

History of pedagogy in postmodern society

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Abstract

The postmodern era of pedagogy is initiated at the beginning of the XX by the contribution of J.Dewey. It is launched at the middle of the XX century by R.W.Tyler and developed in the second half of the XX by numerous contributions. We will mention only the contributions of B.S.Bloom, J.S. Bruner; L.D'Hainaut. This era promotes the paradigm of curriculum as paradigm of postmodern pedagogy. The history of pedagogy in the postmodern society is the history of the assertion of curriculum paradigm which places in the center of education the education finalities elaborated at the level of the interdependence between the psychological demands and the social demands to the society and the educated. Our study concerns the following issues: 1) the curriculum paradigm in the postmodern society; 2) the anticipation of the curriculum paradigm; 3) launching the curriculum paradigm; 4) development of the curriculum paradigm

Key words: *postmodern, pedagogy, curriculum paradigm*

The curriculum paradigm in the postmodern society

The curriculum paradigm asserts as paradigm of pedagogy in the postmodern society. It tries to solve the conflict existing in the modern pedagogy, between the psychocentrist paradigm (centering education on the

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psychological demands of the *educated*) and the *sociocentrist* paradigm (centering education on society's demands towards the *educated*).

The new paradigm, *the curriculum* paradigm is centered on the education finalities (the ideal of education, the general purposes of education, the education objectives), which orient the valuable activities at the level of the entire educational system and process. These finalities are elaborated, developed and applied at the level of the permanent interdependence between: a) *the psychological demands* towards *education* and *educated* (expressed in terms of capacities / competences); b) *social demands* towards *education* and *educated* (expressed in terms of basic *contents*, validated by society).

The postmodern pedagogy, developed in the postmodern society, postindustrial, informational, based on knowledge, valorizes the *paradigm of curriculum* anticipated from the beginning of the XX century (Dewey), launched at the half of the XX century (Ralph Tyler, *Basics of curriculum and instruction*, 1949), applied at the scale of the educational process (B.S.Bloom, *Taxonomia Obiectivelor Educației*, 1956, 1971; J.S. Bruner, *Procesul educației intelectuale*, 1960; *Pentru o teorie a instruirii*, 1966) in the perspective of the permanent education and selfeducation (L.D Hainaut, *Programe de învățământ și educație permanentă*, 1979, 1981).

Anticipation of the curriculum paradigm

The *curriculum* paradigm is anticipated by John Dewey (1859-1952), representative of the American philosophical *pragmatism*. His *pragmatism* is developed in an original variant, named, *instrumentalism*. He attempts to surpass the classical opposition between *materialism* – *idealism*, by advancing the central concept of *experience*.

The concept of „expresses the interaction of the organism with the environment”, accomplished by *action*, which ensures the basics of knowledge and learning. It is pedagogically used for the analysis of education as *efficient practical activity*. The experience is a *source* but also a *model of knowledge*. It

contributes to the progress of education and generally of the society. On its basis, Dewey promotes *a model of education of the industrially developed society* (in economic plan) and *democratically* (in political plan). Education bases on the interdependence between *the cultural demands of the society*, reflected by the school institution *and by the psychological demands* of the child / pupil, which correspond to „the laws of human knowledge”. In this perspective, John Dewey, anticipates the *curriculum paradigm*, specific to the future postindustrial society. He does this through the effort to „surpass the opposition between the *sociologic* conception and the *psychological* conception of education (...), putting accent on the psychological aspect or on the sociological one” (Ion Gh.Stanciu, *Școala și doctrinele pedagogice în secolul XX*, 1995, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică RA, București, pp.55-59; John Dewey, *Democrație și educație*, 1916; trad.1972.

J. Dewey’s *pedagogical conception* is initially based on the unconditioned adhering at the current ”The New education”. It is promoted in the American variant known under the name of *progressivism* – ”school based on child (...), a copernician revolution” in education. Subsequently it will promote the *reconstructionist formative model*, based on the *reconstruction of education* by valorizing the experience of the child / pupil in the purpose of his optimal integration in society.

