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Professionalism as a category of teacher studies

In the area of deliberations undertaken in the field of teacher studies, issues related to teacher professionalism should occupy their due place. This is dictated above all by the specific nature of the teacher's work, which takes place in the conditions of a complex and dynamically changing social reality, a constitutive element of which is educational reality. This imposes on teachers the need to present an above-average level of knowledge, skills, competences, or, in other words, a high level of professionalism in the professional activity undertaken in its individual dimensions.

The aim of the considerations presented in this article is to explore the issue of teacher professionalism, for which the teaching profession and the professionalization of the teaching profession are a starting point. A reflection on this category may contribute to thorough studies and analyses touching on this rudimentary issue, both on the theoretical level and on the level of conducting empirical research, which in turn may result in the enrichment of modern knowledge about the teacher and his or her profession.

Keywords: pedeutology, teacher, teacher professionalism, profession, professionalization

Profesjonalizm jako kategoria studiów o nauczycielu

W obszarze rozważań podejmowanych w obrębie studiów o nauczycielu właściwe sobie miejsce powinny znaleźć kwestie oscylujące wokół nauczycielskiego profesjonalizmu. Podyktowane jest to przede wszystkim specyficznym charakterem pracy nauczyciela, która przebiega w warunkach złożonej, a zarazem dynamicznie zmieniającej się rzeczywistości społecznej, której konstytutywnym elementem jest rzeczywistość edukacyjna. Nakłada to na nauczycieli konieczność prezentowania ponadprzeciętnego poziomu wiedzy, umiejętności, kompetencji, inaczej biorąc wysokiego stopnia fachowości w podejmowanej profesjonalnej aktywności w poszczególnych jej wymiarach.

Celem zaprezentowanych w artykule rozważań jest próba eksploracji zagadnienia profesjonalizmu nauczycielskiego, dla którego punktem wyjścia jest profesja nauczycielska i profesjonalizacja zawodu nauczycielskiego. Namysł nad tą kategorią stanowić może przyczynek do gruntownych studiów i analiz oscylujących wokół tej rudymenarnej kwestii zarówno na płaszczyźnie teoretycznej, jak i prowadzenia badań empirycznych, co z kolei może skutkować wzbogaceniem współczesnej wiedzy o nauczycielu i jego zawodzie.

Słowa kluczowe: pedeutologia, nauczyciel, profesjonalizm nauczycielski, profesja, profesjonalizacja

Introduction

The teacher and the teaching profession are of interest to many representatives of the educational sciences. However, they occupy an essential place in pedeutology¹ – a subdiscipline of pedagogics, which puts the teacher and the professional activity undertaken by him or her at the centre of its research. Owing to the interdisciplinary position of both the teacher and the teaching profession in scientific-research discourse, we can speak of teacher studies. This does not mean abandoning the use of the term pedeutology in deliberations, but treating it, to a certain extent, as a synonym for teacher studies.

The contemporary social reality, and thus the educational reality that constitutes it, makes the teacher a special educational subject, whose knowledge, skills, and competences should be at a level higher than average. Hence, teacher professionalism is of great importance in the deliberations on the teacher. This issue is extremely complex within the professional activity of teachers. How to pursue the teaching profession in a professional manner, especially in times of changeable and complex educational reality, in the area of which constant changes, not necessarily those which enjoy universal approval and recognition in the teaching community, take place? The answer to this question is not simple and straightforward.

¹ The term *pedeutology* appears in classifications of pedagogical disciplines/subdisciplines. For example, while establishing the basic criteria for classifying pedagogical sciences (subdisciplines of pedagogics), Stanisław Kawula distinguished seven such criteria. One of them is the problem criterion concerning the cross-sectional approach to research and practical issues. This criterion made it possible for the above-mentioned author to distinguish pedeutology dealing with the problems of the teaching profession (Kawula, 1986, pp. 46–48). Similarly, Zygmunt Wiatrowski, modifying the concept presented by the Polish Academy of Sciences, presents a list and structure of pedagogical disciplines, among which he lists auxiliary and border-pedagogical disciplines, and within them he distinguishes pedeutology (Wiatrowski, 1995, p. 57). Also Jan Průcha – a co-founder of The European Educational Research Association – distinguishes pedeutology among pedagogical subdisciplines, which he describes as a theory of the teaching profession (cf. Śliwerski, 2006, p. 24).

