

Coaching as a Reflection of Changes in the Adult Education

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The evolution of both theory and practice of andragogy should be understood as, generally direct result of adaptation tendencies towards the cultural changes. On the other hand, it should be remembered that constant efforts for the sake of activities enabling such adaptation changes to exist, belong to andragogues' duties, bearing in mind that the pace and intensity shall be of level eliminating the possibility to deepen the gap between the cultural and educational reality. The paradigmatic change, evoked by new issues within the andragogical reflections, reflects the change taking place both in andragogical theory and practice. It seems that coaching is one of these ideas that significantly reflect the direction of ongoing changes in adult education.

Key words: *andragogy; adult education; coaching*

The process of adult education, its course and possibilities of optimization have been for years a subject of interest for researchers of various disciplines. In principle, there might be two main streams of researching interests indicated in this regard. The first one refers to scientific, the second to an artistic approach¹. The scientific perspective was launched by the works of E. Thorndike, who laid scientific foundations for the future scientific field claiming that adults can still learn despite their interest and cognitive abilities are different from those that children present. This statement initiated search for specific factors and circumstances that shape the course and effects of adult learning.

The artistic one initiated by E. Lindeman – successors of the J. Dewey's philosophical concept of education – focused mainly on the endeavors aiming at establishing own theory of adult learning.

The main conclusions from Lindeman's research may be brought down to the following claims:

- The motivation of an adult learner depends on their level of fulfilled needs and interests.
- Adult orientation is concentrated on the life situation.

¹ Knowles, M. – Holton, E. – Swanson, R. (2009): *Edukacja dorosłych*. Warszawa, PWN, p. 43.

- Experience is crucial in the process of adult learning.
- Self-managing is the essential adults need.
- Differences between adults are growing with age.²

These conclusions depict an image of an adult learner that significantly differ from what we usually observe among learning children. It is particularly worth emphasizing that the adult learners focus on their life situation and adjust to it the process of education, both in case of formulated expectations and goals, as well as the accepted forms of work, or even the load of effort made. The participation of conscious process both on perceptive, abstract and practical level, must be also taken into consideration. It is all empowered by – particularly developed among adults – the need for self-determination. These conclusions explicitly define the working principles of those teaching adults, becoming crucial in the context of reflections proposed by contemporary adult learners, as developed in the latest andragogical theories.

With reference to the theoretical aspect of andragogical reflection, the attention should be drawn to the fact that "...andragogical knowledge, similarly as any other institutionalized belief, functions on the ground of given culture and meets appropriate standards of rationality. Therefore the paradigmatic changes in the adults education are (...) the consequence of the requirements of adequacy towards cultural changes experienced temporarily by postmodern societies".³ Hence, the evolution of andragogical theory, as well as practice, shall be understood as more or less direct result of tendencies of adaptation to cultural changes. On the other hand, it may be claimed, that the obligation of adult learners, both the theoretical and practical ones, is to constantly make effort for the sake of such activities that would create circumstances for such adaptation changes to occur, concurrently implying that their pace and intensity shall remain at such level that would prevent the gap between the cultural and educational reality from deepening.

One of the possible strategies in such case is the systematic inventory of the applied theoretical approaches and practical solutions from the perspective of their adequacy towards the challenges of postmodernity. The updating criteria may concern the each time reconstructed set of key problems revealed both in theoretical reflections and educational praxis. Therefore, Malewski refers to the issues as self-education, motivations of

² Ibidem, p. 47.

³ Malewski, M. (2010): *Od nauczania do uczenia się. O paradygmatycznej zmianie w andragogice*. Wrocław, 2010, p. 13.

learners and professional development as slightly archaic, indicating their recent substitutes such as “biographical learning of adults, role of life experiences in cognition, the process of acquiring and modifying individual identity”.⁴ The newly arose issues of andragogy reflect the paradigm change that took place in andragogical theory and practice. The change implied shift from technical education, through humanistic education towards the critical one.⁵

Such shift took place (or to be more precise – is still taking place) with different intensity at various levels. From the perspective of the further reflections, the following aspects appear particularly interesting: *human ontology, key values, teacher's role, the nature of education, teaching methods, role of adults' life experience, the criteria of education efficiency*. These assumptions, more or less consciously accepted at given levels, constituting specific paradigm of adults education, constitute the accurate attempt to diagnose the cultural environment, starting from the outlook on life, through solutions within social life organizations, ending up on technical and methodic aspects of human activities. In other words, the assumptions dominating in the cultural environment are on one hand the basis for solutions accepted in adults education, and on the other they are themselves subject to critical assessment and numerous modifications, applied both by theoretical andragogues, as well as practical adult learners.

