

In quest for the pedagogical understanding of the term „learning from life”. Implications for the teacher profession

Introduction

In the recent years, education in Poland, like in other central-eastern European countries, has gone through many transformations in order to meet the requirements of the contemporary socio-economic reality as well as the requirements related to Poland's membership in the European Union since 2004.

The socio-political breakthrough of 1989 brought about many changes in the way people think about the Polish education. Its objective is no longer sustaining the social order. Quite different requirements are set related to the unfolding the development potential of people or making desirable changes in the life conditions both of the individuals and of the entire Polish society.

Change in the way of thinking about education entails the change in the perception of the teacher profession. More and more often, the teachers are supposed to be equipped with creativity, unconventional thinking, thoughtfulness, continuous learning, resourcefulness and engagement for the common good. Therefore it is do possible to advance a hypothesis , that the majority of the teachers, however, find it difficult to meet these expectations since they studied and worked in the very different political circumstances i.e. in the socialist system that did not enable them to acquire and develop such skills. Thus, the discrepancies between the teachers' skills and school requirements occur and it is worth to do research on this phenomenon.

Certainly, Polish teachers can count on the support of the In-Service Teacher Training Centers. The courses organized by these institutions are very popular. According to the data the Łódź Center for Development of Teachers and Practical Training in 2008 organized 8034 teaching consultancy events, in-service training and other professional training for 33421 teachers from the Łódź region. All of these projects were to be implemented within 21000 hours. These forms, however, frequently lead only to the improvement of teaching skills of the teachers, to extending their pedagogical content knowledge, i.e., pedagogy applied to a specific content, pedagogy connected with the question: how to teach? The classes offered by the In-Service Teacher Training Centers contribute to the passive adaptation of the teachers to the changing conditions rather than to the profound change in the way of thinking about own profession by the teachers or promoting any critical and thoughtful attitudes.

I think one of the ways to address the challenges of the modern school by the teachers can be learning from (everyday) life. This kind of learning goes every time, free of charge (what matters when teachers earn no much money) as well as seems to provide teachers with knowledge and ability that which can be used in everyday professional situations. Teachers are able to make the most of this knowledge and ability, because it come from their own experiences.

Therefore, my research area focuses on the questions: does and how learning from life affect the professional development of the teachers?

The first step towards the solution of this research problem is to present the understanding of the learning from life phenomenon, which is what I'm going to undertake. It is essential in the Polish educational reality

since there are no Polish equivalents of the terms *learning from lives*¹ and *learning from life*.

I made this type of learning object of my present considerations with three reasons.

Therefore first of them is that term: “learning from life” for several years has already functioned in West - European pedagogical/andragogical literature², and translated also to Polish³ and in contrast to remaining, above-mentioned types and kinds of learning, so far did not be the subject of the theoretical studies and the scientific interpretations. What's more, in fact it functions without one definition, understanding is intuitive, once describing learning from history of life and another time describes learning from the experience. Therefore it is necessary to design the definition which will inform about proper understanding this term in future.

The second reason is because of the rank of informal learning (“on a background of life”) and constant learning (by the whole life) grows constantly. Such learning which is the part of a everyday life and which “came in the form of unconstitutional and the unintentional broadcast of knowledge and skills⁴, so learning, as the intuition prompts, that stays in exact relations with learning from life.

The third reason of undertaking this matter is the problem of translation itself to Polish, when learning from life can be understood as a learning from “our” live, learning from biography (life as a text) as well as learning from life or lives other people, for example authorities.

¹ see. I. Goodson, P. Sikes, *Life history research in educational settings. Learning from lives*. Buckingham – Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2001.

² see. Op.cit.

³ see. P. Dominicé, *Uczyć się z życia. Biografia edukacyjna w edukacji dorosłych*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Humanistyczno-Ekonomicznej w Łodzi, 2006.

⁴ A. Nizińska, *Między nauczaniem a uczeniem się*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej, 2008, p. 47.

