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Denaturalisation of instrumental rationality in management education in Poland

Introduction

From the perspective of the cultural responsibility of the role of the manager, the quality of education which prepares one to take it up is not insignificant. Management education¹ fulfilling the function of preparation for participation in culture, including participation in organisational reality, must facilitate the continuous development of a critical reflexivity by the persons who are involved in it. The quality of communication between the persons entangled in the educational process, the involved values and the content used in the process of education are of key importance for the quality of cultural competences and the level of symbolic capital deciding about the ethical dimension of organisational actions. This is because the role of the manager is related to the ability to recognise the normative nature and the structural complexity of both the reality and the pursued objectives in consideration not only of the economic effectiveness of the organisation, but above all of the existential condition of the subjects involved in an action².

Unfortunately, management education in Poland is today dominated by the technical imperative locating its main normative assumptions in the area of instrumental rationality. The educational content is over-economised, which locates it in the profile of the paradigm of functionalism and positivism. Communication between teachers and students, as well as contact with symbolic culture are apparent and boil down to the mere memorisation of information. Instead of learning about the humanistic aspects of management of an organisation, including people, which requires developed cultural competences and a humanistic imagination, allowing one to notice the complexity of organisational life and care for other people, students are only taught to calculate profits and losses, and to treat other people in the organisation as a resource necessary to achieve their economic goal. The cultural illiteracy

¹ I understand the notion of management education in Poland as studies in economics, studies in management (at private and public universities), as well as postgraduate studies, including the MBA.

² L. Witkowski, *Jak pokonać 'homo oeconomicus'?* (problem specyfiki zarządzania humanistycznego) [How to Beat 'Homo Oeconomicus'? (Problem of the Specificity of Humanistic Management)], [in:] *Humanistyka i zarządzanie. W poszukiwaniu problemów badawczych i inspiracji metodologicznych* [The Humanities and Management. In Search of Research Problems and Methodological Inspirations], Piotr Górski (ed.), Wydawnictwo UJ, Kraków 2009.

increasingly mushrooming among Polish managers largely results from the fact that the management education they receive is apparent and masked with the alleged prestige of a diploma, the position of the educating institution in the ranking, and high tuition fees (which is especially noticeable in the case of MBA³ studies).

Critical management education is an interesting, albeit not yet recognised in Poland, research tool allowing one to diagnose the pathologies of management education and propose relevant changes; it draws its basic assumptions from radical pedagogy and is simultaneously the most important emancipatory field for a broader critical approach in management studies (critical management studies)⁴. This article elaborates on both these trends, discusses their founding assumptions, and, using the critical tools they offer, undertakes an attempt at a critical diagnosis of the current normative condition of the management education in Poland. My reflections aim primarily at the indication of the illusion of the naturalness of the location of normative assumptions of management education on instrumental rationality, the showing of cultural pathologies resulting from such a location, and the offering of an alternative in the form of an emancipatory rationality. They are based on my own theoretical studies, in which I make recourse to Lech Witkowski's ideas of the ethics of reading, symbolic authority and the triad of moral development, as well as the existing empirical studies concerning Polish managers and management education.

Critical management studies

Sources

Critical management studies (CMS)⁵ are a transdisciplinary platform of critical humanistic reflection on the theory and practice of management and organisation. The approach adopted an institutionalised form at the beginning of the 1990s and although its popularity in the Western management discourse has been growing, it is still a poorly recognized area in its Polish counterpart⁶. The intellectual sources of the critical approach in management and organisation studies are very broad and include in particular the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, post-

³ MBA: Master of Business Administration.

⁴ M. Zawadzki, *Nurt krytyczny w zarządzaniu: kultura, edukacja, teoria* [Critical Management Stream: Culture, Education, Theory], Sedno, Warszawa 2014.

⁵ H. Willmott, M. Alvesson, T. Bridgman (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Management Studies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009.

⁶ See M. Zawadzki, *Nurt krytyczny w zarządzaniu: kultura, edukacja, teoria* [Critical Management Stream: Culture, Education, Theory], Sedno, Warszawa 2014; Ł. Sułkowski, M. Zawadzki (eds.), *Krytyczny nurt zarządzania* [Critical Management Stream], Difin, Warszawa 2014; Ł. Sułkowski, *Epistemologia i metodologia zarządzania* [Management Epistemology and Methodology], PWE, Warszawa 2012; M. Zawadzki, *Rola i miejsce nurtu krytycznego w naukach o zarządzaniu* [The Role and Place of the Critical Approach in Management Sciences], "Culture Management / Kulturmanagement / Zarządzanie Kulturą", Vol. 5; M. Zawadzki, *Teoria krytyczna w epistemologii nauk o zarządzaniu* [Critical Theory in the Epistemology of the Management Sciences], "Przedsiębiorczość i Zarządzanie" 2011, Vol. XII, No. 12, pp. 13–28.

modernism, poststructuralism, critical realism, radical pedagogy, cultural studies, and feminism. Despite the multitude of sources powering the critical approach, which evolved and pluralised as the approach developed (and which often overlap in terms of the scope of their proposed normative solutions), it is the critical theory of the Frankfurt School which remains its basic source constituting the foundation for research efforts⁷.

In the field of the critical management studies we may identify two main approaches related to the adaptation of the critical theory of the Frankfurt School to the exploration of the world of management and organisation⁸. The first one is related to the critique of ideology and refers to the early works of researchers originating from the school. This approach is mainly interested in the critique of the managerial ideology, which is based on Marxist theory and highlights the problem of the exploitation of employees by managers. Concepts based on this approach are primarily directed at the critique of the following processes: the naturalisation and universalisation of managerial interests, the primacy of instrumental reason, and the hegemony of power.

Although the critical approach draws inspirations from the early Frankfurt School, researchers turn attention to the shortcomings of its proposal in the context of reflection on organisation and management. Representatives of the school, such as Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, devoted for example little attention to problems concerning the work of the manager, and when they did focus on the topic, they typically treated managers as a homogenic group of agents of capitalism who oppress employees to maximise their own profits. This idea, which originates from Marxism, does not allow to see that managers themselves can be oppressed as well, or that a single organisation can have different levels of management together with different organisational roles⁹.

