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The conditioning of hermeneutic competences of students of pedagogy: nature versus culture and education

Uwarunkowania kompetencji hermeneutycznych studentów pedagogiki: natura a kultura i edukacja

Abstract

Introduction. Hermeneutic competences are connected with responsibility and the ability to understand, read, and shape oneself and the world as meaningful, and constituted by senses whole. In Polish pedagogical literature, they are not characterised by name, they are not spoken or written about explicitly, although they function and are assigned to various groups of skills and abilities.

Aim. The main aim of this article is to define the essence of hermeneutic competences and their relationship with other competences during education for social professions.

Material and methods. The paper draws on the interdisciplinary literature on hermeneutic competencies and reviews it using the hermeneutic method of text analysis. The study con-

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sists of several complementary parts, explaining the genesis and essence of hermeneutic competences, their structure and levels, as well as their conditions and relationship with other competences

Results. The conducted analysis shows the sense and necessity of purposeful formation of hermeneutic competences of students of pedagogy (as well as to other social professions) in the course of the carefully considered process of studying-teaching in the higher school and within the framework of learning-self-education.

Conclusion. The issue of the presence of hermeneutic competences in academic education requires further research and implementation measures into practice in higher education institutions.

*Keywords***:** hermeneutic competences, pedagogy students, academic didactics

Abstrakt
Wprowadzenie. Kompetencje hermeneutyczne związane są z odpowiedzialnością i umiejętnością rozumienia, odczytywania i kształtowania siebie oraz świata jako znaczących, konstytuowanych przez sensy całości. W polskiej literaturze pedagogicznej nie charakteryzuje się z ich nazwy, nie mówi się i nie pisze o nich wprost, chociaż funkcjonują one i są przypisywane do różnych grup umiejętności i sprawności.
Cel. Głównym celem prezentowanego artykułu jest określenie istoty kompetencji hermeneutycznych oraz ich związków z innymi kompetencjami w trakcie kształcenia do zawodów społecznych.
Materiał i metody. W pracy wykorzystano interdyscyplinarną literaturę przedmiotu na temat kompetencji hermeneutycznych i dokonano jej przeglądu z zastosowaniem hermeneutycznej metody analizy tekstu. Opracowanie składa się z kilku wzajemnie dopełniających się ze sobą części, wyjaśniamy w nim genezę i istotę kompetencji hermeneutycznych, ich strukturę oraz poziomy, a także uwarunkowania i związek z innymi kompetencjami
Wyniki. Z przeprowadzonych analiz wynika sens i konieczność celowego kształtowania kompetencji hermeneutycznych studentów pedagogiki (a także do innych profesji społecznych) w toku starannie przemyślanego procesu studiowania-nauczania w szkole wyższej oraz w ramach uczenia się – samokształcenia.
Wnioski. Zagadnienie obecności kompetencji hermeneutycznych w kształceniu akademickim wymaga dalszych badań oraz działań wdrożeniowych do praktyki w szkołach wyższych.

Słowa kluczowe: kompetencje hermeneutyczne, studenci pedagogiki, dydaktyka akademicka

Introduction

This text resulted from the belief that students of pedagogy should acquire, on top of other competences proving the quality of their professional skills, the hermeneutical competences, which in essence means the understanding of exceptional situations and people, as well as applying general knowledge in specific circumstances. They are expressed in both rational and reflective adaptation and continuation as

well as in willingness to change, in a critical evaluation of current affairs, and the confident design and responsible implementation of new ideas. In the case of students, these include various skills that affect both the process of studying and the future performance in their profession, such as understanding and interpreting the situation forming qualities of empathy, reflectiveness, recognizing duality, handling closeness and distance, oscillating between knowledge and ignorance, certainty and uncertainty, between theory and practice.

