
ВАСПИТАЊЕ И ОБРАЗОВАЊЕ
ИЗМЕЂУ
ТЕОРИЈЕ И ПРАКСЕ

Зборник радова са конференције

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ПЕДАГОШКИ ФАКУЛТЕТ У УЖИЦУ

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између
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Contemporary Teaching Between Theory and Practice

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Abstract: The time that we live in and talk about is the modern age, our contemporaneity. In this sense our contemporary teaching is our contemporaneity, which is currently in between theory and practice. Our thoughts are presented in the paper in the direction of how current teaching bears the epithet 'contemporary' and resolves the question of dichotomy between theory and practice. The key questions that are in our main focus in this paper refer to what is characteristic for contemporary teaching and in which position is the theory-practice relation.

Keywords: *teaching, theory, practice, future, development.*

Introduction

In recent times, when discussing teaching as a social category, it is talked about contemporary teaching. How is contemporary teaching different from the uncontemporary teaching, or i.e., traditional teaching; how are they alike, how do they differ, does contemporary teaching even exist? These are the key research questions in our paper. In order to give a clear

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answer, the thoughts derive from our surroundings. Namely, as part of society today, it is evident that we are part of a contemporary society. And contemporary society is nothing else but a collection of characteristic features opposite the interpretations that is a stage within the development of society. In analogy, this means that education in this society is contemporary. Contemporary education today is established on competencies and it is a referential framework for the development and assessment of the individual competencies in the professional work and the everyday life. One of the key competencies in contemporary education is the competence of life-long education. On the other hand, this competence is only a single link in the chain of key competences that in essence represent transferable and multi-functional package of knowledge, skills and opinions essential for personal growth, inclusion and employment, which need to be developed by the end of the obligatory education. The society has continuously been developing parallelly with the technological development. Namely, the society is in constant evolution with the information and communication technology, the digital application and social networks, which are being used by different types of people regardless of their social status. The influence of technology over education is inevitable. The adaptation of the information and communication technology, the digital tools and applications, the social networks are not only an integral part of the educational process, but they are also a tool for the pedagogical workers. Consequently, it has created a situation that includes modernization of the methods, forms and means of work as well as strategies in the organized educational and upbringing process on all levels in the institutions. And while the technological side of teaching has been developing and changing rapidly, many new notions that are empirically confirmed appeared and implied a new teaching model, where the role of the teacher is changed, and also the role of the one who studies on all educational levels is also changed. Hence, the question that rises again is how much does the teaching equips us for life, or i.e., how much are theory and practice related and what is the essence of their connection.

Contemporary teaching – key didactic question

One of the key didactic questions is the teaching process as an object of interest for study. In the section that follows, we will try to explain our discourse of thought and why we talk about key didactic questions. In the

paper, we use the term *didactics* to mark the “art or science of teaching” and in accordance with the etymological meaning of the term didactics, we will define it as an art of representation, adding an emphasis to enable something that is not simply showing or it cannot be understood, to be seen, realized and recognized. In accordance with this initial meaning of the term, didactics can be defined as a science of actions of demonstrations, or more precisely, as a science of teaching – didactics as a teaching theory and embodiment of teaching knowledge (Künzli, 1998: 42). Didactics can be described as one of the three types of knowledge for teaching: science of teaching, didactics and experience based knowledge. These three types of teaching are united by their subject of interest (teaching and learning in the educational system), but they still have different interests of knowledge and consequently use different criteria or codes to produce and determine differences between the knowledge that belongs (or does not belong) to the specific type of knowledge. In fact, modern didactics puts the activities of the teacher and the activities of the students in an inextricable connection (Andreev, 1996: 38-41). But, let us go back to the key term of contemporary teaching, so that we determine it within the context of our object of interest. There are numerous authors that define the attributive meaning of the term contemporary teaching starting with the structural elements, the contents, intentions and model of teaching; but this is not our intention in this paper. We believe that the complex contemporary teaching prescribes teaching that is characterized as a dynamic process of acquiring education, developing capabilities and building opinion, views and attitudes about the world around us.

Contemporary teaching is a teaching that uses contemporary methods, tools and forms of work aiming to advance the teaching process, to motivate the subjects and the respond to the needs of the community. Only a teaching that pays attention to the interaction between the subjects, the relations teacher-students and student-student is contemporary. Students are actively involved in the learning process through discussions, collaboration and team work, they are mentally engaged which encourages the developmental dimension of critical thinking. The application of technology in teaching enables to adjust the teaching in accordance with every student, his/her needs, interests, possibilities and capabilities. Beside the interactivity and the individualisation, contemporary teaching is also characterized with accessibility and creativity. The internet enables an access to a variety of sources of knowledge that will help them in the research project activities, in the pro-

