EDUCATION AND FORMATION FOR ACTING IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL WORK – THE SOCIO-PEDAGOGICAL POINT OF VIEW

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The issues related to social work and activities taken in this field of practice have been tackled by extensive literature on the subject and many concepts that make the theoretical reference material for the construction of that practice. In this text, the concept of the socio-pedagogical perspective of the field of social work is presented, which expresses the social dimension of activity in the field of social work. This concept provides a fundamental theoretical reference (framework) for training to work in the field of social work carried out at the Department of Social Pedagogy at the University of Lodz. Education understood in this way is also shaping the acting subject who, throughout the process, acquires values of professionalism.

1. PREPARING FOR ACTING IN THE FIELD OF PRACTICE: THE STARTING POINT OF THE ANALYSIS

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1 The article is a modified version of articles dealing with the subject of the social dimension of activity in the field of social work that were published in 2011 and 2012 in Polish and English. Cf.: Marynowicz-Hetka, 2011, 2012.

2 Translation from Polish and linguistic consultations: Magdalena Machcińska-Szczeńiak.
concepts that make the theoretical reference material for the construction of that practice. In this text, it is proposed to become familiar with the concept of the socio-pedagogical perspective of the field of social work, which expresses the social dimension of activity in the field of social work. This concept provides a fundamental theoretical reference (frames) for training to work in the field of social work carried out at the Department of Social Pedagogy at the University of Lodz. Education understood in this way is also shaping the acting subject who, throughout the process, acquires values of professionalism.

The starting point for the analysis is a few theses referring to:

- the understanding of social work as a field of activity and practice. This thesis requires indicating the meaning of the activity category in an interactive perspective and the theory of pragmatic activity perspective;
- the position of social work practice not necessarily clearly articulating its functions, but often between them. This means the field between the protection function/normalizing, questioning and mediating. The many fields of social work practice are vivid and have meaning for the perception of the essence and sense of the social dimension of activity in the field of social practice;
- drawing attention to the relational model of social work practice which has its source in the social-pedagogical perspective of its analysis of John Dewey’s pragmatic theory (1963, 1968, 1975). One of its exceptional attributes is the understanding of social work practice as a mutual experience, created in reconstruction and reorganization, carried out in a process. The features are: continuation and interaction.

The subject of this text is the consideration of certain aspects understood as social work practice, which is continuously on the oscillation axis between completing control functions and support functions. The question of the specifics of social work functions, understood as a field of activity, is in essence a question of the shared paradigm by the environment on the activity in the social work field. There are many suggestions and analyses on this issue (e.g. Social Work, 1998; Social Work Education, 2003) and outlining it we can differentiate, in a simplified way, two opposing social work paradigms.
The first one can be defined as techno-control (instrumental) oriented towards technology, evaluation and control. As a result, it verifies activity supporting ensuring social order and exposes the strategically oriented activities, allowing for the evaluation of effects, an external analysis of the needs, probing the market of social services, a *homo oeconomicus* success analysis.

The second one, defined as humanistic, is oriented towards relational social work, which begins to assume the dimension of social work and facilitates in this way creating a society/community. It exposes non-strategic activities, expressed in solutions of mutual construction of reality, its transformation, in sharing values agreed on in a mediatory and solidarity approach.

The position formulated in this text is situated nearer to the continuum in the direction of the idea of solidarity, when the social work practice begins to resemble the dimension of social work/community work. In other words, we will discuss aspects of activity, which are significant towards understanding the approach of social work practice, which becomes social work community work. The theoretical reference will be the socio-pedagogical perspective of understanding activity in the milieu and studies on social education. It is significant to emphasize that the term social work is understood here in the socio-pedagogical perspective as a field of social profession activities and as an ensemble of practices in the social sphere. This field of activity can be analyzed in various perspectives, here the socio-pedagogical point of view on the practice field.

