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Wolfgang Welsch's concept of transculturality: towards a transversal paradigm of social pedagogy

A B S T R A C T : The article is an attempt to answer the following questions: how, in the context of Wolfgang Welsch's concept of transculturality (1998a,b,c,d;2004), together with its transformations towards transversality, a new interpretation of the categories of interculturalism and multiculturalism is possible? This proposal helps to find justifications for Helena Radlinska's thesis that social pedagogy is at the crossroads of sciences and also allows us to think about the epistemological consequences of this view. As a result of the analysis of the values of the concept of transculturality/tranversality, the assumption was formulated that it can be a reference for constructing a transversal paradigm of social pedagogy and a basis for its ontological framework. As a result of adopting such a view, a transversal paradigm of social pedagogy was proposed, which is formed by three frameworks: ontological – transversal reason, methodological – long duration plus breaks and discontinuities, and epistemological – complexity of processes and phenomena occurring in the field of practice.

K E Y W O R D S : Transculturality, transversality, social pedagogy, long persistence, breaking and discontinuity, duality/complexity.

Introductory notes

In the works of Tadeusz Pilch, one can easily find the current of research that can be used as a reference for interpreting the categories of interculturality and multiculturalism in the context of Wolfgang Welsch's concept of transculturality (1998a, b, c, d; 2004) together with its possible transformations towards transversality.

In this text an assumption is formulated that this concept can also be a reference for the construction of a transversal paradigm of social pedagogy. Analysis of this issue may help to find justifications for Helena Radlinska's popular thesis that social pedagogy is at the crossroads of sciences and also may allow us to think about the epistemological consequences of this view. Works by Welsch and authors developing this discourse (e.g. *Estetyka transkulturowa* 2005; *Estetyka pośród kultur* 2012; *Filozoficzne konteksty koncepcji rozumu transwersalnego. Wokół koncepcji Wolfganga Welscha* 1998) turned out to be very helpful in the search for a framework for the constructed structure of thinking about social pedagogy in transversal categories.

The extensive output of Tadeusz Pilch is philosophically situated, which is understandable, because it seems that a committed social pedagogue cannot 'break away' from the 'philosophical root'[1]. In fact, it is very visible in the works of Tadeusz Pilch. His research works and social engagement are oriented towards the Other in difficult situations, in a way not deserved for him (social inequalities, exclusion, marginalisation, etc.). On the other hand, the Other with whom we enter into social relations, create a community (by sharing experiences); then what connects (or divides) us are the values that are recognized and (not) shared. Therefore, in his works we find an important axiological dimension of the undertaken activity. Thus, philosophical issues are present again. It is also indispensable in methodological works, which are permanently connected with Professor Pilch's name.

In the first decade of transformation in Poland, Tadeusz Pilch led an interdisciplinary team dealing with interculturalism. These were important works, anticipating later manifestations of xenophobic attitudes, divisions and shaping the attitude towards the Other as a Stranger, which, growing, are becoming a serious social problem, not only an individual attitude. Issues addressed in Tadeusz Pilch's research and recommendations for practice formulated there become increasingly important and require returns in search of a theoretical framework for the analysis of mechanisms of constructing a heterogeneous and multicultural community.

One such framework is Wolfgang Welsch's concept of transculturality[2] (1998a, c; 2004), in which change and development always take place in relation

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[1]   However, at one of the seminars that started the cycle of events connected with the 70th anniversary of the Department of Social Pedagogy of the University of Łódź, Professor said: "I have already been a philosopher" (cf. *Pedagogika społeczna: wstępy i kontynuacje* 2015).

[2]   Jadwiga Romanowska (2013, p. 144) reminds us that prior to Welsch's concept of transculturality there was the concept of transculturation developed in 1940 by Fernando Ortiz, who, according to the author, was an anthropologist, ethnographer, historian and musicologist.

to cultural resources (traditions) and relational building of unity in diversity. It is a concept that analyses the mechanisms that connect a community, not divide it, and thus it perfectly fits the message of social pedagogy, including Radlinska's standpoint on the attitude towards 'ours' and 'strangers', and then the idea developed by Aleksander Kamiński under the slogan: "be able to differ beautifully". The realization of these ideological premises is clearly visible in the activity of Tadeusz Pilch, oriented tirelessly towards constructing a community, gathering supporters around the manifested disagreement on exclusion, marginalisation, violence, authoritarianism, etc. These activities can be read as manifestations of disagreement with the existing reality, which established social pedagogy.

