

АКТУАЛЬНІ ПИТАННЯ ВІКОВОЇ, КОРЕКЦІЙНОЇ, СОЦІАЛЬНОЇ ПЕДАГОГІКИ ТА ПРОФЕСІЙНОЇ ОСВІТИ

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REFLECTION AS A VALUE IN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE OF A TEACHER

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Properties of pedagogical action, particularly requiring critical consideration, call for recognition of reflection as a value in the teaching profession. Apart from this, a teacher's reflection is one of the resources for their individual theories, which in turn allows the pedagogue to become a "reflective practitioner", orienting his or her thoughts to the analysis of the way of understanding and evaluating the educational reality. In order to prevent the lack of reflective pedagogues capable of deep consideration in the teaching profession, it is necessary to pay special attention to the process of academic teacher training.

Key words: reflection, teachers' individual theories, "reflective practitioner".

When discussing reflection as a value in educational practice of a teacher, it might be well to consider the way of understanding the term *reflection*, which may mean deep pondering over, careful consideration, deliberation combined with analysing of something [11, p. 945], the act of inquiring, a kind of theoretical reasoning [8, p. 64], or a conclusion resulting from contemplation or meditation. Reflection can also refer to a mental attitudes of a person trying to avoid haste in passing judgements or impulsiveness in one's own conduct, or, in a narrower sense of the word, reflection means the act of concentration "owing to which the mind illuminates thinking" [3, p. 337]. In other words, reflection is a process of thinking oriented on analysis of the way of understanding and evaluating reality, "a critical insight into the direction of determining one's own attitude to life" (including professional life) [5, p. 14]. Accepting similar definitions allows to assign reflection a notion that is extremely substantial for the realm of education, in which a pupil and a teacher function together. It allows to recognize reflection as a value for the teaching profession. As the dispute about understanding values is insoluble [2, p. 14] and subject to an assumed convention [13, p. 508], without entering into

polemics specifying the notion of *value*, I assume in the possibly general (simplified) way that it is something valuable and desirable, and it should become the object of particular concern, or the aim of human ambition.

Properties of pedagogical actions, which particularly require critical consideration, weigh in favour of recognizing reflection as a value (something indispensable) in educational practice of a teacher. One of these properties is functioning on verge of actions provided directly and the world of ideas, emotions and ways of individual experiencing them. The quoted worlds require different pedagogical reactions from a teacher. In case of the first verge of the educational reality, which expresses everything that is specific and practically perceptible, a teacher can refer to ideas and actions of technological type, to certain educational patterns of behaviour (though there are only a few of them). Whereas, in the case of the world of thoughts, emotions, ideas a teacher is compelled to deeper consideration, interpretation, reflection that allow sensitive co-perception and penetration of the emotions of his/her pupil. A teacher must not forget that the educational theory which he or she was provided with during the process of academic education is only of general nature and its practical application will not always guarantee his or her success. Not every case, situation encountered by a teacher has been taken into account by the regulations of science and therefore the so called “ready-made prescriptions” of behaviour in educational situations, “effective” methods of acting very often do not apply to the dynamic, obscure school reality. A pedagogic theory does not provide sufficient grounds for explicit solving of educational issues, complicated in their nature and its role cannot be limited to producing algorithms of action sought by a teacher. Contemporary professionalism of a teacher involves not so much accuracy and precision in implementation of theories as an ability to cope with educational events which are characterized by instability, lack of self-confidence, uniqueness. This is exactly why, a teacher’s reflection is indispensable in solving numerous problems.

The moment which starts-up the mechanism of reflection is – as expected – a teacher’s subjective sense of incompatibility of the real course of individual events and his/her notion of their course. The incompatibility gives rise to a feeling of uncertainty, anxiety, reveals possibility of making mistakes and, at the same time, makes the teacher aware of the multitude of possibilities of different perceptions of such a fragment of educational reality, which he or she actually experiences. This type of reflection is a source of a teacher’s humility on account of his or her inability to exercise control of the events taking place around them. One should think that reflection destroys confidence and belief in the unshakeable order of the world (including educational order), making it problematic, uncertain and unpredictable. It is, therefore, a mechanism of arousing uneasiness, destroying the comfort of having all the arguments in one’s favour. Apart from the fact that reflection has the power of making cognition problematic, upsetting the certainty of

