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Agnieszka Dziedziczak-Foltyn, Beata Karpińska-Musiał, Adrianna Sarnat-Ciastko, *Tutoring drogą do doskonałości akademickiej. Percepcja i implementacja personalizacji kształcenia w polskim szkolnictwie wyższym w latach 2014–2019* [Tutoring as a Path to Academic Excellence: Perception and Implementation of Education Personalization in the Polish Higher Education in the Years 2014–2019], Oficyna Wydawnicza IMPULS, Kraków 2020, pp. 196

Scientific excellence and didactic excellence are the two target features of public universities
(Dziedziczak-Foltyn, Karpińska-Musiał, & Sarnat-Ciastko, 2019, p. 9).

HOW MUCH OF SOCRATES IS THERE IN US? INTRODUCTION

With great satisfaction, I assume that the authors of the reviewed book may have reasons to be happy. First of all, it is not easy to write a monograph collectively, which is not so much a collection of particular texts on a given problem, but a well-thought-out and jointly designed publication with coherent conclusions and recommendations for pedagogical practice.² The content of the publication is condensed, but not banal and superficial. The authors touched on the process of tutoring in

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2 The narrative community is visible not only in the content but also on a formal level. None of the chapters or subchapters is signed with the name of any single author. Only footnotes in the text are always marked with each author's initials.

a multi-faceted way, giving it importance for sociological and pedagogical theory and practice, as well as for public policies.³

Secondly, it is rare to combine tradition and modernity so gratefully, with great erudition and knowledge. This thesis concerns not only the main subject of the publication – the institution of tutoring – but also thinking about education in general. The institutions of education and upbringing, which are similar to other institutions of long duration, draw on patterns and solutions from the past, adapting to the conditions of today – sometimes difficult, sometimes entangled either politically or socially.⁴ Dominik Antonowicz (2005) wrote about it, pointing out that the university is an institution that adapts perfectly to external conditions, which determines its strength and well-established identity.

Hence the idea contained in the book – to reread not only the pedagogical categories, which was postulated by the classic of Polish philosophy of education Lech Witkowski, but also educational institutions, including the university – is an important and exciting research goal. In order for this idea to be successful, in the first chapter of the book the authors identify patterns of conceptualizing tutoring based on literature queries in the disciplines of social sciences – pedagogy and sociology of education. The authors indicate the tradition and paradigm of their thinking about tutoring. In defining the person of the “tutor”, they refer first of all to another classic of Polish pedagogy – Wincenty Okoń – and his *Pedagogical Dictionary*, a publication well-known to every student and researcher of education sciences. Both the author and the dictionary are ‘institutions’ in Poland; hence the citation of the definition of the concepts and theories of tutoring is not only a narrative procedure. It indicates a particular way of thinking, a description of reality. Dziedziczak-Foltyn, Karpińska-Musiał and Sarnat-Ciastko, first of all, accept the institutional perspective, and secondly, they point to the attachment to tradition, respect for mastery, and conviction of the value of cooperation with a teacher.⁵

3 The book has few formal advantages: (1) condensing the content in chapters with particular cognitive purposes, as well as preparing a summary after each chapter; (2) ordering the conclusions in different graphic forms – highlighting the main ones with a bold, as well as preparing a table; (3) preparing a glossary at the end of the book, presenting the essential terms and categories (e.g., tutoring accreditation, tutoring cycle, tutoring essay, and tutee/tutor).

4 This can be seen, e.g., today, when analyzing the guidelines for schools and universities in the context of their functioning in the COVID-19 pandemic. Few of them can point out innovative solutions for the situation of necessary isolation in order not to lose what is most important: the multilateral development of pupils and students (intellectual, social, emotional, physical) and the rich in senses and true contact between the teacher and the pupil.

5 The list of quoted books is long. There are three problem areas: didactics, university, and tutoring. The list includes both classic items such as works by Ulrich Beck or Anthony Giddens (Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 2009) as well as publications by Polish researchers such as Marek Kw-

The cited definition is also interesting, very different from the one presented by the authors. For Wincenty Okoń, the tutor (Latin: *tutor* – ‘defender, guardian’) is “[...] a tutor of a group of students in Anglo-Saxon colleges and universities, who takes care of the course of studies and the daily behaviour of his pupils in and out of school” (1981, p. 324). Therefore Okoń places this actor specifically in the time and space, without giving him universal qualities, which is an assumption of the authors, inscribed in the research objectives of the project, the result of which is the book under review. Dziedziczak-Foltyn, Karpińska-Musiał, and Sarnat-Ciastko try to show how beneficial the institution of tutoring is for the educational system and its subjects. They also prove it with their practical experience – each of the authors conducts strictly tutoring, training and tutoring promotion activities.

