



Research Paper

## Education, philosophy and politics: some contributions for critical analysis

Author Gustavo Toledo Lara

<sup>1</sup>(University Camilo José Cela - Spain)

Corresponding Author: [gustavotoledolara@gmail.com](mailto:gustavotoledolara@gmail.com)

**ABSTRACT:** *this article presents an analytical and interpretative approach that revolves around the philosophy of education based on three fundamental aspects: 1) the philosophy of education between doxa and episteme, 2) university teachers and the philosophy of education and 3) the curriculum from the philosophy of education. These aspects are reviewed from the critical and from the implications for the agents that are part of the educational fact with special emphasis on the figure of the university teacher and as this has the responsibility to promote critical thinking in their educational practice. Regardless of the field of study being taught, the philosophy of education presents us with a series of challenges and strengths in the face of social requirements as the main reference of educational activity. This makes us turn our attention to dialogic learning.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Higher Education; Educational Studies; Teaching; Curriculum, Learning.*

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Deep and heterogeneous transformations have changed the course of the planet as humanity has observed the evolution and development of societies. The speed and impetus of the changes we have experienced, has permeated all the constitutive aspects of the human being as he passed through the world. Changes in the ideological order have shaped the deployment of all sectors, changes in the political, economic, social and demographic have not infrequently been able to assume both radical and mediating positions, both antagonistic and conciliatory.

From the end of the last world war of the twentieth century the world experienced a technological paradigm shift, and with it, the recognition of the constructive and destructive capabilities of the human being, brought out a set of opportunities in which, of course, human beings were the first actor, protagonist and, above all, the responsible. By the last decade of the twentieth century, the fall of the Berlin Wall showed that even the strongest ideologies would not be impervious to the voice of humanity. From then on, the speed of changes was increased, and therefore adaptive capacity was a virtually imperative feature.

This context is a privileged opportunity for the critical and thoughtful voices that, on education have been exposed. As all this happens, it is education that, in this case, is influenced and in many cases determined by a series of currents that will permeate all the educational work under the subterfuge of adaptation and search for response to social needs. It is in this quest that precisely the critical and reflective component, which must be in every educational process, unfortunately does not become present in all spaces of formative cut. Therefore, the emphasis on the economically profitable and the labor-expectable seems to be the goal that all systems want to reach and this is when the question almost obligatorily appears, what is it for? And once placed in this question, the humanistic and the transcendental is displaced by the new logics that break untimely into contemporary thinking, leading to the urgent need for the useful and the profitable without further questioning, as opposed to the anthropocentric and the ethical as an educational choice and model.

In this order of ideas, it is almost obligatory to place ourselves for a moment in the figure of the teacher since it is the one who has the responsibility and practically the obligation to transmit a knowledge already built previously for which, a measurable and quantifiable system of competence serves to determine who or who are the students or students who are the most approaching the economic and potentially more profitable citizen. As opposed to this, it is often rare for the process of reflection to be encouraged in the faculty in the light of its own

practice and how it can determine the path that is followed in education [16]. Therefore, the acquisition of skills and competencies without further questioning is being categorically favored, as opposed to the acquisition and cultivation of a personal criterion as a result of the approach to knowledge and understanding of the world.

All these considerations serve as a starting point for approaching the subject of the philosophy of education. While it is true that it forms (or should be) part of the curriculum structure of teacher training, it is also true that due to the contemporary trend that privileges the profitable and the competitive over the critical and reflective, the philosophy of education has taken a path full of ups and downs and has practically been delegated in most cases to be regarded as a set of correct and beautiful reflections, but with little use in the educational context, and this is where the current challenges of the philosophy of education are identified for which, we try in this article to offer some criteria for its analysis and reflection.

## **II. THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION BETWEEN DOXA AND EPISTEME**

There is consensus in considering philosophy as thoughtful thinking, enables a permanent dialogue that moves between educational reality and those rational constructions elaborated on educational fact [1]. All this with the interest of facilitating that understanding of the object and subject of education from the recognition here and now, that is, situationality. In addition to this, the recognition of otherness [19], will allow us to have a contextualized dialogical approach in the deepest educational convictions that take place precisely from the self (re)knowledge of the teaching vocation, from which, an experience impulse is generated precisely by philosophical thinking.

