

CRISIS AND EDUCATION: IN SEARCH OF A FUNCTIONAL PARADIGM

Abstract

The paper refers to the most recurrent concepts that are to be involved in the development of educational philosophy – relevant to emergency contexts, i.e. crises of social impact. The article aims to compile the set of key concepts that seem to be indispensable for the respective paradigm – necessary to define the required framework for overcoming the difficulties and tackling the issues caused by crises. The article makes use of a variety of concepts of philosophical discourse to cover all the possible instances of the educational realm.

Keywords: anticipation, comparison, compliance, contemplation, criterion, discontinuity, discrimination, eloquence of experience, expectancies, harshness of objectivity, impartiality, instrumental, methodological discourses, networking, POST-crisis schedule, PRE-crisis schedule, prudence, stability, system-based education, vision, WHILE-crisis schedule, wisdom of obedience,

Introduction

The contradictory perception of responsibility that is assumed by educators appears to infer the significance commonly attributed to this domain of human society, on the one hand, and the severest allegations, blame, and criticism which are likely to rise, at the most critical moments or emergencies. Therefore, the rundown of the respective paradigm of educational philosophy is persistently on the agenda of educators, education managers and all the stakeholders of the sphere. The paper is an attempt to offer some alignment for the search of some priority concepts which, dependent of the situation and/or case, might become vectors and even axes for building up the necessary conceptual edifice for further progress.

Formats matter

Any scope of educational activity might be observed as a *process*, *network* or

system. **Education as a process** comprises any actual teaching/learning process with the respective transfer of information on the knowledge and skills required, as well as on the formation of the corresponding competences. **Networking** has always existed in the sphere of education. Recently, network-based education has mainly been promoted due to the variety of information and communication channels that foster the educational activities and enhance them both quantitatively and qualitatively. In the modern world, the key concept of networking has recorded drastic changes: geographic expansion of a variety of educational communities, associations, and interest groups and deeper professional intercourse formats – with instant interaction and facilitated assistance and counselling. **System-based education** is the institutionalised educational sector with the respective standards and norms prioritised. This format is aimed at embracing educational ideas, practices, and experiences for further testing and endorsement. The key concept within this format is the respective rationale for community-based activities – developed out of actual needs and in value-specific ways.

Educator's insight within crises

The educator's insight that might be assigned with specific prospects of positive development could be grouped under the following priorities:

- (a) Detecting the character of current educational activities,
- (b) Detecting crises;
- (c) Observing education as a tool,
- (d) Observing education as a process struck by a crisis,
- (e) Observing education as a possible reason for a crisis.

Once all the insights are considered, one should refer to *the areas of vulnerability*, which similar to Achilles heel, are the standpoints from which the possible crisis might be both observed and, unfortunately, spread (e). The managerial viewpoint (a) offers not only the respective angle of vision but also the potential failure in **objectivity**. As for the diagnostic standpoint (b), it is likely to encounter hurdles related to **measurability**. The instrumental perspective (c) appears to become a victim of inadequacy. The education struck by a crisis (d) might easily fall to a disarray caused by the given crisis. Therefore, every single aspect tends to contain areas of vulnerability which, quite contradictorily, comprises not only the ability to perceive the subject matter scope of issues but also to grow into a possible epicentre of the crisis. Such dual function of standpoint reminds the statement by renowned Greek philosopher Evaghelos Moutsopoulos (Moutsopoulos,

2017), “The more the historical consciousness of a society is aware of its eventual capacity to take advantage of its past, the more it is susceptible of being subject to crises.” (p. 25)

All these areas of vulnerability are there to be considered through the scope of managerial duties (for instance, *foreseeing*), philosophical prospects (for example, *overall understanding and obtaining wellbeing*), and cultural vision (for instance, *a system of values*).

Thus, the scope of educational tasks introduced above might be hindered or become an epicentre of crises because of the following potential issues:

- (a) Managerial insight – inappropriate administration issues,
- (b) Diagnostic insight – imprecise criteria of measurability,
- (c) Instrumental insights – disproportioned methodological standards,
- (d) Observing education as a process struck by a crisis – unfocused or misfocused efforts applied,
- (e) Observing education as a possible cause of the crisis – inappropriate educational content.

