RADICAL SOCIAL WORK IN THE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS OF SOCIAL PEDAGOGY: THE CONCEPT OF "EDUCATIONAL SPACE" THAT ENCOURAGES THE QUESTIONING OF THE ‘TAKEN FOR GRANTED’

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The purpose of this article is to present a concept of an educational space created in the course of B.A. social pedagogy studies for the introduction of the radical social work model. In a wider perspective, this contribution gives an idea of an academic teacher’s action to develop certain alternative approaches to social work while studying social pedagogy. The framework of this concept, and thus the reference for defining the knowledge and role of academic staff in the process of its creation, is social constructionism.

THE RATIONALE FOR THE PRESENCE OF THE RADICAL SOCIAL WORK MODEL IN THE COURSE OF SOCIAL PEDAGOGY STUDIES

Social pedagogy in Poland represents one of the academic disciplines forming a theoretical base for social work education, in which one understands social work not as a profession, but as a kind of a socially constructed space including various categories of specific jobs and professions that share a common mission, an idea uniting the action taken, oriented on the inclusion into social life and facilitating the
establishment of social relationships (Marynowicz-Hetka, Piekarski, Wagner, 1999).

Hence, socio-pedagogical analyses and education are considered a part of the space co-created by various academic disciplines, theoretical approaches to action and the daily practice of the representatives of professional and non-professional roles, whose purpose is to increase the inclusive potential of the society. As an academic discipline, and not a social profession, social pedagogy prepares its graduates to work in schools (as a school social worker), psycho-pedagogical counseling agencies, children’s houses (orphanages), other residential care institutions, extra-school centers, community centers, welfare services, courts (as a probation officer), the NGO sector, etc.

Co-creating this social space, it belongs to educational sciences, which clearly distinguishes both its theoretical approaches to social work and analyses carried out in this field. The specificity of social pedagogy, as a discipline theoretically underpinning social work, is most generally expressed in its classic, encyclopedic definition, according to which social pedagogy is “a practical science developing at the crossroads of human, biological and social sciences with ethics and cultural studies (...) thanks to its own point of view” (Radlińska, 1961).

The outlining of this ‘own point of view’ requires reference to the roots of Polish social pedagogy, which date back to basically the end of the 19th century. One of its significant founders was Helena Radlińska who embodied the model scientific biography of a sensitive social activist and an academic, who turned the reflection on her action into the cornerstone of an academic discipline.

According to the followers of the academic effort of Helena Radlińska – professor Irena Lepalczyk and professor Ewa Marynowicz-Hetka1,

1 She developed and organized Poland’s first program in social work at an institute of higher education – the Social and Education Studies Program [Studium Pracy Społeczno-Oświatowej] of the Polish Free University in 1925. She directed the School till 1944 when the suspension of the official education during World War II made her an organizer of conspiratorial teaching activities. Between 1945 and 1950, she organized Poland’s first Department of Social Pedagogy at the University of Łódź. Following the closure of the Faculty, Radlińska’s academic career ended in 1950 when she was sent on a compulsory paid leave of absence. Subsequent heads of the Department – Prof. Aleksander Kamiński, Ph.D., and Prof. Irena Lepalczyk, Ph.D.,
“Radlińska’s life and work were closely tied to historical events in Poland and Europe. They clearly influenced her activities, beginning with the struggle to establish a sovereign Polish state, the achievement of political independence and the aspirations linked with the opportunities of creating and changing the society ‘to reflect the ideal’” (Lepalczyk, Marynowicz, 2001). Her concept of social work training was tailored to “prepare students to work on behalf of the community as well as with the community and using the strengths of the community” (Lepalczyk, Marynowicz-Hetka, 2001).

Even today, when we have in Poland several centers of academic education of social pedagogues that are quite different from one another outlining the local trends, what they share is seeking answers to the “question of the relationship that exists between a man and the environment. On the one hand, it is about the assessment of the impact of living conditions on the development of individuals, and on the other – about identifying the transformative capabilities of the existing reality” (Theiss, 1984, p. 64).

This understanding of the subject and object of theoretization and research is closely connected with another specific feature of social pedagogy as an academic discipline – its interdisciplinarity, characteristic for the socio-educational curriculum for social work education. Interdisciplinarity, so much emphasized in the Polish social pedagogy definitions, having been rooted in the tradition of social pedagogy, is expressed in our curriculum and reflected in the range of scientific (mainly humanistic) disciplines in terms of which a human creature and her/his relations to the world are presented. While social pedagogy has to some extent generated its own theoretical approach and related concepts, it has borrowed a lot from other social sciences for its research and practice. Hence, the multidimensional study of man has a prominent place in the syllabus of the study program to show varied perspectives on human affairs while preserving the requirement of consistency between those cultivated the model of training and research endorsed by Prof. Radlińska’s team while modifying its selected aspects according to the needs of the changing social reality. The main ideas underpinning the training profile have remained in the syllabus until today, when the Department is headed by Prof. Ewa Marynowicz-Hetka with a special focus on interdisciplinarity, collaboration and integration not only in the dimension of the studies curriculum, but also in the dimension of internationalization.
perspectives, methods of research and action orientation. This serves as ground work in education for our graduates to become future researchers and activists who will be well-equipped to fulfill the demanding and complex tasks of social professions.

