



Pedagogical photography as a new direction and creative approach in pedagogical science and practice

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Abstract

Despite the widespread use of photography today, there is generally still no culture of its use, including in a pedagogical context. Pedagogical photography is a new frontier direction in pedagogical science. Its emergence was initiated by the author of the present text and is a result of the realities and needs of the modern hyper visual age. This is not only part of the trend of interpenetration of related sciences, but it is part of the trend of interaction between science and art that has clearly emerged in recent years. The text attempts to locate Pedagogical photography in the scientific and practical space and outline its main characteristics. Because it is a theoretical scientific direction, but it is also a practical approach. It aims to help optimize pedagogical interactions in a creative and contemporary way through the pedagogical use of photographic images. Educational photography not only helps to build the personality and identity of the society, but also has a preventive and corrective function.

Key words: Pedagogical photography, interaction, art, identity, society, culture

Introduction

Nowadays, in the modern time, there is the increasingly widespread use of photography and its ever-increasing influence on the life of mankind. In reality, it finds a place in every sphere of life – from photographing space objects at great distances, through summer holidays, professional photo shoots, to photographing micro-invasive medical procedures, doing advertising, of course posting on social networks and much more. Outside the professional use of photography, its mass use in everyday life has long been a fact. Photographers have long been demythologized as magicians and the only ones privileged to create images using light. The trend towards massification became particularly strong after the sharp increase in the use of social networks from 15-20 years ago, which is a result of the digital revolution. Photography is no longer only used for special occasions, but in a variety of everyday situations, from capturing shop's work hours to save time recording by hand, to being used on social media etc. Worryingly, however, this widespread use of photography contrasts with a disproportionate level of education and culture in the use of photographic visuality. Every day we are witness of the inappropriate use of photography due to ignorance and lack of skill, or due to intent, as a result of a problematic upbringing – from copyright infringement to the use of footage for criminal activity. This gives rise to the need to use the potential of education, the need to implement pedagogical interactions with a view to increasing the culture of using photography (as a manifestation of this culture, Duncum points out that "all kinds of pictures as circulated and viewed in the context of often conflicting, deeply held beliefs and values" (Duncum, 2020, p. 5). Of course, this cannot happen adequately if there is no scientific basis. In this sense, I have been developing for more than 10 years my author's idea for a specific direction in pedagogical science – Pedagogical photography, which is committed to using the potential of the intersection between photography and pedagogy.

First of all, it should be noted that we are well aware that ideas and practices in the direction of the interaction between visuality and the pedagogical phenomenon are not new and have been created over the centuries. Even primitive people, although they are often looked down upon, used images for pedagogical purposes. Modern people look at prehistoric paintings with interest, but probably do not realize that almost all of them, regardless of the location on the globe, have a hunting scene (Caves of Lascaux, France, Altamira, Spain, Magurata in Bulgaria and many others). At that, a hunting scene in development, like a comic book. This is not accidental. These drawings were made by the ancient people not because of boredom, not because of aesthetics, for decoration, but for the preparation of adolescents. Because the most important thing was to develop skills for providing food. In Ancient Egypt, images and the verbal formulas that accompany them have a key place in the wanderings of the soul, its catharsis and indeed a process of re-education and growth before the soul returns purified and perfected to the mummified body. In the Middle Ages, stained glass images had an important educational role. At that time, over 90 percent of the people were illiterate and could not read their native language or understand Latin during liturgy. That is why the most direct way for the church to reach them is precisely through the stained glass windows (vitrages), which represent biblical scenes through images. We will also mention probably the most striking example in this direction – the father of the science of Pedagogy Jan Comenius. His most famous work is The

Great Didactics – it is considered to be fundamental to the science of pedagogy. But in our opinion, another work is just as ingenious – *The Visual world in pictures (Orbis sensualium pictus)*; (Komensky, J., the first edition in Bulgarian was published very late, in 1957). It is the first book in history, which was created and designed specifically for children and this is one of the most published books in world history. In it, Comenius explains the whole world through images – drawings that he makes with his own hands. But he combines them in a very appropriate way with text. This text is not only in Latin, but also in the local language of Bohemia. This is a great courage and a revolutionary decision (the Latin language at that time was dominant in worship and in books). Combining images with words is also ahead of its time. Until then, images were used in books, but not so much and not with such a clear pedagogical focus.

In this sense, the idea of pedagogy of images is not new, but modern realities presuppose and impose the need to single out a new specific direction in pedagogical science, which provides as a single system principles, methods of work, research, etc.

What are the main prerequisites for this need?

