

ETHICAL AND UNETHICAL ELEMENTS IN THE PEDAGOGICAL PRAXIS

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Abstract

As most of the novelties in the last century, the ethics of pedagogical praxis is an American invention. Exciting or detestable, in the business sector, ethics had a meteoric rise in North-America, then spreading all over the world, especially to independent countries which have their own economy.

Educational ethics is a branch of ethics which studies the quality of the relationships between natural and legal persons involved in common actions, based on the positive values which govern the concept of education. With the absolute certainty that we are in need of more information, we would like to point out that ethics in the pedagogical praxis is restricted to the standard of the criteria for moral behavior which give clear guidelines to teachers in their professional activity.

Keywords: pedagogy, proactive education, ethics, moral education;

Introduction

In our society, ethics and deontology are confused with morality, but the three are very different, as morality relates to religion, learning and the Christian tradition, while ethics and deontology are regarded as more of a way of behaving in society, based on moral principles and values which are universally accepted as valid.

Thus, ethics is defined as the science that deals with the theoretical study of human values and the human condition from the perspective of moral principles, and with their role in social life. Ethics also means norms of behavior which are accepted by society as being just, correct and moral, specifying what is right and what is wrong in the duties and moral obligations of a particular society.

We can consider ethics as a science of behavior, of mores, as a set of concrete rules about morality or related to it. In this regard, we also find a definition of ethics that highlights the fact that it represents the system of behavioral norms transmitted by a particular community, norms based on the distinction between what is right and what is wrong, while morality includes a set of general guiding principles. In a more and more dynamic and complex society, in which economic entities control important human, material and informational risks, the question related to rectitude and responsibility is becoming more and more pressing.

An understanding of ethics is rather difficult for us as individuals and we will only know it when we have understood that healthy ethics is the essence itself of a civilized society. In our busy world, more and more people are looking for novelty, which many turn into a first-rank standard for the value of all things. In education, ethics is a distinctive field and a general, very current topic of discussion.

In fact, ethics in the pedagogical praxis may be considered an applied field of ethics, related to determining the moral principles and behavior codes which regulate interpersonal relationships in educational establishments and govern the teachers' or school managers' decisions.

General ideas regarding ethical and unethical elements in the pedagogical praxis

In our rushed and busy world, more and more people crave novelty, which many turn into a first-rank standard for the value of all things. From this perspective, we are doing alright. Ethics in the pedagogical praxis is a highly-regarded area and an extremely current topic of discussion at a global level. This topic, which is so new, has not generated controversies or polemics related to situations such as: "Do we know who invoked and dictated the word "ethics" in the pedagogical praxis?" or "Whose was the first editorial, writing or debate on pedagogical ethics?". It is not currently common to look back, which releases me from the (always boring) obligation to introduce, in this first chapter, the inevitable "overview of the history of the subject".

Ethics in the pedagogical praxis in the EU has only been introduced very recently, thus the literature on the subject cannot provide details on who introduced this concept, who developed, updated and modernized it. As any novelty in the last century, pedagogical ethics is an American invention. The genesis of this recent science has divided the population into two categories: some consider it valuable, serious and high-performance, others, on

the contrary, claim that all American inventions are primitive, summary and inevitably “imperial”.

Exciting or detestable, ethics in the pedagogical praxis spread very quickly in America, and then to all “civilized” countries, no doubt to countries in the European Union, which have a market economy and are governed by the rule of law. (Zorleţan, T., Burduş, E., Căprărescu, G., 1996, p. 45). Starting with the inhabitants of Great Britain, the inhabitants of the European Union were also “infected” with the increased attention given to ethics in pedagogy, starting with the 1980s. In our country, the interest for ethics in pedagogy is something new. Are we, by any chance, talking only about the imitation of the “forms without content” or about the normal connection to the trends of the population in the developed world? This is a question that is too early to answer.

Many times, categorical explanations do not manage to clarify the (seemingly) clear meaning of certain words. From the perspective of the first opinion, it is easy to understand that “ethics in the pedagogical praxis” is an area which aspires to clarify topics related to morality which the teacher faces in his or her teaching activity in an educational establishment. That is true, no doubt, but it is only close. Let’s look at the

little more accuracy which may help us understand what ethics in the pedagogical praxis is.

What is the meaning of the word “ethics”? Sociologist Raymond Baumhart asked some American businessmen such a question and he received some classical answers:

- “Ethics is related to my intuition, to what I feel is right or wrong”.
- “Ethics is related to religion, to faith”.
- “You are ethical if you follow the law”.
- “The acceptance of your behavior by society”.
- “I have no knowledge of the meaning of the word”.

