

7th icCSBs 2018
**The Annual International Conference on Cognitive - Social,
and Behavioural Sciences**

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE IRRATIONAL IN EDUCATION

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the significance of irrational in matters of education, and to the role of the teacher as a source of psychological influence on the formation of the child's personality. Generally, current teacher education programmes at universities do not properly acquaint students with aspects of the interaction between unconscious spheres of people, in particular, in the "teacher – pupil" system. At the same time, in the pedagogical literature there are practically no special works related to this issue. However, behaviour, emotional states, and the irrational thoughts of teachers can have a negative impact on the formation of the personality of schoolchildren. This study attempts to show the necessity of taking into account the influence of the irrational factor on the formation of the personality of schoolchildren. The authors consider scientific literature, psychoanalytic theories of child development, methods of education, as well as the analysis of the works of scientists engaged in those areas in psychology and philosophy in which the leading role of unconscious (irrational, affective, emotional, instinctive and intuitive processes) in the formation of the child's personality in the school educational process is postulated. Most of the impacts of the environment on the child are unconscious. All that is unconsciously remains unchanged. But we are capable of correcting something only in the mind, and the teacher, with his authority, and also with his professionalism and eruditions, can make an important contribution to the formation and development of the child's personality.

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Keywords: Myth, unconscious, irrational, personality, pedagogy, education.



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1. Introduction

The changes taking place in the periods of the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution, caused unprecedented damage to the spiritual life of man; its full-fledged and harmonious nature. Formed as a result of the exorbitant exaltation of the status of the human mind, the gap between consciousness and the unconscious led to the impoverishment of the human spirit. The myth, which for thousands of years was a living reality for man and thanks to which his life received its expression, justification and its goal-setting meaning, was the object of criticism of Reason. The myth began to be regarded as a fantastic reflection of reality in the primitive consciousness embodied in folklore and oral tradition. A characteristic feature for the ideology of this period was the assertion that primitive people tried to generalize and explain various phenomena of nature and society through mythical images. The concept of myth was used to designate various kinds of illusory ideas that affect the consciousness of people. This idea of the myth is also supported by modern researchers of this problem. At the same time, many scientists built their theories about myth, based on the postulate of the unconditional reality of myth. Losev (1993) defined mythology as follows: “The logos of myth, or awareness of mythical reality, is mythology. No matter how to relate to mythology, every criticism of it is always only a sermon of a different, new mythology. Myth is the most concrete, most real phenomenon of existence, without any deductions and reservations - when it comes as a living reality” . The following words of this philosopher and mythologist highlight the importance and significance of myth in human life: “The myth is not an invention or fiction, it is not a fantastic fiction, but - logically, i.e. first of all, dialectically, the necessary category of consciousness and being in general” (Losev, 1994).

Fantasies as a product of the myth-creating activity of the human psyche cease to be perceived by modern man as the most important source of internal energy. And we, adults, parents and teachers often deprive children of such spiritual nourishment, ridiculing these “inventions”, and even completely forbidding thinking of “awkward”, suspecting them of instability of the psyche. The paradox is that many of us probably suffered as a child from such spiritual usurpation from adults. We lose sight of the colossal stratum of the human psyche, capable of being both a fertile soil for the prosperity of the mind, and becoming a heavy burden paralyzing the vital activity of the individual. By right, we as adults should allow the children create their own worlds and wander in them. These worlds can be much cleaner than our reality. By destroying these worlds, or hindering their creation, we can indirectly contribute to the care of children in substitutes for reality by other means - through drugs. Not noticing, not feeling the child’s inner world means not being a pedagogue!

With the revolutionary discovery of psychoanalysis as a scientific trend, the ideas about man changed dramatically. The values of millennial traditions began to be reconsidered. In the history of mankind, up to the turning point of an incontrovertible evidence of the existence of the unconscious component of the human psyche, the reassessment of reality has occurred twice, since Copernicus created the heliocentric system of the world and after the proclamation of Darwin’s theory of evolution. In view of objective reasons to stop feeling the centre of the universe and to reconcile to the non-divine origin, it was very difficult for man; however, it was much harder to understand and accept the fact that his own thoughts and actions are sometimes dictated by the unconscious world. An individual’s irrational behaviour becomes

a significant subject of human study in philosophy, sociology, culturology, psychology and other fields of humanitarian knowledge.

