

PRIORITIES OF EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT IN MODERN TIMES

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ABSTRACT

This article delves into methodological considerations pertaining to the evolution of the educational system and the establishment of the educational milieu amidst significant global transformations in politics, economics, ecology, and socio-cultural dynamics. It explores novel approaches aimed at shaping a fresh paradigm for education and fostering collaborative pedagogy tailored to the exigencies of the contemporary era. Furthermore, the paper conducts an in-depth analysis of the outcomes derived from sociological surveys administered to educators. These surveys focus on key theses and approaches presented within the article, offering insights into the reception and perspectives of teaching professionals on the outlined concepts. The synthesis of theoretical exploration, practical pedagogical strategies, and empirical feedback contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted landscape of modern educational methodologies.

Keywords: *education paradigm, education based on competencies, integration of educational programs, non-formal and informal education, digital technologies, multilingualism, multiethnic and multicultural environment, project-based learning.*

INTRODUCTION

In modern times of global political changes and technological developments, the notions about the development and future vision of the educational system are constantly being reviewed. The theses and concepts of universal pedagogical thought that have always expressed the ideas of human existence, coexistence, and co-development and had a methodological role in further education development are gaining a new meaning.

The theses on educational development in the social mind are reflected in new political, economic, and scientific-cultural structures. The core issue of the purpose of education has been set forward in each historical-cultural epoch, and the state structures, educational systems, and pedagogical thought have recorded those problems, solved them from the aspect of social-political and socio-cultural realities, or have designated the vision and the ways of solution involving national, universal and planetary components.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Education is currently regarded as a strategic resource for the development of a society. There is accordingly an increasing necessity for the definition of the modern paradigm of education and its methodological validation against the backdrop of the integration of educational programs, formal, non-formal, and informal education, development of educational environment, adaptation of outcome-based approach towards education, intercultural communication as well as the availability of information and communication technologies and growing investment in the area, media education and development of artificial intelligence.

Addressing the issue of education development priorities is primarily conditioned by discussions on global and regional levels concerning program documents related to the future of education development, establishment and introduction of new standards of general education, changes in schoolchildren's educational needs as well as changing demands to public education institutions and teachers' professional development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Today, when there is maximum accessibility to knowledge and to the means of getting it, educational systems tend to develop paradigm systems that will emphasize the optimal combination of basic and practical knowledge, the relation between education goals and final results, and the cooperation and engagement of the subjects of the educational process.

The new world order and the issues of people's adaptation and natural life activity in multicultural environments are imperative to forming a new education paradigm.

The paradigm of education is a system of theoretical, methodological, and value-related theses. It is a complex of basic knowledge, values, notions, and technological means. Paradigm as a conceptual education model is based on global political realities and universal values while preserving national educational and cultural traditions.

Contemporary time dictates the necessity of developing a paradigm that provides the imperative of forming the skills of the 21st century. From these proceeds, the goal and content of education, the demands presented to the skills and final results of each level graduate, the nature of pedagogical interaction, the organizational forms of the learning process, the assessment of the outcomes, and the type of interdisciplinary and intercultural communication.

The following approaches may be observed as the basis of a modern education paradigm.

Competence-based education focuses on the idea that the school must prepare pupils for life. In the context of a competent approach, the amount of learned information is not only observed as a final result of education but also the knowledge with a measurable, perceptible, and practically valuable result. Due to competence-based education, a person must be able **to learn**, create new knowledge, set realistic goals, and predict, design, and model the steps toward realising those goals. Critical thinking, conscious choice-making, feeling, noticing and solving the basic issues, forming one's opinion and viewpoint, managing and controlling one's activity, and taking responsibility are essential. Self-cognition, self-esteem, creativity, entrepreneurship, and engagement are prioritized in the final results of education. Emotional stability, reflection, social activeness, comprehension of the connection between the learned material and the world, cooperation, solidarity, and digital literacy are emphasized. It is a developing education that allows discovery, self-confidence, and learning from mistakes.

English psychologist J. Raven observes about 37 competencies in his surveys devoted to the nature and assessment of competencies. Those competencies include a clear understanding of values and landmarks for achieving a certain goal, the striving to control one's activity, ability, and willingness to learn independently, and targeting broad perspectives. Emotional attitude towards the activity, self-control, adaptability, and the ability to abstract to focus on basic issues related to the realisation of the set goals are also mentioned. Critical thinking, the willingness to apply new ideas and innovations to achieve the goal and to work on disputable issues, stability, and tolerance are also considered essential qualities. The abilities to listen, make decisions, overcome collisions, alleviate disagreements, as well as personal responsibility are accentuated (Raven, 1984).