a teacher's assessment of educational events, in which he or she is one of the participants, it provides a teacher with an opportunity of fixing what has been destroyed by rash acting, devoid of reflection. It can also be a warning against uncritical belief in the veracity of the delivered lectures, as well as against the unauthorized belief in one's infallibility. Due to the reflection, a teacher receives feedback on himself and cultural ambivalence of the cultural reality, of which he or she is a co-originator. A deeper consideration, reflection allows a teacher to reconstruct an experience as well as formulate hypotheses, conclusions, abstractions going beyond the narrow horizon of tangible reality, yet, in the first place, it allows to understand the sense of his or her participation in educational reality. Owing to the self-knowledge appearing in the course of self-awareness resulting from self-cognition, from the reflection at the "meta" level, a teacher achieves the ability of creating an individual, subjective style of pedagogical acting and the sense of his/her own identity. Reflection seems to be the benefit which creates favourable conditions for getting to know oneself, understanding one's own role, but first of all it allows a teacher to view himself/herself as a separate, independent being, in spite of the passage of time.

Pondering over the value of reflection in educational practice of a teacher, it is worthwhile to refer the opinion of B. Suchodolski, according to whom reflective thinking is "the kind of thinking due to which we learn to understand the reality deeper than we do in effect of standard, empirical observation. [...] The perspective of possibilities takes us into the heart of the matter, into the play of the forces creating a definite state of reality, which after all is never ultimate and unchanging. To understand the movement of reality, we have to take into account multiple possibilities" [12, p. 141]. Reflective thinking of a teacher seems to be an attribute of mature subjectivity, "for which the basic tool of development is the ability to use the intellect" [12, p. 116]. On account of that, reflectivity becomes one of the source bases of **the individual theory of a teacher**.

There are many names attributed to individual theories in the literature on the subject: e.g. personal theories, personal practical knowledge, subjective educational theory. There also many way of defining them. However, most frequently attention is focused on the fact that a personal theory refers to the system of knowledge that a teacher uses in the course of his or her own work. It is a system of subjective knowledge on teaching and learning regularities, roles and tasks of both teachers and pupils in mutual cooperation, the knowledge, which is the result of the previous educational experiences of a teacher and the way they were integrated in his or her consciousness. Individual theories are "a kind of knowledge in action and about activities, manifesting both, cognitive as well as cognitive-judging aspects at the same time. They are a form of practical application of constructs and principles. Such a transformation of constructs into principles and the latter ones into theories clearly shows that there exists a link between cognitive

outlines of an individual and teacher's action" [10, p. 76]. Individual theories, as opposed to scientific theories, are focused on the personal dimension of a teacher's work, reflective deliberation on understanding the educational process and his or her own professional tasks. A teacher's personal theory shows dual character. On the one hand it is a reflection of the educational reality by a teacher's mind, and on the other hand it is itself an instrument of the reflection and determines the way that the teacher experiences the reality. It is a link of an infinite chain of relations between the experienced educational reality and the teacher who experiences it [10, p. 39]. An individual theory of a teacher is a kind of functional map of the educational space, which allows the teacher to act within the space. It includes factors of cognitive nature, which help a teacher fairly accurately get to know the world of education, as well as factors of evaluative-affective nature, supporting evaluation of the values functioning therein. Apart from the fact that it has the power of making cognition problematic reflection, which is the source of individual teacher's theory, creates an opportunity to discover cases of inadequacy or cohesion of the methods towards the aims of action, conditions of actions. Experiencing of current educational events prevents teacher's speculativeness, confirms or not, the teacher's diagnosis of a situation, verifies the value of undertaken actions after or in the course of a reflection. Plunging into practice allows a teacher to go beyond reflective doubts, scepticism, which is so characteristic feature of reflection. Reflectiveness allows a teacher to go beyond the narrow horizon of everyday events, makes it easier for him or her to enter the meta level, at which he or she acquires a possibility of better examination and evaluation of a situation [10, p. 81]. The more often a teacher takes to reflection, the more universal his personal theories become and the easier it is for the teacher of become a **reflective practising educationalist**.

