

Educating is welcoming: education as a process of self-education of the human being

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Abstract: A topic of pedagogical discussion that has characterized educational debates since the 18th century is related to the degree of influence that educators should exert on students. A large sector of the educational community believes that teachers should be in charge of the learning process, while others, influenced by Rousseau, believe that education should be free and spontaneous, that the natural development of children should be respected, and that no actions should be taken that inhibit this development. Education is defined as a three-dimensional activity. It can be considered a cognitive, practical, and axiological act. This article argues that to educate is to welcome, and education is assumed to be a process of self-formation of the human being. All of the above was necessary for—and is the result of—the research project entitled Configuration of scenarios of organizational resilience based on the problems in the management processes of primary and secondary educational institutions in the Department of Magdalena, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and post-pandemic, funded by the University of Magdalena. Santa Marta, Colombia, developed in 2022.

Keywords: education; instruction; training; educational sciences; pedagogy; teaching; learning

1 Introduction

One of the important messages conveyed by this article is that educating means welcoming, and that education is a process of self-formation of the human being, which is in line with the contributions of Torres Duarte (2004), Skliar (2011), Moncayo Dorado, Ángel Palomino, Fabián Paruma, and Gómez (2013) and Gallo, Chaparro, Ruiz, and Benavides (2021). Furthermore, this idea of welcoming students is endorsed by Cortés Valencia and Ibagué Vallejo (2011), who approach early childhood from the perspective of education and human rights. Likewise, Enríquez Meza, Díaz Eraso, and Ríos Patiño (2013) characterize religious education as a vital element in inclusive teaching practices. Furthermore, Sepúlveda Méndez, Soto Rivas, and Ramírez Aristizabal (2014) describe the fabric of school interaction as an enabler of management in inclusion policy.

On the other hand, Acevedo Serrato, Ramírez Cantillo, Silva Sánchez, Álvaro, and Cárdenas Zuluaga (2015) reveal the meanings and significance of diversity from a perspective based on children's understanding of their school experiences. In this sense, Campo Flor, Sauca Avirama, Trujillo Agredo, and Mosquera Moreno (2016) address diversity, its myths, and tensions from the perspective of teachers. Along the same lines are the contributions of Grisales Serna and Zuluaga Robles (2018) on non-parametric teaching, understood as a research path of constant closure and opening.

2 Educating is welcoming

Dávila and Maturana (2009) state that the task of education is to train democratic adults, for which "teachers must have the resources for reflection and action with children in a coexistence in which they are not frightened by being rejected because of the difficulties they may have at a given moment" (p. 147). In this way, "this is precisely where the spiritual mission of education lies: to teach understanding among people as a condition and guarantee of the intellectual and moral solidarity of humanity" (Morín, 2001, p. 98).

The contributions of Maria Montessori (1870-1952), Alexander Neill (1883-1973), Célestin Freinet (1896-1966), and Paulo Freire (1921-1997) are very valuable here, and can be found in Freinet (2014) and Freire (1969).

According to Alcott, "education is the process by which thought detaches itself from the soul and, by associating with external things, reflects back on itself in order to become aware of the reality and form of those things [...]. It is a process of self-knowledge" (quoted by Nussbaum, 2013, p. 93).

Based on the above, we must develop our work "from early childhood education and throughout life through genuine lifelong education" (Adorno, 1969, p. 98).

Rousseau (1762) states: "Everything is fine when it leaves the hands of the author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man" (p. 43). As can be seen, the education modeled by Rousseau maintains that society corrupts the good people who emerge from Nature.

Education is a praxiological and cognitive-intellectual process, but it can also be considered an axiological act, since it "seeks to educate others on the basis of raising, teaching, and training under the guise of cultural values or standards" (Zambrano, 2006, p. 137).

For Flórez (2005), "education not only socializes individuals, but also rescues what is most valuable in them, their creative and innovative abilities, humanizes them, and empowers them as people" (p. 350). However, in modernity, being educated does not imply adapting to society, since "the prohibitions and demands of educators become rigid and immutable. From something alive and animated, they become a historical sediment, incapable of continuing to adapt to progressive external changes" (Freud, 2011, p. 84).

This allows us to affirm that educators must limit their educational action to welcoming students. "Welcoming is what makes us all more human, both the one who welcomes and the one who is welcomed. Welcoming is recognizing that the child is the protagonist of their own biography, that they have basic needs and rhythms that are not our own" (L'Ecuyer, 2014, p. 64).

