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THE HISTORICAL DIMENSION OF PEDAGOGICAL RESEARCH

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Abstract

Pedagogical research has the general function of developing scientific knowledge in the field of education. It aims to improve the theory and practice of education. Scientific knowledge is achieved through fundamental concepts, normative, research methodology - specific to the field of pedagogy. In the epistemological context, pedagogical research exploits two ways of scientific knowledge, necessary in any field: a) genetic, historical - refers to the historical evolution of the field; b) logistic, axiomatic - refers to the "basic matrix" that supports the scientific fundamentals of the field. The historical dimension of pedagogical research can be emphasized at level of : 1) general - by analyzing the evolution of the field from a perspective: a) theoretical (history of pedagogical thinking); b) practice (history of educational institutions); 2) particular - through the analysis of education, during historical epochs (currents, authors, school institutions, etc., nationally and locally affirmed). It involves a methodology that includes: a) synchronic historical research strategies (related to the historical time of the event); b) diachronic (reporting to the current historical time); c) basic methods: document analysis, biobibliography, monograph, discovery, modeling - historical; d) operational means (historical documents - primary, secondary, original, reproduced). The theme proposed by us will be argued at the level of two case studies that aim at the historical (synchronous - diachronic) analysis of the relationship between the pedagogical conceptions and the reforms of education in Romania between 1864-1944, respectively the evolution of pedagogy in Romania in modern and contemporary epoch.

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1. Introduction

Our theme is emphasizing as a *general objective*, the *historical dimension of pedagogical research*, necessary from the *epistemological* point of view, at the level of *fundamental research*.

Fundamental pedagogical research fulfills the *general function of maturation and epistemological development of knowledge* in pedagogy, as a socio-human science *specialized* in the study of education. It sustains the *operational pedagogical research*, which fulfills the *general function of improving the short-term practicing education* with medium-term methodological implications.

2. Problem Statement

In a broad sense, *pedagogical research* is also defined by the *research formula in education*. The *pedagogical research* formula emphasizes the prime role of *pedagogy* as a specialized science in the study of education through its own fundamental concepts and also through its own normative and methodological guidelines promoted at the level of the *general theories* of the domain: *general theory of education (the fundamentals of pedagogy)*, *theory and methodology of training (general didactics)*, *the theory and methodology of the curriculum*. Under this *specific epistemological circumstances*, there is achieved the research of education, training and education's design at a *theoretical (general)* level - through *fundamental research* and *applicative (specific)*, through *operational, experimental, research multidisciplinary oriented*.

3. Research Questions

Epistemologically, fundamental research appraises two dimensions of *scientific knowledge*, set at *normative* and *methodological* level by Piaget (1970). Both are important in the process of maturation and development of any socio-human science, and therefore they apply to pedagogy too:

1) **Genetic, historical knowledge** refers to the genesis and evolution of concepts, *normativity* and *methodology* specific to *pedagogy*. *The fundamental concepts*, are setting **over time** the *specific object of pedagogy* - education approached globally, abstractly (profound) and dynamically (under historical evolution). *Normativity* ensures *education's orientation*, both theoretically and practically, through the references promoted over **time**. *The research methodology* ensures the progress of the *domain*, through *revealing and capitalizing of its own scientific knowledge methods* (specific object of research and specific normativity), elaborated in *time* at *disciplinary* level, *intra-disciplinary* and *interdisciplinary* level.

2) **Logistic, axiomatic knowledge** refers to the *logistics of the research domain* epistemologically assured by the *disciplinary matrix of pedagogy* as a socio-human science specialized in the study of **education/training/design of education and training**, through the *general theories of the domain* (general theory of education, theory of training/ general didactics, curriculum theory) developed according to the *paradigms* asserted in various *historical stages* (Kuhn, 1999). This *basic matrix* is supported by the *fundamental concepts* asserted in time (according to historically consecrated *paradigms*), ordered at *normative level* (through axioms, laws, main guidelines) and consolidated and applied at the level of fundamental and operational research methodology.