The main basic pedagogic ideas which anticipate the *curriculum* paradigm, may be identified in several papers written by John Dewey, included in two works, published in Romania: *Trei scrieri despre educație*, 1977; *Fundamente pentru o știință a educației*, 1992

a) *School and society* (1899) – centering education on the *child*, with all his *psychological* resources and on school as social institution; education must consider the psychological capacities of the educated; on the other hand, the valorization of these capacities must be accomplished in school environment, but also extra-scholar, in order to ensure the integration in society.

b) *The child and the curriculum* (1902) – the projection of the school curricula contents must be accomplished reported to the actual *experience* of the child; it takes a process of „continuous reconstruction”; the *curriculum* understood as content of instruction, must present the scientific information in an adequate form reported to the knowledge experience of the pupil, with his intellectual in capacities, of his internal interests, typical for the psychological age;

c) *Experience and education* (1938) – proposes two principles of projecting education and instruction which must be regarded, in their interdependence:

- the principle of continuity between the *experience* of the pupil and the *curricula contents*;

- the principle of the interaction between the external objective interaction and the subjective ones of education / instruction / learning.

d) *The basics for a science of education*, trad.1992

– *defining education* at the level of the unity between the *individual, psychological side* (of the educated) and the *social one* (which offer substance to contents);

– *the historical analysis of the education ideal*, from the *democratic ideal* of Antiquity to the *democratic ideal* of the modern society;

– *establishing criteria for the projection of the positive pedagogic purposes*: the concordance with the *education ideal*, with the existing internal resources; surpassing the actual state, the possibility of choosing „alternatives” of purposes accomplishing.

Launching the paradigm of curriculum

The paradigm of *curriculum* is launched by Ralph W. Tyler, in the paper *Principii de bază ale curriculumului și ale instruirii* (1949). There are four *pedagogic principles* presented by R.W.Tyler in an interrogative manner. We are presenting them in an affirmative formula, but which still keeps its

actuality: a) the principle of *defining the purposes and objectives* of the education and instruction activity; b) the principle of the *selection of the learning activities* which are necessary to pupils in order to fulfill the purposes and objectives proposed at the beginning of the activity; c) the principle of the *methodical organization of activity* in forms and modalities which are adequate for the efficient accomplishment of the pupils' learning *experiences* according to the proposed *purposes and objectives*; d) the principle of *evaluating the results of the activities* of education / instruction in accordance with the criteria included in the structure of the purposes and objectives, announced at the beginning of the activity.

The analysis of these principles, proposed by R.W.Tyler, evidence important aspects which does not result from a mere lecture, a fact which supposes a historical interpretation, synchronic but also diachronic.

The purposes and objectives are presented from the perspective of their bi-dimension: a) *psychological*, expressed in terms of „cognitive behaviors” which must be formed and developed (but also evaluated) during the entire activity of education or instruction; b) *sociological*, expressed in terms of *contents* undertaken from the level of the general culture, of specialty, professional etc., understood also as *basic contents* validated by society at different intervals of time. The term of „cognitive behaviors”, used by R.W.Tyler is tributary to behaviorism, still influent in the 50's. Reinterpreted *diachronically*, these have the significance of *capacities* or *competences*. From this perspective, they have a quality of *specific psychological cognitive objectives* (see the taxonomy of the *cognitive objectives of education / instruction*, proposed by B.S. Bloom, in the 50's).

The pupils' learning experiences are proposed starting from the projected *purposes and objectives* which can be accomplished only at the level of the relation between the *cognitive psychological* resources identified by the teacher and the *contents of the curricula* adapted at the concrete situation existing in class, school, local educational community etc.

The organization of the activity regards the practical dimension of the actions expressed in terms of *instruction forms and methods*, necessary in order for the pupils' *learning experiences* to be valorized for the formation and development of the *psychological capacities / competences* and to acquire the basic contents important in the present and in the future.

The evaluation of the final results of the pupils must be accomplished according to the criteria included in the structure of the purposes and objectives announced at the beginning of the activity, followed during the entire activity. It is thus anticipated the strategy of the continuous, formative, self-formative evaluation.

By *basic principles*, proposed as a model of the *rational curriculum*, RW.Tyler anticipates the paradigm of *curriculum*, implicated in the efficient projection of the activity of education / instruction, at all the levels of the educational system and process.

The application of the paradigm of curriculum

The curriculum paradigm is largely applied in the second half of the XX until nowadays. We will mention the contributions of B.S. Bloom, J.S.Bruner and L.D'Hainaut.

- B.S.Bloom, *Taxonomia Obiectivelor Educației*, 1956, 1971.

He elaborates the first *taxonomy of the education objectives*, applied at the level of the instruction activity in the context of the main *school disciplines*. It defines a set of capacities or cognitive *competences* which may be acquired on medium and long term, which are at the foundation of the concrete performances, immediately evaluable in each lesson.

