# INTRODUCTION

Contemporary pedagogy departs from the tradition dominant in the twentieth century, in which the focus was primarily on the organization of school life, the teaching process (whereas the learning process to a much lesser extent), the activities and competences of a teacher and students' school-related responsibilities. In a civilization called the society of knowledge, in which it is information and then knowledge that become key assets in the economic development, the aforementioned problems are still significant. Today, however, pedagogy is not exclusively limited to school problems, but covers the whole period of human existence – from the youngest years to the senior age. It is not limited to the school situation only, either. Instead, on one hand, it takes into account the centuries-old tradition focusing on the upbringing of a person (the education process being a part of it), as well as extends its reach outside school (e.g. issues related to the proper use of leisure time, the problem of helping adults deal with their everyday, also non-educational, dilemmas). In this volume, the authors' attention focuses on the above-mentioned issues. As in the previous editions, it contains both theoretical analyses concerning the directions of development of contemporary pedagogy, as well as empirical research, which the authors draw particular conclusions from, concerning both the current state of affairs (as it is) and the future (as it should be).

Pedagogy, as any other scientific discipline, is not born in a vacuum. Pedagogical research is limited by the imposed research framework (in this sense pedagogy constitutes a practical science), and – similarly to the humanities – refers to the theoretical achievements, classics deeply rooted in the deliberations. Finally, pedagogy refers to the socio-cultural conditions that define the framework for the existence of people constituting the subject of its analysis, therefore pedagogy is a social science. In their research, the authors refer to the achievements of pedagogy, as well as other disciplines of the human and social sciences, but also they take advantage of methods used in pedagogical research. Their theoretical analyses are based on key references, which are not only thoroughly scrutinized, but are used to derive original, often innovative conclusions, too. As far as empirical analyses are concerned, in addition to the aforementioned key findings concerning the subject of the topics discussed, the authors use pedagogical methods and techniques well-established in the methodology of pedagogical research.

Education cannot ignore the socio-cultural conditions in which it takes place. In this sense, it is not universal, but dominated by the "spirit of the time." For people living in every historical period, what proved to be the most important was the current conditions, whereas history – the past, fulfills the condition of the bygone era, which might inspire and teach, but will always have a secondary role in relation to the present. In contemporary times, too, we are dealing with the specificity which

sets trends today, but was insignificant in the past. What has come to the fore here is postmodernism, with its positive and negative features. Well-used individualism, not limited to the perception of freedom or responsibility in a negative way ("I am free from… others," "I am limited only by law or other coercive measures"), but developed in a positive way, as an opportunity to implement many models of living inaccessible to people in previous centuries, is one of the benefits of our times. Its creative use for the good of man is one of the greatest challenges that contemporary educators face. The state of contemporary education is influenced by other issues, widely elaborated on by the authors of papers collected in this issue, such as multiculturalism, the post-modern discourse and women's activity (influenced by the women of the past). Balancing the rights and obligations of various entities and social groups, characterized by various life goals and aspirations, seems to be a particularly important issue, which results in both behavioral and educational problems (e.g. searching for the answer to the question of which elements of the so-called "hidden curriculum" are the models of our culture, and which are only a relic from the past). An equally important issue, typical of contemporary considerations, is the influence of the "Internet society" on the existence of a modern human, since it has become a part of our everyday life. At the moment, as some of the problems related to it are already gone (e.g. whether virtual reality will replace the real one), new ones emerge, among which those regarding the positive and negative aspects of virtuality and its impact on human education are especially important for pedagogy. Therefore, does the Internet society bring more positive, educational opportunities that exist, but are still not used in the practical activities of the school, as well as the family, or do its negative aspects prevail, such as the decay of social ties, uncontrolled flow of information (not always reliable) and widespread decline of the "culture of thinking," which manifests itself in the domination of stupidity, the inability to use the language correctly both in speech and in writing, or the lack of the ability to formulate convincing arguments and conclusions resulting from them?

