

Educational Process as Something Dynamic

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If we conceive the educational process as something dynamic, which basically combines what is given with what is emerging, we will understand that there are protagonists in it who have a fundamental role in this process, or perhaps we should say that, in this process, each and every one of the agents has a leading role. So, talking about curriculum implies that the subject can be approached from different perspectives, some more legitimate than others, some broader than others and, what is even more notorious, some more dynamic than others. It is in these differences where the essence of the educational process is conjugated, namely, in the conception of the curriculum, so it is worth asking: What are the educational units understanding by “development of their own curricular projects”? What are they actually doing? What curricular decisions do they make? Not only these questions arise, but many more, not to mention that it is also legitimate to doubt the capacity and preparation of teachers and educational units to undertake a process of conscious and responsible construction of an effective curriculum. It is interesting to approach the subject critically, not to reconsider the theoretical aspects, in which we find a wide range of postulates, but rather to revitalize the pedagogical practice in the place where it actually occurs, the classroom, and from there to enable discussion, and analysis of the problem, assuming that a paradigm change is urgent at all levels, otherwise, the entire society will suffer even more marked dehumanization. There are many challenges and requirements that fall on the educational task, and there are many who express their opinion, judge, and dare to formulate lapidary sentences on the subject of education, with no more foundation than that allowed by a fragmented look at reality. Therefore, a deeper look can shed light on why it has not yet been possible to reach a more optimal level in the quality indices, nor has equity been achieved, and what is worse, it seems that all that has been said is slipping away through the window of the classrooms to end up in the realm of abstraction, from which it will not be possible to bring what is real and everyday. Thus, this work will also be a proposal for educational agents, a proposal that should not be kept together with others, but rather, hand in hand with the contingent, could give way to a better understanding of the problem.

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Development

Curricular Conception: Starting Point

Before the Educational Reform, the existing curricular conceptions in educational institutions were characterized by being loaded with an exaggerated encyclopedia, a behaviorist approach that led to the depersonalization of the teaching-learning process. The lack of coherence and lack of clarity regarding the purposes pursued in the educational process made transformation necessary, giving a great boost to teacher training and investing in infrastructure, technology, and others, but above all, redesigning plans and programs from their foundations.

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Everything seemed to portend that new times were approaching the field of education, and that the already tainted atmosphere would be filled with renewed air and the demands to improve the quality of education would be met, with teachers being the protagonists of this change.

In the fundamental postulates of this reform, the constructivist approach is evident, with a dynamism that would allow the main agents of the process, the students, to build their learning.

After some years of walking with the reform, some teachers in active service have been asked about their conception of curriculum, if they have the possibility to make significant changes in it and if they can distinguish between implicit and explicit curriculum, and, we must say, I am very disappointed that only one out of ten people is capable of giving a coherent and correct answer. This research was disappointing and I wanted to know if a person who is starting their teaching career and just graduated, could give us a good definition, but their answer was that “The first year we had that branch, but I don’t remember what it was about”.

The teachers surveyed affirm that curricular decisions are made only in the central spheres, and that they are responsible only for decisions about how to evaluate the contents covered, their main task being “to treat the contents stipulated in the study program”.

Stenhouse’s proposal remains very distant, who assigns the teacher the role of researcher of the curriculum and its development, and even more, assigns him a scientific character, and compares the classroom with a laboratory. If we pay attention to the definition of curriculum that he uses, when he points out that it is “An ordering guideline of the teaching practice and not as a set of materials or a compendium of the field to be covered. It is a way of translating any educational idea into a testable hypothesis in practice.” (Stenhouse, 1984).

I agree with him in this definition, since theoretical conceptions can only be put into practice by appropriating them, namely, that having a research work on the part of the teacher, his role is expanded, and he goes from mere executor, to protagonist of the process. This would mean that the study of teaching practices and all that it implies, would not be done from outside, but would be done by themselves.

But, the tendency that is evident in the pedagogical practices, is to maintain a tradition of abstractionism, with assumptions that have been validated from the behaviorist conception, such as, that the stimuli, contents, must be to achieve an expected response, predesigned, being the center of the process what is taught, emphasizing the formal aspects. From this conception, “good students” will be those who repeat the predesigned response model, which is measurable and objectifiable, and allows the teacher to maintain authority and validates it in front of his students as superior.

