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THEORETICAL AND TERMINOLOGICAL ASPECTS IN CONCEPTUALIZING METHODICS OF EDUCATIONAL WORK AS A PEDAGOGICAL DISCIPLINE

Abstract:

The importance of pedagogy as a science is in exploration and improvement of education as an integral part of the social reality. Theory of education, General pedagogy and Methodics of educational work are the scientific disciplines that are most directly related to examining the educational work, and represent its theoretical and methodological basis in the process of its realization.

Educational work provides the essence of the overall education process, since it refers and unites the knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs and values of the individual, and its results are seen in developing student's unique personality.

In this paper the focus is on the Methodics of educational work, as a pedagogical discipline which is most closely related to the process of realization of educational work. The aim is through analysis of the basic theoretical and terminological aspects to emphasize its role in the overall education process. Taking into consideration the complexity of educational work and difficulties related to the process of assessment of the outcomes, application of the taxonomy of the affective domain is suggested as a possible approach. Also, the importance of some topics that are particularly relevant in pedagogy is emphasized, but which, due to terminological inconsistencies, are not sufficiently recognized as part of the Methodics of educational work.

Keywords: *education, educational work, education process, assessment.*

Introduction

The Methodics of educational work is a discipline which in the system of pedagogical disciplines has been established in the second half of the 20th century. Although constituted relatively late, the issues that are its subject of interest have always been in the focus of pedagogy as a science.

The first thoughts and observations about the importance of this discipline were emphasized by A.S. Makarenko (1936) referring to the need of making a distinction between teaching methodologies and methodics in educational work, thus underlining the absence of methods and techniques which would refer specifically to the educational work (cited in Kostova 2004, pp.1).

From historical perspective, the interest for systematic exploration of educational work through the methodics of educational work was particularly accentuated during the period of socialism, which is supported with the fact that large body of the literature in the area is from this period. Still, as one of the major shortcomings in the teachings from this period Samolovchev points that: "are being too much focused on the abstract, all-round developed person, without pointing to the concrete methods and practical approaches in changing the person in a qualitative way" (Samolovchev 1984, pp.5).

In this context, broadly defined aim of the Methodics of educational work, which encompasses "developing knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs and values" (Krneta et al. 1968, pp. 55), that will contribute in forming complete and unique person, makes the process of operationalization and, specifically assessment, very difficult.

From today's point of view, in the education process the focus is mainly on "acquiring knowledge, skills and competences according to the needs of the labour market and the new challenges in the scientific and technological environment" (Ministry of Education, Education strategy 2018-2025, pp. 19), expressed as measurable results. This puts the focus on achieving learning outcomes, at the expense of disregarding the educational aspect.

Still, during the last years the opinions that the educational work should not be neglected on the cost of academic achievements, are more emphasized, since the value dimension of learning outcomes derives from the educational component, because "Goodness without knowledge is weak, but knowledge without goodness is dangerous" (Lickona and Davidson 2005, pp.16). The other reason comes from the evidence of increased anti-social behaviour and peer violence among students, as well as the increasing number of students with various psychological difficulties. From here arises the need for actualization of educational work and re-affirmation of the Methodics of educational work as a pedagogical discipline, which should contribute in organizing the educational work with higher quality and in a more organized manner, thus including both components, educational and learning, equally.

In this regard, in defining the aim of the process of education in strategic documents, besides acquiring knowledge and preparing the students for the

labour market, the focus is also on “enabling students’ personal development and their preparation as active citizens in the society”(Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, 2018). Students should “develop curiosity, resilience, and self-regulation, to learn how to respect ideas and values of others, to learn how to cope with failure and rejection, and to move forward in the face of adversity...to develop as whole individuals, so that they can contribute in building a future based on well-being of the individual, communities, and the planet”(OECD 2018, pp. 3).

However, it is necessary to point out on one specific difficulty that arises when studying the scientific literature in the field of Methodics of educational work that comes from the used terminology. Namely, in English speaking countries, the most often used is the term “education“, which meaning is more appropriate to the term “obrazovanje“whereas there is no other term which would refer more appropriately to the term “educational work“. Hence, in the Western literature Methodics of educational work ‘Методика на воспитна работа’ is not used and recognized, neither as a term nor as separate pedagogical discipline, and the issues related to this aspect of education sciences are mainly covered in the disciplines Character education, Value education, Classroom management and educational psychology, and are mainly focusing on the practical approaches in achieving the goals of educational work.