The subject of the presented reflection focuses on the professionalism of teachers, for which the teaching profession and the professionalization of the teaching profession² are primary issues. The purpose of these considerations is to try to grasp the essence of teacher professionalism as a key category of teacher studies, understanding the teacher and his or her attributes. Undertaking such research may constitute a starting point for in-depth studies at the theoretical and empirical levels, which may result in drawing significant conclusions not only for educational theory, but also for educational practice, in relation to the professional activity of teachers.

Categories as ways of ordering reality

Social reality, and thus educational reality, are quite dynamic structures, not easily amenable to scientific exploration, and thus to unambiguous findings. The way to organize complex and multidimensional reality is categories³.

In the *Dictionary of the Polish Language*, we read that a category is: “1. a type or class distinguished in a classification, 2. general concepts by which reality is understood in philosophy and science” (*Słownik języka polskiego*, 2006, p. 314). Małgorzata Lewartowska-Zychowicz defines the category as a philosophical term that comes from the Greek language (judgement, pronouncement) and which “is defined as: a kind, a class distinguished in some classification, a type, a group of people or objects of the same nature; it expresses general dependencies that can be established between beings or ideas” (2003, p. 566).

There are two positions in philosophy regarding the meaning of the term *category*. The first of them comes from Aristotle, the second from Immanuel Kant. According to Aristotle, categories are the most general classes of beings, and Aristotle considered substance as the basic category. The term was given a slightly different meaning by Kant, according to whom the category is a principle by which we organize experiences, a principle by the use of which we distinguish classes of objects (Brożek, 2007, pp. 5–6).

When analysing the literature on the research subject, we can indicate three ways of understanding the above term. Firstly, it denotes the type of statements that make up judgements and constitute their structural elements; secondly, an *a priori*, pure concept of intellect, belonging to epistemology; and thirdly, one

² Interesting considerations on these three categories are presented by Joanna M. Michalak (2010, pp. 87–121; Madalińska-Michalak, 2018, pp. 2–10). The issues related to teacher professionalism are taken up by the author, Dariusz Zajac, in his works (2012, pp. 37–45; 2018, pp. 175–203; 2021, pp. 27–41).

³ The author presents the term *category* in his work: Zajac, 2018, pp. 19–20.

which expresses the unconditionally necessary and constitutive definition of an object, its property, feature, type or something that belongs to the essence of the concept (Kubiak-Szymborska, 2003, p. 15).

The terms *concept* and *category* are often equated with each other. Meanwhile, as noted by Lewartowska-Zychowicz cited a bit earlier:

The phenomenon of the category can be interpreted in three ways. Firstly, it can be assumed to be a concept of special importance for a given science. In this approach, it can fit into a scientific interpretation that raises the static nature of the concept, and the difference between the category and other scientific concepts lies in attributing to it exceptional importance for the penetration of a selected area of reality. Secondly, the category appears as a term qualitatively completely different from the concept: in this interpretation, the concept introduces the cognizer to the “world of science”, while the category introduces him or her to the “world of philosophy” as a field of knowledge in principle oriented towards asking questions. Thirdly, it may seem that the category is a term the semantic scope of which only partially coincides with the meaning of the term *concept*. Thus, in this approach, it is a special case of the concept. The common semantic field of both terms is determined by the function of generalizing specific cases, while what distinguishes them is the dynamically understood “sense-creating power” of the category, expressed in the potential possibility of building a theory around it. In this interpretation, the category remains a concept, but not a scientific concept, the meaning of which is to be strictly and statically defined (2003, p. 569).

Hence, identifying the terms *concept* and *category* with each other is not entirely justified, nor is the use of the word cluster *conceptual categories*.

According to Agnieszka Zalewska-Meler, categories make it possible to organize the social world, and it is thanks to them that it is possible to define new problem areas (2009, p. 9). This is important in the case of various aspects of teachers’ professional work, which are not fully organized and unambiguous. This can also be related to teacher professionalism, which is part of educational reality, or more precisely, that part of this reality which covers everything that teacher studies deal with. The category of teacher professionalism seems to be so broad that its further exploration may contribute to the delineation of ever new fields and problem areas requiring specific reflection on them, thus enriching the existing knowledge about the teacher and his or her profession.