cess of acquiring and expanding their knowledge, in the process of skills development and the phase of expressing creativity. Contemporary teaching offers possibilities for connecting peers with each other surpassing the spatial, cultural and language barriers through video conferences, online platforms and virtual classrooms, and for the teacher, technology enables to follow the development and to grade the achievements of each student. The integration of technology in teaching is a key determinant in the process of dynamization of learning, encouraging team work, group projects that leads toward a development of social skills and encourages socio-emotional intelligence. For this reason, the information era should be taken as a reality and not as an intellectual abstraction and people should be educated to understand and accept it (Herrera i Mandic, 1989: 247). Contemporary teaching relies on formative assessment to obtain continuous feedback for the students. The teachers use variable methods for checking how different types of assessment, especially with the application of peer assessment and self-assessment, adapt the teaching of the students themselves.

Contemporary teaching is not just a term that needs to be defined, but a rich source of questions such as: teaching content, teaching tools, forms, methods and strategies, functions of the teacher, roles of the student, designing the processes of learning and teaching. Contrary to the modern teaching, literature discusses the traditional teaching, where the frontal model of work dominates with an expressed teaching function of the teacher, teaching that does not provide sufficient interaction with the students and does not enable sufficient time for independent activity of the student. It is often a formal, verbal teaching, insufficiently obvious that decreases the durability of the knowledge and the possibility to connect theory with real life. On the other hand, contemporary teaching provides conditions for quality new knowledge, independent acquirement of knowledge through the use of multimedia programs, electronic study packages with text, picture, sound animations and films, teaching that creates conditions for individual advancement of every student in accordance with the student's possibilities, capabilities and interests. This assumes the creation of an inspirational environment for learning and working. From a content perspective, contemporary teaching means "freshness" within the teaching contents. It assumes scientific knowledge, reduced for educational goals, to be restructured in accordance with the new requirements. New teaching contents are being introduced, the usual social environment is being changed into a new Ambiental one that includes free

atmosphere and cooperativeness. In contemporary teaching, the roles of the teacher are changed. The long-standing traditional role of leading and unambiguous authority, judge and expert is changed into a moderator and consultant.

Now the teacher deviates from the leading active position toward more passive one and a position of a supporter, whose aim is to make the students independently acquire new knowledge and to achieve the expected results in a certain stage of the teaching process.

After all, knowledge is functional only if it represents an essential part of every individual. Hence, the teacher needs to have knowledge and skills for leading, to be capable for observation and analysis and to be able to plan and organize the work in the groups, but also to recognize the individual differences and the rate of development of every student in the classroom.

The change of the teacher's roles means a change in the position of the student. This is conditioned by the functional realization of the connection between theory and practice, which means a change of the conception of teaching and learning.

The transition from a traditional concept toward a contemporary one is operative if: the teaching content is directed toward the individual and the group, and the learning is focused on the content and the process; the students are fully included (cognitively, affectively and practically); the student is in an active interaction and participates in the activities; the teacher has the role of a source of resources, facilitator, mediator and coach; it is the responsibility of the teacher to create different situations for interaction; the working climate is informal, stimulative, relaxing with decreased amounts of stress and decreased status difference; the main problem of the teacher is to stimulate the group interaction, to encourage the students to ask questions and to search for the answers on their own; the students are responsible for the results, for their achievements, behaviour and learning; the upbringing feature of the teaching is expressed by developing social skills, emotional intelligence and empathy towards oneself and the others.

If we identify these characteristics of teaching, then we speak of contemporary teaching. And again, we emphasize the claim that contemporary teaching is not a teaching that is exclusively based on the supplication of information and communication technology, but it is a teaching that is found-

ed on the social side of the human, the human activity and interaction with others.

Between theory and practice – a constant problem

How is the situation with contemporary teaching, on what position is it, is it closer to theory or to practice – this is the key question for us. Regardless of the type of teaching in relation to the institutional level, teaching determined as contemporary is in the gap between theory and practice. The diametral oppositeness of theory and practice is nothing new nor an innovation of the 20th century, but it is an eternal problem and object of interest of many authors that study education and teaching. Ignoring the different aspects of the problem do not lead toward a substantial progress. The traditional model of technical rationality is directed toward the application of theory into practice, but the researches show minimal influence of this model. In that sense, the synthesis between theory and practice does not depend only on them but it also includes the individual characteristic of every person. Namely, the essence of education is to help each individual become a unique person. Education is a process of individuality development and a “bridge between possibilities and popularity”. On the other hand, traditional pedagogy determines education as a process of socialization and transfer of social heritage from a generation to generation, which are aims of crucial importance. This points to the enduring paradox of socialization and individualization. The paradox called socialization and individualization in education and consequently in teaching as a unique organized process for education and upbringing, gives a new dimension to the problem and deepens the gap between theory and practice. The attempts to surpass the gap and with that to understand the paradox have produced a new approach considered holistic, complete and integrative. From an aspect of an integrative inhibitory approach, teaching is considered as an interaction and communication of two or more people, which creates a new specific environment in the human relations. In this environment, the interaction and communication are under the influence of conscious and unconscious actions and activities. Sometimes the unconscious and unintentional activities have a greater and stronger influence than the conscious and intentional ones, which creates real conditions for conflict and barriers regardless of the level of

consciousness. At the moment when we become conscious of them and work to surpass them, we resolve the gap in teaching.