The meaning and functions of hermeneutical competences in the light of reference literature

As a description of the hermeneutical competences of the (future) guidance counsellors is not very frequently encountered in the reference literature, the first step was to determine its meaning. Therefore the theoretical premises behind the acquisition and improvement of these competences state that one of the propaedeutic, but also essential postulates, is not only the one claiming the competences should be perfected in academic training, but above all, rather the one stating that the essence of the above is found in the harmonious, vertical, and horizontal combination of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, interests, talents, and physical as well as mental aptitude (Gołębniak, 1998; Krajewska, 2004).

The reference literature in Poland does not distinguish these competences by name; they exist and are assigned to different groups of skills and capabilities, although the term did appear several times as self-evident, especially in popular understanding in a few studies related to philosophy, translatology, and computer games (Bukowski, 2012; Piecychna, 2014). An illustration of this is the classification of competences into improvement, didactic, educational, moral, and creative (Magda, 2002). Their description was also a part of a cognitive study on the philosophy of nature, where these competences are of non-anthropocentric character (Urbaniak, 2017).

Marcin Urbaniak (2017) asserted that, according to Heidegger, each human being is, *a priori,* hermeneutical, because he always somehow understands himself in terms of his own existence and the reality around him. Only then does this individual ask questions (understanding at least the context of they are asking about), explains, defines, and describes whatever has been understood. Understanding as grasping the meaning seems to be the primary act or process continuously present as part of the cognitive activity. Only the second step is (2) to focus on a given phenomenon or fact and provide an explanatory description of it, *e.g.*, by the means of phenomenological reduction. The last step would be to reduce the described facts

to its general nature or sense to develop the knowledge up-to-date. While (1) the primordial state of understanding of the world (given to the subject passively) is the specificity of human existence, (2) the second step is made possible by the intentional nature of the objective activity (Urbaniak, 2017).

Moreover, Heidegger claims that hermeneutical competences are not epistemological, but ontological. We can mention the following: an understanding of the way of life, involvement in the world, its meaningful ordering, a tendency to anticipate, apply the assumptions, and preliminary pre-understanding, "these are exploratory behaviours (capturing or establishing the meanings); species-specific understanding of the surroundings; an ability to establish dialogue, understanding, cooperation, and thus activities, which H. G. Gadamer defined as the «hermeneutical approach»" (Urbaniak, 2017, p. 28).

M. Urbaniak (2017) claims that in the light of literature provided by outstanding hermeneutics researchers, "hermeneutical competences can also be defined as a collective term for the cognitive and living abilities, enabling «a vivid/intense movement of thoughts constantly going beyond themselves»" (Urbaniak, 2017, p. 28). Gadamer distinguishes: conveying the acts of cognition by the linguistic and cultural media, circular and interpretative consciousness, entering relations based on dialogue (Urbaniak, 2017, p. 31).

On the other hand, according to Ricoeur, hermeneutical competence is all about "the practical area - they are an active interpretation of cultural acts, such as symbols, discourses, narratives or myths" (Urbaniak, 2017, p. 35). We can then say, in a more general sense, that hermeneutic competences:

> (…) are the link between the cognitive experiences of institutionalisation, codification, normativisation, and notionalisation of the world (the effect of the competence functioning), and the primeval, existential features of the object of natural origin (primary pre-understanding, being-in-the-world, linguistic cognition). This constitutes an everyday experience of creative interpretation of stimuli arriving from the surroundings, the interpretation of which is not a creative autonomy and freedom - it is developed by the individual framework of experiences the object has gained so far as well as its knowledge (Urbaniak, 2017, s. 43).

Hermeneutic competences interpreted in this way by other authors are treated as the creative competences of a teacher who "enriches pedagogical experiences, designs and tools new solutions, assisting with pedagogical help" (Magda, 2002, p. 52).

However, in the theory and practice of translation, while we do not find a definition, we do come across explanations, which indicate that the competence is called either a translation or expert competence, and that, from the point of view

of hermeneutics values, are an integral part of the aforementioned and must be reflected upon by the translator. Moreover, they are expected to be hermeneutically engaged, be familiar with the culture of the country the language of which they are translating, be able to connect with the text, listen to it attentively in order to understand its message (Bukowski, 2012).