While elaborating the strategy of state educational policy, the competent approach dictates the necessity to implement relevant changes in the normative documents that regulate the sphere of education as an imperative for evaluating

the connection between school and life. In this regard, the establishment of the expected abilities of a graduate of elementary, basic, and secondary school and of the expected final results of studying the main programs of general education in RA “State Standard for General Education” is an important step towards the formation of a learner’s basic skills in the 21st century (State Standard for General Education, the Republic of Armenia, 2021).

The imperative of integrating educational programs, study courses, and separate topics. As the competencies are holistic, above-school-subject, the education based on them dictates that, as a result of integrating educational programs and subjects, basic knowledge and skills expressing a person’s consciousness as an inhabitant of Planet Earth in outer space should be formed. This is the thorough understanding of the world with deeply comprehended and conceptualised convictions, reasonings, value orientations, eco-centred consciousness, and behaviour towards the inviolability of the laws of existence, coexistence, and stable balance preservation of each element in the “person-society-nature” system. By creating an integrated curriculum using service learning, as noted by Astin, A., W, Eyler, J, & Dwight, E. G. Jr., you are changing the teaching and learning experience for both the teacher and the learner. Integrated curriculums allow students to understand the course subject matter and how to apply the material they have learned in the classroom in a real-world situation (Astin, A., W, Eyler, J, & Dwight, E. Jr., 1999 p. 80). Within the scope of any study course, science learning is a method, while critical thinking, creativity, research, assessment, overviews of the future, communications ethics, entrepreneurship, and logistic conclusions are the final results. They are competencies formed based on knowledge integration. UNESCO’s “Reimagining Our Futures Together” new social contract for education emphasizes ecological, intercultural, and interdisciplinary learning. It encourages knowledge availability for learners and its reproduction carried out by them, simultaneously developing critical and practical skills (Reimagining Our Futures Together, 2021, p. 4).

It may be concluded that in the mentioned report, “contemporary pedagogy is observed as a process of collective interrelations based on the principles of cooperation and solidarity, mutual help, interconnection, interdependence, linkage of personal and collective responsibility. It puts forward the demand for organizing interdisciplinary, intergenerational, intercultural education which is both program-based and issue-based” (Topuzyan A. Harutyunyan G. 2022, p. 141).

Forming an educational environment for the learner’s psycho-mental and physical development with the existential, technological, and methodological

assessment of all its components. Traditional notions on the perception of educational areas have changed in the modern world. Nowadays, natural, vital, and man-made areas and digital environments are perceived as an all-encompassing environment that involves the resources of universal culture, science, and ICT availability for their comprehension, as well as the principles of inclusiveness, equality, interaction, and cooperation. Using ICTs for educational purposes has an essential impact on improving education quality, learners' academic and cognitive activity, creative self-expression, and the effective solution of several other educative issues. Electronic educational and methodical materials, such as textbooks, vocabularies, and encyclopedias that are composed on multi-environment (multimedia) basis, the complex of tasks intended for control and assessment, three-dimensional animations, video and audio materials, program tools, and equipment "make the education interesting and pleasant, which allows a person to perceive the information by several organs of senses. ...Making ICTs pedagogical helps to form learner's most important skills necessary for the 21st century, such as making a choice, a decision, and managing the result of education, thus becoming the subject for one's development and self-development. It promotes the development of the learner's interactivity, creativity, entrepreneurship, and imagination" (Topuzyan, 2018, p. 163-164).

Our surrounding world is an educational area where learners may make mistakes, experiment, test, learn, recognize by personal experience, and create knowledge. Sandra Horne-Martin argues that style of teaching and room organisation are linked, although it is unclear which is the cause and which is an effect (S. Horne-Martin, 2002). Hence, the methods and technologies that help us notice the problems in the surrounding world and gain and apply new knowledge for solving them are considered essential. Besides, informative situations and teachers' cooperative activities are also important as they guide the learners toward building their education in the given situation. "Each taught subject should foster the development of both future teachers' and pupils' critical-analytical thinking since the pedagogical profession requires to examine everything, to analyze each phenomenon, fact, event, to be able to check their veracity (fact checking), to be proactive, to be able to plan and predict, to introduce diversity into the work and to be creative" (Topuzyan A. Harutyunyan G., 2022, p. 144). From this aspect, critical thinking, which is considered to be pivotal in the 21st century, comes to the fore. It is intended "to analyse the information received from practice, to combine and assess it using observations, considerations or communication" (Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2019).

