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## **Strategies and mechanisms for building social order** (Sub-table No. 3)

### **Introduction**

In Poland we are proud of radical ideological and economic changes, created conditions for freedom. Along with them new opportunities for development have emerged, as well as problems that in the past had a different nature or did not exist. More and more often changes are accompanied by moods, behaviors and actions resulting from particularism, nationalism and homophobia. They influence social behaviors and manifestations of various forms of activity that is destructive to social order. And yet, in a democratic system, principles and values such as freedom, responsibility, sovereignty, partnership, patriotism, subsidiarity, participation, solidarity, social justice and others must be of particular importance. They create the social order necessary to ensure the existence, survival and development of the community as a whole. Therefore, during the 6th Congress of Social Pedagogues (Poznań 2018), the aim of work in the third group (moderated by Prof. Tadeusz Pilch (prof. dr hab.) and Prof. Wioleta Danilewicz (dr hab. prof. UwB) was to diagnose current social issues and problems from the perspective of social pedagogy, focusing on reflection on *Strategies and mechanisms for building social order*. The aim of the debate defined in this way included a broadly understood system of values and social objectives guaranteeing human and citizen's well-being, as well as the mechanisms of social order implemented and guaranteed by public authorities.

The moderators of the meeting suggested a discussion focused on the following questions:

- what duties are imposed on particular social life entities (legal, organizational, institutional, etc.) in terms of building of social order?
- what fundamental values should be present and guaranteed in the collective life of the community and in the individual life of man?
- what is the role of academic teachers in building social order? Are there any and what are the limits of their social involvement and what do they refer to?

### **Review of strategies and mechanisms for building social order**

The discussion was guided by the rule of the necessity to take into account different points of view and interpretations, but with respect to the basic idea of work – presentation of current phenomena, social processes and their determinants from the point of view of the interests of social pedagogy.

Some of the statements were dialogs and reflections, others were based on the results of the conducted research. There were also examples of professionalization of methods of supporting individuals and groups. An interesting element of the September meeting were examples of social experiences. One of them was *public health* treated as an element of socio-cultural capital of the society. Attention was drawn to the fact that public health is not the sum of society's health, but it should be seen as a timeless, universal value. Health builds the condition of society, as healthy societies achieve greater success in various areas of life. The state is therefore obliged to monitor health and to create conditions for reducing existing inequalities. An example of the deficiencies in this area (among many mentioned) is the lack of medical care in schools, which results from the restrictions in the children health care system. The participants in the discussion clearly stated that medicine has become more and more commercialized. After the school health care system was liquidated in the 1980s, it has not been rebuilt. In addition, it was stated that health education is still very poorly represented in school curricula, which is a clear negligence in a society with a low level of health knowledge.

Another issue highlighted during the work of the third discussion group was the problem of the ministerial attempt to „*eliminate*” *children with special educational needs from general school education*. It was recognized that the attitude towards people, including families and children with disabilities, is the main evidence of the culture and level of humanitarianism of the state and

its authorities. In this area, these levels are still low in Poland. For this reason it was stated that the practice to date has created a relatively flexible system of teaching children with disabilities at home and at school. Therefore, school education made sense in all aspects of children with disabilities and children without them, and in many cases it gained pedagogical and educational sense for all members of such a community. Separating children with special developmental and educational needs from their peers and educational environment means depriving them of a chance for development in many spheres of life.

Another group at risk of exclusion, highlighted during the discussions, was *the elderly*. This topic of the discussion revealed the need to build social cohesion and intergenerational dialog. It was stressed that Polish seniors are often condemned to live in social isolation. The participants noted also that Poland is one of the countries where the aging process is one of the fastest in Europe, so it can be expected that in the coming years the percentage of people aged 65+ will be much higher. Similar trends are projected for the entire Europe. It was stated that the social responsibility is to fight the causes of exclusion of these people from various areas of social life and to prepare the younger generations to cooperate with the „new seniors” who are active, are learning and seeking.