Some definitions and descriptions of hermeneutical competences and examples of their meaning and measures of development can be found in German literature. According to the sociologist and pedagogue Hans Ch. Koller (2009a; 2009b), the essence of hermeneutical competences is the understanding of the subjective and objective senses, or the interpretation of meanings (contextuality, subjectivity) while in regard to sports pedagogy, the ability to use scientific knowledge to achieve a solution equals to seeing, understanding, and correctly interpreting the dilemmas between both practice and theory (Schierz & Thiele, 2002). On the other hand, in the pedagogy of religion, hermeneutical competences are perceived as the ability to comprehend the testimony (mostly in the form of biblical texts) of past and modern generations as well as other cultures, and translating this ability into the present and future (Zimmerman, 2005).

Renate Schwarz (2009) described hermeneutical competences in the aspect of care for the sick in a broad sense: she listed a number of behaviours characteristic of professional caretakers aimed at the person under their care, as well as interactive actions towards them. There is a broad spectrum of knowledge concerning the interpretation of situations suspended between certainty and uncertainty and between scientific knowledge, based on experience and practical professional skills. It is also the capacity for in-depth reflection, both in terms of care and the following period, and the resilience manifested in accepting the reality even when it is not fully transparent and plannable, in enduring uncertainty and the ability to live in it, and in not trying to convince ourselves and others that we have everything under control. Moreover, hermeneutical competences are not only limited to the individual elements listed here (Schwarz, 2009) but are also a vertical-horizontal system composed of them (Kaliszewska, 2016). It is in their essence then to apply the knowledge not only routinely, but to reflect on it a little more, teeter between knowledge, and often also ignorance, being aware of the ambivalence found in the knowledge we have as well as being aware of paradoxes and ambivalences encountered in life and work, which are nevertheless continuously contributing to the permanent updating of our professional knowledge. These competences should lead to achieving enhanced skills and readiness for self-reflection, understanding of self as an active object, experiencing empathy, and empathetic understanding of the Other. They should also be more conducive to a subjective/personal concentration on the person under the care and on interpreting care as a feedback activity, as well as

a dialogue and hermeneutical understanding of the circumstances of care. In brief, it is a question of applying the professional and methodical knowledge available in various forms, to specific, and even exceptional circumstances and participating people, and understanding them (Koller, 2006)**.**

The descriptions of hermeneutical competences presented here simultaneously show the fundamental problems of social professions, which result from the dual, unclear, and uncertain image of the contemporary world and the emergence of new aspects of social professions, related to coping with dilemmas and uncertainty in their performance. As a result, since the 1960s There has been a discourse pertaining to these professions, presenting the structural duality in professional action (Witkowski, 2018). Slowly, instead of expert professionalism, we start having "professionalism enlightened by hermeneutics" (Dewe et al*.,* 2001, p. 57; Schwarz, 2008, pp. 56-58).

This understanding of hermeneutical competences raises new challenges for authors and innovators of the educational process, if they want hermeneutics to find a new place in academic didactics and not be reduced only to text analysis techniques, but to enhance professionalism with new aspects and values.

Bogusław Milerski (2011), a Polish pedagogue, recognizing the multitude of theoretical approaches to the process of education, included in his publications, and especially his monograph (2010), references to the hermeneutical foundations of this process and categories such as understanding, interpretation, and sense/ meaning, which he considers to be a requirement of education meant to convey humanity, Education in this sense will not only teach measurable competences, "but also the hermeneutical ones linked to responsibility and capability to understand, read and form oneself and the world as meaningful wholes constituted by sense" (Milerski, 2011, pp. 10-11). This sentence from the first pages of the book became a direct impulse not only to search for descriptions of these competences, but also ways of complementing academic teaching with these important human "skills," becoming significant as well in the university graduate's professional career.

Types and varieties of hermeneutical competence levels of people at different stages of life

Although we deal with hermeneutical competences of students of pedagogy and candidates for other social-oriented professions, we must also realize that these competences are created at different stages of human life, so they are at different levels of generality and development.