The teaching profession

The teaching profession can be made the starting point for our considerations around teacher professionalism. It is important because, as part of considerations in the field of teacher studies, the teaching trade is often perceived as a profession.

The term *profession* started to be used in the 16th century and initially it was used in the Anglo-Saxon linguistic tradition mainly with regard to the so-called freelance occupations, which were characterized by a specific, strictly defined set of features distinguishing them from any other occupation. Three professions were most often indicated, i.e. those related to law, medicine, and the clergy. The basic distinguishing feature of occupations classified as professions was that they were those in which work was performed on the so-called self-employed basis, and their main task was to meet important social needs realized in direct contact with the person concerned (Plewka, 2011, p. 62).

The word *profession* comes from the Latin language (from the word *professio* – public awareness, notification) and means: 1) a craft, profession; 2) testimony, statement (*Słownik łacińsko-polski*, 2007, p. 317). An interesting analysis of the term *profession* is made by Piotr Pilch through his comparative exploration of the English language and the Polish language. Based on the historical process of the development of the term *profession* in English, he indicates that today it can be understood as having two meanings, a broader and a narrower. In the former meaning, it covers all occupations and no distinction between them is made. On the other hand, in the latter sense, the term *profession* applies only to occupations that derive from the traditions of medieval universities. It is from this meaning that words come such as: *professional*, *professionalize*, *professionalism*, *professionalization*. The very criterion of narrowing down the term *profession* and its derivatives refers to specific knowledge and skills as an educational outcome, for pursuing a profession requires specialized, expert knowledge. This knowledge, in turn, is not a set of guidelines on how to proceed in a specific case (e.g. knowledge of a craftsman), but is based on research as scientific knowledge (e.g. medicine) or is created as a result of a specific discourse, being the subject of social negotiations (e.g. law, theology). This knowledge cannot be acquired through individual experience, or through practice (as in the case of crafts), but it must be passed on by others. It is characteristic that this knowledge is associated with a set of skills that make it possible to use it to solve other people's problems. Thus, this knowledge has a practical application and is oriented towards others and, at the same time, it is "knowledge for the sake of knowledge", which serves to expand the limits of human cognition and self-development. On the other hand, analysing the term *profession* in Polish, Piotr Pilch notices that it appears mainly in

literature and corresponds to the broader meaning of the English word *profession*, which applies to all occupations. This means that it is not associated with any requirements formulated for a given profession, nor with a privileged position or prestige. It can, therefore, be assumed that in Polish a profession is a nobler equivalent of the word *occupation*. Hence, the word *profession* and the words derived from it, i.e. professional or professionalization, are definitely less frequently used in Polish than in English. A possible equivalent and competitor to the term *profession* in the Polish language may be the term *freelance trade*, which is equivalent to the English term *free practitioner*, corresponding to the development of the profession on the basis of individual practice (2011, pp. 176–186).

In use, the term *profession* most often refers to specialized occupations that require long and intensive preparation, such as occupations the performance of which is related to a social contract, which results from the special role played in society by people who can be described as professionals (Michalak, 2010, p. 94; Madalińska-Michalak, 2018, p. 2).

As part of scholarly explorations, focusing on teacher studies, Henryka Kwiatkowska points to the contemporary tendency to perceive the profession as the level of performance and it is sometimes associated with qualifications at the academic level. Therefore, this does not apply to every profession. Profession is a type of practice that can be called a mission and it has the character of a public service that is called upon to carry out important tasks in society requiring the highest qualifications. Profession is recognized as an occupation of public trust (2008, p. 167). Hence, profession should be associated with an above-average way of practising it, with a high level of proficiency and professionalism in the professional activity undertaken by people who can be described as professional people or, in other words, professionals.

The analysis of the literature on the subject of the research shows that there are numerous features ascribed to a profession, including the teaching profession. Michalak points to such properties as characterize a profession as high social usefulness. The pursuit of a profession is to promote the satisfaction of various important social needs, and requires long preparation for its practising, and in particular the need to get a higher education degree, as well as often to complete a professional internship in order to obtain highest academic qualifications, so as to demonstrate appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for work. Professions are associated with high remuneration, association in professional associations, adherence to certain standards of professional integrity and ethics (constructing one's own ethical codes), exercising care over the proper performance of the profession within the limits of the public interest and for its protection, and thus limiting access to practising a profession by people who do not have the appropriate professional qualifications. Therefore, a profession is

linked to the highest qualifications at an academic level and it is so complex that it is impossible to indicate a closed system of activities that are repetitive, which means that a person practising a profession is required to have not only technical, but above all ethical and moral competences. People who practise a profession are required by society, not only to have very high professional qualifications, but also to constantly increase the amount of their professional knowledge and improve the level of their skills, and higher than average ethical requirements are set for them (2010, pp. 94–96).