This first *taxonomy* is one of the *cognitive psychological objectives*. it may be interpreted as a *model of curricular approach of instruction* at the level of the correlation between: a) *the specific objectives* expressed in terms of *competences / psychological capacities* necessary to pupils in the educational process, in the study of the most school disciplines; b) *the concrete objectives*

expressed in terms of *basic contents* socially recognized, according to the *curricular* school programs, evaluable as concrete performances, observable during the didactic activity, from the beginning to its end.

The analysis of the psychological objectives taxonomy, proposed by Bloom allows the identification and valorization of the optimal reports between the psychological capacities / competencies projected with impact on medium and long term and the school performances obtained during the respective didactic activity. It is what any teacher can accomplish during an activity of pedagogic projection of *curricular* type, based on:

A) The specific, psychological objectives, expressed in terms of capacities / competencies de: a) simple communication; b) understanding; c) application; analysis; d) synthesis; e) critical evaluation;

B) Concrete objectives, specified by the practicing teacher, according to the official school curricula, adapted at the context of the class and of the school, expressed in terms of concrete performances (corresponding to each psychological capacity / competency previously presented), immediately evaluable, during the entire lesson, until its end: a) to define, to distinguish, to identify, to recognize, to remember; b) to redefine, to translate, to express with one's own words, to reorganize, to explain, to interpret, to complete, to extrapolate etc; c) to apply, to generalize, to establish relations, to use, to transfer, to restructure, to classify; d) to analyze, to identify the essential elements, to classify in valoric order; to compare, to distinguish, to deduce the essential parts etc.; e) to synthesize in a written form, in narration, in different products; to create, to document, to project, to plan, to develop, to organize etc.; f) to judge, to argue critically; to validate, to decide, to contrast, to standardize etc. (see Viviane De Landsheere; Gilbert De Landsheere, trad.1979)

- J.S. Bruner, *Procesul educației intelectuale*, 1960; *Pentru o teorie a instruirii*, 1966, both translated in Romanian in 1970.

The theory of instruction proposed by J.S. Bruner, „American psychologist strongly influenced by Vîgotski's researches” is conceived in the spirit of the

sociocultural *constructivism*, applied in education. The pedagogic model proposed valorizes three *cognitive structures* which may ensure the efficiency of learning if it is organized by *concrete actions, images, concepts*. Thus results three modalities of instruction: a) *active*; b) *iconic*; c) *symbolic*.

The school curricula are centered on the relations between *objectives* and *contents* which represent „the discipline’s basic structure”, which includes the basic notions in interdependency. The didactic models proposed by the teacher must stimulate the pupil’s analytical thinking, psychologically sustained, reported to age, *intuitive* (action, iconic) and *logic* (symbolic).

In the perspective of the *curriculum* paradigm, *the theory of instruction* is reconstructed on a psychological fond which allows the organization of the *sociocultural* environment specially in order to „reach the optimization of learning”. As a fundamental pedagogical science, the *theory of instruction*, conceived by Bruner, has a *prescriptive* and *normative* character. Its pedagogic unity is fixed, in *curricular* spirit, at the level of the connections between: a) *the objectives of instruction* – which „orients the process of intellectual education”; b) *the fundamental contents*, which represent *the basic structure* of the educational discipline – necessary to fulfill the objectives; c) *the methodology* which includes several *learning paths*, proposing „different types of succession” of the learning succession; d) *evaluation* which becomes integrative part of instruction, which fulfills the function of *regulation-self-regulation* of the pupils and teachers activity.

- L.D’Hainaut, *Programe de învățământ și educație permanentă*, 1979, trad.1981.

The curriculum paradigm is applied at the level of educational politics, with the special contribution of *UNESCO*. The researches made under the coordination of L.D’Hainaut, confirm the importance of the curriculum paradigm at the level of the educational system (by the elaboration of conceptual models of projection and accomplishing the education reform), not only at the level of the education process (which implies the *curricular*

projection and accomplishing of the education plan, of the programs and school manuals, of the school projects etc.).

From the perspective of the *pedagogic theory*, generally and especially of the *curriculum theory*, we remember the approach model of the *curriculum* at the level of fundamental concept which defines: a) finalities / „aims, purposes, objectives”; b) the necessary means to reach the finalities; c) the evaluation methods and instruments.

The *curriculum projection* imply the integration of all the *general contents* of education (moral, intellectual, technological, esthetical, physical) and of all the *general forms* of education (formal education, nonformal education, informal education) in the perspective of the permanent education and of self-education, in any moment and in each moment of the existence of the educated’.

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