As M. Urbaniak (2017) claims, hermeneutical competences are "above all the daily experience of creative interpretation of stimuli arriving from the surroundings" (Urbaniak, 2017, p. 43), it is, in his opinion, limited (formed) by individual framework of the up-to-date experience and knowledge, by a collective framework of cultural environment shared with others and "hermeneutic predispositions" identical for the entire human species as we have the "same phylogenetic source, structure, and functions" (Urbaniak, 2017, p. 43). The phylogenetic perspective is sometimes interesting and surprising for a pedagogue.

However, in the ontogenetic perspective, *i.e.,* individual human development the researchers have observed that some elements of hermeneutical competences are already present among primates and in the earliest stages of human childhood (Urbaniak, 2017) and point to a great significance of the ninth month of a child's life, as it is then we see the "Biologically inherent ability for cultural life (...), the ability to understand individuals of one's own species emerges" (Tomasello, 1999, p. 75). The ability to understand the intentional actions of oneself and the other person and the ability to identify oneself with another person are features that indicate the uniqueness of a human being from the first months of life. Between the ninth and twelfth months of life, babies themselves seek to share their attention with adults when they see an object. In short, the human ontogenesis of hermeneutical structures emerges from the "biological ground," but then develops and transforms on the cultural ground. Therefore, the development and improvement of hermeneutical competences requires correlation with the cultural environment (Urbaniak, 2017).

The first turn in the ontogenetic development of hermeneutical competences takes place around the age of one year and consists in the ability to identify with persons from the child's environment, in order to understand causal agency. The next change occurs between the second and third years of life, and consists of uttering the first words. What follows is the development of the ability to ask questions and understand linguistic symbols, and around the age of four we observe the emergence of the ability called "the theory of the mind." In the early-school period further hermeneutical competences emerge, allowing children to reflect, acquire self-knowledge, and re-describe their own representations (Urbaniak, 2017).

As we can see, hermeneutical competences evolve in stages along the course of human development and are impacted by both biological and cultural factors. The author wonders whether the hermeneutic theory considered in academia should be supplemented by the knowledge on the biological and cultural dimensions of constructing, recognising, interpreting, and communicating meanings, *i.e*., hermeneutical competences of a human (Urbaniak, 2017).

In the area of professional activities concerning the competence for translation, reaching the highest level of competence has been divided into the following

stages: initial, intermediate, competence phase, proficiency and knowledge (Pie-cychna, 2014). In turn, religious education distinguishes competence at the level of the work, at the level of its origins, at the conceptual level and at the level of the recipient (Zimmermann, 2005). This information makes us aware of the heterogeneity of these competences and their dynamic nature.

Determinants of hermeneutical competences

To complete the presentation of the essence of hermeneutical competence it is necessary to indicate the determinants impacting them. In the process of formulating hermeneutical competences in higher education, it is extremely important to optimize their subjective and non-objective conditions - environmental and organizational. As biological and cultural roots, innate and unchangeable, as well as the acquired and developmental character of competences impact their profiling, so both the environment and the characteristics of each individual are sources of their experience (Martowska, 2012; Urbaniak, 2017).

Before we discuss these determinants let us think about a few important postulates. First of all, we accept the claim that the understanding of the way of life is not only given to people, and the forms of understanding are manifold, "today we cannot ignore the achievements of natural sciences and fail to notice the «human animalism», (....) human conditions of existence and cognition and relations with nature seem to demand rethinking" (Urbaniak, 2017, pp. 8-9).

Secondly, at the same time, we focus on adults who are learning, consciously improving their knowledge, skills, and attitudes; on their competences and their quality. Therefore, we are dealing with people who consciously undertake the effort of improving their qualifications and non-measurable competences, whose resources can be abundant due to their experience, previous knowledge, and learning.