The above-mentioned features of a profession distinguish it from those of a trade. For a profession is a specific occupation, the attributes of which go beyond those that characterize an ordinary occupation. It can be assumed here that every profession is an occupation, but not every occupation is a profession. This is due to the fact that not every occupation always meets the expectations that are formulated in relation to a profession.

Professionalization of the teaching profession

When addressing the issue of the teaching profession, it is impossible not to refer to the professionalization of the teaching profession. According to dictionary definitions, professionalization is “1. the process of separating new professions or specializations in a given field; 2. the process of transforming a certain set of activities and skills into a profession” (*Słownik wyrazów obcych*, 2006, p. 759).

In his deliberations in the field of teacher studies, Norbert Landwehr points out that the professionalization of teachers is not a state, but a process that occurs throughout the entire period of professional activity, and it is a process much broader than the acquisition of professional knowledge only, legitimized by individual cognitive systems and theories (cf. Plewka, 2011, p. 65). It is about the process of acquiring such professional furnishing as will make a teacher a professional, and knowledge is only one of many elements of this furnishing. Apart from it, skills, competences, abilities, etc. play an important role.

Marta Łuczyńska points to many different semantic dimensions of the term *professionalization*. If it is related to society, it can mean the professional or ethnic diversification of the population. However, in relation to the professional category, these are the features of a specific profession, its hermetic nature, exclusivity, and the control of professional behaviour of its members through professional institutions and associations. Professionalization also means a level of advancement in the transition from an occupation to a profession. However, in relation to an individual, the term *professionalization* refers to the acquisition by an individual and then the improvement of professional competences. Thus, unlike a pro-

profession used to statically describe a professional group, professionalization means a dynamic process of change of a specific professional group, both at the level of society or an individual (2013, p. 22). Hence, speaking of professionalization, it should be referred to the individual dimension as well as to the social dimension.

Referring to the considerations of Tomas Englund, Joanna M. Michalak states that in relation to the teaching profession professionalization concerns, on the one hand, the historical process of constituting teaching as an independent activity, furnishing teachers with external attributes of changing their status and, on the other hand, it means the process of crystallizing social expectations in relation to the teacher's professional qualifications and competences in favour of the optimization of the activities undertaken by him or her (cf. Michalak, 2010, p. 111; cf. Madalińska-Michalak, 2018, p. 3). As she notes:

[...] the professionalization of the teaching profession refers both to the conditions that should be met for the social status of the teaching profession to be higher and higher, and to the requirements that a teacher should meet in order to be called a professional (Michalak, 2010, p. 111; cf. Madalińska-Michalak, 2018, p. 3).

Understood in this way, professionalization, which is a dynamic and diverse process, cannot be deprived of the humanistic element because, for example, it directly concerns both the person participating in it and the profession that a teacher, as a professional, will be practising as part of the educational activity undertaken on many different levels, starting from pre-school and early childhood education, and ending with adult education.

Stefan Wołoszyn is right when he writes: "The professionalization of the teaching profession cannot be dehumanized. This professionalization must always be accompanied by an indispensable humanistic factor – the constant building of the teacher's spiritual and moral culture" (1994, p. 27). It is worth mentioning here that the professionalization of the teaching profession initiated in Europe in the 1960s, and making itself felt in the 1980s and 1990s, was caused by the improvement in the functioning of schools, improving the quality of teaching at school, challenges to education, the belief in the benefits of theory and its application to educational practice, and increasing the prestige of the teaching profession (Michalak, 2010, pp. 111–112).

The observations presented above make possible a clear distinction between professionalization and teacher professionalism. These concepts do not go hand in hand. In the teaching profession, stronger professionalization does not always lead to stronger professionalism. In order for teachers to become true professionals, the process is not so much fostered by caring for the raising of the status of

their profession, as by providing them with conditions that would foster teacher autonomy, a sense of agency, as well as developing the basis for interpreting the often contradictory requirements arising from the pluralist society and professional operation (Hargreaves cf. Michalak, 2010, pp. 112–113; cf. Madalińska-Michalak, 2018, p. 4). Treating the professionalization of teachers and teacher professionalism separately leads to a closer exploration of the second of the distinguished categories of teacher studies.

