

NEW CHALLENGES FOR TEACHING IN THE NEW SOCIETY OF KNOWLEDGE, TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION

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I share the belief that each teacher has a personal and professional “project”, on which he or she bases his teaching activity and the relationship with his/her students. Generally speaking, the goal of any project, as conceived by its author, can surely be the effort toward intellectual development (for his/her subject of course, because the teacher can hardly claim overall development) of each student, until the latter manage to acquire the knowledge transmitted in the course of the lectures. The philosopher Martin Buber used to maintain that the degree of success and self-awareness, passes through the other. From this viewpoint, the teacher can achieve his/her success to the degree that his/her students manage to acquire his/her subject, i.e. “grow up” as an individual. In other words, it implies the upbringing of an individual, so that he/she can study, discuss and analyse problems, with solid intelligence, with initiative for debate and face arguments in the auditorium, with integrity and proper scrupulosity to deal with issues and students at the same time. I would like to define the work of the teacher as: “bringing up people, capable of thinking professionally and behaving as social individuals, which implies the possession of competence, consciousness and passion for knowledge and work”. This demands strong commitment on the part of the teacher, but for the students as well, through a process inviting you to its effort to carry out what we have to do, our work. In the new circumstances of the rapid technological changes and innovation, changes in information technology, in economics, it becomes clear that the present society demands educated people, equipped with the necessary personal and professional competences, so that they can deal with and handle with success the resulting complexity (due to the continuous contextual and global changes). They should also be efficient and competitive in the market and in the society. In order to achieve the goals of education or the transmission of knowledge to the students, I would be in favour of a pedagogy which activates the motivation to bring up students (people actually), to face the new challenges in the post-modern world, in which there are many factors acting intensely against such goals. As teachers, we do also need ongoing learning ourselves, so that we can properly accomplish and complete this pedagogy of communication and Exchange, which leads to learning. By applying the pattern of joint discussion and the argumentation, about issues and viewpoints, I believe that the role of the teacher is of paramount importance, to promote an ever improving relationship between the students and the knowledge, regarding what is being studied under the direction of the teacher, regarding the necessary provisions and environment for the student, and establishing the basics for reciprocal communication between the experience, the reflection and the action taken over by each of them. It is an important step by the teacher, to place the students onto the basics of the acquisition of the subject, by introducing the techniques and the practices of reflection over issues, which not only promotes the students’ attention to follow the track of the subject, but also provokes the desire and curiosity for what is being acquired and learnt. This also involves the memory, the intelligence and the feelings, in order to acquire the significance and the essential values of what is being acquired, to discover its relationship to other aspects of human activity, so that further implications, as ongoing search for

