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I. P. Podlasii's Contributions to the Reconstruction of Pedagogic Normativity

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Abstract

The paper entitled "I.P.Podlasii's contributions to the reconstruction of pedagogic normativity" highlights the contribution of the contemporary educator of the eastern area, I.P.Podlasii in demonstrating the scientificity of pedagogy. I.P.Podlasii is one of the few contemporary educators who noticed the need to address the issue of normativity, not by starting from the didactic principles but from the axioms of pedagogy. The axioms of pedagogy, fundamental truths which no longer need to be proven, are epistemological guidelines for the construction of the scientific knowledge system. The model of pedagogical normativity suggested by I.P.Podlasii, adaptable to the paradigm of the curriculum, includes: the axioms of pedagogy, the regularities of pedagogy, specific laws, concrete laws, principles of pedagogy, pedagogic rules which have an operational nature. I.P.Podlasii suggests the promotion and application of a three-step axiomatic method which creates the necessary context for the affirmation of a system of pedagogical axioms. It refers to systematising the basic concepts, stabilised at the level of the basic matrix of pedagogy. The second step consists in correlating the basic concepts and the third step in concentrated organisation of the theories of the field through formula, symbols. The contributions of the mentioned educator are remarkable, given that they are not reduced to the didactic principles, but create a coherent system. The scientific novelty and originality arises from its specificity, hermeneutic research of a theoretical type, which focuses on identifying the epistemic structures of pedagogy.

Keywords: Axioms, regularities, normativity, scientificity, paradigm of the curriculum.

1. Introduction

The paper entitled *I.P.Podlasii's contributions to the reconstruction of pedagogic normativity* brings into focus the interests of I.P.Podlasii, the contemporary educator, specialist in the theory and history of pedagogy in the post-Soviet space. Author of: *Педагогика (Pedagogy) 1996*, *Курс лекций по коррекционной педагогике (Lectures on correctional pedagogy) 2002*, *Продуктивная педагогика (The productive dimension of pedagogy) 2003*, *Педагогика: 100 вопросов - 100 ответов (Pedagogy: 100 questions – 100 answers) 2004*,

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Педагогика начальной школы (*The pedagogy of the primary education*) 2008, *Энергоинформационная педагогика* (*Energo-informational pedagogy*) 2010, he is one of the few contemporary educators who addresses normativity starting from the axioms of pedagogy.

2. Purpose, methodology and results of the study

The objectives of the paper were: the analysis of the axioms, regularities, laws, principles and of the pedagogical rules, and their inclusion in the system designed by the contemporary educator. The subject is relevant insofar as it brings in front of the reader a less explored space. The methods used in the research were: text analysis – method used in the study of the aforementioned author's representative works; the comparative method, achieved through the investigation of educational problems from a synchronic and diachronic perspective.

3. Theoretical Foundation

In any science, *normativity* ensures the ordering of facts, events, processes etc. which constitute the subject of that specific research. It is an essential epistemological criterion which confirms scientificity in the reference field. In terms of pedagogy, the issue is debatable, although, throughout history, there has been interest in the construction of a specific *normativity*, achieved through: the development of the *education* and *instruction principles*, starting with the founder of pedagogy, the Czech Jan Amos Comenius, in the eighteenth century; the more or less successful attempts to discover and promote some laws of pedagogy, respectively of education, instruction etc.

I.P.Podlașii has undeniable merits in the *reconstruction process of pedagogic normativity* to a level of maximum generality and openness required by the curriculum paradigm. In other words, his contributions are remarkable given that they are not reduced to the didactic principles, but also tackle the *laws* and *axioms of pedagogy*. It is the most difficult problem faced by the socio-humanist sciences, in general, and by the pedagogic sciences or education sciences, in particular. From this perspective, we can identify - as does Sorin Cristea in *Fundamentele pedagogiei* (2010):

a model of pedagogic normativity targeting a series of resources and requirements (didactical, gnoseological, psychological, sociological, organizational, cybernetic) synthesized into axioms, regularities, laws, principles, rules. (Podlașii, 1996, p. 125)