The discussion was also conducted around issues related to social *professionals and the process of stimulation and integration of the community*. It was highlighted that social support is first of all the help available to an individual or a group in difficult and groundbreaking situations, which they are not able to overcome on their own. It was noticed that the organization of temporary help for people in the local community (which is, in fact, provided in Poland), does not solve the complicated, multi-layered – difficult situation of people in need. What is important is a well-planned and coherent direction of support activities organized in the local community based on the wise cooperation of governmental and non-governmental institutions. It was emphasized that it is necessary to inspire the social forces of the community, which should be aimed at local social activity. Activities supporting e.g. families with problems could then be based on local initiatives (with the involvement of professionals). Such actions would make it possible to build a society open to the needs of other people, recognizing and supporting them. It was recognized that activities undertaken by pedagogues should aim at helping people in their living environment – family and local environment, being a specific type of pedagogical environment. It was also stated that the category of local environment should be re-interpreted, taking into account

the readiness for joint action of the community. This readiness, it was stated, should result from the awareness of participation. Such an attitude provides an opportunity to build a new social order or to transform an existing one. Therefore, there is an urgent need to initiate activities aimed at involving Poles in social activities, attracting interest in existing initiatives and building new ones. After all, Helena Radlińska wrote that „there are no people, groups or environments that do not have positive powers or possibilities of such [...] the existing ones should be reached, relieved and channeled.” It is an important indication of the role of the so-called social service volunteers present in the local environment and supporting people in need of this support. All the more so our – pedagogues – attention should be focused on young people who, „infected” by the idea of social service, will feel a shared responsibility for themselves and others in their close and distant living space.

In the discussion, an example was given of research conducted among students of pedagogy, which suggests that, for example, they are guided by stereotypical perception of current phenomena and social problems, e.g. the migration crisis. Therefore, there was an obvious statement that education plays an essential role in building social order. A report prepared for UNESCO, as part of the works of the International Commission on Education for Twenty First Century, noted that it is not possible to completely eliminate the attitude associated with the lack of understanding of other people, but it can be significantly reduced. For this reason, the International Commission on Education for Twenty First Century paid particular attention to one of the four pillars of education: learning to live together with others – by broadening the knowledge of other societies, history, traditions, spirituality, tolerance, and learning to cooperate and resolve unavoidable conflicts (Nikitorowicz, 2009, p. 187). Education must (and not only should) help to raise awareness of the complexity of the world and acquire knowledge about the „new – old” world; to develop an attitude of empathy, respect, awareness of the complexity of experiences and attitudes of others, openness to them.

When talking about the need for change in the field of education, it is necessary to constantly point out its significant tasks. It should deliberately introduce young people into the world of values, thus preparing them for a complete, valuable contact with other people; for taking care of the development of global and at the same time humanistic thinking of contemporary students. Therefore, the role of education in the new global reality, in building world citizenship (Kubiak-Szymborska 2002, p. 34), which allows the person experiencing global space to be a citizen of a given country, is of great significance. The ability to look at another person from his or

her perspective may help to avoid misunderstanding, rejection and hostility. Education understood in this way will contribute to building attitudes of acceptance, understanding and tolerance<sup>1</sup>.

The discussion concluded that a significant role at all stages of education is performed by teachers, including academic teachers, who shape the attitudes of students, future teachers, social workers, animators, parents and citizens, through their knowledge, actions and emotional attitude towards people and their needs. Such an attitude – wise, open, based on timeless values – is particularly important and necessary in the era of current social problems – local and global ones. The teacher may become – and should become – a master who will wisely show young people the values essential in their further life and work with children and young people.

### **Socially involved pedagogues**

Despite the developments in many spheres of life, the essence of an individual's fate is still his unstable situation, uncertain fate. It is also the enigmatic nature of causal links between the threat to man and the forces that lead to deprivation or exclusion. Therefore, social pedagogues can search for and provide knowledge resulting from the recognition of the environment in its various dimensions. They are qualified to identify the nature of threats and the causes behind them in order to identify their nature in global structures and processes. Tadeusz Pilch, referring to the basic idea of social pedagogy, asked: „Apart from the awareness that we have to live in this world and conditions shaped by indefinite forces, can we design corrective and creative actions that are desirable from the point of view of humanism, i.e. can we influence this world on our own, according to our own ideals?” (Pilch 2008). The answers to this question can be found in current tasks of social pedagogy. These are internal tasks which are directed towards the development of social pedagogy as a scientific discipline through the development of its subject identity. It is also an area of normative and axiological activity of social pedagogues. The goal in this area is to diagnose social reality based on insightful recognition, description and evaluation, designing activities and personal involvement. It is also the creation of living conditions, i.e. pragmatic orientation. „This is the most primordial rule of social pedagogy – T. Pilch emphasizes – to build the