The second approach to critical studies on management and organisation is connected with the use of research inspirations resulting from Jürgen Habermas's reformulation of the paradigm of critical theory. Although elements related to the critique of ideology can also be found in this approach, the emphasis in the use of the critical theory in the field of management is shifted to the diagnosis of the discourse of management in the context of the cognitive triangle¹⁰, as well as the use of the concept of the ideal communication situation for diagnosing attempts at the re-

⁷ A. G. Scherer, *Critical Theory and Its Contribution to Critical Management Studies*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Management Studies*, H. Willmott, M. Alvesson, T. Bridgman (eds.), Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009, pp. 29–51.

⁸ M. Alvesson, S. Deetz, *Critical Theory and Postmodernism: Approaches to Organization Studies*, [in:] *Critical Management Studies. A Reader*, C. Grey, H. Willmott (eds.), Oxford University Press, Oxford 2005, pp. 60–106.

⁹ J. Duberley, P. Johnson, *Understanding Management Research: An Introduction to Epistemology*, Sage Publications, London 2003, p. 123.

¹⁰ J. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Beacon Press, Boston 1972; H. Willmott, *Organization Theory as a Critical Science? Forms of Analysis and 'New Organizational Form'*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Organization Theory: Meta-theoretical Perspectives*, C. Knudsen, H. Tsoukas (eds.), Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York 2005, pp. 88–112.

formation of institutions by ethically-oriented discourse¹¹. In the first case, research focuses on the epistemology of management and involves critical diagnosis of the paradigms present in the management sciences with a view to the showing of the consequences resulting from the adoption of specific normative assumptions. In the second case, the main area of interest lies in the studying of organisational communication in terms of the possibility to eliminate communication disruptions in the context of the constitution of the type of communication being the basis for rational, reflexive, and moral decision-making. Moreover, the critical analysis of communication in an organisation facilitates the diagnosis of the role of concrete management models in an improvement/deterioration of the quality of communication.

Normative assumptions

Being based on the assumption of the necessity to care for people as participants of the world of organisation, the critical approach is in particular directed at the diagnosis of the social and cultural conditions of the relationship of domination or oppression in an organisation, which are often effects of management processes. These conditions are analysed as elements of such cultural pathologies in organisations as the managerial ideology, instrumental approach to others, and the hegemony of economism. In connection with its critical and humanistic orientation, the central issues for the critical approach include the notion of rationality and progress, technocracy and social engineering, autonomy and control, communicative action, power and ideology, the value of resistance, as well as the epistemological issues which are of fundamental importance for the construction of knowledge related to the discipline of management. When performing research into these issues, researchers are guided by an intention to humanise the discourse of management and to contribute to the improvement of the conditions of work by way of the democratisation of social relations, which would be connected with the necessity to constitute a reflexive and emancipatory dimension of human existence in an organisation.

Critical management studies are based on specific assumptions, which make it possible to differentiate between the criticality of research conducted from the perspective of this approach and of studies carried out in the management sciences. The approach of CMS does not claim the right to the indication of the only true meaning of critique (which would be consistent with positivist thinking constituting the main object of the critique of CMS¹²) – but only argues in favour of its un-

¹¹ J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action – Reason and the Rationalization of Society* (Vol. I), Beacon Press, Boston, MA 1984; J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action – Lifeworld and Systems: a Critique of Functionalist Reason* (Vol. II), Beacon Press, Boston, MA 1987; J. Forester, *On Fieldwork in a Habermasian Way: Critical Ethnography and the Extra-ordinary Character of Ordinary Professional Work*, [in:] *Studying Management Critically*, H. Willmott, M. Alvesson (eds.), Sage Publications, London 2003, pp. 46–65.

¹² I wish to kindly thank dr Piotr Zamojski for turning my attention to the problem during informal conversations we had during the Gdansk-based conference “Critical Pedagogy Today. Questions on Theory and Practice” (Institute of Pedagogy, University of Gdansk, 28–29 May 2012).

derstanding originating primarily from the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, which is markedly different to the popular understanding of the notion in research, taking an opposite position and indicating its shortcomings.

As pointed out by Alessia Contu¹³, in the contemporary civilisation of speed, innovation, and hyper-reflexivity (although we are talking about the reflexivity reduced to the dimension of the familiarisation with the information noise, which has nothing to do with the knowledge which needs to be digested and subjected to critical insight), no one (and in particular a researcher) is going to declare themselves as an uncritical conformist or dogmatist. However, from the perspective of the critical theory, considering oneself critical only as a result of the role one plays (researcher) or the amount of familiarized information one has is tantamount to irresponsible usurpation. This is because criticality necessitates the adoption of specific strategies in relation to reality as a part of the process of its exploration and change. The adaptation of the critical theory of the Frankfurt School to the area of management makes it possible to point out some of these strategies. They include: denaturalisation, anti-performativeness and reflexivity, as well as the idea of the engagement of research into the process of aiming at social change through emancipatory processes¹⁴.

Denaturalisation – the basic research strategy in the critical approach, from which the other ones result – is directed at the questioning of the elements related to management and organisation, which are universally considered natural and obvious, and having no alternatives. Therefore, researchers undertake the effort of demonstrating that every reflection and action are determined by vested contexts or interests; in other words, they indicate their inevitably political and normative value. This goes hand in hand with the adoption of an anti-performative position and a denial that social relations within an organisation should be considered as solely instrumental ones, i.e. that they should be analysed in terms of the maximisation of results by means of specific measures. For example, the acknowledgment that the quality of management processes or the work of a manager depend solely on the ability to increase the economic effectiveness of an organisation leads to the de-politicisation of reflection on the processes of management and organisation. This is because in this way deeper ethical and political issues such as the distribution of life chances in an organisation or the degree of democratisation of inter-organisational relations are omitted.

