

# **LABOR et EDUCATIO**

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### **STUDIES**

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## **Pedagogical Category – Learning – in the Perspective of Selected Paradigms**

## **Pedagogiczna kategoria – uczenie się – w perspektywie wybranych paradygmatów**

### **Introduction**

In the 1960s, T.S. Kuhn used the concept of paradigm, recognizing that this is the accepted way of seeing reality in a given area. The paradigm is becoming a universally accepted theory of the highest order among the scientific community, arranging hypotheses within a specific field of science (Kuhn, 2001). In Polish pedagogical thought, this category became widespread thanks to the work of Z. Kwieciński, B. Śliwerski, T. Hejnicka-Bezwińska, J. Rutkowiak, K. Rubacha, D. Klus-Stańska and many others.

Kwieciński defines the paradigm as “(...) a set of general and final premises for explaining a certain area of reality, adopted in the scholarly community – representatives of a given scientific discipline, and then distributed as a model of thought among the regular communities of science users” (Kwieciński, 2000, p. 53).

As Melosik rightly emphasizes (2003, p. 33), “Everyone who tries to describe the world needs assumptions about the nature of this world and opportunities to learn about it. They need a theory, a conceptual anchor point”.

The necessity to adopt specific ontological and epistemological assumptions is also raised by Śliwerski, who believes that a paradigm is a set of ontological assumptions as to the nature of reality and the role of learning that affect the acceptance of research results at a given time and place. The author emphasizes “The values of science are not invariable. Along with the next paradigm, new conceptual categories appear that transform what the previous paradigm saw as an irregularity, anomaly, into scientific fact” (Śliwerski, 2009, p. 29).

There are many paradigms at work in pedagogy. Śliwerski (2009, p. 31) argues that “The existence of differing paradigms in a postmodern society means that it is not possible to arrange rationality in the form of a metanarrative, and if so, individual paradigms must be placed at the center of a multitude of others and give up their exclusivity claims”.

One can hardly argue with Śliwerski’s statement (2007, p. 448) that “the concepts vital for pedagogy should be treated as ambiguous in the light of complexity and paradigmatic differentiation, not giving rise to the conviction that this results in their interpretative freedom, since they must be consistent with the paradigm that defines or determines them.”

Apart from subjectivity and self-actualization, one of the key pedagogical categories is learning (Górniewicz, 1997; Hejnicka-Bezwińska, 2008). The author points out that the feature characterizing the contemporary educational debate is the transfer of focus from teaching to learning.

R. B. Barr and J. Tagg (1995) point out the pursue of a new paradigm in education, the replacement of teaching with learning. In the paradigm of guided (directive) teaching, knowledge exists as an external being independently, it is being supplied in pieces, as if in the form of a transfer from teacher to student; learning is cumulative and linear. In a teacher-centered education process, the teacher appears as an expert with knowledge, which they provide the students with. The learners’ talents and capabilities are not taken into account. The learning environment is focused on competitiveness and is individualistic in nature. However, the foundation of the new paradigm – the learning paradigm – assumes that knowledge is constructed in the student’s mind as a result of individual experiences. It is necessary to create a stimulating educational environment, provide opportunities for multilateral activity, to interact, gain experience and build knowledge on one’s own. The learning process consists not

only in the autonomous activity of the subject of learning, but also in providing support from teachers and peers, i.e. collaborative learning is important. The students' talents and capabilities are recognized and appreciated.

Undoubtedly, the student should be considered an important subject of the education process they participate in actively, developing their own potential and cooperating with others. One may say that these truths are obvious, yet so difficult to implement in educational practice, because teachers often feel somehow compelled to enter a role in accordance with formal requirements, which hinders the students' functioning as subjects.

The "learning" category was revealed in educational reports in the 20th and 21st century by E. Faure (1975), *Learning to be*, J. Delors (1998), *Learning: the Treasure Within*, European Commission White Papers (1995). *Teaching and learning. Towards the learning society*; J.W. Botkin, M. Elmandjra, M. Malitza (1982). *No limits to learning. Bridging the human gap*; F. Benavides, H. Dumont, D. Istance (2012), *The nature of learning. Using research to inspire practice*.

