

Analysis of Modern Education and the Course of Reform

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Abstract—The following article describes main aspects of modern education and offers possible reforms for it. In this article, the authors tried to give a brief theoretical outlook of the educational system. The rules of the masses and the elitist education have been discussed. Afterwards the authors proceeded to analyze particular problems that the modern educational system is facing today, such as the lack of proper general strategy and lack of realistic goals. In the final part of the article, the authors proposed possible solutions to these issues, such as an individual approach to teaching.

Keywords—*postmodern educational system; group mind; dual education; interdisciplinarity; modern education; cognitive science; reforms in education*

I. INTRODUCTION

This study analyzes the state of modern education and attempts to propose the necessary reforms. The purpose of this article is to find a way for modern education to progress to a new needed level in order to be able to unlock the potential of each student. Modern education is based on the concept of the modern man, and while it is certainly called “modern” by culturological standards, it cannot be called by any other word than “postmodern”, and if it truly is “modern” it is than proper to name it either anachronistic or “classical”. The main difference between the classical and postmodern education is that the classical education was elitist, while the postmodern educational system is complex mechanism that focuses its attention on the “mass”. Moreover, since masses, or the mass man for that matter, haven’t existed before the climax of the industrial era, therefore the modern educational system couldn’t exist as well. French sociologist Gustave Le Bon theorized that this completely new entity, the “psychological crowd”, existed in a plain of a collective “unconsciousness”, rather than being a sum of rational individuals. The mass operates with a power that can transmute every individual’s behavior until it becomes governed by the “group mind”. Le Bon’s understanding of the masses or crowds treats this envisioned entity as a single being, which deprives every individual member of their opinions, values and beliefs. In Le Bon’s words: “An individual in a crowd is a grain of sand amid other grains of sand, which the wind stirs up at will”. Edward Bernays, a nephew of Sigmund Freud was highly influenced by Gustave le Bon and published a book titled “Propaganda”

and declared that one of the features of democracy was the manipulation of the mass by media and advertising.

II. HISTORICAL VIEW OF THE PROBLEM

If we were to follow this line of thinking, we would declare that the modern educational system does not particularly differ from the mass-media system, or the advertising, or even the leisure industry. The educational system does indeed serve a role of socialization, and it thus has the obligation to prepare its students for the “actual world”. And what this “actual world”, actually is defined by the dominant political, economic and social system. That observation is true for the totalitarian systems of the first half of the 20th century, as well as the neoliberal system that is dominant today. As Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman claimed consumerism is the main form of expression in the postmodernist era. That may be the explanation behind the whole scientific and educational structure, which simply has to follow the stratification and the needs of the market. What would be the point of a middle level education if it did not closely follow the need of the manufacturing industry, for example, what kind of expert workers it would produce if corporations themselves were not involved in the educational process itself, offering training and experience for the students. We can observe this kind of “dual education” in German speaking countries, and Germany is the greatest manufacturer still functioning in the stagnant European market.

The Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset took a different approach to the theory of the masses, but the culture itself, that is closely tied to the question of modern education. He indeed did not lose faith in the modern man as a whole, but he harshly criticized the bourgeois masses of the West, particularly the United States. For him the mass men is embodied in the so-called “Mr. Satisfied” type, the specialist who believes he has it all and extends the command he has of his subject to others. This critique can be even more relevant today, when liberal democracy is once again threatened, not only from the right and leftwing populists, but by its own ruling elite, its technocracy. And in this case in particular, the modern educational system plays a key role, especially the higher level educational system, that mass produces these experts, which in the postmodern, relativistic

world, hold great sway over the masses. It is the elite university system that automatically produces this kind of individual simply by issuing him or her prestigious diploma or a certificate. Ortega y Gasset's critique of the masses was therefore a defense of the individual both from prying ideologies and from the paternalistic state. In this manner his conceptions of an individual against the mass system have been developed even earlier by the great German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. While some of his ideas were used by the followers of German totalitarian National-socialist movement, Nietzsche actually sought to empower the individual and not to make a slave to collectivism. He sought to "put together" the fractured modern man, and to free him from the classic believes that the modern man has basically given up by that point in history. It is not Nietzsche who was trying to break the classical world, or even to transform it, his goal was for an individual to exist freely in the modern world that was already created by the struggles of his fellow peers. Through the point of view of Nietzscheism, the modern educational system is nothing more than a prison for "the freed man", only a factory for the masses. Of course his radical theories do not take into account the economy, mass production, mass consumerism, mass entertainment, that the modern man needs to survive and also to be "satisfied".

Besides this difference that can be dated to the end of the 19th century, or the beginning of the 20th, that depends wholly on the expedience of development of various societies, there is one contemporary difference between the classical and modern education and that is the issue of personal identity. That is also a grand contradiction in the contemporary educational system – on one hand it has a set goal of producing the quantitatively largest number of people that are able to use a certain set of skill, but at the same time, in the postmodernist era of fluidity of personal identity it also has an obligation to respect every individual. Those two goals seem mutually exclusive, and yet the postmodern educational system would fail its purpose if it couldn't achieve them both.

Furthermore, the scientific system is being compartmentalized more and more, as science itself becomes more complicated, and human knowledge, which in the times of Ancient Greece was seen as "the search for the Truth", has since those times been so relativized that it cannot almost be perceived as knowledge. The human conscience, and subconscious for that matter, has been so fragmented, to use the words of Carl Gustav Jung, that the postmodern man has become a fractured, almost neurotic being, that cannot be forced to accept only one viewpoint, even if that particular information has been transferred to him in an educational institution. Thus the modern man differs greatly from the classical man, classical in the preindustrial since of the word, as the Dutch historian and writer Johan Huizinga defined him a pessimist, culturally exhausted, and nostalgic man for whom the material and spiritual world have been so real, so close, that they became unconditionally intertwined.

