THE CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL AGENDA _ EDUCATION AND REALITY

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Abstract

One of the most forgotten topics in the various educational agendas is the anthropological reflection for the teachers themselves, as well as for the students. Essential questions of a fundamental educational character arise without any doubt: who do we educate? and where do we educate from? Having in our hands, as teachers, the cognitive destiny of our students, being able to influence their freedom of thought, and forge an ethical framework, are very important aspects, especially when the constructivist educational philosophy, which most reforms have assumed, implies anthropological concepts that influence educational approaches under an eminently humanistic profile, and integrate basic assumptions such as: a) the person is a biological, rational, and social being; b) his cognitive ability is essential; and, c) he has a psychic dimension. The following paper discusses our beliefs and truths towards our students as future generations, and tries to outline the anthropological vision that we have regarding the educational aspects, because without pretending it, we will always be configuring and contrasting the student with models, whose foundations can be determinants for their future.
What does a true transformation imply and the philosophical and epistemological absence in contemporary educational currents? Readers interested in this field of education will find also in this article considerable ideas that would help them to understand the transcendence of the mission and the vision in the education of the future as a utopia; the paradigm of pedagogical "Complexity" in postmodern society when it comes to gender from the perspective of beliefs and axiology, and the challenges of the school as an educational institution. They will complement their didactic training and thus make practical decisions that allow them to reach the established objectives.

Keywords: Anthropology, dimensions, education, gender, reflection.

1. Introduction

Having in our hands, as educators, the cognitive destiny of students, being able to influence their freedom of thought, forging the ethical framework, are very important aspects; so, let's review our believes and truths about the person, and try to sketch the anthropological vision that we have regarding education, since without intending it, we are always configuring and contrasting the students with models, whose foundations can be decisive for their future.

Being a teacher – more than a profession – is a challenge especially for those countries that are facing critical situations of social and economic stagnation. In spite of the multiple efforts to the reforms and regular transformations, the educational status continues to be considered as a profession of less priority, that does not harbor much hope of progress; teacher salaries denote a true relevance, and are symptoms of the low dignity of the teaching profession.

Contemporary trends invite us to reflect on a new teaching model and we are increasingly talking about a scholar with research field focused on Education and Learning processes, a teaching task expert in specific technical actions, whose abilities must be eminently professional in regards to content, methodologies, technologies, assessments, etc.

2. Teacher's training as development and culture

Training requires a prominent place on the educational agenda under new tactics and strategies. A first aspect to consider is the reformulation of the teacher's training under a paradigm of "professional development", which, obviously, is marked by a system that stimulates or rewards the efforts of this development. A second aspect is the creation of a "permanent culture"; in other words, there should be no specific moments at long intervals, but rather, a professional development and/or updating that should be a permanent task.

On the other hand, the training must be designed and executed by teachers who know the reality, and who have had real experience and ethical authority to be counselor. It is also important to mention

that the creation of a culture or personal discipline of professional self-development must emerge in teacher's training institutions – or earlier -; if university students are not required or are not introduced to the path of autonomous professional responsibilities, if they are not helped to build a habit of reading or being updated, they will hardly be able to self-train in the workplace.

We are facing a serious issue associated to the motivation and self-esteem, which in turn articulates with several factors: first, the teaching status and its possibilities for development; what can motivate the teacher to excel professionally or to invest in a postgraduate degree? Or, what are the conditions to reach higher levels? Second, the quality of the system: which institution guarantees quality standards in the educational field at graduate and postgraduate level?; third, the relationship between the profile of the candidate for teaching and the conditions of the professional training process: do students and teachers aspire to enhance their skills through personal convictions or does it have to be through an economic incentive?

Finally, the issue of professional development and a culture of self-training has to do with a vision toward the future and with a self-understanding of teaching professionalism. While teaching is only perceived as a way for surviving or meanwhile it's disfigured or saturated, there will be no space for even thinking about the importance of professional development; beyond vocational concerns, the system will also have to open the initial spaces to punctuate or stimulate this professional concern.

3. Educational reforms and transformation in critical environments

The fundamental question of true educational transformation implies overcoming the reformist vision of institutions and resources, and inevitably leads us to a nerve center: the teaching profession; So: does reforming the laws, the curriculum, the textbooks and the administration guarantee a true transformation? Apparently, the answer is no; In that case, what does a true transformation imply? It involves more than consulting and training the teachers or co-authoring the process. It supposes a very forgotten anthropological starting point in the agendas of the reformers: knowing the identity of the teachers. Who and how are they? Which in turn facilitates the analysis of the possibilities to concretize – or not – certain changes in the educational setting. In other words, knowing the assimilation capacities, assessing their conditions for change and auscultating how far they can count on their management in the real reform that is, in the classroom, a substantial place for major reforms and / or transformations.