The knowledge concerning management must therefore be liberated from the domination of instrumental rationality – practical usefulness based on efficiency rules cannot be the sole criterion of the value of knowledge. The return of the ethical dimension of knowledge in the management sciences can be facilitated by the postulate of reflexivity, which refers to the ability to see all the issues concerning organisation

¹³ A. Contu, *Critical Management Education*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Management Studies*, H. Willmott, M. Alvesson, T. Bridgman (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Management Studies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009, p. 538.

¹⁴ C. Grey, V. Fournier, *At the Critical Moment: Conditions and Prospects for Critical Management Studies*, "Human Relations" 2000, No. 53 (1), pp. 7–32.

and management as ones mediated by the vested tradition of their authors, including their decisions having the roots in philosophical assumptions. What is thus negated is the view on knowledge and truth as an objective and authoritative result of a positivistic rationality for the benefit of constructivism and epistemological pluralism.

Therefore, the critical approach indicates the inevitability of the adoption of specific values at every stage of the research process in the management sciences, simultaneously underlining that the separation of values from facts aimed at the fulfilment of the conditions of the objectivism of the research process is a positivist, unachievable illusion. The researcher is not a neutral observer, but inevitably involves themselves in the research process with his/her own personal values, which affect both the process and research results.

Denaturalisation, anti-performativeness and reflexivity are related to a commitment to *praxis*. It is one of the most important conditions for the execution of the emancipatory purpose constituting the leitmotif for the intellectual production of the critical approach. Emancipation is understood here as becoming aware or making others (employees, managers, scientists, students) aware of the fact that it is not necessary to adopt dehumanizing assumptions in thinking and acting and/or that it is not necessary to live in conditions which offend against human subjectivity and dignity, with the simultaneous intention of a change allowing a deeper care for humanity and subjectivity¹⁵. Attempts at changing the reality (also the organisational one) are some of the basic features differing critical management studies from other critical concepts and theories. Therefore, the critical approach aims not only at a different, critical view of the world of management, but, above all, at the introduction of changes to the theory and practice of management and organisation – also through changes in the area of education, including management education¹⁶.

Fields of intervention

The constructivist position of critical management studies makes it possible to design research and its methodology in the direction of the execution of the postulates of empowerment and emancipation. These postulates are executed in relation to three main areas and target groups: the area of the research discourse of management and scholars (researchers), the area of organisational discourse and employees of an organisation (including managers), the area of the discourse of management education and students together with teachers.

¹⁵ H. Willmott, M. Alvesson, T. Bridgman (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Management Studies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009.

¹⁶ M. Zawadzki, *Autorytet symboliczny jako wyzwanie dla edukacji menedżerskiej i nauk o zarządzaniu* [Symbolic Authority as a Challenge to Management Education and Management Sciences], [in:] *Pedagogika i zarządzanie edukacją i rozwojem. W perspektywie troski o uniwersytet i kulturę humanistyczną* [Pedagogy and Management with Education and Development. In the Perspective of Care for University and Humanistic Culture], Lech Witkowski, Monika Jaworska-Witkowska (eds.), series: *Przebudzenia Humanistyczne. Kolokwia* [Humanistic Awakenings, Colloquia], vol. I, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2010, pp. 222–248.

The orientation of the critical approach towards research discourse is directed primarily towards the diagnosis of the epistemological area of the management sciences, where the subject of critical research is the assumptions adopted in research processes and being a part of the knowledge concerning management and organisation¹⁷. Using the constructivist perspective, researchers situating their research in the critical approach underline that the very construction of knowledge from the discipline of management sciences affects the discourse of management, shaping not only the assumptions constituting the basis for research, but also the awareness of the environment of management and consultants, as well as – ultimately – the manner in which the organisation functions¹⁸.

Research undertaken as a part of critical management studies can also be conducted directly in an organisation. In such cases, the research most often takes the form of critical ethnography directed at the processes of the denaturalisation of the existing order and the critique of the dominating ideology. The processes are directly related to the emancipatory goal of critical research: the studies not only aim at the construction of useful knowledge on the basis of a diagnosis of the research problem and an analysis of the reality, but also at influencing the attitudes and awareness of the subjects participating in the research process¹⁹.

The area of education – in comparison with the two other areas – is the most effective and influential field for the implementation of changes in view of the possibility of the long-term introduction of emancipatory impulses based on the growth of cultural capital determining the reality and depth of the impact. In this case, the care for the reflexive and emancipatory dimension of being within an organisation combines deepened reflexion on the area of management education, which plays the key role in equipping the subjects with the cultural competences deciding about the ability to speak up for (one's own or other subjects') emancipatory dimension of being in an organisation. Research into this dimension is powered by critical management education, which draws its basic philosophical assumptions from radical pedagogy²⁰. Of key importance in this context are the ideas of emancipation and empowerment, which point to the fact that the achievement of the emancipatory dimension of participation in the public sphere – including the organisational one – depends on the quality of the execution of the cultural mission to do with the implementation of individuals to participation in culture by education.

¹⁷ M. Alvesson, S. Deetz, *Doing Critical Management Research*, Sage Publications, London 2000.

¹⁸ N. Harding, *The Social Construction of Management. Texts and Identities*, Routledge, London and New York 2003.

¹⁹ J. Duberley, P. Johnson, *Critical Management Methodology*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Management Studies*, H. Willmott, M. Alvesson, T. Bridgman (eds.), Oxford 2009, Oxford University Press, pp. 345–368.

²⁰ A. Contu, *Critical Management Education*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Management Studies*, H. Willmott, M. Alvesson, T. Bridgman (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Management Studies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009, pp. 536–550; C. Grey, *Reinventing Business Schools: The Contribution of Critical Management Education*, "Academy of Management Learning and Education" 2004, vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 178–186.

