

(RE)FORMS IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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Abstract

Pedagogy has never before been so separated from social relations and generally from children's, pupils' and students' lives. This is so even when it seemed to be located on the margins of social events. The goals of education make sense only when they are generally obligative, which means that they are dependent and associated with pure theoretical sciences such as logic, ethics, and aesthetics. Anthropological, ethical and spiritual sense are deeply rooted in education. All reforms that did not respect this principle failed. Thus the key to success is the person (teacher, professor) and his/her meeting with the child, the pupil, or the student.

One of the problems of accessing reforms in the educational system of the Republic of Macedonia is that it is not based on these disciplines and principles, it is not based on this sense, and it does not have philosophical and pedagogical background. The foundation of reforms is in political pragmatism, opportunism and ephemerally set goals. The consequences of these educational policies are: transferring and imposing from other educational systems different programs, regulations, measurements, testing, ranking and benchmarking on institutional and national level which have faced all of us (students, teachers, professors, parents), with the "Japanese syndrome" - forcing of competitive spirit while forgetting that it is the first principle of war in the minds of man, instead of developing reflective and creative thinking. On the other hand, numerous complaints are directed to pedagogy and pedagogues that they have not been able to solve the problems of the educational system leaving them to deal with excessive occurrences in classrooms and schools. While it behaves in an inferior way, pedagogy is not expected to deal with fundamental issues as a social and humanistic force which must prepare the relevant assumptions in making quality educational policies.

Keywords: *reform, educational system, pedagogy, educational policies.*

A number of social factors and individuals cannot be indifferent to questions such as: **why, what** and **how to create a better education and upbringing?** The basic determinations of the **objective**(why), **content** (what) and **methods** (how) of the education of staff represent a kind of a **pedagogical vision** both of the future of the educational system and of the society, and they actually determine what members of a society can be and which human potentials can be developed.

Hence, the reaction of the whole social, scientific and professional public, their interests, debates and comments during discussions on reforms in the educational work or changes in syllabi and curricula are quite normal. These are very sensitive topics. Therefore it is recommended that educational policies be based on solid foundations and that changes in the programs should be worked on for a longer period of time taking into consideration the needs of the present generation, but with a vision for future generations - because it is quite certain that impetuous actions and possible

failures can create serious and unpredictable consequences to society as a whole and to each of its members.

Representatives of humanistic disciplines consider that in today's society it is not most important *to know and to have - but to be a man* – to make the right judgments and decisions. For that reason a good system of humanistic education is needed. The essence is to build a **system**, i.e. **curriculum** that will be the instrument and the doctrine for achieving the objectives that will primarily be in accordance with the man.

In sociology the concepts ***culture*** (Lat.: colere, “to raise”) and ***civilization*** are understood in different ways. Culture is a complex social phenomenon and the term is very broad. Culture includes everything that nature cannot give to the man. Beside material things, culture includes the entirety of all spiritual creations. So, culture usually means the sum of all material and spiritual values of human work in nature and society, while civilization includes material culture and is therefore a wider term. According to other authors, both culture and civilization represent everything that characterizes one society, that makes societies different, and hence their view that no distinction between these terms should be made.

However, all agree that culture and civilization are important factors in upbringing and education, and that the educational process is the act of mastering cultural and civilization courses in a particular society. In fact, this entails mastering a particular system of values, moral norms, elementary scientific insights, forms of artistic expression, scientific and artistic language, technology, as well as content in using leisure time.

By creating a common discourse (*teacher - child*), the teacher directly influences the cultural development of the child (man). The teacher is a representative of the culture in which the child is formed into a person. “*Culture shapes the mind, ensures values with which we design not only our worlds, but we also develop the self-concept and perceive our own abilities*” (Bruner, in: Colic, 2005).

A brief history of the development of education focused on competencies

In the last thirty years, several international organizations (World Bank, OECD, and UNESCO) have intensively been promoting the concept of education aimed at developing competencies.

Reforms in competency based education arise from: (1) The Industrial Revolution and the needs of the industry; (2) neo-liberal economy and the theory of human capital and (3) behavioristic movement (Деспотовић, 2010). Economy and productivism as a serious global ethos are based on the assumption that economic growth and work, regardless of their negative consequences, are the key feature and the essence of human existence. This drastic form that promotes continuous production and consumption of goods and services, obsessive accumulation of economic wealth and material possession, is actually a negation of all the values and needs that are outside the sphere of the economy (Anderson, D., 2008). This concept of education finds its roots in the theory of Scientific Management by Frederick Winslow Taylor (Taylor, F., 1911). Based on this, one of the first approaches in the area of curriculum development inspired by Taylor and published in 1919 that was aimed at establishing competencies, is the work by Charles Allen “The teacher, the man and the work” (Herschbach, D.R.,

1992, in **Деспотовић**, 2010). **Charles Allen** insists on programs that will be standardized logical units and aimed to establish specific working achievements or competencies.

According to the neo-liberal economy that is based on the assumption of a strong interdependence in skills formation and economic growth, education is an investment that develops skills and abilities, and thus also productivity and economic development in general.