Among the features which may be significant for the differentiation of the specified paradigms – an important place is held by the meaning of the activity as a whole, which in the case of social work is society. The dichotomic final aims are characterized by the following oscillation: from attention paid to order/social order to accepting multiple solutions, expressed in the idea of *unitas multiplex* and activity located in context. A special place is occupied in this differentiation by the location of the active subject in the social practice field and the theoretical orientation and perspective of activity. Other important elements which differentiate these paradigms and the emerging specific types of activity are: the appointed sense and logic of activity. The results of such a proposed tool
of analysis are the slightly modified suggestions of J. K. Tillmann (2005), namely two types of activity: strategic and non-strategic activity.

In this text, I will rather not deal with the discussion on how to be active in the field of social practice, but on what it is, may be, and on its sense and meaning. Thus, I will focus on the status of activity and what is said to be its social dimension. By adapting this standpoint we will reach the discussion on its limits, the lines of division between theory and practice, between research on activity and activity itself, action, work or the task as formulated by Hannah Arendt (1986)\(^3\).

The starting point for determining our position on the issue of education for acting in the field of social work is the recognition that the universal aim of training (formation, education) is preparation to self-determination and making sovereign decisions. In brief, the purpose of education is to prepare for freedom and responsibility, i.e. to making responsible choices (cf. Ingarden, 1973). This is an objective and attribute of the learning process. These values, as universal ones, apply to the entire educational process. They take on special significance, however, when the education process regards preparation for certain professions that are particularly burdened with the need to make decisions, also on behalf of the charge, the beneficiary of an institution, and sometimes even for him/her.

The most important element demonstrating the specificity of the training process for acting in the field of social practice is finding and realizing the existence of “one’s knowledge” (”personal knowledge”), used in analyzing the field of practice and orienting activities in this field. Helping each acting subject realize that they have their own knowledge is the final goal of education for acting in the field of practice, formulated in the individual dimension for each student, each person being educated and striving for advancement.

Education is also gradual formation (German: Bildung, French: formation) of oneself, one’s own image as an individual and as a person holding various social roles. It is essentially a development of the person in the relationship with the milieu and being equipped with the tools of

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\(^3\) Cf. the interpretation in the text by E. Marynowicz-Hetka, A. Wagner, J. Piekarski (1999, p. 20).
analysis of social reality and the main lines (ontological, epistemological and axiological references), which make the framework for professional activities.

The measure of professional training to work in the field of social practice is the ability of the actant to report what he/she is doing, i.e. the ability to describe the process of acting (Barbier, 2006). This statement contains the intention to emphasize the importance of the training/development process for the acquisition of competences related to realizing the activities undertaken and full participation, including the mental one, in this process. It is also important to gain, throughout the educational process, such conceptual and vocabulary skills, which would protect the acting subject from instrumental use of detached techniques. The measure of proper educational process preparing the subject to act in the field of social practice seems to be the fact that the actant understands the meaning and importance of the activity of others, and the meaning and importance of the action taken by him/her towards others.

2. THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF ACTIVITY IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL WORK – AN EVOLUTION OF PERCEPTION

One of the theses which can be made at the starting point of the analysis of the evolution of perception as regards the activity in the field of social practice indicates a close relation of differentiation in the understanding of it with the oscillation and stress that are present in connection with the domination of particular theoretical and methodological paradigms in humanistic and social sciences. At present, they are rather connected to the perception of reality (Manterys, 1997; Guba, Lincoln, 2010) not the one ordered, confident, known and easy to measure, evaluate, count, but the reality characterized by multiplicity and non-measurability oriented towards communication and participation, than carrying out the “assumptions of a preconceived plan.” The stress between these paradigms orients thinking on the social dimension of the social practice.

These oscillations can be defined as:

- from certainty of activity and results towards omnipresent uncertainty (Morin, 2007);
from unit analysis of the act of activity towards situation in process;
from belief in rational activity towards scientist doubt.

Observing the social work practice (and the expectations placed towards it by the society) and analyzing the results of reflection on it, one has the impression that there is a clear dissonance between projecting the reality and the reality itself. One may say straightforwardly that social practice “does not fit” the more and more often developed paradigms, situated in the understanding of others, in their participation, which are generally defined as non-strategic activities. This dissonance is especially visible when one does not notice the social dimension immanently situated in the complex process of activity in the social practice field. As a result, activity is often limited to isolated acts, separating particular elements of activity from the whole complex process.

