



## CHALLENGES FOR THE CURRENT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. THE ARTISTIC EDUCATION

### *PROVOCĂRI PENTRU SISTEMUL EDUCAȚIONAL ACTUAL. EDUCAȚIE ARTISTICĂ*

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*Noul sistem de învățământ va fi funcțional în cazul în care va reuși nu doar transmiterea de informații, ci și descoperirea și dezvoltarea constantă, dinamică, variată, organică a abilităților de comunicare, de management, management stresului la lucru și a vieții de familie (într-o eră în care presiunea asupra individului ajunge la niveluri fără precedent), mai multe abilități creative și imaginative. În paradigma actuală a educației, educația artistică este absolut necesară, în special educația prin tehnici teatrale.*

A more frequent topic talks about the need of the educational system to adapt to the requirements of the ultrahigh-tech society of today and more important of tomorrow. It is obvious that in this millennium is not enough to simply be a permanent citizen of the consumer society, with all that it brings – from food, clothing, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, etc., promoted worldwide to the skills and behaviors suggested by the new forms of social group networking, to cultural products – namely the Hollywood movies „culture” and the television talk shows. The human being feels that he has lost ground to itself in the second half of the last century; he feels the need to regain itself in order to continue to exist with dignity in relation with his characteristics and purpose. In this new society, with a low birth rate than that of past centuries, the role of each member is stressed.

The individual has the opportunity to become useful and even stand out, as the new standard is variety. In other words, *modern society cannot afford to exclude anyone by selection*, but

must create a successful education in which every individual can acquire that position which enables him to capitalize the innate and acquired skills. The literacy requirement is a condition sine qua non of the current education because even the simplest jobs cannot be met today without at least medium-level scientific and technological capacities. For assuming these medium-level scientific and technological skills, the individual needs a Cartesian type intelligence, logical and analytical<sup>1</sup> thinking – and this is the kind of thinking that education is currently focused on. But, for the use and development of all kinds of skills, even of the technical needs, an individual needs emotional intelligence<sup>2</sup>, imagination and creativity.

**Basically, the new educational system will be functional if he does not just transmit information but discovers, develops through constant,**

<sup>1</sup> whose index is denoted by IQ – intelligence quotient

<sup>2</sup> EI = emotional intelligence; EQ – emotional quantient

**dynamic, varied, organic exercise communication skills, emotion management skills, work and family life stress (in an era in which pressure on the individual reaches unprecedented levels), enhanced creative and imaginative skills.** Therefore, teachers should also develop the ability to diagnose the characteristics and the needs of the group of pupils he is working with, the ability to adapt his teaching to the characteristics of each group member, *he must teach pupils to learn, to have the ability to form their characters and use their emotional intelligence.* This is the new hidden curriculum.

Here are a few means of action of the current hidden curriculum and opportunities to improve it:

- Having its own rules, the school sends out organically individual respect for the rules of society. This idea can be enriched supporting individual initiative, the profile of „the adventurer”, of „the road opener” being sketched on the deviation from the rule. Even the youngest pupils should be able to invent new rules as long as they increase individual and group performance.
- In school the teacher is the accepted authority just as the parent is at home. This teaches that society is hierarchically built and this enables respect for work superiors, for the police, judges, priests etc. This hidden curriculum action however should not make room for abuse of authority from parents and/or teachers. Authoritarianism prevents the development of the individual because it emotionally traumatizes him, limiting him or pushing

him backwards academically/professional making him dependent on the positive assessment of his superiors. Individual performance is not necessarily achieved with the help of superiors! And, even if in general this is true, we should make it possible for our pupils to overcome us.

- By respect for colleagues they learn to respect others; the responsibilities given to school pupils and the perpetuation of greater respect for teachers teaches them respect for the elderly. Moreover, the new curriculum needs to help to change attitudes towards the elderly, which after a certain age are left unused, whilst most are at the climax of personal development. Their use in voluntary programs would not only support both the above social categories but also adults, overwhelmed in generally by the multitude of tasks at work and at home. In fact, we are confident that the organization of parenting schools, or schools for grandparents, has become imperative, where they can receive specialized support for several areas designed to develop competence for their family but also social role.
- Grading and awards teaches them that work and study are rewarded, that the differentiation of social statuses is natural and justified. Therefore it is necessary that grades and awards always be granted correctly! The question is *What do you grade?* Because the capacity of memory is often graded at the expense of learning process, the blind obedience is graded at the expense of creative

„delinquency” etc. Also the rating should be the natural result of the evaluation process. If the pupil gets better grades than he deserved after learning this decreases his respect for evaluators and the personal motivation to learn<sup>3</sup>.