Thirdly – M. Urbaniak (2018) states that:

> Probably from their birth men are "tuned" to understand their surroundings through being "immersed" in their surroundings on an ongoing basis. Constant curiosity about the world, asking questions and searching for further answers, transcending obtained explanations is an expression of the human way of life (Urbaniak 2018, p. 118).

To become aware of this fact required efforts to reinforce curiosity about the world and new knowledge, to motivate and encourage students to form their own judgements and opinions. And fourthly - after Bogusław Milerski (2011), we observe that:

> (…) from the humanistic perspective, man (the subject of cognition) cannot completely distance himself from the reality he is coming to understand. He is involved in the experience of what he learns in the process of understanding. A work of art, a literary text, a statement, or the behaviour of another person are not something neutral for the one who learns. (...) Pedagogical hermeneutics therefore indicates the existential character of understanding, the object of which are not objective abstracts but existentially significant reality (Milerski, 2011, p. 209).

This means that theory and practice in the educational process are more closely linked to social professions.

Therefore, it is not difficult to observe that the list of factors determining hermeneutical competences is very extensive. In general, they depend on knowledge, skills, values and norms, attitudes, motivation, external environment, and individual abilities, as well as one's own personal traits (such as temperament and intelligence, especially social and emotional, as well as biologically determined personality traits, such as introversion, extroversion, neuroticism, amicability, conscientiousness, and openness to experience) (Matczak, & Martowska, 2011; Rogozińska-Pawelczyk, 2006). We can then distinguish subjective, internal, non-subjective, environmental, and organisational determinants (Bajcar, 2016), which together influence the intensity of experience and the manner of using it.

The foremost factor among the environmental determinants is family, which has the earliest and longest impact on the human being; its impact is natural, manifold, characterized by a strong emotional and relatively autonomous context (Martowska, 2012). However, with the view of the issue in question, external conditions, non-subjective, found at a university and beyond it are particularly significant. Therefore, culture, tradition, mentality, economy, and politics, as well as the influence of educational decision-makers, reformers, or politicians, play an important role (Kocór, 2013).

However, during the process of educating future pedagogues, the conditions in higher education play an exceptional role. It is more precisely about the organization of studies, study plans, and programmes, the atmosphere at the university and during classes, relations in student groups between students and academic teachers, infrastructure, and code of conduct (people of science to which students also aspire), and customs and practices prevailing in higher education, the skills of scientific and professional work of academic teachers, as well as the skills students themselves display in their work and learning processes (Duraj-Nowakowa, 2000; Klasińska, 2017). The important aspect consists in the form of the education programme, manner of its implementation, openness of students, their awareness

and active participation, incentive to learn, as well as incentive of the teachers, self-awareness of the participants in the education process (students and academic) teachers, mobility of those taking part in the educational process as well as the equipment available at facilities conducting the educational process. Further conditions include The next *conditio sine qua non* include careful preparation of (taught) classes, students' awareness and activity, the system of lectures and practical exercises, the relationship between theory and practice, accessibility, and individualization in the transfer of knowledge (Apanowicz, 2000; Duraj-Nowakowa, 2006), as well as the choice of diploma thesis orientation by the academic teacher, depending on his/her abilities and invention, expected problems and needs, as well as group progression (Zubrzycka-Maciąg, 2007).

Connection of hermeneutic competences with other competences

Competences are interdependent because it is extremely difficult to isolate one competence and treat it as an entirely detached phenomenon, utterly independent of the others. It is also not possible to determine to what extent, and in what way, they are different; therefore, we can distinguish a group of principal (basic aptitudes) and performance (more work-related) competences. Moreover, there is no precise definition of how many professional competencies can be distinguished; competences may exist in any number, so they should be combined into coherent groups. This coherent nature of competences impacts the development of others, *i.e.*, the development of one competence influences the development of the others (Filipowicz, 2004).