Considering the above mentioned, this paper is focused on terminological issues and approaches in conceptualizing the methodics of educational work as a pedagogical discipline, as well as the approach in assessing the outcomes of the educational work. This paper takes into consideration the importance of scientific heritage and its significance in understanding the essential issues in this field, through the prism of contemporary approaches and new scientific findings.

Terminological distinction and conceptualization of Methodics of educational work

In defining Methodics of educational work, two groups of authors with different approaches can be distinguished.

The first group defines Methodics of educational work as a separate pedagogical discipline whose subject of study is educational work, or determining methodological approaches and the ways and means of its practical realization (Nebrigić 1984; Kostova 2004; Suzić 2005). The other group mainly focuses on educational work as an activity through which education is realized and educational tasks are fulfilled. (Vukasović, 1979; Samolovchev, 1984; Đorđević, 1984; Đorđević and Potkonjak, 1986).

Danilo Nebrigić (1984) defines educational work as: “an activity composed of pedagogical processes (forming, developing, building, encouraging, guidance, correction etc.) and pedagogical situations (friendship, solving problems, aesthetic assessment, creativity etc., through co-action and

interaction) in which are fulfilled roles (student, teacher, group) through appropriate forms of activity (teaching, additional teaching hours and extra-curricular activities). It represents an educational influence or activity, with a repressive or permissive character. Educational work is an activity, a process of educating and the result of the activity" (Nebrigić 1984, pp. 559).

Nebrigić makes a clear distinction between educational work and educating 'воспитание', where pedagogy as a science examines the ontological, epistemological, teleological, and axiological aspects of education, whereas methodics of educational work deals with educating as a process, an activity and its organization. From here follows that "the subject area of methodics of educational work as a scientific (pedagogical and methodological) discipline is the educational work" (Nebrigić 1984, pp. 559-560).

Regarding its place in the system of pedagogical disciplines, he considers that it's part of the area of methodologies in appropriate teaching subjects. Also, it is closely related to didactics, since is in relation to the teaching process, i.e. "educational work is an activity which arises from the teaching work and goes back into it" (Nebrigić 1984, pp. 559).

According to Marija Kostova (2004) "The methodics of educational work represents a system of knowledge about the ways, methods, means, forms and techniques of work that will allow the most optimal organization and implementation of the educating process in different educational and life situations and for different age of students" (Kostova 2004, pp. 5). Based on the knowledge of pedagogical theory, the methodics of educational work is a theoretical and practical pedagogical discipline that "checks and applies in practice the basic pedagogical findings, based on which gives answer to the question: How to educate?" (Kostova 2004, pp.5).

However, she emphasizes that the methodics of educational work does not offer a scheme nor gives recipes for educating, but rather directs towards choosing the most appropriate methods, means and procedures, in accordance with the specific educational situation and the individual characteristics of the students.

Kostova doesn't relate educational work exclusively to the teaching process, but believes that it can be understood in a broader sense, as a social phenomenon, and in a narrow sense, as a methodics of educational working given social system: in the school, in the family, in leisure-time, through the means of mass communication, in voluntary work of students, etc.

Suzić (2005) defines the methodics of educational work in a similar way, that is, as "a system of pedagogical and methodical knowledge about the ways and possibilities for achieving the goals and tasks of educating and the education process". Through determining the methods and means for achieving the goals, it represents a theoretical and practical discipline, "relational and procedural in the relationship between pedagogy, didactics and educational practice" (Suzić, 2005, pp. 398-399).

From this, follows the conclusion that these authors define the methodics of educational work as a separate pedagogical discipline that deals with searching for and finding the most optimal ways in the process of educating the individual, in different educational situations, and in accordance with the goals of education.

The second group of authors do not determine the methodics of educational work as a separate discipline, but are more focused on determining the meaning of the term educational work.

Đorjević and Potkonjak (1986) talk about the methodics of educating/developing the student's personality, but not as a separate pedagogical discipline, but as a methodics that is an integral part of general pedagogy. The methodics of educating examines the contents, principles, methods, means and factors of educating, based on which the procedures for the overall organization of educational work are determined. It deals with the practical issues related to the general course of educating, i.e., developing the personality and gives an answer to the question: How should educational work be organized? And how to practically achieve the defined goals and tasks of education? (Đorđević and Potkonjak 1986, pp. 204).