In this analysis, we focus our attention on the relationship between the field of education and the field of practice. In the background of our analysis there is the concept of educating social workers (Radlińska, 1961; Brodowska, 1958) elaborated at the Center for Social and Educational Work at the Free Polish University, which seems to be still extremely valid. Among the essential elements of this concept we ought to specify the following ones:

- understanding social work as a process of forming a community, expressed in a three-dimensional activity (for, with, and through the community);
- specific recognition of a social worker as a factor animating the environment (community) and stimulating transformation and change;
- parallel training to acting (practice) and learning – understanding (research) and reflecting on these processes (reflection on activity);
- attention paid to the training of human resources for education to social work (educating those who educate);
- parallel undertaking of studies not only making it possible to identify social problems and design compensation and optimization solutions, but also those on the discipline in process of change and development.

The term “social” means that these are people that work for others and with others who share a common goal of activity. Generally speaking, this aim involves undertaking and organizing activity to minimize the
concerns and problems in the individual and social dimension and to forestall the occurrence of threats. By assigning such meaning to this term, we make it closer to the traditional but very modern comprehension of the adjective “social”, which in the original concept of social pedagogy was used in at least two senses: to determine the goal of the activity and to set the course of action (Radlińska, 1961, p. 377). The adjective “social” (activity, work, service) means at the same time the target (for the community) and the way to achieve the goal (social forces).

The concept of social work is very broad, because it includes all mutual influences of individuals situated in the environment. It has a personal nature, which is characterized most of all by:

- mutual relation. One does not “work” by oneself – the social dimension of work means reciprocity and participation;
- understanding in terms of social activity aimed at constructing a symbolic institution (see: Marynowicz-Hetka, 2006), created by all the subjects in the given field of activity;
- three dimensional approach, as activity realized by the subject in the life environment, using human strengths (individual and collective). As a result of this activity they acquire a social dimension and become social forces, which participate in the transformation of the milieu. This participation can be multidimensional: the adjective social means that this can be an activity for the environment, with it and through it. From such description various models of social practice can be gathered as well as methodological indications, whose differentiation legitimizes the complexity of the practice. The continuum of the social worker’s/social pedagogue’s orientation in relation to the field of activity is characterized by features such as: the distribution of goods – mutuality – participation. On the other hand, the continuum of the relationship a subject – the field of activity includes: distancing oneself – engagement – sharing (fate, situation, aims, etc.);
- understanding it as the leading method of activity in the field of social practice.

Under this understanding of social work, we should highlight the animatory aspect, i.e. a certain direction of methodological thinking oriented towards seeking the answers to practical questions such as: how to transform, how to animate, how to achieve final aims that are articulated
by the subject as final conceptions. The animation dimension defines the basic final aim of the undertaken activity: animating the individual’s milieu in the direction of improving the quality of life.

3. ACTIVITY IN THE SOCIAL PRACTICE FIELD – CHOSEN TOOLS FOR ANALYZING THE SOCIAL DIMENSION

This part of the analysis will be aimed at answering the question: what is the specificity of the social dimension of social work based on? The location in the social context is characteristic for gaining processual attributes and complexity. The fact that the reality becomes all the more complex influences all undertaken activities (Morin, 2007; Marynowicz-Hetka, 2009).

An analysis of what is or can be the social dimension of social practice may be made orderly by the use of a tool of analysis which will take into account the following aspects: the subject, means of analysis, term apparatus, activity, specific point of view on the problem, activities in the field of social practice.

The subject of social dimension analysis of activity: commonizing of experience. The first register of questions, differentiating the positions, refers to what activity is characterized in the field of social practice, what the expectations external and internalized by the subject are, what the rationale for the undertaking of an activity is and what is the best way to achieve the set goal. These are questions concerning the subject of analyzing the social dimension of activity. Since answering them would require a wide range of studies, the analysis undertaken in this text is rather an attempt to answer them contextually.