And finally, teacher and their learning are perceived nowadays as a fundamental for education issue. Already by the end of the 20th century well-know researcher Christopher Day⁵ formulated en principles related to teacher's occupation:

- Teachers are the schools' greatest assert. They stand at the interface of the transmission of knowledge, skills and values (...)
- One of the main tasks of all teachers is to inculcate in their students a disposition towards lifelong learning. They must, therefore, demonstrate their own commitment towards and enthusiasm for lifelong learning.
- Continuing, carrer-long professional development is necessary for all teachers in order to keep pace with change and to review renew their own knowledge, skills and visions for good teaching.
- Teachers learn naturally over the course of a career. However, learning from experience alone will ultimately limit development.
- Teachers' thinking and action will be the result of an interplay between their life histories, their current phase of development, classroom and school settings, and the broader social and political contexts in which they work.
- Classroom is peopled by students of different motivations and dispositions to learning, of different abilities and different backgrounds. Teaching, therefore, is a complex process (...).
- The way the curriculum is understood is linked to teachers' constructions of their personal and professional identities (...).
- Teachers cannot be developed (passively). They develop (actively). It is vital, therefore, that they are centrally involved in decisions concerning the direction and processes of their own learning.

⁵ Ch. Day, *Developing Teachers. The Challenges of Lifelong Learning*. London: Farmer Press, 1999, p. 2.

- Successful school development is dependent upon successful teacher development.
- Planning and supporting career-long development is joint responsibility of teachers, schools and government.

So therefore if modern teachers want to fully fill these rules, they have to be very responsible for themselves and have to learn very often (or maybe even constantly) in all directions. One of the ways to do it can be just learning from life.

Pedagogical quest for the understanding of the term “learning from life”

The role of learning has always been very appreciated but the contemporaries began to realize that you cannot only learn at school but also, and maybe first of all, outside school. The human being thus appears as an individual fulfilling themselves through acquiring knowledge.

According to T. Bauman⁶ “The renaissance of learning both at school and outside school has already started. This is a process aimed at huge qualitative change in education, a difficult one, (...) but irreversible. (...) Nowadays you can notice the indications of the end of supremacy of teaching over learning (at least outside school) due to low effectiveness of teaching compared to high potential of learning”.

In the contemporary considerations about the education of adults – and the teacher belongs to this group, emphasis is put on the fact that an adult person should learn from every life situation and draw conclusions from it for the future because “human life – development – learning make a distinctive ontological-anthropological triad determining humanity. Learning is therefore important to becoming rather than being a human. The worth of the human person is defined under this point of view by

⁶ T. Bauman, Wstęp (w:) T. Bauman (red.), *Uczenie się jako przedsięwzięcie na całe życie*. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”, 2005, p. 9-10.

learning. Paraphrasing the famous quote, you can say: "I learn, therefore I am"⁷.

To make research on learning is essential to familiarize with different point of view on this process. The analysis of literature of object shows, that term "learning" becomes fashionable and more and more commonly used. There is the multitude of kinds appears, multitude of definitions for learning and the types of learning. On the basis of only pedagogy itself we can distinguish many of them, and the most popular are: learning with biography (own and different persons), life-long learning, general learning, partial learning, learning by work, incidental learning, learning with the method of tests and the mistakes, involuntary learning, learning by imitation, unintentional and intentional learning, learning by uncovering, observational learning, learning with memory, cognitive learning, learning by relations, learning to learn oneself, learning by strategy, planned learning, organized learning, self-learning, but teachers also talk about types of learning associated more with psychology such as, associative learning, conditional learning, learning by the rule "all or nothing", serial learning, selective learning, subliminal learning etc. However the development of biographic I methods in education that was made in the last dozen years in Western Europe and in Poland, brought, beside learning from biography, another type of learning - learning from life (or learning from lives)⁸.

⁷ E. Dubas, *Dorosłość w edukacyjnym paradygmacie, czyli dorosłość jako edukacyjny okres życia człowieka* (w:) M. Podgórný, (red.), *Człowiek na edukacyjnej fali. Współczesne konteksty edukacji dorosłych*. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”, 2005, p. 26.

⁸ see. I. Goodson, P. Sikes, *Life history research in educational settings. Learning from lives*. Buckingham – Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2001.

The starting point of the research into the pedagogical understanding of learning from lives should be the findings concerning both “learning” alone as well as the category of “life” in pedagogy.