III. PROPOSED REFORM

What could be chosen as the emphasis in the teaching process in the modern world? It would certainly be an interdisciplinary and educationally reflexive attitude to knowledge, that could help students better internalize the data they receive, but also help them to critically analyze and even doubt this knowledge. Why did we choose these accents in particular? This choice was made due to the processes taking place in the world that we observe on a large scale; take for example the process of globalization and the development of science. To date, it is difficult to talk about any isolated events — so, discoveries made on one continent, can almost instantly become available (or influence) the people, both individuals and groups on the other. Every day persons all around the world are subjected to a huge flow of information, which they sometimes do not have time to comprehend almost as much as they lack even the time needed to study various phenomena. It is also obvious that the discoveries made in one area of science affect many other industries and fields, and it is almost impossible to think of any important event in the scientific community that can be regarded as an isolated case. Approximately in the mid-60s of the previous century, a method of diagnosing the fetus (prenatal diagnosis) in the early stages was discovered, we are thinking of course of amniocentesis, that is, a way to detect any chromosomal abnormalities in the fetus. This, in turn, raised the question of the possibility of abortion (in the US abortion was legalized already in 1973 by the ruling of the Supreme court in the famous case of *Roe vs. Wade*), since not every woman was ready to take on such a responsibility [1]. Thus, the discoveries in medicine raised new questions (or opened a new side of existing problems) in ethics and law.

In connection with more and more discoveries in science, it is assumed that this should lead to the expansion of the school curricula or teaching program in the higher levels education, especially the prestigious universities, or at the very least its revision. In addition, the logical question arises: How to expand the program, which path of reform should be taken? By increasing the number of school hours, and therefore the number of years of training or receiving education? However, in practice, it is difficult to keep the attention and discipline of a grammar or intermediate student even for 10 or 11 grades (years, that is), but it would be even more difficult if they had to attend lower and middle school, for example, 15-20 years. Then another dilemma arises – how to select the necessary knowledge that makes up the program that we want to plan? Completely throw out, erase the whole Ancient period and focus on the New time (post Columbus period) and industrial revolutions? Or teach the students only about the greatest iconic historical figures, writers or philosophers, natural scientists and so on? And here it becomes obvious that the institutions that regulate the educational program (in Russia we are talking about the Ministry of Education and Science) should review the existing program and the approaches to teaching. Moreover, here we must take into account not just the sample of specific information, but also the fact that subject is quickly changing itself. Perhaps, in this time and age, it is necessary

to teach students the skills of a critical assessment at the information they are receiving, the methods of analysis, verification, and search for information and so on. Modern education should not only provide information and pure knowledge, but also demonstrate how it can subsequently influence and how to use it.

How to implement such a large-scale project of education revision? It is assumed that cognitive science (direction in science, which includes the theory of knowledge, linguistics, neurophysiology, cognitive psychology and the theory of artificial intelligence) will be the support in the development of such mechanisms. To understand how to teach, how to build an education system, what to present and how to produce new knowledge, of course, you should pay attention primarily to the knower, that is, the person (specifically the brain and consciousness). How does our brain work, what do we know about it, how do the process of cognition and the process of creativity happen — in fact, what is the brain in reality? The chemical composition is not unique and does not differ much from the whole body — it is fats, proteins and carbohydrates. But if you go further, the human brain is made up of neurons and neural connections, a huge number of them, exceeding millions (many scientists make assumptions about specific quantities, but to calculate exactly these connections is not yet possible). That is, physically we can observe and study the brain as one of the main mechanisms of processing and production of information, but the famous Russian scientist in the field of neuroscience and psycholinguistics, Tatyana Vladimirovna Chernigov, asks the question: "how to step from neurons to Shakespeare?" [2].

IV. CONCLUSION

It is important in education to teach a child-student to learn how to perceive and sort information, how to manage their attention and memory, how to draw Parallels and logical relationships, how to apply this knowledge (and not only in a narrow area, and have synthesis). Perhaps if we had a lot of knowledge about the work of our brain (despite the fact that now this area is quite actively developing) and our consciousness, we could better manage it (although there are scientists who argue that talking about the management of our brain is quite hasty and in reality the situation is just different). It is also worth noting that standardized learning systems, of course, have a certain meaning — a person is given a picture of the world, a set of knowledge. And, later, in higher education, the student can choose the direction in which he would like to continue to study (in the first years there are also General courses, but in General it allows you to narrow down the area of knowledge and the huge sector of information). But what are the pitfalls here? Each person is unique and his brain is unique, speed, quality of training can be completely different. Einstein initially did not study well in school, slowly assimilated information and experienced difficulties in learning compared to other children, but as a result of his discoveries significantly influenced science. So what is it all about? Each individual person (brain) learn differently and teach all in one system or conduct the same standardized exams (exam, GIA, and so on) is not effective.

This does not make any sense and does not give any information about the level of intelligence passed or failed the exam student. Therefore, the modern education system should develop projects to implement different learning schemes for people with different abilities. This will reveal their individual abilities to each student. Obviously, it is impossible to develop such a number of schemes for each individual, but should be given the opportunity to different children to move at their own pace and not to put obstacles to their further education (in the form of the same standardized exams).

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