Cultural pathologies in management education in Poland

Education and management in the perspective of instrumental rationality

Using Jürgen Habermas's types of rationalities²¹, as well as Henry Giroux's concept of types of rationalities²² based on the former, it should be pointed out that the main problem of management education in Poland lies in the placement of its normative assumptions on the technical imperative with the domination of instrumental rationality determining educational processes. I understand rationality, following Giroux, as a set of cognitive interests, philosophical assumptions and social practices which mediate the particular understanding of social phenomena²³.

The domination of instrumental (or, as Giroux prefers: technical or technocratic) rationality results primarily in the ritualisation of the apparentness of the apoliticalness of education and the knowledge transmitted as a part of it. The model of education based on the dominance of this type of rationality is marked by the absence of reflexivity concerning the normative assumptions adopted as a part of it, as well as (thus) the non-reflexive belief on the indisputable rightness of these assumptions and their universal validity. Socialisation in this model of education boils down to the preparation of its recipients to the objectification of the appropriate measures, which will make it possible to execute the undisputable goals. This takes place via the discovery of 'facts' providing what things really are – everything which remains outside the sphere of 'facts' is considered to be a worthless speculation. The question concerning the validity of facts related to a given social order is in this case removed from discussion²⁴.

The generation of knowledge is therefore directed at the increased effectiveness and efficiency of resources in the context of the pursuit of the predetermined objectives – however, the questions concerning the validity of the adopted goals and the rightness of such an analytical practice fail to appear. Reality is understood as a set of independent, external, objective and constant elements or processes which can be discovered and manipulated by the human being who strives to extend his/her control over the world. These elements are understood as manipulated and interdependent variables, while the value of a given theory depends on its usefulness in the context of the control of the environment and the production of foreseeable effects. In this orientation, the teacher is only a passive transmitter of knowledge rather than a negotiator of senses concerning reality.

Management education in Poland is mainly directed at the preparation of in-

²¹ J. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Beacon Press, Boston 1972.

²² H. A. Giroux, *Teoria krytyczna i racjonalność w edukacji obywatelskiej* [Critical Theory and Rationality in Citizenship Education], transl. P. Kwieciński, A. Nalaskowski, [in:] H. A. Giroux, L. Witkowski, *Edukacja i sfera publiczna. Idee i doświadczenia pedagogiki radykalnej* [Education and the Public Sphere. Ideas and Experiences of Radical Pedagogy], Impuls, Kraków 2010, pp. 149–184.

²³ H. A. Giroux, *Teoria krytyczna...* [Critical Theory...], p. 153.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

dividuals for being able to calculate their own as well as the organisational interests and for acting in line with the established procedures in the context of the accomplishment of the imposed goals. The basic problem lies in the dominating presence of technicalised educational content based on the positivist paradigm, which accentuates the techniques of economic effectiveness at the price of the development of the humanistic imagination resulting from contact with humanistic content, not mentioning the lack of openness of subjects to the real digestion of the content²⁵. Thus, the education does not create the conditions for the acquisition of cultural competences and the broadening of symbolic capital, which are necessary for activity in the complex reality and for management, which constitutes a socio-cultural process of giving sense to reality²⁶.

It is assumed that the management practice requires only instrumental abilities, which are to allow rational action directed at the uncritical implementation of the appropriate measures leading, pursuant to the relation of cause and effect, to the achievement of the economic goal adopted as one having no alternative. In other words, in the area of the basic assumptions founding today's management education in Poland the *homo oeconomicus*²⁷ model is adopted as the ideal construct for the design of the role of the manager: independently of the complexity of the normative dilemma, the manager is to aim at the maximisation of subjectively expected results of his/her actions; the actions are reduced solely to the search for the measures necessary for the achievement of economic effectiveness. One of the results of such a state of affairs is the absence of the problematising dimension of education, which is usually reduced to the culturally-barren strategy of socialisation to ready-made prescriptions or solutions, which are considered to be indisputable facts allowing manipulation with the reality. This goes hand in hand with the absence of critical reflexivity and discussion on the discussed content or the reduction of such reflection solely to the instrumental issue of the potential of a given theoretical solution in the context of the pursuit of the economic goal in an organisation.

It should be noted that the very nature of the content provided as a part of management education in Poland reproduces an inability of autonomous thinking that is, however, justified by the apparent authority of the content. Of key importance in this context is the statement Lech Witkowski made following Hans Georg Gadamer, that "interpretation of a text sometimes plays a normative function [...], imposing its approach as the valid one"²⁸. The very construction of the content used in the didac-

²⁵ Which is visible in the field of management education both in Poland, and in the West; see J. Hendry, *Management Education and the Humanities: The Challenge of Post-Bureaucracy*, [in:] *Management Education and Humanities*, B. Czarniawska, P. Gagliardi (eds.), Edward Elgar, Cheltenham-Northampton 2006, pp. 21–44.

²⁶ S. Magala, *The Management of Meaning in Organizations*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2009.

²⁷ See L. Witkowski, *Jak pokonać 'homo oeconomicus'?*... [How to Beat 'Homo Oeconomicus'?...], pp. 115–142.

²⁸ L. Witkowski, *Wyzwania autorytetu w praktyce społecznej i kulturze symbolicznej (przechadzki krytyczne w poszukiwaniu dyskursu dla teorii)* [Challenges to Authority in Social Practice and Symbolic Culture (Critical Walks in Search of Discourse for Theory)], Impuls, Kraków 2009, p. 190.

tic process – content which is filled with positivist schemes persuasively communicating about its alleged objectivism and universal validity, generates an illusion of its authoritarianism and in consequence activates the mechanism of releasing one from the obligation of critical reflexivity concerning the things such content proposes.

What is symptomatic in this context is the construction of Polish management textbooks used in management education. As Sławomir Banaszak put it, “[...] they present either solely the positive side of management, as a part of which even difficulties can be overcome owing to the application of the appropriate algorithm of action, or they try to show the social, economic, and organisational reality as something simple, with the possible complexities and adversities related to the fact that it is not understood by the participants of the organisational life”²⁹. This goes hand in hand with the over-economised point of view (where the positivism, functionalism or school of classical economics is considered a cure for all organisational problems), which is additionally presented as the only valid one.