Taking into account the view close to me that the key space of the change in the educational process are the social representations of one’s own future professional role (Jodelet, 1994; Barbier, 2006; Marynowicz, 2007), the key element of the studies seems to be theoretical approaches to the relations between man and the environment, and to – consistent with them – the role of social work. We find them in different courses of studies offered in our Department, in the following blocks:

- **basic courses** centered around the fundamental aspects of pedagogy and its sub-fields and compulsory for all students of pedagogical studies2;
- **obligatory courses** for the students of pedagogy which outline the area of pedagogical action and provide students with knowledge indispensable for their future professional career as pedagogues of different specializations;
- **specialization courses** designed exclusively for the social pedagogy students to prepare them for work within social professions.

The key importance of location of socio-pedagogical analyses and ideas in the space of the man-environment relationship is especially manifested in the selection of the content and forms of the specialization courses. Their syllabi cover both socio-pedagogical theories and theories from other scientific disciplines, that ensure the possibility of explaining and analyzing the social practice in their terms.

Among the many theoretical approaches, in our education there are also radical approaches, which are the subject of my particular interest. The rationale for inclusion in the course of socio-pedagogical studies the elements of the radical social thought and the radical model of social work seems to be unquestionable.

On the part of the student, looking for inspiration in the radical stream

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2 Our Department offers studies in social pedagogy within care and socio-educational work on the I (B.A) and the II (M.A.) degree studies. In our Faculty, in addition to social pedagogy, other pedagogical studies are organized by other departments.
of thinking facilitates the discovery of the link between power distribution and social problems – the etiology of social problems considering the structurally fixed favoring of certain values over others. The absence of such approach in understanding of the social professions, together with the dominance of the theories seeing social problems as results of individual (biological, psychological, etc.) and environmental factors in the socio-pedagogical curriculum, would impoverish the idea of the role of social professions, to the agent reinforcing the status quo. The dominance of traditional social work theories in education leads to difficulties. One might look for them not only in the dimension of social responsibility of social professions educators, but also in the dimension of the professional identity of these teachers of social work who turn the awareness of the need for the radical orientation in the social work education into the effort of inclusion of its elements into their courses. They can freely use the teaching experience of their colleagues in teaching classical theories, or conducting activities consistent with them, but they might be alone in the process of introducing into education the models that are in some ways alternative. And their loneliness seems proportionally stronger to the modest representation of radical social projects in their domestic (national or local) practice of social work.

SYNTHETIC PRESENTATION OF THE MODEL OF SOCIAL WORK

Radical social work I understand as an elimination of any form (working with the case) or content (sexism, racism) of practice that reinforce the power of the ruling class and thus makes a system of opposition, which is based on dehumanization of the capitalist social formation (Webb, 1981).

Such wide scope of the subjects of radical social work points to the vaguely defined collective subject for the sake of which it is developed,

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namely the groups deprived of power, towards which the ‘majority’ uses the tactics of discrimination, which results in the reinforcement of the status quo. The social entity abstracted in such a way is ‘the sum’ of the representatives of the minority social groups that differ according to their characteristics discrediting them in relations with the so-called majority. Some examples of these features are: class, gender, age, race, sexual orientation, physical fitness and intellectual abilities. Radical social work is aimed not only at ‘the poor’, but also at other minorities (be they cultural-ethnic, sexual, or members of a particular gender, etc). Therefore, it seems to be as diverse as the population of the disadvantaged groups is internally differentiated, and as diverse as the left-wing thought is, whose central premise is sensitivity to inequality, social injustice, and looking for both the causes of individual problems in structural constraints and their manifestations in human biographies. Searching for the ways to build a new social order that would change the balance between the minority and the majority, rather than seeking ways of social inclusion into the privileged majority, outlines most broadly the radically-oriented interventions.

The theorists of the radical model of social work primarily refer to Marx (Payne, 1997; Dominelli, 1997). Lena Dominelli sees in his thought the role more sensitizing than orienting practice (Dominelli, 1997). The level of the generality of his theses makes it impossible to derive directly a particular model of social practice. However, the search for specific theoretical approaches underpinning the radical model of social work leads to interactionism, the theory of social labeling, the systems theory, the ecological theory, etc. and the feminist approaches (Payne, 1997).

The model of radical social work grounded in such theoretical foundations is defined in opposition to the orientation of the action based on the theoretical approaches explaining the etiology of social problems in terms of individual characteristics or the environmental ones. In the literature devoted to this subject, it is sometimes called traditional/non-radical social work (Rojek, 1986; Payne, 1997; Fook, 1993). “Radical social work criticizes ‘traditional’ (psychodynamic) social work, and other theories relying on psychological explanations of social problems, and
functionalist theories which tend to take for granted the present social order” (Payne, 1997, p. 216).

