The Pedagogical Problems of Making the Educational Aim More Specific

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Abstract

When one discusses the dissemination of the educational aims and tasks on a theoretical, as well as a methodological, level, it is important to highlight that pedagogy, being the science of education that it is, finds solutions in differing directions. One is theoretical, and the other is the realization of the sum of the demands of working in the field of education. More often than not, educational aims come from the basic demands of society. They can also be taken from documents of state, laws, resolutions etc. Sometimes, they can be set too wide and can be too general. This is thought to be the reason of insufficient clarity of the educational aim when we discuss making the educational aim more specific and realizing it in the educational process itself. This is where we find the need to further develop the educational aim and make it more specific in order to make it possible to realize for a practical educational purpose and to realize the educational goals of the person we are trying to educate. This process of specification relates to two levels. One is the scientifically-theoretical, and the other is a practical one. This paper, therefore, deals with ways of making the educational aim more specific and realizing it in the educational process.

The paper also highlights the importance of basing the educational aim in a scientific, as well as a theoretical, approach and making it more specific in order to achieve it as fully as possible in the educational process. The paper presents a curriculum approach to the realization of the educational aim and its specification. By doing so, it creates the basis for acting in a scientific-theoretical way, as well as in a practical one.

Keywords: education, educational aim, educational tasks, specifying the educational aim, curriculum, curriculum approach

1. Introduction

By reading through the available literature concerning educational aims, one can quickly notice the wide variety of ideas and statements regarding the topic of what an educational aim should be. More often than not, these are general and non-specific statements such as "a versatile person" or "wholesome personality". This can often lead to misconceptions and makes it hard to get ones bearings when it is needed to realistically attain an educational goal among students in the educational, classroom, and school process. Pratt (Pratt, 1980; Marples, 1999) believes that, when an educational aim is set too generally, it can be rather difficult to point it towards a more specific action. Pedagogists and teachers themselves can often be faced with dilemmas about educational aims being set in this way when they find them in literature and documents. Moreover, it is difficult to understand how to realize those general aims in the classroom and, at the same time, realize the educational and pedagogical purpose of them, which is raising a Human. Therefore, a certain specification of the educational aim is considered to be required i.e. we need to attain a more "specific", "periodic", "narrow" classification of the educational aims which come from a more general one, content-wise. In literature (Peko & Pintarić, 1999; Vukasović, 2001; Bognar & Matijević, 2005; Vujčić, 2013; Lamar, Richardson, & Blake Calrson, 2016; Schiefelbein & Mcginn, 2017), these more specific forms of aims are called educational tasks. When speaking of these, a more general educational aim is mentioned (singular) and certain educational actions are being aimed at it. Furthermore, educational tasks (plural) are introduced and they make possible to realize "immediate aims" in the practical educational action. These are necessary in order to achieve the general educational aim. These special educational aims which come in stages are important because, when we talk about education, we talk about a very complex series of actions relating to a large number of people realizing them. Educational conditions are, as is known, very complex. They are not just found in the person we are attempting to

educate, their physical and psychological characteristics, but also the teacher, the possibilities to educate in an organized and continuous fashion, in the rich, diverse influences of the environment in which a student is found and which is the foundation for their communication with other people. Apart from the aforementioned things, we also meet many personality traits and properties when we talk about education. These provide richness and diversity among those we are influencing with education. Therefore, the realization of the educational aim demands a series of special, individual aims to be set in order to make possible the realization of a more general one. It is also important to know that that we extend the meaning of 'aims', prevalent in the curriculum literature, to include aims such as intellectual or moral virtues that cannot be analysed, defined or completely described in terms of behaviour (Harđarson, 2012). In that sense, a need to further clarify educational aims is set due to the fact that it is precisely the curriculum perspective which has its basis in a scientifically based educational aim which can be further specified and realized in the curriculum elements of the educational process and, finally, evaluated. This paper attempts to tackle the relationship between the educational aim and educational tasks by attempting to present the curriculum model as being the optimal process of achieving the educational purpose.