In the first place is the nature of man. Thanks to visual thinking, a person perceives almost all information about the world around him through the images that are received in the visual receptor. In this way, in a very short time, a large amount of information about the world is obtained, which, if it were to be described in words, would take much more time. Thus, the photographic image could be a powerful transmitter of information and attitude in the context of pedagogical interaction. Its potential has been used to a considerable extent until now, mainly in textbooks. But this use is often self-serving - with a view to complying with the principle of visibility in teaching and without much attention to the relationship between image and text. Also, the way information is perceived today is much different – the young generation perceives the world primarily through images, icons and other types of visualizations. And how to achieve such a balance between image and text that allows for the simultaneous consideration of the new generation's need for hyper-visualization and with this a sufficient advocacy of the use of the written word. In order to realize the interrelationship between thinking and speech, which Vygotsky defines as key to the development of the human being as *Homo Sapiens* and dedicates a significant part of his life to its research (Vygotsky, 1983). In this sense, such an important phenomenon is subject to scientific research.

On the next place, ideas and practices accumulated over time in the use of images for pedagogical purposes. Until the advent of Pedagogical Photography, they were episodic, unsystematic and isolated, almost entirely related to visualizations other than photography. In the preparation of students in specialized art schools and students of art academies, pedagogy is used to impart knowledge and skills, but conversely, the pedagogical effect of photography is rarely sought. Photography is still more systematically, though underutilized, in psychology, diagnostic and therapeutic contexts.

Due to the fundamental place of imagery in human life, and specifically of photographic imagery today, where reality and image coincide as much as possible, it exerts a great emotional, intellectual and spiritual influence on the person. This deserves more research to help establish the mechanisms and delineate possible pedagogical interactions to support the process of personality construction and functioning in this context. But photography also projects the essence of pedagogy as something visible-tangible and something invisible. As Tolstoy noted: "Conscious suggestion is what is called training, and unconscious – what is called education in a narrow sense and what I will call enlightenment" (Tolstoy, 1907, p. 13). And on the other hand, both photography and education are related to light. Photography is creating, drawing a lasting image with the help of light, and the other word in Bulgarian that is used for education is enlightenment – giving light to a person through knowledge and skills – enlightened is "who has (high) education, culture; educated" (Bulgarian interpretive dictionary, 2008, p. 778). In particular, a number of Bulgarian scientists emphasize the great importance of art and aesthetic education for personality formation (Atanasov, 1974; Boyadzhieva, 1994; Dimitrov, 2016; Chavdarova-Kostova, Gospodinov & Delibaltova, 2018, etc.). Accepting also the thesis that "obviously man can be transposed beyond the codes of history and nature, but we are not allowed to be seduced by the simplification of extremes: not everything is determined by genetics, as not everything can be achieved by means and through education, or by conscience and will" (Formosinho, Jesus & Reis, 2018, p. 26).

Activities with photography could have a very positive effect on the child physically as well. Photography requires and may require better coordination in movements. This is especially important for young children who have a problem with fine motor skills and activities in the space. It also requires scientific studies and, based on them, corresponding pedagogical interactions.

It is the great influence of imagery, aided by the technologies for its creation and use, that lead to the mass use of photography. Massification of use precedes its cultivation, i.e. acquisition of knowledge and the cultivation of skills for adequate use. This requires trained specialists and a scientific basis. This is probably the most important, global reason for the need for Educational Photography. As mentioned in the introductory part of the text.

It is also impossible to ignore the mass use of digital devices that have photography as an additional function (not the main one, as is the case with cameras) – mobile phone, tablet, etc. Its use is maximally facilitated and supported by artificial intelligence (focusing, other settings, subsequent manipulation of the image, etc.). The question of the role and place of artificial intelligence is becoming more and more relevant. And more precisely, the limits in which it will be used, the limits in which it will interfere in the person's life, the limits in which it will have the opportunity to make decisions for the person. It is a question of values and a mechanism for their formation. And this is again related to pedagogy.

A significant part of social networks originated as photo galleries, but to nowadays they continue to develop and function as such. A space where footage with diverse content is published that provokes interesting phenomena that deserve research. The tendency is so strongly pronounced that an increasingly large part of children's lives is spent in the social network – with all the opportunities and risks of such a stay in relation to the formation of behavioral reactions and behavioral patterns. There are different types of software to filter the content that children can access to regulate their behavior. But the best and most effective software is the one that is in the mind. The one that is installed through upbringing. The ability of a child to think maturely and independently, without being influenced by "authorities" that mass culture imposes – too schizophrenic, because at the same time egocentrism reaches unprecedented proportions, and together with this, the number of influencers grows with the same scales. Even in scientific texts, independent thinking is not sufficiently stimulated – there must be references to other authors to support one's own idea. Yes, but if this idea is new?