The above problem is accompanied by the failure to initiate a real discussion problematizing the generated content, which ultimately reduces the educational dimension of education to the cumulative collection of non-problematic information, which in this case, as Erich Fromm writes, takes an alienated form, since it is considered true only because it comes from a recognized authority³⁰. Alienated knowledge is an effect of “scholastic reading”³¹, where the real dialogue with the symbolic authority is replaced with its uncritical glorification.

The mechanism releasing one from reflexivity under the influence of the comfortable subordination to an authority is strengthened by the presence of non-scientific books written by persons considered to be management gurus in the management education curricula³². As John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge see it, management gurus manipulate managers’ minds, teaching them what they should think about everything³³. Categorical statements which are to suggest “what it really is like” and what one should do to be successful in an organisation are a constitutive element of both the management gurus themselves³⁴ and the seminars they conduct, which due to their high price and content not requiring a deeper thinking effort become appealing and attract people who are willing to copy unreflectively.

²⁹ S. Banaszak, *Edukacja menedżerska w społeczeństwie współczesnym. Studium teoretyczno-empiryczne* [Management Education in Today’s Society. A Theoretical and Empirical Study], Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2011, pp. 171–172.

³⁰ E. Fromm, *Wolność, determinizm, alternatywizm* [Freedom, Determinism, Alternativism], transl. A. Żuk, “Colloquia Communia” 1990, No. 1–6 (48–53), p. 105. Quoted after L. Witkowski, *Wyzwania autorytetu...* [Challenges to Authority...], p. 131.

³¹ L. Witkowski, *Wyzwania autorytetu...* [Challenges to Authority...], p. 168.

³² A. Zawadzki, *Smuggling Panaceas by Management Gurus: A Critical Approach* [in:] *Handbook of Research on Management Ideas and Panaceas: Adaptation and Context*, A. Örtenblad (ed.), Cheltenham 2015, Edward Elgar, pp. 313–326.

³³ A. Wooldridge, J. Micklethwait, *The Witch Doctors: Making Sense of the Management Gurus*, Times Books, 1996.

³⁴ See e.g. T. Peters, R. Waterman, *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America’s Best-Run Companies*, Harper & Row, New York 1982.

Management education in the perspective of the moral development triad developed by Habermas and Kohlberg

It is worthwhile to analyse the consequences of the domination of instrumental rationality in management education in Poland in the context of the implications resulting from the reconstruction of Jürgen Habermas and Lawrence Kohlberg's concept of the triad of moral development carried out by Lech Witkowski³⁵ and the types of community related to the concept, where I consider a given type of community as equivalent to a given type of organisation. It seems justified to state that the model of management education which dominates in Poland socialises students to the profile of a pre-conventional "community of interests" (organisation of interests) and the conventional "community of tasks" (task organisation).

The "community of interests" is marked by a strong pressure on the similarity of vested, defined interests and is a means for the execution of goals "related to egoistically perceived interest and the desired effect of temporarily jointly undertaken actions"³⁶. This community is constituted by individuals marked by the pre-conventional – i.e. the lowest – level of morality, related to the adoption of the "radar orientation" in the social space. This orientation "expresses [...] readiness for agreeing and pursuing one's own interest with any interest which dominates in the [...] surroundings at a given time"³⁷. Therefore, the individual functions at the level of the profit and loss strategy, trying to act in line with the logic of the avoidance of penalties and the individual profitability of the undertaken measures ("peace of mind" strategy).

In turn, the "community of tasks" constitutes a set reality, which was organised and functions around rigidly determined goals and tasks which are "more important than the vested perspectives of the individuals who function within it"³⁸. The community is constituted by individuals marked by the conventional level of moral development, who act following the logic of approval for group (organisational) standards and values as a part of their non-reflexive resignation from their own subjectivity. Hence, participants of organisations function here at the level of the 'role identity', which does not allow involvement in actions inconsistent with the assumed group standards in view of the unawareness of the problem of the legitimacy of these standards³⁹.

The third type of community is the "community as a task", which is attained under "principles of its creation agreed by dialogue"⁴⁰. An indispensable condition

³⁵ L. Witkowski, *Tożsamość i zmiana. Epistemologia i rozwojowe profile w edukacji* [Identity and Change. Epistemology and Developmental Profiles in Education], Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej, Wrocław 2010.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

for its existence is the subjectivity and creativity of individuals, and group targets constitute a specific help in the possibility of the accomplishment of individual goals, where autonomous individuals accept (or question) the normative rightness of both their own and group targets and analyse their consistence in a critical dialogue. This community is constituted by individuals marked by the highest, i.e. post-conventional level of moral development, which involves axio-normative tension related to the ability to question the existing standards, values, principles, goals or interests, if they limit individual subjectivity and prevent personal fulfilment (competence to act in a dispute)⁴¹.

It should be noticed that – as results from Banaszak's research⁴² – Polish managers who graduated from management studies are marked by a high level of social capital with a simultaneously poor level of cultural capital. Although a generalisation of conclusions resulting from empirical research to the entire population of managers in Poland would not be legitimate, the results of the study nevertheless provide food for thought. We should agree with Witkowski's suggestion, that – following Pierre Bourdieu – the possibility of the existence of cultural pathologies should be sought in particular as a part of phenomena marked by social success⁴³.

The conclusion concerning the high level of social capital results from the fact that the managers participating in the study were strongly motivated to extend their network of contacts to include persons owing to whom they may achieve an egoistic advantage, to informally support mainly people who may offer something to them in exchange and to act in line with the logic of a mutual 'arrangement' of the most advantageous options. The respondents typically shared an opinion that professional success was determined above all by the social capital understood as the appropriate connections and good contacts. The pre-conventional level of moral development and radar orientation related to the taking of actions aimed at the achievement of one's own egoistic interest and agreeing it with every dominating interest in the environment are visible to the naked eye.