Social work seen in the socio-pedagogical perspective is a certain type of activity where the social dimension holds a special place. It is an activity directed at change and transformation. Thus, it is a dynamic process helping individuals and groups participate in relations with themselves, with others and through others. This process is described according to various models, formulated depending on the dominant theoretical and methodological references.
If, following J. Dewey, we assume that education as a type of activity can be understood as a process of reconstructing experience, one can comprehend the social dimension of the activity in the field of social practice in a similar way as an integrated collection of experiences of acting subjects characterized by continuum and interaction. In his works, Dewey writes of a continuum of experience. Continuum and interaction are never separate. They are longitudinal aspects and border (lateral) experiences defined by rules (Dewey, 1968, p. 91).

Since the reconstruction of experience takes place in interaction (Hałas, 2006, p. 44-47; Szacki, 2002, p. 554-555) and one can speak of the reciprocity of experience, most probably in an analogous way we can talk of activity in the field of social practice as a relational process (interactive). We can formulate the thesis that the specifics of activity in the field of social practice, the essence, sense and meaning, will depend on how we perceive social work. If this is a field of commonized experiences of the subjects, it also possesses certain attributes. Social work acquires the attributes of social work/community work.

The activity in the field of social work can be, most generally speaking, oriented towards the following functions:

- protection/normalization, which situates social work as a guard and stabilizer of change in social life and a distributor of goods. Representatives of social professions are situated here as managers of social problems. Methodological activity is dominated by the adaptive and distributory model;

- contestation, expressed as realizing social mechanisms of change, when a social worker situates himself/herself as a spokesperson of groups excluded from social life. He/she comes closer to performing the role of a social worker;

- mediation, mentioned as the opposite of managing social problems.

The concept of activity, seen from the perspective of non-strategic activity, generates the concept of social activity, understood as the actions of the subject oriented at creating a symbolic institution in the life environment, and this is precisely what the subject of the social dimension of social practice is. This practice is oriented at supporting the empow-
tement of individuals and the ensemble of certain features which are briefly defined as *disoeconomicus*⁴.

**The method of analysis.** The second element of the tool is the assumed method of analyzing the phenomenon, which is characteristic for the given approach. One needs to agree with the thesis that the social dimension of activity in the social practice field cannot be considered apart from the social contexts in which the practice is located and where the research processes happen, especially in reference to its analysis. This is important for the understanding of the social dimension of activity and the development of the ranges of its sense and meaning, as well as its location. This dimension is not situated outside these contexts, it is not just externally defined, but it is also contained within these spaces, as their important attribute and source of verification of the undertaken steps. Such perception of the social dimension of the social work practice emphasizes the meaning of such attributes as: relativity, processuality, temporality, contextuality and localization. These features define the range of the practice, including the boundaries and means of crossing them. This is also essential for the specifics of defining the situation and as a result for the *bricolage* of activity, in which processuality and interactivity are special features.

**The term apparatus.** A significant aspect of the tool is the term apparatus, which enables us to ensure the cohesion of the activity assessment and the explanation of its sense and meaning. In this text, the terms around which it is focused include social work and activity. The first of these terms is situated in the humanistic paradigm and relational model of activity. It allows us to go to the social description of this practice. The second, from the perspective of non-strategic activity generates the concept of social activity, understood as the activity of the subject oriented on creating the symbolic institution in the life environment. Experience plays a vital role in both of them. It undergoes a continuous

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⁴ K. J. Tillmann’s proposition popularized by A. Wagner (1998), later developed by L. Witkowski (2010, p. 63), features: “the weight (ballast), support (basis), protection and empowerment (use).” Witkowski says that these may be the frame for humanist management. They define in a complete way the multitude of situations and their complexity, with what in the social field can be encountered by the active subject. They also indicate the elements that may mutually influence one another (and through one another).
reconstruction and reorganization enriching its content and increasing the ability of directing the further process of experience (Dewey, 1963).

What needs emphasizing is that the term apparatus is a derivative of the acquired positions and research approaches. The described concept has an exceptional meaning for the participative, interactive approach and the research in action (i.e. Participative Approaches..., 2010).

