

Pedagogics in Education: Moving Backwards or Forward?

Monika A. Papa

Athens School of Fine Arts Athens
Pedagogics and Psychology of education
Athens, Attica, Greece

Sousanna-Maria Nikolaou

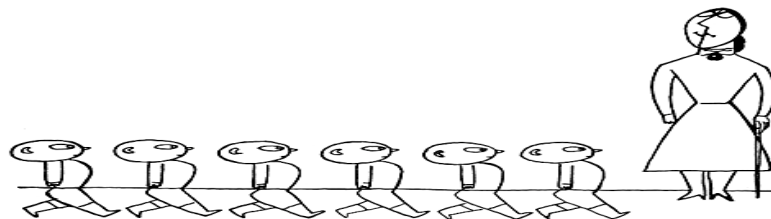
Department of Primary Education
Sociology of Education
University of Ioannina
45 110 Ioannina, Greece

Abstract

Education is and has been in the center of a greater debate as to the pedagogical or non-pedagogical methods, a debate escalating continuously since different theoretical and scientists have not always agreed as to which method is the best. From the industrial revolution, a time in which children are to be punished for using their imagination, to the behaviorists who believed feelings, values, dreams, mean very little to the learning process, teachers always struggle to achieve a harmonic balance with their students, despite all difficulties and challenges. The role of pedagogics is to help all educational systems to evolve and upgrade themselves to their maximum potential in order to allow students to overcome the problems and thrive in the learning experience.

Keywords: pedagogics, education, teachers, learning, encouragement.

Throughout the history of education, especially through the industrial revolution, a great number of intellectuals and all kind of different scientists (philosophers, educators, psychologists), have repeatedly made countless efforts and attempts to convince a violent and cruel educational system (often deriving from an also cruel and/or authoritative political system) that children have rights, deserve to be happy and safe but most importantly they achieved to spread a greater realization that no knowledge comes through intimidation or physical violence, which, at the time, was most common and normal. In Lancaster's school where students are just numbers instead of human beings (Dickens,1978,p.40-43), and creativity must be completely discarded, since both imagination and creativity are dangerous for a society that recognizes only the normal and the one the current system dictates as safe. Wilhelm Reich in Listen little man!, feels very sorry for all the children that are made to be "normal" (Reich,1974) inside a system that destroys their very need for knowledge and evolution.



*When I think of your children,
how you torment the life out of them,
trying to make them "normal" like yourself . . .*

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¹ Found in: <http://www.listenlittleman.com>. W. Reich use a number of pictures throughout the book to underline his ideas, in a more graphic way.

Around the same time D. Glino, a great Greek pedagogue, writes the notorious: An unburied dead, which symbolizes the necrotic educational system that despite all efforts remains unattended (1925). At this point it's still quite early for pedagogics to achieve the balance between education and oppression. It is a time that behaviorism offers the scientific methodology that gives answers to questions about learning and teaching. Behaviorism is going viral with so many scientists believing to have found the ultimate solution to all learning and behavioral issues. Pavlov and Thorndike managed to persuade a number of educators that a person's feelings, personality and values mean actually very little since it is the behavior that dictates and controls all of them, and of course behavior can be modified and fully conditioned. Moreover, Watson proclaimed that he can actually modify behaviors and create personalities as requested if someone could supply him with a number of children to raise by himself and according to his behaviorism. The major breakthrough in education is how punishment and fear can be positive for teaching children. If Skinner's pigeons can play ping pong, the possibilities for humans must be endless.

But science is always moving forward so slowly but surely Dewey's thoughts concerning learning and experience (Dewey, 1930) to Neill's theory about equality between teacher and student relationship, lay the very foundations for modern pedagogics. The curriculums are now more affected by the theories of Piaget and Bandura than Pavlov and the methodology is concerned for the cognitive, emotional and psychomotor dimension of the student (Braun, 1978, p.27-29), creativity is more than welcome in the classroom since our civilization is in need of young people to be innovative instead of replicates. Instead of punishment a teacher can now adjust to methods such as encouragement to achieve maximum success in all aspects of education (Dreikurs, 1980,p.129). A teacher is now aware that no physical or emotional violence will ever have the great outcome of the love Pestalozzi declared as sine qua non for any learning process or relationship between teacher and student. And this is Pedagogy all about: encouragement and love. Moreover, it should also be about supporting all students, by being understanding to their problems and needs and also to entrust that the true purpose of pedagogics is to help those in need. And there lies the challenge every teacher faces as soon as entering the classroom. Do we have enough time? Will we manage to finish today's whole lesson? Is there enough time for asking questions? Many young teachers break down completely as they realize that the perfect project they prepared to last only 20 minutes, actually goes on for an hour or so, children get excited wanting to participate more and more, and suddenly time is up and the curriculum must go on with another topic.