Realization of educational projects directed towards gaining knowledge independently, creating new knowledge together, developing research skills, and summarizing and substantiating research results. Not only the gained result but also the core process, the atmosphere of cooperation, the responsibility for the overall result, participation, and the ways of getting new knowledge are essential in the methodology of project-based education. A culture of independent and collaborative work and team thinking are developed. Learners manage to predict, plan the sequence of steps, and comprehend the practical value of knowledge by linking it to their life experiences. Verma brings out the important interpersonal skills required to be a project manager: communication, team building, coaching, motivating, decision-making, delegating, training, directing, persuading/influencing, negotiating, and supporting those involved in the project. Project managers must establish a climate of open communication and maintain effective communication links across the organizational interface (Verma, V. K. 1996).

The priorities of education development in multilingual, multicultural, and multiethnic environments. Universal practice is acquired by the mastery of languages. The main goal of language education policy is to promote the teaching of foreign languages to make the intercultural discourse, mutual understanding, and cooperation of nations and peoples more effective. International organizations have taken active steps following the demand of this modern time imperative. The resolution of the European Parliament passed on December 13, 2001, emphasizes the importance of promoting language teaching and appeals to member states and the European Commission to allow learning foreign languages to communicate. This is the precondition for mutual understanding, tolerance, and agility, as well as for receiving information in a multilingual and multicultural world (European Parliament, 2001). According to this, cultural competency is “developmental in nature” in that it recognises that “one’s worldview can change dynamically over time through experiences and reflective learning” and that learning can come from “formal education, non-formal learning, and experiences combined with reflection about cultural perspective and ways of being” (Gutentag, T., Horenczyk, G., & Tatar, M. 2018).

Approaches on the assessment of the results of non-formal and informal education. We get non-formal education in educational-cultural institutions, out-of-school organizations, museums, libraries, clubs, and study groups during excursions, additional study programs, different courses, and training. Informal education involves the knowledge gained due to interactions in various spheres of life, the surrounding

world, and the virtual reality of the internet. “The State Program for the Development of Education of the Republic of Armenia until 2030” defines clear approaches for creating legislative regulations and normative bases for non-formal and informal education results. The assessment, cognition, certification, accreditation, and integration of those results in the national education registry is an essential direction of the state educational policy. It will foster competitive professional readiness, continuous education, and the acquisition of high-quality education relevant to the needs and capacities in all stages of life (The State Program for the Development of Education of the Republic of Armenia until 2030 (2022)).

THE NOVELTY OF THE RESEARCH

In the complex era of scientific and educational advancements, an attempt has been made to take a new approach to introduce and interpret the methodological, content, and organisational matters related to the development of the modern paradigm of education according to the optimal combination of fundamental and applicable knowledge. Finally, using surveys conducted among Armenian teachers, a few issues have been researched and explored stemming from contemporary challenges, such as teachers’ engagement in research and activities targeting the development of standards and programs, their attitude towards the application of technologies with pedagogical purpose in education in the 21st century, integration of general education programs and the acknowledgement of formal and informal education results.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Surveys were conducted among 78 teachers of RA comprehensive schools about certain theses and approaches raised within the scope of the research. The teachers took part in the surveys online via Google’s platform: /URL: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1yfLnUj1Q6NxqKMI9blp6trLwUtUBYEW3m7jObClSdyq/>.

The obtained data are analytically represented below:

The answers to the question **“Have you ever cooperated in any format on professional platforms within the scope of developing standards or programs of the subject you teach?”** affirm that 3.8 % of teachers have worked in expert groups. 16.7 % chose the option **“has made observations”**, and 7.8 % participated in master classes and training. 11.5 % have participated in joint discussions and mutual visits, and 60.3 % have not been engaged in any cooperation. No answer was received regarding

the option **“participation in conferences”**. Teachers’ engagement in the processes of developing essential documents is insufficient.

“Do you cooperate with the specialists of other subjects towards the integration and collaborative teaching of educational topics?” 43.6 % noted that they cooperate at school, while 56.4 % do not. Moreover, no one referred to the option **“I cooperate with other educational institutions”**, which is a worrisome fact.

