

Two Referential Sides of Institutional Pedagogy – Social Pedagogy and Special Pedagogy

Toader Pălășan^{1*} and Ramona Henter²

¹ Transilvania University of Brasov

² Transilvania University of Brasov

ABSTRACT

In the last ten years, all those who had education as their object of work (theoreticians and practitioners) have been concerned, consciously or unconsciously, with overcoming the magistro-centrism both by promoting a new vision that gives priority to interrelations between students as a new educational environment, nondirective group, experiential learning, self-management, etc. and by building institutional channels specific to pedagogy (the offer-demand channel, the communication channel, the decision and coordination channel, the cooperation and working channel). All these are characteristics of institutional pedagogy that holds forms specific to the transition period that Romanian pedagogy is crossing nowadays. To bring the decision closer to where it should have an effect, the students' cooperation in the group, group education, capitalization of local potential are ways in which the social and special dimensions are joined in the educational action. Our work proposes a reading grid of these changes in pedagogy.

KEYWORDS: *institutional pedagogy, social pedagogy, special pedagogy*

1. INSTITUTIONAL PEDAGOGY

Tom De Coster, Marc Depaepe and Frank Simon [2] presented in a study of the educational reform a situation very much similar to what is happening in the Romanian educational system. They mention that as in Flanders, at the time of writing their article, the changes in curriculum at the end of last century's England and Wales were presented as radical reform, but actually the curriculum "was in terms of control, extent, content and form, firmly rooted in the English past. It was essentially backward rather than forward-looking, an attempt to preserve under the guise of change". The researchers focus on the "emancipatory tradition" that manifested itself in the educational landscape in the 1960s and its traces in the modern pedagogy. Such a study is needed for our educational system, too.

In the last ten years, all those who had education as their object of work (theoreticians and practitioners) have been concerned, consciously or unconsciously, with overcoming the magistro-centrism both by promoting a new vision that gives priority to interrelations between students as a new educational environment, nondirective group, experiential learning, self-management, etc., new visions which sometimes are reinterpretations of older ones or even their revival or proper implementation.

History records discoveries that have not been given the proper recognition. Such a situation may face the institutional pedagogy, which has faded into oblivion, but its

* Corresponding author. Tel.:

E-mail address: toader.palasan@unitbv.ro

characteristics can be encountered in Romanian schools and not only. Institutional pedagogy has its roots in the American social psychology, whose representatives, Jakob Moreno and Kurt Lewin, focused on the role of human interrelations in human development. To these influences, there can be added Carl Rogers' non-directive learning strategy, which postulated that real learning can be achieved only through personal discovery. Meaning, the teacher cannot teach, but only help the student and only if the latter desires it, thus the teacher becomes a facilitator who guides students' growth and development. A partnership in learning is established between the teacher and the student. Rogers [3] believed that positive relationships allowed a person to grow and that instruction should be based on concepts of human relations.

Rogers [6] argued that the primary goal of education lies in facilitating the whole and fully functioning person and that students should play the central role in the classroom, being against the traditional teaching model that placed teachers at the centre, since under the instruction of such model, students were just the passive receivers of knowledge and not able to play creative roles in learning. Students should learn in groups, with the teacher mingling among them, becoming a member of the group, offering help only when asked to. The key qualities of the relationship between the facilitator and the learner are realness, acceptance or trust and empathetic understanding. Realness or congruence stresses the importance of entering into such a relationship without any mask or façade, but exactly as one is: sensitive, enthusiastic or bored, irritated. Facilitators should accept and trust their learners, see them as trustworthy and thus offering them unconditional positive regard. Also, facilitators should stand in their students' shoes so as to become aware of their inner lives, the focus being on the empathetic understanding of their world.

These groups, named encounter groups, are defined by a mutual trust atmosphere, due to the lack of any directing and hence to each individual's freedom to express feelings and ideas. Rogers [6] considered that the educational situation which most effectively promoted significant learning was one in which any threat to the self of the learner is reduced a minimum and a differentiated perception of the field of experience is facilitated. Thus, the focus shifts to building a new learning space, where the teacher does not teach by directing the students, but he gives up his power of "magister" of the classroom, waives the rules and regulations in favour of the group.

Having these ideas as background, a new pedagogy emerged, focused on the learner and on the learning in non-directive groups, namely the institutional pedagogy. It criticised the relationship of dependency of the students to the teacher and promoted the class as a social group, whose main function was to develop students' personalities. The term 'institution' used in Institutional Pedagogy is broader than in its more colloquial sense. To Oury and Vasquez [5], the institution could be defined as: "the places, moments, status of each according to his/her level of performance, that is to say according to his/her potentialities, the functions (services, posts, responsibilities), roles (president, secretary), diverse meetings (team captains, different levels of classes, etc.), and the rituals that maintain their efficacy."

