

Radical Humanist Paradigm and the Problem of the Crisis of Education

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Abstract

Radical humanist paradigm and associated to it problems of educational discourse are discussed on the basis of the analysis of works of well-known representatives of this sphere (Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich). In author's opinion, radical humanist paradigm which not only does not conceal the crisis and shortcomings of the educational sphere, but, on the contrary, brings them to light and proposes original means of their solution, should be paid more attention in the modern educational practice.

Keywords: Education and oppression of masses; the problem of the crisis of education; cultural revolution; humanist liberatory pedagogy; latent program; refusal of mass education; repressiveness of education.

Introduction

The paradigm of radical humanist education has been developed in the bosom of educational sociology and, like other paradigms of radical mood, does not enjoy much popularity. Though, its fundamental principles were rather popular in the recent past. As a rule, the roots of this paradigm are being sought in the philosophic and social-political teachings. Radical humanist sociological paradigms and theories of education are distinguished by nominalism, voluntarism and radical approach to a number of issues that is unacceptable for the society loving conformism.

In this case, education is considered as a system of oppression. Correspondingly, their supporters demand radical reforming of educational system and transition from oppressive to humane approaches, even if this transmission would be accomplished at the expense of collapse of existing educational system. The basis of such a vision of the system of education is a structuralism and social phenomenology of the Marxist coloring. Radical humanist sociological theories on education are carriers of conflict and left political and revolutionary approaches and that's why they are not paid proper attention.

Materials and Methods

The article is a theoretical-sociological research performed by using the method of logical analysis. It is based on the primary (P. Freire and I. Illich) and secondary sources on the theoretical problem under study.

In detail about results of the research

One of the prominent representatives of radical humanist paradigm of education is **P. Freire**, who, along with an analysis of problems of education, developed critical theory of democracy in his book "**Pedagogy of the Oppressed**". Freire characterizes modern society as a society of oppression, in which the education plays main role. Oppressed people are doomed for unfair treatment, though there are people, who raise their voices against disgraceful things. In Freire's opinion, the greatest humanistic and historical task of mankind (particularly of European society) is to free society from oppressors.

Freire offers us "Banking concept of education" instead of a system of leveling education. In this case the education is presented as a process of depositing. Students are depositors, teachers - owners of deposits, and education is a process of depositing. Relations between students and teachers are considered by Freire as an action of "cultural pressure". In this case the teacher is consciously or unconsciously an agent of the oppression process. Freire argues that such forms of cultural actions contribute to the existence of such forms of consciousness, when violent reality absorbs people. Relations between oppressors and oppressed are realized by cultural-historical configurations, that is defined as a "culture of silence".

In Freire's opinion, a way out is alteration of human consciousness that should be done by changing his attitude towards the conditions of unfree situation. In this context, Freire creates the theory of cultural revolution, in which education plays the decisive role. In this revolution anti-dialogue relations are replaced by dialogic cultural actions. The future of such transformations lays on the way of "cultural struggle", i.e. it becomes real when "culture of silence" is overcome. That is why the role of the leader, who is a generator of actions and is called upon to do everything to transform the dominant culture, is great in this process. These revolutionary leaders fight for freedom and their pedagogic practice changes "culture of silence" as the result of which new dialogic pedagogy emerges.

People are in incredible poverty and oppression in the pre-revolutionary period. The task of cultural revolution is, first of all, transformation of people's consciousness. They should comprehend their awful situation. For Freire, political action is a form of cultural action. It should be noted that this conception of Freire envisages social conditions of development of countries such as Brazil (Freire is of Brazilian origin).

According to Freire, the existing system of education is based on inequality and oppression. It is natural that in this situation pedagogy serves to protect the selfish interests of oppressors (it often takes a vicious form of paternalism) and further intensifies oppression. Accordingly, pedagogy, which opposes all this, is humanistic and liberatory. Its development comprises two stages: at the first stage, alteration of consciousness of oppressed and, based on it, creation of a new attitude to the reality takes place, and at the second stage, in the result of destruction of old myths, numerous spectra of new structures arise, that are signs of cultural revolution.

The second famous representative of radical humanist paradigm is **Ivan Illich**. In 1971, I. Illich wrote the book with scandalous title: "Deschooling Society"¹. Sociologists of education and representatives of pedagogical science compared the publication of the book to a bomb explosion. Illich was the initiator of the rejection of compulsory education and argued that employers had to stop focusing on education of potential employee when hiring them, i.e. education should not be the main criterion for taking to work! Thus, Illich broke the connection between studying-education, work and income, to which followers of functional and "human capital" theory attached great importance.

The question arises: what was Illich's hostility towards education caused by? The answer to this question has to be sought in his **theory of latent program**.