It can be noticed that basically, this determination is within the framework of the determination given by the authors Kostova (2004) and Suzić (2005), but the main difference is that they define the methodics of educational work as a separate pedagogical discipline, whereas according to Đorjević and Potkonjak (1986), it is an integral part of the general pedagogy.

Samolovchev (1984) believes that the starting point of the methodics of educational work should be "educating as a process of developing the overall social aspects of the individual" (Samolovchev 1984, pp. 6), but he significantly limits it, connecting it primarily to the process of socialization. He defines socialization as "a lifelong interaction process of developing all social aspects of the individual which are important for his/her integration in the social environment and are important for his/her active, creative and responsible social participation" (Samolovchev 1984, pp. 16).

At the end, it's worth mentioning that some authors, such as Vukasović (1979) and Đorjević, B. (1984), define educational work through the moral education, that is, as moral forming and developing of student's personality. Its task is to develop responsible and independent individuals.

Regarding the second group of authors, we can say that they define educational work primarily as an activity, a process through which education is realized, as a whole or some of its parts or tasks.

Disagreements regarding the terminological distinction and conceptualization of the methodics of educational work have affected toward its insufficient distinction and differentiation as a separate pedagogical discipline. As reasons for this can be pointed out the following:

- Insufficient differentiation between educating and educational work when determining the subject of the discipline methodics of educational

work. Nebrigić (1984) believes that the general theories of education, and not educational work, are usually taken as a starting point, and the term educational work is either not clearly defined or is understood in the same way as education. As a result of this, the independence and authenticity of the methodics of educational work is often questioned.

- Equating the methodics of educational work with moral education, where the “pressure” of moral education as the identity of educational work is present, which significantly restricts its subject area” (Nebrigić 1984, pp. 558). In this regard, “in the process of determining domains of education, it is difficult to point out a single methodics of educational work, and at the same time not taking the one-way road of moral education” (Suzić 2005, pp. 397).

- With its interdisciplinary character and being a component part of all individual methodics, makes this discipline to be instilled in the methodics of each subject area. This has contributed for its insufficient differentiation as a separate pedagogical discipline and unclear defining of its specific subject area.

- Teachers’ focuses on acquiring knowledge and achieving the goals of the teaching process, and disregarding the educational tasks and the value dimension of the education process. (Kostova, 2009; MitevaskaPetrusheva, 2015). Miovska-Spaseva considers that this is a result of the tendency for measuring and evaluating students’ knowledge, with the aim of international comparison of students’ achievements and education systems. Still, she emphasizes that “quantitative and measurable results and standards should not affect in neglecting the educational component and in disregarding the humanizing mission of teaching” (Miovska-Spaseva 2009, pp. 39).

All abovementioned aspects have influenced on disregarding the realization of educational work and neglecting the importance of methodics of educational work as a separate pedagogical discipline. However, the occurring changes in the education area and the increased interest in developing students’ potentials, once again affirm the importance of this pedagogical discipline. This is supported by the emphasized requirements that the education process should be focused on developing students’ personality, individuality, and uniqueness, on forming individuals with own attitudes, able to appropriately value self and their own qualities, with skills for establishing good social connections and having a proactive approach in enriching all aspects of social life. This wide range of requirements is possible to achieve through a systematic and planned educational influence, which finds its theoretical basis in the methodics of educational work.

Assessing the outcomes of educational work

Results of the educational work are reflected in the overall behaviour of the student, manifested through the attitudes, beliefs, and values, as well as the demonstrated behaviour in the broader social environment. According to Radev, “The results are reflected in ‘being an educated person’, as an integrative

quality of the individual, which indicates the degree of achieved educational results that can be measured and assessed." (Radev 2003, pp.122)

However, there are a lot of methodological difficulties in evaluating the outcomes of educational work, as well as in exploring and systematic research of educational phenomena in general, which arises from their nature. Namely, educational issues refer to a complex and sensitive phenomenon which, on the one hand, are multidimensional and influenced by a multitude of factors, which effect is difficult to be accurately determined or isolated. On the other hand, these phenomena are closely related to the person, his/her individuality, and uniqueness, which is manifested in the relations and interactions with its environment. Being highly individualized, they are difficult to be clearly defined and evaluated directly. (Newman and Friedman, 2010)

In this regard, Samolovchev (1984) points out that "it is difficult to talk about a certain achieved level of 'being educated' of one individual. Still, this doesn't mean that the results are unmeasurable, because every educational phenomenon has its own material basis, contained in the knowledge, the habit, in the presence of emotions, in volitional and intellectual effort, in the certain "educational" behaviour, and thus they have their own visible side, which enables to be perceived and measured." (Samolovchev 1984, pp. 112)

Considering this, we think that the theory of affective learning and the taxonomy in affective domain can be applied in assessing the results of educational work.

