

## UPBRINGING ENVIRONMENT AS A PLACE WHERE HUMAN LIFELONG EDUCATION IS PROVIDED – FROM TRADITION TO MODERN TRANSFORMATIONS

### ABSTRACT

Education is a process that always runs in the specified external considerations, in a specific place and time and cultural context. Besides this objective dimension is also a process that is perceived and experienced subjectively. This diverse and in some ways complex space education – defines, for example in the category of environment/educational environment. In long tradition the pedagogical reflection, taking into account the multiplicity of ways that impact the environment and his “presence” in a person’s life develops knowledge about its different types, but also the ontological, epistemological and axiological models. Knowledge of the environment is also, and perhaps above all a challenge for teaching practice which includes human lifelong activity. In this respect it has already identified a number of models such conduct educational that takes into the environmental conditions. We can talk about environmental education, socio-cultural animation and a whole range of educational activities undertaken and implemented and carried out on the basis of social work. Not without significance are also influences from other social sciences, which in conjunction with the activities characteristic of pedagogy expanded possible ways to the educational impact.

**KEYWORDS:** *environment, educational environment, socio-cultural animation, social space, social work*

## **SUMMARY**

In the perspective of theory and practice of teaching environmental/ educational environment it has always been and still is a place of carrying out the process of education. Most of the pedagogical theory making the issue of lifelong education process – take this issue – the environmental impact on development and education. So what is the environment, what are its kinds and types, what are the specifics of its impact. Most discussion on this subject is found in the social pedagogy. There are also new, contemporary exploration and analysis of this issue in perspective categories such as: space, place, homeland. We can and must speak today about the new educational challenges associated with understanding but also the real functioning of the new educational environments. What knowledge should have in this area a contemporary educator, teacher – there are new challenges for teaching practice.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Whatever can be said about upbringing regardless of its definitions, it has always been grounded in certain place and time – certain social and cultural circumstances. In pedagogy and other social sciences such space is commonly named environment. It is a space of people, institutions and living standards. Despite being variable, it makes a constant point of reference for our lives. It also has its own characteristics – both educational and axiological impact throughout the entire human life. Therefore, we may speak about upbringing environment as the space of human lifelong education.

## **ENVIRONMENT – UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT**

The concept of environment is of key and source importance for many fields, especially social sciences (Cichosz, 2014). It is widely interpreted and defined which based on the assumed conceptions and theories.

Primarily and most generally, environment may be recognised as a whole of conditions and factors (material or personal) which form the behaviour and development of a human being and, in a broader sense, the social coexistence of units.

The understanding of such influence may be either static or dynamic or objectivistic. The former, being a relationship between human and environment, includes:

- spatial proximity of the environment which enables direct influence on the unit;
- relative stability and invariability of environment;
- unilateral influence of environment on personality and adaptive character of human behaviour (Turowski, 2001, p. 115).

Such a static approach is widely replaced by a dynamic (processual) approach which focuses on the interdependence of human and (environmental) conditions in which they are brought up and on the fact it is a field of interactions and definite creating of social situations. The most frequently quoted modern concepts of environment are:

- **individualistic** – according to which, environment is the whole of the groups and units that a human contacts with throughout lifetime;
- **typical social environment** – is an approach which sees environment as community in which various social contacts occur;
- **primary and secondary environment** – primary environment is the whole of units which an individual maintains repetitive contacts with; secondary environment is made up of unilateral, indirect (mass media) contacts;
- **objectivistic** – environment is equated with nature – as a collection of natural objects and relationships among them;
- **subjectivistic and anthropocentric** – a system of relationships among subjects (units) and objects (unit, group, institution) with a particularly significant impact on human being especially when the relationship is acknowledged by the human being and influences their actions;
- **objective-subjectivistic** – human and their natural or artificial environment are interdependent (Sowa, 1998).