Teacher professionalism

As Wanda Drózka notes:

In the light of the tradition of Polish pedeutology, or more broadly speaking, the sciences of education in Poland, the concept of the social role or the socio-professional role, and not the concept of professionalism, which is closer to the more pragmatic Western tradition has become the superior category for teaching issues. In our country, emphasizing the sociological and cultural aspects and determinants of the teaching profession through the category of the social role has a historical and cultural justification. It is related to the fact that teachers belong to the specifically Polish social class of the intelligentsia, along with its national and culture-creating mission, as well as its social ethos. Only in recent years has the concept of western-style professionalism been used more often in the analyses and research of teachers (2011, p. 136).

This interest in teacher professionalism may result from many reasons.

Bogusława D. Gołębnik states that the atmosphere of professionalism around the teaching profession appears in the periods of tensions that manifest themselves inside the teachers' community, which are a reaction to processes threatening their status, as well as in those historical moments that make society aware of the importance of education for its development on a global scale, and of the need to increase the funds allocated to it (1998, p. 116). A question arises here: why should the atmosphere of professionalism in relation to the teaching profession be revealed especially in times of tension, threats, etc., and not as a result of an analysis of the specific, and at the same time, dynamic and non-stereotypical nature of teachers' professional activity? It is primarily the specific work of teachers that implies the need for considerations oscillating around teacher professionalism.

In the 1990s, Richard I. Arends wrote that: "Teachers of the 21st century will be required to possess a vast body of knowledge [...]: they will have to be reflec-

tive creators and professionals” (1994, p. 10). Teachers, adds Christopher Day, “not only must be professionals, but they must also behave like professionals” (2004, p. 25).

A teacher as a professional is someone who is competent in his or her job and means “a person who does something with great skill” (Hurst & Reding, 2011, p. 21). The category of a professional, or rather a professional activity, has found its proper place in the internationally recognized definition of the teacher used by the OECD, according to which: “Teachers are people whose professional activity includes the transmission of knowledge, shaping attitudes, and skills that are specified in formal education programmes for pupils and students of specific educational institutions” (as cited in Průcha, 2006, p. 295). When asking about a teacher as a professional, we ask about teacher professionalism. So how can one understand professionalism, what are its main attributes? Professionalism is „1. professionally practising some art, sports discipline, etc., 2. someone’s great skills and high level of performed work” (*Słownik języka polskiego*, 2006, p. 742). Often, professionalism is equated with expertise, and this is understood as “proficiency in performing professional tasks and solving difficulties arising at work, based on the knowledge and skills of an employee” (Nowacki, Korabiowska-Nowacka & Baraniak, 2000, p. 72).

From the Anglo-American perspective, the features of professionalism include:

- a) having specialized education based on academic knowledge; b) compliance with specific ethical norms and rules of conduct (code of ethics); c) serving the common good (for example, in the teaching profession – activities undertaken for the benefit of health and development, education and teaching for socially approved success); d) having autonomy in the performance of the profession; e) the existence of self-governing professional organizations to protect the interests of the profession (Urbaniak-Zajac cf. Wenta, 2011, p. 158).

The above features of professionalism make it possible to treat them as specific distinguishing features of people belonging to specific socio-professional categories, namely those whose professional activity is involved in numerous and varied interpersonal relationships with many entities, including educational entities. Undertaking issues of professionalism in the course of his scientific explorations, David Carr points to those forms of activity and to those professions

which (a) are important from the point of view of matters situated in the social and public sphere; (b) require high technical competences and those well-established in practice; (c) have a specific, inherent ethical dimension for the articulation of which a certain code regulating practice in this profession or this

form of activity is needed; (d) require certain organizational forms and regulations necessary for the selection or recruitment and the disciplining of those who are performing or are expected to perform that occupation or profession; (e) provide the practitioners-professionals operating within a given profession (for their practice to be as effective as possible) with a high degree of autonomy, which means also independence in their judgements (cf. Kaniowski, 2010, p. 17).

It can be assumed that the category of professionalism includes not only above-average knowledge, skills, competences, efficiency, action, independence, responsibility, etc., but also, importantly, the ethical element that motivates professional activity.