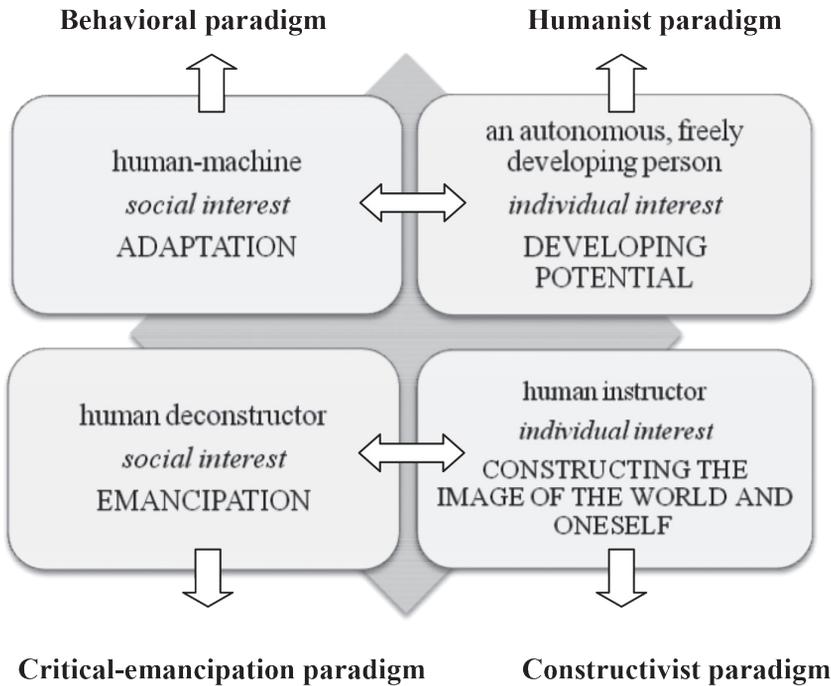
Changes taking place in the social space, numerous disappointments with the quality of education, disputes regarding the properties of the teaching-learning process perceived from the perspective of a given paradigm, and the dynamic development of knowledge in didactics inspire to constantly take up the issue of "learning".

The concept of learning is not clearly understood; educators, psychologists, sociologists, philosophers are providing various definitions, and the changing paradigms are conducive to a new look at this category.

One of the criteria for distinguishing paradigms can be different ways of perceiving man in the world. The proposal of A. Sajdak (2013) is noteworthy, with its associating different ways of seeing man in educational processes with different paradigms (Figure 1).

First of all, one can treat a human being as an entity belonging to the objective world, whose behavior is controlled by means of specific procedures. Thus, the image of the human machine emerges; one's behavior is designed in accordance with externally accepted standards, which are in line with social expectations and patterns adopted by others. This anthropological approach allows linking an outer-controlled person with a behavioral paradigm. Educational impacts are clearly oriented on the processes of human adaptation to the world in which one lives, preparation for acting for the common good, and compliance with the rules in force in the community.

**Figure 1.** Human ways of perception and paradigms



Source: Author's own work based on Sajdak, 2013, pp. 299–301.

Man “portrayed” as a free, inner-controlled person, developing freely in accordance with one’s own potential allows the emergence of a humanistic paradigm and the determination of other educational conditions the learning process takes place in. The autonomy of an individual allows them to set important goals in life on their own. Supporting a learner in the pursuit of self-actualization becomes important in education.

The perception of human constructor, an architect of the world and themselves is associated with the constructivist paradigm - referring to the patterns of process-cognitive learning and collaborative learning. In education, creating conditions for exploration and personal construction of knowledge in cooperation becomes necessary.

The critical-emancipation paradigm is based on the way of perceiving man as a deconstructor of the reality he learns about and functions in. The human deconstructor raises critical questions regarding the validity of existing

world definitions and makes changes. For this to happen, it is important to start educational processes of human emancipation. An individual's interest, however, is subordinated to the social interest towards changing this order (Sajdak, 2013).

### **Learning from the perspective of behavioral paradigm**

In the perspective of the behavioral paradigm, where one is controlled externally, steered by one's external environment – learning understood as a change in one's behavior is always treated as reactive – triggered and reinforced by using of external reinforcements. The goal of education becomes to adapt a person to the existing social structure. Behaviorism assumes – as De Corte (2013) writes – that learning consists in changing one's behavior based on the acquisition, reinforcement and use of associations between environmental stimuli and observable responses of an individual, i.e. S-R (stimulus-reaction) connections. It is worth recalling Thorndike's and Skinner's suggestions regarding the learning process. Based on research, Thorndike (1990) formulated several learning laws, the most important of which are the "law of effect" and "law of exercise". From the "law of effect" it follows that responses to a stimulus can be reinforced without conscious action; the law reads as follows: responses that produce a satisfying or pleasant state of affairs in a particular situation are more likely to occur again in a similar situation. On the other hand, if in a given situation behavior causes discomfort, then the likelihood of this behavior repeating in similar conditions in the future decreases; in other words the connections between the stimulus and the reaction are reinforced by achieving satisfaction. The "law of exercise" states that the connections between the stimulus and the response are reinforced by repetition (Birch, 2007, p. 147).