Nevertheless, the most popular typology of environment, traditionally assumed in social sciences and pedagogy, is the division into social, natural and cultural. Despite being criticised and claimed to be insufficiently broad, schematic and exclusive, this division is the point of reference of a great deal of modern analyses grounded in these sciences.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPTS OF ENVIRONMENT IN CHOSEN AUTHORS

Numerous pedagogists of the last decades have undertaken the notion of the role environment has in the upbringing process. There are studies of different degree of detail, holism or complementarity. Despite all of them being apt to extend knowledge of social conditionings of the upbringing process, there are some particular examples which especially inspire further exploration.

Simultaneously, it is noteworthy that the pedagogical approach (which is especially visible in social pedagogy) clearly associates environment with educational environment leaving out particular analyses and explanations such association is grounded in. A typical example were the acknowledgements assumed in Polish social pedagogy of the 60s and 70s – the period of the so-called real socialism. The ideas of a holistic upbringing system and socialistic upbringing explicitly equated environment with educational influence almost immanently accepting its structural and practical qualities as such. Furthermore, such attitude was not only grounded in a particular ideology but seemed to have sprang from other, mainly socialistic, concepts, such as evolutionism or biological theories. Anyhow, the tendency to associate environment with upbringing environment is firmly anchored in pedagogy.

A characteristic and equally interesting is the concept coined by Florian Znaniecki who sees the educational function as an immanent part of environment. This function stems out of the training undergone by members of a group (adolescents) that enables their full participation in adult society which naturally makes the social environment an upbringing environment. F. Znaniecki points out that “The separate social environment created by a group for an individual who is going to become its member after necessary preparation, is called **upbringing environment**. It includes all the persons and social groups which are required or allowed by the group to be met by the particular individual during his or her preparation for future membership” (Znaniecki, 1973, p. 87). Regardless of the diversification of upbringing environments caused by the rich variety of social relationships participated

or established by the unit, the author outlines a very important area which is common for undertaking and providing upbringing, namely educational institutions (Znaniński, 1973, p. 89–90).

The suggested concept of environment and upbringing environment has been considerably inspiring for pedagogy, especially social pedagogy. It has oriented the way of perceiving this notion which is visible in various concepts of upbringing.

Nevertheless, the most worthwhile for social pedagogy, in terms of understanding environment, were the findings of Helena Radlińska. Following the division of environment, which existed at that times in social sciences, into social (personal), cultural and biological (natural), she defined it as “[...] a set of conditions which a unit exists among as well as factors which shape their personality and last constantly or over a longer period of time” (Radlińska, 1961, p. 30). The author also recognised objective and subjective as well as closer and distant environment (Radlińska, 1961, p. 33).

Particularly significant for the understanding of environment and upbringing environment was the author’s assumption of invisible environment. She claimed it to be the level of human functioning where the upbringing process occurred. In this respect, invisible environment has upbringing value. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the typologies and divisions suggested by Radlińska did not see invisible environment as a separate category of upbringing environment. She writes about this in the following way:

“Proceeding with the recognition of notions which is supposed to facilitate communication with regards to the applied nomenclature, it ought to be acknowledged, both in wide and close environment, that there are material and «invisible» factors which may be called partially psychical. They have «objective» value. [...] The invisible factors of environment are of the utmost importance for upbringing”.

Therefore, apart from the environment perceived as particular living standards realized in certain cultural circles, another important dimension of environmental influence occurred – spiritual (psychical) environment. It is the level where transfer and reception of ideas and values is conducted by the recipient i.e. alumnus, through creative choice. This specific and

relatively unique understanding of upbringing environment (for the pedagogy, especially social pedagogy of that time) suggested by Radlińska ought to be supplemented and analyzed with regards to the widely developed concept of spiritual, task-related forces as well as social educational work. The uniqueness and still limited recognition of the concept of upbringing environment coined by Radlińska, which emphasizes the strong subjective character of its functioning, may also be associated with hardly explored implicit concept of social conscience, evidently taken from E. Abramowski (Abramowski, 1924, p. 15). In this respect, the definition of social pedagogy, including the specific understanding of both environment and upbringing environment, offered by Radlińska proves eminently clear:

“Social pedagogy is a practical science developing at the meeting point of humanistic sciences, both biological and social, ethics and cultural studies (theory and history of culture) owing to its own perspective. It may be determined as an interest in the mutual relationship between a unit and environment, the influence of living standards and cultural circle on a human at different stages of life, the influence of people on maintaining values through their reception and spreading as well as in transforming environments “by means of human powers in the name of ideals” (Radlińska, 1961).