The construction of the term apparatus has influence on the activity used in the process and indirectly during the evaluation process. We differentiate (Barbier, 2006) two types of vocabulary: the language of communication and the language of understanding the activity. What is especially significant is drawing attention to the specifics of the language used by subjects in the practice field in communication with other subjects. It is characteristic for this type of vocabulary that there can be observed the strong axiological marking and its meaning is used simultaneously in many orders: the conceptual, affective, and cognitive ones (ibidem, p. 187).

It is said (Barbier, 1990) that most of the opinions in this type of communication in the practice field are evaluations of the activity results, or comments motivating others to undertake activity. This situates the concepts in a kind of a network with others. We can speak of “interconceptual relations of this type of vocabulary” (ibidem, p. 187). The issue of the language used in action is a very broad field for analysis, requiring interdisciplinary competences (Sierocka, 2003). The map of issues connected with the term apparatus of the social dimension of activity in the practice field is very broad. One should include there, first and foremost, issues concerning the acts of speech.

The specific point of view on the social dimension of activity in the practice field – the socio-relational element of the social practice model. The key element of the tool for the analysis of the social dimension of activity in the practice field is self-consciousness as regards the used research terms and their epistemological references. Undoubtedly, the differentiation of the acquired perspectives facilitates the choice of the theoretical position of understanding activity. For example, in differentiating the dichotomic division into strategic and non-strategic activities, we are – in the first type – the “action-makers” conscious in
acting that we influence the natural change of things. We are driven by rational solutions, which consequently are quite easy to evaluate by referring to the previously formulated goals.

The latter position assumes that in acting we only change the configuration of the process, its structure, the run of the process, the sequence of events, etc. This obviously is meaningful for the occurrence of difficulties in the evaluation of activity in the given practice field, since it is hard to draft a clear definition of references for a certain stability of evaluation, due to the unpredictability of the course of events. Evaluations are often expressed as a probability and in a heuristic way, and they contain many more formulations, which are shaped intersubjectively.

The acknowledged understanding of activity, as the first process situated in time and space, can be defined as closer through the following elements\(^5\): defining the situation, orienting activity and *bricolage*, as well as undertaking activity. These are not stages or phases of activity, but elements of the process that can be transcended and transformed. The specificity of the point of view for this understanding of the social dimension of activity in the social field is expressed in emphasizing the meaning of the relational model of social practice. The activity in the field of social practice performed having such awareness allows this process to gradually gain social dimension – become social work/community work.

4. EDUCATION AND FORMATION FOR ACTING IN THE FIELD OF PRACTICE THROUGH MAKING THE SUBJECTS AWARE OF THE FRAMEWORK OF ACTIVITY

The thesis developed here is that education for acting in the field of practice (in this case a very complex practice, namely social work) should be limited to the provision of ontological, epistemological and axiological elements, which could ensure a framework for activity. Filling this framework should be left to the subject acting in the field of practice and professionally prepared for such activity. The final training target

defined in such a way enables keeping the balance between what is universal in education and what is specific and individual, corresponding to the actant as well as the context in which this activity takes place.

The main idea behind this concept is the following question: “Which of the elements determining the framework of activity performed by the subject ought to be particularly highlighted when we think of professional preparation?” This requires displaying in the course of the preparation for acting not only the analysis of the context and specificity of the field in which the activity takes place, but also the concentration on the subject of the activity analyzed in terms of its intellectual, emotional and axiological resources.

The framework of social activity in our understanding is these elements and aspects that define the field of activity and are important for its development. They comprise (Barbier, 2006) three types of references received or expressed by the acting subject: theoretical and methodological, emotional and volitional, axiological. In other words, they relate to three spheres of human activity: cognitive (intellectual), affective (emotional), causal (volitional).

Using the category of the “framework” of social activity and reflection on it is mirrored in the concept of the social construction of reality (Berger, Lumann, 1983) and the concept of social representations (see: Carré, 2002), which are decisive as regards the perspective of the activity performed by the subject, choosing the approach to the analysis of reality, the orientation of activities articulated in the formulated final goals and the perception of the subject(s) in the field of activity. This proposal also refers to the overall perception of the field of activity and the subject(s), the factors that determine it, the evaluation of the possibility of influencing the activity of others and understanding their actions. For this reason, an important part of the analysis is an attempt to address the subject in the field of activity in the context of distinguishing between the private sphere and the public sphere (Arendt, 1986).