Both *knowledge* paths have a major *epistemological* impact, reflected on the *structure of fundamental scientific research*, based on the interdependence between *historical and theoretical* (logistic, axiomatic)

research that ensures *progress* in any science, generally and in socio-human sciences (also in *pedagogy*), in particular.

4. Purpose of the Study

The relation between **history** and **theory** is not clarified in socio-human sciences, *pedagogy* included. It still persists "a dialogue of deaf people". Those who represent the "social theory" (sociological, economic, political, *pedagogical*, etc.) "Regard historians as *facts hobbyists*, amateurs and shortsighted without a system or a method, the inaccuracy of the *database* being equaled only by the incapacity to analyze it". Historians, on the other side, consider *social theory* (sociological, economic, political, *pedagogical* etc.) only a way to formulate "obvious truths in a barbaric and abstract jargon" without taking into account the "notion of time and space" within the frame of activities described as "scientific" (Burke, 1999).

On a *historical and theoretical* perspective (*logistic, axiomatic*) it is required the transition from "a deaf dialogue" to a *dialogue of authentic scholars* involved in the construction and development of pedagogy fundamentals as "normal science" specialized in the study of education. Only under these circumstances there may be scientifically and socially developed, the *effective* required *solutions*, through any historical time, by *the pedagogical practice*.

Fundamental pedagogical research involves the permanent interdependence between *historical research and theoretical research* (*logistic, axiomatic*).

Historical research has as a *general objective* the analysis of the evolution of scientific knowledge in pedagogy, realized through *general theories*, developed and perfected, in time, which establishes in *epistemological* meaning:

1) *The fundamental concepts*, integrated in *general pedagogy*, initiated by Herbart, in the first half of the nineteenth century, which includes: a) *the fundamentals of pedagogy*: ethical (at the basis of education and training finalities, which sustain *educability*); psychological (at the basis of education and training methods and of the formal steps of the lesson, as the main form of organizing the training in the educational process); b) *the general theory of education* or *general didactics* focused on capitalizing pupil's *educability* through *intellectual augmenting*, carried out at the level of "*educational training*"; c) *the theory of education* involved in the construction of an "*educational training*" or *formative* (emphasizing school and extra-curricular *discipline*) through moral education, spiritual education, aesthetic education, physical education, professional education (Herbart, 1976).

2) *Normativity of pedagogy* necessary to structure the education and *training activity*, initiated in the XVII-th century by the *founder of pedagogy* (as a specific field of knowledge), Jan Amos Comenius, who develops a *system of didactic principles* (Comenius, 1970);

3) *Pedagogical research methodology*, fostered according to the *paradigms* and *doctrines of pedagogy*, stated in time, emphasizing the philosophical, psychological and sociological dimension of education, and also the theoretical and experimental investigation etc., tendencies confirmed at universal and national level (Albulescu, 2007; Stanciu, 1995, 2006);

The historical dimension of pedagogical research may be underlined at a *general level* (*the history of pedagogical thinking and pedagogical institutions*) and *particular* (at the level of some *epochs, stages, works or historical personalities* affirmed in universal and national *pedagogy*). Both levels require

understanding of history as a socio-human science with special epistemological status confirmed by a *specific research object*, *specific normativity* and a *specific research methodology*. On the basis of these *epistemological references*, *history of pedagogy* may be built through: a) observing the particularities of history as a distinct field of research; b) reporting it to *pedagogical theory and practice* (education, training, design of education and training) that are constantly evolving in different *epochs and historical stages* (Cristea, 2016).

The object of study of history science concerns the *historical facts* „lived and thought” from a *past* (through *synchronous research*), a *present* perspective (through *diachronic research*) and even from a *future* one (through *prospective research*) (Djuvara, 2011).

