Management and Philosophy in Albanian higher education

PhD Vebina Resuli
Lecturer of Mediterranean University of Albania
vebina.resuli@umsh.edu.al

Msc Erdet Lalaj
Lecturer of Mediterranean University of Albania
erdet.lalaj@umsh.edu.al

ABSTRACT

The philosophy of education is a branch of philosophy concerned with education; it is a basis of any significant contribution to educational policy and practice. Moreover, due to its links with globalized capitalism, it provides ideas and ideals that must be included in any viable educational reform. According to social justice theory, every member of society must be able to obtain a certain minimum level of education regardless of any discriminatory criteria. While the concept of social justice is usually regarded simply as equality, its application is, in fact, one of the major problems in the contemporary theory of education. Any educational system must adopt an inclusive approach and address a range of social issues.
The contemporary educational system is directly linked to the market: it enters the market of educational services through its educational programs and the labor market through its graduates. As a subject of market relations, any educational reform must include innovative management and strategic marketing. Furthermore, the educational institutions must be at peak efficiency regarding their competition; for that reason, strategic plans and external governing councils are a necessity.

KEY WORDS:

Pedagogical anthropology, Education, Philosophy, Management, Paradigm, Standards.

INTRODUCTION

The analysis of the philosophy of education is a crucial theoretic basis for the research of higher education in Albania. According to W. Harris (2007), the main reasons for the formation of the philosophy of education, as a special research field of philosophy, are the isolation of education in the autonomous sphere of society, and the diversification of educational institutions. Moreover, philosophy of education is also associated with a contradiction in the interpretation of goals and ideals of education, which is recorded as the multiparadigmality of pedagogical knowledge and the new requirements for the education system associated with the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial informational society (Harris W. , 2007). The basic delimitation within the philosophy of education passes between empirical-analytical and humanitarian directions, and reflects alternative approaches to the subject of education, which is an individual. Indeed, the empirical-analytical tradition in the philosophy of education uses the concepts and methods of behaviorism, Gestalt psychology, psychoanalysis, as well as the cybernetic approach to the human psyche.

The actual analytical philosophy of education emerged in the early 1960s in the USA and England (Harris W. , 2007). The representatives of this scientific flow are I. Scheffler, R. S. Piter, E. Macmillan, D. Soltis, and others (Harris W. , 2007). The main goal of the philosophy of education is seen in the logical analysis of language used in the practice of education. The content of education is subjected to the criteria of scientific verification. At the same time, the analytical philosophy of education criticizes ideological indoctrination inherent in the systems of Anglo-American education, and shows that the modern school, reformed in accordance with D. Dewey's philosophy, inspires students with ideological doctrines without analyzing the correctness of their initial premises, and is irrelevant to the requirements of modern society (Harris W. , 2007). In the late 1970s, analytical philosophy of education implemented transition from the principles of logical positivism to the principles of the philosophy of linguistic analysis, to the analysis of everyday language, primarily to the philosophy of the late L. Wittgenstein, emphasizing the role of language games and semantics in education.

John Dewey (2004), one of the pioneers in the field, defined philosophy of education as the general theory of education. There are two major tasks of philosophy that are directly linked to their educational equivalents: criticizing existing values; and interpreting the results of special sciences in regard to their future social impact. For that reason, the reconstruction of philosophy, education, and social ideas alike are mutually inclusive: the educational reforms happen due to major social changes, which are, in turn, connected to the development of science, industry, and democracy. The contemporary philosophy of education is, however, is not only a philosophical outlook regarding education. Instead of being an elaboration of "purely philosophical themes," it is considered a process in which "educational practitioners or reformers develop thoughtfully, and to varying degrees, systematic or coherent justifications for their educational practices and commitments" (Burbules, 2000). Therefore, it is extremely important for educational policy and practice alike.