The pedagogic *normativity model* suggested by I.P.Podlasîi, adaptable to the curriculum paradigm, which envisages the construction of a system of requirements of a global and open character, includes the following components:

3.1 The axioms of pedagogy:

The philosophical axiom of education - The interdependence between the *objective* dimension of education (the general function of instruction and development) and the *subjective* dimension of education (aims of education) / instruction;

The sociological axiom of education - The interdependence between the quality of education and the quality of social development;

The psychological axiom of education - The interdependence between the quality of education and the quality of the development of the human personality.

3.2 The regularities of pedagogy

(at the level of **general laws** of education / instruction covering the basic components of education):

The general pedagogic / didactical regularity – The optimisation of the relationship between the functions and aims of education, between the objectives – contents - methodology – evaluation of the education / instruction activity;

The sociological regularity of education / instruction – The optimisation of the relationship between the participants in the education process at all levels of education / instruction (macrostructural - microstructural);

The psychological regularity of education / instruction – The optimisation of the relationship between external - internal conditions of the education / instruction activity expressed in terms of *learning*;

The gnoseological regularity of education / instruction - The optimisation of the relationship between the knowledge gained at the cultural level (science, technology, art, philosophy, religion, politics etc.) and the reception and internalisation capacity of the *educated* (which can be capitalized under the guidance of the *educator*);

The organisational regularity of education - The optimisation of the relationship between the existing educational resources and the results obtained;

The cybernetic regularity of education / instruction - The optimisation of the relationship between the objectives and contents of the educational / instruction activity, and the results obtained, which are continually evaluated

(through reverse connection circuits, devised by the *educator* and the *educated*, with the specific function of permanent regulation - self-regulation of the educational / instruction activity).

3.3 Specific laws

(laws of basic components of education / instruction):

The specific share law of the cultural function of education;

The permanent correlation law between *educator* and *educated* (necessary in any context of the education system);

The unity law between the social and psychological requirements expressed at the level of educational aims;

The unity law between contents and the general forms of education;

Education / instruction organisation law at system level;

The law of the open methodological offer in relation to the existing teaching resources;

The law for continuous assessment of education and at different time intervals;

The law of pedagogic projection of education / instruction by optimizing the relationship between aims – contents – methodology – evaluation - context of achievement.

3.4 Concrete laws

(laws of particular components of education / instruction):

Laws of learning (The law of guided learning by intensifying reverse connection actions with the purpose of permanent regulation - self-regulation of the activity; The law of learning stimulation by optimizing the relationship between external and internal motivation; The law of quality increase of learning in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, progress);

The law of objective operationalization in terms of optimal correlation between the concrete tasks suggested - actual existing resources;

The law of contents selection in relation to their positive formative value, specific for each psychological age and instruction situations;

The law of permanent adaptation of the instruction methods to the actual situations of learning;

The law of capitalising all forms, strategies and methods of evaluation in relation to the instruction context.

3.5 The principles of pedagogy:

General principles, with a broader range of reference at projection, conception of educational instruction activities at system level – *pedagogic*

principles / projection principles: a) the principle of pedagogic knowledge (transforming the speciality knowledge into knowledge with pedagogic value); b) the principle of pedagogic communication; c) the principle of pedagogic creativity;

Operational principles, with a narrower range of reference in terms of the achievement and development of the instruction activity organised within the educational process didactic principles: a) the principle of positive formative orientation; b) the principle of accessibility; c) the principle of essentialization; d) the principle of systematization; e) the principle efficient participation; f) the principle of interdependence between theory and practice; g) the principle of interdependence between intuitive knowledge and logical knowledge; h) the principle of regulation-self-regulation.

3.6 Pedagogic rules which

have an operational nature within each principle. (Cristea, 2010: 65-67).