2. Problem Statement

In modern science, psychologists and philosophers view the irrational as “a philosophical concept expressing an intellect that is beyond the control of rationality, incommensurable with the possibilities of reason. The correlation of the irrational with the possibilities of reason leads to its division into a pre-rational and super-rational: the former acts as an unreasonable-in-itself, the latter – as incomprehensible only for the actual state of the human mind, but, perhaps, accessible to understanding through the “transformation” of the mind, to a qualitatively higher degree of being” (Novaya filosofskaya entsiklopediya, 2001). Some researchers reduce irrationality to such concepts as sensual, intuitive. Rationality is understood as an assumption in setting goals and objectives, something reasonable (Foucault, 2007); irrationality is the opposite concept: something based on feelings and intuition. Here it is important to note that following Ellis & MacLaren (1998), we believe that the behaviour of the person is affected by adequate and inadequate emotions. In this study, we will consider adequate emotions that contribute to achieving the goals. From this point of view, the irrational turns out to be an important part of the personality of the learner, which ultimately determines his/her intuition, feelings, faith. The irrational can be likened to one of the characteristics of a special perception of reality.

However, in the Soviet pedagogy that developed after the Revolution of 1917, under the influence of processes in the Soviet society of the 1920-s and 1930-s, ideas related to the irrational were forgotten. The prevailing traditional authoritarian approach to the education of the learner, the future builder of a new socialist society, included the postulates of a material, rational attitude to the world around him/her and to the society as well. Appeal to the child’s inner world was not welcomed in educational institutions; extremely rare were visits to a psychologist for advice in case of problems of child’s personality forming. Psychoanalysis remained largely a theoretical concept, during the Soviet era the attitude of the scientific community to the theory, and even more so, to the practice of psychoanalysis was critically negative.

Nevertheless, the theory and practice of foreign education show that it is impossible to discount the “spiritual” aspects of the individual, and the best representatives of the national pedagogy have always stated that it is necessary to take into account the entire complex of features that characterize the learner.

3. Research Questions

In the process of conducting the research, we established the following questions: what is the role of the irrational in the formation of the learner’s self-consciousness in the learning process? what is the role of the teacher in this process of the student’s self-consciousness formation?

4. Purpose of the Study

Behaviour, emotional state, irrational thoughts of the teacher can have a negative impact on the personality of the learner. The purpose of this study is an attempt to show the necessity to take into account the influence of the irrational factor on the formation of the learner’s personality.

5. Research Methods

Analysis of the scientific literature, the works of authors of psychoanalytic theories of child development, methods of education, the analysis of the works of scientists engaged in psychology and philosophy in which the leading role of the unconscious (irrational, affective, emotional, instinctive and intuitive processes) in the formation of the child were used.

6. Findings

Despite certain positive changes in the social sphere and the unprecedented progress of science and technology, a man does not feel confident in his destiny. Promising assumptions of the Renaissance did not lead humanity to cherished goals. The artificially constructed image of a man - a rational and good being, created by the rationalism of the Enlightenment, only strengthened irrational and primitive mental impulses in man. A typical for this time emphasis on individualism and rationalism led to the activation of the archetypes of the collective unconscious, able to compensate for the imbalance in the human soul. Violence from the mind as a response has led to the appearance of the corresponding unconscious forces directed against it. An example of this can serve as the results of the Industrial Revolution, which implemented in practice rational scientific theories of the Enlightenment.

It is obvious that pedagogical science has also undergone significant changes under the influence of Rationalism, and the tendency of depreciation of the importance of irrational factors in the development of an individual personality undoubtedly influenced it. Metamorphoses of the child's soul often go unnoticed even by the closest people – parents due to the underestimation of the irrational (from the point of view of adults) views and actions of the child, his/her fantasies and the importance of the children's fairy-tale world. Schools, of course, are called, first of all, to supply a person with knowledge. But this knowledge will be aimed at creating, for example, an atomic bomb, or an atomic power station or the prohibition of the use of atomic energy, depends on the formed personality soul.

There is a possibility that generally accepted psychological theories, methods of upbringing, whose goal is the formation and development of the child's personality, can actually destroy in the child something that could lead to his/her independence and self-affirmation. Referring to the well-known names of scientists, and their theories, teachers who are incompetent in pedagogical matters, often hide behind these theories. We should not in any way allow theories to become dogmas and a general line in upbringing. These theories should play an auxiliary role.