2. Various Perspectives on the Specification of the Educational Aim

Many pedagogists have attempted to make the educational aim more specific by attempting to systemize educational areas in various ways. The influence of the Soviet pedagogy, which came about after World War II, brought about a physical, moral, labour, aesthetical, intellectual education. This is based in the Marxist teachings which are, in turn, based in the thesis that the basic areas of Communist education are the physical, intellectual, poli-technic, moral, and aesthetic one (Jesipov & Gončarov, 1949). The intellectual education takes up the most room in this division. This logic, which we can call a scientific one, is followed by numerous authors (Pataki, 1963; Šimleša, 1971; Malić & Mužić, 1981) which attempt to portray the contents of these various areas of education. Later on, by using similar theoretical bases, Vukasović highlights the areas of intellectual, labour, moral, physical, and aesthetic education in his clarifications of the field (Vukasović, 1999). Therefore, the specification of the educational aim can be determined in several ways. It can be done according to elements and areas of the educational action. It can also be done according to age, the elements of educational work or it can be done on all these together. Vukasović (1999) differentiates between four possible ways of making the educational aim more specific. They are the following: specifying it based on important human characteristics, on the structure of psychological life, on the pedagogical tradition, and on the possibility of human action. The first possibility differentiates between five characteristics of man as a human being which are, in turn, related to the following elements of the educational process: intellectual, moral, physical, labour, and aesthetic education. By achieving them, one achieves the wholesome development of man, a diverse development of human capabilities.

The second possibility, the one regarding the structure of psychological life, attempts to grasp man in his entirety by grasping his rational, emotional, and volition spheres of life. According to it, the development of capabilities and human characteristics in a rational, emotional, and volitional spheres can be considered special educational tasks which are, in turn, further disseminated into even more concrete tasks in each of the aforementioned areas: the rational one (in order to understand more fully and appropriately), the emotional one (in order to feel and accept more intensely), and the volitional one (in order to act appropriately and conscientiously). The specification process which is based on a pedagogical tradition can differentiate between several different kinds of tasks – material, functional, and educational. They are applied and realized in varying degrees of education or differing areas of education. This structure, comprised of three elements, can be further disseminated into more specific elements – adopting the knowledge system, forming techniques and habits, developing psychophysical capabilities, mastering the culture of work and forming the traits of a personality (Vukasović, 1999). The fourth specification process, the one based on the possibilities of human action, differentiates between three areas of possible action. These are the following – education for work, education for social life, and education for leisure. This specification is, obviously, very widely set and can be further specified in each individual area.

Since the 1960s, there is a growing attempt to specify the educational aim in a more clear, complete and precise way. In that way, many taxonomies of the educational aim were created, based on different foundations (Bloom, 1956; Krathwohl, 1964; Anderson, Krathwohl, & sur., 2001) and, thus, enabling the educational workers (by this we mean teachers in schools, especially) to explain and describe abstract notions such as "understanding", "knowledge", "feeling" etc. using clearer expressions which describe the immediate sensation of a student: to describe, recognize, compare, classify, take part, ask questions etc. It is clear that all of these things cannot be explained by using behavioural terms. Therefore, one can use Bloom's taxonomy to approach the specification or dissemination of the educational aims and tasks. This is done from three aspects when viewing the student's personality and

psychological structure of the learning process: the cognitive, affective, and psycho-motor one.

One of the ways one can approach the analysis and specification of educational aims is the one which stems from the theoretical views on human needs. By analysing the contents of human needs, one can define the content aspect of the educational aim. One known theory of the hierarchical concept of human needs is the one created by Abraham Maslow. This theory stems from the hierarchical structure of needs considering their importance for survival by differentiating between needs of a higher and lower order. When we do not satisfy the needs of a lower order, the possibility of satisfying the ones of a higher order becomes increasingly difficult. Maslow (1982) differentiates between the physiological needs (the need for an organism to function, the need for food, drink, reproduction, activity), the need for security (order, balance, absence of fear and insecurity, stability, predictability etc.), the need to belong and love (love, friendship, bonds, family, peers), the need for respect (trust, achievements, freedom of action, success, status, usefulness to the community), the need to self-realize and self-actualize (achieving and developing own potentials within one's own area). Maslow (1982) specially states also the cognitive (the desire to know and understand) and aesthetic (the need for the beautiful) needs of a human being which are important, but they are not basic needs. On the other hand, we can find the Glasser model of human needs. This model encompasses the need to survive, the need to belong (cooperation, love, sociality, friendship), the need for power (ruling, taking part), the need for freedom (freedom of choice, decisions), the need for entertainment (play, laughter, joy, pleasure, comfort). Glasser's theory of human needs stems from the attitude that all needs must be developed in balance and it is up to the human being themselves to select the behaviours which will satisfy their needs (Glasser, 2000).