Stephen D. Brookfield identified three assumptions that define teacher professionalism, namely:

1) professional teaching is the application by the teacher of everything that helps students learn; 2) a professional teacher is one who presents a critical and reflective attitude towards school practice; 3) the most important knowledge that a professional teacher needs for professional work is the constant awareness of how students experience and perceive his or her actions (as cited in Perzycka, 2010, p. 19).

The above assumptions basically relate to only one aspect of teachers' professional activity, namely to teaching. Nevertheless, it is worth bearing in mind that in educational practice, this activity does not only refer to teaching. This activity should be treated in a more complex way, because it may also apply to other aspects of teachers' educational activity, e.g. aiding, supporting, caring, etc.

The position of Gill Helsby, according to which professionalism in the teaching profession means two things, is important for the considerations being undertaken here, and these are:

Firstly, taking into account the quality of action, ways of behaving, and fulfilling a role, we can speak of *behaving professionally*, which refers to teachers' involvement in work, compliance with work standards, and with the requirements of professional ethics. Professional action is based not so much on routine as on the professional knowledge acquired in the teacher's learning process. Secondly, taking into account the position of teachers in society and the way they are perceived by others, one can speak of *being a professional*. In this case, we can mean the professional status of teachers, prestige, earnings, requirements for their professional education, [...] it is the professional preparation of graduates of educational studies for their work (as cited in Michalak, 2010, p. 97).

Therefore, speaking of teacher professionalism, it can be described in two aspects, namely: first, in the personal aspect, when a teacher is construed as an educational subject; second, in the praxeological aspect, when we relate it to the professional educational activity of a teacher.

As Jolanta Szempruch concludes:

The Polish understanding of teacher professionalism derives from its understanding in the Anglo-Saxon world. Professionalism is most often described, analysed, interpreted, and designed in the system of three variables, i.e. professional knowledge, professional action, and ethical and moral qualifications. Omitting any of these dimensions distorts the image of the teacher's professional role. Thus, professionalism in relation to the teacher is sometimes considered in several spheres:

- knowledge and competence;
- needs, emotions, and values;
- awareness of contact with another person.

Important aspects of teacher professionalism also include: autonomy, which manifests itself in expressing one's own judgements in making decisions in the classroom, and the ability to autonomously develop oneself professionally through self-study, as well as researching and analysing the work of other teachers, and questioning and testing ideas within the applied research procedures (2013, p. 174).

Among the various key categories relevant to teacher professionalism, Michalak lists the social importance of teaching work, teacher education, values in teachers' work, the professional autonomy of teachers, and the competences and ethics of the teaching profession (2010, p. 97; Madalińska-Michalak, 2018, p. 4). The above-mentioned categories characteristic of teacher professionalism fit into the dimensions of professional teaching activity, i.e. the social, substantive, methodical, axiological, and ethical dimensions.

Professionalism should be associated with practising the profession in an above-average manner, significantly different from the accepted standards of its performance. Nowadays, it may, or rather should, constitute the elementary furnishing of employees of a specific socio-professional category, in particular those, such as teachers, whose profession involves entering into various interpersonal relations with another person. It is the representatives of this profession who are to be characterized by a high level of knowledge, skills, and competence, appropriate ethical "refinement", as well as readiness to constantly expand and improve their teaching attributes.

Developing and updating teacher professionalism takes place primarily in the conditions in which teachers undertake professional educational activity.

Kwiatkowska is right when she notes that teacher professionalism results from various situations and working conditions. According to her:

1. Teacher professionalism is the art of combining two types of proficiency, i.e. technical and cumulative. The former is empirically verifiable, the teacher knows his or her technique of work, has mastered the praxeological side of his or her profession. On the other hand, the latter type, i.e. cumulative proficiency, includes both technical proficiency and academic, theoretical proficiency, thanks to which teachers are able to explain their behaviour (why do they act this way and not otherwise?) based on technical proficiency.
2. In selecting the appropriate course of action, the teacher must take into account both the specific situation and, in particular, the student's well-being.
3. The image of the teacher's actions becomes concrete while acting, because the teacher is not sure about the goals and methods of achieving them. This means that the teacher's actions change and are modified.
4. The teacher should take into account not only the student, his or her own biography and system of meanings, but also the fact that the student is important for the achieving of his or her own success, as well as the teacher's success.
5. The one-sidedness of the teacher-student relationship, aimed at changing the student in accordance with the teacher's vision, stands no chance of triggering genuine developmental processes.
6. In the work of a teacher with a student, it is important to communicate, because without communication there is no genuine cooperation, but, at most, passing a boring message that creates distance and strangeness.
7. The world of the teacher's thoughts should be wider and deeper than the world of his or her practical activities. Excess theoretical knowledge is a functional surplus in the teacher's work, necessary to be able to act in problem situations (2008, pp. 169–170).