The intense process of globalization in the first two decades of the 21st century also reflected on science. More and more, the sciences interact, rather than entrench and distinguish one from the other. As a result, new scientific directions are emerging at the border between sciences. As it was in previous centuries. Scientists' fear of losing the identity of the science in which they are developing is less than the need to collaborate in different scientific fields with a view to new, unprecedented challenges. As a result, new scientific directions emerge at the border between sciences, which retain their identity and autonomy.

Specifically, with regard to pedagogical science, it is not one of the oldest, but it is not one of the new ones like Psychology (1879) or the latest. During its creation, Pedagogy is in the golden mean. It appeared in the 17th century as part of the process of the scientific revolution, which in turn prepared the industrial revolution. Pedagogy has been a monolithic science for quite a long time. At that time, efforts were mainly aimed at defending and stabilizing the identity of science. The fundamental nature of pedagogical science, affecting every sphere of life, is the reason why pedagogy has long had claims from other sciences. Kant even wrote the Pedagogy. The dispute of the faculties. The processes of internal differentiation of science were accelerated by the astonishing Century of the Child or the New Education Movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In the middle of the 20th century, Theory of Education and Didactics were created. Together with the History of Pedagogy, they are still the three main branches of Pedagogy. In the second half of the 20th century, Family pedagogy, Comparative pedagogy, Didactics of higher education, etc. appeared. Frontier sciences such as Pedagogical Psychology, Pedagogical Sociology, etc. were also created. To reach the beginning of the 21st century, when the process of emergence of frontier sciences is accelerated in connection with globalization, but also in connection with the search for an interdisciplinary approach in order to solve new challenges. The case of Educational Photography is a little bit different, because it unites two fields, one of which is mainly with the characteristics of a science, and the other – mainly with the characteristics of an art.

In this sense, the following definition of Pedagogical Photography could be given, namely, a borderline, interdisciplinary (between Pedagogy and Photography) field, primarily of a practical-applied nature, aimed at the pedagogy of photography as an activity and process, but also as a product of the activity and the ways of its creation. Or, more specifically, a scientific direction that is aimed at exploring the possibilities and delineating methodological guidelines for the optimal use of photography for pedagogical purposes; revealing and using the pedagogical potential of photography.

In addition to building and maintaining a scientific identity related to relevant principles, methods and others, the main directions in Pedagogical Photography in theoretical and practical-applied terms are the following:

- Exploration of pedagogical aspects in the history of photography and pre-photographic images created through other technologies. This is possible, both in terms of researching the educational process related to photography, and in terms of the use of photographs in pedagogical interactions. It is interesting to note that the Bulgarians are one of the first to have such a wide reach with photography in every single aspect. Already in the year of the birth of photography (1839), a Bulgarian who became the court photographer of the Serbian king began to study daguerreotype photography; the earliest photo in which there are Bulgarians is from 1842; The Crimean War in the middle of the 19th century attracted hundreds of photographers to the Balkan region, many of whom remained in the Bulgarian lands and opened their own studios, made photography courses, issued teaching aids, etc. Along with that, the Bulgarian footprint in photography at that time was very specific and unique. Because photography has a direct part in the process of national awareness of the Bulgarians and in the struggle for liberation from Turkish occupation.

- Photoarchaeology is another important direction. It is about researching the origin of the picture – author, location, year, subject, the story behind the picture related to its making, the life of the picture after its creation – change of location, ownership and much more. This direction brings valuable information that has a cognitive and formative character. Its implementation in pedagogical conditions contributes to the formation of these skills in the individual. And especially about observation. As Steve McCurry notes, "Captivating photography doesn't require exotic travel, but I needed to wander and explore" (McCurry, 2018, p. 7).

- Formation of an attitude towards photography beyond its visible, often perceived as superficial side. Responsible perception of photography as a tool for formative influence. In this regard, two contemporary artists could be noted – such as Sebastião Salgado, who tells in the photo album Amazonia about the nature, life and culture of the people along the Amazon River, which will help to get to know them and preserve them (Salgado, 2021). Or Michael Paar, who follows through footage the behavior of the modern tourist and the damage he inflicts (Paar, 2021).

- Mastering basic technical skills related to photography that are necessary for the mass type of person who is engaged in photography as an amateur. Although many people who have a camera, but are not professionals, are perceived as photographers. Pedagogical photography in its manifestation as a study discipline is not a photography course, but aims to implement a pedagogical approach in using photography and increase the culture of the person in relation to photography.

- Getting to know the main genres of photography – portrait, landscape, travel, street, stock, etc.