I.P.Podlasîi is one of the few contemporary teachers who notices the need to address the issue of normativity, starting not from didactic principles, but from the axioms of pedagogy, which must be researched, demonstrated and promoted as very important /paramount epistemological milestones for the solid argumentation of the *scientificity* of the field. It is a recurring subject in his works dedicated to pedagogical normativity, works concerned with the reconstruction and analysis of “pedagogical axioms and principles”, for the affirmation of an “axiomatic method” in pedagogy capable of fixing the “pedagogical axiom system”, necessary for ordering the “educational process” at all levels of education, seen as global and open formative system (Podlasîi, 2007: 387-403).

The axioms of pedagogy can be constructed insofar as we address “all knowledge together”. We take into account

the pedagogical knowledge dating back to the mists of time, first as experiences, then as theoretical enrichment and then as regularities.

This pedagogical knowledge addressed globally, “all together” from a normative perspective must

rely on obvious truths such as the axioms (Podlasîi, 2007: 191).

The general epistemological function of the axioms consists in affirming a *true judgement*, valid in any context

which leads to the construction of the scientific theory in its normal state,

provable and applicable in every situation, in the field of reference.

Thus, the axioms are not only deducted from *theory*, from the correlation of the fundamental concepts, but from practice as well. At this level,

they lead the consciousness (A.N. pedagogical one, in our case) towards those logical models, formulated as a result of the approval and lengthy enrichment during its development

– as an increasingly active, productive, creative consciousness in its relations with the specific universe of the education field (see the activities from the learning system and process; see the relationship between the participants in the education process, in general, between the *educator* and *educated*, the *teacher* and the *pupil*, as the main *education / instruction participants*, see the school as an organisation and as *a factor of culture and civilization.*) (Podlasii, 2007: 191).

Thus, the *axioms of pedagogy* represent fundamental truths that no longer need to be demonstrated as

they arise from the practice of education and instruction

which they order through the correlation of the fundamental concepts reflecting the educational reality at levels of maximum generality and depth, extension and essentiality. In terms of a historical epistemological argument,

axioms are a sort of conclusion to what had been done until a certain point (...), serving, at the same time, for future progress.

The epistemological role of the *axioms* is vital for the proper construction of the “scientific knowledge system” within the specific conditions of each field, not only in that of *mathematics*. We take into account that mathematics is by definition an *axiomatic science* since its specific object of research is not dependent on contextual and empirical variations, giving it the status of “pure science”. Even though the research object of pedagogy, education, is dependent on a variety of contextual, empirical, phenomenal, ideological, demographic etc. variables, its epistemological status cannot be confirmed if a normativity is not promoted, one based on axioms projected as fundamental truths which no longer need to be proven, accepted and promoted not only from a conventional point of view, but also in a pragmatic and methodologically superior, wide and limited sense, extended and focused on the general, essential issues of the field (Podlasii, 2007: 191-192).

I.P.Podlasii draws attention to the fact that

every scientific theory is constructed from a fixed number of axioms from which, by determining the laws, logical conclusions may be obtained,

applicable, in an extended and restricted context, for the efficient solution of the problems of the field. Thus, a sketch is advanced, necessary for the reconstruction of pedagogical normativity, seeing that the *scientific theory* (pedagogical, in our case, AN) consists of:

a multitude of *concepts*, from which those which are *essential, fundamental*, immutable or of reduced variability compared to the changes of inherent education in an open context must be epistemologically fixed;

a multitude of situations which need to be explained and interpreted in relation to the *fundamental concepts* and to some operational concepts;

a fixed number of axioms constructed by correlating the fundamental concepts that reflect the maximum generality relationships

present inside the objective and subjective reality which represents the subject of specific research (for the science concerned, in our case for pedagogy, as a socio-human science specialised in the study of education).

Thus, the necessary conditions for the development of a new and fundamental research field are created, one which I.P.Podlasii calls, with sufficient precision and plasticity, *The axiomatic method in teaching* (Podlasii 2007: 193-196). The aim is explicitly presented:

to automatize the contents of a field of knowledge (N.A. education, instruction), by fixing the core ideas (N.A. the fundamental concepts) in relation to a stable model.