Pedagogical thought has always been concerned with the problem applying to the education of a human being. How to use conscious influences for the benefit of a young person in order to lead to his or her full development, the essence of which will be achieving their maturity (in the mental sense, rather than registal), so that education can be replaced by self-reliance (replacing external influences by the internal ones)? What the authors suggest is not only to educate so the negative behaviors are corrected, but to perceive education as dominant in contemporary pedagogical thought, i.e. as leading the pupil to independence by noticing his or her autonomy from an early age, highlighting the importance of their subjectivity and individualism. To achieve these objectives, the authors emphasize that it is important not to limit oneself only to didactic influences, and in education – to influencing a young person's psyche. The principle of good education is anthropology, based on the perception of a human as a holistic being, where all the aspects of development are equally significant. Hence, education should not be limited to the interactions

in the mental sphere only. It also refers to the development of spirituality, through which a young person discovers the most important aspects of their existence, i.e. the meaning of life. For this to happen, it is important to pay attention to the axiosphere, i.e. to those values that are really important for the pupil, and not only those that the society considers to be important, hence it is believed that effective education ends with the child recognizing them. As far as education and upbringing are concerned, what makes the pupil come alive proves to be really significant, i.e. presenting him or her with such a world of values that is attractive to them, showing them role models who will become their heroes and authorities, whose lives will be found important and worth following. Finally, modern education and modern civilization alike, are both dominated by the concept of success. Hence, this issue contains answers to the questions of what success in modern understanding is and how to raise children from an early age so that the success they achieve is internal, that is, consistent with what a person wants to really achieve in life, and not exclusively leading to an unhappy life, yet perceived positively by the society (material success, appropriate standard of living, career, etc.).

Despite the problems of contemporary pedagogy outlined above, covering the socio-cultural environment and affecting problems related to the upbringing of a human, the problems connected with the sphere of teaching have not disappeared from the considerations concerning education. Educators still wonder how to make the teaching-learning environment more attractive, i.e. how to facilitate the learning process. What to do to make it more pleasant, but also more effective. What measures to take to enable a young person to function in an environment of information overload. What to do to make them choose what is really important for them from the data available. And finally, how to understand the creativity of a modern human and prepare him or her to process information into knowledge, serving both the student and the whole society. It is, after all, searching an answer to the question of how to motivate students effectively, so that they want to exceed the apparent overload, that is currently clearly visible, and realize their full potential.

In the outlined conditions, the role of the teacher, combining the function of an educator and a tutor, is of particular importance. A teacher who, in unfriendly times, can become a person who will inspire the young generation and will turn into an authority for young people. In this dimension, the teacher seeks space for fulfilling their traditional role in the contemporary conditions. At the same time, the authors show the hardships of the profession – overloading with duties, the problem of stress and burnout, and indicate effective ways to overcome the negative sides of the job. It is a simultaneous ability to see the positive sides of the profession of one's choice, despite the masses of work, and to respect (contrary to the social opinions) the work. It is every teacher's work on the prestige of the whole teacher community, in which it is particularly important to build up one's self-esteem and realize one's strengths, which constitute the foundations of one's career and are the source of satisfaction from the professional activities performed.

Contemporary influences on an individual do not end – as it was the case in the past eras – with the pupil leaving school. Today, what we are dealing with is the sphere of work and education intermingle each other until the end of one's professional activity and continuing education at the retirement age. Hence, the educational needs of adults have gained an important place in the field of contemporary pedagogy. Continuing education at the time of having a whole range of professional experiences, as well as the educational development of the elderly create new challenges for educators. Each of the adult groups of students has their own individual educational needs, which they are not only well aware of, but also able to clearly define and articulate, expecting the educators to fulfill them. The issues are also related to the upbringing and development of an adult human being. As of today, many problems concerning creating comprehensive educational provision that would satisfy adult learners remain unsolved.

The authors of the papers collected in the semi-annual journal attempt to answer a number of questions raised in the introduction. Their analyses constitute a contribution to the contemporary pedagogical thought – often an unfinished contribution, stimulating further reflection and deepening particular threads. At the same time, it is an important contribution, as it focuses the readers' attention on the problems significant to contemporary considerations in pedagogy, encouraging them to raise their own questions about the issues discussed, enter into a discussion with the authors, as well as reach their own, many a time undoubtedly innovative conclusions.

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