According to different authors the learning process is:

- "the plasticity of nervous system arrangement, depending on ability to rebuilding the nervous connections"⁹
- "the name of a set of actions with power to create new actions or enough power to change already existed thoughts and actions (...) No accepting the learning process as an action, we can talk about learning only when specific changes occurs in a subject of teaching"¹⁰
- "process which impacts on relatively durable changes, as the result of experience, in the behaviour potential"¹¹
- " the modification of behaviour of a person as the result of her previous experiences"¹²
- "internal process (disguised), which exists thanks to the system of memory which codes and it stores information received from outside or delivered as product of own cognitive activity"¹³
- „a process in the course of which the new forms of behavior and actions come into being or the forms earlier acquired change based on experience, cognition and exercise"¹⁴

For the pedagogical purposes, in opinion of the author the theory of learning is particularly useful that includes also (ibid):

⁹ A. Longstaff, *Neurobiologia*. Warszawa: PWN, 2006, p. 473.

¹⁰ T. Bauman, *Wstęp* (w:) T. Bauman (red.), *Uczenie się jako przedsięwzięcie na całe życie*. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”, 2005, p. 25.

¹¹ J. R. Anderson, *Uczenie się i pamięć. Integracja zagadnień*. Warszawa: WSiP, 1998, p. 21.

¹² *Leksykon PWN. Pedagogika.*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2000, p. 252.

¹³ *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie „Żak”, 2007, p. 873.

¹⁴ W. Okoń, *Nowy słownik pedagogiczny*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie „Żak”, 2007, p. 437.

- all types of learning (acquiring information, skills, habits, developing abilities and attitudes)
- all forms of learning (learning by trial and mistake, by imitation, discovering and activities)
- all learning conditions (age, environment, motives, stimuli, abilities)
- all teaching results (increase in knowledge and skills, development of the abilities and attitudes, transfer i.e. impact of the consequences of learning some information or skills on other acquired by this person information and skills).

Therefore, the above quoted definitions allow to understand the learning process as the result of process of gathering the knowledge and the skills. However the definition of learning proposed by W. Okon, and marked with a deep pedagogical thought of this process, seems to be the most proper definition for other theoretical considerations over phenomenon of learning from life, because it is the widest understanding. This wide understanding of learning is one of the conditions in realization of human needs and it determines social development. The E. Dubas pays attention on function of life self-learning in adult man's life. According to author learning for a grown man is¹⁵

- preventive resource in the face of existing difficulties
- way of gathering knowledge about reality
- the chance for development of potentials
- it is the value and the need of life, raising the level of individual satisfaction
- the way of realization of life aims

¹⁵ E. Dubas, *Dorosłość w edukacyjnym paradygmacie, czyli dorosłość jako edukacyjny okres życia człowieka* (w:) M. Podgórnny, (red.), *Człowiek na edukacyjnej fali. Współczesne konteksty edukacji dorosłych*. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”, 2005, p. 32-33.

- a chance for emancipation and building the subjectiveness
- the important element of activity of individual and it can be the style of life
- sometimes the relaxation, regeneration of strengths and the separation of from everyday duties
- a way to full-fill a free time as a result of different causes (disease, retirement, unemployment)
- reflection of the individual interests

After above mentioned closer lookup at the phenomenon of learning, we now should decide the matter of translation mentioned before. In Poland, learning is most often understood as the process of gathering skills and knowledge. However in English - learning - means "the type of attitude, both in the light of knowledge, as and in the light of life where the meaning of human initiative emphasizes. It encloses mastering and initiation of the new methodologies, new skills, attitudes and the indispensable values to life in the world full of changes"¹⁶. So this is the wide understanding of the definition of learning, including teaching and learning process, education (as the unintentional, institutional and self learning process) and the institutional education (education system)¹⁷. So this is the close lookup at learning process, helpful in understanding learning from life.

Having interpreted the understanding of the learning phenomenon/notion, another issue should be discussed – and as it seems – the key issue in the discussed subject, namely the issue of pedagogical understanding of life within the context of learning.

¹⁶ J.W. Botkin, M. Elmandira, M. Malitza, *Uczyć się – bez granic. Jak zewrzeć "luke ludzką"?* Warszawa: PWN, 1982, p. 50.