When questioning the technological rationality, the author of the conception of "reflective practice" – Donald Schön – pointed out that the success in professional acting (not only educational) is based on self awareness of such acting, namely reflection, consideration before taking action. Human work, particularly the work of a teacher, underwent distinct intellectualisation, does not refer to simple forms of causability, but to creativity and reflection. Reflection (similarly to teacher's individual theories) is oriented on solving specific practical problems. According to Schön, a professional not so much uses theory in practical acting as learns to recognise, determine and define situations in which he or she participates. Then, testing different interpretations of problem situations lets him or her to modify his or her own actions. In reflective acting a teacher does not only ponder over what and how he does (has done or will do), but first of all he/she thinks about the activity while performing it. What is essential here, is the knowledge accumulated by a teacher as a result of his or her actions and based on

his or her occupational experience. In his conception, D. Schön refers to two kinds of reflections: a reflection-in-action and reflection – on – action [8, p. 69–70].

Reflection in action means a teacher's critical questioning of his or her own knowledge and its assumptions implemented in the course of the applied actions. It involved acting and considering the actions at the same time. In other words, teacher's reflection refers to critical consideration on his or her own thinking and method of acting, due to which a teacher has an opportunity to reconstruct the assumed principles, ideas or attitudes. According to Schön, reflection in action does not mean intuitive acting, nor can it be compared to a form of improvisation. In the opinion of the author of reflective practice, reflection in action "is a process, which creates certain sequence of events, starting from becoming aware of a specific task situation. It is a difficult process and often occurs to people who possess the knowledge of what to do, and are efficient in performance as well. Their action is swift. It creates certain time reserve which makes it possible to think, which provides a chance of applying one's knowledge in taking action. It is a very important reflection, as:

- it allows adaptation to the requirements of a given situation, modifies actions,
- it contributes to changing mental strategies of actions and verified them, it allows examination of one's own actions during the operation, which contributes to one's knowledge about the specific case [8, p. 69].

Another kind of reflection in Schön's conception is a reflection-on-action, which is performed by a teacher after the ensuing situation. As it happens under pressure of a given situation, its character is deeper, more universal, and its results are more extensive. Opposite to reflection in action, the consequences of which are immediate changes, reflection-on-action bears fruit only in future action, in which a teacher can take a fundamental turn, a slight correction, or take initiatives that may be completely different from the ones used to date. Its objective is not so much the action itself as the knowledge, which a teacher creates during his or her actions. Therefore, one can say that the conception of "reflective practice" focuses its attention on a peculiar kind of professional competence in the teaching profession, which includes abilities to create knowledge (general methodological competence) [8, p. 70]. In order to act efficiently, a teacher must create new intellectual and instrumental resources indispensable in interpretation of non-standard situations, which become more and more common in school reality. A teacher, more and more often appears in the role of a debutante, because solving different problems he or she must act in a way at variance with the repertoire of controlled ways of reacting, and must perform operations, which have never appeared in his or her actions before. Therefore, he or she does not have any earlier experience in dealing with them. So such situations, due to the undertaken consideration contribute to creating new knowledge, allow a teacher to act

adequately to the circumstances that came into being, and they just allow to act in an adequate way to a situation in progress, not just by copying the well known methods of action. The reflection of a teacher as an individual type of thinking gives him an opportunity to understand what is going on in a classroom, determining his or her value for his or her educational practice.

The conception of reflective practice induces to revising the way of thinking about teaching profession, and to a different view at **educating future pedagogues**.

Wishing to educate reflective teachers, aware of the values of deeper consideration in educational practice, one should ponder over the recruitment to the profession. It seems necessary to ask a question whether anyone who wants should be educated to be a teacher.

The teaching profession is hedged around with possessing numerous competences in the cognitive, moral, social, aesthetic, and performing spheres. The imperatives result from social expectations and are reflected by regulations of the law and other documents (e.g. in the portfolios of teacher training graduates). A system of recruitment of candidates to such a demanding and difficult profession should therefore contain appropriate tests, which will allow the society as well as the candidate himself/herself to obtain information about his/her predisposition to the teaching profession. The tests should be taken at the earliest possible time (i.e. during the recruitment), so that a young man does not waste his or her energy and time on following an improperly chosen career. A student who chooses to specialise in teaching – as B. Śliwerski writes – must be aware of the correctness of his or her decision. They should not only “take into account the compatibility of interests, aspirations or expectations concerning the career they want to follow in the future, but first of all they must have a sense of their own value. People who do not appreciate and accept themselves, who have problems with themselves, should not apply for enrolment at faculties of education” [12, p. 136–137].