the truth, can be appreciated. The reflection, as a preliminary introduction technique, in the relations students-teacher, must be a process of formation and liberation, which forms the conscience of the students, their attitudes, common values and beliefs, and their way of thinking, in such a way that the students can move from the phase of knowledge to the phase of (re)action. Achieving such a result in the teaching process, may be appear in the cases which arouse the imagination and the will of the students to choose the most appropriate for of action/behaviour, and draw on the consequences and bring them to the reality. What the students will do from this angle, under the direction and guidance of the teacher, will not immediately transform their world of knowledge in the subject, but it will, I believe, be a significant step forward to take them to new experiences, other reflections in the actions they are going to pursue. While discussing the relationship teacher-student, we naturally refer the Martin Buber pedagogy, about the establishment of an authentic relationship, with each being authentic and unique. The constant reciprocal relationship between the communication, the experience, the reflection and the action/behaviour in the teacher-student dynamics of teaching-learning environment, should necessarily be the “war horse” in the teaching process. In case no such authentic relationship has been established with the student, in which the student feels as the first person in the communication with the self, there can be no transmission of knowledge, reflection, joint discussion and formation. It is common fact that the human formation comes through the joint discussion, the joint treatment of topics and issues, the co-sharing of concepts, i.e. it comes as something that cannot be split from the inter-personal relationship. The teacher should have under control, all the Dynamics of the teaching context, the relations, the communications experiences, and, at the same time, he/she should never give up the goals of the specific teaching, i.e. the subject he is teaching. In the case of the students, the way how such relations are treated, makes an important issue. It should be pointed out that, at university, the individual learns what the other person is, and begins to accept that the other is likehim/her but also different from him/her. In other words, citing again Martin Buber, the other is a person like me, but different from me, and, for this reason, he/she deserves my respect and gratitude. I must get to know the other’s values and accept them. This does not mean that I should acquire the other’s values, believing that by doing so, I get to know myself, and, the more I know the other, the more I get to know myself. This process has to be reciprocal. The other should more or less think similarly about me. No one should impose on the other, otherwise the other will be ill at ease and can hardly recognize himself/herself. The awkward state about the values and personality of the other, has a negative influence on the relationship between individuals. A genuine and authentic relationship between the teacher and the student needs to be developed into trust and respect, which grow through continual experience with the other, like with a frank friend in the commitment to acquire knowledge. This also leads to complete knowledge and perception of the knowledge environment by us as teachers, an opening and attention to the complex and often deep net of the norms, the expectations, the behaviours and the relations, which make up the atmosphere and the environment in which knowledge is being acquired. In his/her job, the teacher should also work with the other academic staff, so that they all can consider the real context in which the student lives, i.e. the family, the social environment, the university, the politics, the economy, the cultural context, etc. All these factors affect the student, and it is important to encourage the students to reflect on their experience, on their influence on the elements of the context in which they live, on their attitudes, their way of thinking, their

judgement, their understanding of things, the choices they make. This is particularly important when there are topics relating to strong reactions.

In case such relations are not established, a large part of the excellence will be missed. Actually, a real relationship based on trust between the teacher and the student is a necessary preliminary condition for any progress in the teaching and learning process. Hence it is essential that the teacher devotes personal attention to each student, if this can be so handled, and an appropriate environment can be established in view of enhancing the pedagogic model. We should take it for granted that such pedagogic reflections are based on the knowledge and the professional qualification of the teacher, the empirical experience and ambitions to adjust the pedagogy and education with the social and economic context, without giving up the goal and the major objectives of pedagogy as a science for educating and bringing up people. The teacher should persistently ensure that, in the teaching process, everything should be made in full respect with the freedoms and rights of the students. As experience has shown, there have been cases that students have been acting selfishly, and abusing with the trust granted upon them by the teacher/professor or their classmates. Reflections based on experience may consolidate, may provoke, may encourage higher certainty of acting, so that the action undertaken at individual or group level, may be more coherent with what is defined as being humans to the others. On the other hand, we should acknowledge that experience and reflection are not phenomena that may be split. There can be no experience without reflection. In any case, the teacher has a fundamental role. Experience and reflection may be differently defined by various currents in pedagogy. We would not mind using these or similar terms to express or to encourage a personalized and active teaching and learning process, whose goal should be not only to acquire the planned subjects but the overall development of the person/student. As a result, the track through knowledge, communication, reflection and inter-action, in the daily mission of teaching and learning, not only defines the basics of pedagogy, but it can be helpful to make the process attractive for the young learners. The pedagogy so perceived, should focus on the student's overall formation, mind, willingness, communication, reflection argumentation, and intellect as well, in order to invite the student to understand, through reflection, the meaning of what he is studying/learning, avoiding the unnecessary overloads, and to encourage updating of knowledge, which is demanding to all of us to be willing to grow and develop. We must believe that the best things in the teaching and learning process are not only the ones that are spoken out, but these should also include what is felt and experienced through the interpersonal relations of the students. In order to have success, it is essential to base the efforts on research, and to integrate the pedagogic theories with the practical experience. In this integration, it is necessary to work simultaneously in all those directions reflecting one way or another, the person, the profession, i.e. the philosophy of work for each individual.

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