In causative conditioning that Skinner studied, behavior is controlled by the consequences (rewards, punishments, etc.) that follow the response. It often involves rewarding (reinforcement) or punishing. As a result of conditioning, a new stimulus (enhancer) causes new behavior. Quenching is caused by the suppression in providing reinforcement. The learner is active (causative behavior). Reactions are random: behavior is generated (emitted) by the body (Zimbardo et al., 2017).

According to Skinner, causative conditioning can be used in the learning process, where we gradually approach the desired overall behavior. Learning is guided by reinforcing the proper – even if partial – behaviors created by the learner or obtained by the teacher, thanks to appropriately prepared situations that facilitate their occurrence (De Corte, 2013).

Deliberate control of human behavior becomes the basis for the so-called behavioral engineering, with the use of positive control (use of rewards) and negative control (use of penalties) mechanisms. The learner is praised (reward) for desirable behavior, that is not contradictory to expectations, and rebuked (punishment) for undesirable behavior. The teacher assumes the role of one who reacts appropriately to the reactive action of students, consciously praising and drawing consequences to influence the change of learners' behavior, in accordance with previously adopted assumptions. The student is expected to be subordinate and inscribed in a script prepared by a teacher, whose task is to convey the values and standards typical of a given community.

### **Facilitation of learning in the humanist paradigm**

In opposition to the behavioral paradigm, the humanistic paradigm remains here, which uses the findings of humanistic psychology, where it is assumed that man is a unique whole made of two subsystems, the mental and biological one. There is a desire in human nature for development – unrestricted by external conditions or internal factors. This pursuit of self-actualization (to activate potential opportunities – transgression) becomes the main driving force of human action. Current personal experiences and experiences as well as creative activity are considered important. Humans are good by nature, and their actions are constructive and positive; if they happen to be destructive, it is because reality in given conditions does not allow them to act constructively (Kozielecki, 1995). Man is attributed such traits as: freedom and capability of choice and responsibility. One's relations with others and the resulting positive and negative consequences are important (Sołowiej, 1988).

In the human concept proposed by Rogers, one of the leading representatives of humanistic psychology, it was assumed that a human is a harmonious and unique whole, composed of two subsystems of the *self* and the *organism*. A human being as a whole constitutes a system referred to as a person (Kozielecki, 1995). Humans are born with their individual development potential and strive

for self-actualization, i.e. realizing that potential. Favorable conditions are conducive to the realization of potential inherent in humans, i.e. they support their development, while external factors – goals and principles of functioning imposed by others – hamper this development.

A fully functional person is open to experience, realizes their sensations coming from both the body and the environment. Such a person fully experiences emotions and is not afraid to show them. In making decisions, they are guided by the entirety of their feelings, organic sensations and feelings, not just rational criteria. They completely accept the continuous development process and the resulting changes (Rogers, 1983).

In the proposed concept of education, Rogers (1983) pointed out several regularities regarding learning:

1. Humans have a natural potential for learning and are characterized by a desire to learn, manifested in curiosity, willingness to learn about one's environment and oneself, which is especially visible in young children. In humanistic education - we give the child the freedom to satisfy their curiosity, an opportunity to recognize and develop their interests, and to discover on their own what is important to them.
2. "Significant learning" - occurs when it is perceived by the student as meeting their needs and goals. A student learns faster when they find the content and goals important, when they can determine the learning program themselves. Significant learning enters into every part of the person learning; it introduces a change in one's behavior towards the action that one chooses for the future, in one's attitudes and personality.
3. Learning initiated by the student is more effective, as it engages not only the learner's mind, but also their emotions. The opportunity to determine the direction of one's own action motivates and gives one the chance to choose the best learning method. Mastering the content in itself is not as important as acquiring the skills to discover sources, formulate problems, test hypotheses and evaluate results. This promotes a sense of independence and faith in one's own capabilities.
4. Learning without a sense of threat allows reaching better results. The learning process is reinforced when the student can find assurance as regards their capabilities, self-assess their own experiences, make mistakes without fear of ridicule or criticism.

5. Independence and self-reliance of learning are associated with the learner's self-control and self-esteem. External discipline should be replaced by self-discipline.
6. It is important to teach about how to organize the learning process. The current dynamic changes mean that knowledge is constantly being expanded, so people should be able to learn in changing conditions.