Institutional pedagogy is centred on two factors:

1. the complexity of the learner and the "unconscious" that he or she brings to the classroom. This unconscious, although inspired from the psychoanalysis, is here used with a much broader sense, including the social, economic, cultural and other elements that an educator interacts with in an institutional setting;
2. the role of the institution in the process of intervening.

The focus is on the institution and all it conveys. As part of the physical institution, the classroom extends over its concrete walls and includes its “temporary inhabitants”, the learners, seen as “whole people”, with their individual differences, the psycho-social factors in learning and even the presence of the “unconscious” in the classroom itself are taken into account in the learning space.

The pillars of institutional pedagogy, as described by Ourly [5] are: materialist (the equipment, the techniques of organising activities, the concrete situations and relations), sociological (consideration of the class, groups and grouping of groups, inter-communication within groups that determine students’ behaviour and development) and psychoanalytic (the unconscious features in the class).

M. Lobrot [4] considers that the only educational influences accepted by the institutional pedagogy are:

- a. the demand – offer channel: the educator intervenes only if asked to; he suggests activities but does not coheres students to do them;
- b. the communication channel: it facilitates dialogue and meeting the other;
- c. the decision and coordination channel: the decision belongs to the group, the teacher only facilitates adopting the most appropriate ways to put the decision into practice;
- d. the cooperation and work channel: the group are working together, cooperating among themselves and with the teacher.

Although it was criticized for abandoning both the teacher and the student and for empowering too much the students who may not always be able to self-develop themselves, this pedagogy was successful with students coming from underprivileged areas. However, the criticism highlights the importance of establishing equilibrium between leading the students and offering them freedom to act as they want, taking into consideration students’ age, the topics and the goals aimed.

2. SOCIAL PEDAGOGY AND SPECIAL PEDAGOGY

The social pedagogy emerged as a desire of making or proving pedagogy to be a science. Its first theoretician, Paul Nantorp [4] defined it as “the science of preparing the individual will for the society, country and humanity”, as a science about education should be founded on social life. For social pedagogy, the aim of education is to serve society. The way to achieve this goal is to blend the individual and social aspects while learning in groups or teams: each student’s individual peculiarities are respected, his tasks are according to these features, students work together without letting the social aspect prevail the individual one.

These features make it a perfect descendent of the institutional pedagogy. From the methodological point of view, they promote group learning, highlighting as benefits for the students:

We consider that all these characteristics make social pedagogy a good theoretical model to be used in special pedagogy. When working with children with special needs, following the principles of institutional pedagogy as well as its methodology is a logical thing to do as the teacher really is a facilitator, offering help when needed by the disabled person, who knows best when to ask for help. Disabled students learn better when working in groups and putting in their effort on the part they can do (best). Congruence between what the teacher says and feels, manifestation of trust and acceptance, and empathic understandings are absolutely necessary in any successful activity with impaired students.

Other studies [1] have identified ten principles of institutional pedagogy that can be transposed to special pedagogy:

1. Self-learning – students can what to learn, how to do it and when to do it;
2. Horizontal structures – focusing on collaboration in learning;
3. From presumed authority to collective credibility - if traditional learning environments were about trusting knowledge authorities or certified experts, now issues of credibility are of concern;
4. A de-centered pedagogy – the teacher, as the magister, does no longer have that role;
5. Networked learning – individual learning shifts to a socially networked collaborative one;
6. Open source education – school is no longer the only holder of knowledge;
7. Learning as connectivity and interactivity – learning can only be done within a social group;
8. Lifelong learning - the increasingly rapid changes in the world make us continuously acquire new knowledge to face up to the challenges;
9. Learning institutions as mobilizing networks – the traditional institutions for promoting learning should be seen as mobilizing networks;
10. Flexible scalability and simulation – learning must remain open to various scales of learning possibility.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Both special pedagogy and social pedagogy are descendants of the institutional pedagogy, promoting experiential learning. This learning is the best for those with special educational needs as it fully involves the student in the learning process. The school environment should offer the possibility of applying the theses of institutional pedagogy, as schools are changing (on all levels of analysis). A new educational environment centered on the group of students (the learning group being present in non-directive pedagogies) should replace the current class organization (the authoritarian one, centered on the teacher). This requires change to start from the educational policies, focusing on the shift from student-teacher dependency to a mutual empathetic relationship. Individuals change only after the institutions/the environment change.

Institutional pedagogy is related to the Pedagogy of Institutional Autonomy, Ethnology of Education, Perennial Pedagogy, Pedagogy as Socio-cultural reproduction and of course to Social Pedagogy and Non-directive Pedagogy and Social Pedagogy. This is the new way of pedagogical thinking, based on the Institutional Pedagogy, the third wave of the new education.

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