The attitude towards the permanent question, to ask ourselves why what concerns human nature [10] must imperatively identify precisely in the philosophy of education the privileged space for the critical and reflective process to overcome the gap imposed by a totalizing and efficient perspective [3]. Therefore, it can be dangerous for educational practice, the epistemological isolation of its nature, trying or wanting to respond to the so-called "social demands" for which, it is intended to generate fiduciarily acceptable results, to the detriment of education and the strengthening of thought as a place for the consolidation of the ethical criterion which, should have an impact precisely on society. Therefore, "philosophical and theoretical thinking in education is necessary to accentuate the subject's free disposition towards himself by revitalizing his status as an educational agent." [10]

However, if we start from the hypothesis that teaching is that practical activity in which, not only the otreity is recognized, but the situationally, we are faced with the idea that philosophical thinking is the basis from which the boundaries of the action of that teaching can be recognized as a kind of challenge resulting from the continuous and infinite process of criticism, action and reflection [15]. From this it is essential to recognize the episteme as a germ of philosophical activity at least give the educational and it is from the epistemic that knowledge will be generated without obviating the dialogical and undoubtedly, the otreity. Therefore, it is a challenge for the philosophy of education, starting from the deep conviction that effectively implies a critical analysis as a primal root for the construction of possible alternatives to questions, questions or problems.

A position if more criticism is to be severed, allows us to agree that current educational practice revolves around memorization by obviating the experience of the senses [9]. This is increased in that students usually do not interact with sensitive objects, but with a set of texts identifying the absences of the senses. Therefore, students do not keep in their memory the experience generated by the perception of the senses, but keep some reference of the text, or perhaps some instruction or word from the teacher. Therefore, this type of practice, in which teachers and students are immersed, generally only favors a very primary level of rationality and the only finding or evidence of the desist is precisely to cling to the memorystic as an element of exchange by an alphanumeric expression that corresponds to what has been memorized.

All this to the detriment of the strengthening of critical thinking, procedural autonomy and the search for alternatives of solutions to a given situation. It then tends towards the practice of doxa presented with all the required formality, when what is expected is that the episteme will become permeable present to the whole educational practice [11]. Thus, according to [10] "the nuclear contribution of philosophical thinking in education lies in reminding us insistently of the ultimate senses of human formation."

If we opt for a position from critical rationality, a number of reference assumptions can be identified which, where appropriate, guide the debate on the pedagogical question, understanding pedagogy as a reflection of human education [5], without neglecting dialectics in recognition of the value of discourse, discussion, philosophy or wisdom itself.

A first case of reference, it is the release of a series of commitments outside the pedagogy [15]. This is a challenge because, in practice, pedagogy tries to balance between being part of philosophy, or being regarded as a kind of applied empirical science. Therefore, in the face of this assumption, a discussion can be initiated from the idea that pedagogy can and is part of the critical and thoughtful thinking that is generated about pedagogical practice itself.

A second reference scenario implies the willingness to identify what theoretically corresponds to pedagogy and what can theoretically have a presence in pedagogy, but which is part of or belongs to another field of study or other theoretical context. Therefore, recognition of pedagogical identity is required as a body with its own characteristics and from there, to initiate analysis and criticize it recognizing its constituent elements.

As a third reference scenario for guiding the debate on the pedagogical issue, it is made up of a sense of recognition of ethics as a substrate proper to the pedagogical. However, the difference must be made between understanding pedagogy as a simple characterization of a pedagogical discourse transversalized by doxa, but presented with epistemic formality, and understanding pedagogy from the possibility of discursive subjectivity typical of a constant dialectical evolution, generated precisely from a crossroads of knowledge [11], [18].

### **III. UNIVERSITY FACULTY AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION**

As the context in which the training is circumscribed is changed, the practice of university teaching logically must experience the effect of the complexity of that rapidly changing context. Therefore, at the out point of view, we cannot continue with the same didactic practice in which the theoretical and conceptual encompasses all interest as if it is the only justification for training us at the university level.