In addition, different types of competences that create a person's competence potential are not a mere sum of talents, knowledge, skills, and other characteristics as well as aspects, which a person has acquired and developed over the course of their life experience. Features found in individual competence areas integrate with one another, creating a system with a specific organisation. Its pivot point is an individual skill structure consisting of skills of varying degrees of complexity, based on elements of theoretical and practical knowledge and revealing personality traits necessary to master these skills. An individual skill structure is not the sum of its components. The elements of the structure are connected in relationships of subordination, superiority, inference, functionality, and cause-and-effect (Jeruszka, 2016).

Undoubtedly, the process of education should be imbued with a concern for equipping oneself with the following competences: regarding the object, explanation and interpretation, competence for explaining a problematic situation, competence for recognizing values, technical competence, and functional competence. Competence of the object is a competence that enables one to see problems in a giv-

en spatial and temporal perspective, formulate questions about what the object of the action is, its essence, structure, and meaning and what are the processes that occur along with it. It is therefore a competence that enables us to find the answer to the question about the object (and the essence) of the interest displayed by the subject acting and identifying with the social profession. The competence of explanation and interpretation is connected with diagnosing and designing, it affords an opportunity to explain a problematic situation, determine the conditions of its modification, analyse factors that may influence the course of events, and choose the manner of action. The competence to recognize values enables us to assess the significance of a problematic situation in an axiological context, define its evolution, course, formulate objectives of the activity, and justify the reasons for the undertaken and planned activities. It is acquired in the course of understanding and reflecting on ethical and philosophical systems and own experience. Technical competences are also called operational competence; they are expressed in activity and provide answers to the question of how to act, and what means and tools to use in order to achieve the intended goal. They depend on the adopted theoretical orientation, specificity of the term of activity, and problems to be solved. Functional competences are the competences of dependencies, enabling assessment of the relationships and mechanisms that occur between phenomena, as well as the consequences and effects (Marynowicz-Hetka, 2006).

However in practice action is based on many harmonized competences; therefore hermeneutical competences of different types are usually referred to in the plural, although they also appear individually, which perhaps is the result of treating this competence either integrally (so in the singular, *e.g.*, without going into the resources of specific competences and skills and their interrelationships), or in a modular manner, recognising the different needs of different socially-oriented professions for hermeneutical competences of various types and distinguishing in them the different stages of development or scientific detail, at the same time taking into account their mutual dependence, as none of the competences is ever isolated from others. Renate Schwarz (2009) comments on the subject as follows:

> In fact, these competences are closely interlinked (...). For example, hermeneutical competence cannot be achieved without social competence. Socio-structural competence requires a high capacity for reflection, which is also attributed to social competence. Social competence in turn implies the ability to think ethically and act morally. It is not possible to acquire professional care competencies without cognitive and ethical competencies, etc. The areas of competence overlap and only in combination enable professional action (Schwarz, 2009, p. 110).

German literature, the source of definitions and descriptions (in regard to welfare and social work) of hermeneutical competences states that the professional operation in practice is based on a variety of competences - on a scientifically oriented competence to justify and decision-making competences and actions that result from the necessity (coercion) to make a decision. These welfare competences coincide in the caring process of the caring diagnosis, welfare planning, as well as delivery of care and welfare evaluation. At least three competence determining zones: practical-technical, clinical-pragmatic, and ethical-moral (Schwarz, 2009) should be assigned to the competences of decision-making and taking action.

Practical and technical competence guarantees the safety and correct use of care techniques and aids in the interaction with the patient, or the client, which is associated with the care process. This competence represents in part the functional competence of the caretaker. The clinical-pragmatic competence guards the safety of social interaction with the patient/ his/her relatives and includes the ability to interpret (understanding the case). This competence also serves to guarantee a social and empathetic function on the part of the caregiver. On the other hand, ethical and moral competence guarantees both the regulation of rights and obligations under the caregiver-patient interaction, as well as the ethical balance and justification of the selected means of care (Schwarz, 2009).

However, in order to define professional operation, we propose to replace the three determining areas by professional competence, social competence, and ethical and moral competence and to expand them by adding the hermeneutical and organisational competences (Schwarz, 2009).