As in all human actions, what is thought and how it is thought determines the product of that thought, that is, the concrete action, and if the reflective process is abandoned in favor of a “do for the sake of doing”, we are left with nothing but expect poor teaching performance, and the classroom is reduced to a place where “material is passed” and “things are done”, but where learning is not built (Reductionism of learning by doing to a simple doing). The problem is described like this:

Within the educational field, an anti-intellectual environment is generated, which fights against idealistic currents; concern for making school action effective; The development of child-centered pedagogy leads educators to depend on a type of rationalization oriented towards pragmatic intervention in school change. The massive dissemination of Dewey’s ideas, which are misinterpreted by his followers, favored an environment whose effect was the desertion of reflection and the privilege of applied knowledge... a knowledge that privileges ideas of interest, need... (Stenhouse, 1984)

The educational process would have the purpose of achieving a predesigned product, making the school proactive, whose effectiveness will be determined by the achievement or not of this product so much so that

schools are already conceived as companies, and the teacher, one more functionary within a system characterized by competitiveness, individualism, and other symptoms of the dehumanization of students.

Sharing the same circumstantial scenario, there are the other 10% of the teachers surveyed, for whom the curriculum is something dynamic that is built from a vision of life of the student as a person and of society, given in a present that is important, in itself as a process and as an end, in which the theoretical and the practical are combined, a meeting between concrete people who build a reality, developing effective teaching practices without neglecting reflection or action, perceiving that the dialectic of this process will allow a training that does not depend only on the teacher, nor only on the student, but on each and every one of the educators.

Curriculum Development: A Necessary Challenge

We have established as the basis of the educational problem the lack of conceptual clarity existing in teachers in relation to the concept of curriculum, which leads to developing pedagogical practices that disagree between what is thought and what is done, emphasizing doing for the sake of doing, among other consequences that it entails.

We are now going to see how a conceptual change can be achieved and what needs to be changed or reinforced. The first change should lead us to think of a curriculum with academic relevance and social relevance, which allows us to focus the work on a more humanizing training, which claims the value of training from the person himself, recognizing it in all its dimensions but also valuing the multiple interactions it develops with its environment. This curricular look would require different conceptions of education and school that make it possible to manage and recreate the social and cultural processes that surround educational institutions and those that are gestated from within. This implies conceiving the curriculum with certain particularities in such a way that an integrated, coherent, and flexible work is achieved.

A curriculum with these characteristics will be of permanent, participatory, flexible, creative construction, with a social approach that recognizes and energizes the contexts in which they are configured in their conceptions and practices, with transdisciplinary approaches that allow the transformations that our society requires. There are different social and community processes that do not directly include educational institutions in their dynamics, leading to rethinking the work that occurs within them; from the articulation of the curricular processes with the social and community dynamics that are managed from the educational community, that is, move and generate processes of curricular reconstruction as a result of the social processes, of their dynamics, in a different exercise of conceiving the community relationship as an interactive and dynamic whole, in an integral dialectical relationship.

Initiating a reflection on the curricular structures and the social processes that are dynamized around the school, implies an approach to the way in which the curricular and its characteristics have been presented, in order to understand the influence and relevance of an educational work that recognizes its environment, its social and cultural milieu, but it is not at its service, but rather is part of it.

In the development of the teaching/learning process, it is not possible to approach the once all the objectives and contents present in a certain area. On the contrary, it is necessary that there is a distribution of the contents throughout various units that follow one another in a school year, a cycle or in the complete stage, with adjustments to their present reality, and that is agreed by the unit education and teaching team, guaranteeing the continuity and coherence of their actions and as part of the curricular project, in what we generically call sequences.

As soon as we get into this topic, we can find different ways of understanding the task of ordering objectives and content (part of the curriculum), depending on the importance we give to each type of content, the coherence between the teachers involved in the process of teaching/learning of a course group, the type of learning we choose and, consequently, the teaching model we propose, in short, the way we understand our teaching work together with the vision we have of the educational fact, of education itself. However, what must be clearly determined is whether all the curricula are equally valid, independent of the curricular model that is applied, or if, on the contrary, the curricular units of the model that is applied correspond to an open and flexible model, such as the one we are proposing at this time, must have some characteristics that differentiate them from the others.