The category of interculturality, around which a number of research projects were built in the 1990s, was superseded by the concept of transculturality (Welsch 1998a), which was stronger in its articulation (and structure). A similar phenomenon has been observed in the process of disciplinarisation in social sciences, including education (*La recherche en éducation. Pluralité et complexité* 2014; Sabirón, Arriaz 2014). This process ran from pluridisciplinarity, through interdisciplinarity, to transversality. In both cases, one of the arguments of this 'transition' was the discursive requirement of comprehensiveness/completeness, complex thinking and action. It can therefore be said that these changes are not only due to the postmodern methodology and epistemology, but also to the increasing closeness between research and its implementation. Not without significance were the strong pressures not only on understanding, but also on realizing (Barbier 2016b) the processes and mechanisms of social life. This in turn gave rise to the validation of the interpretative and participatory paradigm.

The concept of transculturality *versus* transversality

As Welsch himself stresses, the concept of transculturality in his research was secondary to the concept of transversality-transversal reason (Welsch 1998c, pp. 203–204). The title of this paragraph deliberately points to the duality/complexity of the process. Both concepts mutually reinforce each other and, despite the individual feeling of the author about their discovery, they are complementary, connected and coupled. This complexity is also expressed in the repeated reminding of the important function that 'old', traditional and national cultures play at different levels in the process of constructing transculturality. Describing the process of forming a mechanism of transculturality, Welsch stresses that it expresses the interweaving of new

networks […] using existing cultures as starting points or reservoirs from which further networks are built, only that now these reference cultures will be characterised by a transcultural cut (Welsch 1998c, p. 210).

This process is referred to as "transition", but interpreting it according to Jean-Marie Barbier (2016a; b) and Marc Durand (2017) one can say that its multi-level structure is a transformation of the interrelated activities recognized by the community, which are referred to as "culture of activity" (Barbier 2016a; b). In a process interpreted in such a way the "old ideas of cultural form and shifts towards a new transcultural form of cultures" (Welsch 1998c, p. 210) are subject to transformations.

From the point of view of social pedagogy, it is particularly important that the Welsch concept does not only refer to macro-structure levels, but also to individual levels. In one of the texts made available to the Polish readers, this is the author's view: "[…] transculturality exists not only at the macro level of entire communities, but also reaches the micro level of individual identity" (Welsch 2004, p. 34). He refers to this transcultural identity as a cocoon "woven partly from the same and partly from different threads that are not identical in terms of colour and pattern" (Welsch 2004, p. 35). It is worth recalling here that a similar epistemological standpoint can be found in the concept of spiritual life by Bogdan Nawroczyński (1947), who speaks of a braid of connections, or such interpreted in the concept of coupled activities (*conjointes*) developed by Barbier (2016b) or Durand (2017). The emphasis on complex/holistic thinking is common in these standpoints, which was also discovered by Lech Witkowski (2014) in Radlińska's work. Such a community of thoughts gives us the right to assume that the mechanisms of transculturality can also be considered as a complex process activity, bound in a node (spiral). This discovery made it possible to focus the research works on the fact that this concept should be considered not only as an opposition to the category of multiculturality and interculturality, but also as a tool (dispositive)[3] for constructing proposals for a transversal paradigm of social pedagogy.

The concept of transculturality, as Welsch admits, is a continuation of his earlier work on the transversal reason and the category of transversality. Both these categories are supplementary and both can be successfully used in a social pedagogue's view on the practice fields in which he/she works, if he/

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[3] Among the three meanings (Nowicka 2016) of the dispositive category: as a tool of analysis defining the idea of its making; a way of explaining the tensions of the mechanisms of symbolic power and its significance for shaping social relations; a sensitizing concept is understood in this text in the first sense.

she intends to realize (to oneself and others) the frameworks of this activity. It is important to make a reservation that the category of transculturality should not be understood schematically, and therefore certainly not:

— in bipolar manner (we – they, ours – strangers, what we know – what we do not know). Its determinant is rather "focusing on what can be universal and inclusive" (Welsch 1998c, p. 213);

— "from a monocultural points of view" (Welsch 1998c, p. 213).

Its discovery allows us, as Krystyna Wilkoszewska (2012) formulates, to reconstruct our own theory, which she defines as "aesthetics among cultures". It involves a change in the perception of cultures, "not binary and not oppositional" (Wilkoszewska 2012, p. 206), as a cultural network of relations built among the "heterogenous and hybrid elements" (Wilkoszewska 2012, p. 207). The author takes an opportunity to interestingly interpret Welsch's standpoint by writing: "the transcultural perspective […] is not about dialogue between cultures as wholes (because it bursts these wholes), but about the network of relationships" (Wilkoszewska 2012, p. 207) between the aforementioned elements. This feature of Welsch's concept testifies to its postmodern location, because in it: "multiplicity is primary, and whole is secondary, because it arises as a result of a permanent tendency of the human mind to generalise" (Wilkoszewska 2012, p. 207).