The search for the radical social work identity through the process of relating it to the traditional social work is used by the authors who give it the character of a distinct social work model (cf. structural social work, Mullaly, 1993), as well as by the supporters of considering radical social work functions and the need of the radicalization of different areas of social action (cf. Fook, 1993; Lee, Pithers, 1980, etc.).

This synthetic presentation of the radical social work model was not intended to provide deep knowledge about it. I only wished to make the Reader sensitive to the way how statements are constructed in this model. In general, statements explaining what radical social work is continuously relates to what it is not. Already at the initial stage of familiarizing oneself with the radical model of social work we can see an analogy between the narrative created by the thinkers, teachers and/or commentators and radical social activists.

One can get an impression that the dominant way of the radical model of social work presentation seems to reflect the way in which a selected social minority would present itself, taking up action aimed at changing its situation. A common feature of these presentations would be constructing in this process their identity by constantly referring to what is outside them – the world of ‘the majority’. A feature of the literature describing the radical model of social work is the presentation of the model carried out by a continuous juxtaposition of the characteristics of the model with the model of traditional/non-radical social work (Payne, 1997; Fook, 1993).

Chris Rojek calls such a way of constructing statements about the social work model ‘gladiatorial paradigm’ (Rojek, 1986). This paradigm is the expression of the dominant conceptualization of the social work theory, according to which theories are opponents fighting for domination over an area. Although such presentation has been criticized in many ways (Whittington, Holland, 1985), for me it has become a benchmark in the development of ideas for the organization of favorable conditions for the introduction of the radical social work model into social pedagogy studies due to the reasons outlined below.
QUESTIONING OF THE ‘TAKEN FOR GRANTED’ – I.E. ON THE CREATION OF EDUCATIONAL SPACE FOR ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF SOCIAL WORK DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOCIO-PEDAGOGICAL EDUCATION

CONSTRUCTIVIST FOUNDATIONS OF THE EDUCATIONAL SPACE THAT ENCOURAGES QUESTIONING OF THE ‘TAKEN FOR GRANTED’

The similarity of the statements on radical social work to the language used by minority groups seems to reflect the similarity of the social status of these two ‘subjects’, but in other structures of prestige. The language of radical social work seems to reflect not only the logic of the process of social change, which could be initiated by the representatives of any of the minority groups, but also the position of the content radicalizing the thinking about social work among other content elements in the curriculum of socio-pedagogical studies.

Such conclusion would justify the need for the emancipation of the ‘absent content’ in the socio-pedagogical educational space, if we agreed with the idea of studying based on the one-way transfer of knowledge. It does not fit though when we think about education for social work not in terms of the ‘flow’, but in terms of social construction (Berger, Luckmann, 1966; Burr, 1995) that is very close to my perspective on academic education.

Starting from the premises of the social constructionist perspective, knowledge is the intersubjectively shared construction of interpretations of the subject by social actors creating the world of communication. Meaning is always the result of the interaction between people, but never a personal vision of reality (cf. Burczyńska-Garewicz, 1975). As stated by Gergen “the terms in which the world is understood are social artifacts,

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4 Intersubjectivism is an “approach, alternative to the objectivist-subjectivist view, on the nature of the subjects. They share common values, agree on the interpretation and create symbolic space (...), and cannot be separated from their local communities” (Granosisik, 2007, p. 173). Intersubjectivity includes such factors as: social perspective, locality, processuality, interactivity, interpretativeness, mutual conditioning (Granosisik, 2007, p. 172-173).
products of historically situated interchanges among people” (Gergen, 1985, p. 267). Hence, the object of the study is not objectively verified knowledge developed and passed on through successive generations of scientists, but the discourses themselves. What is especially important for academic training understood from the constructivist perspective are the performative qualities of discourses. The differentiation of social constructions describing and explaining a particular social problem leads to different social actions (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1985). In other words, knowledge of the world is developed between people in their daily interactions such that we should be centrally concerned with the social processes whereby this comes about and can be changed. These negotiated understandings can take a variety of different forms which thereby invite different kinds of action. However, while constructions of the world sustain some patterns of action they also exclude others. (Parton, O’Byrne, 2000, p. 26). Consequently, interpretations representing absent discourses can become a reality for social actors when, in communication, it comes to developing “a critical stance towards our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world including ourselves” (Parton, O’Byrne, 2000, p. 26).

With respect to those premises, and being aware of specific unprivileged position of the radical perspective in the syllabus of socio-pedagogical studies, while designing the framework of the context of the radical social work perspective ‘implementation’ into the course of the studies, I structured it according to some, created in my imagination, model of a socially constructed space. The space was intended to encourage redefinition of what is ‘real’ and ‘taken-for-granted’ within social problems and social work descriptions and explanations. It would constitute a sub-space of the communication in the academic world, co-created between the academic teacher/s and students, between the students themselves and between them and other parties involved in the process of studying\(^5\). The external and internal context of the discussed space will be presented in detail in the next section.

