

Epistemological basics of pedagogy

Sorin Cristea (*)

University of Bucharest [Romania]

Abstract

Our study has as general objective the establishing of the epistemological basics of pedagogy as socio-humanist science specialized in the study of education. Consequently are followed two specific objectives: 1) the underlining of the conditions of pedagogic specificity at the level of: a) specific research object; b) specific research methodology; c) specific normativity; 2) the argumentation of pedagogy's specificity at the level of theory – paradigm – ideal-models of analysis.

Key words: *epistemological basics of pedagogy, education, pedagogic specificity*

E*pistemological basics of pedagogy* sustain the quality of pedagogy as socio-humanist science specialized in the study of education. They are complementary with the historical basics of pedagogy which mark the *paradigms of education* asserted in the *pre-modern* (magister-centrism), *modern* (*psycho-centrism, socio-centrism, techno-centrism*) and *postmodern* (paradigm of *curriculum*) society. Our approach regards the *paradigm of curriculum* in the postmodern society / pedagogy, launched in the second half of the XX century. It is a *paradigm* which is about to be asserted in the postmodern society / pedagogy of the XX century, which conceives education at the level of the interdependence between the

(*) Prof. Phd. Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Bucharest.
Email: sorincristea3@yahoo.com

psychological demands – social demands to the educated, pupil, student etc. It imposes: a) the underlining of the conditions of pedagogy scientificity; b) the arguing of pedagogy scientificity

The conditions of pedagogy scientificity

The conditions of pedagogy scientificity must be verified at the level of: a) *specific research object*; b) *specific research methodology*; c) *specific normativity*.

1) ***The research object specific for pedagogy*** is represented by *education*. From this perspective, *pedagogy* is the *socio-humanist science specialized* in the study of *education*. Due to its extended dimension at the scale of the entire society, education is also studied by other socio-humanist sciences: psychology, sociology, philosophy, economy, management, anthropology etc. These domains accomplish this task partially, tangentially, superficially (at the surface of some phenomena), *statically* (synchronically), from the specific perspective of their research domain and methodology. *Pedagogy* studies education at *global, profound, dynamic level (historical / synchronic and diachronic)* by means of their fundamental *concepts*, which have a reduced epistemic variability and a methodological and practical capacity extended to the scale of all the educational phenomena, inside the educational system and process.

The signaled difference in approach is significant for: a) the assurance of a first condition of pedagogy scientificity, in epistemological and deontological plan; b) the delimitation of *pedagogic sciences / authentic education* (which have at the base of their epistemic construction *pedagogy*) of „pseudo-sciences of education” which have at the base of their epistemic construction other sciences, representing only applications of these sciences to education (see Jose L.G. Garrido, *Fundamente ale educației comparate*, trans. Editura Didactică și Pedagogică RA., București, 1995).

2) ***The research methodology specific to pedagogy*** is dependent of: a) the epistemic status specific to socio-human sciences, different of that of

sciences of nature; b) the research object specific to pedagogy – education approached *globally, profoundly, dynamically*. Consequently the research methodology specific to pedagogy is predominantly hermeneutic (interpretative) and historical.

The hermeneutic research allows the approach of education at global and profound level by strategies and methods of interpretation necessary in the context of a teleologic determinism, specific to man and society. *The understanding* of the education activity cannot be accomplished within the limits of a *determinism causal* (cause-effect, stimulus-answer) specific to nature, studied *experimentally* by the sciences of nature. The *teleologic determinism* specific to the *activity of education* is / must be studied by pedagogy *hermeneutically* by interpreting the relation *cause – effect* in accordance with the *finalities* (value orientations) *conceived, accomplished and developed* permanently by the education designers on long, medium and short term.

The historical research allows the approach of education at a dynamic level, in its permanent evolution marked by the assertion of some pedagogy paradigms, in the pre-modern society (*magister-centrism*), *modern* (*psycho-centrism, socio-centrism, techno-centrism*) and *postmodern* (paradigm of *curriculum*). It implies the surpassing of any reductionist tendency of education research only at static (synchronic) level. It imposes the assertion of the strategy of historic research, based on the synchronic – diachronic interpretation / understanding of education, of its cyclic evolutions, linear and concentric, registered on theoretic, methodological and practical plan.