The view of the author stems – as Wilkoszewska (2012) writes – from her reflections on the transformation of her standpoint as a researcher who is transculturally and thus transversally oriented. As a result of the application of the concept of transculturality, in her opinion, there has been a change in the formula of the so-called 'superficial' research questions in the adopted research procedure, aimed at 'starting from the bottom and at the micro level' (Wilkoszewska 2012, p. 211) and, most importantly, in recognising the importance of "border crossings", which can be invisible but also "clearly experienced". It is about the experience of a clear distinctiveness, "which reveals a certain, previously unconscious, aspect of the identity of one's own culture" (Wilkoszewska 2012, p. 211). Such an event may be conducive to the transformation of meaning. The adoption of a transversal/transcultural perspective also requires a change of language, is a consequence of it and takes place as a process.

A review of the literature on the subject allows us to state that the category of transculturality is present in the works of researchers (e.g. Deja 2015; Kubicki 1998; Mikołajczyk 2009; Romanowska 2013; Wilkoszewska 2012) representing various disciplines from philosophy through cultural anthropology and history of literature. This interest may represent the capacity

of the concept, which may meet the expectations of researchers looking at reality from the meta-theoretical perspective.

In the works of social pedagogues we can also find a trace of intentions of the analysis of fields of activity (Mendel 2015). However, in relation to intercultural issues, the concept of multiculturality (e.g. Nikitorowicz 2018) and dialogue dominates. In the standpoints of other disciplines, this paradigm is clearly departed from, as Krystyna Wilkoszewska (2012) points out, recalling the concept of transculturality: "[…] Welsch's transcultural perspective does not consist in a dialogue between cultures understood as wholes (because it bursts these wholes), but in a network of relations between heterogeneous and hybrid elements" (Wilkoszewska 2012, p. 207).

One of the examples of the use of this concept and further on of the concept of transversality for social pedagogy, heterogeneously oriented and open to new epistemological approaches, is the proposal to formulate a transversal paradigm of social pedagogy[4].

Towards a transversal paradigm of social pedagogy

The transversal paradigm of social pedagogy was comprehensively proposed in a monograph (Marynowicz-Hetka, in print). In this text it will only be discussed in a signalling manner. Its construction consists of three frameworks: ontological, methodological and epistemological.

In the first one, the basis for conceptual references is the category of Wolfgang Welsch's transversal reason (1998d), which combines "understanding with criticism" (Welsch 1998d, p. 98). This is because "each point of view also illuminates from different perspectives and discovers premises that we are not aware of from this point of view" (Welsch 1998d, p. 98). Such insightful, as if 'X-ray' understanding usually leads *eo ipso* to criticism and change of paradigms, while the scale of repair reaches as far as complete questioning (Welsch 1998d, p. 98).

But at the same time this exaggerated break with tradition, as Welsch warns (*Filozoficzne…* 1998, p. 193), could be 'dangerous'. Sometimes the continuation can be – as he comments "more noteworthy than some modernist novelties" (*Filozoficzne…* 1998, p. 193). A particularly important category in the analysis of the transversal reason is the "transition" in which old ideas and "shifts" towards a new form meet. Its features are tensions and changes: it blooms with 'tensions' and lives thanks to 'tensions'. Its image is hybrid.

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[4] Developed by me for many years (first in: Marynowicz-Hetka 2007; 2009 and this 2008 and 2010), and then developed in the final chapter of the monograph (in print).

The mechanisms of changes are well described by the concept of transculturality (Welsch 1998c). The dominant feature here is the 'ability to join and transform' (Welsch 1998c, p. 213), which allows us to discover what is "universal and inclusive" and to orient ourselves towards a comprehensive and holistic understanding of activity. In the process of constructing transculturality, important are the 'reservoirs' (Welsch 1998c, p. 210), constituting specific viewpoints (and references) from which further 'networks' are derived. They make the existing references take on a transversal dimension. This mechanism of constructing a transversal dimension also allows for "exceeding" externally given patterns/requirements of behaviour (e.g. *habitus*) or "monocultural points of view" (Welsch 1998c). However, these existing imaginations/representations are an essential resource for cultivating a transversal perspective. They undergo numerous hybrid modifications in conjoints (Barbier 2016b), thereby changing themselves, losing their structural frameworks (horizontal/vertical) in favour of a transversal dimension that permeates existing points of view and new openings and includes 'unification processes […] and differentiations' (Welsch 1998c, p. 221). It is expressed in short by the term: "unity in diversity" (Marynowicz-Hetka 2007, 2009, pp. 565–568). However, the term should not be understood too unequivocally. Like in the interpretation of transculturality, it is not about "simple uniformisation" (Welsch 1998c, p. 217) because in the course of transformation, as a result of permeation, previous diversity creates a new type of diversity.

