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Management of Educational Paradigms within the Framework of Contemporary Educational Strategies

Eduard IONESCU[1], Sebastian Cristian CHIRIMBU[2]*

Abstract

Each major pedagogical orientation brings with it a set of certain potential actions, a potential that becomes reality at the level of invariably at the level of educational reality. Assuming a certain pedagogical educational paradigm is thus equivalent to the transposition into practice of a certain type of experimental research and promoting a particular way of conceiving and modeling of human nature. In a world characterized by contradicting realities, by turmoil, fast developing technologies, discussing and deciding on the most appropriate educational paradigms should be a core process in the attempt of conceiving the educational vision and objectives of tomorrow. The present paper aims at discussing the role of educational paradigms within the framework of contemporary educational strategies.

Keywords: *Educational paradigm, educational model, classical educational paradigm, modern educational paradigm, the open class paradigm.*

1. Introduction

The contemporary society is increasingly defined in the literature as being an educational society. Comparative analyses of educational systems highlight the current convergence degree between social development, economic and cultural viability of a company and the system of education which it promotes. This requires the need for a better reflection at the

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educational level of the changes incurred or anticipated to occur in the socio-economic sphere and to rigorous research about the possibilities of contemporary educational systems.

The majority of current scientific research is placed under the sign of deciphering the procedural frameworks that define the general scope of a phenomenon which is studied. Educational research in recent years is rooted in its turn, in keeping with contemporary trends in the context of epistemology, investigations of paradigmatic type proposing explanatory structures-actionale their own approach to the educational phenomenon

2. Theoretical Background

Concerns for the paradigmatic approach to educational reality were generated both by the growing complexity of the phenomenon always investigated and tasks undertaken by the education and the necessity of a better theoretical discourse interrelation of pedagogy and practice in education.

Although having close meanings at the level of general epistemological theory the concepts of model and paradigm have different meanings in the field of educational studies.

The term "model" comes from the Latin "modus" which meant measure. In the epistemological sense, the concept of model refers to the simplified representation, focused on elements strictly useful for the scientific analysis of a particular process. The simplification has as a role to focus on relevant and determining features and functional essentials.

Being the symbolic expression of a particular process or phenomenon, the model aims to reveal the intimate structure of the respective process or phenomenon so that the researcher might operate with it. Defined in this way, the model has the following components: 1. concepts (terms, signs and symbols), 2. assertions (laws or axioms), 3. transformations and rules 4. correspondence rules that make it possible to compare the results estimated by calculation with the experimentation of the model .

In its role of essential figurative construction, the model is able to provide the researcher interested with the opportunity to get to know the processes that are otherwise difficult to access by means of research.

3. Argument of the paper. Models used in creating competitive educational strategies

The successful utilization of models in scientific investigation of the educational reality is conditioned by both the accuracy and correctness of drawing up model (modeling) and coherent and unified interpretation of the symbols of its constituents, i.e. functional relations exist at this level.

In this context, we consider it necessary to underline the distinction between the didactic model (material, symbolic or abstract), understood as a means to achieve a better understanding by the students of the processes and the phenomena studied and the epistemological model, aimed at capturing the essence of the formative processes of instruction components. If the student's teaching models are aimed at facilitating the understanding of a reality otherwise hard to grasp, the epistemological model is a specific type of scientific and pedagogical tool aiming to describe the inner mechanisms and structures of the educational phenomenon.

The specific area of the epistemological models of pedagogy as a science is quite broad, including descriptive-explanatory models, prognosis, etc. We consider it useful to mention the difference between static, structural models, which reproduce by analogy the internal structure of a phenomenon (e.g. educational action model structure) and dynamic models that are focused on identifying ways of functionally relating subprocesses involved in the various didactic activities (models of lifelong learning, teaching, assessment, self-assessment etc.).

Although important, the models of epistemological type turn out to be insufficient in describing and explaining the educational phenomenon as a whole. This has imposed a paradigmatic approach to educational reality. The frequent use of the concept of paradigm in the pedagogical theory and practice requires some clarification.

The term derives from the latin word paradigm "paradigm" that mean example. Used in the specialised literature starting with with T. Kuhn's book, "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions" [1], the concept of paradigm means currently a number of investigative methods and theories with a pronounced regulatory nature that guides and directs at any given time effective research undertaken in a particular area.

Defining elements of any paradigms are the location in investigating the reality on a particular theoretical perspectives positions, the use of certain tools and research methodologies and last but not least, assuming and maintaining a certain balance between theory and practice.

Conceived by some authors as "a disciplinary matrix", the concept of paradigm is valuable in at least two respects: on the one hand it allows uniform, coherent, non-contradictory description of theories and researches carried out in a given time to the level of science and on the other hand it allows the description of how, on the basis of the accumulation over time of the epistemological inconsistencies "the scientific community", chooses to make the transition from one paradigm to another (scientific revolution).

The evolution of pedagogy as a science has imposed the epistemological usefulness of paradigmatic approaches. Originally used by the researchers of the history of pedagogy, concerned about the various ways by means of which education was achievedover time, the concept of paradigm is currently associated to an equal extent with experimental pedagogy, the theory of training or educational management.

4. Arguments to support the thesis. Educational action paradigms and models

While the conception, design and organisation of the contemporary educational-formative processes stem directly from the theory of instruction, emphasizing its particularities in relation to the traditional didactics paradigm, a similar situation may be encountered in terms of the theory of education.