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<sup>1</sup> Source: [http://www.unesco.pl/fileadmin/user\\_upload/pdf/4\\_Filary\\_Raport\\_Delorsa.pdf](http://www.unesco.pl/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/4_Filary_Raport_Delorsa.pdf) (28.12.2012).

new world with one's own strength, according to humanistic ideals, avoiding identification with imposed or fashionable ideological currents" (Pilch, 2008).

The multithreaded discussion led its participants to another statement – the building of social order must be based on the existence of such a community which will provide the individual with a sense of security, stability and comfort; it will allow to develop civil society as a guarantee of protection against irresponsibility and abuse of power, among other things. The participants adopted the principle of the need to respond with their own appropriate measures, i.e. to phenomena which undermine social order or undermine values important for society. It was considered that any dramatic distortions of social order in Poland result from the absence of citizens in public life, due to lack of involvement and participation.

An example of an initiative that deserves special attention is the activity of the „Movement of Socially Involved Pedagogues” Association, to which spontaneously enrolled a large group of scientists from all universities in Poland, as well as many teachers and employees of educational institutions. The members of the Association discuss any matter the essence of which is contrary to the universal norms of law, justice and humanitarianism. „For whoever keeps silent – agrees; whoever does not protest – supports!” (Pilch, 2018). Since December 2015, at the initiative of its founder – Tadeusz Pilch, appeals have been transferred to decision-makers in matters requiring intervention, changes and attention. The aim of the Association is to propagate and strengthen the principles of social justice and humanitarian values of social life, as well as to support directions of social, political and economic development that are friendly to the people and useful to the country. The assumed aims are implemented by:

- individual involvement of its members in any local activities aimed at improving the quality of life and culture of interpersonal relationships as well as enhancing the activity of institutions of public life;
- collective stimulation and organization of civic attitudes and actions aimed at the well-being of the local community. Undertaking initiatives supporting desirable educational processes conducive to development of children and young people;
- nationwide (due to the scientific potential) undertaking research, analysis and diagnosis of all phenomena which are a threat to people, communities and values, which are valued by society and serve the public good; all diagnoses and the resulting consequences will be disseminated and directed to public authorities with demands for their consideration and implementation (Regulations...).

The activity of the association, its members involvement in various initiatives for the benefit of society and the building of social order aims at a situation where indifference and helplessness will be stopped. It alerts when reality can lead to an unjust social order, deficiencies in social order, which should be based on fundamental, unchanging values.

Participants of the discussion of the VI Congress as part of the work of group 3 stressed the need to create conditions for the integration of the social pedagogical environment, as a result of which further development of this discipline will take place. The moderators drew attention to the fact that the changes taking place in the global world as well as in contemporary Poland, create a new social reality and new living conditions, which on the one hand, create opportunities for proper human development, and on the other hand, become a significant threat to its everyday functioning. It was stated that there is a need to show the estimable achievements of social pedagogy in Poland to date, its identity and peculiar social mission, which it performed in various conditions. However, the most important need is to understand and disseminate its current challenges resulting from new social problems and threats, the source of which is the present reality, and in particular in the case of building of civil society.

We decided that one of the most important tasks of social pedagogues is the active involvement in building social order understood as a state of functioning and course of human behavior, which ensures the existence, survival and development of the community as a whole, the entirety of our country. We believe that countries are rich in the richness of their citizens (Frysztański, Sztompka 2012). Its essential element is the forces that provide the basis for creativity in various dimensions, especially in terms of social awareness, mentality, attitudes and values. Such capital is practically expressed in the mechanisms of civil society activity. The creation and modeling of civil society is a great contemporary challenge for social pedagogy and social pedagogues, social workers, social forces – as our discipline calls conscious, organized collective actions in the protection of endangered people and building the desired social order. Within the scope of this important task – social pedagogues find their place, mission, using the good traditions of our scientific discipline and current experiences.

## Literature

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