These changes take place at three levels: macro-meso-micro. From a socio-educational point of view, none of the levels can be ignored. Macro and meso levels are not only, as we would intuitively think, and like we often traditionally understand the social perspective, exposing the social conditions of phenomena, but above all what Radlińska called the soil (Radlińska 1935; Witkowski 2014) and what Welsch today (1998c, p. 204) defines as 'network building', which creates and through which a new, transversely guided point of view is created. The micro level expresses the "transcultural formation of individuals who are […] cultural hybrids" (Welsch 1998c, p. 207). This, of course, sounds very disturbing for a social pedagogue; how to avoid relativisation of the undertaken activity and its assessments, its orientation in this situation? This question is of huge significance.

The idea of a transversal perception of reality is very visible in Radlinska's works, open to otherness/change/novelty, but also protecting the past[5] and

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[5] Historical preparation, research, dissertation on Stanisław Staszic as a social activist, published in Radlińska's *Pisma pedagogiczne* (cf. 1964) were presumably not insignificant here.

referring to it in constructing the present. In this reasoning, the place of the category of the historical generation, which in principle destroys demographic, cultural and social borders – permeates the activity of all those who participate in social life in a given historical period, is special. Knowledge of the mechanisms of formation of the historical generation is also important for the quality of social relations in a society that is in principles different. Creating a society, or perhaps even a community that shares the preferences of values, requires that the participants of a given field of activity first become aware of the transversally penetrating threads, transforming the group of individuals into a historical generation, in which the feeling of common experience is constructed.

The second framework, methodological, of transversal paradigm of social pedagogy, consists of two standpoints. The first is the methodological concept of Ferdynand Braudel (1999 (1977); 1949), who, in his concern for the community of human sciences, so finely differentiated and sometimes divided, calls for a global and holistic analysis of social phenomena. To this end, he proposes using the conceptual category of *longue durée* (long duration), which requires that the cyclicity of events and their internal structure be borne in mind. What can be achieved by moving away, looking at it from a different perspective, or from another discipline. The analysis of events from such a perspective of distance and long duration allows for their autonomous valorisation. The perspective of long duration also allows us to discover the sources of self-creation and institution-building, including axiological, social and contextual dimensions, thus confirming the belief of usefulness of returning to the past. These returns are only useful (Braudel 1999 (1977); 1949) in so far as they help us to explain the present and provide arguments and material for the design of the future. Braudel (1999 (1977); 1949) represents a transversal methodological standpoint by calling for a global and comprehensive analysis of social phenomena. The concept category of 'long duration' introduced by him requires to remember about the cyclicity of events and the internal structure. It is only after a long duration of generations that it is possible to distinguish permanent elements of some approach or standpoint.

The second element of the methodological framework of the transversal paradigm of social pedagogy is the concept of Bachelard (2002 (1937)). It assumes that the development of scientific discourse takes place in the course of reflection on the previously formulated reflection. This process is exposed to cracks and tears. However, these are not complete breakdowns, their structure also contains discontinuities that are renewed from time to time, especially those marked by paradigmatic change. These discontinuities

are crucial for the duration of the discipline (the reflection on reflection) and are often the basis or reference for its reconstruction. It is done in a clash with what is "here and now", but overexposed by "what was" and "how it was" and what can have a meaning for this (new) construction.

The epistemological framework of the transversal paradigm of social pedagogy consists of concepts of complexity, duality and spiral and integrated interrelationships that can foster understanding and realizing of activities in the field of practice. Referring to them in the construction of a transversal paradigm of social pedagogy promotes its completeness (Witkowski 2014) and such a perception of activities in the field of practice which is an essential object of the reflection. The intentions of holistic and comprehensive thinking is found in many proposals aimed at the integration of humanities and social sciences. The standpoint of Pierre Bourdieu, contained in *Bourdieu et la littérature* (2010), in which in several essays linguists, artists, political scientists and sociologists express their opinions, is significant for this analysis. The book, which follows on from the meetings and discussions with Bourdieu on literature, approximates his standpoint on the integrity of the humanities and social sciences, which is not, therefore, about 'simple' integration, but about spirally connected integration.

