

Eszterházy Károly University
Doctoral School of Education Service
Head of the Doctoral School: Dr. Béla Pukánszky DSc.

Final thesis report of doctoral (Ph.D) dissertation

Gabriella Kiss

**Response trials of the 20th century to the challenges in the area of pedagogy
of underprivileged adults: Pedagogy of Paulo Freire and Joseph Wresinski**

Supervisor:
Dr. János Ugrai
Associate professor

Eger

2018

Final thesis report

I. Subject and relevancy of the dissertation

The subject of the dissertation has come from one of today's most pressing pedagogical challenges all around the world to ensure accessibility for underprivileged people falling behind and failing to keep up with the ever-accelerating pace of social changes to the knowledge which would enable them to rejoin society and promote their successful participation in society processes. As a response to this challenge, several initiatives has been launched recently. Nevertheless, the difficulties persist, urging us to seek solutions at a more pressing pace.

Although studying pedagogical conceptions of Freire and Wresinski together may seem surprising at first sight, both of them are intellectual giants from the 20th century who attached great importance to the social emancipation of the underprivileged adults in their respective surroundings in France and Brazil and for whom finding a solution became a personal commitment which stems from inner faith. Starting from their private practices, they both searched passionately for new ways which lead them to their unique pedagogical concepts.

This specific section of responses given in the 20th century to pedagogical challenges of underprivileged adults is dealt in my dissertation. Freire's name and pedagogical conception, though not unknown in Hungary, hasn't got attention enough to publish even one of his works in its entirety in Hungarian until this dissertation. As far as I know, nobody has published anything related to the work done by Joseph Wresinski. Though, they both left life-works more than noteworthy and their activities in the area of the pedagogy of underprivileged adults, I believe, constitute deathless value.

II. Purpose

The pedagogy of Joseph Wresinski and Paulo Freire were both created to provide underprivileged adults, hindered from getting knowledge along regular channels because of their deprived situation, with knowledge necessary to participate in the social and economic processes as full partners. By their pedagogical practice and the system behind practice, they have formulated issues and show the way implying universality. It is this what was aimed to prove in this dissertation. For this, I was aimed primarily at revealing and comparing the characteristics of the pedagogical activities under examination and their theoretical and conceptional background. Additionally, I was aimed also at setting forth values that can help,

with creative inculturation of these values, in making pedagogical activity more successful among this particular population in other context as well, even in Hungary. I hope that, providing international associations for relevant conceptions and possibilities, I contribute my dissertation to broaden the professional discourse of the topic in Hungary.

III. Hypotheses

Kiindulásképpen először is feltételeztem, hogy szorosan összefügg egymással a katolikus egyház teológiájának a 20. század derekán formálódó új szegénység-fogalma, az ennek megfogalmazásához kontextust szolgáltató felszabadítási mozgalmak és a szegények között végzett speciális pedagógiai tevékenység. Ugyancsak feltételeztem, hogy a leszakadó, a társadalmi-gazdasági életből teljesen kiszoruló rétegek számára a tudáson keresztül vezethet az út a társadalomba való be- vagy visszailleszkedésbe. Végül azt a feltételezést is megfogalmaztam, hogy a dolgozatban vizsgált, e korszakban születő, nem hagyományos keresztény, de magukat a kereszténység korszerű értelmezéséhez kötő, a legszegényebb rétegeket felszabadítani kívánó pedagógiák olyan elméleti és szemléleti implikációkat hordoznak, melyek eséllyel alkalmazhatók bármely hátrányos helyzetű populációban.

It was presumed that there is a close relationship between the new conception of poverty in the theology of the Catholic Church, taking shape in the middle of the 20th century, the liberation movements providing context for conceiving the latter conception and the special pedagogical activity carried out among the poor. It was presumed also that the path for underprivileged people falling behind and being excluded from the social and economic life, leading to joining or rejoining the society, can go through knowledge. At last, it was also presumed that the pedagogies studied in this paper, born in this period, not traditionally Christian but associated with the modern interpretation of the Christianity, aiming at the liberation of the people living in the most extreme poverty, bear theoretical implications and intendments that can be applied in any underprivileged population with high chances to succeed.