Against this background, we must
think about the method with which to introduce the axioms of pedagogy.

The epistemological process described obviously “cannot be exhausted”. This *process*, “must, however, be scientifically based and consistent with the logical, philosophical and pedagogical needs of the field of science.” (Podlasii, 2007: 193-194).

I.P.Podlasii talks about the need to promote and apply an *axiomatic method*. It is

the method for constructing a part of a discipline by selecting, from all the true statements of the concerned field or science, a number of allegations, essential ones, with a high theoretical, methodological and practical impact, stable, situated on superior levels, having maximum extension, depth, generality (Podlasii, 2007: 194).

The epistemological criteria involved in the development of the *axiomatic method* aim and ensure:

the basis for the delimitation of the “essential statements”, promoted as fundamental truths of the concerned field or science, through logical means (supported by correlating concepts) and pragmatic means (supported by capitalising concepts into effective practical solutions);

the basis for the development of typical qualities: epistemological independence; the coherence of the connections which eliminate any contradictions between “essential statements”;

the basis for the permanent compliance with the epistemological requirements particular for the “axiomatic method”:

exactness, through the

rigorous determination of the fundamental concepts that will be used in the system of axioms, followed by the determination of the theories;

correctness, by focusing the axioms, “from the first statements”, on the fundamental concepts which reflect the subject of research at the highest levels of depth (essentiality) and generality;

efficiency, by clearly anticipating the subsequent consequences resulting from the system of axioms (Podlasii, 2007: 194).

Is pedagogy ready to adopt the axiomatic method?

To this problem question, I.P.Podlasii answers *methodically* with the help of *three steps* which create the necessary context for a *system of pedagogical axioms* to affirm itself (Podlasii, 2007: 195-197; 198-205).

The first step is to systematize the basic concepts

stated throughout the history of the field concerned and stabilised at the level of the “basic matrix” of pedagogy. In I.P.Podlasii’s view, the basic concepts or categories systematised especially for the epistemological foundation of pedagogy are the following five: *education, instruction / learning, education system* (at *process* and *system* level), *training, development*. Within each “basic category” we find another level of concept systematisation which allows a deeper study of the five “main categories”: a) education – intellectual education, spiritual education, moral education, physical education, etc.; b) instruction – learning, teaching etc.; c) education system – didactic activity, didactic method, form of organisation of the didactic activity etc.; d) training – general, professional etc.; e) development – cognitive, affective, motivational etc.

The second step

consists in correlating the basic concepts into *axiomatic constructions made by using the connections* identified and promoted in terms of the theories and practices of the field of education, of instruction etc. The pedagogical theories build the axioms by fixing and clearly expressing the correlations between the basic concepts in terms of some *concise formulas*, different from those of the exact sciences which use signs or symbols (see mathematics, physics or chemistry).

The third step

is to “formalise the axioms” specifically to better organise the theories of the field subordinated to fundamental truths that can be expressed through *formulas* which concentrate the *information*, but also by creating certain symbols or signs (abbreviations, shorthand expressions etc.) while respecting and valuing the specificity of the field.

“*The axiom system of pedagogy*” defines, in I.P.Podlasii’s opinion, the coordination unit of the basic situations which have a clear, quite rigorous meaning in the specific field of study, researched according to the fundamental concepts, found within special correlations which are necessary in order to gain knowledge about reality at levels of maximum depth and generality (Podlasii, 2007: 198-205).

From this point of view, the *axioms* have superior epistemological qualities present at the base and the top levels of normativity, visible through the fact that they

do not contain anything controversial and do not reuse previous information,

have cognitive independence, do not need to use synonymous concepts or identical terms etc. That is why *axioms* are also necessary in *pedagogy* where they reflect and reinforce the accumulated progress, especially in relation to *the general theories of the field* (foundations of pedagogy / general theory of education, general didactics / general theory of instruction). With

their help, the *theories* of the field can be continuously improved and developed, while the *axioms* themselves should not be considered permanent. Therefore, they must be known as *epistemological* guidelines which “contain general human values”, reflected *specifically* in relation to the *specific* problems of pedagogy as a whole, but also to each *pedagogical science* or *education science* integrated or which can be integrated in the system of pedagogical sciences or education sciences.