In the case of the analysis of social activity conceived in such a way, it is important to emphasize the significance of the categories of representations that may relate to several types of ideas: of oneself, of the possibility to change and teleological conceptions, which have the biggest effect on the orientation of activities. From the position of an outside observer,
forming a framework of social activity is first exerting the influence on shaping intellectual perceptions of the subject(s) of activity, which are involved in the creation of institutions. These are intellectual ideas that determine the power of the human mind and the ideas created by it. It is against this background that particular importance is assumed by education, i.e. formation of the subject acting in the field of education and social work. The multi-reference nature of education and advancement is very important, but the goal should be to facilitate the acquisition of individual identity of the actant and his/her sharing the institutional identity.

In creating the frame and the foundations of social activity, the following aspects are highly significant:

- methodological-theoretical, awareness-related, and ideological references (i.e. these theoretical constructs that allow us to find the reasons of taking action and its justification (as well as its direction). Indeed, theoretical references shape our representation of activity, especially that relating to its goal and course. What can be recalled at this point is the discussion undertaken on the occasion of the debate on the professionalization of social professions;

- emotions, affects, volitional elements of the acting subject. We should note here that a breakthrough in the understanding of the frame and the foundations of creating the institution of social activity did not occur suddenly, but through a gradual shift from the cold, rationalized, praxeological approach to social activity, to emphasizing the importance of emotional elements;

- values, axiological references of the subject. The reflection on the meaning of the axiological perspective was included in the debate on the framework for activity in connection with the return to the phenomenological perspective. One of the key questions formulated in the discussion on the participation of our values in activity, and above all in making choices that accompany the act of taking up a decision, concerns the consideration whether the values are the basis of our activity, and so they make its fundament and determine it giving it some meaning and significance, or they are rather linked to our commitment and only thanks to their recognition we can assign meaning and significance to our activities.
Theoretical references of activities, whose foundations can be found for example in the adopted socio-pedagogical perspective, can be utilized to define the situation, its interpretations, explanations and giving meaning and significance to the projected and undertaken action. They also provide justifications for orienting the performed activity. They may ensure in this process significant support for articulating the axiological foundations of activity and, also, have implications for the quality of the taken or proposed activity because knowing them and being aware of them enables a fuller understanding of an individual in its situational dimension. They include primarily competences of the actant, the social context, the level of activity, and the applied techniques and procedures.

At this level – the techniques of the activity and its theoretical references enable being infirmed in the conviction of the necessity of undertaking this activity and also formulating the answers to the questions: who, where, and how is going to act? The question of the place of values in the field of activity is quite basic in axiological discussions commenced from the position of the rationality of activity analysis, when we ask what it is, what it refers to, and how it should be fulfilled.

5. INSTEAD OF THE CONCLUSION: TOWARDS THE PROFESSIONAL NATURE OF ACTIVITY

The starting point is the assumption that thanks to such preparation for activity in the field of practice, it is possible to dress this activity in the values of professionalism. Professional activity is characterized by sustainability, but also a multi-faceted look, combining different approaches and positions, as well as the ability to create unity in diversity. It is activity oriented at integration and balancing the imaginary (and desirable) with what is real, what has already been created with what is in the making, what is asymmetrical with what is symmetrical, what is monolithic with what is unified in diversity. In this catalogue of wishes, the most important one is to balance three elements of each individual measure: emotional, imaginative (rational) and operational (active). The imbalance between the three elements of activity may expose the acting subject to falling into numerous pitfalls. Impulsive, emotional activity may be recognized as unprofessional.
In the discussion on professional education for social professions, an important category is training (forming) the individuals not only in the cognitive and activity spheres, but also in the affective one. Such training takes place in a relationship with the other, which in the case of a student regards the relationships with teachers, colleagues, clients and charges of different institutions, etc. The category of a relationship, and not an approach towards a person or thing, is important in this concept. A relationship can only be personal and the condition of its existence is the presence of at least two people. In the model approach, its special feature is reciprocity and sharing the values. The most valuable in training (forming) a person is a relationship that is symmetrical and balanced, but at the same time this model is the most difficult one to achieve wherever one party dominates the relations (for example, due to the fact that it has more power, knowledge, capabilities, skills, property, etc.). Education and social work are those areas of activity in which relationships are inherently asymmetrical and unbalanced, as indeed is one of the main reasons for failure in action, especially in the realization of support and inciting individual’s motivation to take up the activity. Hence, an important factor affecting the achievement of successes in the activity is taking care of the proportionality of a relationship. Only the existence of this state allows for taking further activities – open and focused towards the other.