A.H. Maslow (2006) thought so too, describing humans as active individuals who initiate and undertake actions to achieve their goals and satisfaction with their own actions. The goal of learning is self-actualization understood as "full use of one's talents, capabilities, opportunities, etc." (Maslow, 2006, p. 150).

Self-actualization is fulfilled on a level that enables revealing and meeting needs, which is the basis of healthy and creative human development. This process takes place in the course of a constant relationship with the environment; self-actualization activities consist in learning about and transforming oneself, improving oneself and constantly striving for development. It is a state of satisfaction with one's own achievements, self-acceptance, and satisfaction with one's life (Górniewicz, Rubacha, 1993).

The human traits that Maslow considers to be symptomatic of self-actualization processes are: adequate perception of reality, acceptance of oneself and others, spontaneity and simplicity in expressing one's feelings, ability to truly focus on a problem, ability to distance oneself from the environment, freshness of reality assessments, ability to distinguish between right and wrong, a sense of community with others, deep interpersonal relationships, a benevolent sense of humor, spontaneous creative expression, holistic functioning and not breaking one's life between work and pleasure (Maslow, 2006).

Rogers and Maslow agreed that self-realization, or self-actualization, is a process aimed at making a person independent of all that is external, of culture, social environment and physical factors. The completeness of the inner-controlled person is characterized by "increasing openness to experience", "an increasingly existential experiencing of one's life", "increasing trust in one's own body", independence in the decision-making process, responsibility and internal coherence.

Here it is also worth referring to the theory of psychotransgressionism (Kozielecki, 2007) according to which people are the perpetrators of their behavior. One is a relatively inner-controlled system, i.e. the source of one's

activities is in the person themselves. The most important assumptions regarding transgressive man include the following:

- one endowed with the freedom of choice, able of choosing intentions and goals, having the ability to select mental operations and actions that one performs; thanks to this freedom, one becomes an efficient being,
- the human-perpetrator is the main reason for one's behavior; one is a relatively inner-controlled (self-controlled) system; the source of one's activity is primarily in the subject, not the object; personality, extensive motivation, new ideas predominantly affect one's decisions and actions, what one does or avoids,
- the driving force in humans, the main internal motivator is the need (meta need) to confirm one's own value; it is primarily met by making creative and expansive transgressions, by creating new forms or destroying old ones,
- people are perpetrators focused on internal and external development; transgressions allow shaping their personality and at the same time enrich their culture (Kozielecki 2007).

Therefore, human development and learning require an individual's personal involvement; it is associated with personal activity, it is one's personal discovery, perception, understanding, interpretation and action. In humanistic education, it becomes necessary to create appropriate space for the student so that they can develop their personal assets and potential. In other words, supporting the learning process consists in providing the best conditions for the student's self-actualization, an adequately prepared educational environment allows meeting one's need for self-fulfillment as well as the needs of belonging, love, acceptance, and respect (perceiving oneself as a competent and effective person).

Creating an appropriate psychological climate becomes important: the facilitator attitude – unconditional acceptance, empathic understanding, the teacher's authenticity, person-oriented approach – puts the creative and self-actualizing entity – the student - at the center.

As Sajdak argues, learning occurs in a full and free way if the three basic conditions of the relationship with the teacher immersed in the environment are met. These pillars also make up the constitution of the teacher's facilitation attitude:

- “emotional warmth and *unconditional acceptance* of the learner – pupil, protegee, student – respect for a person as they are,
- sensitive, *empathic understanding*, or empathizing with the perception of the world experienced by another person;
- personal coherence and authenticity of the supporter, teacher – facilitator” (Sajdak, 2013, p. 357).

## Constructivist paradigm and the theory of learning

Modern constructivists draw inspiration from e.g. the theories of Immanuel Kant, John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lew S. Wygotski, Jerome S. Bruner, David Ausubel, and Seymour Papert.

Immanuel Kant explained that learning reality requires intellectual effort; man is not a passive recipient of information; the ability to construct makes it possible to present something abstract in a priori intuition. He stated that the logical analysis of the activities and objects learned leads to an increase in knowledge, and thanks to individual experiences, new knowledge is created (Kant, 2004).

Dewey (1972, p. 151) was also positive about the role of experience in cognition and education; he wrote that “an ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory”. He pointed out that in order to achieve specific goals in education, it must be based on experience, which involves the life experience of a given individual. Each experience both draws on what was before and changes what will happen in the future (Dewey, 2014).