The evolution of the andragogical theory and practice has been a subject of many analyses carried out by researchers and organizers of adults education, as well as by the educators themselves. Therefore, omitting this genetic aspect, the following reflections will focus on the recent (recently targeted) dimension of adults education, that is defined by Malewski as a critical didactics. The assumptions of this paradigm, essential for further reflections, are shown in the table below:

Table1. Selected assumption of the critical didactics.

Sphere	Key assumptions
Human ontology	Free individual
Key value	Freedom
Teacher's role	Wakening the awareness
Nature of education	Critical reflection
Education efficiency criteria	Ability to change life

Source: Malewski, 2010, p. 40

⁴ Ibidem, p. 19.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 40.

Therefore, accepting the above-mentioned catalogue of assumptions as a perspective for reflections, I shall analyze coaching as one of the latest phenomena of adults education.

Not referring to the historically distant, phraseological etymology of this notion, it should be remembered that in contemporary understanding, this term first appeared in Tim Gallwey's book „The Inner Game of Tennis” from 1974. In his famous statement “performance = potential – inference” he proved that the basic task of the coach/educator is to release the latent opportunities (knowledge) of each human, with the basic way to develop though self-awareness. The titled inner game is played by everyone with him/herself as a kind of inner dialogue, and to win this game we shall minimalise critical thinking, fight own weaknesses, doubts and nervousness, that are nothing but inner barriers on our way to reach the goal.⁶

Coaching emerged in Poland at the begging of 2000s, with the first workshops on coaching conducted by the founder of International Coaching Community (ICC), Joseph O'Connor in July 2002 within a training arranged by the Polish school of ICC (the oldest coaching school in Poland). Ever since then, the number of schools and coaches have been dynamically growing. The report on Polish coaching schools from 2009 reported 33 subjects offering education in this regard, with five of them having external accreditation of the curriculum recognized by the international coaching organization, and another five having accreditation of both licensed curriculum and coaches themselves, organized to teach in accordance with the internal procedures of accreditation institution. These are usually the offers of post-graduate studies at universities or trainings in the local training institutions. The coaching market is also rapidly growing. On September 16th 2009 Coaching Chamber came to life as an organization of economic local government, representing the economic interest of subjects embraced within, conducting business activity within the range of coaching. One of the statutory goals of the Chamber is to “professionalize the coaching market by establishing professional and ethical standards of coaching “ (§ 6.1.). Such dynamics both of market of coaching services, as well as educational offers with this regard, and – so far – lack of standardizing regulations as for coach qualification, make it all infeasible to refer to one homogenous model of work, or even one “coaching philosophy”.⁷

⁶ Gallwey, T. (1979): *The Inner Game of Golf*. London, p. 50.

⁷ Law, H. – Ireland, S. – Hussain, Z. (2007): *The Psychology of Coaching, Mentoring and Learning*. West Sussex, p. 32.

Therefore, it is commonly accepted that everyone can become a coach with no special preparation, as the skill to ask questions is sufficient, especially that the path to become a professional coach is long and laborious, requiring apart from professional education additional mental or personality features, as well as rich life experience, hence the advanced age of potential candidates for a coach post is obvious.⁸

Such perception is a source of another polarization of opinions regarding theoretical grounds for coaching process, as there are stances in the literature on the topic underestimating the need to refer to any scientific grounds whatsoever. Hence the voices that “coaching requires specialist knowledge only within coaching, not within other disciplines”⁹, stressing solely the technical solutions of the process, sufficiently legitimated by the coach him/herself. Such “intuitive” coaching is more and more frequently confronted with the idea that the efficiency of coaching is predominantly determined by the consciously applied scientific contents. Supporters of such stand underline the necessity to ground the coaching solutions on theoretical foundations, with its valuable references to psychology, sociology and pedagogy, but also history, linguistic studies and cultural studies.