Kwiatkowska describes teacher professionalism as meeting high cognitive, operational, and ethical standards. A component of teacher professionalism is, on the one hand, the world of thought and agency, i.e. the acquisition of knowledge and training of skills, and on the other hand, the world of feelings and values, which are attributes of the humanistic world (2008, pp. 169–170). Hence, following the considerations of the above-mentioned author about teacher professionalism, we can talk about at least three of its types, namely: cognitive professionalism, operational professionalism, and ethical professionalism. Each of them relates to a separate sphere of the professional activity of teachers, which complement each other and create a holistic vision of teacher professionalism.

It is worth recalling here the words of Kwiatkowska, who writes as follows:

[...] teacher professionalism is determined not only by cognitive arguments (how much knowledge I have passed on, what was understood, what I trained, what I consolidated, what I aroused interest in), but also existential reasons (whether I contributed to the development of a positive attitude towards myself, towards people and the world, whether I prevented the evoking of fear, anxiety, low self-esteem in pupils) (2008, p. 170).

Therefore, when considering teacher professionalism, one should take into account instrumental and directional dispositions, appropriately shaped and, at the same time, constantly developed by the teacher. Their simultaneous appearance, manifestation, and actualization in the field of professional activity will determine the state and level of teacher professionalism.

To be a good teacher, it is not enough to have a wide range of knowledge in a given field, which leads to professionalism. What is also needed is proficiency in action, a wealth of methodological technique, as well as personal qualities, positive attitudes that are carriers for the axiological world (Sajdak, 2010, p. 123).

Teacher professionalism is probably not something given together with the acquisition of relevant qualifications, but something set, constituting a challenge for all those who undertake the education of another person at particular levels of the educational system. Its origins could be sought already at the moment of making a decision on the choice of the teaching profession, and developed in the course of teaching education, and then actualized as part of the professional activity undertaken. Hence, professionalism appears not as an initial category that is given to every teacher with a diploma, but as a final category that the teacher develops himself or herself as part of his or her professional activity, in a diachronic effort to become a professional⁴. The diachronic nature of the category of professionalism, and thus the teacher's not being, but becoming a professional in the undertaken educational activity, prompts the need to pay more attention to this issue both in the framework of educating students of the teaching profession, as well as already in the course of practising teaching activities.

⁴ The words *initial* and *final* come from the considerations of Teresa Kukołowicz and Ewa Całka, focusing on the subjectivity of the pupil (1993, pp. 81–87). About “becoming” a teacher writes, *inter alia*, Joanna M. Michalak (2010, pp. 107–108).

End

Teacher professionalism belongs to those categories of teacher studies that are known to those who try to delve into the teaching profession, but is it sufficiently known, both theoretically and empirically? The answer to these questions requires in-depth reflection and discussion around the teaching profession, conducted in a group of people to whom the issues oscillating around teacher professionalism are close, both for theoretical, empirical, and practical reasons.

The multidimensional and dynamically developing social reality as well as, among other matters, the educational reality constituting it, prompts the need to constantly discover new areas and dimensions of teacher professionalism, which so far have not been explored to a satisfactory extent. At this point, one can even risk a statement that the issue of teacher professionalism is still *in statu nascendi*. Still, researchers into the issues surrounding the teacher and his or her profession are trying to explore those areas that have not been fully and sufficiently highlighted in academic research, both in theoretical and empirical dimensions, and concerning teacher professionalism.

The development of thoughts about the teacher, as well as the needs determined by educational reality, seem to indicate, to a large extent, the rank and significance of this issue in the area of knowledge about the teacher and the profession practised by him or her, and the need for its academic penetration. However, the main verifier of teacher professionalism will not be educational theory, but practice with all its complexity and dynamics, the teacher being one of the many entities participating in it and organizing it.

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