The third reason for the authors’ satisfaction could be seen in the decision to bring to light the categories which too rarely appear in modern societies and their institutions – subjectivity/humanity/personalization. To members of democratic societies, usually built on (neo-)liberal values, i.e., productivity, the compulsion to develop and grow, capitalism, this “humanistic” approach, presented in the publication on many levels, is an innovation and a new way for societies and their institutions, including the university.⁶ The entire chapter of the book, *The Social Role of Personalized Education in the Face of University Transformation*, is dedicated to this goal.

Humanistic education, based on relationships, should be a response to the conflict of values and the difference in the visions of the university indicated by experts. The authors observe this conflict “primarily between the decision-makers and their supporters, responsible for the state directives aimed at adapting the functioning of the university to the requirements of economic efficiency, and the so-called academic oligarchy, defending the ethos of science practiced within the walls of the university as an ‘ivory tower’” (Dziedziczak-Foltyn, Karpińska-Musiał, & Sarnat-Ciastko, 2019, p. 7). The negative and far-reaching effect of this opposition is the underestimation of the didactic function in the world of Polish

iek (2013) and Zbyszko Melosik (2002). Many of the items concern the subject of tutoring, which allows for an independent search for detailed information, e.g., *Tutoring: Theory, Practice, Case Studies* (Czekierda, Fingas, & Szala, 2015). The authors also cite articles from the most significant journals from the field of education sciences, both Polish ones (“Science and Higher Education”, “Horizons of Education”, “Culture and Education”, “Higher Education Pedagogy”) and the ones published in English (“Policy Futures in Education”, “Higher Education”, “International Journal of Educational Development”, “Studies in Higher Education”, “Higher Education Studies”, “European Educational Research Journal”).

⁶ The university is often written about as a factory of diplomas, and scientists/academic teachers are called knowledge workers (Davenport & Prusak, 2000), what indicates how much this institution is “in ruins” (Readings, 1997).

university reforms, or rather the loss of its significance in the last 20–25 years. In 1996, Janusz Goćkowski wrote that “[...] the academic teacher participates in the humanistic function of science” (1996, p. 123). According to this researcher, a teacher, by passing on to students scientific knowledge in the relevant discipline/sub-discipline, does not limit himself to the technical knowledge of a specialist in a given field, but acquaints the students with the ideas, values and principles of science, i.e., educates the “mental elite of the nation” (Goćkowski, 1996, p. 123). The authors of the reviewed book share this position.

THE NEED FOR CHANGE: THE BENEFITS OF TUTORING

The above description of the high competence of the authors in tutoring indicates that there are people in Poland who are perfectly prepared to introduce changes in the area of academic didactics. This is particularly important because we live in times of sometimes forced changes and reforms. The presented book seems to be a book about some breakthrough in thinking about the world, about the decline. The rich tone touches not only the neoliberal university patterns but also the world in general.

Before changes of the Law on Higher Education and Science (Law 2.0) in 2018, the direction of change was unequivocally neoliberal, which corresponded to global social change. Currently, anti-neoliberal discourse is still very much alive in the debate on education and public policy, although it slowly gives way to discussions about the end of the anthropocene era and the consequences of the climate catastrophe (see, for example, Bińczyk 2018). Meanwhile, the recent reform of higher education, implemented under the banner of Law 2.0, emphasizes the striving for excellence in both areas, as evidenced by the motto: “In the reform of science and higher education, we strive for excellence in research and academic education. The one supports the other” (Dziedziczak-Foltyn, Karpińska-Musiał, & Sarnat-Ciastko, 2019, p. 9). In order to achieve this didactic excellence, a systemic change in academic education and its personalization is necessary. Translating this into the language of practice: “Personalized learning in the form of academic tutoring appears as a method or form (sometimes also a mission, formula, or even philosophy) that can be de facto applied to a research and teaching university, with the perceived direction of social, market, professional and pedagogical needs also dictated by demographic conditions” (Dziedziczak-Foltyn, Karpińska-Musiał, & Sarnat-Ciastko, 2019, p. 10). This is possible because universalism of tutoring allows the supporters of any ontological and axiological perspective to adopt it as

a didactic method. When we are adopting neoliberal optics, it should be emphasized that tutoring provides better preparation of students, equipping them with competencies valuable in the labour market (professional, but also soft, so-called generic skills), and the ability to think critically. In contrast to this, in the anti-neoliberal (ethos) way of thinking, it creates conditions for building a mini-research field, as a result of dialogue work, creation and implementation of projects, self-constructing knowledge, and joint with the tutor or publishing the results of their research on their own. In the current of humanistic thinking and cognitive development, tutoring restores academic education to a personalistic function, developing specific attitudes and values understood in terms of universal values, such as work, goodness, beauty, life, or man.