In critical environments, we must observe this wide world scenario with carefulness because we are part of it, and beyond the achievements and obstacles, we must ask ourselves what are our contributions and solutions; But this question has to involve all sectors, either at the publicor the private level; which takes us to the need of a necessary and urgent agreement where everyone's commitment must be presented, otherwise we will be predestined to the traditional underdevelopment where we all lose.

There are five fundamental questions that are defined and essential in the field study of "educational quality": What do student learn? What is the level at which this learning occurs? What skills have students enhance within their learning process? How did the learning occur? And, under what conditions did it take place?

4. The philosophical and epistemological absence in contemporary educational trends

Philosophy as a science, facilitates a theoretical instrument that allows to be critical and purposeful, tries to overcome the appearances of reality. It also contributes with a logical ordering to the discourse, points out ethical paths, rationally inquires reality, supposes an intellectual maturity; it is an existential and vital discipline, a form of human existence at the service of something that humanizes the dehumanized society.

But, why philosophy? For what purpose? It is for not being subtle and cynical professionals, corrupt experts, brilliant exploiters, wise despots, fraudsters, enlightened hedonists, excellent materialists, venerable consumerists, and ignorant people. It is for teaching critical thinking, close reading, clear writing, and logical analysis to understand better the world we live in.

The educational and scientific means, and therefore knowledge, are the key to development; however, knowledge – by itself – has also been the basis of inhuman becoming, from which different study fields have emerged such as genetic manipulation, dehumanization…etc. The 21st century is a symbol of artificial intelligence, but it must be especially of human intelligence; the greatest expression of adequate, coherent and ethical knowledge is based on freedom, equity and humanism; and, the human being has the responsibility to begin by knowing himself, then his environment and finally knowing everything else.

It is important to emphasize that – as human being – we are losing the capacity of "amazement", which hinders the real knowledge that implies: to be astonished, to problematize, to conceptualize and to solve. This is also the basis of science; so, did the pre-Socratic philosophers, and from that moment, every great thinker has outlined an analogous scheme.

Finally, it is consequential to highlight the significance of having a culture of intellectual production that would include policies encouraging and rewarding research seen as investment and not as expense for the well-being of the science and therefore the nation.

5. The Mission in education and vision of the future as utopia

A mission is the great title of any collective project, it is the path that allows any institution to avoid being lost when navigating to the future. The etymology concedes a swift epistemic action. The mission is an achievable historical commission, it is a "towards" and a "doing", its contents implies a direction and an action. The mission of an educational institution is an achievable, realistic, complete, and useful programmatic and historical plan that sets the horizons and spaces of its intellectual and operational capacity; it is the genesis of any institutional becoming.

When we think about carrying out the mission, we have to overcome several obstacles that intervene in our clear profile, avoiding tacit contents; for example, if we talk about the University, it is supposed to be an institution of higher education, an educational institution, an institution dedicated to education, etc.; Overcoming these redundancies and others like that, the mission must contain a defined purpose "to the point"; it must obviate the idealistic aspects that will not be realized, those are left for the vision as already pointed out; thus the elaboration must think of a "creative tension", that is, dialectic; we should also avoid using "elegant and ethereal" terms, achieving a rather clear and concrete definition that goes beyond good and legitimate intentions.

As for "Utopia". (that is to say, a place that does not exist), it is a concept that became universal within the socialist context, to designate the pre-scientific stage in the formation of the theory about society based on the community of goods, in compulsory labor and in distributive equality. However, the term was previously used in the Greek context, and was later retaken to describe the ideal society. A synonym of Utopia is vision, understood in the structural context of the mission, goals and objectives of an educational institution; within the realistic, dogmatic and rigid excesses that the definition of a mission requires, understood this as a programmable and realistic mandate achievable, as well as the aims and objectives. It is necessary to cede spaces to the human profiles that have dedicated themselves to defining what achievable, so that the unrealizable, that is, utopias and dreams, the ideal pretensions of what one would like to be and not, sprout.

6. The paradigm of pedagogical "Complexity" in postmodern society

There are four foundations / principles that make up the complexity paradigm: uncertainty, globality, transdisciplinarity and humility.