- Mastering knowledge and forming skills for copyright compliance when using foreign photographs in various pedagogical formats. One of the most common photography-related violations is copyright infringement.

- Mastering behavior patterns suitable for different shooting environments. In general, the majority of people currently implement the same pattern of behavior in diverse environments, without considering their specifics. This can sometimes be disrespectful, but it could also be life-threatening. There should always be an adaptation of the behavior to the specific situation – whether it is photographed at a concert or in a church, whether children or adults are photographed, etc. The same applies when a person is in the role of model.

- Using a pedagogical approach when organizing educational content with the inclusion of photographic images (Gospodinov & Yordanova, 2020).

- The use of photography for pedagogical and psychological diagnostics. One of the most effective tests in psychology are the projective tests related to visualization – drawings, figures, graphics, etc. In this sense, psychology is also ahead in the use of visuality, but together with pedagogy, lags behind in the use of photographic visuality.

- Use of photography in corrective interactions – re-education and art therapy.

- Using photography to build personal and collective identity. An example of this is the book *About thirteen educators and psychologists – my teachers and colleagues (on different occasions)* by Dimitrov (2020-2021).

- Acquiring competence in using photography in school and non-formal educational settings Gospodinov, V. (2016 & 2021).

- Combining image and text in a way that achieves high pedagogical efficiency. This means having adequacy between image and text and balance. The text should provide information about the content of the photo, about its author, about the original dimensions, about the date of shooting, the exposure, etc. An example of this is the book *Fechar o tempo* (Lemos, Silva, Catrica & Pinheiro, 2015). Or the album dedicated to Olga Picasso (Philipport, Pissarro & Ruiz-Picasso, 2019).

- Limits of manipulation of the photographic image (so-called post-production) with a view to achieving an optimal pedagogical effect. And the ability to recognize fake photos. As Gérard Castello Lopes notes: "Photography is a form of fiction. It is both a record of reality and a self-portrait, because only the photographer sees it that way" (<https://www.pensador.com/frase/MzA5MjMz/> used 2023/08/01). Which means there has to be a balance. And he is educated.

- Organization of a system for archiving and storing photographs.

- Last in order, but first in importance – familiarization with the rules for safe implementation of photographic activity, with a focus on the conditions of pedagogical interaction.

The above-mentioned directions are embedded in the courses in the field of Educational Photography, which I have been implementing since 2011 at the Faculty of Pedagogy of the Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. These are Photography and Pedagogy, Educational and Therapeutic Aspects of Photography, and Photography and Visualization for Academic Purposes at Bachelor degree, Master degree and Doctoral degree, including Erasmus students. And also a course in Educational Photography in school, with children with behavioral problems. In parallel, I have published more than 30 texts devoted to the issue. Most of them contain empirical studies. Some of the publications are: *Educational projections of the image before the advent of photography*, 2013; *Educational aspects of profile photography*, 2019; *Possibilities and limitations in the use of photography to preserve the cultural identity of refugees*, 2022; *Photography in the preparation of Erasmus students – towards the formalization and strengthening of the interaction between formal and non-formal education*, 2023. I was supervisor of three diploma theses related to this scientific field, and I am currently the supervisor of a PhD student who is developing a study dedicated to the educational and therapeutic aspects of photography in adolescents.

The photography exhibitions, which I do are in line with pedagogical photography. Similarly, there are numerous author's pictures used for advertising and informational purposes on paper and in the virtual space. Collective memory and identity are also supported by publishing books and albums for anniversaries, again according with pedagogical photography. For example: *"Alma Mater and pedagogical education in Bulgaria. Anniversary photo almanac – 25 years Faculty of Pedagogy"* (2011) or *"100 years Specialty Pedagogy at the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"* (2023). In both albums, the author of the photographs and the accompanying text: Vladislav Gospodinov.

In Conclusion

Pedagogical Photography is a new direction in Pedagogical Science, which is based on time-tested ideas and practices and current research. It is also caused by the modern conditions related to the massification of

photography and hypervisualization and the serious deficit of visual culture. For the first time, it consolidates previous theoretical and empirical experience with current ones in a common scientific space. Further validation of this direction should be based on more research and **cooperation of scientists who work in the field**. In close connection with the practice. In this way, it will be possible to increase the culture of using photography. In general, pedagogical photography arose and established itself in the most natural environment for such processes, which is the academic environment in a research university, such as Sofia University. And mainly through the graduates of the Alma Mater, but also through the Erasmus students, it spreads beyond it. The possibilities it provides are extremely diverse and improve the effectiveness of pedagogical interaction, whether in or out of the classroom. And this is definitely beneficial for all participants in the process. However, the potential for future development at the moment seems more than significant.

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