In the system of enrolment for higher teacher education courses special attention should be paid to such predispositions as: capability for auto-reflection, awareness of the relations between one’s own *ego* and the surrounding reality, ability to show empathy, friendliness, resistance to stress, interpersonal skills, analytic and diagnostic skills, ability to determine tasks and ways of coping with them, and other predispositions, which developed in the process of academic training will allow the teacher to cope better in the educational space.

On the other hand, bearing in mind the process of teacher education itself, one cannot come down to passive mastering of knowledge of a student/future professional; the necessity of organising students’ work in a way that will allow them to learn the educational reality through independent thinking and acting, making independent choices is called for, as an academic is to inspire research activities and develop the creative potential of young people. Teachers’ training

cannot be reduced to “providing a student with knowledge”. It should be understood as a process of “formation of competence allowing and supporting the process of reaching beyond the acquired information” [4, p. 140].

Hence, one of the assumed tasks of university education should be stimulation of the need for constant and spontaneous supplementing of knowledge and skills by way of conscious learning, as the dynamically changing system of knowledge (inflow of new and outdated the old information) does not allow to provide a student – a future teacher – with a closed set of knowledge [1, p. 227]. Numerous psychological studies prove that the information independently produced, interprets, diversifies and intellectually processed by an individual, play a larger role in his or her life and activities than information passed as ready-made and well-suited for memorizing [7, p. 197]. Therefore, there is a necessity for preparing students of teacher training courses (and not only them) for independent discovering of knowledge, which is possible by developing their methodological competence.

In the process of training pedagogues – reflective practitioners – one should not forget about stimulating self-awareness of candidates for the profession, to which introducing to philosophical culture seem to contribute. It is a form of a young man’s personal, conscious attitude towards the world and himself/herself. It is not intended at making a student – a future teacher – a professional philosopher, but to illustrate the significance of philosophy in the process of combining one’s own educational activities, their purposes and results with the essence of the sense of being. University education of teachers requires active forms of implementation. During the implementation students – future reflective teachers – would have an opportunity to create new quality of their knowledge, the so called knowledge “on the run” [8, p. 71], as information, even if well learned and remembered, grow old, become outdated and irrelevant only to join the ranks of the lacking in knowledge. It is, therefore, not enough for the students to acquire knowledge on the necessity to resort to careful consideration, the point is to give them an opportunity to experience the value.

In the process of training teachers capable of reflective consideration one cannot forget about systematic support for the technical as well as practical-moral competence of candidates for the teaching profession. In accordance with the opinion of R. Kwaśnica, fundamental importance is to be assigned to the practical-moral competence, which occupy a super-ordinate position in the teaching profession. “It has priority over technical competence in the sense that the latter cannot be used without their consent. Any goals, methods or measures, before a teacher applies them, must be granted practical-moral acceptance” [9, p. 302]. Due to auto-reflection, practical-moral competence (interpretative, moral and communicative) make it possible for a teacher to impart sense to definite events, to ask questions about the binding force of his or her actions, as well as makes it

easier to maintain a dialogue with other people and with himself/herself . In order to take better care of the practical-moral competence of future teachers, it would be worthwhile to ponder over the methods of implementation of such courses as Psychology or Pedagogy. The course classes could be conducted in the form of workshops, which would allow formation of the ability show sensitive understanding of other people and him-/her-self, which requires showing some personal effort and involvement.

It appears that the abovementioned abilities are still underestimated in the process of training of future teachers. Formation of open, humanistic attitudes, sensitizing, providing with the ability to ask questions addressed to the world, seems to favour creative type of education, education of teachers who are able to inspire their pupils to attempt maximum development of their own abilities, but above all teachers equipped with tools for coping with ambiguity of the educational reality.

Creative abilities and skills can also be the objects of attention in the process of educating reflective pedagogues. Properly selected sets of training routines aimed at development of creativity result in increasing the level of creative thinking, creative ability in educational work, planning creative tasks and moulding creative attitudes. They, sort of, force a student to make an effort to reflect on himself or herself and his/her behaviour, on events taking place around him/her and exerting impact on him/her.

Properly organised pedagogical practical training sessions should not be overlooked in the process of educating reflective teachers, either, as they should provide the candidates to the teaching profession with maximum authentic contact with schoolchildren in different situations, e.g. during classes, breaks between classes, during optional classes, etc. A good practical training session should not only be attended, but experienced as well.