The actions of the researched managers dominated by an instrumental rationality: theories of management are believed to be ready recipes for success and people in the organisation are treated instrumentally as a manipulated economic resource. This goes hand in hand with the absence of the need for following, as a part of organisational reality, ethical principles and with subordination to the es-

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

⁴² S. Banaszak, *Edukacja menedżerska w społeczeństwie współczesnym. Studium teoretyczno-empiryczne* [Management Education in Today's Society. A Theoretical and Empirical Study], Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2011, pp. 188–280. The study was conducted between 2006 and 2008 using the techniques of an in-depth interview (31 respondents), questionnaire (211 respondents), and content analysis (*The GoldenLine* social media portal).

⁴³ L. Witkowski, *Jaka kultura? (tezy, wypowiedzenia i podsumowanie)* [What Culture? (Theses, Complementary Comments and Summary)], [in:] *Jaka kultura? Jaki dyskurs? Sfera publiczna a spory o edukację, pedagogikę i zarządzanie* [What Culture? What Discourse? The Public Sphere and Disputes Concerning Education, Pedagogy, and Management], M. Jaworska-Witkowska (ed.), "Pedagogium", Szczecin 2008, pp. 19–49.

tablished procedures, in relation to which submissive conformism is adopted. The managers treat management processes as a tool allowing them to eliminate their employees' resistance and non-conformist attitudes: it is assumed that the higher the level of non-critical acceptance of the dominating standards and values in an organisation, the higher the chance for the achievement of the imposed organisational goals adopted in advance⁴⁴. The stagnation of moral development at the conventional level of "role identity" resulting in the loss of individual subjectivity and the specific "corrosion of character"⁴⁵ is yet another feature marking the functioning of the interviewed managers.

The low level of cultural capital is reflected in the poor communication-related competences of the managers who participated in the study, as well as in their inability to reflect critically. Their inability to speak correct Polish or use logical sentence structure and longer narration is one of the symptoms of their lack of cultural competences – another one is the inability to conduct a reflexive dialogue based on the power of argumentation, and yet another – the use of the argument of power in the form of symbolic violence in relation to their subordinates. What is symptomatic in this context is that the majority of Banaszak's subjects-managers agree that it is necessary to use shouting as a motivational impulse, and positively assess the strategy of being merciless in relation to their subordinates.

The picture of the moral poverty of the managers covered by the study and their lack of managerial competences is supplemented with their egoism, high opinion of themselves, demonstration of self-confidence with the help of material attributes (cars, watches, gadgets) and the simultaneous belief that their subordinates are lazy and incompetent. The deficit of cultural competences on the part of Polish managers becomes all the more terrifying when we become aware that they are a significant group of reference for the other employees in an organisation, providing considerable ethical models. As can be easily guessed, in this situation it is not difficult to witness the reproduction of cultural illiteracy.

Towards emancipatory rationality – the ethics of reading as a manager's lifestyle

The post-conventional moral development stage and preparation for activity in the profile of a community as a task seem to be, as of today, unattainable for many of the Polish managers, mainly due to their deficiencies in the area of education. The poor level of cultural capital clearly results from the absence of critical

⁴⁴ Positive evaluation of attitudes directed at non-critical conformism in an organisation is a characteristic trait of Polish organisational reality, as confirmed by other studies; see e.g. I. Stańczyk, J. Bugaj, T. Oleksyn, *Diagnoza i kierunki zmian w zarządzaniu zasobami ludzkimi w przedsiębiorstwach z Listy 500. Raport z badań [Diagnosis and Directions of Changes in Human Resources Management in Top 500 Companies. Research Report]*, Oficyna Wydawnicza SGH, Warszawa 2011, pp. 119–128.

⁴⁵ R. Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character. The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York – London 1998.

discussions during classes, absence of contact with books marked by rich epistemological potential provoking reflection, as well as from a failure to step beyond the over-economised perspective of the perception of reality (including that of organisation and management) reducing the dimension of education to an attempt at the answering of the simple question of how to reach economic success with the help of the available resources.

As Banaszak notices, “managers of the contemporary organisations, although formally well educated, do not have valuable knowledge in the scope of human nature, human needs, social functions of workplaces, team-building principles, etc.”⁴⁶. This is an aftermath of the disciplinary closing of the management sciences in Poland to humanistic ideas, as well as a consequence of the fiction of contact with humanistic knowledge, which very often constitutes only an ornament without much significance for people seduced by the paradise of stark numbers and ‘facts’. This is pictured by the reduction of the amount of ethical issues in the educational processes in Poland to just a few dozens of hours of classes in ethics, which additionally usually take the form of the ritualisation of the appearance of the acquisition of knowledge, since students are typically offered barren memorisation of information concerning the features of the so-called ethical systems, without attempts at the initiation of discussion.

Management education in Poland requires that its focus be shifted from the normative assumptions resulting from instrumental rationality for the benefit of emancipatory rationality, which constitutes the basis for efforts undertaken as a part of critical management education. The emancipatory interest of the critical approach in the educational context is directed at the process of the empowerment of both students and teachers, and the conditions of management education are analysed in terms of the potential for empowerment. The main area of interest of the critical management education is the theoretical conditions constituting the possibility for the accomplishment of citizenship attitudes on the grounds of management education. Critical insight is therefore focused on the content used as a part of the didactic processes and the quality of communication in the lecture room, which determines the reality of the acquisition of the cultural capital.

The research questions which should be asked from the critical perspective may oscillate around the following issues: does the educational content include the potential of epistemological (paradigmatic) pluralism allowing a critical and multi-dimensional look at the organisational reality, or does it take the form of closed mono-messages marked by epistemological fundamentalism, generating the non-reflexive reception by seduction with a positivist or/and guided formula? Is the manner of the reception of the content based on critical reflexivity and real dialogue with symbolic authorities originating from the ethics of reading related to the digestion, awakening and transformation of the learning subject, or perhaps on non-reflexive, authoritarian copying of content undertaken towards a mislead-

⁴⁶ S. Banaszak, *Management education...* p. 197.

ing, instrumental goal of familiarisation with the information reduced to the question of how to attain a higher economic efficiency of an organisation? Does the space existing between the teacher and the students facilitate real, critical dialogue based on a stimulating exchange of arguments and the broadening of humanistic and organisational imagination, or is it a space based on the authoritarian imposition of content for non-reflexive memorisation?