Locating pedagogy within the context of crisis

The Greek Thinker (Moutsopoulos, 2017) mentioned above also states, “What remains to be defined and understood in such an ocean of crisis is not the nature of a concrete order of crises, but that of the very idea of crisis, whose every other crisis is a specific manifestation.” (p. 26)

The speculations on the relations between education and crisis have been unfolding for a rather long period. The intrinsic nature of “crisis”, as a notion, has comprised a wide range of concepts – failure, interruption, dead-end, lack (of knowledge, skills, competences, provision and resources), apathy, and critical moment to precede some changes. The same Philosopher (Moutsopoulos, 2017), in the same volume, compiles the comprehensive paradigm of the concepts characterising a crisis – both phenomenologically and dynamically perceived (p. 27-28):

1. from epistemological perspectives – **comparison** and **discrimination**;
2. from the reversive or conflicting standpoint – **criterion**;
3. from ontological perspectives – **discontinuity**.

Despite the continuous explorations in the field, we still come across primordial viewpoint issues: Should we (a) formulate crisis in coordinated conjunction with education (crisis and education), (b) observe education instrumentally, i.e. as a means of overcoming a crisis, and (c) detect a crisis as a phenomenon occurring within the process of education? The relations or possibly compatible links between these concepts derive from the standpoints stated below:

- a. Education as a means of preparing people for crises,**
- b. Education for critical situations, cases, failures, etc.,**
- c. A crisis within the realm of education.**

The standpoints comprise a paradigm typical of **ethical** and **methodological discourses**. The third standpoint, however, occurs within the **instrumental discourse**.

Educational activities scheduled to face a crisis

The readiness for crisis is an objective tackled within general educational mission framework aimed at educating people to face a crisis – detecting, analysing, reacting/solving and realising the experience gained for a better/improved/effective reaction to a similar situation. Therefore, education as a domain might generate the following managerial schedules:

PRE-crisis schedule: The parties involved in the context are anticipating some issues of stressful nature and the educational community is required to prepare the society for possible hardship. Thus, the primary function of educational mind must be either oriented towards the already existing models for a critical situation or emergency or any experience in the past. What educators deal with is a series of hypothesising, measuring, and sampling activities. This phase pretty much reminds the being and anticipating states of the mind, with particular reference to the philosophical and spiritual growth described by Thomas Metzger (Adler, 2008) as “the naturally given phases of the mind” (p. 83) – comprising the phases ranging from the balanced starting point of contemplation to explicit act of self-expression. As Joseph A. Adler (Adler, 2008) summarises in his research, the first state, i.e. “total stillness” in which the mind has access to the “good cosmic force represented by “Heaven” (Chinese: tian – 天); it is the aspect of mind that Zhu Xi calls the “moral mind” (Chinese – daoxin 道心) or it is the principle (Chinese li – 理) of the mind which is human nature (Chinese – xing 性);....” (p. 58).

This stage – deciphered in terms of spirituality – as for educational realm, in particular, consists of harmoniously established statuses: **stability** (stemming from the

previous experience and based on currently enacted standards), **contemplation** (functioning on endorsed or recommended measurability bases), and **anticipation** or **expectancies** (visualised in terms of already established systemic relations and/or regularities observed). It is a must to state that all these statuses are present within all the schedules introduced here.

WHILE-crisis schedule: The context is ardent, and the educational community is expected to guide the society serving as an orienting force and conducting the social pace. This phase, above all, assumes the complete paradigm of choice – of tools, ways, participants, those responsible, priorities, etc. Quite symbolic of the schedule might seem King Lear’s question addressing her daughters, “Which of you shall we say doth love us most?” This question, may we say, might serve as a metaphor of an educator’s (at least, of a competent and diligent one) choice which focuses on all the possible aspects of education while searching for a solution to the series of questions emergent within the context of a crisis. Here is where we must necessarily insist on a cluster of approaches, principles and guidelines to apply. Logically, these approaches should be of broader coverage, principles of tested measurability, and guidelines of acute efficiency. Hence, within the always reciprocal flow of teaching and learning the variety of mutual testing, accepting and rejecting might ensue, quite similar to King Lear’s and his daughters case, from, at least, three possible standpoints: **the eloquence of experience** (Gonorel’s answer), **the wisdom of obedience** (Regan’s reply), and **harshness of objectivity** (Cordelia’s laconic remarks).

As any educational function infers, the eloquence of experience is required for the explicitness of methods and their **efficiency**, the wisdom of obedience is the precondition of **compliance**, and, finally, the harshness of objectivity is the **impartiality** in the choice of measures or means.