Professional competence

Professional competences include care expertise and care taking skills. In addition, it also embraces the professional interpretation of care, which can be described as interactionist. Expertise is based on systematic, empirical knowledge of care and appropriate reflection. And having the expertise means knowing the afflictions characteristic to this professional area. Expertise includes the mastery of manual, practical, and technical care practices, *i.e.*, the correct application of the acquired knowledge, which is implemented in the care facilities. We should list here the organisation-specific and workplace-specific occupational skills and aptitudes for the care sector, as well as accompanying advisory and instrumental-technical skills. In line with the above, the path leading to professional competence leads through mastering many individual skills (Schwarz, 2009).

Social competence

The development of social competences means the optimal combination of teamwork and the ability to make autonomous decisions and take responsibility. A professional should therefore strive for an optimal combination of independence and cooperation. This is particularly important when working with other professional groups, *e.g.*, teachers and other specialists (psychologists, speech therapists, police officers, as well as doctors). A relatively new aspect of care is the introduction of flexibility with regard to permanent changes of practical professional nature. Until recently, jobs in this care and/or education sector were relatively secure. Today, the circumstances have changed. You need to be ready to cooperate with new colleagues from the same structure (organization) and to quickly adapt to work in a new environment. Not everyone is able to meet these requirements in terms of flexibility, openness to change, and accountability for the consequences. Many people feel confused and overwhelmed by the new circumstances. Bearing contradictions as well as tolerating ambiguity is a significant part of competence in the social sphere. It means being able to deal competently with uncertainty, ambiguity, difficult to reconcile expectations, and internal tensions. It is a special form of protection based on the acceptance of reality even when it is not fully transparent and plannable; bearing uncertainty, living with it, and not trying to tell oneself and others that everything is under control.

The group of social competences also includes the following: empathy, love, sensitivity reflected in social sensitivity as understanding (of others), bodily and kinaesthetic perception, self-control, respect for human needs, ability to build trust, self-esteem, ability to learn, verbal and non-verbal expressions, self-control, as well as organisational skills and assertiveness (Schwarz, 2009).

Ethical and moral competence

The essence of ethical and moral competence is based on the ability and willingness to reflect critically and to justify one's own, the team's, department's, or management's professional actions. It is not only about the moral problems of interaction between the caregiver and the ward. Ethical conflicts are to be identified in interactions with the entire staff, the ward's relatives, as well as with the administration as the institution that represents the caregiver in organisational and economic terms (Schwarz, 2009).

However, at the core of the model of caring behaviour lie justice and care. Moral competence is therefore crucial in this context. Morality, in turn, means a more

or less extensive, integrated, and complex system of norms assessing individual or social behaviour as appropriate or inappropriate, good or bad, on the basis of specific religious and philosophical orientation and socio-cultural values. Morality embraces attitude, practical action, and behaviour. On the other hand, ethics in relation to the actions of professional caretakers can therefore be understood as a reflection on the practical and responsible action (Schwarz, 2009).

The components of ethical and moral competences are the autonomy of the client, a reflexive and justified attitude, own standing and argumentation, moral autonomy, and taking responsibility (Schwarz, 2009). However, responsibility, being an element of ethical and moral competence, means the willingness of the professional to take responsibility for making decisions, describing and defining the course of specific actions, and knowing the meaning/scope of ethical decisions, as well as bearing the consequences of their own actions. This perception of moral autonomy also means the burden of decision making (Schwarz, 2009).