\(^5\) They include supervisors in the practical fields during studies, the subjects of their own observations, etc., who can contribute to the questioning of the taken-for-granted, or building cognitive resistance.
THE EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL CONTEXT OF THE EDUCATIONAL SPACE THAT ENCOURAGES QUESTIONING OF ‘THE TAKEN FOR GRANTED’

Although the assumption of the communicational nature of the educational space seems to direct the students’ attention to the processes and not stable structures, each interactional entity is co-created by the social actors in a specific context. The elements of the context significantly frame the course and dynamics of communication processes. One could say that the work on the revision of the social actors’ interpretation models and patterns of their behavior depends on the change in the context of their action. In the case of the educational area outlined here, we can speak of two interwoven dimensions of its context: the external and the internal one.

The term “external context of the described educational space” embraces those elements of the context that are objective in nature. They are beyond my influence, while also significantly contextualizing the choices and the course of the process of constructing the internal context of this space.

On the other hand, the internal context is the outcome of my own choices, in terms of the composition, quality and forms of the classes taught by me, or in agreement with me as a coordinator of the selected courses throughout socio-pedagogical studies – key courses in the constructing the described educational space.

EXTERNAL CONTEXT

It is objective in nature, structurally mounted and connected with the courses order in the curriculum. Radicalization of thinking about the social role of social workers calls for changes in the whole society not only in the way the social work subject is being defined (from the ‘subjects in need of help’, ‘the helpless’ users of social services). It demands also the understanding of ‘alternative’ approaches to the etiology of social problems, as well as the introduction into qualitative research methods and alternative forms and methods of social work. The multidimensionality of the expected changes requires a gradual introduction of the premises of radical social work in the course of a variety of concurrent or consecutive courses throughout socio-pedagogical studies.
To meet these requirements, given the limitations restricting the possibility of changes in the curriculum, it was necessary to take into account the importance of the courses taught by others. Their content contextualized the process of the whole social construction of knowledge in the course of studies, including parts taught by me.

The elements of the external context in my opinion embrace the assumed constituents of the educational space developed prior to our meeting that seems to be a significant point of reference in the construction of the internal context.

The courses that I will refer to, from now on, as supporting subjects, include:
1) methods of research;
2) assessment in Pedagogy;
3) theoretical approaches to social work;
4) designing social projects.

Their brief description reveals the meaning that they have in the internal context structure.

**Ad 1), 2) Methods of Pedagogical Research (III semester: 30 hrs lecture, 15 hrs classes) and Assessment in Pedagogy (V semester: 15 hrs lecture, 15 hrs classes; V semester: 15 hrs classes)**

In any model of social work, regardless of its theoretical bases part of its content is a set of research methods. They allow exploring the social reality in the way consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of the model in order to design the way the explored reality might be changed. The importance of social research methods in social work training does not need any arguments backing it up, nevertheless the importance of this course, as the foundations of the educational space conducive for ‘infecting’ the students discourse with the elements of radical social work, should be emphasized.

The model of radical social work seems to promote qualitative research orientation⁶. The processes revealing the unprivileged areas cannot take

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⁶ The narrative approach, based on the assumption that the clients themselves are the experts in their own lives is widely recommended in the available literature (Saleebey, 1992; Pinderhughes, 1995).
place with the usage of the pre-conceptualized research tools, because they would represent the perspective of the privileged ‘majority.’ Since power misuse can be defined only from the perspective of the one who experiences it and deals with it, the significance of introducing students into qualitative social research methods is indisputable. This need is highlighted especially when we think about the everyday practice of a radically oriented social worker. The professional conduct in the traditional social work is based on an a priori defined set of tools and techniques that allow for assessing the client’s situation. Given the association of the radical social work model with qualitative methods of research, reflections on the limitations of the classical diagnostic approach and the introduction into the alternative one that looks for solutions and reasons for professional action from the clients’ perspective, seems to be the key issue.

Hence, this part of the external context I considered extremely significant in the development of the key courses of the outlined educational space. It is essential to be aware of a risk of low efficiency of a qualitative research workshop during the lectures and practical classes in the number of (in total) 45 hours. Especially when in parallel with that quantitative research methods are introduced and when their dominance in research and education to social work is a fact, which usually translates into the proportions of the adequate content in the curriculum of lectures and classes concerning the methods of social research. The awareness of the dominance of classical research approaches, has decided about the care for the presence of these elements in my communication with students within the key courses of the outlined educational space.

Ad 3) Theoretical Approaches to Social Work (IV semester: 30 hrs lecture, 15 hrs classes)

The purpose of this course is to introduce the students into the selected theoretical concepts from different disciplines underlying the various models of social work. It is not only about providing the students with information on them, but also about highlighting the consequences of the practical application of a given theoretical approach. The lecture has the form of a review and it is here where the students are introduced to the subject of radical social work. During the course, the students get familiar only with the outline of the radically oriented theories. The relations between the qualitative research methods and radical social
work as well as the orientation of action rooted in these theoretical premises are outlined.