¹⁷ see. T. Hejnicka-Bezwińska, *Pedagogika ogólna*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, 2008.

This “life”, although it seems something obvious, accessible and well-known to everyone, and therefore not requiring any definition, however, when juxtaposed with learning in the pedagogical meaning, becomes an imponderable. Hence, it is necessary to examine this phenomenon more thoroughly.

According to Krystyna Ablewicz “knowledge is being acquired by the human due to his ability to live or rather experience life. By living in the world, the man participates in it, experiences it and by “being in the world” gains knowledge on it”¹⁸. Therefore, life as supplementary term to learning tells us, first of all, about environment (conditions) in which the learning process takes place. Thus, not so much the understanding of the essence of learning broadens as its process, determinants and situation in which it takes place since learning from life is the form of learning that makes an integral part of all dimensions of human existence.

Established researcher Knud Illeris¹⁹ locates learning process in three dimensions: cognitive, emotional and psycho-dynamic dimension. He underlines also, that the parts of process of learning are always integrated with all of the dimensions and they do not exist as alone in reality. This is very interesting statement, however in perspective of our research to understand the term “learning from life”, it is necessary to analyse also the biological dimension of learning, because the life is first of all the biological phenomenon.

Without going beyond the pedagogical area of considerations and based on the views of the leading Polish social pedagogy experts e.g., H.

¹⁸ K. Ablewicz, *Codziennosc i fenomenologia. Metodologiczne uwagi pedagoga. „Teraźniejszość – Człowiek – Edukacja”*, 2003. Numer specjalny: *Codziennosc jako miejsce i źródło uczenia się*, p. 371.

¹⁹ K. Illeris, *The Three dimensions of Learning*. Roskilde: Roskilde University Press, 2002.

Radlińska²⁰ who situated social pedagogy on the crossroads between biological and social studies about human and cultural studies, A. Kamiński²¹ who distinguished three spheres of human life: biological, social and cultural or R. Wroczyński²², who differentiated natural, social and cultural life environment – three following human life dimensions in which learning takes place can be mentioned.

Biological dimension. This dimension is determined, first of all, by time frames of the human life, in which learning from life is a narrowly psychical phenomenon, will be possible and space frames in which the human as biological creature can live and learn from life.

Human's functioning in the biological dimension consists in spontaneous, autonomous development based on inborn predispositions. Learning from life is here contingent upon by the development of the nervous system and it will take place in the natural environment understood as "those elements of the surroundings that were created by nature, the existence of which did not require human intervention"²³ and to which elements the Earth with its landform features and resources, as well as climate, flora and fauna belong²⁴.

The world-famous Polish scientist, the researcher of biological development of human, N. Wolański²⁵ claims that "learning hinges on the development of the nervous system (...). The essence of learning process is not as much memorizing facts as training of the associations skills". Hence, the man from biological point of view is capable of learning already in the prenatal phase of development. In the last three months before birth, the

²⁰ H.Radlińska, *Pedagogika społeczna*. Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków: Zakład im. Ossolińskich, 1961, p. 361.

²¹ A. Kamiński, *Funkcje pedagogiki społecznej*. Warszawa: PWN, 1972, p. 29.

²² R. Wroczyński, *Pedagogika społeczna*. Warszawa: PWN, 1985, p. 78-87.

²³ R. Wroczyński, *Pedagogika społeczna*. Warszawa: PWN, 1985, p. 79.

²⁴ *op. cit.*, p. 79-80.

²⁵ N. Wolański, *Rozwój biologiczny człowieka*. Warszawa: PWN, 2006, p. 379.

child learns to react to stimuli (conditional response) recognize and memorize sounds and voices, learns physical coordination (balance) and to sense the feelings of the mother and, by means of touch, learns the environment. The period of prenatal development being an integral part of our life is also an integral part of our learning from life.

We can advance yet further going conclusion: learning from the prenatal life is, in biological dimension, learning from life in the purest form, because relations between subject of learning and the life itself are at the most primal level and they run in truly natural, biological environment, and only after "experiences of this period influence on how we later see the world, how we think, react emotionally, dream and what is our predominant mood or biorhythm²⁶.