The primary approach of education from *hermeneutic* and *historical* perspective, does not exclude, but assumes the promotion of *experimental, empiric research*, engaged at the level of the *microstructural* phenomena which may be provoked or reproduced in the limits of the causal determinism (cause-effect, stimulus-answer), still reportable, strategically, to the *teleologic determinism*. *The methods of experimental, empiric research*, usually

undertook from other socio-humanist sciences, but adapted to the specific of pedagogic sciences, are: a) quantitative / ascertaining, descriptive / explicative; b) qualitative / opened / interpretative.

3) *The normativity specific to pedagogy* is / must be constructed, assumed and expressed at the level of *axioms, laws, principles* which ordinate the projection and accomplishing of the education / instruction activity. It is absolutely necessary in the conditions in which the lack or inconsistency of *pedagogic normativity*, entertains the *pedagogic anomia*.

The pedagogic normativity evolves reported to the paradigm asserted historically and epistemologically at the level of the pre-modern, modern, postmodern pedagogy. Our analysis considers the *construction of the pedagogic normativity*, accomplished / achievable in the perspective of the *curriculum paradigm*.

A) *The axioms of pedagogy* represent fundamental truths, fixed at the level of *the general theory of the domain (general theory of education)*. They are / must be constructed in report with „the discipline matrix”, by its „hard epistemic nucleus” concentrated, fathomed and stabilized as value by the consolidation of the *fundamental pedagogic concepts*, which are at the base of all the education sciences: *education, basic function and structure, finalities, contents and general forms, education system*. These fundamental concepts, epistemologically fixed at levels of maximal generality, have the superior normative value of some *axioms of pedagogy / education*: a) the axiom of defining *education as psycho-social activity*; b) the axiom of the *central function* of education (formation-development of personality); c) the axiom of the education *basic structure* (correlation educator – educated); d) axiom of the general contents of education (moral, intellectual, technologic, esthetic, psycho-physic); e) the axiom of the general forms of education (formal – non-formal – informal); f) the axiom of the system of education which ensures the context of education, specifically developed at level of education system and process, concrete activities (of education, instruction etc.), concrete situations (generated

by the relations existing between the concrete activity and the existing resources and conditions).

B) *The laws of pedagogy* define the existing *general connections*, at the level of the activity of education, between *causes and effects* (on short term, but mostly on medium and long term), *mediated by the finalities (the valoric orientations)* established by the education designers, at the scale of the entire educational system and process. From this perspective, the laws in pedagogy / sciences of education have a statistic, probabilistic character, underlining the *main tendency* which ensure the normal achievement of the activity at different reference levels (education / instruction; teaching, learning, evaluation, projection of education / instruction, construction of the pedagogic / didactic message etc.) (see Sorin Cristea, 2010, p.66-67).

C) *The principles of pedagogy* represent categorical imperatives which need to be respected in the projection and accomplishment of the education / instruction activity. They are determined by *the functioning structure of education / instruction* which impose two categories of principles: a) principles of pedagogic projection: a-1) *the principle of pedagogic knowledge* (the principle of transforming *the specialty knowledge in knowledge with pedagogic value*; it is accomplishable at the level of *the construction of the pedagogic / didactic message* in the terms of interdependence *positive information-formation*); a-2) *the principle of pedagogic communication* (reported to the educated, accomplishable by the construction of the common repertoire between *educator and educated*); a-3) the principle of pedagogic creativity (in the conditions of the permanent adaptation of the educator and of the educated to the changes that appear in *opened context*); b) *principles of accomplishing education / instruction* – see the didactic principles: b-1) the principle of the formative orientation of instruction; b-2) the principle of instruction accessibility; b-3) the principle of instruction systematization; b-4) the principle of the pupils efficient participation at the instruction activity; b-5) the principle of the interdependence which is necessary in instruction between the intuitive

knowledge and the logical knowledge; b-6) the principle of the interdependence which is necessary in instruction between theory and practice; b-7) the principle of the results systematization of the instruction activity; b-8) the principle of regulation-self-regulation of the instruction activity;

The argumentation of pedagogy's scientificity

Pedagogy can be confirmed as a socio-humanist science specialized in the study of education in the measure in which are epistemologically constructed and socially asserted: a) the general theories of pedagogy; b) the paradigms of pedagogy; c) the ideal-models which underline the functioning structure of education, instruction, curriculum etc.