The analysis of the curriculum of this course was mandatory for designing the key courses, given the fact that they are supposed to be based on the frame of the gladiatorial paradigm. The contrasting references to the traditional models of social work became the light motive in my communication with students. Hence, I needed to determine which of them, in what proportions, and with what readings had been worked with students in the course of these classes.

Ad 4) Designing a Social Project (V semester: 15 hrs lecture, 30 hrs classes)

This course, in a chronological sense, is located in the curriculum alongside the key courses of the outlined educational space. However, since its purpose is to develop and implement a social project, based on an earlier diagnosis of ‘the needs’ conducted in a particular institution or community, I assumed a link between the expected change in the students’ discourse about social work and the quality of conceptualized and implemented social projects, especially for those students who decide to write their thesis under my supervision. A humble confirmation of the validity of this assumption is the fact that two years ago, one of the project groups took up action in the League of Polish Women for female victims of violence. Bearing in mind the limitations of public institutions helping the victims of violence and the weakness of standardized aid procedures, they organized a public informative campaign. The research conducted in local institutions and NGO’s resulted in the information leaflet book and a website where local initiatives taken to combat violence against women

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7 It starts in the same semester as two key subjects of the described educational space: ‘Social Problems of Youth and Social Work’, and ‘Community Work’ – the elements of the internal context of the space. It is continued providing the context for the students’ action in the role of social project implementers. The problem of training for social work with the method of social projects, together with the description of the subjects, has already been introduced by Dorota Wolska in the previous article of this issue.

8 The B.A. seminar runs in parallel with the course of social projects. Since the B.A. thesis is related to the realized project, I have, as a person who runs the seminar, an indirect effect on the orientation of action in the social project. The more detailed description of the relationship between the undergraduate seminar and ‘Designing social projects’ can be found in the article by Dorota Wolska in this issue.
were presented. Although the radical premises expressed at the stage of taking up the initiative were not reflected in the project as expected\(^9\), this project pointed to the validity of perceiving in the educational space initiated by me for the questioning of the ‘taken for granted’ a significant reference in the process of becoming a student activist.

**INTERNAL CONTEXT**

Regardless of the fact which key course we consider, the following elements frame the communication between me and the students:

1) the concept of a teacher;

2) the key importance of the ‘gladiatorial paradigm’ for the selection of the content and forms of communication.

**Ad 1) Concept of a Teacher**

A significant element of the internal context of the described educational space (perhaps quite immodestly assumed by me) was to be a charismatic teacher. The charisma is understood here not only as an attribute of my self-presentation, which might stimulate and encourage the students to intellectual effort and redefinitions. It is defined as a result of my authenticity in the communication questioning of the ‘taken for granted’. Since “man internalizes the external world in the process of acquiring it and giving it some meanings” (Pilch, Bauman, 2001, p. 276), the authenticity of a teacher in communication with students is an element that is favorable for this process.

The importance of teacher’s authenticity in the construction of the space questioning of the ‘taken for granted’ refers to a concept of a university teacher which is close to me.

I understand a teacher as the one who introduces the students to the process of creation of general knowledge (Szczepański, 1963, 1969), by

\(^9\) Interestingly, the organizations under the auspices of which the students’ action was to be carried out were not ready themselves to radically oriented ideas. The minimization of radical premises seemed to me to be the result of negotiations between the vision of the students and the routine way of perceiving professional action by the employees of the organizations.
introducing unique knowledge, closely tied with theoretical approaches and research of specific lecturers. An academic teacher in this concept is primarily a researcher and a person identified with specific ontological and epistemological perspectives, which are the subjects of his/her lectures. The concept that I found very helpful in the construction of my idea of the role of a teacher who accompanies in the process of the questioning of what is ‘obvious’ seems to be also the idea of a ‘transformative intellectual’ (Giroux, 1988), i.e. a teacher who is an advocate of vulnerable social groups, assisting in the critical understanding of the world – a teacher who creates the conditions for a discourse. However, the transformative potential of a teacher had to be consistent with his or her scientific biography. In building the role I opted for authenticity, ‘experience’, and self-presentation resulted from my experience of identity transformation in the course of the conducted research. My criticality and radicalism disclosed in the classroom were not the result of ‘intellectual infection’ by critical or radical social thinkers, but a natural stage of intellectual development resulting from a redefinition of identity in the process of socially engaged research. In my case, ‘becoming a radical’ occurred in parallel with the advancement of my research (to my doctoral dissertation) dedicated to the youth from one of the unprivileged neighborhoods in Łódź. During the course of several years of participant observation, I managed to experience ‘the hard way’ the crisis of confidence put in traditional knowledge or trust in the institutions and forms of social work that find their legitimacy in it. Participation in the daily routine of the research actors, the lived experience, and above all, the theory which is the result of the participative research – symbolic-interactional theory of social participation of the youth from the socially non-homogenous Łodź neighborhoods, explaining the socially unacceptable activities of young people from such neighborhoods in terms of structural constraints and the process of stigmatization, became my ‘status-creating props’ in the process of initiating educational space conducive to the emancipation of the ‘radical discourse’ in the socially constructed knowledge while studying.