Specifying the educational aims demands also the specification of the aim according to the age of the child. Therefore, in order to do this appropriately, one must understand the age characteristics and traits of a child and their growth and development. The specification of the educational aim must take into consideration the tasks of education in primary school, secondary school and beyond, when educating adults. The reason for this is the simple fact that man is raised from birth to death. Further specification demands an exact setting of tasks for each and every grade of primary and secondary school, for each specific subject. It requires tasks for specific educational areas which will be attained within the family, pre-school institutions, schools, children and youth organizations, leisure time etc. Besides, it is important to state that no property, trait or quality of a person can be understood outside of the context of their entire personality, behaviour, value system, relation towards reality, world views etc. This means that it is not possible to raise a child in a fragmented way. It cannot be done in sections, as some earlier sources stated. The entire personality is sometimes understood to be a sum of its parts, aspects or sides. This fragmentation came to be as a consequence of studying a child within the confines of different scientific disciplines, a variety of methodologies and measurements.

If we take a look at the educational tasks within our own curriculums and programs which we are supposed to use in order to achieve an educational aim, we can notice that it is completely unknown what those educational aims are, even less which educational tasks are supposed to be used in service of these aims. Aims are sometimes written in an unclear fashion, set too wide or general, or they are left to the interpretation of the individual teacher when processing the content. Therefore, it is simply not clear in what way teachers actually understand the importance of educational aims and their realization in teaching and in the class by way of educational tasks. The tasks which are set within individual classes are focused on achieving educational outcomes (an actuality in which achievements are measured by realizing set outcomes in class) with an unclear way of realizing them in class. The measure used for realizing a general educational aim depends upon the structure of individual aims and all the things which make education a possibility. The development, reach, and specification of special aims and tasks have their limits. Those limits are set by the general notion of the educational aim which they comprise. This problem of the general versus specific, when we express it with a relationship of interests of the needs of the society and the individual, still stumbles upon questions and discussions which favour both extremities, thus making us choose between the individual and/or the society. All of these previously mentioned notions encourage numerous dilemmas and create profound confusion in the very teaching process. Reiss and White (2013) think that he state should decide the most general aims and the more general sub-aims that fall under them. At some point in this process of increasing specification it has to hand over responsibility to the school. Generating more specific aims they mentioned the familiar truth that a person's education is not complete when he or she leaves school. The more detailed the specification of aims becomes, the more likely it is that many of them will not be attained, or only imperfectly attained, by school-leaving age. This is especially true of aims concerning breadth of understanding. There will also be wide variations, of course, among individuals.

Another problem which clearly presents itself upon a detailed inspection is the specification of educational aims and tasks according to certain educational stages which take into consideration a child's age. If we take into

consideration the civil dimension and social responsibility when setting educational aims and tasks, an obvious question presents itself – how do we achieve the task of "developing social responsibility and active citizenship" and at which level? When do we start realizing it through tasks and in what way? How is a child to behave among its peers, friends, elders, the environment? Which qualities are we to nurture in a child in this sense so that we may say we are educating a child for the set aim and tasks? This line of thinking presents us with a different problem. In this way, every property attains a different piece of content if we take into consideration the general structure of the personality and the child's age. The dissemination and specification of the educational aim suddenly become an enormous problem. Theoretically speaking, this problem is still not developed in detail. It is still needed to perform a scientific-theoretical analysis of the educational aim in order to perform a theoretical analysis of the educational aims and tasks.

Given the fact that the relations between a man and his environment are inherently complex and tie-in numerous doubts, stands, and ideas, it is quite understandable that when trying to define those relations within differing viewpoints, many obscurities and contradictions are left. This specially pertains to the relationship between an individual and the society i.e. heteronomy-autonomy, monism-pluralism of educational aims (aim-means). Therefore, in order to better understand the educational aim, one needs to highlight these duelling opinions, portray them in a more precise and thorough way, and define them in order to give a better definition of an educational aim. This definition should resemble the current stage of development of man i.e. man himself, although this is not the topic of this paper.

Without a clear understanding of the educational aim, all educational elements which are involved in this process will not have the essence required, a clear and visible path determining their actions. The educational process will inherently become thoughtless and inefficient. Therefore, the educational aim must be approached from an anthropological, philosophical, sociological, psychological, value, and pedagogical aspect i.e. all of the aforementioned together. The reason for this is the fact that the educational aim expresses the basis of the concept of understanding man and all the stated aspects realize cognitions in an integrative way when the subject of their scientific achievement is man himself. The essence of what was just written is that only an educational aim may tie together different viewpoints which take part in understanding the human condition. All of the aforementioned aspects of a human being are unique in their achievement of one thing – education of Man.