I understand that, in a model based on the contributions of significant learning, and attention to the diversity of the students, in the autonomy of the planning of each curricular unit, logically the sequences of contents should not be rigid, nor the same for all the courses of the same educational unit. It will then be understood that each reality is not comprehensible a priori, but in the dynamics of the process itself, discarding metaphysical, ideological, or any type of assumptions, giving the curriculum its most appropriate understanding and definition, namely, as a path that has been followed to travel, in a present, building significant learning for themselves. Thus, for example, one no longer prepares for life, learning becomes life: The curriculum is development, not predetermined assumptions.

For Stenhouse,

...The ideal is that the specification of the curriculum encourages a personal research and development program on the part of the teacher, through which he progressively increases the understanding of his own work and thus refines his teaching. To summarize the consequences of this position: all well-founded research and development of the curriculum, whether it be the work of an individual teacher, a school, a group working in a teacher's centre, or a group operating within the coordinating structure of a national project, will be based on the study carried out in school classes. It rests, therefore, on the work of teachers. It is not enough that the work of teachers has to be studied: they need to study it themselves. (Sacristan, 1988)

The consequences of the development of the curriculum for teachers in the sense of broad depth as opposed to restricted professionalism are evident, and arise mainly from the commitment that the teacher generates in himself by systematically questioning the teaching taught by himself, with the ability to self-criticism, constant self-evaluation, studying the proper way of teaching, questioning, and verifying the theory in practice through the use of the aforementioned capacities.

Cultural Dialectic in the Classroom: An Emancipatory Process

In our investigation, as in the investigations carried out by Sacristán, keeping the proportions, it is evident that the traditional categories with which the curriculum is conceived do not lead us to an emancipatory development nor to the progress of the sense of the human. It is evident in the teaching work that derives from this conception, as has already been stated, many deficiencies, of which I will now cite the technical interest, manifested in a knowledge that maintains an essential interest towards ideas.

Theory is valued to the extent that it is practical, that is, directly applicable to practice, without the need to reinterpret it. The action is related to the product, and when the teachers' work is informed by technical knowledge, it appears as a manifestation of craftsmanship, and even mechanical work. (Sacristan, 1988)

The technical interest and the predesigned quantitative results seem to be signs of effectiveness in the school process, if we maintain the traditional conception of the curriculum as it is. But what we really need is to establish a culture of self-assessment, a capacity to see all parts of the process as equally important, namely both the

classroom and its near and far environment, with all its agents engaged in this constant analysis. A holistic view of the process, with a critical analysis of the teacher's work, given by the teacher himself, is a guarantor of a more dynamic curricular conception.

Conceiving the curriculum as a process, development involves the teacher, the student, and society as a whole, being clear that the hypotheses to develop the investigation of this process will not emerge from outside, but from the process itself. It is the teachers who, as has already been said, must develop research in their professional actions, without ignoring the classroom, but in itself.

Already around 1960, Stenhouse, based on the ideas of Kurt Lewin, and the philosophical position of Habermas, proposed research in educational action, in which systematic and self-critical inquiry should be given by the teachers themselves.

We believe that, if the teacher becomes a researcher of his own work, renewing his conceptions about the curriculum, the cultural dialectic will really occur, contemplating the knowledge accumulated by all the historical and epistemological events, which gives meaning to the plans and programs established, and emerging knowledge, the product of new visions, new knowledge built in contingency, in a propitious meeting for true development and human and humanizing progress.

The action research proposed by Stenhouse would allow the teacher to be a generator of change, with the possibility of applying clear and effective solutions to the various problems and school requirements. With these parameters, the quality of education will be a necessary consequence and not a statistical requirement, thus also improving the school-community relationship, and revaluing both the role of the teacher, considered as a true professional, and the student as a real person, not a static content repository object.

With this new curricular conception, the educational process will have value in itself and what society really needs will be generated as a result: people capable of thinking independently, generators of significant changes. Let's understand the word change not as an attempt to replace some structures with others, but in the sense of a dynamic process that allows the active becoming of what the human being really needs: to be realized as such in a society that values each being in their fair measure, offering them the opportunities to develop their life in a community.