Taking a look at the previous answers, we can say that they are all false (except for the last one, of course). Many people tend to juxtapose ethics with what they feel, probably wanting to empathize with others. However, ethics is not related to one’s mood. The latter is in a state of flux, it changes and does not always conform to reason, and, most times, it is the feeling itself which pushes us to deviate from ethical principles: to have extra-marital relations, to envy those who have more things than us, to hate people with other

sexual orientations or of a different religion, etc.

The link between ethics and religion is not confirmed either. It is true that most religions claim to have high levels of ethics. If ethics were closely related to religion, that would mean it should be obeyed only by religious people. However, ethics is valid for both atheists and saints, so that it can in no way be confused with religion or completely subordinated to it.

At the same time, behaving ethically is not the same as following the law – idea which I will be supporting with various arguments several times hereafter. Many times the law incorporates moral beliefs accepted by a lot of people in a particular country. Both the law and feelings can easily deviate from what should be ethical. The enslavement of Africans in America before the Civil War, the policies of South Africa, the segregation of women in Islamic countries are models to avoid of barbarian social links, forcibly introduced through “laws” which cannot be admitted as related to ethics. In conclusion, being an ethical person does not mean following the behavior patterns accepted by society in their entirety. There are also people who practise true behavior types, but not always (Ioan Țoca, 2002, p. 81).

In training and educating young people, the teacher has the top role. He or she is

given the task with the highest degree of responsibility: that of training in a particular field and educating the youth. What other profession can bring a bigger satisfaction than to see a child open up and grow as a flower before the teacher’s eyes? This growth is, of course, the biggest reward for the teacher. It is unanimously admitted that history annals have not had until the present day the opportunity to record a job so full of creative spirit and that follows such noble objectives, in the work of our people. “How profound and noble is this work, which makes people happy, changes the course of rivers, creates seas, restores hundreds of thousands of hectares to growing good crops...!” (Stelian Păun, 1974, p. 14).

For school teachers, working in a creative manner means seeing how the child develops before their eyes. It means educating, with dedication and responsibility, tomorrow’s citizen, the multi-skilled man, who fully understands what is truly beautiful in life. The social status of the teacher in contemporary society seems to be that of middle class. The teaching job is not among the most sought-after, nor is it among the most avoided ones. The intellectual job, though respected, does not give the teacher power, influence or a superior income. But it does provide prestige and satisfaction, vocation

being one of the main reasons for choosing the profession. Those who take on this job come from families where intellectual professions are valued. In most developed countries, this job is especially sought by women. Romania is not an exception to this rule. The stereotype that circulates in society is that the teaching job is a feminine profession. Some sociologists believe that the characteristic itself of this profession, which involves fragmenting objectives and intensifying external control, make it unattractive to men. A lot of research highlights the fact that this profession seems to suit mostly women, who are capable of emphasizing the affective and expressive side.

The teacher has the following roles in school:

- a) Promoter of education;
- b) Educator;
- c) Associate of education;
- d) Partner of the teaching staff.

As an organizer of learning, the teacher combines the objective and logical aspects of communicating knowledge with psychological aspects. He or she is therefore preoccupied with both applying didactic principles and the theory of instruction in communicating the content of education, and with the psychological implications of the act of communication: the psychology of child evolution, the

psychology of learning, communication strategies (Stelian Păun, 1974, p. 16) etc.

According to Mr Filimon Turcu in *Psihologie Școlară (School Psychology)*, when we talk about didactic skill we take into consideration the teacher's knowledge in his or her field, the teacher's expertise, skills and abilities of working with students, the pedagogical abilities he or she possesses, his or her character, etc., that is his or her personal traits, but also the context in which they are involved.

It is also necessary to take into consideration the relationships with the students, the ability to manage the education establishment, the necessary pedagogical abilities. Then it is necessary to differentiate these traits and abilities, as potentiality, from their actual manifestation in the didactic behavior. A teacher may be competent, but the competence is only latent, unmanifested. Just as there are, of course, competent teachers who are also active and express their competence in palpable results.

The psychological and pedagogical skill consists in the full development of all the components of the teacher's personality and in integrating them, at the same time, into a whole. It is a synthesis of all general human traits and of a solid and multi-skill training, of the effort made to develop and consolidate one's qualities as a human

being and as a person who exercises a profession. “The psychological and pedagogical skill is the complex, personal and specific ability (dimension) of the teacher to conceive, organize, plan and lead the learning process, the instruction and education process of the studious youth, with competence and prestige, creative spirit and increased efficiency.”

