

## THE EDUCATIONAL RELATIONSHIP UNDERSTANDING, MODELS, PROPOSAL SUMMARY

Interpersonal relationships are an increasing focus of many scientific disciplines. A large number of publications and literature on the subject argue that the educational relationship is a multidimensional and complex reality. This by no means makes it any easier to study. Therefore, it is necessary to use a simplified picture of such a reality. This is done not only from the position of individual sciences, but also – within their framework – the research problems undertaken.

My research is based on the following question: what is the proposal of the most adequate model of the educational relationship in the context of pedagogical reflection thus far? The main question posed in this way was operationalized into the following specific questions: 1. How can the educational relationship be defined? 2. What are the components of the educational relationship? 3. What models of the educational relationship can be identified to date? 4. What is the proposal for a new model of educational relationship? 5. What are the practical implications of the proposed model of the educational relationship?

I set the following objectives for my research: 1. Cognitive goal: to learn about the current understanding of the educational relationship and the models thereof; 2. Theoretical goal: to build the author's model of the educational relationship; 3. Practical goal: to establish general methodical solutions in order to implement the developed model of the educational relationship into practice.

In order to achieve these goals, it was necessary first and foremost (chapter one) to answer the question about the specificity of the educational relationship with regard to the rich group of interpersonal relationships in general. In search of an answer to this question, I used the method of hermeneutic reduction which indicates the "suspension" of all previous knowledge on the examined subject in order to build it from scratch. In the context of the issue I am investigating, there is a content intersection of two issues: relation and upbringing. Hence, it was necessary to look first at the issue of relation as such, and then at what makes them educational relationships.

At the beginning of my research I adapted the following definition of relation as: "the assignment of anything to anything for the sake of a specific purpose"<sup>1</sup>. In the next stage,

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mieczysław Krąpiec, "Relacja", in *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, ed. Andrzej Maryniarczyk, vol. 8 (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2007), 712.

I searched for a meaningful criterion that would enable me to distinguish educational relationships from the group of relationships in general. I assumed that I would find this criterion in the specifics of pedagogy as a science. This is described in the methodological literature by the term *specificum pedagogicum*. Based on the positions presented, I came to the conclusion that it was the anthropological and teleological aspect.

I proposed the following definitions of the educational relationship with regard to the research conducted. An educational relationship is: a) an interpersonal assignment the goal of which is comprehensive personal development; or b) a kind of assignment between a human and a human the goal of which is the full personal development of at least one of them; or (in a more descriptive way) c) the totality of processes and mutual interactions occurring between persons, undertaken to bestow humanity on one another. The above definitions reflect the underlying, baseline definition of the relationship taking into account the results of the research on *specificum pedagogicum*.

In the next stage (chapter two), a search was undertaken for individual elements of this relationship and whole models of it in literature, both historical and contemporary. This made it possible for me to trace the process of the emergence of interest in the educational relationship, to notice the contexts in which this content appeared, and – what is particularly engaging in the early sources – to present the metaphors that were used to explain the essence of the relationship between educator or tutor and pupil (or teacher and student). The theoretical models presented in the following section are examples of current ways of relational thinking in the educational context. The paper presents the following models: the “original happening” (*ursprüngliches Geschehen*) by Ernst Krieck (1882–1947), the “pedagogical relationship” (*pädagogischer Bezug*) by Herman Nohl (1879–1960), the “dialogical relationship” (*dialogisches Verhältnis*) by Martin Buber (1878–1965), the “educational relationship” (*erzieherisches Verhältnis*) by Friedrich W. Kron (1933–2016) and the “resonating relationship” (*Resonanzbeziehung*) by Hartmut Rosa. An extensive range of possibilities for further exploration emerges in this area. The purpose of such research would be to show how the reality of the educational relationship is recognized and described in the so-called basic or auxiliary sciences for pedagogy.