The concept of environment and upbringing environment suggested by Radlińska emphasizes the subjective and humanistic dimension of social influences and indicates the significant role of decisive processes of an individual entangled in certain relationships and social conditions. Such inspiration seems to be clearly existent and dominant in contemporary social sciences and their attempted descriptions of upbringing environment and its functioning. What is accentuated in these approaches is the subjectivity – independence and freedom of choice, of social units functioning within and for the purposes of culturally determined groups and communes.

A similar understanding of environment to H. Radlińska was also presented by A. Kamiński. The author found the analysis connected with differentiating environment into subjective and objective (typical) especially particular. Kamiński claimed that for the purposes of social pedagogy it is important to present environment from the perspective of a community – as a typical social

environment, which was further associated with certain social circles (Kamiński, 1982, p. 41). Such attitude became dominant in modern pedagogy.

Disparate understanding of environment and upbringing environment presented within a uniform and holistic concept that also inspired pedagogy of that time, still being visibly grounded in certain traditions of social sciences may be found in R. Wroczyński. The author indicated the key role environment plays in human development and upbringing process, however, he developed a wide concept of institutionalized, non-school educational influences. The researcher clearly based his ideas on naturalistic and evolutionary social concepts claiming that environment is made up of “[...] components of a surrounding structure which act as a system of stimuli and bring about specific psychological reactions” (Wroczyński, 1985, p. 78).

Despite being apt to put a wider and more humanistic interpretation, this typically behavioural understanding brings environment, its impact and role, down to certain social situations (stimuli). In accordance with such approach and understanding R. Wroczyński developed a typology of environments which is always based on the type of these environmental stimuli. The author attributed such meaning to the acknowledged and recognised types of environments: natural, social and cultural, or, with regards to territorial features, urban and rural. It also seems like the researcher ultimately identified all types of environments with upbringing environment. Moreover, from the perspective of educational practice, ascribed particular role to educational institutions – especially non-school.

The above-mentioned understanding of upbringing environments as institutionalized forms of educational influence has proved inspiring not only for social pedagogy. Therefore, it is currently a very visible and important notion related both to the level of social policy practice and welfare practice. It also makes an interpretational perspective for recognising regularities in the functioning of social structures.

The outlined ideas of chosen authors on the concept of environment and upbringing environment represent the main trends in explorations of this area and account for the most distinctive insights into this concept developed in Polish pedagogy, especially social pedagogy.

## CHOSEN TYPOLOGIES OF ENVIRONMENT

The growing knowledge of the social conditionings of upbringing process has led to a detailed and multi-layered insight into the notion of environment including upbringing environment. It turned out that the knowledge, with special significance of the types of environments, is useful for designed and realized educational practice. Such practice is always conducted in a specific place, dedicated to specific people and subject to a specific situational context, i.e. specific environment. The understanding of upbringing environments and their “localization” is more or less related to the understanding of environment in general. Numerous authors, referring to certain findings and explanations or making reductions, equate upbringing environment with environment as such.

It seems that the majority of typologies of upbringing environments is based on the division maintained in social sciences since their very beginning which include: social, natural and cultural environment. Such typology was developed before the world war II in Polish school of upbringing sociology by e.g. F. Znaniecki or T. Szczurkiewicz. Such understanding was also commonly accepted by the developing social sciences including pedagogy and social pedagogy. Such rudimental division, despite being currently proved to reveal its limits and declining adequacy, has been the basis of numerous settlements and oriented they way upbringing is perceived. The mentioned division was referred to by K. Sośnicki who claimed that: firstly, taking the genesis of environments into account, one may recognise their physical and spiritual types; secondly, (following J. Pieter) based on territorial ground, environment can be described as nearby, local and personal.