IV. Keywords

underprivileged, extreme poverty, Fourth World;
education, folk high school, people's university;
theological anthropology, new political theology, liberation theology;
knowledge as an instrument of the social emancipation;

method using literacy project, Fourth World People's University;

Paulo Freire

Joseph Wresinski

V. Methodology

interface -> interdisciplinary approach, including the areas of philology, based on the social teaching of the Church; source analysis, special literature, theological, cultural anthropological and comparative pedagogy
concerned objectivity

VI. Dissertation Structure

As the subject of the research is to study the educational principles and practices (rightly speaking, in this particular case, practices and principles) elaborated for a certain group of undeprivileged, initially the two key concepts used in the paper were made clear. Difficulties of defining and characterizing the undeprivileged were described, later in the Chapter 1, the history of folk high school movement in Europe and in Hungary, playing significant role in forming and developing the pedagogy of marginalized adults, was shown; Sándor Karácsony and free self-education was specially mentioned as having special importance in Hungarian context. The conclusion of the analysis is that, although these three practices, at least partly, were formed as consequences of original development processes and there are characteristic differences between them, the common features are more significant from the point of the view of the subject of the paper. On the one hand, all of them are autodynamic civil initiatives built from underneath, autonomic and based on pluralism. On the other hand, although all of them was aimed at promoting the social emancipation of undeprivileged adults, in fact, only the highest selected layer of this group (selected on the basis of being considered suitable and self-conscious) was involved and endeavored to be returned within the framework of the existing society. None of them responded the challenge of the social emancipation of the poorest people, urging already that time.

Freire's pedagogy of liberation is introduced in the second chapter. For this, socio-historical context of its origination was outlined first, i.e. the Brazilian society of the relevant period of 20th century and the theology of freedom having great impact on Freire's conception were described. An overview of Freire's life is given with highlights on elements playing significant

role in forming his anthropology as well as in his pedagogy of liberation, deriving from his anthropology. Some key concepts were defined, such as dialectics of the oppressors and the oppressed; pedagogy leading to consciousness or unconsciousness, transforming the object into subject; the dialogical relation, building knowledge, nourished necessarily by socio-cultural experiences of the penniless. The role of these experiences in obtaining usable, mobilizable knowledge and organizing social interactions is investigated. Answers are sought to the questions of what the acquisition of literacy skills meant for Freire; why he considers it as revolutionary as leading to the autonomy of the personality and as radically changing world perception and comprehension of the population concerned; why the dialogues play such an important role in all this. While seeking answers, Freire's two most important synthetic works *Education, the practice of freedom* (1967) and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968) were taken as a basis.

The following issues are dealt in the third chapter: what questions, related to underprivileged adults, constituting an urging problem also in France were raised by Wresinski, what answers had he tried to give within ATD Fourth World movement and particularly within *Université populaire Quart Monde* (Fourth World People's University). For this, the glorious thirty years of the history of France in the 20th century is overviewed, the biography of Wresinski is given. I feel the life of Wresinski had crucial effect on the formation of his life-work. Wresinski's anthropology is detailed; on the one hand, its core thesis saying that God's image manifests itself most markedly in the most underprivileged people, living in the most extreme poverty; on the other hand, the consequence of the core thesis that redefining human development and social commitment is imperative. Before the analysis of the conception of the Fourth World People's University, the history of the institution of the People's University in France is overviewed, emphasizing its features. Going on to the Fourth World People's University, first issue is investigated why Wresinski attributes so much importance to culture and access to knowledge in liberating the Fourth World, establishing the *raison d'être* and importance of the *université populaire* as well. Then the operation and history of this specific institution system is briefly described, underlining how the system endeavors to become the scene of social emancipation. The analysis revealed what the consequences resulting from acknowledging the life experience of the Fourth World as unconditional autonomous knowledge are, and that the system provides a knowledge turning the observed reality to valuable understood experience and how a new kind of knowledge is born from the combination of these various interactions.

Keystones of pedagogical conceptions of Paulo Freire and Joseph Wresinski are compared in the fourth chapter according to four points of view. It is emphasized once again what the concept of *people living in the most extreme poverty* to be liberated means for them, which particular way they want to carry out the liberation, what co-operation, *commitment* of whom they feel necessary for this social emancipation and at last, what the social teaching of the Christianity means in their reception.

