



ISSN 2543-506X

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12775/CSNME.2017.010>

Received: December 3, 2017 / Accepted: a) April 29, 2017; b) May 11, 2018

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Selected aspects of ICT applications in education. Inspirations by the scientific achievements of the Norwegian theoretician and researcher – Harald Nilsen

Abstract. The article is devoted to the presentation and analysis of selected items from the list of achievements of Norwegian specialist in literature Harald Nilsen. The authors search for the meaning and sense of Nilsen's postulates and educational guidelines. They also emphasize that the proposals collected should be used in modern didactics.

Key words: scientific achievements, education, ICT, on-line education.

Introduction

We have devoted these considerations to the scientific achievements of Harald Nilsen, a Norwegian didactic undertaking educational, cultural, social and digital technologies problems. He is one of the few theoreticians seeking inspiration in Norwegian and Polish education, culture and tradition. He undertook a wide range of topics, for example the importance of the media in the process of education, program changes in Norwegian

education, the problem of evaluating the didactic process, and discussed sociological issues as well. The indicated theoretical threads have been referred to both the theory and educational practice, personal experiences and the work of the authors of the text.

It is emphasized that Nilsen's conclusions and postulates for educational practice can and should be used in the area of Polish scientific and research thought, actions and implementations. Attempting to read selected texts by Harald Nilsen, we intend to bring closer and popularize his thoughts in the whole world as well as in Poland. It is impossible to present the totality of his work and achievements in such a short study. However, it should be noted that he enriched the pedagogical considerations presented during Toruń conferences, scientific seminars, project meetings organized by the Department of Didactics and Media in Education of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, and as a co-author he made a significant contribution to publications issued in Poland.

Educational problems in the scientific creativity of Harald Nilsen

A fragment of Harald Nilsen's life and experiences as a teacher and educator at school can be learned through the development of his authorship with an interesting title "On the eighth day of the journey ... – act, experience and learn", seemingly referring to a biblical novel explaining nature and way of creating the universe. In fact, this text is somewhat reminiscent of a short story or maybe even a diary with carefully written hints and notes about the work of the teacher and his students. These discussed rules of action can be named as the author says – the "compass needle of the teacher". The journey in which the author takes the reader is divided into days of the week, during which he discovers another rule of dealing with students. He identifies the school as a boat sailing through good and bad weather, where the teacher is the captain and the crew are his students. The first day of the journey is an extremely important stage of preparation for the first meeting with new classes, which can condition the emerging relationship and influence their cooperation. Festive attire and being on time seems to be extremely important in Nilsen's opinion. As part of the first meeting, it is worth setting certain rules of work. The

author emphasizes the importance of honesty, mutual trust and integrity towards himself and others. The foundation and at the same time the bond for these virtues should be a well-thought-out conversation, that gives the students a sense of peace and security. He talks about the need for other people's closeness. The words of the Polish pedagogue Janusz Miąso (2010, p. 204) fit in with these reflections by emphasizing the fact that the modern man who interacts everyday with modern technologies is looking for understanding and dialogue with another person. In fact, it can be noticed that interpersonal relations disappear, as it turns out not only in a Norwegian school, but in a Polish school as well, where everything focuses on the automation of learning and testing, thus losing what is most important for a student – shaping his knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. The first principle that Nilsen derives is courtesy towards students and mutual acceptance based on personal and school culture. Another day brings new educational challenges. And so, in the process of education, situations occur that make it possible for the teacher to communicate wordlessly with the students and build mutual trust, which the author considers to be the key principle of didactic work. He arranged his sudden departures from the classes, signaling to the students that he believed them and wanted to rely on them. As he claimed, this is important, because the students are trying to reciprocate and deserve trust. The teacher creates and cares for a friendly atmosphere based on entrusting, which later facilitates mutual understanding and maintaining positive relationships. Do not forget that students are good observers and it is easy to guess that the words spoken by the teacher are contradictory to their non-verbal message. The author points out that the teacher should require proper behavior not only from students, but above all, be an example for them. In the first place it is worth to be noticed by the students. And here we find out that Harald Nilsen was an active athlete and encouraged his students to develop sports passions. Being of the teacher and an opportunity to get to know him in various situations, including out-of-school ones, turns out to be valuable. Such occasions for informal contacts bring people closer together. It is also important to recognize students' qualities, motivate them to learn and be caring and sensitive to all signals issued by the class. Nilsen admits that during his work with students he learned that they are looking for understanding, attention, listening, they need care, support and interest.

The social competences of the teacher and the ability to communicate and talk with the group proves to be extremely important. It is worth quoting the words cited by the author of the students saying that “in their opinion, the warm heart is much more important than a cold (strict) mind” (Nilsen, 2006, p. 152). Sunday is not always a day of rest for the teacher. Often, he must check the works of students, learn from gained experience, and think about strategies to work with them. The author attempts to characterize the teacher of the future through the prism of his own person and personal didactic experience. He concludes his reflections, once again stressing the importance of met competency that should be possessed by every teacher, who is a strategist giving the sense of student knowledge to his/her understanding and activities related to the design of their activity.