This pattern that determines teaching practice is reproduced from generation to generation with which, the cognitive reference of the university teacher to his practice with his students is mediated by the way he has been formed, and by not allowing himself to identify another style of pedagogical dynamics, he simply chooses almost automatically, to reproduce the same style in which he was formed.

Thus, the weight of tradition ensures continuity under the subterfuge of the acquisition of competences mediated by countless theories or practices without due revision or reflection, thus enabling professionals with little or limited capacity to respond to problems of logical or ethical order, while the country receives professionals, with its most and its least, with a number of technical and sometimes automatic skills and competencies without further questioning. So that it is not considered appropriate to promote teacher training "from outdated teaching models that worked (albeit already in trouble) in other times" [12].

Even if the idea is assumed and generally accepted, a student-centered education appears to be the panacea to the crisis of the contemporary curriculum and didactic order. This generally accepted thesis is not usually seen in its just dimension nor is it true involvement recognized since by accepting an education whose focus is the student, the theorist training that has its epicenter in the teacher is being called into question [4].

Thus, the master class in which questioning and questioning sometimes does not exist becomes one of the strongest shields before the ideological airs that advocate a real change in teaching practice [17]. While this happens, university autonomy is often used as protection to justify the teacher's own style inside the classroom. On this point, the question proposed by [7] is appropriate and which is one of the most controversial elements when rethinking our own didactic practice:

Who can rightly say that what we are teaching (we don't really know, perhaps because of its opacity under the cloak of each teacher's autonomy) does not also need to be deeply renewed and therefore included under innovative, reserved effluvial, in addition to competences, almost exclusively to activities, ICTs or other methodologies however convenient they may be? [7].

The philosophy of education then takes on singular importance when establishing the lines of action aimed at the training of the university teacher. Beyond formative fulfillment with an eye on accreditation, rigor in practice, and pedagogical ethics must permeate the spirit that drives and underpins teaching conviction, based on the approach to social and anthropocentric commitment of human formation regardless of the field of study [6]. Thus, it is considered necessary to be formed not only in what is to be taught, but in how to teach it. Therefore, reflection on the university teaching profession must count as a starting point, with the role of the teacher as a teacher and, of course, be a trainer.

These critical and thoughtful references will surely need that point of support to understand and recognize a new way of living teaching practice, starting with the self-knowledge of ethical responsibility and also by the discovery of teaching strategies mainly inclined towards the search for the experience of the senses from the student performance itself [2]. We are talking then, for example, about problem learning, learning autonomy, information transfer and inference, case study, self-assessment, among others.

Attempting a self-critical exercise, part of the skepticism towards the pedagogical that should accompany the teaching exercise within the university field, possibly because theories, trends or terminology are often highly convoluted with regard to pedagogy. In this somewhat abrupt attempt to turn pedagogy into a science with factual procedures, the emergence of an entire procedural framework accompanied by words or concepts as bold as it is complicated to understand is justified, and if we add to this that in university slang there is talk of research "activity" and teaching "burden", it is assumed that research activity is what moves us, and that the teaching burden is what can prevent that movement. Therefore, and according to [12] "the improvement

of university teaching depends not only on the methodology used in university classrooms, but also on the institutional involvement of the university and the teaching collective"

#### **IV. THE CURRICULUM FROM THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION**

Plato (born 1872) stated that "philosophy, despite the state of abandonment to which it is reduced, retains even over the other arts an ascendant and a superiority that cause those who were not born for it to seek it." Philosophical thinking, therefore, is no stranger in this case to the process of analysis and questioning that has to be done on the curriculum. Such a process logically based from the scientific, not from the opinion, accepting here that science is intended to be.

In short, it is then a question that the process that must be present as a determining element for the construction of a structure that tries to organize the teachings, almost imperatively must lead to this level of discursive and reflective density [8]. However, the required density level requires that it, can be gradually acquired as we go into those aspects of which we are partakers.