Newman and Friedman (2010) determine that affective learning refers to the changes in feelings, attitudes and values which shape individual's opinion and behaviour. The outcomes refer to changes in personality in these aspects and incorporate cognitive elements, behaviour of the individual, values, and feelings. McMillan (2007) refers to these results as affective outcomes.

In order to be able to evaluate these outcomes, first of all, it needs to be determined which goals should be achieved. In this context, McMillan talks about affective goals where: "affective goals don't refer only to emotions, but also to cognitive beliefs a person holds, including a set of attitudes, values, motivation, self-image and self-evaluation, the world view, the social relations and the positive school climate. (McMillan 2007, pp. 296-297).

From here, follows the notion that affective goals don't refer exclusively to the affective area, but they as well include the cognitive area. With this, it is once again pointed out that educational and learning outcomes are closely related.

Accordingly, it can be concluded that the affective goals determined in this way correspond to the results expected from the educational work. Having this in mind, we believe that the Taxonomy of educational objectives in the affective domain would be an appropriate approach for evaluating the affective goals and for assessment of the results of educational work.

The taxonomy of educational objectives originally referred to objectives in the cognitive domain, known as the Bloom's taxonomy (Taxonomy of

educational objectives. Handbook I: The cognitive domain), and the Taxonomy of educational objectives in the affective domain was developed later (Taxonomy of educational objectives. Handbook II: The affective domain) (Krathwohl, Bloom and Masia, 1964; Krathwohl, 2002).

This taxonomy refers to the affective domain, that is, the manner in which individuals deal with things emotionally, such as feelings, values, appreciation, enthusiasm, motivations, and attitudes. Through a hierarchy, it points the movement and continuity in person's affective behaviour. The hierarchy in the affective domain is consisted of 5 levels:

1. Receiving/Perception – refers to the awareness and readiness to perceive and be aware of certain phenomenon, situation, or idea. It indicates selective and directed attention to the phenomenon.

2. Responding – indicates the readiness to respond to the perceived phenomenon, through acceptance and recognition.

3. Valuing – refers to the acceptance of the phenomenon as a value, through commitment and preference.

4. Organizing – the new accepted value is conceptualized and organized in previously existing value system.

5. Characterizing – organizing the entire value system and manifesting a consistent behaviour in accordance with the values that the person has accepted and internalized in his/her own value system. The value system organized in this way becomes a part of individual's philosophy and lifestyle, and is manifested through the overall behaviour of the individual.

The results of the educational work cannot be determined by testing and evaluating the learning outcomes, as in the teaching process, but rather require careful observation of changes which occur in student's behaviour over a longer period of time, in terms of emotions, attitudes, values, personality traits, character, will and behaviour. All this, once again points to the complexity of educational work, both from the aspect of its realization and from the aspect of evaluating and assessing the outcomes.

The application of this taxonomy in the education process can serve as a basis for defining and structuring the goals of the educational work, and enables to assess them in objective manner, based on student's progress through indicated levels.

Current issues in the methodics of educational work

Recently in the literature in pedagogy, the importance of issues related to character education, students' well-being, improving interpersonal relations, social-emotional learning, the influence of the school emotional climate, etc. are often emphasized and addressed. According to Suzić (2005), some of these are the new significant issues in the field of methodics of educational work. In the following part will be covered some of these issues, which we believe are current issues in the area of methodics of educational work.

Some of the aspects which are theoretically covered in the methodics of educational work, are found in literature related to character education. Character education is especially popular in the Western countries, where it usually represents a whole-school program. Theoretically speaking, there are differences in understanding what character education is. According to Williams & Schnaps (1999) it is defined as: "any planned approach in which school personnel, in cooperation with parents and members of society, help children and young people to develop into caring, principled and responsible individuals" (cited by Kimberly and Duane 2003, pp. 2). It aims at internalization of basic human values such as freedom, equality, respect, honesty etc., which will serve to educate "young people who will be morally responsible and self-disciplined citizens." (According to the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Berkowitz & Bier 2005, pp. 4). Following, character education is the basis for promoting students' overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (Character Education: Framework Guidance, 2019).

