THE SOCIALIZATION OF EDUCATION IN YUGOSLAVIA:
PROBLEMS AND HOPES

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The socialization of education has been assigned a central place in several of my papers written over the last years. In these papers I usually dwelt only on some particular aspects of this subject, always bearing in mind, however, the need to see it in its totality. In this paper I shall mainly limit myself to a discussion of educational orientations in Yugoslavia seen as equivalents of theoretical approaches to education, as theories of education, as pedagogics which naturally find their reflection in educational practice.

My intention to discuss theoretical orientations in education may appear strange as discussions of theoretical and epistemological questions in this field in Yugoslavia usually start from the assumption that we follow only one educational theory and orientation. My paper, however, offers the hypothesis that several theories of education exist in Yugoslavia, and tries to delimit them as relatively independent theoretical orientations. I wish to add at once that this differentiation will not reveal a clear theoretical division. On the contrary, some of the divisions will only be glimpsed in some more subtle and hidden aspects of our educational theory and practice.

Assuming that several theories do exist, it remains to be determined which theories, and what is their essence? My analysis is based on a distinction I have elaborated in some of my earlier papers: the distinction between “education in the name of a class” and “education of a class” (1). Starting from this criterion, obviously only one of several possible criteria, educational theory could be divided into statistic and self-managing. Throughout the post-war period we can in fact follow the historical process in which our pedagogy has been shifting from an statistic to a self-managing concept. In other words, in this period “education in the name of a class” has been straining to become the “education of a class”.

Within statistic pedagogy we can clearly distinguish between two relatively separate variants. One of them is usually denoted as traditional pedagogy.
The other could be called positivist-functionalist.

Traditional pedagogy in Yugoslavia goes back to the XIXth century, more precisely to the eighteen eighties, the years when it grounded itself in the German idealistic pedagogy best represented by HERBART and his followers. Advocating the pursuit of virtue as the highest goal of educational and, more generally, of all human activity, in the period between the two wars this pedagogy was also marked by a cultural-philosophical orientation. Although it was at that time partly supplanted by the so-called reformist, new pedagogy advocating individual activity, there was a return to HERBART and normative pedagogy at the very eve of World War II (2). Nor did the post-war period entirely reject HERBART (3). On the contrary, his views have lived on different forms up to the present, both in theoretical and practical pedagogy.

In the years following World War II the synthesis was obviously effected between Herbartian and Soviet pedagogy. In the period between the two wars Soviet educational theory had passed through various phases: a uniform working school and complex system, the “stabilization of educational policy”, new teaching plans and curricula, a new educational policy based on the five-year plan of cultural and economic development, the revision of so-called educational leftism, and the return to educational autonomy in which school autonomy was seen primarily as a channel for ideological action. The latter variant was transplanted into our midst after the war and going strong up to about 1948.

Yet even apart from the influence of Soviet educational theory on Yugoslav pedagogy, it is a fact that traditional pedagogy essentially also relies on the state and on its administrative educational system. The state plans education and distributes financial resources, but it is also expected to offer guidelines in educational theory and practical teaching. Traditional pedagogy advocates a strictly autonomous educational practice. On this practice a theory was based by which education is communicated in the name of a class through the intermediary of an equally autonomous body of teachers. Traditional pedagogy expects the teacher to be a state employee transmitting education in the name of a class.

Both in theory and practice traditional pedagogy is essentially directive. Its directiveness is, for instance, expressed in the norms and prescriptions of educational activities, in hierarchical relations and a refusal to problematize the educational activity of the teacher. Traditional pedagogy is not critically founded and is therefore closed to criticism. It is interested in education obedient souls and forming correct interpretations of the world rather than leading to its changing.

Another variant of statist pedagogy might be called positivist-functionalist. Its roots also grow out of Yugoslav educational history. In its present form it
emerged in the late Fifties. This pedagogy was born from the ambition to
develop a "truly" scientific pedagogy. On the theoretical-epistemological
level it is opposed to traditional, dogmatic pedagogy and its methodology.
Rejecting pedagogy as a speculative-descriptive and normative theory, it tries
to devise a "scientific methodology" for a "new pedagogy". This methodo-
logy relies heavily on the use of an exact mathematical-statistic apparatus,
the quantification of education, and on experiment. It mainly denies the
validity of unexperimental pedagogical research, even when empirically
founded, and considers it unscientific (4). For them the epithet "scientific"
is primarily reserved for findings that can be measured and processed by ma-
thematical and statistic instruments. This educational orientation does not
question the merits of this or that educational concept. It is only interested
in whether a method has applied correctly from a formal methodological
standpoint regardless of the educational concept lying behind it. It does not
care, for instance, whether in some cases it is in fact advancing and advoca-
ting the old pedagogy.

However, if our educational development is measured by the quality of the
education appropriated, the quality of a free human being, the quality of
the creative life and of liberated human relations in an authentic communi-
ty, then the narrowness of all these pedagogical approaches is fully revealed.

For the further development of Yugoslav education it is particularly impor-
tant to reaffirm the authentic Marxist approach as the methodological basis
of the science, theory and practice of education (5). In the Sixties and Seven-
ties this approach was systematically repressed by a positivist-functionalist
pedagogical activity obsessed by empiricism and scientism. The first require-
ment of positivist-functionalist pedagogy, both in theory and practice, is
efficiency. Along with other factors, it shares the responsibility for those
educational trends which in the last two decades have led to the great quan-
titative increase of required information and data in school curricula. Within
the framework of this positivist-functionalist orientations new instructional
system have been developed, stressing the need for maximum efficiency un-
derstood primarily as more facts. These system can fundamentally be charac-
terized as seeing educational activity as a technological process modifying the
behaviour of those participating in education. Education is thus in the final
analysis reduced to human engineering, a scientifically programmed manipu-
lation of human behaviour. A system himself, man is made to function under
the impact of education by using the mechanisms which enable him to adapt
to work conditions, the social milieu and the social relations in his surround-
ing (6).