In the late 1960s, a new direction was formed in the philosophy of education, which is a critical-rationalist one. Accepting the basic principles of K. Popper's critical rationalism, this trend seeks to build experimental and scientific pedagogy distanced from values and metaphysics, criticizes naive empiricism, emphasizing that the experience is not self-sufficient, loaded with theoretical content, and its range is determined by theoretical positions (Rowbottom, 2011). Representatives of this direction in the analytical philosophy of education are V. Brzezinka, G. Zdarzil, F. Kube, and R. Lochner (Rowbottom, 2011). Critical-rationalist philosophy of education is characterized by the interpretation of pedagogy as a practical sociology and a turn to social pedagogy. In addition, it includes the opposition of social engineering to holism. In this connection, there is also the criticism of the long-term planning, design in pedagogical practice, the criticism of the totalitarian approach in education, pedagogical thinking and upholding the principles of open society and democratic institutions in management of the education system. Pedagogical theory and practice in critical-rationalist philosophy are focused on the upbringing of critical-checking intelligence, and on the formation of critical abilities of a person. This direction in 1970-80s, having entered into a controversy with the representatives of humanitarian directions in the philosophy of education, modified a number of its provisions, in particular, perceiving some ideas of pedagogical anthropology. Thus, the analytical philosophy of education focuses on a critical analysis of the language of pedagogy, on the identification of the structure of pedagogical knowledge, on the status of theoretical knowledge in pedagogy, the relationship of value propositions and statements about facts, and on the interpretation of the relationship between descriptive and normative pedagogy. In this tradition, philosophy of education is identified with metatheory, or with a critical-rationalist analysis of growth of pedagogical knowledge from posing problems to the promotion of theories.

The origins of humanitarian trends in the philosophy of education are the systems of German idealism of the early 19th century, including F. Schleiermacher and Hegel, the philosophy of life from the works of such philosophers as V. Dilthey and G. Simmel, existentialism and many variants of philosophical anthropology. For humanitarian directions, philosophy of education is characterized by emphasizing the specificity of the methods of pedagogy as a science of the spirit, and its humanitarian orientation. Moreover, humanitarian directions in the philosophy of education are focused on the interpretation of education as a system of meaningful actions and interactions of participants in the pedagogical relationship, and highlighting the method of understanding, interpreting the meaning of the actions of participants in the educational process (O'Connor, 2017). Within the humanitarian philosophy of education, there are several directions.

The first one is the hermeneutic historicism of H. Nol, in the center of which lies the concepts of everyday life and world of a person (O'Connor, 2017). This direction defends the idea that in any life moment and action, there is an educational moment. Additionally, the problem of the philosophy of education is interpreted as a comprehension of all spiritual objectification of a person forming certain integrity, as an analysis of specifics of the pedagogical relationship, which is the initial cell of pedagogical action imbued with responsibility and love. The second direction is the structural hermeneutics of E. Veniger and V. Flitner, which, based on the autonomy of education in modern society, considers pedagogy and philosophy of education as a critical interpretation of pedagogical actions and relationships within the pedagogical process (O'Connor, 2017). It also analyzes the structure of the theory, revealing its different levels, emphasizes the significance of hermeneutics in pedagogical theory and practice, it also puts forward the program of the autonomy of education.

The third one is pedagogical anthropology, which is presented in various versions: from naturalistic oriented to phenomenological and others (O'Connor, 2017). For naturalistic oriented, pedagogical anthropology is a private integrative science, which combines the achievements and methods of all human sciences, such as theories of evolution, ecology, ethology, psychology, and others. Phenomenological options see in pedagogical anthropology a certain way of consideration, an approach, a methodology, which does not end in the pedagogical theory. Using the method of phenomenological reduction on the material of autobiographical and biographical sources, the authors seek to construct anthropology of childhood and youth. In recent years, the core of pedagogical anthropology has become the "image of a human," which is built on the basis of human biological insufficiency, its openness, and formation in the process of upbringing and education. Such image of a human has an understanding of people as integrity, where the spiritual-spiritual is inextricably linked with the physical. The difference in the concepts of pedagogical anthropology is largely due to the orientation toward a certain kind of conception of philosophical anthropology of such representatives as A. Gehlen, M. Scheler, E. Mounier, M. Heidegger, G. Marcel, and others.