VII. Findings

1. Freire's underprivileged and Wresinski's ATD Forth World

For Freire, "the poor" means the people most exposed in the Brazilian society: about 27 million illiterate adults. He most often calls them "oppressed", a term borrowed from Marxism, reflecting that, according to Freire, their situation is determined basically by their relation to the oppressors, i.e. primarily by the fact that they are deprived of the economic goods, the political power and the sources of knowledge as well. Freire does not consider them as people excluded from the society, though. It is more characteristic for them, according to Freire, that, despite their abject situation, they constitute an integral part of the society, since, keeping them in subjection, on the one hand, is a key factor in sustaining a society based on social injustice and inequity; on the other hand, legitimizes the basically autotelic political measures in the area of public welfare. As a consequence of lacking access to knowledge, the oppressed have a kind of mythical conscience, preventing them from being *subjects, autonomic personalities* of accomplishing their destiny. Though, Freire considers this a violation of the other person's autonomy. Violation can be eradicated, according to Freire, by implementing pedagogy of liberation.

For Wresinski, the basic relation is the relation between God and man. Man, created in God's image, is entitled to an infinite and unalienable dignity, and that this dignity manifests itself markedly in the most underprivileged people, living in the most extreme poverty. (WRESINSKI, 1992, 2007) This is specific cornerstone of Freire's Christian anthropology. Opposed to the stigmatizing social judgement which views them as lamentable *objects* of social backing-up, he looks at them as subjects that are able to make their own decisions and take responsibility for those decisions. Emphasizing that they are subjects, Freire created a new designation for them: Fourth World. Since then, this denomination has meant the groups of people living worldwide in the most extreme poverty. So Wresinski goes beyond Freire. Beside

deprivations piling up until lacking identity, Wresinski considers Fourth World “people”, a community with common destiny, hold together not simply by general isolation caused by the underprivileged but by life situations inherited from the past and common with a certain group and the responses to these life situations. These responses are out of accordance with those of the majority of the society but coherent and based on practical knowledge.

2. Emancipatory pedagogy based on practice

Pedagogical presumptions derived from the definition of the people living in the most extreme poverty follow. Both look at the path leading to social emancipation through a *specific pedagogical approach*, posing their questions and forming their practice from the standpoint of the oppressed and excluded, using their perspective. They basically agree that first of all the liberation pedagogy must bear in mind “*specific ideology of the poor*”. (FREIRE, 1980:80) It is only the existing, concrete existential situation that can serve as starting-point for working out any project. And solution in its turn must be delivered not merely on highbrow level but on the level of practice and action. Their common turn of mind related to the essence of the poverty led to their common standpoint that the liberation of the poor can only proceed from the poor themselves, from the *subjects already conscious, able to act*. For Freire, this means that the narrative pedagogy (which he also calls "banking" concept of education) has to be replaced by the dialogic pedagogy (or pedagogy of becoming self-conscious). To strengthen the common identity, important for both of them, *the history and culture implantable into the common property of the mankind* has also to be created for the underprivileged who always have been losers both in terms of history and culture. In the cultural circles of the Freire’s method, participants take the topics from the everyday experience of the apprentices, problematized situations are jointly discussed based on it. ATD Forth World Movement, founded by Wresinski, in its turn, assisted to develop *self-consciousness*, a certain new approach to I and the world, considered by Freire indispensable, by providing room for this *people* to speak out, express themselves and opportunity to obtain new social relations. The method of *dialogues*, considered as crucial element of the emancipatory pedagogy by both of them, appears in Freire’s concrete program of wiping out illiteracy. In Wresinski’s conception, originating from the practice, the significance of multifacial dialogues is outlined most markedly in his institution of Fourth World People's University). The People's University would like to become the scene of social emancipation that, on the one hand, it recognizes the practical knowledge of the community of people, living in the most extreme poverty, on the other hand, it provides a

platform to share knowledge in a democratic setting. At the same time, at regular meetings of the People's University, people not only express their opinions concerning poverty but, more importantly, all these impressions are examined through the prism of extreme poverty.