In the next text titled “ICT as a tool in distance learning in the light of ecological perspective” H. Nilsen (2006) considers the benefits and drawbacks of using modern information and communication technologies in learning Norwegian language based on research and acquired teaching experience. The main benefits include: cost savings and easy reconciliation of duties and family life, and losses: inability to build knowledge in a common social climate, a problem with clarity and understanding of communications and limited possibilities of oral communication. Although increasingly better information and communication technologies enable these shortcomings to be remedied, they still exist. An own study about which Nilsen mentions among Norwegian students confirms that in learning they choose printed materials and textbooks. Respondents admit that it is harder to find the information you need on the Internet, which is much more time-consuming and often unsatisfactory. The author warns against uncritical use of technological solutions and the need to seek a balance between benefits and their shortcomings. In Polish literature, you can also find a number of similar analyzes describing the positive and negative aspects of on-line education, which are key to the development and dissemination of this form of education (for example: Siemieniecki, Lewandowski W., 2001; Juszczak, 2002; Osmańska-Furmanek, 1999; Morbitzer 2002, Dylak, 2002, Wenta 2003, Kwiatkowska 2011; 2008, Majewska 2015). Nilsen states that this form of education allows the development of writing skills but impairs verbal skills. He also postulates the need for transparency and communication in the transfer of

information between the lecturer and students and the need for further exploration of this issue.

The teacher's character plays a significant role in Nilsen's work. The article "Pedagogy in the Norwegian system of teacher education" (2013) the author starts with the quote "The profession of teacher is one of the most important professions in our society. The Minister of Education and Research, Kristin Halvorsen, said that children and young adults make up 20% of the population and 100% of the future, and therefore there is no more important profession than the teacher"¹, which proves respect and high evaluation of this social group. At the same time, he emphasizes the importance of pedagogy as a science that combines theoretical and objective knowledge with practice. In the further part of the work, the author introduces the principles of the teacher education program, refers to teaching plans, guidelines, ordinances as well as pedagogical practices in the Norwegian system.

Analyzing the elements of Nilsen's work related to sociological aspects, it is worth recalling one of the selected works of *The Face of Trust? What we talk about, when we talk about trust? A background*, which is a part of a series of publications devoted to the issue of trust². The source of the undertaken considerations, as the author emphasizes, were the chronicles of Norwegian newspapers³. In the first paragraphs of the text, Nilsen also mentions the discussion he had with Bronisław Siemieniecki⁴ about the source of trust and distrust, which is included in the following words:

in order to survive, the human being depended on solidarity and mutual trust. When the Homo sapiens species became more numerous, food for every person was lacking and a competition for survival was

¹ Svein Erik Forfang, rector of Nesna University College.

² The second one will be presented in fall 2013, based on Harald Grimen's book (What is Trust, 2009). The third article will be published in spring 2014 – Nilsen H., "Trust In Schools In Kaliningrad? Background – Observation – Interpretation" [in:] "Media and Trust. Theoretical, Research and Practical Contexts" M. Czerepaniak-Walczak, E. Perzycka (red.), Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, Szczecin 2014, p. 212–134.

³ The three chronicles are from the major national newspaper *Aftenposten*. The newspaper is published in Oslo, has a considerable circulation, and is the most reputable and politically independent newspaper in Norway.

⁴ Prof. zw. dr hab. Bronisław Siemieniecki, Head of the Chair of Didactics and Media in Education, Faculty of Education, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń.

born; this caused distrust between individuals and between groups. In other words, first, there was solidarity and trust, and then there was competition and distrust (Nilsen, 2013a, 35).

To conclude this idea, the author positively perceives the nature of a man who is capable of empathy and mutual understanding, but is also aware of his weakness resulting from unfavorable life situations.

At the same time, Professor Nilsen refers to the biblical story of Adam and Eve – as an example of lost trust. He emphasizes that according to people's opinions, trust usually involves interpersonal relationships, between an individual and a group, between groups and between individuals and groups on the one hand, and institutions and social systems on the other. The main purpose of his deliberations is to analyze the term – trust. The article encourages the reader to think about the following issues: do you trust this feeling, knowledge, experience or maybe belief? Can confidence be measured, assessed, whether it is static or dynamic? Thus, the author refers to the well-known, but very complicated and complex feelings.

Speaking about ethical issues raised in the Professor's work, it is worth mentioning the book "Language of New Communication" (2010), which was created in collaboration with Dorota Siemieniecka, Bronisław Siemieniecki and Erik Bratland. The chapter elaborated by Nilsen is devoted to the relationship between language and power. The author, while referring to a specific conflict which he witnesses, remarks that "most of the contemporary wars are war on words, and the media make us lovers of conflict" (2010, p. 44). It is very sad to note that the most popular among people are the decisions and conflicting content described in the media, defined by the author as "salable goods". Wars that take the form of dialogues become in the work a contribution to deeper deliberations about the language, its origin, the ability to use it, the relationship between language and power, the morality of the media creating the written message, as well as verbal.

Conclusion

Harald Nilsen is a theoretician who thanks to his open mind and heart undertook numerous international educational projects, marking his reflections and experience of educational practice in the development

of Polish pedagogical thought. Valuable reflections and insights make Nilsen's work play a significant role in the Norwegian and Polish educational literature, thanks to which they will never be forgotten. Getting to know his scientific output can help teachers struggling with didactic and educational problems and in their appropriate orientation to take appropriate actions in the field of education.

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