Of course through daily experience these issues are resolved but sometimes the balance of the relationship between student-teacher is disturbed. Pressure, deadlines and timetables, quizzes and tests take a real toll on the basic pedagogic role of a teacher as one must go from a loving, patient, helping, cooperative, and supportive role model to a despotic representation of how a child's value is measured with a number. Moreover no teacher ever went to the university to study and become an expert in giving grades to others. It is a Lancastrian logic all over again and reminds us of the severity of those obsolete educational systems, which no one wants to relive. A teacher can always correct a student's essay with a red pen so that all mistakes show at once but one could also take any other colored pen and highlight all the correct points of the essay so as to encourage the student to keep writing. In both cases there is an evaluation of the student. We believe the second method is the one that encourages a student to overcome the difficulties and strengthens the pedagogical relationship in the educational process. It is an ongoing and daily challenge to achieve the balance in the classroom, to maintain the control without being authoritarian. As Dennison says sometimes it's much more important to lose our time than to gain a few extra minutes at all costs, in order to teach something more. (1979, p.129)

For Pedagogy is about the person that has feelings, problems, needs and fears who, if left unattended, will eventually block a child's readiness and willingness along with most possibilities for the person to learn and thrive. In pedagogics for example, it is more important to address immediately a sudden fight that disrupts the class and see it through until the sense of justice and balance is restored than to order them to stay quiet, even maybe mention some kind of punishment, so that the teacher can continue teaching grammar rules. Grammar is of course very important, but the feeling of being understood, cared for, supported and shown the way to address a quarrel in a civil, respectful and calm way, is much more important, because it's a lesson about being dialectic, respectful, patient and democratic. There will be no grades for this because the reward comes in form of ethical, spiritual, emotional, and social values. There is no evaluation for humanism and compassion however there is an old myth where the father always argues with his son saying:

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My son no matter how much knowledge you acquire, you will never be *human*. So the son studied and became very educated and very rich up to the point he became king. Immediately the king ordered his guards to go and find his old father, chain him and drag him in front of him. So it happened and the old man was brought in chains to bow to the king.- See now old man, the son bragged, not only I became human but I am also a King. – Yes my child, the old man said, a King you are but human you are not, because humans don't chain their old, sick parents, nor do they drag them in such a humiliating way in front of them.

Education is about teaching our young ones but if that teaching is not supported by pedagogical methods and approaches, then any success cannot be celebrated as it is a step to the past, not the future. In other words Pedagogy is more of being able to use all the methodology of educational psychology and didactics along with all the tools provided from modern technology to ensure and to empower not only the learning process but also to reach and evolve the values to a less intimidating and less competitive learning environment. Children are under a lot of stress already and the educational system must become their sanctuary, the place they can thrive and be happy. Unfortunately with all the technology and the modern methods, the countless researches and theories our schools are still this place where a child must sit and stay still and speechless while the teacher who knows everything teaches and evaluates as in the banking concept (Freire,1973). The question rising is relentless. Is Education going backwards or forward? Are our schools evolving to a more sufficient and child friendly environment or simply turning into an institution where a so called equality for all never meets the justice needed?

The difficulties in the modern classroom are surely overwhelming for both teacher and student, however by using pedagogical methods instead of being controlling or despotic, one will contribute to a healthy, creative, loving and humanitarian outcome. For the schools should not only prepare the children for what lies ahead in their lives, but also to help them live their lives in the very present. This can only happen in an environment where freedom thrives because as A.S. Neill says: “the child needs freedom, because only with freedom it can grow normally”.(Neill, 1972,p.164)

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