Historical facts are represented by numerous events, groups and social classes, human communities, institutions, works, personalities, etc. affirmed in different periods, *epochs, stages of historical development*. From an *epistemological point of view*, not all *historical facts* constitute the "*research object of history*". The *object of specific study of history* refers to the **significant** *historical facts* identified in the *historical past*, capitalized on the understanding of the *present* history, "in order to influence the *future*" (Djuvara, 2011). The value of significant historical facts is constantly proven by "opening to the present" and the future (Ariès, 1997). In their definition and analysis, there are interfering the fundamental concepts of history: civilization, culture, period, epoch, stage, historical-development; truth, historical progress etc.

The specific normativity of history science depends on the *specific object of study of history* – *significant historical facts* identified at the level of the three dimensions of *historical time*: a) the past – requiring systematization through *synchronous historical analysis*; b) the present - requiring systematization through *historical diachronic analysis*; c) the future - requiring systematization through *prospective historical analysis*. Under these circumstances, on an open context, it becomes possible the consolidation of the fundamentals of history *normativity*, strengthened through the construction of *axioms and norms* specific for the history's domain:

I. Axioms:

1) *Explanation of historical facts* through *interpretation/understanding*, depending on their consequences in *time* (*present*, with perspectives of the *future*). This *axiom* sets the fundamental normative criterion that ensures the identification of significant historical facts.

2) *Interpretation/understanding of the significance of historical facts* according to the *specifics of historical knowledge* and the *general theory of the domain* (in which *historical knowledge* is applied). This *axiom* establishes two fundamental normative criteria: a) the particularity of *historical knowledge* (specific to socio-human sciences) based on a *teleological causality* (the *cause* generates the *effect* mediated by the proposed purposes and objectives, involving the *responsibility* of the designer, confirmable over *time*) separated by the deterministic type causality, from natural sciences (the *cause* generates the *immediate, observable, measurable effect*) (Djuvara, 2011); b) *the particularity of the general theory of the domain*, historically researched, supported by the "basic matrix" of the discipline sustained at the level of fundamental concepts (Kuhn, 1999; Burke, 1999); in the case of *historical research applied in pedagogy*, we have in mind the basic concepts, the normativity and the methodology specific to the field of *pedagogy*.

The "*norms*" in history may be constructed from an "*analytic*" *epistemological perspective* or "*existential hermeneutics*".

From the "*analytical*" perspective there are proposed: a) *probabilistic norms* - which reveal the necessary connection between a *direction/evolution trend* of the significant historical facts and the open context in which this direction may be realized, *independent*, "by a rigorous deduction"; b) *provisional norms* - which emphasize "a rational connection between a given situation and the decision to be made", which requires the construction of an ideal model of the functioning structure of the activity (see, in the case of pedagogy, the *structure of the functioning of education*) (Djuvara, 2011).

From the perspective of "existential hermeneutics", which is specific to history, there are proposed two "*norms*": 1) *The norm of the fundamental difference* between the *causal explanation* from natural sciences (direct, instantaneous, between cause and effect) and the "causal explanation" from *history*, (mediated through the proposed objectives); 2) "*The norm of the heterogeneity of objectives*", which emphasizes the role of the historical context, "always different and unpredictable towards the original objective, which outlines only the direction/the main tendency of unfolding significant historical facts, and not the precise coordinates of actual achievements" (Djuvara, 2011).

5. Research Methods

Historical research methodology, subordinated to the *specific research object* and *normativity of history*, involves three integrated actions into historical *research strategies*: *synchronous - diachronic*:

- 1) *Establishment of significant facts* through the *synchronous historical research* of the original, discovered, reconstituted historical documents and their critical interpretation at the level of historical *diachronic research*, constantly related to the *social theory* of the domain (in *pedagogy*, see the *general theory of education*, etc.)
- 2) *Emphasizing of significant historical facts continuity* "in an order to restore the *continuity* of duration (see the *historical age*), capitalizing two *categories of significant historical facts*: a) "*monumental facts*, which no contemporary must ignore "; b) "*hidden*, which remain in the *shadow*" that may be reevaluated through the *diachronic historical research strategy*."
- 3) *Explanation of significant historical facts at the level of synthesis*, realized not only by "mere chronological order", but by *teleological explanation*, depending on the *projected objectives that mediates* from a valor perspective the cause-effect relation (realized in a determinate *time-period, epoch, stage* of historical development) (Ariès, 1997).