For both Freire's liberation pedagogy and Fourth World People's University, it is important that the topics generating conversation, which are chosen after careful consideration of the given situation, participants and circumstances, are not presented as ready answers but as *problems to be solved*. Both Wresinski and Freire think of the conceptions on adult education aiming at their education, forced on the adults from above but neglecting them as futile and inefficient. In their opinion, pedagogical influence occurs through the *interaction* of the two parties in their responsive and harmonized working community rather than through direct impacts which they consider as *invasion*, a violation of the other person's autonomy. This necessitates understanding, which demands a common system of symbols, a *common language*.

3. Commitments

Although partnership in Freire's and especially Wresinski's dialogic concept is featured by the prevailing role of the underprivileged adult student, the relation between parties is obviously not independent of the party formerly playing central role: the teacher. The substantive property of the teacher (in a broader sense, the majority society) is the *unavoidable responsibility*, which means that the teacher has to be committed to the underprivileged student and to become a catalyst, an efficient assistant in the teaching process and in the social emancipation of the student.

For Freire, understanding the Brazilian society of his time basically as a contradiction of the oppressors and the oppressed, this person is the "*leader*" introduced as third component, the key character of the teacher becoming a revolutionary leader. During the adult literacy project, he plays a role of initiator in defining key aspects of the topic selected jointly and in gripping relationships relevant from the point of view of facilitating abstraction. Nevertheless, he regards the poor as capable of forming a valid opinion and making authentic decisions. Mutual trust is formed and the traditionally opponent relation of teacher and student is resolved in this trust. The practice generated between the two *subjects*, based on the dynamics of acting and thinking, leads to surpassing the society built on the contradiction of the oppressor and the oppressed, to the real liberation, which is the sole solution for Freire.

Wresinski also touched on the notion of *commitment* and *life-communion* as prerequisite of the change but its fulfilment requires a decision having even more importance. With his radical evangelical approach, he looks at the unconditional commitment and solidarity as basic distinctive characteristic of the human being, which can go to the breakpoint: it can even take over the fate of the other being. For Wresinski, the direct carrier of this responsibility is *Volontariat*. This Volunteer Service is the hard core organization of the Fourth World Movement and serves as model for the society. Offering projects for the poor (always adapting to the local circumstances) they provide manifold support to change the social judgement of the Fourth World. Nevertheless, its main mission is to demonstrate solidarity towards the excluded people, which is essential in restoring identities of people living in extreme poverty. As Wresinski says: It is the only way they can become a “*valorization factor, reference and tutor*” at the same time. (WRESINSKI, 1992:377). However, beside the volunteers, all other players of the society involved in the emancipation process must take commitment, although in different extent and with different contents: the allied, the decision makers in different areas of the social life as well as experts of issues selected for processing.

The alliance of the players of the emancipation process resulted in a *new approach of sharing the knowledge*. As Freire says, the critical reflection based on personal commitment of the oppressed and of the teachers supporting them is of different quality: it is real because it creates a mutually shared knowledge. This new knowledge is closely connected with the principle that the pedagogy of the liberation must be forged with, not for, the oppressed

Talking about knowledge, Wresinski emphasizes the basic requirement of passing it over and the possibility to pass it over. Together with his co-workers, he creates a platform to mutually share the knowledge of each participant with the aid of the common language elaborated jointly, so the *knowledge is conveyed in multiple directions*. A new kind of knowledge is born from placing the knowledge of the poor in the origin, adding elements of knowledge of different points of view together. This knowledge is created collectively, it is valid for every participant and it can launch social changes.

4. Reception of the social teaching of the Christianity in the conception of Freire and Wresinski

With their radical evangelical approach, both Freire and Wresinski consider man to be primarily as God’s creature and denote freedom and personal autonomy as earnest of being created in God’s image. Their pedagogies and the underlying anthropologies are based on the theological

acumen taking into account the social and practical aspects, deals with problems of publicity, right and freedom, plainly the political relationships.