The existential-dialogic philosophy of education is represented primarily by M. Buber, who has stated the meaning and grounds for pedagogical relationship in interpersonal relations. Representatives of this trend, for which the fundamental principle of upbringing and education was a dialogue, were A. Petzelt, K. Schaller, who characterized education as a symmetric communication between a teacher and the pupils; K. Mellenhauer, who referred to the communication theory of Y. Habermas and K. Apel, and defined education as a form of communicative action. In the 1970-80s, the critical-emancipatory direction in the philosophy of education became popular, which, under the influence of the critical theory of the Frankfurt school society, developed a radical program of de-secularization of society (O'Connor, 2017). It means the liquidation of schools and universities as a social institution. Its representatives, including A. Illich and P. Freire, saw the source of all social issues in school and universities. Since it is a model for all social institutions, which promotes the conformism, it is based on discipline, the repayment of any creative potential of the child, on the pedagogy of repression and manipulation. In fact, this direction in the philosophy of education is a variant of anti-pedagogy, which, without recognizing the modern institutions of education, reduces all communication with children to an empathic life together. It completely excludes any requirements for the pedagogical process and the content of education, any norms and regulations in teaching and education. The postmodern philosophy of education, which opposes the dictatorship

of theories for the pluralism of pedagogical practices, preaches the cult of individual self-expression in small groups, and largely coincides with the critical-emancipatory direction in the philosophy of education. Among the representatives of this direction are D. Lentsen, V. Fisher, K. Wünsche, G. Gieseke, S. Aronovitz, and W. Doll (O'Connor, 2017).

In its essence, the philosophy of education can be defined as a branch of philosophy concerned with virtually every aspect of education. As such, it overlaps several philosophical branches, such as epistemology, ethics, logic, and metaphysics (Senchuk, 1995, p. 670). According to Senchuk (1995), the most recent research in this field explores major educational objectives, such as moral values and both creative and critical thinking, linking philosophy to "the actual conduct of education" (p. 671). For that reason, philosophy of education is considered a major part of the professional educational mainstream.

SOCIAL JUSTICE THEORY

In any society, educational activities and education system are connected to the demands based on values recognized in this society (Vincent, 2003). In the countries of Western civilization, the majority of people believe that equality of opportunity in education should be a fundamental human right. This view is based on the notion that education is not one of a number of consumer goods, but a process, which is of a fundamental importance for the lives of those who receive it, and for the lives of their children. Consequently, it raises the requirements of equality of rights to receive education (Vincent, 2003). If the acquisition of education is possible only through the individual purchase of educational services, access to education will be entirely determined by the family incomes, which are distributed unevenly.

The distribution of opportunities to receive education in accordance with the distribution of income levels is regarded in many countries as socially unfair. Accordingly, there are also views on the need to ensure socially equitable access to education (Vincent, 2003); (Rowbottom, 2011). In modern Western culture, the rule of equitable access to education means that every citizen who wants and is able to get some education, should not face such discriminatory criteria as an income level, race, nationality, gender, or religion (Banks, 2012). Since the resources of society are limited, the requirements of social justice are presented as the requirements that every member of society is able to obtain a certain minimum level of education, in particular primary or secondary.

Vincent has written that some people can get higher education, but no one can be prevented from reaching the level of education recognized as socially necessary (Vincent, 2003). In applying to obtaining higher levels of education, the requirements of social justice are to ensure equality in admission to the appropriate educational institutions for all social groups and strata, regardless of the material situation of people, their nationality, gender, and place of residence. Citizens should be able to get higher education on a competitive basis, where the criteria should be the level of individual abilities and the level of mastering knowledge, and not the ability to pay a higher price or membership in a particular social group. Indeed, implementation of these principles is impossible without the state regulation of educational activities.