Dewey recommended using the experimental method in learning – “complete thinking is only effective when the experimental method in some form is used. (...) the entire history of human knowledge indicates that the conditions needed for full mental activity will not be achieved until conditions are created for performing activities that significantly change physical conditions, and that books, paintings and even objects that one observes passively, and which are not manipulated, do not constitute the necessary conditions”(Dewey, 1988, p. 54).

The learning of people is stimulated by finding themselves in a problem situation. If solving a problem is extremely important for the learner then they become physically and mentally active, sensitive to the environment and involved. Thinking begins when a person actually realizes that a problem has

arisen. In a new difficult situation, the mind activates, the learner tries to find a clearer formulation of the problem, seeking a solution, analyzing elements of the problem situation that may be relevant, and referring to their knowledge to better understand the current situation. Then they begin to create an action plan and hypothesize the best solution to the problem. This hypothesis is tested, and if the problem is resolved, then – according to Dewey – a person has learned something. Namely, that there is a relationship between their action and the results of said action (Philips, Solis, 2003).

It is important that mutual exchange of experiences takes place in education “in the process of building common experience”. The learning process should be based on the reconstruction of personal and social experience, and experience – in a feedback relationship – should constitute a learning infrastructure. While contributing to this reconstruction, teachers should expand students’ experiences and at the same time rely on them (Dewey, 1972). It is worth making the experience reflective, i.e. the child is to understand the consequences of what they are “getting to know”.

Piaget (1981, 2006), an outstanding psychologist studying children’s behavior, was convinced that, while learning, a person constantly constructs cognitive structures by which they adapt intellectually to their environment and at the same time organizes them. Schemes, or internal representations of specific physical and mental activities, change due to human activity and mental development. They reflect the current level of one’s knowledge and understanding of the world. The process of learning is always a result of interactions between what is innate in the body and what the environment represents. The adaptation process is enabled by two other processes: assimilation and accommodation. Thanks to assimilation, new content is modified so that it can be incorporated into existing cognitive structures. This does not change the pattern, but rather extends it. A modification of the previously created cognitive structures is triggered by the accommodation process, which leads to the creation of new schemes or modifies existing ones under the influence of changing environmental conditions. Accommodation occurs when we learn something that we are unable to adapt to pre-existing schemes. The regulating mechanism ensuring reaching a balance between assimilation and accommodation is compensation.

This state of balance between assimilation and accommodation recognized by Piaget as intelligence is a form of biological adaptation that should be

understood as a self-regulation mechanism that provides a developing child with effective interaction with the environment (Wadsworth, 1998).

Human development depends on one's own activity in discovering the surrounding world, and the structures emerging in the mind are not faithful representations of this world, but constructs arising under the influence of e.g. one's previous experience and "their image gets closer to reality over time" (Piaget, 1981, p. 29).

Referring to J. Piaget's constructivist theory, it can be said that learners should: reach knowledge by actively exploring their surroundings, stand in a situation of cognitive conflict, constantly establish balance through active assimilation and accommodation, pursue their own interests, which are the driving force of their commitment and activity, construct their own understanding through interactions with other people, especially peers.

Wygotski is also considered a constructivist. Although he had different views than Piaget regarding the nature of learning and the conditions for a child's development, he agreed with him when it came to the issue of building knowledge by learners.

In the model proposed by Wygotski (1989), learning is the main factor in human development; it takes place in a social environment and requires undertaking multiple activities. One is subject to more or less cultural influence. Through culture, one more fully achieves the essence of the thinking process, i.e. knowledge. According to this theory, we learn the world in the course of interaction with other people (human behavior has built-in meanings given to various phenomena, processes, events, symbols, concepts, etc.). An important element in Wygotski's learning theory is the notion of a social scaffolding, which is built by an adult (expert, tutor) to provide support, enabling the less skilled individual to acquire knowledge or skills.

Teaching is effective when it precedes development, which then is revived and stimulates a number of functions that are only just maturing and yet are in the zone of proximal development (Wygotski, 1989). The zone of proximal development is the distance between one's current level of development, determined by the level of problems one solves on their own and the level of potential development determined by problem solving under the direction of adults or in cooperation with more talented peers. The ability to move from what the learner can do on their own to what they can do in collaboration with others is an important element characterizing the dynamics

of child development and a possibility of achieving school success. Vygotski emphasizes that education should not focus on what the child has learned up to yesterday, but should rather be future-oriented (Vygotski, 1971).