"In this new world, humans are expected to seek particular solutions to socially generated problems, rather than seeking socially generated solutions to particular problems" (Bauman, 2011a, p. 112). It is urgent. "We have not yet learned the art of living in a world oversaturated with information. Nor have we learned the inconceivably difficult art of preparing human beings for that life" (Bauman, 2011a, p. 119), as Martí (1975) also proposed: "To educate is to deposit in each man all the human work that has preceded him, it is to make each man a summary of the living world up to the day he lives, it is to bring him up to the level of his time so that he can float above it and not leave him below his time, unable to stay afloat; it is to prepare man for life" (p. 282). For Calzado (2004), this implies promoting "its practical and creative use in the service of social and individual progress" (p. 26).

Aguayo (1927) understood education as "the channeling or direction of development and adaptation to the environment, in accordance with certain values and ideas" (p. 1), and Echegoyen and Suárez (1944) defined it as "the accumulation of experiences useful to the individual to enable them to act satisfactorily in the different spheres of life" (p. 29). Both authors associate education with actions that enable individuals to be prepared for life. As Not (2013) states, a

person's education is nothing more than "their transformation towards certain goals, achieved through the exploitation of appropriate situations" (p. 13).

Likewise, "Hyper-specialized education replaces the old ignorance with a new blindness, which is maintained thanks to the illusion that rationality determines development, when in fact it confuses techno-economic rationalization with human rationality" (Morín, 2011, p. 27). Education based on acceptance must teach us to "learn to be human beings capable of loving and imagining" (p. 34).

For Adorno (1969), educating does not mean shaping people, because "no one has the right to shape people from the outside; nor is it the simple transmission of knowledge, in which the dead and reified has so often been emphasized, but rather the attainment of a thorough consciousness" (p. 95). This endorses the following idea: "Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to take responsibility for it and thus save it from ruin, which, were it not for the arrival of the new and the young, would be inevitable" (Arendt, 2003, p. 208).

Education "aims to awaken and develop in children a certain number of physical, intellectual, and moral qualities required by political society as a whole and the social environment to which they are destined" (Durkheim, 1980, p. 51).

In the 21st century, we need a libertarian education, an education that frees us from totalitarian society. We must unearth that education which, "instead of teaching newcomers how to enter the world, is dedicated to indoctrinating them. That is, to repeat slogans without thinking, without being able to judge, to justify banal acts that can be horrific" (Sobarzo, 2008, p. 71). However, today's student, "[...] is in the desperate position, by definition, of a minority of one facing the absolute majority of all the others. (...) Therefore, by emancipating themselves from the authority of adults, children did not free themselves, but remained subject to a much more terrifying and truly tyrannical authority: that of the majority" (Arendt, 2003, p. 193).

That is why the purpose of education is to emancipate, because a true democracy requires emancipated individuals. "It is impossible to imagine a democracy without a society of emancipated individuals" (p. 95), which is why the relationship between democracy, education, and politics is a triadic, configurative relationship; they are inseparable and influence each other interactively. "Education is the institutionalized effort to instruct and train individuals in the art of using their freedom of choice within the agenda established by legislation" (Bauman, 2011b, p. 82).

3 Education from the perspective of the founders of pedagogy

Education has always been associated with the formative process of human beings. "Education is a process of construction or formation through educational materials that are representations. These representations come from outside and shape the spirit. The materials will determine the nature of education" (Herbart, 1806, p. 374). "With Comenius, people were educated in specific places (schools, academies), by special people (teachers), and using specific and particular means (methods)" (Quiceno, 2003, p. 226).

Herbart (1806) considered virtue to be the goal of education. "Virtue is the union of intention with the corresponding will" (p. 274). However, Tyler (1986) states that: "Viewed in this way, it is clear that the objectives of education are the behavioral changes that the educational establishment seeks to achieve in its students" (p. 11).

Herbart's work emphasizes that: "Education must ensure the free and pleasant development of all manifestations of growth in man from the cradle to the marriage bed" (Herbart, 1806, p. 2).