Second, and disproportional longer period of the man's life is the postnatal period. Divided, with conventional years last, as the childhood (from birth of to 10-12 y.o.), period of adolescence (from 10-12 y.o. to 20-23 y.o.), the adulthood (from 20-23 y.o. to 60-65 y.o.) as well as the old age (from 60-65 y.o. to death).

The human from the first days of postnatal period learns from life, adapting to the new conditions. From birth to about twenty years of age, the ability to learn increases and then stabilizes and, afterwards, gradually decreases and from circa 40-45 years of age falls more rapidly. However, as a matter of fact, the human can learn throughout whole life, and over the course of years only the levels of different learning indicators alter. Even in the late old age despite weakening of the intellectual functions, learning can

²⁶ Op.cit., p. 35-36.

take place and especially good results of learning can be observed in the area of important and real life information²⁷.

In the biological dimension, learning from life is a potential psychophysical property of the healthy organism realizing itself in the natural environment (Earth with its landform features and resources as well as climate, flora and fauna) is determined by acquiring the conditional reflexes in the prenatal period, a clear surge in the pace of learning since birth, its fall after 40-45 years of life and possibility to learn till the old age and even till death.

Social dimension. Learning from life will be examined here under the social environment aspect which is “complex system rich in forms of internal functioning and influencing the individuals”²⁸.

Social environment comprises: population distribution, population density and connected with it: frequency and diversity of social, economic communication, relations between the individual age groups that make up the society, education level of the people, associations, organizations and intensity of their functioning, the level of social awareness, behavior norms and dynamics of transformation, level of social integration and even health of the people . Social environment includes also various types of communities (social groups big and small, formal and informal, original and secondary, audience, crowd) direct social relations (“face to face”) and indirect, established via press, radio, television, Internet.

Thus, life in the social environment provides every human normally functioning in it with multitude of stimuli and opportunities to learn from life. Learning from life under the social aspect is learning inseparably

²⁷ M. Straś-Romanowska, *Późna dorosłość. Wiek starzenia się* (w:) B. Harwas-Napierała, J. Trempała (red.), *Psychologia rozwoju człowieka. Charakterystyka okresów życia*. Warszawa: PWN, 2005, p. 270.

²⁸ R. Wroczyński, *Pedagogika społeczna*. Warszawa: PWN, 1985, p. 80.

connected with the society and resulting from the fact of existing in the society i.e. relation person – society. Learning from life in formal, informal and spontaneous groups is learning resulting from the belief that skills and knowledge can be acquired in many social contacts as a consequence of functioning in the society. These contacts may take place in original groups (family), in form of spontaneous socialization, in direct surroundings (school, local society) or outside local area (random interpersonal contacts) and in global world (virtual) via media.

Learning from life in the society consists, first of all, in assuming social roles and familiarizing yourself with the rules of social life but also mastering the so called soft skills, that is forming and sustaining interpersonal bonds, developing empathy, negotiation skills and solving problems, entrepreneurship and knowledge about human needs. Learning from life in the social dimension influences also building civic attitudes and image of yourself as social being.

In social relations man learns how to express himself, manifesting his identity, show his pride and dignity. He learns to express the respect for the life partner or his/hers undertakings, social interactions as well as the art of changing his mind under influence of rational reasons. The understanding for another man is particularly important in the case of teachers because without understanding of its pupils the effective work with them is impossible. Understanding for another man means the skill of perception of human proprieties and developmental potentials, perception of the man as the whole body, psyche and the spirit, then the sensibility on somebody's feelings, motives, attitude, value and then enlighten them to ourself. The work is also one of the constant and concurrent with a man's life phenomenon and function as one of principal forms his social activity.

The school is mostly for teachers the place of work, since, learning from life should not be understood as learning outside school but rather as 'learning after lessons' because when classes finish, learning from (school) life continues.

Cultural dimension. The place of learning from life is also cultural environment, understood as "the element of historical heritage of human activity". This includes material goods and spiritual cultural goods (ideology, philosophy, religion, law and norms and rules resulting from it), as well as the attitude of people towards those goods being the consequence of historical development of human (ibid). In view of U. Ostrowska²⁹, a special meaning is attributed to culture as an area of human life because "it constitutes the basis of communities' awareness and at the same time has a deciding influence on shaping the personality of every man (...) making characteristic *compositum* of body and mind/will and intellect".