The *axioms of pedagogy* suggested by I.P.Podlasîi, which form, in his opinion, “*the axiom system of pedagogy*” are defined in the following terms (Podlasîi, 2007: 200-205):

The axiom concerning the interdependence between the physical and psychological development of the human personality;

The axiom concerning the development of the human personality based on learning;

The axiom concerning the preparation of the personality for life through education and instruction;

The axiom concerning the capitalisation of moral, intellectual, technological, physical, etc. exercises for the development of the human personality in any context, in any situation;

The axiom concerning the capitalisation of motivation as a stimulating force for learning;

The axiom concerning the appropriation and understanding of the fundamental knowledge as a condition of effective learning;

The axiom concerning the teacher’s role as a prerequisite to effective learning;

The axiom concerning the complete capitalisation of one’s aptitudes in the development of the human personality;

The axiom concerning education as a basis for the acquisition of the skills and attitudes necessary in any human activity.

The *capitalisation of the axioms of pedagogy* can be accomplished from a historical perspective. It is an important argument in favour of demonstrating the scientificity of pedagogy, suggested previously in the pre-modern era by the first paradigm launched by the founder of pedagogy as a distinct field of knowledge. I.P.Podlasîi refers to the great Czech educator, Komenski (Comenius) who, in the seventeenth century, launched the *education paradigm in accordance with the perfect abstract nature, created by God*. Against this background, the great Czech educator advances two theses with a superior, absolute ethical and pedagogical value for the pedagogical and social normativity.

Neglect of education means the death of people, families, states and of the entire world.

The difficulties of family education lead to difficulties in adapting in society, school, church and at work. (Podlasîi, 2007: 206)

From the perspective of contemporary, postmodern pedagogy, we must highlight the role of the *axiomatic system* in the correct approach to the “educational process” (Podlasă, 2007: 387-403).

The *pedagogical system* contains all the elements which ensure a fixed ordering of the existing concepts and relationships in education.

The *structure of the pedagogical system* concerns itself with the interrelations between the components that constitute the pedagogical system and that are distributed according to the form required by the specific characteristic of education, which is oriented towards reaching certain formative aims, obtainable through pedagogical means capitalised in terms of the *subject* – educator, the teacher initiating education – the *object* (educated, pupil, student etc., benefiting from education’s formative actions and influences, direct and indirect, organised and spontaneous, as an activity carried out in an open context).

In all the situations mentioned, initiated and developed at the level of the pedagogical system, the ordering of the formative activities and actions is necessary, as well as that of the influences emitted or imprinted spontaneously, in an unorganised manner, through the *priority* and *determining* intervention of the *axioms* as *fundamental truths* which are stable in terms of value, epistemologically solid, that no longer need to be experimentally demonstrated or validated.

4. Results

The research results are represented by the interpretation of the fundamental texts of the educator from the post-Soviet space in accordance with the analysis grid belonging to the Romanian educator Sorin Cristea, which makes subjective interpretation almost impossible. By applying the axioms of education, the fundamental concepts, to the texts of the educator we are analysing, we have demonstrated the epistemic aspects of the Russian postmodern pedagogy.

Conclusions

The present work, which is a hermeneutic research of a theoretical type, analyses I.P.Podlasă’s remarkable contribution to the consolidation of the epistemological status of pedagogy in the postmodern stage of its evolution, supported by clarifying normativity as an ordering model for the specific object of the research – education, as a formation and development activity of the personality of the educated. The axiomatisation process of

pedagogy, demonstrated by the Russian educator, contributes to the increase in the level of its epistemological maturity.

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