The antithesis between theory and practice today is misused to condemn theory. Adorno says that if practice conceals its inability today with the help of the collective, then it transforms itself into an ideology.

What was once called a problem in practice and what culminates today with the question about the connection between theory and practice corresponds with the loss of experience caused by the rationale. Hence, where experience is blocked or completely absent, practice is damaged and becomes an object of aspiration, distorted and desperately overvalued (Adorno, 1985: 242–260).

The claim that the educational system is too theoretical and not “practical” has different dimensions determined from the approached perspective. We negate this claim and do not accept it, because the analysis of the current study programs for preparation of future teachers refers to a high degree of frequency of the practical teaching as one of the ways of connecting theory and practice, and with 30% of the total number of lessons through practical work in the second, fourth and sixth semester and practical teaching as an interdisciplinary project in the eight semesters in accordance with the study plan. The percentage representation is higher when we take into consideration the lessons of methodical practice as part of the framework of the subject programs of sixth methodologies as study contents.¹ The relation between theory and practice can be and should be developed continuously, so that the design of the teaching is in the spirit of modernity and in accordance to the time being discussed it will provide the characteristic features of contemporary teaching. Also, we agree with the sentence “Nothing is that practical as the good theory!” (Mirascieva, 2022: 68).

Or as the Nobel prize winner Albert Einstein said: “Theory is when we know all, but nothing functions, and practice is when everything functions, but nobody knows why”.

¹ <https://fon.ugd.edu.mk/index.php/mk/studiski-programi/prv-ciklus>

What can be concluded?

The insights into what, how, and why we have to and are able to teach today and tomorrow are different in their content, both in relation to contemporary teaching and in relation to its positioning in the relationship between theory and practice. There is a lot to be said about the advantages of contemporary teaching from different perspectives. For example, from a students' perspective we can mention a few such as active learning, adjustment to the individual needs, accessible and rich literature, development of creativity.

From a perspective of the teachers, with the application of contemporary technology and innovative teaching strategies that create a stimulative learning environment, inspirational environment, continuous follow-up and valuing the development and the achievements of the students, as well as an efficient and effective preparation for work and life challenges in the future.

The teaching is contemporary and in relation to the set aims that it strives to achieve. The question about the aims is the basic problem of didactics, pedagogy and all educational processes. A specific characteristic of a man's activity is his cognitive and teleological nature. As in any aimed activity, the educational and upbringing process has certain aims that lead the process. In a most general sense, the aim is a cognitive and desired result after a certain activity.

The educational and upbringing aims are an ideal cognitively planned reflection of the possible expected result of the educational-upbringing process during the consideration of the influences of various factors and conditions. The clear cognitive aim is a determined assumption for the selection of adequate methods and tools for its achievement. Only after it is defined, it is possible to determine the contents and the tools for its achievement. On the other hand, it opens a possibility to value the effects from the activities such as tracing the path for future development.

The contemporary education requires an activity as a basis for development and advancement of the person, and contemporary teaching affirms the student as an active subject in the teaching process. Humans strive for perfection and changes as one of his characteristics determines the sense of success in a high degree. That strive is present in all the spheres of life, in

the interaction with others, in the results that are achieved and expected. The change, on the other hand, creates new conditions and sets new requests that need to be answered by education. In this context, the contemporary teaching with all of its specificity means contemporary teaching that will be changed adopting the features of modernity as its own. The basis of all of them is the activity of the subject in the teaching, the subject on the side of the teacher as well, but the student's activity expressed more.

If we are creators of the future, then what kind of education we have, that will be our future. And what exactly is education?! "A person forgets all that has been learned at school and what is left after that is education" says A. Einstein.

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САВРЕМЕНА НАСТАВА ИЗМЕЂУ ТЕОРИЈЕ И ПРАКСЕ

Резиме: Време у коме живимо и о коме говоримо јесте модерно доба, наша современост. У том смислу, савремена настава је наша садашњост, која се у овом тренутку налази између теорије и праксе. Наша размишљања изнета у раду иду у правцу колико настава данас носи епитет савремена и решава проблем дихотомије између теорије и праксе. Кључна питања која су у фокусу нашег интересовања у раду односе се на то шта је карактеристично за савремену наставу и какву позицију она заузима у односу теорија – пракса.

Кључне речи: настава, теорија, пракса, будућност, развој.