In studies of educational policy, social justice theory draws attention to the production and reproduction of inequalities. While the meaning of the term may vary according to different social theories and their definitions, Zajda, Majhanovich, and Rust (2006) state that most of its conceptions refer to an "egalitarian society that is based on the principles of equality and solidarity, that understands and values human rights, and that recognizes the dignity of every human being." However, instead of simply regarding social justice as a theoretical framework, it is crucial for any educational reform to apply it in practice.

The concept of social justice in the context of education is understood as equality, which means that all students should be given equal rights and opportunities. Moreover, it can be considered as the task of educators to impart to students a desire for harmony in a multi-cultural society. Carol Vincent states that social justice as a concept is already so fuzzy and politically tattered that it has lost particular meaning at all (Vincent, 2003). Despite the fact that many experts try to outline the contours of social justice, the concept of this phenomenon still remains only in the stage of sensory-empirical sensations. Additionally, these feelings are reduced to an abstract level of perception of each individual participant in the education system, such as personal landmarks, and determined by the infinity of different concepts, which is the main problem. Therefore, the topic of social justice becomes relevant in a fundamental, theoretical way, as well as in relation to real life and education. That is why the concept of social justice in the educational system of Albania may differ slightly from social justice in the education of other countries.

The practical application of social justice is regarded as one of the major problems in the contemporary theory of education. According to Bogotch (2000), social justice must be achieved through "critique, example, and practice" (p. 1). Advocating for "the pragmatic necessity of having multiple social purposes," which allows individuals and institutions alike to strive for "different notions of social reform and justice," the author claims that it is necessary for a society as a whole to create both structural and cultural opportunities for the emergence of educational leadership (p. 9–10). Griffiths (2003) employs a similar approach, defining social justice as a dynamic state of affairs, which involves different structural groupings (from small groups to the society as a whole), and depends on "both 'recognition' and 'redistribution'," indicating diversity as a valuable resource instead of a problem (p. 55). As such, social justice must be included into both educational theory and practice on every level, from educational institutions to government policies and academic research.

EDUCATIONAL GOVERNANCE THEORY

Governance is a framework, which includes common concepts relating to structure and process of education. For any country, including Albania, one of the crucial issues is developing a high-quality, innovative, efficient, and equitable education system; for that reason, modern educational governance requires "engaging diverse actors and

stakeholders across multiple levels" (Burns, Köster, & Fuster, 2016, p. 3). According to Burns, Köster, and Fuster (2016), three themes are essential for successful governance: accountability, which focuses holding different actors at multiple levels responsible for their actions; capacity building, which addresses needs and dynamics of implementation on multiple levels (individual, institutional, and system); and strategic thinking, which requires developing a long-term vision and a set of common goals of an educational system (p. 3). A successful analytical framework must combine all three themes into one functional ecosystem.

Governance structures vary between national contexts; for that reason, the approach to the management of internal relations must be developed according to the contemporary settings of the specific country's educational system. Glatter, Mulford, and Shuttleworth (2003) establish four models of governance: "competitive market (CM), school empowerment (SE), local empowerment (LE), and quality control (QC). Regarded as ideal types, those models include different forms of school autonomy, modes of accountability, forms and functions of intermediate authority, and school leadership.

In Europe, many higher education institutions are influenced by their respective state governments. McDaniel (1996) argues that it is "generally accepted that government has a legitimate interest in exercising influence on higher education systems" regardless of the existing respect for academic freedom (p.140). Nevertheless, while institutional autonomy may be extremely limited or even non-existent, most publicly-funded higher education systems are more reputable than private institutions (Ferlie, Musselin, & Andressani, 2009, p. 1). However, the existing global integration brings a series of issues regarding the development of higher education policy on a national level. Enders (2004) draws attention to two major "blind spots." According to him, the reforms focus mainly on policy effects, macro-level policy making, and meso-level organizational adaptation, while the input side of policy formation and micro-level dynamics and effects in the academic work often get neglected. It is clear that an increasingly internationalizing environment requires a new model of governing, which must be based on cooperation in mixed networks by both state and non-state actors.

MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The development of a new conceptual model which would improve the overall standards of higher education in Albania must also consider the role of management in higher education. In that regard, the higher educational institutions of Albania need to make changes in educational approaches to increase the opportunity for cooperating with and adopting the experience of foreign higher education institutions. Such a reform must be executed in connection with the ongoing processes of globalization, integration, and Albania's accession to the Bologna process (Hatakenaka & Thompson, 2006).

One of the declared goals of the Bologna process is to ensure the improvement of the quality of education. The main objectives of The European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education are:1) the dissemination of new ideas and best practices in the field of quality assurance among members of the organization and stakeholders; 2) preparation of a Memorandum of Quality Assurance and Transparency Instruments for the Bologna Process Coordination Group (BFUG); 3) conducting expert reviews of the activities of member agencies, cooperation with foreign (non-European) organizations and associations (ENQA, 2015). ENQA works in close cooperation with the European Union of Students, the European Association of Universities, the European Association of Institutions of Higher Professional Education, Network of information centers ENIC-NARIC, association Business Europe, International Educational Organization Education International, and European Commission. In order to increase transparency and efficiency of quality assurance procedures The Association has started the formation of a European register of quality assurance agencies, which includes 26 agencies that have undergone an external examination of activities. ENQA to help universities and national education authorities, a document was prepared that includes a list of recommended standards and guidance for their application in the implementation of the evaluation of quality of education within the framework of the European Higher Education Area. The standards are presented in three parts and concern internal quality assessment of higher education institutions, external quality assessment of higher education and quality assurance agencies (ENQA, 2015). Based on the above standards, the main procedures are systematized and recommendations for quality assurance. For successful scientific and educational activities of universities, partnership and interaction with industry, society as a whole, and other educational structures become necessary (Hatakenaka & Thompson, 2006).

The market power of educational institutions in recent years is justified by the criterion of the effectiveness of the activity of universities, based on the assessment of the quality of education. Moreover, universities strengthen their market power, recognized effective, and inefficient educational institutions disband. The market power of consumers is conditioned by the freedom of choice of an educational institution, but the threat of invasion of new participants is associated with the massivization of higher education, which can lead to the emergence of new non-state commercial universities (Purnendu, 2013). In addition, the threat of the emergence of substitute services exists, but its significance is not so huge. As a substitute service, educational courses, trainings, seminars, and educational master classes become the part of the educational sphere. It is explained by the attractiveness of the industry. However, the requirement of employers for applicants for a diploma of higher education reduces the likelihood of replacing higher education with educational courses (Purnendu, 2013). Indeed, schools and universities pay great attention to social and political education. According to the Constitution of Albania, adopted in 1998, the independence of educational institutions and the freedom of scientific and educational activities are guaranteed by law. Therefore, to limit anyone in obtaining higher education is possible only by the criteria of the person's abilities and talents (Balili, 2013).

Moreover, higher education in Albania has been oriented towards the development

of institutional governance in higher education by providing technical assistance for the development and implementation of the Higher Education Strategy for 2013–2017. Additionally, the key reforms in higher education financing and standards for higher education institutions have been used to introduce an initiative to determine the rankings of higher education programs. All universities in Albania now have strategic plans and external governing councils.

Within Albania, any direct comparison between the university sphere and the business world would have been unimaginable up until a few decades ago. Many higher education institutions have implemented business models from successful companies and have thus found ways to improve financial management and to efficiently manage human resources. Over the last decade, the vocabulary of marketing, particularly concepts such as market research, market segmentation, and strategic planning, has been applied to the field of education. Marketing in higher education has extended its scope to include new dimensions, such as attracting financial investment and enhancing the institution's image, again with the ultimate aim of attracting new students (Wu & Naidoo, 2016). Knowledge in this area, and of implementing marketing plans in the non-profit sector, poses challenges for strategic operations in many higher education institutions, especially in Albania.