The primary purpose of my research was to develop an author’s model of the educational relationship. The results of the work stages shown so far allowed me to present a three-subject model of the educational relationship in the main part of this study (chapter three), showing both the specificity of the particular subjects which compose it, as well as the relationships occurring between the indicated subjects and the immanent goals ascribed to the particular types of relationships. Based on the study of the sources and my own findings, I assumed that the following subjects, to which I gave symbolic names, could be distinguished in the proposed model of the educational relationship: 1) the external educator “You”, i.e. the educator in the traditional sense; 2) the “I-caller” is the normative self-image internalized in the pupil; and 3) the “I-(re)called”, i.e. the pupil present “here and now” with all the contexts (biological, psychological, cultural, spiritual, historical and future ones) that led them to the “here and

now". It is worth noting that I have identified the last two subjects in the traditionally called pupil. I assume that this particular dialogue which takes place in the space of the inner world of the pupil has a great educational significance, and therefore I have decided to highlight both sides of this dialogue, giving them (or rather: recognizing in each of them) their own proper educational initiative. The above distinctions and names are obviously a description of a model, i.e. a theoretical and simplified construct, and therefore their very distinction is an artificial one, intended to serve cognitive purposes. It should be remembered that in reality the educational relationship is a complex phenomenon in which individual processes overlap and condition each other.

The last part (chapter four) proposes the meeting of the theoretical model of the three-subject educational relationship with educational practice. It is impossible to exhaust this issue because it is conditioned by the multiplicity of specific educational situations. Therefore, I have focused on presenting a fundamental methodological perspective and the educational principles associated with it. However, this is an issue still open for further exploration, additions and supplementation.

With the research presented in this book in mind, I trust that it will make a tangible contribution to enriching both pedagogical theory and practice. Exposing and naming the reality of the "I-caller" and describing the dynamics of the educational relationship based on this subject is a request for noticing what, in truth, cannot be fully grasped by empirical methods, but is present and active in the process of bestowing pupil with humanity, i.e. upbringing. What I have in mind here is the inner world of the pupil described by me in the context of the dialogue between the "I-caller" and the "I-(re)-called". Recognizing these two entities, and thus recognizing the complexity and significance of the inner spaces of growth of the pupil, to which science has no direct access, is extremely important for pedagogical reflection. Even if there is no adequate language to describe this reality and the methodological tools to study the same, the recognition of its presence and attempts to explore it are an inspiring force both for educational practice and for scientific development of pedagogy.

In addition, I hope that my research may contribute significantly to a broader understanding of the educational relationship from a dynamic perspective, i.e. as a reality that happens, changes and pulsates, and not – which has been a common way to describe it so far – only exists (static perspective). Only a change of the perspective from zero-one (exists/does not exist) to a dynamic one provokes and justifies the validity of the questions posed on the grounds of pedagogical theory about 1) what is the reality of the educational relationship and its structure; 2) what has an important contribution to the process of its becoming and change; 3) what strengthens and what weakens it, etc.

On the other hand, for pedagogical practice, the research presented here may be an important plea to pay attention not only to what happens in the pupil as a result of educational influence, but also to what is the reality "between" the educator and the pupil. The research I have undertaken leads to the following question: to what extent is it reasonable, legitimate, valuable, or even possible or feasible to achieve the educational goals intended in practice, without paying attention to the relationship with the

pupil? This question can also be formulated in the following way: In educational work, how can one maintain the right balance between achieving intended effects and strengthening a good and authentic relationship with the pupil? There are situations in which an uncompromising focus on the achievement of goals destroys the bond with the pupil, or *vice versa*, when the educator abandons the accepted educational ideals in the name of strengthening this bond. The very raising of such questions is an important step towards changing educational practice.

In connection with the above, another meaning for pedagogical practice emerges. It can be briefly stated that the entirety of educational activity is aimed at awakening, dynamizing and optimizing the internal educational relationship in the pupils themselves. Such an approach inspires a variety of educational activities – always corresponding to the developmental and social conditions of the pupils – which leads them to make an effort of critical reflection on the situation in which they find themselves.