The overriding feature of the epistemological framework for the development of science understood in this way, and including the transversal paradigm of social pedagogy, is undoubtedly the structural complexity / duality, seen on the one hand as a certain way of perceiving reality, characterized by saturating social situations with "signs of complexity, arising from the interpenetration of different influences, from the clash of what passes and goes, with what announces its coming, what actually marks a new epoch, despite the lack of a ready shape and maturity of manifestations" (Witkowski 2013). On the other hand, it is an element of the attitude of the subject acting in the field of practice, sensitive to the complexity and non-obviousness and to the complexity of mutual relations visible in it. Against this background, the preparation for such a perception of the field of practice includes also equipping with cultural references and own knowledge of the subject acting to interpret complexity and social situations and transformation mechanisms occurring in the field of practice in a spirally connected and silent way.

Final remarks

The transversal approach to activity in the field of practice is characterized by several syndromes of features. The first is the permeation of

the participatory and understanding perspective, which is oriented towards the notion of the sense and meaning of mutual relationships present in the activity of a human being as an acting subject, situated in the surrounding, often disordered (or even chaotic) context, constantly changing and subject to change and remaining in the process of creation. In this perspective, the acting subject is internally located, strives to understand the field of practice by participating in it. The transversal perspective, in which external and internal elements intersect and are far from the field of practice, allows us to analyse reality in a three-dimensional perspective.

The second syndrome of features includes an opportunity to see the complexity of social reality from the point of view of many disciplines, but its expression is made in one, universal message. In this way, this approach combines what is universal and repeatable, with what is individual and specific and unique. At the same time, the meta-theoretical and meta-methodological aspects can be useful for the constitution of disciplines and the process of disciplinarisation of reflexive practice. This circumstance of reflection on the condition of social pedagogy and methodological reflection on the field of activity, have become an impulse to return to thinking about the possible usefulness of the transversal approach to analysing the field of activity (and preparing for it). It seemed useful for a new interpretation of the idea of Radlińska's social pedagogy, formulated in the well-known term "the name of social pedagogy expresses its role as a link between the group of education sciences and sciences on culture and society" (Theiss 1984, p. 233). It should be added that the formulation was published by Zygmunt Mysłakowski in his *Encyklopedia wychowania* in 1933, when he defined the subject of pedagogy[6]. This discovery is also an argument in favour of the search for an integrated paradigm common to pedagogy.

The third syndrome of features refers to the emphasis that such an approach favours multi-faceted and multi-referential analysis of social reality. It can be present in the three dimensions discussed above, constituting a specific methodological approach to analysing practice, or a justification and method

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[6] This is what he wrote: "pedagogy is one of the disciplines in which human is a subject, and the pedagogical knowledge of human presupposes knowledge of all the disciplines which apply to this subject. It is located in a way at the crossroads of these disciplines, with neither of them, nor their sum being unambiguous. The essence of the pedagogical point of view is precisely the fact that it treats human in the most universal way, as the most comprehensively conceived whole, with any fragmentation of the »human« phenomenon being at the same time a way out of the pedagogical point of view" (Mysłakowski 1933, p. 28).

for constructing meta-reflections on the field of practice. It uses its own meta-theoretical language to express relationships between the analysed elements. It provides an opportunity to see the complexity of social reality from the point of view of many disciplines, but its expression is made in one message. The meta-theoretical and meta-methodological aspects can be useful for the constitution of disciplines and their whole process of disciplinarisation of reflexive practice.

As a result of such an analysis, a paradigm of social pedagogy can be defined, situated in a transversal way, i.e. combining in unity (resulting from diversity) the elements characteristic of many approaches. Understood as a reflection on activity, expressing in a complex way a certain system of notions and meanings, which can be used as references for cognition of activity, its orientation and justification of its undertaking. This standpoint justifies the nurturing of the links between (social) pedagogy and other proposals (approaches) in humanities and social sciences, by configuring a clearly defined and coherent, transversally guided (socio-pedagogical) point of view. Among these concepts, useful for building such an understanding of the transversal paradigm of social pedagogy, one should especially emphasize: the transversal concept of the analysis of the field of practice; the mechanisms of creating a common experience by integrating and reconstructing individual experience, which allows to create a symbolic institution shared by the participants of the field of practice; the recognition that activity is life (Barbier 2016b; Durand 2017), all that we do, by acting we change the environment, we affect others, but also we change ourselves. All activities and transformations taking place are coupled in a spiral node, in a braid of relationships. Therefore, there is no need to specify individual actions; the transversal concept encourages to perceive the field of practice in a holistic, comprehensive and complex way, not forgetting the dualities and oscillations in the processual development of events.

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