In this context, we approach the curriculum. Resume conceptions are as numerous as views. However, we can dare to ensure that the curriculum is an ever-evolving living body, and it is also a technical and political document, therefore, the responsibility for conceiving a curriculum lies in the fact that among other things, it will determine much of the life of human beings who are educated under their principles and criteria, that is, it can become an aspect conducive to the legitimacy of societies, especially the legitimacy of governments, since as we have mentioned above, being a political document, a whole range of aspects of their own comes into play from identifying the way in which governments are targeting a particular sector, that is made politics from the resume. Public educational policy to be exact.

The approach to the issue of public policy is an aspect of singular importance when approaching the curriculum as the subject of review. Recognition of the relevance of public policies as a decision-making process has influenced them to be recognized beyond lines of action. On the other hand, understanding the decision-making process considered in public policy involves empirical and systematic research into how these policies are built and implemented. Thus, and in [13], "we have become more aware that the policy process, of its elaboration and realization, is the subject of study in its own right, mainly in the hope of increasing the rationality of decisions".

Thus, when talking about public policies in the field of education, we must consider an aspect that determines the whole discussion. This is the debate about whether education is or should be a public service. If we understand it in this regard as a public service, education is due to society. However, there are positions, both from a normative position and from political practice, which understand differently the provision of this service.

So, in some countries, underlying policies are given that are profiling almost unintendedly, an institutional nature that pushes to consider as a reference of Higher Education to the market, and not to society. The result of the activity of a public authority, which holds government power and legitimacy, is then considered as an educational public policy.

However, the utilitarian character assigned to it in knowledge has made the education system a sector that, for some, must respond to the need to produce under the industrial sector and to economic dynamics [8]. Therefore, while the labour market sets out its needs, the educational world and part of its decision-making actors understand that education must respond precisely to those needs, and from there the curriculum is designed so that there is greater sync between what is demanded by the market and what must be answered from the educational. Similarly, as crises appear in the economic sector, the focus turns its attention to education by exercising certain pressure or coercion mechanisms for the necessary adjustments to this juncture.

Logically, critical voices have not been made to wait and from various sectors questions are made as to the fact that, if one persists in the idea that education is due to the market, and that human talent is being formed to generate wealth, produce goods, but not to reason or to strengthen critical thinking or problem solving, it is gradually getting social and ethical principles to move to the background as production is prioritized over reason [20].

There's another aspect to review. The organization of teachings as a characteristic and property of the curriculum, prints an almost unobjectionable voice that allows, or is allowed, to decide what to learn and how to learn. With this, we are facing a reproductive function of the curriculum if we look at it as a rigid element to which we can carefully make the necessary adaptations precisely in the face of the demands that decision-making bodies decide must be answered. To all this, it should be added that as a result of the meeting between the student and the content, the teacher, in this case the university, can guarantee in a certain way the acquisition of a series of competences that someone has decided as necessary and this is when the mastery of science, the must be and the expected result enter into a kind of conflict of conviction trying to get the pole with greater dominance finally managed to impose itself.

In this order of ideas, the recognition of those becoming more than obvious effects on the new technological and economic order in relation to education cannot be overlooked since this space (the educational

one) as it is considered an area of transmission, it must indisputably measure the impact of the values generated as a result of scientific and technological advancement [20] as well as delimit those measures that precisely pursue recognition of the threat that can represent the practice of unrestricted consumption of knowledge, in a growing and almost uncontrolled information society. Logically, if we also recognize that the education sector is a key part of the entrenchment of a democratic culture, we are assuming that it is in this area that those constituent elements of such a culture that necessarily requires recognition of observation must be ensured, the analysis of the context, the recognition of the duty to be and the constant search for the fulfillment of the ethical and social duties that insoeselably must transgress the self-centered boundaries of social relations, in order to move to an anthropocentric and socio-reconstructing order [8].