Wu and Naidoo (2016) have stated that fierce competition has become the dynamic of the last decades in all spheres of life, and the market for educational services has not been an exception. The level of competition in this industry depends on such factors as the market share of the university, the market power of consumers, as well as the threat of new entrants. The branch of educational services develops dynamically. Therefore, it is necessary for higher educational institutions to build a competent marketing policy in the conditions of strong competition (Wu & Naidoo, 2016). Of a particular importance are marketing communications, communication tools, and communication channels. It is crucial due to the need for dialogue with consumers of educational services. However, the dialogue does not take place only on the initiative of the entrants, and the university should conduct active information activities throughout the year in order to warm up the interest of the potential students. However, before choosing one or another method of marketing activity, before choosing marketing tools and forming communication channels, it is necessary to assess the level of competitiveness of a higher education institution. In addition, universities also should inform the individualized educational trajectory of each student from the moment of enrollment to placement in the specialty.

This aspect of the higher education system in Albania is still in its early stages of development. Albanian researchers are hindered by serious deficiencies in methodological training and by their isolation from international debates on the production and development of knowledge. They also face obstacles due to the lack of management cooperation and their lack of integration within the infrastructure of scientific research in the country, as well as an unwillingness of institutions to facilitate such cooperation. However, the development trend is considered a positive one. There are some similar existing private institutes or NGOs with a clear profile of the competencies required in their field of research, particularly in the field of economic and social analysis.

Lower standards in higher education, particularly in terms of scientific research, are due to the prioritization of quantity over quality in education and the limited focus on scientific research. Such problems require a mutual and widespread mobilization of resources, as well as careful identification of the necessary protocols building research capacities, in order to respond to various market needs. Addressing capacity development in research across Albania must take into account the major differences in terms of population size and quality of life in communities throughout the country. Furthermore, discrepancies in terms of financial resources available should be taken into account, and funds in education and scientific research should be allocated and implemented according to such specifications. The main objectives of increasing research capacities include facilitating learning and knowledge exchange experiences in the region, coordinating research and scientific policies in the region, and intervening in particular cases.

EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ALBANIA

The education system in the Republic of Albania is under the jurisdiction of the Albanian Parliament. The education system is based on the Albanian Constitution, which states that the formation of Albanian citizens is a national priority (Higher Education in the Republic of Albania, 2015). The Constitution of the Republic of Albania states that everyone has the right to education. Moreover, 9-year school education is compulsory in Albania. Therefore, children must study at school until the age of 16. Indeed, members of national minorities have the opportunity to teach and learn the education program in their own language, to study their history and culture through school curricula, which is one of the main achievements and pluses of education in Albania (Higher Education in the Republic of Albania, 2015).

Reforms in the educational system that took place in Albania in 1992–1999 included some innovations in curriculum, new solutions in the field of foreign language learning, school management, the evaluation of teachers' work, and others were introduced and defined (Vickers, 2011). With regard to post-secondary and university education, the application of new laws led to the creation of several local universities in the main cities of Albania. By adopting the law on the school after graduating from high school in Albania, the segment of non-university higher education was regulated (Rexhepi, 2013).

The general principles and objectives of education in Albania are based on international standards. Thus, they include equal rights to education for all citizens who receive the secondary and vocational education. The second standard of education is the creation of conditions for the full development of the individual, and the provision of educational opportunities that must meet modern requirements of the youth development. Moreover, educational programs in Albania are focused on the promotion and modernization of educational content in accordance with modern social requirements, including scientific achievements and information technologies in teaching (Rexhepi, 2013). Educational systems should also have a development path

in common with the social, labor, and production spheres in Albania. Despite state problems, the country's leadership focuses on providing conditions for continuing education and also improving the quality and effectiveness of education (Balili, 2013).

The development of Albania, which includes economic, technological, scientific, and other reforms, requires the further adaptation of education to social needs and the establishment and development of educational policies. The state government regulates and provides the goals and guidelines for the development of economy, science, and technology, as well as the conditions for the realization of citizens' rights and common interests in the field of education, the development of the educational sphere is an integral part.

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