- Participating in school and extra-curricular group activities (sports, scientific, artistic, etc.), pupils learn to work together (later in an institution, firm, company), but also learn that the group cannot succeed unless each individual works. In competitive sports, beyond the mere difference in equipment, pupils learn to conform to gender stereotypes<sup>4</sup>, they discover the gender-specific skills. But the term of „competition” should be well understood. Of course, workers, regardless of their profession, must compete for jobs and wages, but compe-

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<sup>3</sup> Teachers say the pupils harmfully speculate the characteristics of the system: "Madam, you cannot expel me because you are paid according to the number of students" or "Mrs., you cannot punish me for not doing my homework. You forgot that now Grade IX and X are mandatory? So, you'll pass me anyway! "Etc. (experiences recounted by teachers in the university in the trainings that support the European project "Communication abilities. Performance in education". (<http://www.competenteincomunicare.ro/>)

<sup>4</sup> Regarding genre, opinions are divided. It is an objective fact – today's society is less concerned to prepare girls and boys for differentiated statuses. Accordingly, girls don't have only "feminine occupations", which were an extension of their domestic role, and the boys are not anymore the only ones who support the family. Some philosophers and sociologists put contemporary family decline on account of this fact.

tion is not useful when success is not the result of the process, it does not bring joy if success was not achieved through personal commitment to self and not for others („to prove” something to colleagues or to be “liked” by the teacher/parents). Arts education becomes very useful because, unlike sports competition where only one wins, everyone is a winner here by engaging in artistic activity (be it individual – in a painting circle or collective – in a theater club) depending on the capabilities.

- By organizing study periods on hours and by the punctuality requirement the effective use of time at work is taught. As school and family organize the pupil's time, so, later, his time will be organized by the employer. However, the individual must be supported by actions of the hidden curriculum, to also learn how to use time effectively and creatively.
- Accurate study subjects enable respect for the scientific value and for the great personalities of mankind. However, the exclusive theoretical teaching, unaccompanied by practice on these subjects often renders their implementation difficult – and this is one weakness of the current education. Where the system allows laboratory experience, these study subjects give indispensable practical skills.
- Humanistic subjects also enable respect for the great personalities of mankind, for aesthetic values (artistic and extra-artistic), moral, religious, legal values, etc. School

generally must provide a real and valid values system for the respective generation. Therefore, learning must be an „experiment together”, the teacher must accept that the partnership is the only form in which it can continuously adapt to the new requirements of new generations. This type of partnership helps us find new, more accessible information for young people, to learn about them and their concerns, about problems that we can support<sup>5</sup>.

- Because school obligations are placed at the forefront of children's lives, despite sometimes dull, these requires patience, persistence and repetition, in order to learn, on one hand, that employees must accept sometimes boring, repetitive work, and on the other hand, that performance in any field requires patience and exactness.
- The lack of control over curriculum and school organization, teaches pupils how to function within an institution, organization, company where control decisions belong to employers. On the other hand, as they progress in age and ability, pupils and

especially pupils have a say in the organization of universities, for example. This, as well as involvement in sport competitions or artistic activities, trains them to know their place in hierarchies of power and control and to occupy a management position.

- Promotion in high school and university education through exams enable respect for study, hard work, efficiently planned and staged. The success achieved by passing a test is an extraordinary increase in self-esteem, confidence in their capabilities – the core strength of personality and future personal development.

Through all the types of action of the hidden curriculum listed above individual responsibility at all levels is practiced and the idea that the individual will live according to how he prepares for life is enforced. However, a *pedagogy focused on encouragement* works extremely well and we have to be very cautious about labeling and, especially about negative prediction.

*Labels* are not only inappropriate, but often incorrect because the pupil might not have understood what is required or that the assessment was taken in a moment of closure due to emotional problems: „I watch the sheets that kindergarten children bring less and less often. Early in my career these seemed to me very important. But I had a case where a little boy with suspected autism label and antisocial behavior was brought to me in class and although I have taken this for granted, I realized that the teacher and I were both wrong, and

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<sup>5</sup> This is particularly important for all kinds of problems (related to the natural stages of development of the psyche, the personality, the emotional, the physical, gender issues, etc..) or addictions – the teacher can support the pupil (even only by notifying parents and professionals) only if he can identify the problem (and can recognize it only if he has already dealt with it, at least in theory). We must not forget that we are in the era of cyber crime and that addiction isolation can produce monsters!

by the fourth grade he was an Olympic in Mathematics” (teacher)<sup>6</sup>. Viola Spolin, reformer of the theater education, said in her textbook – “Improvisation for the Theater” – that labels are static and prevent the process<sup>7</sup>. In other words, specific terminology must be entered when the meaning is already known, when there were data that could be analyzed, when there were conclusive examples.

Regarding the labeling of people, it should be especially avoided. „Innocent” labels like „She is the shy one in the class” are likely to make her vulnerable in the group. She will have to fight to change this label and, paradoxically, when she will show that she is not shy she will be reproached for leaving the indicated behavior pattern: „Look! I was not expecting that from a shy pupil! Labeling such as „bad child” often push the child to be more introverted if he is socially shy or make him stand to the level of expectations - he will do everything possible to justify his role and to maintain supremacy in the hierarchy of evil, as attractive as the good one. And yet, in all cases given as examples, the teacher has capacity to transform the problem-pupil into a charismatic personality, even with leadership future.

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<sup>6</sup> Quote from the **Diagnostic Report** made in the European project “Communication abilities. Performance in education”.