Basic acumens of Freire's pedagogy rhyme to relevant aspects of theologies of freedom. He conceives liberation of man as an objective in the natural life and eschatological perspective not only simultaneously but in the dynamics of each other. In his opinion, man's universal ethic derives from the human nature and comes true in the history. He is convinced that human life, although affected by economic, social, political and cultural structures, is still not determined by them. In his messianistic revolutionism, he does not connect the idea liberating the poor with violence. In his character sketch of the revolution leader (authentic witness, penetrating love), in point of fact he outlines a prophetic portrayal using evangelistic language.¹ It is insinuated that the last paragraph of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is built from the keywords of the Christian teaching (hope, trust, faith, create), the last word of the opus is *love*.²

The core of *Wresinski's* anthropology is the double evidence that man, independently of what his religion and ideology is, first of all, created in God's image, is entitled to an infinite and unalienable dignity, and secondly, that this dignity manifests itself markedly in the most underprivileged people, living in the most extreme poverty. (LECLERC, 2004). He regards the poor as God's sons in Son, i.e. *Christ* in a special way. (BEGASSE DE DHAEM, 2011) Wresinski's Jesus leans primarily and in effect towards human misery. For him, sin is basically nothing else than rejecting to share the misery of others, originating from not being able to overpass one's own misery history. The shocking novelty of the life sample Jesus gave to people in this interpretation is that responsible action in social interactions is determined by sensibility towards misery of *others*.³

Having created the notion of Fourth World, and placed it in the center of evangelical faith, Wresinski highlights a new aspect of the social teaching of the Christianity in the practice, which can even change the judgement of extreme poverty as a phenomenon and the people living in extreme poverty.

¹ See FREIRE, P., 1980:165

² "If nothing else will remain from these pages, we hope that our trust in the people still remain. Our faith in the people and in creating a world where it will be easier to love." (FREIRE, P, 1980:180)

³ Cf: "That family frozen in wintery distress, that unschooled child was me. You passed me and did not recognize me, you did not even slow down your pace." (WRESINSKI, 2010:98)

VIII. Conclusion, further work to do

As a result of the analysis and comparison of practical pedagogy of Paulo Freire and Joseph Wresinski, the life-work of two pedagogues little known in Hungary but enjoying a high reputation abroad is revealed, particularly features of their activity in the area of social emancipation of the underprivileged adults and the Christian standpoint behind the activity. The source of universal value suitable to serve as a base of complex and successful practice in the area of pedagogy of the underprivileged can be caught on in their human and pedagogical approach, based on Christian anthropology. When connecting the work of these two giants with the adult pedagogy aspects of the history of the pedagogy in Hungary, the work of Sándor Karácsony can also get new exposition. The presented new approaches also offer valid answers to contemporary pedagogical challenges for higher education institutions maintained either by a church or civil organizations.

The research done brings up the parallelism between Freire and Karácsony, just mentioned in the paper. I would like to investigate this, reveal different aspects of the parallelism, analyze and compare them in due depth, in the next stage of the research.

The author's own publications related to the subject of the dissertation

La laïcité face aux contraintes socio-économiques, In: *Acta Romanica*, Tomus XVI, Szeged, 1996. 41-57.

A modern kor egyik árnyoldala, avagy a hajléktalanok problémája Franciaországban, In: *Egyházforum*, 1997/1. 75-85.

A vallás fogalma Joseph Wresinski gondolkodásában és mozgalmában, In: „*Vallásfogalmak sokfélesége*” (szerk: Kendeffy Gábor, Kopeczky Rita), L'Harmattan Kiadó, 2012. ISBN 978 963 236 623 4, 176-184.

Hommage à Joseph Wresinski, In: *Vigilia* 2013/8, 580-589.

A szegények identitása – Sokszoros megfosztottság és rehabilitáció Wresinski antropológiájában, In: *Hiszek, hogy megértsem* (szerk: Gér András László, Jenei Péter, Zila Gábor), L'Harmattan Kiadó, 2015. ISBN 978 963 980 861 4, 394-400.

Alapkövek Joseph Wresinski és Paulo Freire pedagógiájának megértéséhez. In: „Transfert nec mergitur” - Albert Sándor 65. születésnapjának tiszteletére, Jatepress, Szeged, 2014. ISBN 978 963 315 177 8, 353-362.

Egy társadalmi kihívás – két pedagógiai válasz – három alapkérdés, In: *Hitetek mellé tudományt* (szerk: Zila Gábor), L'Harmattan Kiadó, Budapest, 2015. 133-142.