**Ad 2) Key Meaning of Gladiatorial Paradigm for the Selection of the Content and Forms of Communication with Students**

This refers to the proposed and sustained way of framing my lectures, classes and discussions with students, and involves the constant
comparisons of the traditional and the radical model of social work. The framing of communication with students reflecting the logic of the ‘gladiatorial paradigm’ was the result of an assumption of the unprivileged position of radical social work among the models in the sociopedagogical training for social work.

The assumed similarity of the statutes of these entities, despite the differences in the structures within which they are socially positioned, as well as constructivist underpinnings of my viewpoint, inspired me to frame the educational process similarly to framing the social change co-created in the social action by a radical social worker and the representatives of a selected minority group. The nature of change – be it educational one or a change in the situation of a selected minority group – I see in the change of the intersubjectivity of the communication partners, which is ‘overburdened’ with certain discourses. Therefore, while designing classes, I had in mind pursuing the change, whose essence is captured by the concept of raising consciousness. It is a process used in radically oriented social work and “it involves the processes of reflecting on oppressive social structures to try to understand them and then exploring ways of acting on the understanding” (Payne, 1997, p. 224). This is a process of reflection on the nature of social structures leading to the development of an alternative vision of reality – ‘redefining’ (Payne, 1997). It is the work with the representatives of the disadvantaged groups on changing the way of defining one’s problem and locating the fault – not on an individual, but on the side of the system (Fook, 1993).

The way of realization of this goal will be presented in the description of the key courses – the space of communication between students me and my colleagues taking part in the process of organizing it to facilitate the questioning of the ‘taken for granted’ in the training of our students.

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10 Berger and Luckmann argue that the ways of defining the reality dominant in the society are in line with the interests of the exercise of social control and the identity of the entities. As produced by the dominant version of the reality, they remain – under identification supplied to it – subordinate to the social forms of control (Berger, Luckmann, 1966; Męczkowska, 2006). Similarly, the alternative versions of entities identification, and thus the alternative versions of the reality, can be marginalized and subjected to strategies conducive to a ‘just’ change.

11 Freire (1985) speaks about conscientization as “the process by which human beings participate critically in transforming acts” (Freire, 1985, p. 106).
KEY COURSES AND THEIR ROLE IN THE CREATION OF EDUCATIONAL SPACE FOR ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF SOCIAL WORK DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOCIO-PEDAGOGICAL EDUCATION

The key courses in the emerging area of education for radical social work include:

- ‘Social Problems of Youth and Social Work’ (V semester: 15 hrs lecture, 15 hrs classes) – first half of the fifth semester;
- ‘Community Work’ (V semester: 15 hrs lecture, 15 hrs classes) – second half of the fifth semester;
- B.A. Diploma Work (IV semester: 30 hrs classes; V semester: 30 hrs classes; VI semester: 15 hrs classes).

The first of the key courses, organized by me for all students, is called ‘Social Problems of the Youth and Social Work’. It comprises 30 hours (15 hrs lectures and 15 hrs classes).12

Choosing the content and format of the course I somewhat referred to the premises of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969). According to its main assumptions, an individual lives in a society filled with meanings and takes action to meet the requirements of the emerging situations. Participating in social life, people construct shared interpretations of situations, and thus also the common patterns of action, which leads to the harmonization of behavior. Whenever a reference is made to one’s behavior, an interpretation is taken into account that is going to lead to the use of best practices derived from the existing at hand definitions. Let us note, however, that there are situations that prevent the use of common solutions, making it necessary to construct a new definition and launch mutual adaptation (it is mainly about new situations or those defined in an individually varied way). Creating such situations was made by me the cornerstone of communication in the framework of this course.

This course consists of lectures conducted by me and parallel classes carried out by my colleagues. The classes are designed to analyze social

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12 Both in the case of the course titled ‘Social Problems of Youth and Social Work’ and the course called ‘Community Work’ the classes are run by one of my colleagues from the Department.
problems of young people in terms of different – albeit traditional – concepts of their etiology and discuss common forms of social work with the youth\textsuperscript{13}. An emphasis is put here on the diversity of causes, due to accentuating the importance of prevention in the socio-pedagogical mainstream of training for social work and the consideration of the limitations.

On the other hand, the lecture is a space for interpretative analyses of selected social problems of young people, which are designed to induce consciousness raising of other theoretical approaches – those who explain the etiology of the selected social problems in a different (non-traditional) way. I pretty strongly focus on the differences between interpretative and normative insight into social problems. In relation to this, I am outlining different roles of social workers and the corresponding fields of their action.

