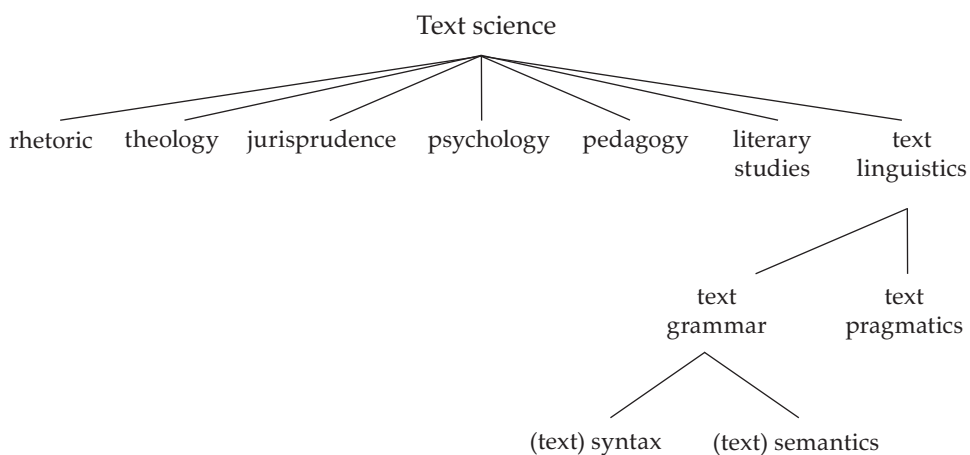


Diagram 1. Classification of text sciences

Source: H. Vater, *Wstęp do lingwistyki tekstu. Struktura i rozumienie tekstu*, transl. E. Błachut, A. Gołębiowski, Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT, Wrocław 2009, p. 14.

The 21st century marks the beginning of an entirely new scope of humanistic and social research in the metacognitive area, i.e. one the subjects of analyses and disputes of which focus on the most important and valuable ideas, phenomena, and trends in thoughts and theories, which connect the past, the canon, the tradition with the present and the challenges of the future. It was in every epoch that they became the current of searches for and the location of the essence and scope or intensity of research phenomena scholars found interesting. For pedagogy, like for all humanistic and social sciences (what an unfortunate division!), it has always been and will continue to be important what creates the knowledge about the condition of the human being of the past, the present, and the future as imagined

⁴⁰ L. Witkowski, *Historie autorytetu wobec kultury i edukacji* [Histories of Authority in Relation to Culture and Education], Oficyna Wydawnicza “Impuls”, Kraków 2011, p. 26.

by the futurists, and, thus, about its past, current and future impact on the practice of both education and child-rearing, and the whole of civilisation. As a result of the processes of globalisation and the parametrisation of scientific achievements enforced by scientific competition, the period of focus on national pedagogical sciences (which is not equivalent to the end of their inner development) is coming to an end, and is being replaced with their confrontation with pedagogical sciences from other countries, cultures and languages, so that their mutual interpenetration enhances their progress through dialogue. This creates a completely new circle of scientific relationships, which step beyond the state of isolation of varying degree, in favour of exchange, deepening, revision, mutual inspiration, trying renewed models or ideas in practice, and opening themselves up for new fields of research.

Summary

Pedagogy trapped between the humanities and the social sciences

The content of the article is a discussion on the place of pedagogy as a scientific discipline. The author characterizes pedagogy as a discipline located both in the social sciences area and the humanities. Such a location of pedagogy generates methodological problems – including the questioning of its scientific status. The author perceives pedagogy as an interdisciplinary science and discusses its chances for development enabling the break-up of the scientific discipline's isolation.

English translation: Anna Moroz-Darska

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