It is worth noting cognitive and social constructivism, postulated by Bruner who, like Vygotski, pointed out the important role of culture in the context of learning: “knowledge (...) is a dynamic, culturally contextualized system of interrelated meanings, constructed and reconstructed by an individual in the course of continuous social negotiation” (Klus-Stańska, 2000, p. 104). The human mind creates meanings, seeks meanings and changes them. Culture is crucial in this process as a carrier of meanings and symbols (Bruner, 2006).

When presenting the act of learning, Bruner pointed out that it consists of three processes, i.e. the acquisition of new messages (which corresponds to Piaget’s assimilation); transformation, i.e. the processing of new information by extrapolation, interpolation or giving them a new form (Piaget’s accommodation); assessment consisting in checking whether we have processed information in a way that allows using it in a specific task-oriented situation. This process is similar to balancing (Ornstein, Hunkins, 1998).

In Bruner’s theory (1974), learning appears as an active process, where learners construct new ideas or ones based on their past and present knowledge. Students select and process information, construct hypotheses and make decisions, rely on the cognitive structure in the implementation of their activities. The teacher’s role is to provide the student with opportunities to act and discover (acquire knowledge on their own), as well as the necessary help when the need arises.

Bruner (1974) strongly highlighted that learning as a process of acquiring and constructing knowledge is mutual, hence the value of the forms and methods promoting the community of teachers and learners. The author vividly describes this community: “(...) culture is by nature a set of values, skills and customs, by no means created by a single member of the community. In this sense, knowledge can be compared with a rope made of fibers, whose individual length each does not exceed a dozen or so centimeters, while all firmly twisted together constitute a solid whole” (Bruner, 1974, p. 173).

Effective learning occurs when a child interacts with mature people and peers. Negotiating, discussing and sharing personal understanding plays a vital role. Learning with the method of discovery and inventiveness favors the student’s full development and ensures success at school. Learning by

discovery is the student's search for relationships between data. Discovery is considered to be any form of independent learning. According to Bruner, one should focus on the process of acquiring knowledge. The student's autonomy in choosing the methods and pace of learning and choosing the curriculum is important. Familiarizing the student with specific areas of knowledge should not consist in passing on the results obtained in them. The point is to encourage and enable the student to actively participate in the process of creating knowledge: "The purpose of teaching a given subject is not to produce small walking encyclopedias, but to make the student start to think independently (...) and actively participate in the process of learning. Knowledge is a process, not a finished product" (Bruner, 1974, p. 109).

While characterizing the assumptions of constructivist didactics, Klus-Stańska (2010, pp. 313–314) writes:

- "The student's activity is always the starting point of learning; so before the teacher intervenes, it is necessary to leave the student time for independent – even if inept – attempts to cope with the cognitive situation offered by the teacher.
- Putting the student in problem situations that cause cognitive conflict and enable their conceptual independence is crucial in teaching.
- To reinforce learning, it is important to know the student's pre-knowledge, resulting from both their extracurricular cognitive experiences, as well as the individual strategies used to absorb the knowledge being developed.
- Teaching is more about the teacher recognizing what the student means, than about having students guess what the teacher means.
- Learning is not about adopting other people's concepts, but about socially negotiating meanings and giving them real-life value.
- What remains in the student's memory are cognitive procedures of achieving the result rather than the results of their mental activity alone, so it is more important didactically for the student to try to act in various ways on their own, without even reaching the result, than receive ready or suggested ways of acting from the teacher (...)"

Learning is therefore an individual process, requiring the personal commitment of a student who individually constructs and reconstructs knowledge in reference to their own previous and current experiences in social

and cultural areas, by coping with cognitive conflict at their own pace and in their preferred way, obtaining the necessary support from teacher and peers.

Participation in a community of learners allows an individual to co-experience and become aware of their own internal condition. Interactive exchange is determined by a sense of belonging to a given community, providing help, mutual respect.

### **Learning in a critical-emancipation perspective**

The critical-emancipation paradigm is underlied by the works of Habermas, Giroux, Freire, Bourdieu, and Adorn, which fit into the so-called critical and emancipatory approaches that adequately build critical pedagogy and emancipation pedagogy. It is represented in Poland by Czerepaniak-Walczak (2006). As Sajdak-Burska (2018, p. 25) argues, in the “critical-emancipation paradigm, the critical perspective coincides with the emancipatory perspective in building goals of education seeking to support one’s ability to deconstruct reality and to emancipate oneself as a critical response to perceived oppression and enslavement. The critical-emancipation paradigm is difficult to translate into a system of teaching activities.”