In the context of considerations about learning from life the broader understanding of the culture should be examined, the culture consisting of spiritual and material heritage as well as lifestyle. Culture is "not only the memory of an individual existence but also the form of manifesting life as human species. Biography of conscious life, biography of humanity in coexistence should be sought in the culture³⁰. The same author claims also that culture is "an expression and extension of possibility to realize human activity"³¹. Thus, learning from life in the cultural dimension goes beyond biological and social activity and is open to a new content and meanings.

²⁹ U. Ostrowska, Kultura jako wartość i przedmiot refleksji pedagogicznej (w:) A. Popławska, L. M. Jakoniuk (red.) Kultura. Młodzież. Edukacja. Białystok: Wydawnictwo Niepaństwowej Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej w Białymstoku, 2008, p. 13.

³⁰ A. Zachariasz, Kulturozofia. Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2006, p. 24.

³¹ Op.cit., p. 29.

Learning from life is understanding yourself, building own image, hierarchization of the principles, creating the images, asking yourself questions emerging in culture and looking for answers to these questions. It is learning to understand your own place in the world and, what is more important, learning to achieve this understanding. However, it also involves quelling all biological drives and natural inclinations disturbing the functioning in the society and acquiring the features typical for the human because no one is fully a human since the moment of birth but can strive for it throughout life.

To illustrate how much a man learns from living in culture we can bring forward the example of children found in the woods who were grown up by animals. After years of living between the animal they were not be able to talk or walk on two limbs as humans does. Only the biological aspect tell about membership to the same biological species only.

Therefore, learning from life is unique in such a respect that it consists first of all in aspiring to wisdom and, not like in case of other ways of learning, in consolidating content and developing skills. This striving after wisdom manifests itself in the sphere of material culture through the constant technological development and emergence of the new advanced technologies, whereas in the sphere of spiritual culture through reflective contemplation of its artifacts. Literary works, paintings, music, philosophical thoughts, rites and religious beliefs - all of them provoking the human to thoughts over themselves and world, lead them through spiritual and intellectual development to wisdom which in pedagogy is understood as “personal trait of the human that consists in turning his mind to the system of universal human values but its symptom is not only

selection of values alone but also making use of mind in realizing these values”³².

Suggestion for pedagogical understanding of the term “learning from life”

As one can see, the term learning from life is related to many phenomena and in the course of pedagogical analysis the number of them increases. However, it is not synonymous with the impossibility to design a definition of learning from life.

Thus, for my research project, I have made assumption, that learning from life is a conscious or unconscious process of development resulting from human existence and psychophysical capabilities of human, beginning in the latest stage of prenatal development, taking place everyday and lasting incessantly till death, affecting all aspects of human functioning (biological, social and cultural) including all ways of learning (e.g. learning by trial and error, imitation, through discovery and actions, from own and other persons’ biographies) and conditions in which it takes place (age, environment, motives, capabilities) leading to the definite amount of knowledge, skills, habits and value system, to a better understanding of yourself (internal order, identity and autonomy). This kind of learning is in sharp contrast to “institutional” learning, which take place in simulated conditions (for example: classrooms), it happen that is too much theoretical and not useful during everyday professional situations or is not concordat to people abilities and expectations. Learning from life equip people with knowledge (might well with wisdom) not only with information.

In other words, these are relatively fixed changes in the human awareness triggered by a person’s experiences throughout life. The fact of

³² W. Okoń, Nowy słownik pedagogiczny. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie „Żak”, 2007, p. 241.

living alone is not synonymous with learning from life because learning from life is experiencing life in order to gain wisdom.

Learning from life is a very complicated process which can be divided into two main strategies:

The first of them is: strategy of retrospective learning from life.

This strategy consists in learning from life, recorded in the form of history in the human memory. This means referring to the reminiscences, previous experience and drawing conclusions from it for the future. This involves dwelling upon past events, life history and its contemplation aimed at finding common truths, attaining self-knowledge and wisdom. In the retrospective strategy of learning from life, you can distinguish the following methods:

- learning from the life history
- learning from the own biography
- learning from the biography of other people (e.g. significant ones)
- learning by accident

The second strategy is the systematic learning from life. It depends not from the past experiences or knowledge but on opening oneself to all educational possibilities as a result of everyday and current life experience.