1) *The general theories of the field* define and analyze *the fundamental pedagogic concepts* which are at the base of all the *sciences of education* and of all the actions with formative finality:

a) *General theory of education* – defines and analyzes the fundamental concepts of pedagogy: a-1) education; a-2) normativity of education; a-3) general functions of education; a-4) basic structure of education; a-5) finalities of education (of the education system / ideal and purposes of education; of the education process / general, specific, concrete objectives), a-6) general contents of education (moral, intellectual, technological, esthetic, psycho-physical); a-7) general forms of education (formal, non-formal, informal); a-8) education system (education system and process, concrete activities, concrete situations); a-9) permanent education, self-education, educability (entirely valorizable) – as evolution directions of education in the perspective of *curriculum paradigm*.

b) *General theory of instruction* – it defines and analyzes a set of pedagogic / didactic fundamental concepts, with explicit methodological openings, epistemic subordinated to those promoted by the *general theory of instruction*: b-1) instruction / education process (the instruction activity in the context of the education process; b-2) normativity of instruction; b-3)

organization forms of instruction; b-4) instruction objectives; b-5) instruction contents; b-6) instruction methodology; b-7) instruction evaluation; b-8) instruction as activity of teaching-learning-evaluation; b-9) projection of the instruction activity.

c) *General theory of curriculum* – analyzes the activity of curricular projection at the scale of the entire education system and process; in this perspective it defines and analyzes a set of fundamental concepts, with superior methodological and practical value: c-1) curriculum – as paradigm; c-2) as model of curricular projection; c-3) general basics of curriculum (etymological, historical, philosophical, sociologic, psychological, political; c-4) specific-pedagogic basics of curriculum (education finalities / education ideal, strategic purposes, general, specific, concrete objectives); c-5) curriculum domains (environments, types, levels, stages, cycles, curricular areas); c-6) curriculum products; c-7) process of *curriculum* elaboration; c-8) curriculum changings („*curricular reform*”).

2) Paradigms of pedagogy, asserted historically at different time intervals, they impose a certain manner of general theory approach, sustained epistemologically and socially recognized, at the top level of the scientific community. From this perspective the basic concepts integrated in the *general theory of education* are approached and valorized differently in the paradigms of modern pedagogy (psycho-centrism – socio-centrism) which are in a historical conflict prolonged until our days.

Postmodern pedagogy in postmodern society confirm the importance of the *curriculum paradigm* implicated in the reconstruction of the *general theory of education* – which is at the base of all the education / pedagogic sciences, older or newer – by the promoted *axioms*: a) the axiom of defining education as psycho-social activity; b) the axiom of the interdependence between the objective dimension of education (central function and the basic structure) and the subjective dimension of education (education finalities); c) the axiom of valorizing all the education contents and general forms, in any activity, in the

perspective of permanent education and self-education; d) the axiom of the permanent report of education to an opened context.

3) *Ideal-models* constructed in the general theories of the domain on the fond of *curriculum paradigm*, with a mainly methodological purpose, evidences:

a) *The functioning structure of education*, based on the permanent correlation between *educator* and *educated*, sustained at the level of : a-1) construction of the curricular pedagogic project (centered on the interdependence central function – system finalities; objectives-basic contents-methods-evaluation); a-2) conceiving of the pedagogic message (in terms of positive information-formation) and accomplishing (by the elaboration of the common repertoire educator – educated and by advancing adequate strategies of education guiding); a-3) regulation-self-regulation of the activity by the strategy of continuous evaluation / self-evaluation, in opened intern and extern context;

b) *The functioning structure of instruction*, based on the permanent correlation between *teacher* and *pupil*, sustained at the level of: b-1) organization of resources in the perspective of activity individualization; b-2) activity planning by centering on objectives and basic contents, in permanent interdependence with the methods and evaluation); b-3) *accomplishing-developing* of activity in *opened context* by valorizing the necessary interdependence between the actions of teaching-learning-evaluation.

c) *The functioning structure of curriculum* at the level of *educational project*, based on the correlation between its *dimension*: c-1) *teleological* (education's finalities: of *system* / ideal and general purposes; of *process* / *general, specific, concrete objectives*); c-2) *axiological* (general-human values which determine *the general contents of education: moral, intellectual, technological, esthetical, psycho-physical*); c-3) *methodological* (instruction strategies, methods, proceedings, means); c-4) *contextual*: organization forms, existing resources, pedagogic space and time, pedagogic styles, pedagogic ethos of the community, pedagogic ideology etc.

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