If we imagine that the teacher is a psychoenergetic source in the classroom, constantly broadcasting signals, then it is obvious that at this age the receivers of children's souls do not yet have a protective mechanism that can extinguish or reflect useless and dangerous signals. It is known that children are more influenced not by the moralizing speech of adults, but by their unconscious background. The soulful world of the child easily interacts with the psychological attitudes of adults. In this regard we can say that a significant part of the pathologies of the nervous system in childhood is associated with diseased mental health of adults, and, of course, primarily parents. This means that it would be a gross and unacceptable mistake to link children's neuroses or other pathologies of a psychological, mental nature only with the school. However, we believe that the assistance of educational institutions in the detection of certain

violations in children is possible with the appropriate degree of education of teachers. The corresponding competence in this matter can also be useful to the teacher himself in case of dissatisfaction with his profession. The educator must be in the process of continuous self-upbringing, and also try to understand his/her own unconscious. Unfortunately, the programme of pedagogical education at universities very superficially introduces students to the aspects of mutual influence between people at the unconscious level, and specifically within the framework of the “teacher-student” system. We would like to hope that it is possible to find compensation through the self-upbringing of practicing teachers. As noted by Sukhdeep Kaur Chohan (2010) “it is crucial for teachers to value themselves in the educative process and not perceive themselves as working in a structured organization where they are just functionaries” (p. 16).

Even the visible part of the life of adults, which corresponds to the accepted moral values of society, cannot become true for the child, since children are able to discover behind this artificial screen the real life of the “defenders of morality”. The “decency” of adults can very quickly be revealed by the “psychological barometer” of the children’s soul.

History tells us that the underground depravity of “decent” people of the Victorian era with external signs of the upbringing and erudition has maimed more than one generation. In addition to direct influence of the environment on the child’s psyche, it is necessary to take into account and accept effective force of mental factors connected with the irrational aspects of his/her soul that are not subject of rational analysis. The soul, being not a primitive mechanism, reacts in a certain way not only to external stimuli, but is constantly subject to irrational transformations. Shiho Main in her paper “The Other Half” of Education: Unconscious education of children’ contrasts the aim of ‘the other half’ of education, as an indirect unconscious process, with formal curriculum and direct education. She addresses the children’s psyche as described by what Jung qualified as participation mystique. Arguing that a purely technical education is insufficient, Main nonetheless identifies some problems with Jung’s account of the ‘other half’ of education (Semetsky, 2012, p.4).

Citing one example, we would like to draw attention to the importance of the child’s unconscious perception of the world around him. It is necessary to consider the fact of the magical authority of the entire female, knowing that most teachers are women. Depending on the circumstances, this authority can play in the child’s life as a protective positive role, but it can also play a traumatic psyche of the child and devastating his/her soul negative role. From the female authority depends whether the creative fantasies of the child will remain at the infantile level of the development of the psyche, which, probably, can lead to the appearance of neuroses, or these fantasies will receive support conducive to the formation of an independent personality. It is not necessary to be a psychologist to foresee the probability of manifesting the pathology of the nervous system of a child who is brought up in a family where all his/her actions are totally controlled, and the mother shows her concern for each occasion.

The authority of the teacher can compensate for the influence of the mother or may enhance the child’s perception of the negative image of the female nature. Unfortunately, there are often cases where children everywhere are looking for protection from their parents, even if they are morally rich, decent people. Teachers have the opportunity to provide these children with this protection. The school, accordingly, teachers can help the child to enter the real adult world and painlessly break away from the

parental “guardianship”. It is important that the child does not remain infantile, becomes an independent person.

One phenomenon that appears to be a common factor in the dynamics of the helping relationship - educational or otherwise - is transference, an unconscious displacement of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours from a previous significant relationship onto a current relationship (Robertson, 1999, 152)

Citing Douglas L. Robertson, the authors of the article “The Role of Unconscious Awareness of Teachers within Teacher-child Relationship” Gölbaşı and Önder (2017) present his propositions of several unconscious processes within teacher-student relationship:

- Student’s positive (admiration) or negative (hate) overreactions or neutral position (indifference, disregarding, ignoring),
- Overreaction to a specific student, sudden impairment of a relationship with a student, distant and hostile behaviours,
- Defensive behaviours (withdrawing support or ignoring the student),
- Aggressive communication between the teacher and the student,
- Emotional distance of the student or oversensitivity for a student’s absence,
- Teacher’s decentralization of her own authority, treating students as equal, or a parental figure (mother or father) or a child figure,
- Transferring to traditional gender roles while behaving in a non-sexist manner,
- Preserving boundaries although removing the barriers toward a specific student,
- Student’s intolerance to criticism, perceiving criticism as an attack to her personality or oversensitivity to a specific student’s criticism,
- Unexplained learning difficulties (writing, mathematics, communication or thinking),
- Too much need for approval of the teacher and vice versa,
- Fear of a teacher or fear of a student,
- To feel an obligation to “save” a student or quite the contrary student’s feeling of an obligation to save a teacher,
- Student’s envy for or competition with the teacher or a teacher’s envy of or competition with a student. (Gölbaşı & Önder, 2017, p. 135)

Unfortunately, we must admit that the educational system in schools is failing. We probably overestimated our “learning”, and maybe underestimated the child’s psyche. It may be right, if instead of edifying children, we will take up our own upbringing. For some reason we are sure that a teacher, a pedagogue is a formed personality and has the full right to educate children. Unfortunately, many teachers, and first of all young teachers, themselves need better education and are hardly able to contribute to the formation of the younger generation.