“Do you carry out research work (on a personal or group level)?” 33.3 % mentioned having a published article, and 24.1 % ticked **“methodical elaboration”**. 42.6 % do not carry out research activities. Besides, there are no records regarding the options **“creation of a guide for practical materials”** and **“development of alternative educational programs”**. The received data are not satisfactory since the teacher who does research at schools of the 21st century also has an important role in developing learners’ educational and research skills.

50% gave a positive answer to the question, **“Does the professional training satisfy the needs of your professional growth and continuous education?”** 39.7 % answered **“partially,”** and only 10.2 % found it difficult to answer. Hence, we can conclude that, generally, professional training fosters professional improvement and is an important platform for interaction.

28.4 % gave a positive answer to the question, **“Do you think the processes of normative cognition and assessment of the results of informal and non-formal education will foster continuous professional development in society?”** 63.8 % found it difficult to answer, and 7.8 % gave a negative answer. This provides a basis to conclude that there is a need to inform society about normative cognition and assessment of informal and non-formal education results.

“What kind of difficulties do you have while organizing project-based activities?” 25.9% mentioned difficulty choosing the project topic, and 14.8 % had problems with pupils’ motivation. 39.4 % struggle to identify basic issues and practice research skills, which are very important in project-based work. To some extent, it is good that 7.4 % do not have any difficulties, and only 12.5 % have problems with teamwork organization.

“What kind of experience do you have in organizing out-of-school education?” 24.5 % answered that they have teaching experience in the natural environment, 8.9 % organize classes in museums, and 3.8% have experience managing education online via web technologies (Web 2.0 tools and others). It is troublesome that the majority (62.8%) do not take the opportunity of organising out-of-class education.

“Do you think digital technologies may substitute the teacher in an educational environment?” 17.9 % chose the answer ***“partially, yet some problems of communication and mutual understanding may arise”***, and 33.4 % responded negatively. It is noteworthy the answer ***“technologies are useful if their application is methodically correct”*** was given by 48.7%. Besides, no one ticked the answer ***“may thoroughly replace”***, which positively states the importance of the teacher’s role in modern times of computerization of education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The teacher has an essential role in the educational process. The contemporary pedagogical theory and practice development stage is characterized by teachers’ engagement in research and innovative and experimental activities based on continuous self-development. It is a self-organization of continuous education, a self-willed and conscious training to improve professional qualities. “There is great reason for hope. Around the world, teachers, communities, organizations, and governments have embarked on many promising educational initiatives. These seeds of hope and the new possibilities they unleash should be nurtured. The Commission hopes the Report will be a tool to connect and support the millions of educators and coalitions who share the ideals laid out here. (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2021).

It is necessary to enhance the sphere of comprehensive school teachers’ professional activity involving them in the development processes of education policy as the teacher is the main organizer of the educational process and deeply understands the problems and difficulties existing in that field. Thus, there is a need to provide teachers’ participation in educational reforms to make their voices heard in the discussions and decision-making processes of the issues related to their professional and personal lives. The teachers should be given freedom and independence, as well as an opportunity to participate in reformatory project discussions. Fake participation and cabinet decision-making, which bypass the records of public discussion results, ought to be excluded.

The mentioned approaches will be effectively implemented if an applicant’s personal qualities are necessary for the professional-pedagogical activity, social and psychological willingness and physical and neuro-psychological factors are considered when entering a pedagogical university. The choice of teacher’s profession should be deeply comprehended. There must be a strong belief that this is a cooperative profession that demands communicative, reflexive qualities based on the principles of collaboration and solidarity. Hence, while determining the domain on entering a pedagogical university,

during the advisory discourses with the applicants, as well as in the system of professional training of the university, it is important to inform the applicants about the peculiarities of pedagogical activity, professional aptitude, compatibility, biosocial factors, issues regarding the basic problems, risks, challenges and others connected with the profession. Due to this, the future teacher will be ready for pedagogical activity based on the belief in conscious professional choice, freedom, and responsibility.

CONCLUSION

As a result of the research, the following conclusions were made:

Modern times dictate the integration of problem-based educational programs that focus on prioritizing practical knowledge, forming an open academic environment, a competent approach based on final results, cooperation, and balancing technological means and “person-to-person” relationships.

It is necessary to promote teachers’ research activity as much as possible by enhancing their cooperation opportunities with different educational institutions, including universities and other companies, corporations, and school-related organizations.

The imperative of comprehending national and cultural values, national identity, integrating national and universal experience as well as humanistic concepts should be considered while developing the education paradigm.

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