The work starts by analyzing the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency presenting the data gathered in the course of my research. I use the example of a case study of one of my research actors – a teenage boy. I introduce him first by providing students with pieces of the diagnostic description prepared by a Family Center for Diagnostics and Consultation. It represents a diagnosis prepared in the language of normative perspective where he is perceived as a socially maladjusted teenager, with a criminal record quite extraordinary for a person of his age\textsuperscript{14}. The image constructed in the diagnosis\textsuperscript{15} is best described by the following descriptive categories: ‘disfunctional family’, ‘parents are deprived of parental authority’, ‘father is in prison’, ‘disturbed the social/school functioning’, ‘aggressive towards friends’, ‘uncontrolled way of spending leisure time’, ‘school retardation’, ‘poor awareness of the problem and its consequences’, ‘troublesome, insecure and unhappy with the results of his work, it is difficult for him to focus

\textsuperscript{13} They depend on the individual research interests of the lecturers. The common part to both groups is normatively oriented analysis of social problems discussed in the lecture.

\textsuperscript{14} It is an institution working for the court. Its diagnosis, based on standardized techniques, makes the foundation of the court’s decisions.

\textsuperscript{15} This diagnosis regarded a boy, who for many years was placed in an orphanage and later in correctional institutions for juvenile offenders. Since he regularly escaped from institutions to his home (located in the neighborhood in which I ran the study) he was allowed to temporarily stay at home, provided that he would have constant contact with the judge and reported to tests that would help in taking further custodial steps.

This part of the diagnostic description seems to display the results of testing with standardized tools that checked in this ‘case’ the value of variables whose relation to juvenile delinquency is scientifically proven.

Then, I’m presenting a description of a situation involving the same boy, namely his being interrogated by the police as a suspect of committing a robbery. This description comes from my research materials and reflects the model situation of adjusting the interpretation of the testimony of a minor (with a long criminal record) to what is expected from him because of his stigma. This time the boy was innocent and I myself could confirm it. Walking a minor along the street in handcuffs with policemen accompanying him on the way to the interrogation, interrogating him without the actual legal guardian, answer-suggesting way of asking questions, constant referring to the ‘criminal career’ of the boy with negotiations with me, and writing down the record of the witness testimony on my request not as a part of a standardized procedure – these are the main elements of the context and dynamics of the interrogation, towards which I steered the analysis of this material with the students.

Thus, the example of a ‘traditional’ diagnosis (led by the question of why an individual cannot cope in the environment?) was juxtaposed by me with a description prompting the students to reconstruct the diagnostic problem expressed in the question of the ways in which the inadequacy of the social structure to the needs of individuals, groups and communities is revealed and of the areas and mechanisms of discrimination. First, I try to bring about a reconstruction (from the example of the traditional diagnosis) of answer categories logically arising from the question. After acquiring usually a very rich spectrum of categories I come back to the second example and its interpretation to indicate the interactional mechanisms of becoming a criminal. The course of the interrogation empirically illustrates the thesis on the relationship between the stigmatized definitions of a partner, and the dynamics of interactions in a way reinforcing the stigmatizing definition. This situation reveals the effects of stigmatization as a manifestation and consequence of the
power misuse by the representatives of the privileged ‘majority’ and as a mechanism generating a social problem – here, juvenile delinquency.

By their juxtaposition, and breaking the lecture with a discussion, I wish to develop a communication space helping the students to understand not only the diversity of the etiology of social problems, but also the fact that the vast array of theoretical approaches underlying the traditional and radical social work implies a different perceptions of social reality by their supporters.

Such framing of the lecture and discussion allows for not only emphasizing the differences of locating the responsibility for social problems beyond those representing their categories, but also for indicating the different nature of the diagnostic methods, depending on whom this responsibility is assigned to by a social worker.

Raising the awareness of students on the basis of the above analysis (case study) conducted in the language of diverse theoretical and methodological perspectives is followed by lectures already showing the results of the interpretative analyses carried out in groups of young people, whose representatives appear to be locally (in Łódź) well-recognized and defined as addressees of the many forms of social work. I have here in mind the above-mentioned youth form the unprivileged socially non-homogenous neighborhoods and stadium hooligans. I present their everyday life in theoretical categories derived from two separate several-year participant observations carried out with the use of the grounded theory method and documented in the following works:

1) “Social Participation of Youth from the Unprivileged Socially Non-Homogeneous Neighborhood”

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2) “Aggression in Football Stadiums. Analysis of the Phenomenon from the Interactional Perspective”\textsuperscript{17}.