The theories and authors most frequently referred to by the supporters of “scientific” coaching are as the following:

- * Learning theory (Kolb, Bloom, Bandura, Boud, Mumford),
- * Change theory (Hudson, Batson, Kotter, Scott i Jaffee),
- * Developmental theory (Ulrich, Smallwood, Schein, Beckhard, Burke),
- * Leadership theory (Bennis, Blanchard, Weinstock),
- * Emotional intelligence theory (Pert, Goleman).

Moreover, „in the process of improving the knowledge concerning the coaching processes, knowledge on systems of organizations and family systems, as well as specialized knowledge and ethical principles are highly appreciated”.¹⁰ In other words “*coaching is still facing its initial phase; there are no regulations or standards, along with many different approaches, causing confusion*”.¹¹ Because of these and other differences, it is impossible to come up with such definition of coaching, that would be recognized by the entire environment. The only alternative in such case is to propose a general definition, only drafting the outline of the essence of the coaching process, consequently leaving space to

⁸ Vickers, A. – Bavister, S. (2007): Coaching. Gliwice, pp. 11–14.

⁹ Whitmore, S. (2011): *Coaching. Trening efektywności*. Warszawa, p. 21.

¹⁰ Zaleska, H.: *Literatura. Subiektywny wybór publikacji o coachingu*. (<http://www.izbacoachingu.pl>)

¹¹ Vickers, A. – Bavister, S.: op. cit., p. 32.

interpretation in detailed issues. Hence, acknowledgment of varieties of approaches shall be accompanied by the acceptance of common definition basis. This, in turn, could facilitate the beginning of integration of the entire coaching environment, launching a substantive discussion tackling both the workshop solutions, as well as their scientific foundations (we may hope that such effect will be brought about by the Coaching Chamber activities in the future).

For the purpose of this paper I propose to analyze coaching as *a process oriented at personal and/or professional goals of a client, releasing his/her potential through training of reflectiveness over own self and the surrounding, or – by learning new skills*. As for the type of coaching subject to analysis, it shall be the holistic one as *“its central point is the subject – the Person – the client, with the aims determined by the client him/herself (...)*. The assumption of holistic coaching focuses not only on the goals, but on the entire system in place of their location. The client is considered as one (entire and complete) coherent system.”¹² Such approach implies that the source of the individual behaviour refers not only to the knowledge and skills, but also to own identity, hierarchy of values, system of beliefs, worked out techniques of controlling own emotions and its level, as well as thinking and behavioural habits and patterns.

As far as the question of the human vision in coaching is concerned, the most interesting answer so far is the metaphor of Robert S. de Ropp's regarding the internal Gallwey's game: *“contemporary man, mesmerized by his/her glimmering gadgets, has very faint contact with its own inner worlds and deals mainly with the external, not internal space. Nevertheless, the masterly game takes place entirely and exclusively in the internal world, which is a broad and complex territory, of which people still have very little knowledge. This game can be played only by people whose observations of own self and other led them to a certain conclusion – that the ordinary state of awareness (so called the state of vigilance) is not the highest possible level of awareness one is capable of. This happens, when a person realizes that he/she is not longer able to sleep well (...) becoming aware that he/she hears, sees and knows only a tiny fraction of what could be heard, seen and known (...) that he/she lives in the most disgusting room of an internal house, despite being able to enter other rooms that windows overlook eternity and infinity”*.¹³

¹² Pilipeczuk, P. (2012): *Współczesna mitologia coachingu*. Gliwice, p. 151.

¹³ Atkinson, M. – Choisi, R. T. (2009): *Wewnętrzna dynamika coachingu*. Tom I. Warszawa, p. 23.

This sheer praise of reflectiveness as a forsaken feature of humans reveals a new vision of a human. We may assume that this is exactly what Scott Lash meant while exploring reflectiveness, when he confronted his concept of modernity reflectiveness with Giddens' structural reflectiveness, next to which, as the first one claimed "*there is self-reflectiveness, where the subjectivity ponders over own self. In the self-reflectiveness the heteronomic control of the subjects is replaced by self-control*".¹⁴ Nevertheless, he agreed with Beck, claiming that reflectiveness emerges also through the intermediacy of "the expertise systems", whereas for Giddens "*the reflectiveness arises in modernity by >double hermeneutics<, where the first intermediary is the social subject, and the expertise system the second one*".¹⁵ It is worth to emphasize, that according to Giddens, sociology was the key expertise system. Undoubtedly, psychology may be also considered as such (including the coaching psychology – highly reflective oriented), as well as philosophy of education (including andragogy, particularly in its meta-reflective discourse).