The achievement of the two historical, synchronous and diachronic, research strategies involves: a) basic *historical research methods*: research of historical documents, content analysis, historical reading (oriented, thematic etc.), bio-bibliography, monography, discovery, demonstration, modeling and *historical-brainstorming*; b) *Historical, operational research tools*: historical documents (primary, secondary, original, reproduced etc.) etc.

6. Findings

The historical dimension of pedagogical research may be evidenced at the level of case studies. We recall in this respect our own historical research of the relationship between pedagogical concepts and the education policy strategies and educational reforms carried out in Romania between 1864-1944. This case study assesses the relationship between:

1) *Pedagogical theory*, involved in defining and analyzing the concept of education reform - as a change of the educational system at purposes level - organization structure - content of *education* (education outline and school curricula) and

2) *Education reforms* initiated and realized in *Premodern Age* (1864-1898 - see the *Law on the Instruction* from 1864, *Law on Primary and Primary-Ordinary Education*, 1896) and in *Modern Age*:

a) Initiated by Spiru Haret (*Law on Secondary and Higher Education*, 1898; *Law on Professional Education*, 1899; *Draft Law on Primary Education*, 1904; *Special Regulations for Adult Schools*, 1904; *Law for Schools for Young Children*, 1909) (Dinu, 1970).

b) Continued, in the *interwar period*, through the "innovative ideas about education" promoted by the *philosophical pedagogy* (G. Antonescu, St Bârsănescu, C. Narly), *sociological pedagogy* (D. Gusti, P. Andrei, I.C. Petrescu, S. Mehedinti, St. Stoian, O. Ghibu), *psychological pedagogy* (I. Nisipeanu, Fl. Ștefinescu-Goangă Fl.) (Cristea, 2001).

The modern interwar period confirmed the value of education reform strategies, supported by education ministers with a historical significant *pedagogical work* (S.Mehedinți, P.P. Negulescu, dr. C. Anglescu, N. Iorga, D.Gusti, P.Andrei, I.Petrovici) (Cristea, 2001).

A second case study, in design stage, aims at the historical analysis of the evolution of pedagogy in Romania in *Modern Age*: a) *Inceptive* (the end of the 19th century at the beginning of the 20th century); b) *mature* (interwar period); c) *advanced* (the phase launched in the second half of the 20th century). In another formulation, we are considering the development of pedagogy in Romania in the *premodern, modern and contemporary historical age*.

7. Conclusion

Such a historical analysis requests for a fundamental pedagogical research model. Such a *model* is used by Ștefan Bârsănescu since 1936, especially to analyze the "critical and genetic" historical evolution of *pedagogy*. On its basis there may be answered to the fundamental question - "How was conceived pedagogy in terms of its own object of study and of the specific research methodology?" (Bârsănescu, 1976).

The two *epistemological* references provide the basic *normative criteria* necessary to identify and dispose significant *works and personalities* in the *history of pedagogy*. These criteria are developed by Ion Gh. Stanciu, who analyzes Modern Age at the level of two *historical stages*: 1) *The foundation of systematic pedagogy*, carried out in parallel with the construction of the national education system initiated by Spiru Haret in-between the 19-th and 20-th centuries; 2) *The development of modern scientific pedagogy* in the first half of the 20-th century, in the context of *philosophical, sociological and psychological* orientations, which aim at the achievement of the *national ideal* (Stanciu 1995, 2006).

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