

## **Education for Life od Life for Education?**

### **The Approach of Alexander S. Neill, The Founder of Summerhill School**

#### Summary

It has been almost 100 years since Summerhill School was founded by a charismatic Scottish teacher, A.S. Neill. Today it serves as an inspiration for a great number of schools and organizations all over the world, being considered the oldest democratic and archetypal school. Its weekly self-government meetings involve the entire school community (around 100 people) and everyone participates on equal terms. Students are free to join all classes according to the timetable and can decide on their own which ones they want to attend (if any). It is a boarding school with a number of international students. Not only does this place prepare children for lifetime challenges, but it also creates room for simple joys and cherishing the moment. Despite a great many controversial opinions, it has definitely become the symbol of debates on the nature of education.

Summerhill embodies both Neill's ideals and his concept. It is the latter that is the main subject of this dissertation. And its purpose is to present the origins of Neill's views on upbringing, teaching and school functioning and to undertake a prolific reconstruction of the key aspects of his pedagogical thoughts, as well as providing a reflection upon their perception and current meaning. In this dissertation, Neill's arguments are complemented by the past and present perspective of philosophical and pedagogical thinking.

What deserves particular attention is the subjects which have not been thoroughly discussed in the Polish pedagogical literature. They include Neill's intellectual biography, the philosophical origins of Neill's pedagogical thoughts, the pluralistic approach to school organization and the influence of people associated with the League for New Education, as well as psychoanalysis enthusiasts (for example Wilhelm Reich and Sigmund Freud, who both played a part in shaping Neill's concept).

Key words: Neill Pedagogy, Roots of Neill's Views, Summerhill School, Education for Life, Freedom and Self-Governance at School, Pluralistic Organizational Model.