Summarizing the "coaching" human ontology, we may assume that the contemporary man constructs his/her living conditions in such way, that the reflective self-development leads him/her to subsequent turning points in life, what seems to be corresponding with the concept of "identity trajectory" where "reflectiveness of ME is continuous and overwhelming (...) Starting from the series of consciously posed questions, the individual gets familiar with the issue how to use this moment to change him/herself. Such reflectiveness (...) comes down to practicing the art of self-observance by tackling the following:

- What is happening right now?
- What am I thinking about right now?
- What am I doing?
- What am I feeling?
- How am I breathing?

It turns out, that the identity of an individual as a coherent integrity implies the narration where the >Me< narration becomes the obvious one"¹⁶, whereas – from the perspective of effective coaching – it may be added that such narration is obvious and desired as the key tool of reflectiveness and indispensable condition of the directed change.

¹⁴ Beck, U. – Giddens, A. – Lash, S. (2009): *Modernizacja refleksyjna*. Warszawa, PWN, p. 154.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 153.

¹⁶ Giddens, A. (2001): *Nowoczesność i tożsamość*. Warszawa, PWN, p. 106.

While answering the question on the key value in coaching, many – not only orthodoxly oriented – would say it is the client's key value – the one he/she manifests during the sessions, to which unconsciously subordinates own plans and actions, and last but not least – this is the one, for which identification the numerous coaching tools have been worked out (e.g. "circle of values" or the "value of the hearth"). Such situational context of the values in the coaching process handicaps the search for explicit statement in the literature regarding universal values of coaching. Still, there might be some common axiological assumptions found in such analyses that tackle the client and the relation between a client and a coach: "we are constructed biologically in such way that we need other members of our "pack" to make it. Such faith is followed by trust and respect, where coach's trust implies he/she is sure why the clients does certain things and why he/she does it this way".¹⁷ The trust leads to faith in the potential and possibilities of a client and, by the rule of reciprocity, it facilitates trust on the other side. In such way the trust ceases to function as a sheer deceleration, and becomes for the client an active tool of building faith in own abilities. It seems that such accomplishment of the trust postulate is firmly grounded in the sociological reflection over contemporary reality, as "in the profound transformations taking place, trust must be gained and actively sustained, what has been currently connected with mutual process of narrative and emotional opening towards each other".¹⁸ "Opening" towards the client leads to unconditional acceptance of his/her beliefs, potentials and limitations, as well as acceptance of him/herself as a person trust- and respect worthy, expanding the sphere of freedom in the coach-client relations.¹⁹

"I can control only what I am aware of. This, of what I am unaware, has control over me. The awareness gives me the control".²⁰ This quotation, frequently cited in coaching workshops, reflects the essence of such process clearly defining the obligations of a coach, which operationally are brought down to the process of awakening the (self)awareness of a client. It happens through disclosure of his/her potentials as well as limitation of beliefs, simultaneously broadening the client's "comfort zone".²¹ Only a possibly complete awareness of these existence spheres

¹⁷ Sidor-Rządkowska, M. (ed.) (2009): *Coaching. Teoria, praktyka, studia przypadków*. Warszawa, p. 110.

¹⁸ Beck, U. – Giddens, A. – Lash, S.: op. cit. p. 238.

¹⁹ Hargrove, R. (2009): *Mistrzowski coaching*. Kraków, pp. 219–226.

²⁰ Whitmore, S.: op. cit. p. 44.