In order to find out what students themselves think about the **need** (or perhaps the necessity) **for reflective thinking** in the teaching profession, in May 2015 I asked 120 first-year students of the second degree course of studies to write an answer to the question: *Is an ability of reflective thinking necessary for a teacher?*

The answers that I received reflect well on intellectual maturity of the student respondents. An absolute majority of the respondents (98%) realize that the educational space in which teachers and pupils function is full of conflicts, tension, conflicting interests and intentions, which causes loss of aloofness, but which can be prevented by deep consideration, self-analysis, pedagogue's reflection. Here are a few examples of statements made by the students: *"In my opinion reflection plays a key role in this profession. Reflection is the measure to understand the world and other men. It provides an opportunity of deep examination and evaluation of a difficult educational situation..."* (A-23); *"A reflection in the*

teaching profession is indispensable to develop one's own style of pedagogical action..." (A-68); "...*a reflective teacher is not a person ready to transmit his or her knowledge, it is a person looking for knowledge and enjoying the search...*" (A-51); "*A reflective teacher can retain his or her subjectivity, so as to be able to respect his/her pupil's freedom and subjectivity.*" (A-71); "...*a reflection is a basic tool used to explain a teacher's own failures*" (A-95).

In their statements, the student-respondents also emphasize that a reflective teacher is particularly appreciated by students: "*Every teacher characterized by reflectivity, self-control is held in high esteem by his/her students.*" (A-24); "...*a teacher's reflective thinking strengthens his or her authority*" (A32); "...*a teacher who wants to be an authority for his/her students as well as to be held in high esteem by the teaching staff, must not forget about reflection in thinking and acting*" (A-111). Young people – future teachers – are also aware of the sources of reflective thinking: "*Reflective thinking demands from a teacher certain effort, demands overcoming the apathy of the mind. It is a kind of thinking that must go through the mental anxiety and abashment.*" (A-51); "*The genesis of reflection is uncertainty, doubt, lack of possibility to >dot the i's and cross the t's>.*" (A-22).

It can, therefore, be acknowledged that students are aware of the value that reflection carries for the educational practice of a teacher. Young people do realize that it is consideration that helps a teacher to retain his/her aloofness towards spontaneity of school situations, achieving orientation in the stream of events and analysing his or her own participation in all this.

According to J. Legowicz, in the days of haste a thing or two can be dispersed or treated mindlessly. This state of things pertains to the teaching profession as well [6]. A teacher's intellectual culture should, therefore, be based on a thought, a question, an intention of understanding the surrounding world as well as himself/herself, which will prevent carefree attitude and contingency of the undertaken educational activities, as well as protect him/her against intellectual ignorance. The teaching profession is a process of intellectual and emotional maturing to oneself and to educational and social role of a tutor. Thanks to the undertaken consideration a pedagogue has an opportunity to become aware that "is not" a teacher, but he keeps "becoming" a teacher [5, p.20]. Permanent analysis of one's own conduct, consideration of the issue whether there is no better solution to apply in a given situation, does not limit a teacher to searching for a "ready-made recipe", pattern of behaviour, but by way of intellectual effort it allows to determine the significance of school events, assign them a definite sense, create cultural interpretation of educational "texts", in order to build up one's own "truth" about the educational space. All this seems to reflect the indispensable value of reflection in a teacher's educational practice.

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РЕФЛЕКСІЯ ЯК ЦІННІСТЬ В НАВЧАЛЬНІЙ ПРАКТИЦІ ВЧИТЕЛЯ

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Особливістю педагогічної діяльності, яка вимагає критичного осмислення, є розуміння рефлексії як цінності в професії вчителя. Окрім цього, рефлексії вчителя є джерелом його власних педагогічних теорій, що дозволять вчителю стати “рефлексивним практиком”, орієнтованим на аналіз, осмислення і оцінювання сучасної теорії та практики освіти. Тому в процесі професійного навчання вчителів важливо звертати увагу на розвиток рефлексії, для того щоб зменшити у майбутньому кількість вчителів, не здатних до глибокого осмислення та аналізу своєї діяльності.

Ключові слова: відображення, окремі теорії “рефлексивної практики” вчителів.