The first part of the book deals with the above perspectives and definitions, present in pedagogy and the sociology of education, also going back to the history of tutoring, especially in the Middle Ages and the period of emerging universities. The review of the literature on this subject, which was made by the authors, is fascinating and introduces new threads to the debate about tutoring. It is, for example, about the fact that the role and form of tutorials have changed, related not only to the development of the British Empire or the later Commonwealth (which also became the foundation for the spread of the vision of British higher education and thus tutoring in the world), but also about rapid social changes, resulting from the industrial revolution. A symbolic example of this was the activities of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), which, with the participation of the University of Oxford, created in 1907 a movement of so-called university tutorial classes to promote education among the part of society that had very limited access to education. Hunger for knowledge, identified with the possibility of social advancement, was increasingly felt. Between 1930 and 1960, the number of students in Oxford doubled, which was associated with the loss of the atmosphere of the "family home" or the club for wealthy men with which the university was associated. This also had an impact on the realization of the tutorials, because, e.g., in the situation of an increasing number of students, the current professors were replaced by their assistants as tutors.

The authors introduce an institutional perspective because they are aware that in order to appreciate something, an institution must be established. They see it in the perspective of Jan Szczepański's concept (1969) – i.e., functions established ("given" by the state) and real functions (realized by universities in practice). The authors may pose a naive question: how, therefore, can the aforementioned socializing functions of higher education be realized through tutoring when they are unlikely to even talk about its established functions? The absence of the tutorial

formula in national (statutory) regulations contradicts the idea of instrumentalization of this method, but instrumentalization in a positive sense of the word – i.e., treating it as an instrument used to achieve the assumed educational goals. The lack of tutoring as a typical official form of academic education in practice leads, however, to the fact that it is dealt with by its true enthusiasts, convinced of the benefits of this educational relationship⁷.

OPPORTUNITIES AND NEEDS: RESEARCH ON THE POLISH ACADEMIC TUTORING SYSTEM

Nevertheless, is it so that only teachers working in the humanistic perspective are tutoring enthusiasts? The authors decided to check it out and conducted preliminary research among decision-makers and managers of the largest Polish universities⁸. The research was based on interviews and observations of tutoring practices (including those of the authors' own experience). It focused on the two issues mentioned above. Firstly, on the level of beliefs among the representatives of the academic community about the possibilities of systemic tutoring implementation. Secondly, on the level of real activities aimed at implementing the tutoring method. Therefore, the opinions and real activities were studied, which can be applied in parallel to the functions mentioned above of the established and real university.

The authors' interviews were conducted during the period from March to May 2017, together with eight people who hold positions in the institutions mentioned above: rectors, deans or deputy deans, being professors and assistant professors who carry out tutoring personally. The data collected come from seven different universities, three of which are the home universities of the authors of the book. The interview consisted of three groups of questions: from the broadest, refer-

⁷ Despite the unfavourable conditions for tutoring at universities in Poland, there are examples of implementing new methods. In 2018, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education initiated a non-competitive implementation project called "Masters of Didactics", co-financed by the European Union from the European Social Fund under the Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development. Officially, "Masters of Didactics" is aimed at increasing the competence of academic staff in the application of modern, innovative didactic methods such as tutoring.

⁸ It is worth mentioning that the authors have referred to other types of empirical research. The publication analyzed the problem of the presence of tutoring in public educational discourse, mainly in academic publications. The conclusions are also twofold because, in the cited literature, two optics clash in the perception of tutoring. The first one results from the genesis and rooting of tutoring in humanistic thinking and also in humanistic values. The second optics, on the other hand, emphasizes the pro-innovative nature of teaching and learning and tends to instrumentalize and effectively implement this form of education.

ring to (1) issues of institutional implementation of tutoring in teaching practice; through (2) questions about the image of a model of functioning of personalized didactics in the studied institution; to the narrowest, concerning (3) the very role of the tutor and the shape of meetings in this process.