The Curricular Training of the Teacher

Today is when initial teacher training is most discussed, for all those backgrounds that provide the daily events in our schools and high schools in our country. This is how, through the evaluations that are being applied to the teachers of the municipal system, it has been possible to determine that around 41% of the teachers evaluated do not meet the expected standards, that is, they are categorized as basic, and unsatisfactory. On the other hand, from the pressures for a change to the LOCE, after a day of paralysis of the students, and from the general consensus to produce an imperative change in education, the question arises about what is the role of educational institutions that train new teachers and what is the conception of initial training and learning that they promote. It is true that there are innumerable contributions that the State has given: the full time, the radical change in infrastructure, the curricular appropriation courses, the postgraduate degrees in some subsectors, etc., for which the answer will not be long in coming.

Although teacher training is intended to show a reflection on the conception of initial teacher training and some disciplinary, didactic, and pedagogical skills that every teacher should handle. Emphasis has been placed

on some accessory elements so that the students of these future teachers acquire significant learning in the corresponding subsector.

The conception of initial teacher training should be framed within the paradigm of constructivism, for which reason the teachers that every institution trains must respond to a triple dimension of learning (knowledge, ability, and attitude).

A School of Education must infuse its students with professional and teacher training so that they acquire the competences of the domains of their area or specialty, the competences of the domain of the teaching and learning processes and have attitudes and actions that reflect their interest, genuine in the practice of their teaching role.

To do this, it must commit to creating spaces for teachers in training to be builders of their own curricular projects, to be competent, to develop their teaching skills, to be autonomous, committed to their work, capable of teamwork and open to change, and above all, have the ability and motivation to develop research about their own work in the classroom.

In teacher training, efforts must be made to articulate the disciplinary, the didactic, and the pedagogical; In addition, it seeks to develop the continuous nature of learning, that is, the knowledge that is developed is anchored in previously acquired knowledge and is the basis for generating new knowledge.

From this perspective, what should be sought in each approach could be characterized as follows:

- Disciplinary: with emphasis on the development of conceptual and procedural competencies given by the current study programs, with various depths and extensions of levels, basic to medium, and medium to higher, in order to achieve disciplinary expertise.
- Didactic: with emphasis on the development of didactic skills through reflective and critical analysis of didactic proposals, both designed by the teacher and by others, and
- Pedagogical: with emphasis on the methodological and evaluative orientations given by the current study programs, and even by particular proposals, whether institutional, and/or personal.
- Scientific: Understood as the need for constant renewal and self-evaluation that emerges from within the classroom itself, namely, with an investigation-action that postulates and tests hypotheses about the problems that arise.

Current Curriculum Framework

From the dimension of know-how, the teacher in training must be able to learn to design, implement, and evaluate the curriculum in didactic situations, in addition to understanding that the skills, an important part of learning, must be learned by their students, and put into practice.

From the dimension of knowing how to be, it must be individually and socially responsible, in addition, and capable of meeting the needs that arise from the field of dispositions towards objects, ideas, or people with affective, cognitive, and evaluative components, which incline people to certain types of actions, such as personal development, learning and the relationship with knowledge, relationships with others, citizen rights and duties, study discipline and personal work, teamwork, evidence management, truth and criticality, dialogue and conflict management, including the natural environment, in such a way that all areas are developed with a cognitive look at the attitude.

In this sense, what should be sought is not only to develop the evaluative aspect that is part of the attitude, but also to intentionalize the cognitive look that emerges from it, with respect to learning and its relationship with the knowledge that they develop.

Like the dimension of knowing how to be, they articulate the values and beliefs with the behavior that we expect a teacher should have in the exercise of their teaching function, so that the institutional and social environment of the school or high school is a place that favors the meeting and does not hinder the interactions within the educational unit.

From the dimension of wanting to do, this teacher must be a committed and active participant in the educational change that is to be implemented, but must also be reflective, not impulsive, in such a way that it demonstrates all the skills acquired in their training, and also demonstrates all its expertise in the specific area in which it has been prepared.

As expressed by Grundy (1994), "First, the attitudes and practices of teachers must become more firmly based on educational theory and research. Second, the professional autonomy of teachers must be expanded. Third, the professional responsibilities of teachers must be expanded" (p. 256).

Based on the above, I have wanted to show the importance of teacher training and the conception of learning that can be extended to practically all educational tasks, not only from the dimensions addressed in the previous lines.

As a way of concluding, I want to reflectively express an aspect of real importance that is not often treated in curricular topics and that is closely linked, it is evaluation as well as Planning. What about the evaluation? The evaluation is more than a qualification, it is a permanent process, which feeds back the teacher's work. It is left as open questions to be taken into consideration in the initial teacher training, and in the learning conceptions that these new teachers will handle. What is the role of the teacher from this perspective? What evaluation approach do you want to deliver to these teachers so that they have a management according to the curricular needs of the heterogeneity of students and schools where they will practice?