The positivist-functionalist pedagogical variant also obeys the logic of "edu-
cation in the name of a class". Education is communicated through a separate
and autonomous educational system in which the central role is played
by the technologists of human behaviour, experts who have mastered the
scientific methodology of “teaching everyone everything”. Education for them is not a matter of social distribution of labour in the process of producing human life. For these pedagogues education is first of all the capacity of skilled experts to direct the programmed process of behavioral human modification aiming at adapting the individual to the existing social system.

Somewhere between these two orientations — the traditional and positivist-functionalist — we can, however, locate an effort to constitute a pedagogy in which “education in the name of a class” is turning into the “education of a class”. This very class, in the historical course of human production and social development, aiming at eliminating itself as a class.

In Yugoslavia the seems of an education outside a closed and institutional framework, outside a closed and autonomous school system founded on alienated surplus product, could already be discerned in the education of the working class between the two wars. This “education of a class” must be understood primarily as self-learning, self-education for the historical process of self-liberation and the liberation of all men. The process of social and educational transformation in Yugoslavia took place in the years of the People’s War of Liberation (1941-1945). In this period of modern history was born the new pedagogy of the revolutionary masses. Educational practice was not just schooling practice, but rather a collective act of mass participation of the people — children, youth, adults and old people — in the transformation of social reality. At that time the practice of education and schooling was undoubtedly being socialized through the popular “appropriation of education” and the social conditions of producing one’s own life.

And, although no educational theory was written at the time, it is a fact that Marxism was becoming the methodological foundation for the solution of theoretical and practical educational questions (7).

The further socialization of education depends directly on the appropriation of the new relation of the working people towards the means of production and the conditions and results of their labour. Self-management, as the social form of the further economic liberation of work and the worker, has broadened the scope of labour socialization in the course of the Fifties and Sixties. At the beginning of the Seventies, as a result of such a social, self-managing appropriation of producing one’s own life, the educational question was set on radically new foundations, although it became a central social question only towards the middle of that decade. Education thus became one of the fundamental social question to be regarded in the total context of social transformation. At that period social-economic relations were more directly connected to the development of associated labour, and the political life was further democratized through the delegate system leading to an increased direct participation of working people and citizens in the running of social affairs (8). This was a period when Yugoslav pedagogy found itself at its “historical moment”, demanding a new pedagogy which would answer
the needs of the self-managing socialist society (9).

This demand was an implicit avowal that we had was in fact an old pedagogy of self-managing society. It also means that the educational theory and its organizational and empirical projections were evidently lagging behind the reality of broader social trends. It would be exaggerated to say that pedagogy was in agony. It is certain, however, that its traditional and positivist-functional orientation were found wanting. At the same time these orientations showed a great capacity for readjustment, especially on the verbal level. It must be admitted, however, that the existing pedagogy was undergoing a period of radical self-questioning, from matters related to its theory, epistemology and methodology to those of a more practical nature. The second half of the last decade (1975-1980) should therefore be considered as a time of searching for a new pedagogy, a new pedagogy of education.

Without going into more general considerations regarding future developments in education, I should only like to stress that in some of my earlier writing I have underlined that the socialization of education should be of primary importance for the new pedagogy. In other worlds, I believe that the new pedagogy will become possible only if education is further socialized. This should be understood as the historical process of individual and social appropriation of education and, in the final analysis, as the process marking the transformation of education "in the name of a class" into an education conceived by that very class. This should create the historical conditions necessary for the liberation of labour, eliminate the distinction between intellectual and manual labour and the class structure of society as such. In such a historical perspective education as the activity of a class is appropriated by an ever broader social community. Gradually it become the true and unalienable need of all men who produce their own life, freely associated into a community (10).

The new pedagogy demands radical changes in the science, theory and practice of education; more than that, it prompts us to view education in closest relation with the transformation of self-managing social relations in production aiming at the true liberation of labour and the elimination of the alienated conditions of human existence. How new this pedagogy will be depends, however, neither on our capacity to visualize possible development in the future, nor on our wishes. It depends first of all on the total reality of social relations which are again rising before us in all the complexity of this historical moment.

NOTES

1. In the paper entitled "Pedagogy's Historical Moments" I have given a more complete view of the new educational theory and practice seen as shifting from "education in
the name of the working class” to “education of this class”; in the course of history the working class creates the conditions necessary for its self-elimination, and thereby the elimination of a class society. The paper was published in the book Contributions to the Discussion of Self-Managing Socialist Pedagogy. Zagreb : PKZ, 1979.


3. In a programmatic article J. JURMAN gave the following definition of the basis and future trends of Yugoslav “new pedagogy” in the post-war period: “Our work is thus based on HERBART’s experiences because he turned pedagogy into a true science”. And further: “Using all the experiences and achievements of various school systems, especially HERBART and the working school, we shall create a new pedagogy and a new school which will satisfy our demands and needs”. See J. JURMAN, “The Way to Our New Pedagogy”, Napredak (Zagreb), Vol. 82, No. 1-2, 1945, pp. 3-11, esp. 11.


5. What I have in mind is MARX’s authentic interpretation based on an humanistic or anthropological conception of man and history, to be distinguished from all dogmatic derivations.


9. More about this in article “Pedagogy’s Historical Moments” – quoted above.