Professional training includes (Staub-Bernasconi, 1989) equipping the subjects with the following competencies:

- subject recognition, i.e. the competence that makes it possible to recognize the problems from a given perspective of space-time, to formulate answers to questions about the subject of activity, its essence, its structure and importance, and the processes that accompany it (e.g. exchange or power). Therefore, it is a set of competencies, which allow to find an answer to the question about what is or can/should be the subject of interest in an actant identifying himself/herself with the category of social professions;
- explanation and interpretation, i.e. the competence that makes it possible to explain the problem situation, the conditions of its modifications, the analysis of the factors that may influence the course of events and facilitate taking up the decision on how to act.
detailed catalogue of skills that promote explanation refers to those activities that are associated with the process of making diagnosis and projecting;

- criterion of axiological activity, i.e. the competence of values recognition, which may be a preference choice that is acquired in the process of getting to know the systems of philosophical and ethical reflection on them and the individual experience. This competence is conducive to finding the axiological orientation that allows one to assess the significance of the problem situation, determine its evolution and progress, and – as a result – formulate the objectives of the activities and justify the reasons for the undertaken and proposed activity;

- technical, i.e. operational competences, which vary not only according to the adopted theoretical orientation, but also the specific area of activity and the problems faced by the worker. The range of operational proposals is very diverse and variable due to the diversity of the social context of social activity and the changing theoretical and methodological approaches to the activity in the field of practice. These are the skills that express themselves in the activities and provide answers to the question “how to act”, which measures to take to achieve the goal, what tools to use, etc.;

- function (of dependencies), i.e. the competence that makes it possible to assess the relationships and mechanisms that occur between phenomena, as well as to valuate the implications and effects related to them.

The presentation of the array of competences acquired in the course of training to act in the field of social work is only to show the context and complexity of the process. Among the many dispositions of the actant making up the competences, special place is occupied by those that participate in the axiological and teleological orientation of activity. In the process of shaping the acting subject, a significant role is played by the activities meant to sensitize people to others. It is a disposition specific for social professions and having it facilitates creating a symbolic institution through participation in the process of inclusion into the society conducive to balancing the social relations in which man enters with himself and with others. The social dimension of activity is at the same time the objective of activity – for the community – and the way to achieve the goal – with the social forces, which further reinforces the
necessity of forming them also in professional sensitization to the other. The social dimension of social activity is expressed, among other things, in that it is directed “to the others”, and implemented “with the others” and “through the others.”

Making people sensitive to the others in an ethical sense is a fairly simple educational task, as it requires from the participant of the training (formation) process only the consent and acceptance of universal values and ethical and philosophical systems corresponding to his/her beliefs, which may be treated as a reference for the justification of the reasons for the formation of such an attitude.

A much more complex task, in terms of education, is to develop professional sensitivity, because it requires the assimilation of a difficult skill of distancing oneself, “exiting from” “going outside”, as well as the ability to apply theoretical references for valorization, evaluation and designing. The educational difficulty in this situation is related *inter alia* to the fact that sometimes it is not only necessary to teach, show, adopt, but also “un-teach” – which is a much more difficult process, since it requires breaking down stereotypes, phobias or fundamentalist elements in one’s beliefs. Another difficulty is brought by the postulate to train the skill of distancing oneself, because it can be perceived as discouraging one from involvement – it therefore remains in apparent contradiction to the category of social service, which is so often referred to in social work. It is, however, an apparent contradiction only, since the analysis of the situation and the problem somewhat from the outside is more extensive (multi-faceted), more balanced and more importantly can be more focused on the other.

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