For example, referring to the organisation of space according to the pedagogical conceptions prevalent throughout time, Getzels (according to Caesar Bârzea, 1998:101) distinguishes the existence of four fundamental paradigms of the educational context type: the rectangular class paradigm, the square class paradigm, the circular class paradigm and the paradigm of the open class. [2]

4.1 The rectangular class paradigm

The rectangular class, specific to the paradigm of the nineteenth century, also called magistrocentric, emphasizes the absolute authority of the teacher.

Placing the teacher's desk and chair in front of the string of banks arranged in the rectangular space of the classroom emphasizes almost ostentatiously the dependence of the students on the knowledge offered by the teacher's tasks and instructions.

This context, as mentioned previously, is characterised by "the dominant role of the teacher as the author of the act of teaching learning activities at the expense of students and instill a climate of rigid hierarchy at

the level of interpersonal relationships among students and between students and teacher" [3]

4.2 The square class paradigm

The paradigm of the square classroom appears at the beginning of the twentieth century, and is an expression of the child centered pedagogical concept, centered on students and their needs, proposed by authors like Decroly Claparede, Montessori, etc. In this context of a square space, with the teacher's desk situated at the level the student's desks, the focus moves from teacher to student and from teaching towards learning, students being offered more freedom.

4.3 The circular class paradigm

The paradigm of the circular classroom, promoted in the mid 20th century, is a result of the transition from the associationist to the structuralist perspective within the theory on the lifelong learning. This paradigm is based on the fact that the student is no longer conceived as inactive entity to whom the teacher simply sends information, nor as an active body which must be stimulated to learn but, this time, the student is placed in a field of reciprocal influences, similar to the model of the enclosure with barriers proposed by Kurt Lewin. "Every person who learns is a stimulus for learning activity of persons placed in the same field. The emphasis is moving from individual to collective activity, while priority is given to cohesion and group learning dynamics, with focus on the activity of social learning and inter- education "(according to Caesar Bârzea, 1998:102).

4.4 The open class paradigm

The open class paradigm built on the principles of lifelong learning through discovery and action promoted by Bruner, is focused on the promotion through education of natural curiosity and desire of the students to get to know and explore the reality in all its forms of manifestation. It envisages equipping school spaces with modular furniture and turning the teacher into a guide of the students, that should support them in their effort to gain knowledge of various aspects of the phenomena they study. The open class paradigm enhances the quality of the teaching learning process, promoting the liberation of any spatial constraints, limiting in this way the artificial character of learning.

Referring to the specifics of contemporary education B. Wurtz (according to C. Cucos, 1996, p. 32-33), captures the defining traits of the

current paradigm being promoted in education. We present in the table below the principles of the new educational paradigms.

Table 1: *Features of new educational paradigms*

Principles of the classical educational paradigm	*Principles of the modern educational paradigm*
Emphasis is placed on knowledge of content, on accurate and punctual information definitively	Emphasis is placed on the connections between information on the responsiveness of the face of the new concepts, stressing the need of permanent learning;
Learning is a result;	Learning is a process;
There is a hierarchical and authoritarian structure where conformity is rewarded and different thinking is discouraged;	There are anti-hierarchic principles, teachers and students considering each other especially as people and not as roles;
The structure of the education curriculum is rigid, mandatory;	The flexible structure of the formative process is underway, the optional disciplines and alternative methods of work are encouraged;
Knowledge is learnt in a binding for all rhythm;	Accepting that, from the point of view of capacities and capabilities students are different, different rhythms of learning are accepted;
Focus is placed on efficiency and success	Focus is placed on the development of the student's personality
Focus is placed on the outer world;	Focus is placed on imagination and creativity, on the student's inner world;
Focus is places on the development of linear analytical thinking favoured by the left hemisphere of the brain;	Focus is placed on a type of education that should involve all the brain, combining reasoning favoured by the left hemisphere with the non-linear, intuitive strategies favoured by the right henisphere;
Assessment of students is based on strict labeling, which can sometimes lead to stigmatization;	Labelling is limited to an auxiliary role, it is of limited importance for the development of students;
Focus on norms and standards which are most often exterior to the students themselves;	Focus on the student's capacities and aspirations when measuring results;
Emphasis is placed on theoretical knowledge of theoretical;	Completion of theoretical knowledge is made with practical experiences carried out in class and outside of class;
Bureaucracy and resistance to collectiv proposals	Collective proposals are taken into consideration and supported;
Classrooms designed and organized according to strictly functional criteria;	Classrooms organized according to ergonomic criteria – light, colours, confort when sitting
Learning is done for the present time,	Education has a prospective character, it

Principles of the classical educational paradigm	*Principles of the modern educational paradigm*
recycling information following scientific progress;	can be for the future, recycling information anticipating scientific progress;
The information flow is conceived as having a one-way character, from teacher to students;	Learning is promoted within a relationship of reciprocity between teachers and students;

A comparative study of the new educational paradigms on the background of the classical paradigm demonstrates, as in the study of modern didactics paradigm razvi, important instructive-formative values.

We refer to the fact that the specification of an explicit manner of the coordinates that define the new educational paradigm offers an important theoretical and methodological support for both organizing educational and formative activities as well as in terms of the design of investigative strategies that are tailored to optimize educational reality [4].

6. Conclusions

The paradigms previously mentioned illustrate how various pedagogical theories promoted over time have been influencing the educational process, its quality and results.

Each major pedagogical orientation brings with it a set of certain potential actions, a potential that becomes reality at the level of invariably at the level of educational reality. Assuming a certain pedagogical educational paradigm is thus equivalent to the transposition into practice of a certain type of experimental research and promoting a particular way of conceiving and modeling of human nature.

In a world characterized by contradicting realities, by turmoil, fast developing technologies, discussing and deciding on the most appropriate educational paradigms should be a core process in the attempt of conceiving the educational vision and objectives of tomorrow.

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