²¹ Law, H. – Ireland, S. – Hussain, Z. (2010): *Psychologia coachingu*. Warszawa, PWN, p. 74.

facilitates focusing on the first one and combating the latter one. "Only a free mind is able to accept experience, as only such can set free from ideological prejudices, using own experience, as itself it does not establish some certainties, but solely closes given beliefs and enters a space of questions".²²

Raising awareness has one more crucial aspect – it throws a light on current individual's experiences, allowing one to notice their new quality, opening new possibilities of interpretation and applying wisdom coming from within, not only to be applied for the new activities but to establish some new life goals. It all liberates from routine behaviour, both at the level of response to the familiar surroundings, as well as at the level of planning the future, and independently shaped new states of mind. "*Not placing entire trust in the everyday life reality and igniting own reflectiveness, we prepare for changes and learn to consider it not as a fixed framework (...) but as a temporary solution, since – as Bauman claims – the learnt skills and remembered reactions that help us well in stable, freed from surprises surrounding, may lead us to a disaster, when the occurring events shall suddenly slip from the routine and start to sneer at precedence-justified expectation*".²³

While educational advantages of coaching is something more than obvious, the issue of the nature of education that undoubtedly takes place within coaching is questionable. It may be stated that education in this case has a relation character, i.e. is grounded in the relation and takes its course in the coach-client relation. "*It is a foundation for the client's transformation, changes of old habits, readiness to undertake challenges, and acquisition of new competences based on client's assets and potential. The coach-client relation is a kind of synergy, where client contributes motivation, goals and the need for change, whereas the coach brings in the knowledge on growth and nature of changes, engagement, and skills. (...) Establishing the coach-client relation (...) may be generally referred to as creating safe, creative sphere for growth*"²⁴, with partnership and trust as basis for such relation. In the Popovic and Boniwell model of "personal counseling" such relation is defined as "being with the client"²⁵ accompanied by a sort of complete, mutual acceptance of each other. The demand for acceptance of the

²² Delso, Ch. (2003): *Esej o człowieku późnej nowoczesności*. Kraków, Wyd. Znak, p. 35.

²³ Niżyńska, A. (2008): *Między nauczaniem a uczeniem się*. Wrocław, Wyd. DSW, pp. 42–43.

²⁴ Sidor-Rządowska, M.: op. cit. p. 97.

²⁵ Smółka, P.: (ed.) (2009): *Coaching. Inspiracje z perspektywy nauki, praktyki i klientów*. Gliwice, p. 31.

Other is close to the philosophy of the encounter, where it is stressed that “*the place of a human in the sphere of communing, does not come down to sheer existence of point next to another point, but it implies a field of given possibilities and impossibilities directly corresponding with own freedom and the freedom of the Other*”.²⁶ The issue of freedom is emerging again in such perception, as in the relation with another person it seems to constitute one of the essential definition categories in the recalled philosophical perspective. Experiencing the other person in such a “sphere of communing” confronts us with the inevitable question who is the other human – is he/she only a sheer existence constituted by acts of consciousness, or those he/she reach beyond awareness whilst existing with own existence, constituting another Me.²⁷

There are two issues implied in such perspective. The first one is the question whether the existence is only an object of perception of generally intentional cognitive acts within the framework of cognitive possibilities and limitations, or may be the other person, remaining beyond perception, falling outside the cognition, remains solely relatively fixed, and beyond any doubt – independent and separate existence?

Exploration of the latter question gave rise to the philosophy of dialogue, with M. Buber as one of the initiators. He analyzed the relation Me-You, paying attention to the fact that only in such relation “I become Me in contact with You”²⁸, in other words – a human becomes Me while encountering You, as well as he/she it becomes familiar with its humanity only upon encounter with another person. We can fully perceive own selves only in the eyes of the other, with the crucial process of discovering Me while contacting You, i.e. getting to know myself while meeting the Other.

Nevertheless, most of the works on coaching perceive this relation one-sided, as the accent is frequently put on the process of cognition on the coach's side, while the situation of encounter may become an excellent, unrepeatable opportunity for the coach to get to know one self. In such meaning, the cognitive relation in coaching may be of dual character, resulting from the two-direction flow of cognitive process: I get to know the Other, concurrently recognizing Myself in the Other. The symmetry of Me-You relation is a recommendation of many dialogue philosophers and it may be interpreted as a guideline “let the Other get to know to you to such degree as you get to know, or – let the Other get as much from meeting as you do, allowing the Other recognize him/herself in You”. Accepting such

²⁶ Tischner, J. (1977): *Przestrzeń obcowania z drugim. Analecta Cracoviensia*, nr 9, s. 77.