Kant (2013) also confirms this in his practical proposals: "Education is an art, the practice of which must be perfected over many generations. Each generation, equipped with the knowledge of previous generations, can constantly provide an education that develops all of man's natural dispositions in a proportionate manner and in accordance with a purpose, thus leading the entire human species to its destiny" (p. 34). "We need lifelong education to have options to choose from. But

we need it even more to rescue the conditions that make that choice available to us and within our means" (Bauman, 2013b, p. 169).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, written in 1948, states: "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; it shall promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations and all ethnic or religious groups" (Quoted by Nussbaum, 2013, p. 34). And further on, she states: "Children must learn to take responsibility for their own thoughts and to participate in the world with a critical and curious spirit" (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 95). Likewise, "The purpose of education is to make culture more of a resource than a determinant" (Stenhouse, 1997, p. 39).

Runge (2008) characterizes education as "an identifiable and relatively autonomous sector within the whole of social praxis, as is the case with political praxis or religious praxis" (p. 32).

A very valuable contribution to this idea of education as a process of welcoming human beings can be found in the work of Duch (2000), who analyzes some aspects of the first "welcoming structure," the family, co-descendance, which is of utmost importance in the processes of human transmission. After offering a schematic history of some family models that have been prevalent in the West, they turn their attention to a set of topics that are not usually addressed in studies on the family institution, among which the question of "family space and time" stands out. Another topic analyzed in depth is that of "family memory," which has a wide range of modulations and registers. They assign extraordinary importance to hospitality, which is a manifestation of humanity as such.

4 Conclusion

For Flórez (2005), education "is a process through which a society initiates and cultivates in individuals their ability to assimilate and produce culture" (p. 44). But not only this, it is also an "active and conscious social process that guarantees not only the assimilation of social, national, and universal experience, but above all that individuals relate creatively to such experiences and transform themselves through knowledge, art, and work" (Flórez, 2005, p. 44).

Teachers must adopt a conception of education that will guide the process of student training, especially in critical contexts such as the corona-virus pandemic that generated Covid-19, in which the emotional weaknesses of our students could be perceived. However, when the act of educating is assumed as a process of welcoming, the strengthening of the mental and emotional configurations of children, adolescents, and young people is remarkable.

In any case, whatever conception we may have of education, it will always be considered a practical activity, a praxiological action, a doing. And the theory that underpins it is shaped by the sciences of education: pedagogy, anthropology, sociology, and psychology. However, if we take a conceptual and epistemic leap and conduct a much deeper epistemological analysis of how human knowledge and our own world are configured, we would have to raise our uncertainty about the factual existence and ontological reality of education. It only exists ontologically when it is assumed as welcoming, which is why we affirm that to educate is to welcome. An education that does not welcome human beings in all their true being is not really education.

It is interesting to consider that Nietzsche (2013) used to say that there are no facts, only interpretations. On the other hand, Maturana (2009) asserts that human beings give birth to our world through language, and that everything said is said by one person to another, who may be themselves. In this sense, the world we live in is a linguistic configuration. From this epistemological perspective, education is not a reality, it is a language. Education is not a fact or a piece of factual information, it is a description, a distinction, an exegesis, an explanation, or an argument made by an observer when they observe that one or more people are carrying out certain actions that enable them to transform themselves in coexistence,

either individually or collectively. Education is a story, a narrative of the changes that should occur in human behavior as a result of receiving certain influences from the human environment or the biosphere.

On the other hand, Dávila and Maturana (2009) argue that what happens to people in the educational space is irreplaceable, because they consider education to be a process of transformation in coexistence, which implies that "everything that occurs in relational spaces will constitute the conditions that shape the particularity of educational spaces, endowing them with uniqueness" (p. 138).

From this perspective, educating means creating environments of coexistence or interpersonal relationships that allow for the formation of an educational community, which is called Amar-Educa (Dávila and Maturana, 2009), and Ortiz (2014) calls it Pedagogy of Love.

It is urgent, necessary, and important that, within educational institutions and universities, teachers engage in intense debate about the essence, meaning, and significance of education, why and for what purpose we educate, and what meaning and significance education has, since the answers to these questions are not predetermined but depend on context and social needs.

Pedagogical reflection is essential, although Freire (2012) considers that educational problems do not have a solely pedagogical solution, but are also influenced by political and ethical aspects. Nevertheless, he considers that without education, social transformation cannot be achieved, although he recognizes that education is not the only factor in the transformation of society.

In any case, teachers' reflections will contribute to greater clarity about education and, consequently, this will result in a more coherent conception of school, in which education must be provided through instruction.

Acknowledgments

Results of the project Configuration of organizational resilience scenarios based on issues in the management processes of primary and secondary educational institutions in the Department of Magdalena, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and post-pandemic, funded by the University of Magdalena, Santa Marta, Colombia.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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