The more extensive the critical openness to the problems discussed and texts analysed as a part of the didactic process and the higher the degree of openness to critical discussion, the better the chance for the accomplishment of emancipatory potential in the area of management education. This potential makes it possible to become aware of the oppressive pathologies of the power relation, the domination of economism and gender inequality in management-related texts, the practice of organisational life, and in the area of education. It is worthwhile to once again accentuate the emancipatory significance of critique in CME, which is to lead to changes in reality in the intention of care for the disclosing of cultural pathologies, and not boil down for example solely to the pondering on the problem of inadequacy of the knowledge acquired in the course of education aimed at the practice of management and organisation.

Every attempt at the accomplishment of emancipatory goals in management education in Poland should be related to the undertaking of specific strategies of change, in particular in the area of the curriculum of business schools or university courses, as well as in the sphere of communication between teachers and students, and between the educational content and its recipients. It seems that the common denominator of these strategies is the necessity of basing their normative assumptions on the idea of critical performativeness, which requires the enrichment of the educational processes with the element of the acquisition of knowledge through reflexive action⁴⁷.

Firstly, it seems justified to considerably enrich curricula with critical theories, which would allow reflexive distance in relation to the over-economised content based on the technical imperative present in the mainstream management, thus contributing to their delegitimation, denaturalisation, and the dispelling of the myth providing that there are no alternatives to them. The use of these theories would therefore allow a specific deviation from the mainstream, shifting the focus of reflection from instrumental considerations devoted to the measures necessary for the achievement of the economic success of an organisation to ethical problems such as the issues of inequality, oppression or power. By mediating thinking in the categories of paradoxes, antinomies or ethical dilemmas, teachers and students would obtain a possibility to develop their awareness of the politicalness of management and organisation, which as a consequence would have an impact on their ability to notice the complexity of the normative organisational reality and to act more efficiently in it.

⁴⁷ A. Contu, *Critical Management...*, p. 545.

Secondly, it would be worth filling curricula with the symbolic heritage of art. For example literature (but also film or theatre) is a valuable medium of the transmission of knowledge on management, allowing to see the paradoxes of organisational life which are not recognizable in the scientific discourse⁴⁸. The development of the humanistic imagination by the contemporary manager as a result of contact with works of art seems to be fundamental in view of the increasing normative complexity of the sphere of organisation, as well as the necessity to use intuition and tacit knowledge⁴⁹.

However, let us notice that the very filling of curricula with critical theory or literature will not bring about the desired emancipatory advantages if the contact with symbolic culture will be based on apparent communication. In the context of thinking on the condition of management education, the above suggestion indicates that the very saturation of curricula with humanistic content will not be sufficient for education to fulfil its function of the broadening of reflexivity among the subjects engaged in that education. The very broadening of points of view without the ability to justify them and negotiate meanings may result in, as Andrzej M. Kaniowski put it after Ortega y Gasset⁵⁰, the attitude of a mediocre human being, which is related to the inability to think individually with a simultaneous sense of having the proper view and having the right to impose it on others. Therefore, what hides here is a trap of the authoritarianism of one's own judgements related to the absence of openness to their renegotiation.

The issue of the ethics of reading as a lifestyle is of key significance here, as it decides about the effects of contact with the absorbed content⁵¹. In the area of education – including management education – the achievement of empowerment requires above all the creation of conditions for the enrichment of symbolic capital, which depends on the “readiness to introduce the possibility to generate knowledge from the position of experience to educational content”⁵². In the scope under discussion, ethics requires in the first place that didactic processes be grounded in the vision of the symbolic authority as someone with whom it is worthwhile to disagree, rather than someone who should be copied⁵³. Regardless of the form in

⁴⁸ Which has been noticed in the West a long time ago; see B. Czarniawska-Joerges, P. Guillet de Monthoux (eds.), *Good Novels, Better Management. Reading Organizational Realities in Fiction*, Harwood Academic Publishers, Chur 1994.

⁴⁹ M. Kostera, *Organizacje i archetypy* [Organisations and Archetypes], Wolters Kluwer Polska, Warszawa 2010.

⁵⁰ A. M. Kaniowski, *Dyskurs publiczny a podstawy nowoczesnej kultury: kryzys jako wyzwanie* [Public Discourse and the Foundations of Modern Culture: Crisis as a Challenge], [in:] *Jaka kultura? Jaki dyskurs? Sfera publiczna a spory o edukację, pedagogikę i zarządzanie* [What Culture? What Discourse? The Public Sphere and Disputes Concerning Education, Pedagogy, and Management], M. Jaworska-Witkowska (ed.), “Pedagogium”, Szczecin 2008, pp. 77–92.

⁵¹ M. Zawadzki, *Etyka czytania jako sposób bycia* [Ethics of Reading as a Way of Life], “Twórczość” 2010, No. 8 (777), pp. 129–131.

⁵² L. Witkowski, *Wyzwania autorytetu...* [Challenges to Authority...], p. 448.

⁵³ *Ibid.*; L. Witkowski, *Historie autorytetu wobec kultury i edukacji* [Histories of Authority in Relation to Culture and Education], “Impuls”, Kraków 2011.

which the content is provided (an academic textbook on a discipline of management sciences, a single author's scientific book on management, a pop-management guide, a novel), its reception must be related to an attempt at undertaking a discussion with the author with the simultaneous discontinuation of the strategy of objectification based on an attempt at the answering of the barren question "what does the author want to say?".