Uncertainty is somewhat analogous to instability and indeterminacy; it is a vision that starts from quantum physics transferred to a more complex scenario: the social sciences; in fact, we are facing an unlimited and ethereal horizon of possibilities: today's society.

Globality is another foundation of the new rationality; here the whole is inexplicable if referring to the parts, equally the one that are incomprehensible without relating them to the whole; but that whole is a sum with versatile identities, something different from the parts but possible because of them; the global is sweeping and is acquiring a presence of its own; But without falling into extremisms, global consciousness challenges local existence, both on a single scaffolding.

Interdisciplinarity supposes the complementarity and the conjunction of disciplinary knowledge; quoting Edgar Morin (2000a :18), who explains that: *complexity thinking is animated by a permanent tension between the pursuit of "a knowledge that is neither fragmented nor compartmentalized, and the recognition of the incompletion and incompleteness of any knowledge"*

Finally, the principle of humility and cooperation demands a solid ethical support based on dialogue and cooperation; which in turn rejects dogmatism, authoritarian superiority and self-centeredness; as Claude Bernard, father of experimental medicine, affirms: "it is better to know nothing than to have fixed ideas supported by theories in which confirmation is always sought, neglecting what is not related to them. This is one of the worst dispositions of the mind and is eminently opposed to the invention. Indeed, a discovery is generally an unforeseen relationship that is not understood in theory. "Humility goes hand in hand with synergy, cooperation, networks, team works, cluster, which supposes a coherent response to the own uncertainty, globality and transdisciplinarity, something not easy for the isolated subject.

7. Women at the crossroads: for an education with a gender perspective

Since ancient times, society has excluded women outside of any organization, community or right. Making this has been nothing more than a procreative entity for all those who observed it then. It has taken centuries for rights, and women themselves to be recognized as "equal" in a society of rights.

A vision of how women have been treated since the play is highlighted: The Assembly of Women (also known as eclesiazusas, Latinized form of the ancient Greek title, Ἐκκλησιάζουσαι:

Ekklesiazousai) is a play by Aristophanes written in the 392 B.C. and similar to Lysistrata in the sense that much of the comedy comes from the participation of women in politics, although it is much more infused by problems of gender. This work also shows a change in the style of classical Greek comedy, after the short period of oligarchy after the Peloponnesian War, or at least an attempt of this. It seems to be a mixture of the two styles that works in the beginning but fails at the end.

The play is about a group of women led by Protagoras, who has decided that women must convince men to relinquish control of Athens to them, as they will be able to govern it better than they have. Women then institute a proto-communist government in which the state gives food, home, and general care to all Athenians. After the ruling oligarchy that followed the end of the war, the Athenians asserted their democracy and equality with great force, to the point that, although it was an evident exaggeration, the master piece surely made clear enough their opinion on excessive democracy.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the world history of women has been changing rapidly from the roles of participation within a state, through the expansion of ideas of equality to the formation of feminist thought. In addition to this, the mentality of world citizenship has been constantly growing in terms of the inclusion of women in social and political matters, the latter being one of the most important. The philosophical and historical perspective of the role of women and the variation of this throughout history remains among questions in countries with low to medium level of human development.

8. Axiology and education: beliefs or values?

The term axiology from the Greek Aixa = value and logos = study or treatise: In fact we can affirm that since the time of the Republic of Plato considered as one of the first educational projects that recognized the history of education, it was already intended to form certain characteristics or traits in students such as good, beauty, etc. as ends or purposes to achieve in education. However, in almost all the Middle Ages, the fight for the establishment of values was almost prosecuted by the church as the most important educational institution and in particular by religion as the dominant form of social consciousness always under the divine design.

Educational policies and programs in Ethics began to emerge in response to social decline and lack of the mystical teacher; in effect, the teaching sector and its training centers entered the superhighway of deterioration, and with the requiem of the normal ones, the teachers became technical facilitators of learning, leaving behind the mystical support of a dedicated profession, in other times, to be an artisan of the citizen conscience.

Beyond the diverse orthodox and heterodox conceptions of values, and the discussion about the need for a more or less secular or religious morality or ethic, there is a fundamental, historical and cultural antecedent: beliefs, which standardize conduct by means of a contrasting and axiological scale of values. It should be noted that beliefs, values, and attitudes shape behavior. Having said that, in order to have a better nation, with new beliefs and value, with new attitudes and behaviors, it's necessary to start thinking about a new generation that is forging and embracing a solid and coherent system of citizen beliefs that not only preach, but live historically with conviction.