²⁷ Kłoczowski, J. (2005): *Filozofia dialogu*. Poznań, p. 35.

²⁸ Buber, M. (1992): *Ja i Ty. Wybór pism filozoficznych*. Warszawa, p. 45.

philosophical perspective evokes another issues, such as how to provide symmetric relation, and what should be taken care of so as to both sides of the relation could be satisfied? Therefore, referring to another category of the philosophy of dialogue, a coach undertakes aware responsibility for his/her personal relation with the client.

Reliable researches on coaching efficiency are scarce, whereas those that can be found in the literature are focused on business coaching, indicating the following factors to be taken into account while measurement: increase of company's income, general growth of profitability, improvement of relations with company clients, improvement of working time management, increase of the employees' readiness to undertake new challenges, higher work satisfaction, improved balance between personal and professional life, rise in number of business innovations, improved internal communication, greater efficiency of staff meetings and committees, meeting deadlines improvement, growth in accuracy of business decisions, rise in the number and pace of acquiring new skills by the employees, higher efficiency of team work results, better quality of communication and working relationships.²⁹

In most of the cases, the efficiency of coaching is perceived in the context of the categories of profits resulting from such process. "Profits in the sphere of motivation are commonly recalled, expressed in the working path of the coaching beginner, tighter bonds with the company activities and organization itself, higher work satisfaction and higher income. As for acquisition of knowledge and skills, the growth in abilities and competences, quicker learning, more efficient decision taking, as well as better comprehension of economic and organizational issues are mentioned".³⁰ And as Malewski emphasized the "ability to change" with regards to the criteria of critical didactics analysis, in case of coaching there is a real, noticeable change assumed, which direction and intensity, as well as course, are defined by the client him/herself. Regardless of how and where such change will be placed, whether in the professional or private area of client's life, Piotr Żylicz is undoubtedly right claiming, that "coaching requires profound research of efficiency, both at the level of systematic evaluations carried out by the researchers, as well as in the regular, line work of coaches. There are far too many magical beliefs in the assessment of coaching for its participants that consider it purely as an amazing or moving experience".³¹

²⁹ Sidor-Rządkowska, M.: op. cit., pp. 151–153.

³⁰ Law, H. – Ireland, S. – Hussain, Z.: op. cit., p. 252.

³¹ Sidor-Rządkowska, M.: op. cit. p. 156.

The researchers-to-be, focusing on this phenomena, should bear in mind, that on one hand next to hard-data and entirely financial criteria, they might be soft criteria introduced, and on the other – apart from applying quantitative research, the usefulness of qualitative research with its biographical approach might be also taken into account, not only because it is becoming more and more popular in educational research, but due to the fact the complexity of coaching process is significantly spread in the time context. Hence, taking into consideration that coaching introduces essential changes to human's life, it might be interesting to explore not only how this change influences the further biography, but also how it changes the client's perception of own biography before the change evoked by coaching, and what he/she has learnt about own self experiencing the change, whether it had any influence whatsoever on his/her identity.

Summing up, a comparison of previously mentioned assumptions of critical didactics and assumptions of coaching emerging from the carried out analysis may be presented, as shown in the table below.

Table 2. Comparison of the critical didactics and coaching assumptions.

Sphere	Key assumptions	
	Critical didactics	Concept of coaching
Human ontology	Free individual	Free individuals with potential and ability to reflect
Key value	Freedom	Freedom, trust, open-mindedness
Teacher's role	Wakening the awareness	Wakening the awareness
Nature of education	Critical reflection	Personal relation
Efficiency criteria	Ability to change life	Real change of life

Source: own idea

On the basis of the above comparison we may conclude that the (holistic) concept of coaching in its fundamental assumptions corresponds with the idea of critical didactics. It must be also emphasized that the projected change in client's life is initiated only upon the session, whereas in fact it takes place in the periods between sessions, when the client is assigned with the tasks to practice and improve in own everyday reality, working continuously on own resources, so that he/she could reach relatively permanent change. Therefore, it may

be implied that coaching considered as an integrity of a process (sessions + own client's work) is placed at the meeting point of an informal and a formal education, developing the borderland area, at the same time working out for itself a new educational sphere in adult education.