Therefore, the permanent questioning of social, political, economic and cultural realities will require a married teaching practice with social relevance so that society has citizens not only educated under democratic values, but also that these citizens receive from education the guidelines required to ensure this type of formative culture. It is not then a question of looking at education from an individualized perspective (in the sense of the non-recognition of the ethical character and responsibility of each of the agents involved), but it is a question that, from self-recognition from the personal action space, the effect that is generated will have a progressive effect on those people as a close spectrum of relationships [8]. Therefore, questioning and proactive and analytical attitude can be taught as a strategy for learning and teaching to think.

In noting the cognitive vision of education, consisting of educational processes that promote the construction of personal criteria for the creation of informed opinions on the political, and on the civic side, we are promoting autonomous thinking so that gradually questioning does not become an impediment to progress, but is consolidated as a choice of life in order to propose, where appropriate, possible alternatives of improvement or revision to certain practices that, when present in the educational sphere, are prone to a revision not only in a way but in substance [20].

Of course, it is not under any circumstances in the culture of single thought, rather it is the recognition of the value of divergent thought as an opportunity for the emergence of new avenues of action provided that this thought can be produced under ethically correct standards, in relation to respect for differences and the assurance of the responsible exercise of informed opinion.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

Once all the above considerations have been set out, the time is right to lead to a series of ideas that, as a final balance sheet, seek to provide some clarifications for the preliminary closure of the subject under this analysis. Logically, it cannot be a closure, because if so, it would lose sense to convey and share these reflections that seek to collaborate with the process of criticism and reflection.

Firstly, it is necessary to recognize the importance of the whole critical process that has to do precisely with education as a social fact. It seems that the philosophy of education from its origins is called to swim against the current because in not a few occasions, the pole or center of attention is not precisely in the duty to be or in mental activity in terms of resolute or critical capacity, rather it is inclined or assumed that that educational practice in the more competencies to acquire or more profitability can ensure, is the ideal practice for many societies.

In this order of ideas, all the actors involved are somehow coerced into reproducing this pattern. From there the importance of recognizing the curriculum as that technical and political cutting tool that will regulate that and how it is taught and learned. And that is where the philosophy of education emerges as an alternative so that, from critical pedagogy, you can warn of the risks that this entails. We are then talking about how to convey the student's information and learning experience, and how the university professor is trained to practice and live teaching.

Without downplaying the importance of research, since the value and advancement it has brought to humanity is indisputable, it is not really congruent to accumulate research without greater social relevance and without a greater commitment to really know how that research path impacts or benefits the student. [14] stated this in 1930 by categorically stating that "compared to medieval, the contemporary University has greatly complicated the professional teaching that it provided in germ, and has added research by almost completely removing the teaching or transmission of culture."

In this way, the public sphere of education imperatively obliges us to consider that, this public nature is the criterion to be followed so that from the educational fact it is of the appropriate space for teaching to consider as a priority, beyond the acquisition of economically expected competences, analytical capacity, critical thinking and certainly the ethical sense of our actions. All of this should not be alien to any practice that is considered educational in our case. Therefore, the ideal scenario for living the philosophy of education will always be effective as soon as it is accepted that it is important, at least, to teach to think, to doubt, and to question from a duly constructed criterion.

Beyond the prescription of a resume, there is the responsibility of the teacher, but also the responsibility of the disc. Both are subjects and not objects of education. This "subject" being of education imprints on the educational fact from the perspective of its actors, an atmosphere of responsibility first with itself, and almost as a result, a responsibility to the other. Otrety and dialogical thinking go against the immediacy and utilitarianism that have otherwise nested quite palpably in the educational sphere [19].

We understand, then, that by being in a society called the "knowledge society", training and its legitimacy irrespective of whether such training is of institutional or personal origin, it must be understood on the basis of the establishment and increase of indicators that effectively allow us to assess its socially relevant character. This increase must be accompanied by the ability to read to interpret the messages that social, cultural, political and economic trends convey to human beings. Undoubtedly this capacity for analysis and interpretation requires us to focus our attention on the critical once the complex cognitive process that, from the recognition of the evolutionary cycle of the human being, allows a competence to transfer and infer the message, process the information and make a judgment or assessment resulting from the analysis both personal and with the peers. Therefore, the philosophy of education will always be facing new challenges and new opportunities.

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