POST-crisis schedule: The context is stressful and social issues are to be tackled, and the solutions should be contributed to by the educational community. The schedule is both managerial (to complete the PDCA cycle) and conceptual (to revise the previous paradigm). The most inspiring idea that we consider as opportune to quote here belongs to Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (Kierkegaard, 1941), “For in order to be aware of oneself and God imagination must enable a man to soar higher than the misty precinct of the probable, it must wrench one out of this and, by making possible that which transcends the *quantum satis* of every experience, it must teach him to hope and fear, or to fear and hope.” (p. 43).

The theological concept of hope, used in the quote in its obviously religious sense, might be substituted by the concept of **vision** of the future, the possible planning of the pathway based on the segment covered. As for fear, it might be relevant to reformulate it as **prudence** which must necessarily assume the diligence, watchfulness, impartiality and cooperativeness.

Educational philosophy layout dealing with crises

In order to commence a more-or-less compatible layout for further enactment, the following questions are to be covered:

- (i) How can education prepare for any crises?
- (ii) How can education help to overcome any specific crisis?
- (iii) What can education take advantage of a crisis?

As introduced by one of the accessible online educational sources (Beth, 2019), for an exhaustive definition of one's educational philosophy, i.e. for a vision of necessary depth and coverage, an educator should think of the following domains:

(a) the aim of education that goes in line with the generic social and/or community interests,

(b) the role that the educator is ready to assume within the standard-based (e.g. curricular) framework,

(c) the vision of the efficiency of learning through methodological applications,

(d) the way that an educator should get the students involved in community life,

(e) the self-evaluation of professional qualities,

(f) the omnipresence of learning abilities among students,

(g) the possibly complete spectrum of responsibilities assumed by the educator and owed to their students,

(h) the broader personal frame goals assumed by the educator,

(i) the ability and methods of engaging students in learning,

(j) the professional (technical enhancement and methodological reinforcement) progress of the educator. (<https://www.thoughtco.com/design-your-educational-philosophy-2081733>)

The aspect of watchfulness must necessarily imply the coverage of all the possible aspects of education and increasing involvement of as many participants as possible in

order to provide the process with the plurality of viewpoints, understanding, managing, and doing.

Completing the framework of the possible paradigm

The Greek philosopher quoted above – Evangelhos Moutsopoulos (2017) – at the end of his chapter in “Crises in History: A Philosophical Approach” in *Philosophy and Crisis Volumes 1, Responding to Challenges to Ways of Life in the Contemporary World* (Ser. IV, Vol. 11) by Golfo Maggini (Author), Vasiliki P. Solomou-Papanikolaou (Author), Helen Karabatzaki (Author), Konstantinos D. Koskeridis (Author), University of Ioannina, Sector of Philosophy, 2017, outlining the crises experienced by universities and university education in general, claims that the variety of crises that the university system is currently facing is of “specific” character: with the already conceptualized issues that have always been there – “generation gap” and “degeneration” – as for the personal integrity of participants, on the one hand, and the generic liberalisation tendencies (“democratisation”) mutually imposed by the society (as we think, out of progress necessity) and by the university community (if it might be allowed to say so, out of the scholarly confidence in knowledge, skills, and competences) (pp. 35-36). The same Greek thinker refers to the outer and inner aspects of the academic set-up of universities claiming that the outer countenance of universities must necessarily be developed in line with their inner premises substituting the half-measures with a complete and harmonious alignment (p. 36).

As for the agentive function of university community members in the solution of issues of social impact, it might be justified making use of Roger Deacon’s (Deacon, 2006) insight on Michel Foucault’s educational perceptions. Deacon, among other key terms offered by Michel Foucault, refers to the “implications for contemporary educational institutions and practices of a model of education as a “block of capacity – communication – power” which factually delineates the kernel logic of the social responsibility assumed by the participants of educational domain (p. 177).

Universities are the cradles of changes – hopefully of progressive ones. Thus, there is a constant need in supporting advanced studies which are likely to cause quality changes in the long run. Whereas, as so wisely observed by Evangelhos Moutsopoulos, one of the possible prospects of university education format is its transformation into research centres. These possible prospects are far less desirable as Universities are centers which deal with education as (a) research centres (through institutional formats), (b) premises for further development (process dynamics), (c) “bridges” that keep both the timeline and the space coverage within the frames of the given society uninterrupted

(networking logic). That is why we totally agree with the Greek Academician as for the currently observed and definitely destructive trend of substituting the idea of vocation with quite a vague conception of professionalism: it does seem destructive as it appears to obliterate all the necessary premises for tackling issues of crises. What we would claim as of absolute priority is paradigmatically determined “channelling” between the educational realm, trying to cover all the possible formats and social systems, engaging every single aspect, function and infrastructure present.

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