In terms of upbringing environment, J. Pieter enumerated three criteria of influence, environmental factors have in these environments:

- according to the degree of the “distance” between given factors and upbringing;
- according to the degree of conscious organization of given factors by upbringing society;
- according to specific correspondence between certain environmental conditions and particular psychological activities or upbringing trends (Pieter, 1972, p. 86–122).

Being guided by the first criterion, superordinate towards the remaining ones, the researcher recognised three circles of environmental influences namely:

- **nearby environment** – constructed by the vicinity, region, environmental conditions adequate to extra-localizational surrounding of a unit such like population density, means of transport, professional variability of the inhabitants, economical rate, housing, the condition of education, the state of cultural needs;
- **local environment** – encompassing the whole of environmental conditions of the habitat a unit functions in (village, town) including climate factors, size and character of a habitat, cultural tradition of the habitat, cultural “achievements”, transport and housing conditions, the degree of equipment of schools, libraries, reading rooms, youth clubs or non-school educational institutions, the linguistic culture of the inhabitants, the condition and activity of educational-cultural, social and political associations, the conditions of recreation and entertainment;
- **Individual (personal)** – conditions encountered by an individual person directly and constantly i.e. housing, income of parents and carers, family possessions, parents’ spare time, participation of a child in housework, cultural achievements, education of parents, intellectual life of parents, linguistic culture, relationship between parents, esthetical needs of the family, outlook and beliefs, the character of the family’s social life, intellectual and moral authority of parents, technical culture within family.

Searching the pedagogical achievements for typologies which could be simultaneously inspiring and significant for pedagogical theory and practice and currently valid it is worthwhile to refer to a typology which occurred in pedagogy owing to systemic sociology conducted in the current of functionalism and particularly visible in Polish pedagogy in the 70s and 80s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. What is meant, is the typology that associates upbringing environments with particular institutions. Such kind of educational influence, at that time, strongly grounded and explained through Marxist ideology i.e. ideology of holistic educational influence faced a lot of criticism. Contemporarily, however, the perspective of institutionalization quoted by i.a. followers of structural and

critical approach to the functioning of social systems (with regards to their description and designing) proves significantly relevant. Treated literally and referentially the typologies of that time, indicating the role of institutions in social life may prove inspiring and valuable for contemporary elaborations.

First of all, one should refer to the typologies of upbringing environments seen as educational institutions included in the work of K. Przeclawski (Przeclawski, 1968). Such typology remained for long years in the works of the upbringing sociologists and social pedagogists of that time. The researcher recognized three institutions:

- **natural upbringing institution** – family, peer group;
- **indirect upbringing institution** – workplace, institutions organizing vacations, health service, art promotion institutions, magazines and media, book, film;
- **direct upbringing institutions** – school, non-school upbringing institutions, courses, clubs, youth centres.

Contemporary typologies of upbringing environments clearly correspond with the outlined range. Assuming a criterion of specific socio-spatial frames, localization of factors and their character, M. Winiarski enumerates six environmental circles (upbringing environment categories), namely:

- upbringing micro-environment – limited only to a single social group or educational institution;
- local upbringing environment – understood as a set of socio-cultural and natural factors of educational character functioning within a given region;
- nearby upbringing environment – natural and socio-cultural factors existing in a district or several neighbouring districts, a town or a city district;
- upbringing mezzo-environment – natural and socio-cultural factors localized in a given macro-region;
- upbringing macro-environment – nationwide socio-educational environment including various spheres of social life, a whole network of devices, institutions and posts;
- global upbringing environment – universal environment, the influence of natural, economic and socio-cultural factors localized in different countries (Winiarski, 2007, p. 433–434).

The presented typologies of upbringing environments most often highlight their objective character. Therefore, it is experiencing environment from the perspective of a community as an objectively given reality. Such epistemological and methodological perspective is widely accepted in pedagogy. Experiencing and exploring environment from the perspective of a subject i.e. subjectivistic approach, though existent in pedagogy, has not been deeply studied.

With regards to the variety of understandings of environment/upbringing environment also various models of educational practice are constructed.