9. Education and poverty: The challenge of the school

"Freedom is a conquest and not a donation, which requires a permanent search" (Freire, 1993); without any doubt, this definition leads us to a deep interpretation of the subject that continues to worry about education and poverty. It has been said that education is the determining factor to alleviate poverty; However, scientifically it continues to be verified that despite large investments in the education sector, the gap between rich and poor continues to expand in many countries.

One of the reasons for this failure is the downward verticality of educational policies and strategies still in force, that is: national organizations have dedicated themselves, metaphorically speaking, to "donating" packages of pedagogical and administrative actions to schools with the aggravating factor. They are not assimilated for various reasons: they are complex, inadequate, out of reality; they do not respond to needs, problems and expectations, just as other adjectives could be continued.

What a school does demand is true autonomy or freedom, but the various legal and administrative gags, although decentralization continues to be spoken of, are lurking, cutting off all initiatives. It is worth mentioning that a true school cannot subsist on strategic donations and needs to conquer its own institutional freedom. The key question would be: how is it conquered? When the school has an educational project with a defined mission and a vision of the future, but this project demands an innovative, proactive, synergistic leadership direction that pushes and guides this projects, it is necessary that each school discover its own within the privacy of that educational community.

Following the pedagogue Joao Picardo, an educational project must have two coordinates: within its consolidation of educational quality and efficiency; and outside, its social role of being a reflective space for solving problems and proposing solutions, as in this case poverty…..A school under this organizational architecture becomes a substantial means to mitigate it. Because the school is not only

dedicated to taking care of its enrollment, but it is also beginning to be a new stage of dialogue to analyze the local circumstances of its environment. Therefore, the school would have to be the first point of reference to achieve the literacy task, identify the most pressing problems in that community, propose the conclusions, summon the pertinent governmental instances to solve them together, articulate community-municipality developing programs and extracurricular training for the community with the support of other instances, among other possible functions. Schools that make schools, schools that learn, innovative schools, schools at the service of their community: these are the challenges that educators face today; but, sometimes, we are faced with another reality, faint-hearted directors, perverse laws, outdated administrative processes, salary problems, few incentives, thus building a wall of obstacles. To avoid today having to face the alarming dropout rates that many environments are going through, it is necessary to turn the gaze towards those who have achieved through a firm educational policy that includes considering the variables of poverty, exclusion, marginality, underemployment, thus reaching a leading economic position in the region, by achieving through education to eradicate the historical ills that affects us as a country in the *"educational area.*

10. Pedagogical ideas from challenged educational environment

In recent years, the educational systems have demonstrated, in some countries more than others, the importance of: a) making large and continuous investments in the field of education; b) reform the curricula, especially at the elementary level, to give more room to the key subject that lay the foundations for learning; c) extend the coverage of the school system; d) introduce new forms of schools management, in support of decentralization and strengthening of local capacities; and 2) questioning the operation-cost of higher education institutions, generally exempt from public supervision due to the tradition of university autonomy. Due to the previous initiatives, are now the international cooperation and credit institutions, whose interest and commitment in the field of education represents a notable change in relation to their previous priorities. Despite initiatives that seek to improve the coverage and efficiency of educational services, deficits are still greater that attempts to overcome them. Children and young people come to schools in many challenged environments in conditions of great inequality, especially due to the great differences of social and economic origin that still prevail in many countries. School systems do not contribute to overcoming these differences because resources and investments in education are distributed very unequally and end up favoring urban and middle- and high-income populations.

For education to become a true instrument of economic and social development that allows the full use of human potential, it will be necessary to make greater efforts and investments in schools, a place where mostly the learning and training process occurs. To achieve these objectives, three specific measures are proposed: a) investing the maximum in the classroom in terms of 3 learning resources and infrastructure; b) make the training of teachers more rigorous and intensify and systematize the continuous training; and c) offer better conditions and supports to students who come from low-income homes, communities and regions.

Beyond these specific measures, it will be necessary to rethink and redesign the educational systems as a whole to respond appropriately to the changes in the structure of the student population that will surely occur when the quality and retention levels in schools are improved.

Finally, efforts in the educational field will have to be substantially increased. Much of this effort will be monetary (expenses, investments), but it must be complemented by measures that take advantage of the good experiences that have been achieved. It is also essential that stakeholders in a good education – parents, employers, officials, and teachers themselves – are more concerned with improving the quality of education. Only when this occurs, a substantial improvement can be anticipated and thus, respond to the demands and opportunities of globalization.

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