A tudás és a tanulás értelmezése Paulo Freire és Joseph Wreinski pedagógiai gyakorlatában, In: *Százarcú pedagógia*, (International Research Institute s. r. o.) Komarno, 2015. ISBN 978 80 89691 17 3). 410-420.

Aki a legnyomorultabb embert helyezte antropológiája középpontjába: Joseph Wresinski. In: *Iskolakultúra*, 2015/5-6. 114-123.

La famille dans le Quart Monde, In: *Lire, écrire, construire*. Acta Romanica Tomus XXIX, Szeged, 2015. 69-79.

Két hagyománytisztelő forradalmár: Joseph Wresinski és Karácsony Sándor pedagógiája, In: *Pedagógiai és szakmódszertani tanulmányok* (szerk: Karlovitz János Tibor), International Research Institute s. r. o., Komárno, 2016. 35-44.

Aspects sociaux et religieux dans l'anthropologie pédagogique de Joseph Wresinski, in: *Ostium – Open Access Journal for Humanities*, N° 4, 2016 <http://www.ostium.sk/sk/aspects-sociaux-et-religieux-dans-lanthropologie-pedagogique-de-joseph-wresinski/> (11 oldal)

La responsabilité pour autrui, In: *Revue Quart Monde*, N° 4, 2016 december, 17-22. <https://www.revue-quartmonde.org/6734>

Karácsony Sándor és Joseph Wresinski *másik embere* – Lévinas tükrében, In: *A népműveléstől a közösségi művelődésig* (szerk: Juhász Erika), ACTA Andragogiae et Culturae 27, Debrecen, 2016. 394-405.

Two revolutionist traditionalists: The pedagogical concepts of Joseph Wresinski and Sándor Krácsony, in: *ph Publico* N° 14, 2018. július. 147-153.

https://www.ph-burgenland.at/fileadmin/user_upload/information-ueber/f-e/ph-publico/phpublico_14.pdf

References

BEGASSE DE DHAEM, Amaury: Théologie de filiation et universalité du salut.

L'anthropologie théologique de Joseph Wresinski. Cerf, Paris, 2011

BUGÁR M. István: Szabadság, szeretet, személy. Az ókeresztény teológia antropológiai vetülete. Kairosz Kiadó, Budapest. 2013

DACOS-BURGUES Marie-Hélène: Agir avec Joseph Wresinski. L'engagement républicain du fondateur du Mouvement ATD Quart Monde. Éditions chronique sociale, Lyon, 2008

DEFRAIGNE-TARDIEU, Geneviève: L'Université populaire Quart Monde. La construction du savoir émancipatoire. Presses universitaires de Paris Ouest. Paris, 2012

DURKÓ Mátyás: Társadalom, felnőttnevelés, önnévelés. Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, Debrecen, 1998

FREIRE, Paulo: La pédagogie des opprimés. Maspero, Paris, 1980

FREIRE, Paulo: L'éducation: pratique de la liberté. Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 1971

GADOTTI, Moacir: The Political-Pedagogical Praxis of Paulo Freire. In: FREIRE, Paulo: *Politics and education*, UCLA Latin American Center Publications, University of California, Los Angeles, 1998. 105-112.

GERHARDT, Heinz-Peter: Paulo Freire. In: *Perspectivas: revista trimestral de educación comparada* (París, UNESCO: Oficina Internacional de Educación), vol. XXIII, nos 3-4, 1993, 463-484.

GUTIÉRREZ, Gustavo – MÜLLER, Gerhard Ludwig: A szegények oldalán. A felszabadítási teológia. Új Ember, Budapest, 2016

LECLERC, Marc: L'anthropologie du Père Joseph Wresinski: entre Philosophie et Théologie, In: *Colloque international Joseph Wresinski. Acteur et prophète du peuple des pauvres*, Éditions Quart Monde, Paris, 2004. 43-54.

WRESINSKI, Joseph: Culture et grande pauvreté. Éditions Quart Monde, Paris, 2004

WRESINSKI, Joseph: Écrits et paroles aux volontaires, Éditions Quart-Monde, Paris, 1992

WRESINSKI, Joseph: Szegények egyháza, Pannonhalma, Bencés Kiadó, 2010