In this sense, the practical specification of the educational aim and tasks relates to a clear path, set in stages, for a practical action. This part should also highlight a significant interdisciplinary cooperation. In the national documents in Croatia, so far there has been nothing done for the matter at hand. Educational aim and its specific aims were always taken from the earlier documents and resolutions. There has been no significant studying and scientific consideration. Therefore, it is highly necessary to first process the concept of the educational aim in a scientific and theoretical way. By doing so, we will create a precise and clear specification and realize the aim in the teaching process. Every educational aim remains an unattained attempt if it does not realize its practical function i.e. if it is not brought down to the actual realization in the school environment. It needs to live among students, teacher-student meetings. Only in this way will it actually contribute to the growth of an individual. The previously mentioned specification of the educational aim into multiple tasks finds very real difficulties when applied in practice. We believe that it is crucial to dedicate a much higher level of attention to the dissemination of the theoretical and methodological problems in the area of general pedagogy, as well as the theory of education.

3. The Curriculum Approach as a Staring Point for the Realization of the Educational Aim and Tasks

The variety in theoretical approaches, philosophical viewpoints, religious understandings, political affiliations, and value orientations has caused a difference in the understanding of the very notion of *curriculum* and its definition. Curriculum definitions may be categorized in multiple ways. These ways stem from the very specific ones to the more general ones. In the German didactic literature, the notion of curriculum encompasses aims, content, situations, strategies and evaluation (Köck & Ott, 1989). According to Schirou (1978), a curriculum is an aim of education, its contents, media, methods, situations, and strategies, as well as the ways of evaluating the educational process. Poljak (1984) uses the name *curriculum* to signify an order in learning materials according to age. Jurić (1993) interprets it as a wide-scope of planning, constitution and checking of the learning process (class) with regards to specific goals, content elements, the constitution of learning and class and the control of learning achievements according to globally set aims and assumptions for learning. Marsh (1994) considers the curriculum to be a relatively reliable, precise, and optimal way to perform a flexibly planned learning and education process in which we acquire abilities and skills. Tyler (1949) defines it as every learning of a student which is planned and guided by a school with an

attempt to realize its educational goals. Print (1993) sees the curriculum as all planned possibilities of learning which are offered to a student by the educational institutions, as well as the experiences achieved when the curriculum is implemented. Meyer (2002) considers the curriculum to be a group of decisions on aims, contents, methods, and learning organization i.e. studying. We can shorty summarize that the curriculum presents a systematic entirety of the planned education process which transpires through individual elements of the curriculum (the scientifically based aim, tasks, content, plan, organization and technology, evaluation) in order to achieve a clearly set purpose of education. At this point, we need to take into consideration the philosophical, theoretical, and practical questions influencing the interpretations and choice of tasks, choice of contents, ways of studying and judging evaluations of the successfulness of the curriculum (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004). Its basic characteristic is an organized, planned and active acquirement of knowledge, capabilities, and skills using carefully selected content programmed by the teaching process, and it contains all of the organized and planned activities and experiences of learning to which a person involved in the educational process is exposed to. The curriculum is, therefore, an educational course which has its basic elements. Those elements are the following: educational values, general aims, curriculum principles, educational contents, organization of work, methods, and a way of working, as well as the procedures to evaluate and self-evaluate (Vican, Bognar, & Previšić, 2007).