Recognizing emancipation as a social process, it can be considered from two points of view: as the goal of human effort and as a means, a tool for human development and self-actualization. Education through emancipation should provide room for independent activity, where an individual “reveals their own rationality and divergence of thinking” on the one hand, while on the other they manifest “innovation, entrepreneurship and courage in their use of symbolic and material means inherent in the living world” (Czerepaniak-Walczak, 2006, pp. 31–32).

According to Czerepaniak-Walczak, the conditions necessary for the emancipation process understood as extending the rights and areas of freedom of the subjects of pedagogical activity (teachers and students) through school education, are as follows: a) (...) “members of the school community (teachers and students) must share a common vision of the school as a center for the development of rational and critical thought. The basis for self-reflection and achieving independence is faith in the potential of the human mind and the empirically proven and bold rejection of restrictions and obstacles to accessing such values as truth and freedom; b) formulating and solving problems, making

decisions as well as openly communicating and expressing acceptance/negation at all levels of interaction is the only way to expand the knowledge and skills base (...); c) a common work and study place constitutes a specific territory for exercising one's rights and an opportunity for their rational expansion. This is accompanied by trust, loyalty, openness to conflict and cooperation in its resolution. The multitude of content and levels of interpretation in this community means that self-reflection and independence is a consequence of deliberate release from dogmatic dependencies both during work and learning (official, formal) and during celebrations" (Czerepaniak-Walczak, 1994, pp. 234–235).

If education is aimed at supporting critical thinking, which leads to initiating the processes of triggering and emancipation, then the methods of education used should stimulate the emancipation potential of learners. If we assume after Habermas (1999) that education is a communication activity, and emancipation is associated with the abolition of communication barriers, then "the **educational interactions** focused on intersubjective construction and reconciliation of meanings are of vital importance to supporting emancipation. Among many teaching/learning methods that fit into such a perspective, **dialogue** and all methods based on it play a crucial role. (...) The purpose of entering into dialogue is to explore the other person's world as they see it, and at the same time to present and discover one's own world. On the one hand, the dialogue is intended to build agreement (...) based on agreeing on meanings within the learning community; on the other, it is to help acquire knowledge about oneself, one's own functioning, subjective possibilities and limitations" (Sajdak, 2013, pp. 449–450).

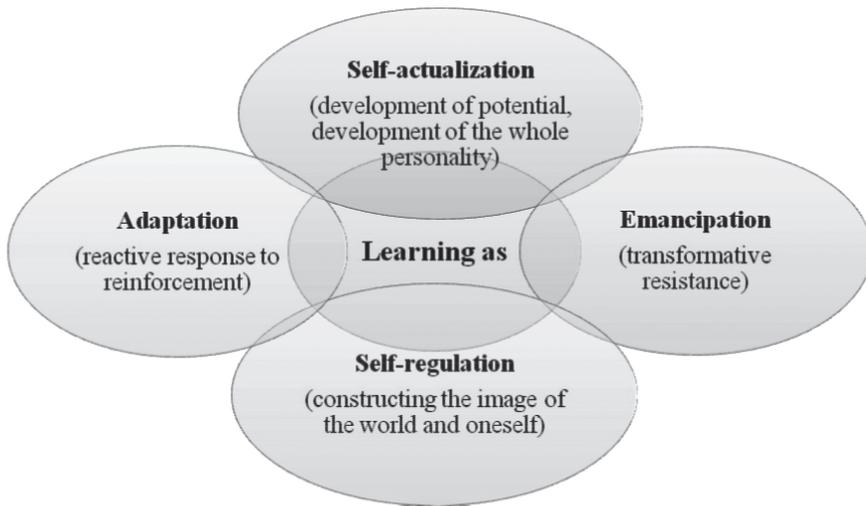
## Summary

Contrary to verbalized opposition, there are various paradigmatic assumptions coexisting in the realities of life, or their fragments are being modified continually. In the perspective of each of the four selected paradigms, learning is understood differently; behaviorists attached importance to reinforcing reactions; humanists unilaterally emphasized self-actualization; and constructivists adopted the metaphor of learning as constructing one's knowledge, and then completed it with participation and negotiation of meanings; and finally in perspective of critical emancipation, it was recognized that the only way to acquire knowledge and skills is to formulate and resolve

problems, make decisions, and openly communicate and express acceptance/negation at all levels of educational interaction, and protest and resistance allow freeing oneself from the oppressiveness of the educational system.

In fact, these paradigms do not compete in certain situations, but complement one another, so we can talk about the multi-paradigmatism of teaching and interpenetration, complementing various teaching and learning models. I suggest looking at learning as a multidimensional process, and taking into account the four paradigmatic perspectives discussed, it is worth complementing its four aspects: adaptation, self-actualization, emancipation and self-regulation (Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Four aspects of learning



Source: Author's own work.