There is a common enough problem for adults, which consists in the fact that parents try to avoid repetition of those mistakes that occurred in the process of their own upbringing. This often leads to a new mistake, namely, to overexposure the use of an alternative, and more often the opposite method of upbringing. Throughout the life of an adult, a child remains in the person, and regardless of whether a person’s conscious desire or unconscious motivation to correct his/her omissions and solve internal psychological conflicts associated with childhood these attempts can lead to deformation of the psyche of

their child. Such deformation is possible for the reason that the field for the selection of personal “cultures” is often not the one’s own soul, but the easily permeable soul of the child. The development of the child’s personality is possible due to the motivating compulsion from fate and the conscious moral choice of one’s life path, and not due to the well-intentioned wishes of adults, or their orders.

Diligent attempts of parents and pedagogues to create a personality according to their own ideas and their worldview, can destroy a real person. Personality is not an individual acting in accordance with established universal rules and norms of public order. Personality is an individual whose purpose and need are to reveal the integrity of their essence.

It turns out that very few pedagogues are able at least to admit to themselves that they themselves need education, that they still have infantilism. Self-deception and the generally accepted false idea that a pedagogue is indisputably the person and authority for the children speak only of our dishonesty. How necessary is the honesty of an adult, his courage to admit his/her own flaws in the process of upbringing of a child! In this regard, Feyerabend (2010) wrote: “The noblest human prodigies, friendly feelings, sincerity, the need for communication, the desire to do good to others are perverted and distorted by teachers who have retained hardly a grain of talent, ingenuity, and charm of their students. They partially aware their inferiority and take revenge for it. The only aim of their lives is to reduce their students to the level of dullness and squalor at which they themselves are” (p. 275).

7. Conclusion

To take into account and, if possible, to determine a certain coefficient of refraction of the ray emanating from the child’s soul for understanding its inner world, not yet distorted by the attitudes of adults, is a very difficult task, but, presumably, one of the main challenges facing pedagogy. Thoughts, behaviour of the child obviously have their own motivation. To assess it, an adult uses his own intellectual system, figuratively speaking, a prism through which the light of the world is refracted. After all, the wisdom, the talent of the teacher, parent is to correctly channel the creative energy of children, and not to form its stagnation by prohibitions, thereby creating a source of nervous, mental disorders. The upbringing and education of children at school supports the process of forming the child’s psyche. According to Jung (1995) the teacher’s task is “not only to insert the necessary volume of educational material in the minds of children in a schematic way, but he must also influence the children by his personality. This function of the teacher is at least as important as the actual learning activity, and in some cases even more important than learning activities”.

Pedagogy as interdisciplinary science studies the interrelationships of various aspects of the personality of the learner, using the techniques and methods of other fields of knowledge - philosophy, sociology, psychology, etc. This approach allows us to view the personality in a complex way, from the standpoint of humanitarian ideas about a person. The subject in modern pedagogy undergoes changes in connection with the variability of the conditions in which the educational process is carried out, under the influence of the information environment, the experience of other people (Biggs, 2003). This causes the use of the achievements of a number of sciences in the characterization of the learner’s personality, from interdisciplinary positions, the maintenance of a full account of his psychological characteristics.

But the educator should also improve professionally. It is clear that a teacher, formed in college years, who worked for several years, is unlikely to be able to change the way he has learned and habitual for him (Ivanova, 2018). For most teachers, however, teaching is a private matter; it occurs behind a closed classroom door, and it is often questioned or challenged (Hattie, 2012).

Unlike children, the teacher should be in the process of continuous self-upbringing. The human psyche is not only a consciousness, but also an unconscious world. University programs of pedagogical education do not properly acquaint students with interaction of unconscious spaces between people, in the system of “educator-student”. This omission can be replenished through the self-education of already practicing teachers.

Is it possible to exclude the possibility of teachers projecting their own problems, shortcomings and inclinations for children? Is the society insured against the fact that the choice of the profession of the teacher was not dictated by its hidden motive of ruling over people? Are the parents sure that the psychoemotional field of the school does not induce negative vortices in the souls of their children?

Responsibility for the mental health of children, in many ways, lies with the teachers. The trace left in the soul of the child can become the route of his life, his destiny.

Acknowledgments

The present research is conducted in compliance with the State Assignment of the Institute for Strategy of Education Development of the Russian Academy of Education within the project 27.8520.2017/BCh.

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