The Ethical View of the Problem

From the perspective of what should be, and of the values that should be present in the educational process, we can observe at least two causes that make the problem that we have raised serious:

(1) The relationship between the means and the ends is unknown or confused: indirectly, by transforming the teacher into a "technician" who applies what is given, he generates a level of frustration that prevents him from being happy with what he does, he instrumentalizes himself and his students. This is an ethical problem because the human being is an end in itself, and should not be objectified or another human being objectified.

The way out of this problem has already been mentioned, but it is necessary to dwell on it:

The exciting consequence that action research has for teachers is that it offers practicing professionals a greater degree of autonomy and responsibility for their own working practices, and to provide students with students with whom they work, more authentic learning experiences. (Grundy, 1994, p. 258)

(2) Individualism as a prevailing value: Today's society is marked by a growing individualism, which goes against the essence of the human being, social by nature, and the classroom is no stranger to this: students are privileged that achieves the highest performance and subtly or clearly, those who do not give the expected answers are discriminated, obviously, without making an analysis of why some students do not reach the expected levels, or they are classified as bad students, bad courses. This is an ethical problem that violates the fundamental rights of people, such as equality, and we believe that it would be solved when the professionalism of the teacher is understood and assumed as such and the student is understood and assumed as a person, with all what that implies.

(3) Assessments: Every human being is an axiological being, with an estimative conscience, and this sometimes leads him to dogmatisms that are difficult to overcome, and that affect his work and relationship with others. Thus, in the case that we are analyzing, the assessment of work is of singular importance. Being a professional or being a technician in the classroom will lead to different considerations, to different visions of life, and, of course, to approach the pedagogical task with high vision or with mediocrity.

If we emphasize the ability that human beings have to critically analyze what they think and do, dogmatism is overcome, and therefore stagnation.

There are many other points that we could cite in this regard, but these three are the fundamental ones, since they make explicit the need to also reflect on what is the professional and personal ethics of the teacher, and update the value perspectives, rescuing the fundamentals of the pedagogical task: A job between people and for people.

Conclusions and Reflections

In my opinion, it is assumed that one is the theoretical conception of things and processes, and the other is the process itself, which is evidenced when I hear, for example, that something is supposed to be happening, or that someone is expected to take care of it, and in reality, that assumption is just that, assumption, and that someone is not really present either, then I realize how far we are from the essence of the process. It seems complicated, but it is not, it is just a discrepancy between the theoretical and the concrete reality, where learning by doing is reduced to a mere functionality, to a marked doing without due reflection.

We then show two extremes: Thinking without doing.... Doing without thinking..., and its golden mean, in Aristotelian language or adequate measure to rescue the essence of the educational process: Thinking and doing to think again.

When we enable a real meeting between people who recognize themselves as parts of a whole, with different but valid points of view, and the teacher assumes that the content is not paramount, but rather the learning process, and learning not for the future, but for the here and now, when we assume the social role that corresponds to us, of awakening the capacities of the students, mainly the capacity to assume the challenge of learning by themselves... only then will we have reconciled the theoretical plane with the plane.

In this way, the need and commitment to reflect on the teacher's work becomes an ethical need, in which constant self-evaluation, open-minded discussion, and the values of respect, social responsibility mark the pattern of this reflection.

In addition to the above, there is an urgent need to create effective spaces for reflection on the actions of teachers in the classroom, as a way of expanding knowledge and for teachers to become researchers of their own practices, not waiting that others set the guidelines to find solutions to the problems that arise in the classroom, but that the solutions emerge from their own hypotheses verified in the field itself.

We must say, quite clearly, that teachers are not prepared to take on this challenge, either because of weakness in their training, or because of stagnation in their professional development. The truth is that a change is urgently needed, a change of paradigms in the curricular conception, which must be understood as a dynamic process, in which the role of the teacher rescues his professional level and a change in society, which should not sue education, the development of a product determined a priori, but must give the process the role it deserves.

Finally, I conclude then that quality in education should not be a statistical requirement, but a necessary consequence of a process that recovers its essence: *a process that trains people with autonomy of thought.*

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