Therefore, it seems justified to use the strategy of ferocious humility⁵⁴, which allows one to find in the text the explosive moments which are emotionally important for the reader, without submissiveness to the symbolic authority, but with the simultaneous avoidance of the authoritarianism of one's own normative position. It seems justified to say that there is no understanding of content without its digestion – otherwise, there is only familiarisation with a certain information resource without a chance for it to become knowledge which works within us and develops our depth of view and the quality of our justifications.

Let me add that from the perspective of the idea of critical performativeness, an important element enriching the processes of management education is enabling students to acquire knowledge via participation in organisational conditions, and via contact with working managers. The possibility of solving the organisational problems of a concrete organisation in real time (e.g. through a case study and group work in the space of the organisation) seems to be of key importance from the perspective of the development of cultural and professional competences. Similarly, a real dialogue with managers may foster a development of the organisational imagination and becoming aware of the complexity of the work of a manager. However, if this type of education is to bring real benefits rather than become an illusion hidden under the cover of marketing, participation in organisational conditions must not boil down to a promotional trip to a workplace, and contact with the manager to an empty lecture of a guru promoting his/her own brand. Moreover, it should be remembered that participation in organisational conditions may be a lost opportunity for the development of managerial competences when there is nothing but an appearance of education, which I discussed above, in the lecture room.

Conclusion

The implementation of the idea of critical management education in Poland seems to be a necessary and fascinating task, but also one which is extremely difficult. The assumption of the necessity to make critical practice a collective effort in the management sciences, management education and practice of organisational

⁵⁴ L. Witkowski, *Wstęp do problemu fenomenologii czytania (uwagi nie tylko seminaryjne)* [Introduction to the problem of the Phenomenology of Reading (not only Seminar Comments)], [in:] *Między pedagogiką, filozofią i kulturą. Studia, eseje, szkice* [Between Pedagogy, Philosophy, and Culture. Studies, Essays, Sketches], *Ibid.*, vol. III of *Tryptyk Edukacyjny* [Educational Triptych], Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych, Warszawa 2007, pp. 29–66.

life is hindered by many obstacles. Firstly, a clear majority of persons having a contact with management identify the discipline with the practice of effective money-making, additionally closing their horizons of thought in the tight disciplinary corset of positivistic version of economics. Therefore, it seems necessary to find a way to constitute a communication space, which would allow a real, transdisciplinary dialogue between representatives of the mainstream management and researchers originating from the humanities, who are interested in the development of the management sciences. Perhaps this must go hand in hand with taking away the management sciences from persons who presently claim to be their only advocates and who try to negate the achievements of great symbolic authorities (such as members of the Frankfurt School), who, according to them, do not deserve to be considered in the field of management as they are labelled as philosophers, sociologists or artists.

Secondly, it is worth turning attention to the problem of mass education in management-related courses, which for years have been among the most popular courses of study in Poland. Emancipatory education requires a direct contact between the teacher and the students, which must be based on the master and apprentice relationship. The disproportionately small number of teachers in relation to the number of students makes it impossible to enable such a relationship, which makes education an appearance based on the mass acquisition of diplomas which mean nothing in the cultural sense. In fact, as reported by Aleksander Sulejewicz and Mahmood Zaidi, the teaching staff related to management education in Poland is marked by an intellectual backwardness connected with the fact that they have obsolete information on management, while simultaneously they reproduce it in a ritualized manner in the didactic process in the form of multimedia presentations, typically in several universities at the same time (which makes it impossible for them to find time for self-education)⁵⁵. The teaching staff often includes the so-called 'shelf-fillers' – researchers writing books which are insignificant in the cultural sense, and the only role of which is that of staying on the shelves, but which give their authors academic promotion and social prestige⁵⁶.

The cultural pathologies mentioned above are just a drop in the sea of the cultural misery of management education in Poland, and this is why the necessary changes require a fast and radical reaction. In this context, it is worth pointing out that we should not close the search for the reasons for cultural pathologies in the world of management or management education in the statement that the market and capitalist realities are simply like that and that they are themselves pathologised by nature. This is an incorrect assumption, which additionally provides a convenient alibi for people who are unable to see the value of serious philosophical reflection concerning the sphere of economics and management.

⁵⁵ A. Sulejewicz, M.A. Zaidi, *Beyond MBA. Management Education in Transitional Economies*, Warsaw School of Economics, Warsaw 2010, pp. 143–152.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

It is also worth stressing that critical management education cannot be treated as one of the research (or didactic) approaches or models being elements of management education as such – just as critical pedagogy is not one of the fields constituting the research area of pedagogy. Pedagogy is either critical or it does not exist at all (although it is possible to effectively maintain the appearances of its existence)⁵⁷ – similarly, criticality testifies to the reality of the existence of management education. However, this paradoxical assumption makes it possible to fight against the danger of the reduction of the critical management education approach (as well as critical pedagogy) to the role of a familiarised, exchangeable idea which is useful on the academic market. The practical implementation of this assumption necessitates, among other things, the overcoming of exclusivist tendencies (the so-called cartelisation) among persons dealing with critical pedagogy and the critique of management education for the benefit of the strategy of openness. We should introduce, via symbolic culture and symbolic capital, the real, emancipatory changes to Polish management education.

The fight for a radical change towards critical emancipatory openness overcoming the danger of cultural illiteracy of Polish managers and persons dealing with management sciences is already much overdue.

Summary

Denaturalisation of instrumental rationality in the management education in Poland

In the article I diagnose cultural pathologies in management education in Poland using the critical tools proposed by the critical management education. The main aim of my reflection is to denaturalize an assumption that management education should be located on the positivistic paradigm with a domination of instrumental rationality. My reflection is based on my own theoretical research, in which I use Lech Witkowski's ideas such as the ethics of reading, symbolic authority and moral development triad. It is also based on empirical research concerning Polish managers and management education.

English translation: Anna Moroz-Darska

⁵⁷ I wish to kindly thank Professor Lech Witkowski for turning my attention to this thesis during the plenary lecture opening the conference "Critical Pedagogy Today. Questions on Theory and Practice" (Institute of Pedagogy, University of Gdansk, 28–29 May 2012).