A. Kargulowa recognises such three:

- environment as a place of natural development of a unit – in this model, a pedagogue is expected to assure the environment does not hinder natural human development and their primary goal is to support this development i.e. provide optimal conditions for it;
- environment as a source of deliberate influences the aim of which is to mould the development of the alumnus – ideally it should undergo full control and the development has to proceed according to an upbringing ideal;
- environment as a system of social interactions of conscious social subjects (Piekarski, 2010, p. 131).

It seems that such representation of models clearly conforms with the methods of realizing environmental practice assumed in pedagogy but also with understanding environment itself. With regards to such diverse knowledge of environment and upbringing environment the problem of studying it remains valid and is even more complex. A rich knowledge that exists within this notion is highly applicable with regards to the issue of diagnosing environmental conditions as well as recognising factors that determine particular social conditions Also emphasized, is the role of the elaborated theoretical-empirical orientations within studies on environment. D. Lalak suggests three of such orientations:

- structural-functional approach;
- a current of studies on everyday life;
- humanistically oriented area of biographical studies.

They are relatively representative of the existent and elaborated approaches to studying environment which see it as a structure of certain features, consisting of functionally interdependent elements. The most prominent

example of such approach is social pedagogy and the studies conducted within this area since 70s and 80s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (i.e. by E. Trempała, M. Winiarski, S. Kowalski) which present environment as places where humans appear actively transforming the world where the sheer examination of the world leads to its transformation (i.a. H. Radlińska, A. Kamiński, B. Smolińska-Theiss). Moreover, there is another current of exploring recollections, experiences, memory and reconstructing past facts (i.a. W. Theiss, D. Lalak).

## ENVIRONMENT/UPBRINGING ENVIRONMENT

### – MODERN CONCEPTS AND TRENDS OF EXPLORATIONS

The category of environment/upbringing environment is so complex that it constantly undergoes transformations. Moreover, its new dimensions are continuously being discovered. This is reflected in the extending knowledge of this concept which creates new terms and categories and forms new theoretical-methodological perspectives.

In this respect social pedagogy sees environment and upbringing environment as: a little homeland, living space or the so-called pedagogy of a place. These concepts obtain the greatest degree of adaptation and applicability with regards to both theory and social pedagogical practice.

**Living space.** Creating the category of a living space the attention was drawn to the need of extending environment which, according to A. Przeclawska, “[...] is characterised as a rather closed circle, whereas space is something open, material which is transformed into upbringing environment” (Przeclawska, Theiss, 1999, p. 76). Such approach understood environment in its traditional sense as “an area” which is too narrow, limiting and reducing a great deal of potential experiences which might be influential for human upbringing and development. The perspective of a living space is ontologically and axiologically broader – existentially more adequate. Following A. Przeclawska: “[...] human fate is shaped at the meeting point of various dimensions of space. They are the physical, social, temporal (with particular reference to history), symbolic, psychological space. A growing importance of information space is also observable. There is also moral space and a space which I called a space of

transcendence. Transformations occurring as a result of the development of civilization and social modifications appear within each of these spaces but also in the proportions shaping relationships among them”.

The suggested paradigm of socio-spatial orientation in social sciences takes on various interpretations. In social pedagogy and social practice two models are most often recognised: a model of absolute space and a model of relativistic space. The first model perceives space through its physical, geographical and territorial properties – it is described and appraised through the development of social communication, interest in modernizing social care institutions and seeking ways to enhance cooperation (Piekarski, 2010, p. 201–229). J. Szurzykiewicz claims “[...] social space structures of this kind can be measured by the means of analysis of particular aspects: data concerning social structures, socio-economical situation, housing facilities and infrastructure, family structures, educational standards, frequency of using public services and an identification of problem areas and the system of gratification”. The second, relativistic model understands space as “[...] relationships and various smooth connections with respect to the interdependence of the strength and structure of relationships. The constitution of space, however, has an inter-subjective character related to practical activity in historical-biographical and symbolic dimension”. Therefore, in this respect, space is rather regarded as everyday life. It is the space of human experiences and choices grounded in particular social structures and institutionalized connections.

When it comes to its role and place in social life, the presented paradigm of socio-spatial human life orientation more often promotes subjectivity and agency but also engagement in transforming social world.