These definitions of character education put it mainly in the context of moral education and developing morally responsible citizens. A broader explanation is given by the national association Character.org, which includes individual's personal development and strengthening of individual capacities. According to the established standards, 4 components of character development are determined: moral (refers to the development of values such as honesty, integrity, compassion and courage to take initiative), behavioural (characteristics such as: self-discipline, responsibility, persistence, perseverance and goal setting), intellectual (intellectual curiosity, autonomy, critical thinking) and social engagement (developing values such as justice, respect, care and contributing for the common good). (Model Standards: Character and Social-Emotional Development, 2020).

According to James Arthur (2008), although there is no complete agreement in defining what Character education is, it still gives positive results as a whole-school program.

Closely related to Character Education is Social-Emotional Learning, which is aimed at directing students' behaviour. The focus is on acquiring attitudes and skills needed to function and navigate in the social environment (Elias et. al, 2008). Social-emotional learning includes the following skills: Self-awareness (refers to the ability to recognize, understand and express one's own thoughts and feelings); Awareness of the social environment (empathy and respect for human dignity); Self-management (controlling and regulating emotions, thoughts and behaviour in different situations); Interpersonal relations (ability to establish and maintain quality interpersonal relations, and being able to actively listen, communicate and cooperate with others and resolve conflicts) and Responsibility and decision-making while respecting ethical norms (making right decisions, respecting norms, awareness of the consequences of one's own decisions and behaviour). (Elias et. al, 2008; Model Standards: Character and Social-Emotional Development, 2020)

One more issue that has become particularly relevant in recent times is students' well-being. In general, "Well-being is defined as a complex integration between internal (subjective) and external factors, and how the individual responds to them." (OECD, 2014). In regards to students, it is defined as: "Sustainable state of positive mood and attitude, resilience and satisfaction with oneself, and with the relationships and experiences one has in school". (Australian Catholic University, 2008).

Well-being is a multidimensional concept, which includes different aspects, such as social, emotional, psychological, and pedagogical well-being. Within the scope of our interest, we will focus on pedagogical well-being, which Pyhalto, Soini&Pietarinen(2010) define as: "Feelings of autonomy, connection, competence and acceptance, which are generated as a result of daily interaction in school." It is the result of experience, positive and negative, through which the student learns how to deal with different situations, and through which he/she adopts strategies and practices that will contribute positively to the overall well-being. (Pyhalto et al. 2010, pp. 209)

Taking into consideration that the educational work influences on the development of positive character traits, attitudes, values and developing a positive world view, by strengthening the capacities of the student as an individual, we can conclude that, within the framework of educational work, the students' well-being can be considered as a benefit and a result of the overall educational work.

Related to the above-mentioned questions, we can conclude that they are not new, neither unknown from the point of view of methodics of educational work, and as contents are present in the existing literature. However, it is noticeable that in the past period they have been actualized, as a result of new scientific knowledge and increased research interest. However, in the Western literature, they are elaborated within the framework of educational sciences and other related disciplines, so here again we can notice previously pointed limitations resulting from terminological inconsistencies and the different conceptualization of pedagogy as a science in different countries.

Conclusion

From the presented overview of available literature, we can conclude that the subject of interest of the methodics of educational work is the realization of the educational work in its entity. It provides a systematic approach in determining the steps in the realization of educational work, by determining the principles, contents, means, methods, and forms. In general, all authors agree about the importance of educational work for student's personal development and the need for appropriate planning, guidance, and realization. On the other hand, we find disagreements in terms of the question whether methodics of educational work represents a separate pedagogical discipline or is part of other pedagogical disciplines.

Regarding the assessment of the outcomes of educational work, we believe that application of the taxonomy of educational objectives in the affective domain gives possibility to overcome the recognized limitations and offers a basis for better and systematic structuring of the educational work.

In conclusion, the need for appropriate and quality realization of educational work remains crucial, and this can be achieved through planned and systematic approach, for which the foundations are outlined in the methodics of educational work as a pedagogical discipline, grounded in the scientific heritage and updated with new scientific findings.

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