The behavioristic concept generally encourages teachers and creators of curricula to define educational objectives as outcomes, i.e. as changes in the observable behavior. Hence this theoretical direction and approach to education is the so-called outcomes-based education. This approach that started from the eighties of the 20th century in the United States becomes a movement and practice in education in the US, UK, Canada and Australia.

Identification of the concept “reform”

In our language the term reform is often used inappropriately, particularly in discussions in the field of education and upbringing. The word **forma** in Latin means “character, shape, face, growth; beauty; picture; base, way, kind; exterior; model” (Žepić, 1961 in **Сузић**, **Н.** 2009.). The prefix **re-** is used for renewal, repetition. The term **reformatio** in Latin means transformation, renewal. In fact, the term **reform** primarily means establishing a desired shape, or renewal of an old or disrupted form. But upbringing and education deal with the essence, not only with the form.

How is the term reform defined? Some definitions of what reform is contain the process of innovation in the system of education and upbringing. “When considering the notion of reform in education, it is important to bear in mind that we are dealing with a particular form of change, the form that assumes a planned strategy that should aim to change definite, certain aspects of the educational system of a certain country, which is in harmony with the entirety of specific needs, anticipated results, appropriate means and methods of action (Sack, 1982. p. 51 in **Сузић**, **Н.** 2009). According to the Pedagogical Encyclopedia, the definition of this term contains numerous components of change: *“It is a social and pedagogical process of fundamental changing of: policies in education; social functions and positions of education; status of the pupil, the student, the teacher, the public; orientation to goals and tasks; organization of the educational system and its parts; planning; organization of school; program content; forms, means and methods of work; building schools and equipment; teacher education; financing and management, mostly aimed at democratization, adjustment to work needs, rationalization, modernization, increasing efficiency and improving the quality of work”* (**Педагошка enciklopedija 2**, 1989. p.303). Hence, according to the definition, if a particular reform covers most of the following components, then it is a fundamental reform, and if it covers only a fraction of these components, it is a partial reform.

Changes made during the last decade on the whole educational scene in the EU and EFTA/EEA countries including Macedonia suggest that social, cultural and economic requirements induced Europe to redefine its educational policy.

Typology of reforms

If an analysis of reforms in education is made, it will immediately be concluded that greatest focus in changing laws is put on changing curricula, i.e. study programs, changing articles of the law taken from other educational systems, as well as some formal issues. Can we establish what type a certain reform is if we make a serious analysis of the overall educational policy? The answer is that we can and that it should serve us to be able learn to scientifically create a methodology that should present the effects of individual reforms. But do we have such instruments? No! So how did then competent authorities implement a certain reform? Without research, without systematic analyses and consultations with science.

Richard Sack, a researcher and consultant of the International Institute for Education Planning of UNESCO in his book "A Typology of Educational Reforms" (*A typology of educational reforms*, 1982) makes a complex typology:

- "Reforms intended to change the objectives and functions of the school in a broad social and economic context;
- Reforms relating to the organization and administration of the educational system;
- Reforms relating to the definition of the roles and relationships between roles;
- Reforms comprising curricula" (Sack, 1982, p. 56).

Nenad Suzic (Сузић, 2009) speaks about and promotes a comprehensive typology according to which certain reforms could be characterized:

- Ideological reforms with national, religious and class foundation;
- Reforms aimed at reconstruction and control of the system, rationalization of the organization and spending money;
- Reforms aimed at human needs of the student and at the outcomes of education.

Each of these types of reforms could be analyzed according to several criteria:

- a) orientation towards the past or towards the future,
- b) manner of implementation: root - grass or the other way round,
- c) orientation towards human needs of the individual or towards the needs of the society.

Conclusion

Never before has pedagogy been so separated from social relations and the lives of children, pupils, and students; not even when it seemed to be on the margins of social events. The objectives of education have sense only when they are generally obligatory, which means that they depend on and are connected with pure theoretical sciences such as logic, ethics and aesthetics. Anthropological, ethical and deep spiritual sense are at the root of upbringing and education. All reforms that do not respect this principle failed. That is why the key to success is the man (teacher, professor) and his meeting with the child, pupil or student.

One of the problems in approaching reforms in the educational system of the Republic of Macedonia is the fact that they were not based on these disciplines and principles, on this sense, and they do not have a philosophical and pedagogical background. The foundations of the reforms are political pragmatism, opportunism and ephemeral goals. The consequences of these educational policies are: transferring and imposing, taken from other educational systems, of different programs, regulations, measurements, testing, ranking and benchmarking at institutional and national level that face us all (students, teachers, professors, parents) with the “Japanese syndrome” - forcing the competitive spirit while forgetting that it is the first principle of war in man’s consciousness, instead of developing reflexive and creative thinking. On the other hand, numerous objections are directed to pedagogy and pedagogues that they are not able to solve the problems of the educational system, letting them deal with excess occurrences in the classroom and in the school. Pedagogy is not expected, and at the same time it acts in an inferior manner, to deal with fundamental issues as a social and humanistic force that must prepare relevant assumptions in creating quality educational policies.

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