**Little homeland.** Social space as an alternative and broaden interpretation of environment and upbringing environment is frequently denoted in terms of a little homeland. This concept, grounded in sociological tradition [cf. Polish works of S. Ossowski] (Ossowski, 1967) was interestingly developed with respect to social pedagogy. W. Theiss writes that this category: “determines a certain area (space, land) including human references i.e. attitudes, emotions, values, meanings. On the other hand, little homeland is a part of local history and tradition as well as cultural heritage of social groups [...] Little homeland

is a structure of relational character. It is situated in the space of «between» – between human and its world and local culture, nature, history, tradition and customs; between a family and a state; in the circle of people and their matters – both everyday and occasional. It is formed on the basis of personal, direct and deeply emotional relationships between a human and its surrounding” (Theiss, Skrzypczak, 2006, p. 24–25). Therefore, the category of a little homeland is an attempt to holistically describe human and its “local” identity. With regards to the understanding of this concept in terms of upbringing environment, especially significant seems to be its practical imperative – transfer to particular educational activities. W. Theiss suggests that “little homeland is an axio-normative and pragmatic category. From one perspective, it presents the desired forms of social structure and social relationships lead by the common good, social harmony, solidarity etc. It also determines the systems of values and norms as well as the approved human behaviour. From another perspective, however, it reveals rich educational, social, socialization and cultural possibilities. It discloses tasks, spaces and opportunities of social participation”. In this respect, the category of little homeland is an important “element” of the currently explored concept of environmental education, especially in social pedagogy.

**Place.** Understanding environment and upbringing environment in terms of “a living space” and “a little homeland” may also be found in the concept of the so-called pedagogy of a place. It is primarily theoretical perspective of studies on education grounded in philosophical thought – in the currents of poststructuralism, critical pedagogy or sociology of a city. This concept defines space/location as a source of identity-related identifications of social subjects (Mendel, 2006). The identity of a subject is here perceived as a dialectic relationship “human-space/location”, which constitutes an area of forming biography or identity itself. Assuming a particular social ontology, pedagogy of a place is simultaneously a proposition of educational practice, contemporarily realized as socio-cultural animation. M. Mendel suggests that: “Pedagogy of a place, with regards to social animation and its rudimental postulate of promoting joint forms of life of local societies, may be understood as a process of constant breaking and creative, aimed at common values, renegotiations of the meanings of locations in which the units and groups are active, creating

their own history [...]”. An animator ally makes use of the formula of exploring through action. They remain in harmony with the community in which they operate, explore and diagnose the environment designing changes and collaborating in the realization of goals. The whole process is based on education which integrates the outlined micro-systems (the common link of community, family, school and district are issues connected with learning) and constitutes the content of animation activities (learning together, through and for each other animates or activates a community).

## EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES

The presented considerations show that the concepts of environment/upbringing environment currently existing in pedagogy are highly diversified – which may enhance pedagogic educational practice. Taking into account the intensity of social participation and social engagement of units and groups as well as frequently institutional character of educational influences it may be observed that the most popular non-school upbringing environments are i.a. associations, clubs, media (TV, the Internet), educational-recreational local initiatives (festivities, regional celebrations), vocational training institutions, religious institutions, etc. Nevertheless, in order to successfully realize educational work in these spaces a proper professional training needs to be undertaken and implemented. Therefore, with regards to environmental influences, professional educators should hold:

- knowledge of upbringing environment – the regularities that stand behind it,
- awareness of the diversity of upbringing environments and changes that occur within them,
- awareness of the existence of “new” upbringing environments (locations and social spaces where upbringing occurs),
- an ability to extract educational possibilities from these environments and to recognize their advantages and threats (e.g. the Internet – only a threat or maybe a new possibility),
- ability to stimulate personal attitude of creative presence and engagement in educational work in a given environment.

## Summary

Environment – upbringing environment is a concept which has always been referential for upbringing. Simultaneously, it is a space that undergoes transformations hence it is always going to be a challenge for pedagogical work, necessary explorations of social life as well as developing methods of environmental work that will be both improved and updated to current living standards.

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