The first aspect is *adaptation*, i.e. learning as a reactive response to reinforcement. It can be said that the prevailing method in teaching is persuasion, and in learning – imitation. However, as humanists rightly argue, the potential of an individual as well as the emotional and motivational factors accompanying them are also crucial to learning; in recognition of this fact, we turn to the next aspect of learning which is *self-actualization*, i.e. the pursuit of a person's self-realization, satisfying their needs, developing their interests and abilities. The learner is committed to learning about reality, overcoming difficulties, relies on their self-discipline, self-control and self-assessment. The actions taken

here are not only important for the development of one's cognitive sphere, but also for the development of the student's entire personality.

The third aspect is learning as *self-regulation*, where the learner constructs an image of the world and themselves, builds personal knowledge on their own, where the process of social negotiation of meanings plays an important role; there is both assimilative and accommodative learning and the constant balancing of these processes.

Various aspects of education based on reinforcement and modeling can be considered oppressive and contribute to a critical view of education and the desire to change the status of the principles of equality, freedom and justice from normative to ones that are implemented in educational practice. Learning by *emancipation* recognizes the importance of adopting an attitude of openness, freeing oneself from restrictions, initiating changes, exercising autonomy and assuming conscious responsibility for one's own actions, as well as constantly developing subjective potential to expand the multidimensional space of human freedom.

**Abstract:** The article presents the reflection on the pedagogical category of 'learning' with a reference to the idea of a paradigm proposed by T.S. Kuhn, based on the belief that didactics is multiparadigmatic. Different ways of defining humans and their mission (human as a machine, human as an autonomous individual, human as a constructor, human as a deconstructor) were linked to the relevant paradigms: behaviorist, humanistic, constructivist and critical/emancipatory. Selected didactic approaches were analyzed, focusing on the subjects and determinants of the educational process. It was assumed that although learning is understood differently from the perspective of each of the four discussed paradigms, in reality the paradigms are not contradictory in certain situations, but rather complementary. It was proposed to look at learning as a multidimensional process, and to complementarily include its four aspects, taking into account the four paradigmatic perspectives discussed: adaptation, self-actualization, emancipation and self-regulation, where learning is a reactive response to reinforcement (adaptation), where the learner constructs the image of the world and themselves, builds personal knowledge (self-regulation) and strives for self-actualization, satisfying needs, developing interests and abilities (self-actualization), as well as adopts an attitude of openness, freeing themselves from restrictions, initiates changes, uses their autonomy (emancipation).

**Keywords:** learning, education, paradigm, didactics

**Streszczenie:** W artykule podjęto namysł nad pedagogiczną kategorią „uczenie się” odwołując się do idei paradygmatu zaproponowanej przez T.S. Kuhna i wyrażono przekonanie o wieloparadygmatyczności dydaktyki. Powiązано różne sposoby definiowania człowieka i jego posłannictwa (człowiek – maszyna, człowiek – autonomiczny, człowiek – konstruktor, człowiek dekonstruktor) z adekwatnymi paradygmatami: behawiorystycznym, humanistycznym, konstruktywistycznym i krytyczno-emancypacyjnym. Dokonano analizy wybranych podejść dydaktycznych, skupiając uwagę podmiotach procesu edukacyjnego i jego uwarunkowaniach. Przyjęto stanowisko, że chociaż w perspektywie każdego z czterech omawianych paradygmatów uczenie się rozumiano inaczej, to jednak w rzeczywistości w określonych sytuacjach paradygmaty te nie konkurują, ale dopełniają się. Zaproponowano, aby spojrzeć na uczenie się jako proces wielowymiarowy, a uwzględniając cztery omówione perspektywy paradygmatyczne, komplementarnie ująć cztery jego wymiary: adaptację, samorealizację, emancypację i samoregulację, gdzie uczenie się stanowi reaktywną odpowiedź na wzmacnianie (adaptacja), gdzie uczący się konstruuje obraz świata i samego siebie, samodzielnie buduje wiedzę osobistą (samoregulacja) oraz dąży do samourzeczywistnienia, zaspokojenia potrzeb, rozwijania zainteresowań i zdolności (samorealizacja), a także przyjmuje postawę otwartości, uwalniania się od ograniczeń, inicjuje zmiany, korzysta z autonomii (emancypacja).

**Słowa kluczowe:** uczenie się, edukacja, paradygmat, dydaktyka

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