A. Illich, the author of one of the most controversial theories of education, is also known as a critic of development of modern economics. In the case of latent program, the matter concerns school functions. It is known that school has two basic functions: **manifest** and **latent** (a great sociologist Merton also shared this idea). **Manifest function is to teach students concrete subjects**, for example - reading and writing, mathematics and other academic skills.

Latent function is a teaching of social skills and attitudes. It implies self-discipline, cooperation with others, adequate behavior in the society, obedience to existing social norms and consideration of the meaning of hard work in achieving the success.

Societies can also be differed from each other taking into account which function of education is of priority. For example, Asian educational system focuses on the second function. Latent role of schools in socialization of children is called latent teaching program. It is unwritten code of behaviors, which prepares children for life. Today everybody shares the idea that latent program is necessary and desirable. In Illich's opinion, this program teaches children what their role is in life. Contemporary education, which has obtained mass character, has ignored the latent program. Standardized teaching programs, homogeneous teaching inventory and many others assist it.

What is the way out of this situation?

Illich offers to create various types of educational systems. Material resources, necessary for formal education, should be collected in libraries, laboratories and informational data banks, which will be accessible for any person involved in the teaching process. "Communication networks", through which getting any necessary information on professional qualification will be possible, should be expanded; students should be given vouchers that they can use when they want.

¹ Austrian thinker of Croatian origin (1926-2002), famous social critic, at the same time was a clergyman of Roman-Catholic Church. He is known by his scandalous left attitude towards development of modern economics. According to him, modern economics destroys folk customs and habits, on which old societies relied. Modern economics enslaved people and made them dependent on many things. Modern educational system is also a good manifestation of it, which is an object of Illich's sharp critique. Despite the polemic nature of his ideas, Illich belongs to the category of interesting authors. Illich's main works are: "Deschooling Society" (1971), "Society of Alternative Education" (1972), "Tools for Conviviality" (1973), "Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health" (1975), "Shadow Work" (1981).

Famous American sociologist Neil Smelser raised a question whether this idea was utopian or not. He says that many would say it but if the volume of paid labour and its structure considerably decrease, Ilich's suggestions become more realistic. If paid hired labour loses its central place in the society, then people will be given a greater opportunity to choose and education will not be only a simple form of vocational training, but a social virtue, that any person can take advantage of.

In accordance with Ilich, education system should have three main aims: • **Accessibility**. Education should be accessible for any person at any time of his/her life;

- **Freedom**. Everybody should be given a possibility to pass on his/her own knowledge to those who want it;
- **Publicity**. Any person should have possibility to raise controversial issues and express their arguments before the society.

In Ilich's opinion, the following principles should be strictly followed for effective teaching:

- Existence of the “**service pointing at the objects of teaching**”, the aim of which is to ensure maximal accessibility to resources being used in the limits of formal education. Services of such type are library, museum, theatre and every space that could be offered to the students.
- **Sharing experience**. It implies the possibility to propose own knowledge to others.
- **Partnership**. Possibility of finding partners with common interests.
- Existence of the “**service aimed at finding of a wide circle of teachers**” that implies reference books in which the addresses of teachers and other necessary information for getting such a service are given.

Opinions, expressed by Ilich in the 70-s of the XX century, again became fashionable by the end of XX century. This was promoted by the development of modern communication technologies, which revolutionized the sphere of education and reduced inequality.

One of the interesting details of sociological theory of Ilich is analysis of iatrogenesis.

Iatrogenesis is a medical term. By iatrogenic diseases are meant diseases (generally neuroses) which are caused by wrong treatment, ignorance of medical personal, breaching of medical ethics etc. This term is also found in Ilich's works, namely, the cause of iatrogenesis might be an ignorant teacher, lecturer and all those people who are involved in the process of teaching, but do not know much about it. Such people become reason of iatrogenesis. Fixation of such a fact contributes to seek alternative education. Thus, the old saying that not everybody is able to be a teacher is comes true again.

Naturally, the theory of latent program of Ilich also has its critics. They think that it teaches children obedience, control of themselves and similar skills that is necessary for working in offices or in various modern institutions. The latent program makes machine bolts, necessary for modern society, from students and nothing more.

Conclusion

In the form of a conclusion, it must be said that radical humanist sociological paradigms and theories of education became significant components of left political discourse and nothing more. Unfortunately, this paradigm is not paid proper attention in modern educational practice.

Modern education really comprises elements of repressiveness, social and economic inequalities, manipulation with student consciousness, imposing values etc. That's why the critique of radical humanist paradigms of education is not so easy. It should be also noted, that radical postmodern theory of social deconstruction is also close to that paradigm, which is very popular today and which points at the crisis of education (mostly of school education).

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