Organisational competence

At the basis of organisational competence, we can distinguish four types of willingness and abilities, which are first of all willingness to organise, *i.e.*, willingness or motivation to actively participate in the organisation of one's own work. This means (re)forming, organising, negotiating, and regulating the course of one's work. This leads to tension between one's own organisation and someone else's enterprise. Whether or not professionals in their organisation show this willingness depends, on the one hand, on their previous experience with organisations (organisational biography) and, on the other, on their belief of what works best for them. Whether the willingness to surrender to the organization or become a self-organizing entity depends, among other things, on which of these things in the organisation is associated with advantages and disadvantages. Another type of willingness is the willingness and ability to perceive, accept, and take into account different backdrops of the organisation (the notion of the backdrop stands for an understanding of the organisation as a whole, thus making one's own work a part of this whole. The perception is a sensual, visual, acoustic, etc. representation). The next one is the type of willingness and ability to act reliably and at the same time taking into account the specifics of proceeding in a work situation, which has to be set between observing the rules and following one's own path. This set of standards should be mastered by professionals, who, accustomed to their previous work experience consisting of obeying the rules, will be reluctant to follow their own informal, and possibly also unconventional, paths. The key is also to follow one's own path and make one's

own decisions against pushback. The final type of willingness is the willingness and ability to enter into new forms of organisation, to try them out and to work together for their development (Schwarz, 2009).

Conclusion and postulates

As a result of analysing the subject literature, we can assume that the presented examples may constitute an inspiration to develop a set of hermeneutical competences for other social professions as well. Moreover, it is clearly seen that each time the set of components comprising hermeneutical competences may be different, depending on the specific requirements of the profession, and preferences and abilities of individual students and academic teachers. In view of the presented theoretical premises:

> (…) the hermeneutical competence of a student, a future employee in social professions, is a system of knowledge, skills, psychological, mental and action abilities and aptitudes, as well as attitudes that enable him/her to: 1) understand the *hermeneutical sense of the social meaning and specific needs of a chosen social profession*, including the recognition of the origin of the profession and its scientific foundations and historical contexts, aspects of uncertainty, duality, ambivalence, values and anti-values, links between theory and practice, needs and conditions in working with another person and their family and the social environment; 2) *independently study a selected academic specialization* through purposeful, spontaneous and active (in the sense of active listening, notation, verbal statements) participation in classes, reading with understanding, analysing (also critical) and interpreting cultural texts (including specialist ones), understanding symbolic messages and the world of values, empathetic listening, independent writing of shorter or longer academic texts, reflectiveness, conscious successive creation and development of own professional and scientific skills; 3) *be able to make decisions and to act* and take responsibility for decisions made despite the perceived inconsistencies between theory and practice, despite being aware of uncertainty and the possible duality in the situation of contact with another person: students, pupils, clients, their world of values, language and communication competence; empathy, dialogue, respect for the need for distance or closeness in mutual contacts; to be able to reflect in action and after action, make changes in oneself and verify one's own behaviour, improve one's own practice on the basis of the hermeneutical circle (Kaliszewska, & Klasińska, 2018, pp. 333-334).

In this case, the quality of vocational skills would be the result of this existential transformation, which is a phenomenon occurring as a result of didactic actions aimed at it. We understand that education, the aims and contents of which include hermeneutic competences in a broad sense, may in effect cause this transformation, resulting in an empathetic and understanding presence of caregivers, teachers, and educators, creating relations based on dialogue, immersed in empathy, and providing developmental impulses.

In today's world of uncertainty, risk, and change (Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 2009) students educated for social professions should undoubtedly possess hermeneutical competences and care for their continuous development in the context of their lives. To this end, the vertical-horizontal (systemic) integration (Duraj-Nowakowa, 2006) of hermeneutical competence factors, *i.e.*, internal and external, may be extremely useful, also due to such careful multilateral, *i.e.*, systemic planning and implementation of educational impact.

To conclude the analysis conducted in this paper it should be noted that in the course of improving hermeneutical competences, it is necessary to use the scientific output of other sciences. We should pay particular attention not only to the values of philosophy and philosophising at all levels of education, but also, for example, to the concept of humanities management (*cf.* Kostera, & Nierenberg, 2016; Nierenberg, Batko, & Sułkowski, 2015), which should be used not only by managers of educational and care institutions, but also by teachers seeking advice and guidance, and by students preparing to work in social professions. If there is no understanding of the meaning of applying humanistic approaches in the management of *e.g.*, educations and one's own self-development, we are not able to appreciate and exploit the potential of hermeneutical competences possessed by people.

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