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“Thinking Transformations” – an Introduction to the Issues

Abstract

The text presents the content of the thematic issue devoted to the reflection on the issue of “thinking transformations”, related to the processes of professionalization and, more generally, to the interrelated transformations of activities and entities occurring in and through their activities.

Keywords: transformations, thinking transformations, professionalization, teamwork.

„Myśląc transformacje” – wprowadzenie w problematykę

Abstrakt

Tekst przedstawia zawartość numeru tematycznego poświęconego refleksji nad zagadnieniem „myśląc transformacje” związanym z procesami profesjonalizacji i w sposób bardziej ogólny także z powiązanymi wzajemnie transformacjami aktywności oraz podmiotów, przebiegającymi w ich aktywnościach i poprzez nie.

Słowa kluczowe: transformacje, myśleć transformacje, profesjonalizacja, praca zespołowa.

“Panta rei”, everything flows, said Heraclitus. From the beginning of the existence of Western culture, characterized by an approach to understanding the world in terms of “provisionally stabilized objects of thought” (Jullien 2009: 17–21; Jullien 2017:

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181–185). This formulation may be the first characterization of the lability and constant transformation of the various environments in which people live and act.

The same intuition also accompanies the history of modern science. Antoine Lavoisier, one of the authors important for the constitution of the discipline of chemistry, notes that “nothing is created, either in artificial operations or in natural operations, one can accept the principle that in the whole operation the same amount of matter exists before and after the operation [...] and that the quality and quantity of the beginnings [i.e. the elements] is the same and there are only changes, modifications” (Lavoisier 2001: 85).

The editors and authors of this issue formulate a hypothesis that contemporary changes in professionalization, also reflected in higher education, may reactivate all the questions about the status of transformation in human relations with the world and with oneself, living and acting. We highlight some of these issues below.

Various social environments change continuously. This also applies to the earth sciences, which take as their subject the category of transformation and formulate hypotheses relating to changes, although slower, but fundamental to understanding the state of the world, which we are allegedly influencing.

Many human activities can be analysed as activities of the transformation of the world, distinguishing the objects which they try to influence. This encourages the confusion of “everything with everything”: disciplines preparing for the professions (technical, dealing with designing changes) and academic disciplines (especially the sciences), which accept the objects of transformation as the object of knowledge.

Along with the development of the activity of the third sector (*la tertiarisation*) and the development of social professions (*métiers de l'humain*), a large number of disciplines adopt the transformation of entities in activity as the subject of their research. This applies, for example, to: educational sciences, communication sciences, management sciences, social intervention, etc.

Finally, by transforming the world, human subjects transform themselves, but these transformations are most often silent (*silencieuses*).

We have prepared this thematic issue as a result of the crossing of two cultures of thinking in the course of many years of cooperation between two teams: one Polish (University of Lodz and related authors from the Pomeranian Academy in Slupsk and the University of Bialystok) and one French (Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers – Formation et Apprentissages Professionnels and UNESCO Chairs of the Catholic University of Paris: Formation Professionnelle, Construction personnelles et Transformations sociales).

The focus of the texts in this issue is the exploration of various epistemological, theoretical, methodological and social aspects relating to what can be described as “transformative thinking”, particularly when it relates to issues of action and professional training.

Contrary to customary behaviour and intellectual habits, we pose the following thorny questions (*épineuses questions*):

- how does the dynamic approach work, in which the dominance of “flow” in life is assumed?
- what tools should be enriched/equipped with the contextual approach, assuming that the meaning of action is constituted in a local and temporal way?
- can we speak of the primacy of practice over theory?
- how can we think about simultaneous transformations of organisms, entities and processes, such as: perceiving, imagining, judging and reasoning?
- how can we understand the activity during its duration?

The proposed answers are contained in fifteen articles, grouped in three parts of the thematic issue: Studies and dissertations; Research reports; Discussions/polemics/reviews. The first part includes articles that analyse various aspects of the transformation paradigm:

- Jean-Marie Barbier talks about the mutual (connected) relationship between professional action and what is known as “transformative thinking”;
- Ewa Marynowicz-Hetka discusses the perception of the concept of transversal activity analysis, developed by Jean-Marie Barbier (2016), from the point of view of social pedagogy and proposes a transformation paradigm;
- Lech Witkowski, in a broad philosophical perspective, presents the concept of transformation, emphasizing the dominants of this process and the specificity of the space between dynamics and the structure of processuality;
- Anna Walczak, referring to French philosophers, analyses the guesswork on the identity of the acting subject, emphasizing the category of difference.

In the second part of the issue, we put articles that were prepared on the basis of qualitative research, strictly speaking narrative materials, discourse analysis, and ethnographic observation. They analyse the dynamics of activity and the transformation processes in the course of action. Thus, the content of these articles covers two phenomena located in different spaces: transformations and interactions, often referring to the concepts of activity and transformation of Jean-Marie Barbier and other researchers from this epistemological trend. The areas of analysis concern mainly the professional sphere of people who work in social professions in the health sector (Martine Dutoit), trade union activities (Marie Jasmine Hyppolite), the police (Myriam Léonard), non-governmental/third sector organizations (Daniela Rodriguez), businesses (Kim Vu), the activity of family assistants (Izabela Kamińska-Jatczak), and also of the private family sphere (Katarzyna Gajek).

In the third part of the issue, we offer articles that will give rise to a discussion or polemics on the concepts discussed in this issue. These are the following:

- prepared on the basis of meetings and analysis of the discourse describing the circumstances of the intellectual flow between our cultures of thinking (French and Polish) (Marcin Kafar, Ewa Marynowicz-Hetka);

- shedding light on the concept of analysis of transversal activity (Barbier 2016), perceived as a significant research experience (Izabela Kamińska-Jatczak);
- showing the possibilities of using the tools of activity analysis (Barbier 2016), when the subject of reflection is creativity and the accompanying emotions, creating a space for transformation and synergy (Halina Monika Wróblewska);
- resulting from the reading (Lech Witkowski) of the collective work *Représenter/transformer* (Barbier, Durand 2018), emphasizing the transversal approach to the relationship between representations and transformations.

At the end of the issue, in a section entitled "Updates", we offer readers two short texts:

- the first, prepared by Jean-Marie Barbier and Martine Dutoit, on the research project "Se préparer à l'action" [Prepare for action], currently implemented by the UNESCO Chair (Chaire Unesco à l'Institut Catholique de Paris), and focused on a large group of partners in a consortium interested in constructing "possible activities" in relation to the concept of activity analysis in relation to the construction of entities;
- the second, prepared by Izabela Kamińska-Jatczak and Ewa Marynowicz-Hetka, presents the main lines of Jean-Marie Barbiera's long-term cooperation with the Department of Social Pedagogy at the University of Lodz. It shows the process of achieving a commonality of the epistemological approach and numerous activities around the category: "Thinking transformations", which mentally prepared the authors of this issue for common and shared thinking on this subject, not forgetting, however, about their differences.

Working together on this thematic issue of the journal "Educational Sciences. Interdisciplinary Studies", colliding with different points of view, also enabled the transformation of the representation of the authors themselves. We tried to apply methods of work that would ensure cultural transversal and international scientific communication.

We invite you to read on!

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