Both of these analyses show the young people as victims of the socially constructed exclusion process. I try to direct the communication to favor the perception of the presented youngsters, and their situation, as the victims of structurally legitimized and interactionally expressed necessity condemning a priori the youth from the unprivileged neighborhoods to ‘hanging around in the streets’ and, consistently with that, recognizing them as ‘street children’, or condemning children from the unkempt cement blocks of flats area located near the football stadium to a stadium hooligan career. During the lectures, I emphasize how structurally legitimized and administratively and interactively executed limitations of the development of young people in their places of residence, restrict their life choices and promote negative changes in their behavior, which results in a change in the social reactions to them, leading to perceiving them as deviants. Both analyses de facto exemplify the strategy supporting the status quo, not only at the local level and not only as regards the groups they embraced.

‘Community Work’ takes place after classes ‘radically’ sensitizing the students and helping them understand the representatives of the selected category of ‘social problems’. My expectation orienting the choice of the content and the shape of this course was to create a space that facilitates understanding the differences in the diagnosis and forms of social work between the traditional and the radical model. During the lectures, I first make a comparison of the two (normatively and interpretatively oriented) models of community work, in order to expose the differences between them. I also want the students to understand the relationship between the orientation of the diagnosis carried out in the community and the role of a social worker. However, the emphasis is placed on the themes dear to me – interpretive diagnosis of communities on the example of a diagnostic model of the Łódź socially non-homogeneous unprivileged neighborhoods and,

\begin{itemize}
\item Example of Participatory Study on Youth from the Unprivileged Neighborhood in Łódź. \textit{Social Work. Experience and Methods}, 9 (1).
\item This is the title of an unpublished M.A. thesis by Agnieszka Stańczak conducted under the supervision of Prof. Ewa Marynowicz-Hetka and myself, and defended in 2011.
\end{itemize}
consequently, on empowering community work on the example of a community of this type.

On the other hand, classes become a space for group social diagnoses carried out on selected groups of young people in their community of life and/or places where they gather and spend their leisure. The teachers during the classes initiate the division into diagnostic teams and accompany them during the process of selecting the community or the place and methodology for the diagnosis, and during the analysis and preparation of the scientific description of its outcome. The course ends with a revision test covering the content presented at the lectures and contained in the supplementary literature, but first of all with the presentations, performed in front of all students of the same year, summarizing the results of their teamwork. The final grade is still a socially negotiated assessment of the work performed by various ‘diagnostic’ teams, crystallized throughout the negotiations between me, my two colleagues and the students.

The students are free to choose the communities and methodologies for the group diagnosis (quantitative or qualitative), although we do encourage them to make sensitizing, qualitative diagnoses with the hope to develop, on the basis of it, logically consistent premises for community work. Ethnographically oriented diagnoses of the groups or communities attract attention and generate stronger emotions, compared with studies based on isolated data (e.g. analysis of the needs of the residents of a given community based on the records of the local administration, interviews with local land managers, school principals, school social workers, district constables, etc.).

Some students continue a relationship with me, choosing me as a promoter of their undergraduate diploma theses. These papers are intended to be reflections on social action in the course of a social project. Given the emphasis on the reflexive value, radical and critical approaches become a canvas of theoretical references forming this reflection in the course of dynamic seminar discussions and individual meetings with me.

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18 The seminar runs in parallel with the entire series of classes dedicated to projects. The issues of training for social work with the application of social designing, together with a description of courses, can be found in the previous article of this issue written by Dorota Wolska.
CONCLUSION

The object of this contribution is the author’s concept of introducing a radical model of social work, as an alternative approach to social work in the course of studies of social pedagogy. The premises of this concept are rooted in social constructionism. Therefore, the key concept of this approach is the concept of educational space, i.e. the space of communication, in which knowledge is co-created by interchanges amongst acting people. Thus, taking into account that the object of knowledge are discourses and their performative qualities, in communication in the course of studies there are designed negotiated understandings of social reality and a place of the social worker in it, and – consequently – the inclusion of some patterns of action and the exclusion of others. Bearing in mind the widespread dominance of the traditional forms of descriptions and explanations of the social reality in social work training within socio-pedagogical studies, I assumed:

- the risk of discrimination of the radical social model in the training, with the anticipation of specific consequences of it for social practice;
- the similarity of the status of the radical social work model in education and in social practice to the position of minority groups (the object of concern of radical social work) in the society.

Hence, while framing educational space, I referred to the elements favorable for the empowerment of the disadvantaged courses. I put an emphasis on the relationship between consciousness raising, understanding the social reality and the orientation of the action of a subject. In addition to the above assumptions, I included into the list some elements that contextualize the outlined educational space and called them the external and internal context of the educational space. The detailed description of the frame and the content of the key courses of that space lets the reader understand the dynamics of the interactional mechanisms expected.

The conclusion cannot, unfortunately, include the evaluation understood not as a typical test of the acquired knowledge, but the feedback from the students, as well as the analysis of team diagnoses (I mean the qualitative content analysis), namely the diagnoses of selected local communities.
etc. and anonymous, open, written statements of students evaluating the classes. The qualitative analysis of these materials will allow, hopefully, for a reconstruction of areas requiring a change, which will become a driving force for further development.

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