In order to understand the relationship between the educational aim and the curriculum approach in a clearer way, we will present an aim-based approach or didactics as the theory of the curriculum by C. Möller. In the Anglo-Saxon traditions, this assumes (under the term curriculum) a plan of teaching containing expressions on the aims, organization, and control of learning (Möller, 1994 according to Matanović, 2017). This model gives instructions on how to act in class. On the one hand, it relies on the results of empirical research i.e. actual facts from the classroom and their interdependence. On the other hand, it relies on the results of normative didactics. This branch of didactics deals with the following question – what aims are we striving to accomplish and how do we even attempt to accomplish them (Matanović, 2017)? The author explains that her vision of the aim-based approach assumes that the process of setting aims is the central task of the curriculum. In this process, it is necessary to create the instruments needed to produce aims. Also, those aims need to be uniformly describe. This is achieved by a uniform setting of behaviours which a student must portray, as well as contents relating to those behaviours. Namely, the success in teaching and learning can only be efficiently tested based on aims (Möller, 1994; Cindrić & sur., 2010 according to Matanović, 2017). Möller (1994) clarifies that the development of the curriculum goes on in three parts of a process which are dependent on one another. These are the following: planning, organizing, and controlling learning. In this sense, planning assumes the gathering of the largest available number of aims which are to be explicitly and uniformly described. In order to categorize the aforementioned aims, we need to use a scheme (hierarchy, taxonomy), such as Bloom's (which is deemed appropriate for planning and controlling learning) or Gagné's (which is deemed appropriate for organizing learning). The author goes on to state that, when the process of planning is completed, one gets a systematic inventory of precisely described and explained aims of learning based on which one can begin the process of organizing learning. This process contains choices and developing teaching methods and media which are to be explicitly and precisely described and joined together with the aims of learning in order for control to begin. The main advantages of an aim-based approach, according to Möller (Möller, 1994 according to Matanović, 2017) are the transparency, verifiability, cooperation of all people involved (students, teachers, and parents) and efficiency. Furthermore, formulating all of the general aims, as well as those precisely defined operational aims which lead to a clear and specific situation, are the most important parts in the development of a curriculum. The curriculum aims which are led by certain values and principles are the starting point of a curriculum approach to education. The reason for this is the fact that other important curriculum elements are organized and adapted to the realization of a purpose or aim set beforehand, which is based on educational values. The educational aim helps in the understanding and conceptualization of the entire structure of a system or program and measuring its results. Therefore, it is important to identify the main aim if the creation and application of a curriculum are to be done systematically. The educational aims which are systematically developed in this way not only aid in the rational and efficient choice of activities, but also they present a guideline for teachers and students in the process of learning. Finally, we arrive at the cognition that each and every reform of the educational system rests on the detailed questioning of aims and their tasks, as well as the role of educational institutions. By doing so, it puts the aim in the relationship with the starting point of educational action. The curriculum approach, as it was just explained, enables a specific and complete realization of the educational aim in practice by using educational tasks, a plan, organization, and technology of implementation.

In this sense, the specification of the educational aim by way of specific educational aims and tasks presents a scientifically relevant problem. It also puts forth a challenge to pedagogy and pedagogists, teachers and experts in

education because it serves as the starting point to realize the pedagogical purpose to which we strive – educating Man.

4. Conclusion

The task taken on by the educational system is to set up guidelines, processes, and procedures into a single coherent system with a purposeful organization which enables maximum synchronization of the whole and its parts. This pertains to the possibility to achieve an educational aim within a system. This system, as was previously stated, is characteristic for a curriculum approach to education. This approach attempts to reduce the disproportion between the ideal and the real. It also tries to bring forth a real achievement of the set educational aim within the educational system. The main task of pedagogy, in this sense, is to understand the process of education. Also, it is to scientifically base the educational aim in order for it to be a guideline and a direction toward which man and education should go, with the help of an interdisciplinary cooperation of the sciences dealing with man. The achievement of the educational aim i.e. the growth of a person into an individual and autonomous personality can only be possible if a humanization of the teacher is enabled, as well as the realization of the educational aim. One way to facilitate this is to achieve interaction between the student and the educational system. Without a successful connection between the two, we cannot talk about a successful educational process. Pedagogy, therefore, has a task of offering the optimal model for their interactive community, due to its knowledge of the processes and parts of the educational action. This task is made difficult due to the oppositions which are an inherent part of education and the educational aim. This pertains to the relationship between the special, individual and the general, the one between the social and individual, value and value-neutral, ethical and non-ethical etc. In this sense, all of the educational components and the educational system as a whole need to be synchronized with the specialities of the development of a child and organizational forms which enable an unobstructed growth of every individual and its complete acceleration need to be created. The curriculum perspective most faithfully presents the relations within the educational system and enables the achievement of the educational aim. First and foremost, it is necessary to scientifically determine the educational aim, bearing in mind the scientific determinations dealing with man. Also, it is necessary to attempt to specify the educational aim by way of educational tasks within the educational system itself. The latter are called specific educational tasks which are possible to achieve in class and school by using the curriculum model. This is all possible if we use the curriculum model and the entire curriculum philosophy, starting from the value determinations which are related to the educational aim, and then moving towards the principles guiding the educational system, the determination of the appropriate methods and tasks, as well as the organizational forms within which (and by which) it is possible to achieve the process of an individuality becoming a personality. Finally, the end stage should be evaluating the process itself and the expected outcomes. It is important to state that it is not enough to simply know the main stages in the development of a student. One should also know the main characteristics, functions, and ways of them appearing in a human being in every developmental period, all the while highlighting the differences in the psychological and physical abilities of a student at every stage. Furthermore, in the curriculum model itself, we also take into consideration every individual subject within the school system within which this generally presented curriculum model of achieving the educational aim should be specifically and purposefully deliberated for every individual area. In this sense, the educational tasks of history classes will be somewhat differently conceptualized than the educational tasks of mathematics classes. However, there should always be a degree of pedagogical tactfulness present in a teacher with a desire to achieve the educational aim i.e. Man as such.

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