In this strategy we can distinguish: active method of learning from life and passive method of learning from life.

The active method involves conscious, purposeful and dynamic search and creating educational situations in life and their optimal use for the sake of learning. It entails constant mind alertness and readiness to look at every life situation from the angle of opportunity to learn, as well as being prepared for the new epistemological experiences. Active learning from life in the contemporary, rapidly changing world should be a skill of

every person so that they are able to tackle the challenges but not only the educational ones.

The second, and it seems less frequent method of learning from life, is passive learning from life. Learning from life takes place every day and is inseparably connected with the fact of living. Passive learning occurs when a man is not fully aware of its happening or when he does not undertake any steps towards learning from life, waiting only for the natural course of events. In the passive learning from life, the human ceases to be the subject of learning. They are being surprised by the new life situations towards which they assume passive attitude thus discrediting them as educational events.

Learning from life should become both means and aim of the education in the 21st century, the element of the global education and upbringing, because it is the simplest way to realize lifelong learning idea (Lifelong Learning Programme supported by European Union), the idea that dates back to the antiquity and remaining, until now, only wishful thinking.

Of course, learning from life is not free of negative aspects situated mainly in its content and conditions. According to J. Holt³³ “experiences that do not increase our knowledge simply do not exist. We draw conclusions from every action, experience in which we participate, from everything what happens to us. We can become wiser or more stupid due to it, better or worse informed, stronger or weaker but we always learn something. What we learn depends on what we experienced and, first of all, on our feelings in a given situation”. Since contemporary human life space features great diversity, as well as characteristic chaos, incoherence or even contradiction, it is vital to prepare yourself for the active, skilful and

³³ J. Holt, *Zamiast edukacji*. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”, 2007, p. 37.

reflective use of life as the learning territory. A significant role to play is held by school, but also family, society and the media.

Having it therefore definition of the learning from life term, we can now discuss its impact on a teachers profession. Term “the teacher” is mostly connected with a person who teaches. But this definition was evaluating³⁴. In the past the teacher was obligated to know the content of the lessons and the skills of passing the knowledge was treated as the gift from the God that could not be taught. The profession of a teacher gained a different meaning in the Middle Ages, mainly by the rise of universities and the development of intellectual life. Diversification of educational system for teachers occurs dividing the group for primary, secondary or higher education school teachers, though the didactics as the scientific theory did not exist yet. John Amos Komenski created modern bases of didactics really in 17th century. The important need to educate the teachers in the psycho-pedagogical dimension occurs. The important need to educate the teachers in the psycho-pedagogical dimension occurs in the 19th century mainly by John Friedrich Herbart. The development of psychology in 20th century brings even more knowledge about psycho-pedagogical aspect of t this profession. The requirements for teachers increased as never before. They need to learn by the whole life appeared because of the endless acquisition of qualifications by the teachers.

Conclusion

Learning from life in a case of the teachers could mean an opening on all of the educational possibilities which came from everyday life experience both in a private and professional life.

Learning from life defined this way is one of irreplaceable stimulants for the teachers. This type of learning helps the teacher to live and work in a

³⁴ H. Kwiatkowska, *Pedeutologia*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, 2007, p. 24-26.

permanently changing reality and to undertake the task of realization of the new educational needs of students. Life as educational space unlocks unlimited possibilities of winning the newest, interdisciplinary knowledge that is very helpful while working as the teacher. This knowledge is not only simply knowledge of basic rules of teaching, but first of all the justice, sensibility, creativity, non - standard thinking, self-esteem, tolerance, patience, leniency as well as empathy. Learning from life as a routine action, that is performed but unconsciously, can influence on their personal life also (friendship, partnership, parenthood).

The knowledge acquired by learning from life will never replace the scientific knowledge, but is a perfect answer to far-reaching, creative and modern researches on the field of educational knowledge, putting on a first place mastering the personal and cultural values and desired teachers attitudes.