The teacher is not just a professional instructor. He or she is also the one who shapes studious young people from a human, ethical and social perspective. The job of an educator involves high moral training, moral qualities, a dignified moral profile, a dignified and civilized conscience and moral behavior.

Research methodology

The purpose of this research is to show what the ethical and unethical elements in the pedagogical praxis are.

The objectives of this research are:

1. The attempt to demonstrate the existence of ethical elements in the pedagogical praxis;
2. The attempt to demonstrate the existence of unethical elements in the pedagogical praxis.

General hypothesis

The pedagogical praxis is the most important process in micro-approaching organizational behavior in schools.

Specific hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Teachers involved in research will understand and integrate certain ethical theories into their pedagogical activity, as their own life philosophy.

Hypothesis 2: The motivation to go through the school curricula is closely related to the student’s development.

Hypothesis 3: If teachers control and influence students through ethical motivation strategies, their performance will improve.

Hypothesis 4: If there is a positive and stimulating organizational climate in the educational establishment, it will be the support for the students to satisfy their needs for self-actualization and self-motivation.

Working hypothesis: Teachers in primary education are guided, in their pedagogical praxis, by superior needs such as the need for self-actualization and the need for respect and consideration.

In order to conduct the research, a questionnaire was used. The most important instrument used by those who conduct surveys, in order to ask questions and record the answers, is the questionnaire. Its concrete content and the way in which it is drawn up depend on the nature of the information that is to be

collected with it, and certain rules of development and use must be followed.

Examination and interpretation of data

According to the answers received from the respondents:

General hypothesis

The pedagogical praxis is the most important process in micro-approaching organizational behavior in schools - ***confirmed.***

Specific hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Teachers involved in research will understand and integrate certain ethical theories into their pedagogical activity, as their own life philosophy - ***confirmed.***

Hypothesis 2: The motivation to go through the school curricula is closely related to the student's development - ***confirmed.***

Hypothesis 3: If teachers control and influence students through ethical motivation strategies, their performance will improve - ***confirmed.***

Hypothesis 4: If there is a positive and stimulating organizational climate in the educational establishment, it will be the support for the students to satisfy their needs for self-actualization and self-motivation - ***confirmed.***

Working hypothesis: Teachers in primary education are guided, in their pedagogical

praxis, by superior needs such as the need for self-actualization and the need for respect and consideration - ***confirmed.***

Conclusions

In order for the pedagogical praxis to be of good quality, characterized by ethical elements, the teacher must be a professional. His or her experience can only be obtained with the passage of time, but any teacher gets specialized training through continuous training programs.

As Romanian and European educational policy documents point out, the problem of quality in education and training has become a vital issue for the European Union's competitiveness. Progress in the teaching career will be ensured by acquiring new professional and social abilities, which are so necessary in an always-changing social context.

The evolution of the educational establishment is not determined only by structural and technological changes, but also by the teacher, by his or her degree of participation, emotional investment, skills and ability to assimilate the values of change.

The school is an organization which corresponds in part to the idea of bureaucracy, but also an organization which functions as an open system. What

makes the school similar to the other organizations is its characteristic of organization that learns and what makes it different is that it produces learning. Metaphorically speaking, we could call the educational establishment “the power of brains” (the human resource in the school is made up of the teachers, the students and the teaching and non-teaching staff).

Knowledge of motivational theories and integrating them in the activity of a manager allows for a better understanding of the motivational profile of the human resource with an impact on improving the professional activity. The need for such an approach is even more pressing now that the current economic and financial crisis can also be blamed on the lack of a coherent motivational system.

The man of the future will be more motivated in order to withstand the profound changes in society. The motivation for achievement is strongly correlated to the economic development taking into account the transition to the post-industrial society. All changes, in general, have an effect on motivational models as well as on generating individual motivation.

In our opinion, the professional development of teachers includes three types of actions, different in their essence, which can be ordered on an axis,

depending on the distance from the requirement to solve non-conformity and which are the result of assessment and self-assessment processes: corrective actions; preventive actions; proactive professional development actions, focused on research, innovation, experimenting, collection and implementation of good practices. While the first two types of action are required mainly by the organization, targeting the need to solve and prevent any non-conformity ascertained after assessment, proactive actions target mainly the individual level – the teacher, agent and actor in the promotion of change – and have as a source the results of the assessment processes, which mainly take the form of self-assessment and reflection over one’s own activity. In the case of proactive actions, the motivation for professional development is of an intrinsic nature and this development process takes place beyond the more narrow space of solving identified cases of non-conformity. We believe the series of proactive actions, which can be generated through assessment, but mainly through self-assessment, is a substantial potential for professional development and it deserves to benefit from the highest degree of attention.

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