The conclusions were exciting and essential, especially for educational practice. It turned out, for example, that tutoring cannot (and should not) be implemented systematically and from above, it is worthwhile to unite the tutoring community in Poland. It is also essential to study the processes of personalization of education at Polish universities. The research shows that the university authorities play a significant role, seeing in tutoring a chance to introduce the didactics implemented at the university on innovative tracks (increasing the effectiveness of education, strengthening the academic and study culture, making tutoring a hallmark).

The majority of the studied universities allow for freedom in the way and formula of tutoring implementation, treating it as an additional didactic offer. Moreover, the awareness of the need to personalize education varies significantly in different environments and fields and scientific disciplines. The authors note a peculiar resistance of the social and humanities environment to a greater appreciation of personalization by the representatives of the sciences. There are also other problems and issues to be considered and solved: the recipients of tutoring are potentially international students and the best students; while appreciating personalization, the inadequacy of the cultural and social field to the formula of tutoring at a Polish university and its cost is noted; the level of financing of didactics and education is a contentious issue and decisive for the use of tutoring; there are no formal tutoring evaluation systems. However, the research shows unequivocally that satisfaction with tutoring is high on both sides: the tutor and the student.

APPENDIX: INSTEAD OF A SUMMARY

Forms of tutoring education are becoming much more common. The dominant market in this activity is the Wrocław market, where the leading company in the country is the Collegium Wratislaviense (which in 2019 had more than 3 thousand graduates of the schools of tutors and schools of academic tutors), and outside it also the College of Tutors Foundation and the Institute of School Tutoring. In formal systems, the University of Wrocław also educates tutors by offering post-graduate studies or by including tutoring in regular pedagogical programs. Post-graduate studies in tutoring are also offered by the Maria Grzegorzewska Academy of Special Education in Warsaw. Students in the University of Gdańsk, Jan Długosz

University of Humanities and Life Sciences in Częstochowa, Cracow University of Economics, the University of Silesia in Katowice and Lower Silesian University in Wrocław are educated with tutoring. Tutoring programs at these universities are created by enthusiasts trained in Wrocław – teachers, deans, rectors. Therefore, we can say that the knowledge about the method and its philosophy is significant and increasingly common. Therefore, there is the reason the reviewed book, which has many useful features, was written for. For me, it is an attempt to point out new ways of academic pedagogy, but also to determine the axionormative field for three research questions (repeated after the authors): **(1) Why tutoring?**, **(2) On what basis tutoring exists?**, **(3) What for is tutoring?**

That is why an interesting idea is an appendix, placed in the book as the last chapter, that opens discussion on these questions. The authors set out additional areas for thinking about tutoring, e.g., at the level of general higher education policy (strategic and legislative). This is made possible by the assumption included in the whole work and in this review, which is its motto – i.e., the thesis that tutoring is the way to didactic excellence of a university. What is essential is that the elitism of the method is not emphasized here, but instead its universality, which positively distinguishes the narrative from the whole range of other tutoring works.

Therefore, the authors see the possibility of research on the competitiveness of universities in the context of implementing innovative teaching methods, but also building academic communities or managing didactic processes. The individual dimension, on the other hand, allows us to search for the uniqueness of tutoring concerning its impact on taking up professional and social roles, career development or educational aspect (e.g., developing the sense of well-being in tutors, improving their quality of life, finding meaning). An important role is also played by language and communication in the tutoring relationship, which can be the beginning of linguistic research in this respect. Due to the use of modern information and communication technologies (e-education) in tutoring, the issue of tutoring may be more and more promising in education as well as in research.

If there is so much content in the book, what is missing? It should be pointed out that there is too little critical theory through which both the history of tutoring and its role could be read (although there is a hidden program thread belonging to the critical theory). I would add to these more pedagogical concepts that could develop the theme of personalized or humanistic education. Finally, I would set more clearly the cognitive goals as well as the recipient of the publication – it is not clear whether it is a practitioner or perhaps a decision-maker in the form of a rector or a dean. Such a precise definition of the reader will allow avoiding the problem indicated by Jerzy Axer, a pioneer of tutoring in Poland, the founder of Collegium

Artes Liberales. According to professor Jerzy Axer (2015), there can be no question of twinning the principles of classical Oxford tutoring to the Polish academy because they are entirely different from the Anglo-Saxon traditions of education and the level of funding. The authors of the publication, following Axer, point to an evident need for an extensive diversification of forms and variants of tutoring, which have a chance of success in their native conditions and can restore, most importantly, the authentic relationship between research and teaching. Perhaps now – in the times of COVID-19 – this is what will be achieved? That is what I wish for myself, the authors and everyone involved in the work for academic education.

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