<sup>7</sup> Viola Spolin, *Improvizație pentru teatru*, trad. Mihaela Bețiu, Unatc Press, 2008, p. 83. Labels: terms that tend to conceal their origin and block organic knowledge; labeling limits us to “things” and categories, neglecting relation. (*engl. Labels*) – p. 435.

In the opposite direction, *the positive feedback technique* determines, in general, an effective management of the teacher-pupil relationship in the classroom and outside class. This technique practices active listening, the teacher-pupil and teacher-pupil-parent partnership and increases self-esteem. Here are a few examples offered by the *Diagnostic Report* of the „Communication abilities. Performance in education Program”:

- „We do several afterschool projects with the Romanian teacher. One is called Cinema. Wednesday we went to a movie. After the movie there are discussions with the directors, discussions in which we engage. I was impressed that the next day I found an e-mail from the Romanian teacher, e-mail thanking us for our involvement. And it mattered a lot to me!” (pupil)

- „I am from the Republic of Moldova. And when I came I had problems with the language. And the Romanian teacher told me: „It's important to try to speak better, to do your homework even if do not speak like you should”. I liked that she encouraged me”. (pupil)

- „I had a girl with extremely low self-esteem. For her black was the only color in the world. During the identification of qualities games she did not understand why she was alive because she had no qualities. It was hard. I would put her in various situations. We talked to her family, we went to a psychologist. But I think the family had the biggest role by accepting my advice to take the child to a psychologist. Unfortunately, not all parents are willing to do that”. (teacher)

We also believe in the need of *change the mentality regarding the*

*idea of the „problem”*. This sort of label has traumatized whole generations, generations in which, even the normally developed children have had fixations determined primarily by a wrong mentality and a bad management of problems”. The mentality that „problem” has a negative connotation is wrong. The „problem” is nothing but a „matter” occurred during the study process (and will occur throughout life), is „something to solve”, „something that can be solved”. In fact, our brain is designed to solve problems. Scientists have discovered that it is able to reorganize to meet new challenges and they even organized training programs for the brain – cognitive exercises that develop the memory, the attention, the concentration, the ability to solve problems, the speed data processing, the flexibility etc. The human brain needs constant challenges – this is the only way to maintain and develop its skills. The way we encounter and overcome „problems” defines our personality. Often, performance in a field is achieved by people who received negative predictions in childhood and did not seem able to overcome momentary weakness.

**In the current education paradigm artistic education is absolutely necessary.** Artistic education, namely education through theater techniques – because this is our specialty, is designed to sustain the expression of all types of emotional intelligence: verbal-linguistic intelligence, visual-spatial intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, musical-rhythmic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, naturalistic intelligence, even logical-mathematical intelligence.

At an undergraduate level, this type of artistic education through theatre techniques is called, just as in universities, „The Art of Acting”. Maybe a very misleading name, so that some teachers do what is called „acting” or „theatre” with their pupils, instead of organically experimenting communication techniques through improvisation exercises. „To make theatre”, to give pupils some lines to learn and organize after their own imagination a show is a technique that brings some advantages: it practices memorization, communication (we take turns and listen to each other so we can communicate), placement in space, dress, attended speech.

These are the advantages of this type of exercise – you can count them on the fingers of one hand. They represent the lowest form of theatre type artistic education and subdue the danger of pupil schematic thinking, the learning of patterns of behavior (how should I sit, what should I say, what should I do) that can never compensate for sincere and living relationship between two stage partners (prejudices sometimes prevent pupils of specialized high schools to become professional). And all of this because of improper teachers without teaching and stage experience. Warning! This statement does not incriminate talented amateurs, but untalented impostors, short of the minimum knowledge in the field or some special education graduates without real pedagogical skills. Because, as firmly stated the professor Ion Cojar, “The theatre school is preoccupied with the process and the theatre is centered on the result – the performance”.

On the other hand, the use of theatre techniques in artistic education, but also in general education, is an improvement to the educational system, an adaptation to the needs of the contemporary society. When we say „*theatrical techniques*” we generally refer to *theatre games*, to *improvisation exercises*, to *dramatic exercises* (such as role-playing or listening exercises). These have the gift to develop attention, concentration, active listening, observation capacity of the environment and of partners, acquisition of data, their process, the ability to create problem-solving strategies, the ability to choose, promptness to collect/takeover, speed of choice, flexibility of thinking, internal mobility, promptness of response, coordination, rhythm, timing, self-expression (or ability to express oneself), ability to work individually or in teams, ability to concede, to

cooperate, to work together to solve common problems, the ability to relate, the ability to accurately relate to partners and situations, ability to control your emotions (via the Concentration Point), the ability to coordinate your emotions to improve relationships with others (parents, teachers, leaders and later leaders and family), organic structure, expressiveness, spontaneity, imagination, creativity, authenticity, etc.

These are the advantages of creative and creator type of theatrical training. Artistic education in general, and the theatre techniques artistic education, in particular, increase the chances of personal, family, social success, through an enjoyable, even fun process, without constraints and the pursuit of results. Practically, the skills develop organically and unconsciously during the game and become competencies.

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