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EDUCATION QUALITY IN THE POSTINDUSTRIAL SOCIETY

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Abstract

Nowadays it is topical to address to the specificity of forming educational space under the conditions generally characterized as postmodern epoch and post-industrial society. The paper deals with the problems of scientific comprehension whether postmodernism has the possibilities for the creation of new approaches to learning in modern education. The authors consider assessment in general and education quality evaluation in particular, from the point of view of the subjective perspectives for the process of education. The questions set forth for the consideration include the problem of search for the tools for assessment and education quality evaluation. Authors suggest using the idea of rhizome for their design. This study also submits that this issue has not been examined properly in Russian scientific literature while the foreign researchers also just designate the problem and try to find its solution. The paper defines the further search directions and the objectives for the scientific comprehension.

Keywords: Postmodernism, subjective perspectives, evaluation, assessment, education quality.

1. Introduction

The problem of education quality has attracted attention of researchers for a long time, and it is especially topical at present, when all over the world society increases demands for both the professionals and their education. To train a creative person able to study independently it is necessary to apply innovative methods of education. It is important to note that modern society places higher demands for qualification and education of personnel which results in the increase of the number of people busy in intellectual spheres, change of people's interest towards creative development and, therefore, change of the society structure itself; growth of the demands for the quality and level of education. Understanding this issue is especially important for the system of education, with regard to the problems of subjectiveness.

The subject acts as a non-eliminated element of the educational space. Via subjectiveness, manifesting itself in activity, educational space is being formed as well as social and economic conditions of its existence and further development. The most important descriptions of the epoch manifest themselves in the level of social and economic development of the society. State policy, internal and external environment, geopolitical situation and economic conditions directly influence social conditions for the vital functions of the society; one of the most important indices of the modern society level of the development is connected with the educational quality. How does education respond to this challenge of the time and conditions?

2. Problem Statement

Regarding education, we put the question: can postmodernism (certainly, considered as a philosophical trend) become the foundation for the educational constructs? Does it have or can it have a reflexive, narrative function in the understanding of modern educational phenomena? Can it favor the appearance of the new approaches meeting it as a phenomenon of the epoch?

We would name several (influencing all the rest) conditions offered by postmodernism:

- self-sufficing function of the text as, at large, the creator of the new reality in each moment of the objective reality (Derrida, 1991), (Derrida, 1992);
- independent interpretation limited not so much by the framework of achieved general scientific knowledge and common human values as by the vision of these frameworks and values, which can change personal worldview to great extent;
- individualization as the presence of an individual in everything which could have never foreseen the subjectivity of one of the participants of a certain activity like in case of educational process. Traditionally object-subject relations were maintained during educational process. Under the modern conditions we cannot help allotting the subject during education.

We see the situation in education as follows. In the opinion of all its researchers, post-industrial industry craves for highly skilled experts, making increasing demands on the quality of education (Jamison, 2016), (Ilyin, 2001). Herewith classical learning theories, traditional educational technologies cannot offer anything new to the new society. In this case course of action is known: if we are talking about quality and growth, it is necessary to strengthen the control.

Truly, all over the world the quality of education is seen to strengthen, its forms become more complicated; the learning content is unified under the control requirements. However, if we remember features and "phantoms" of the epoch when we live, and take into account certain explicit postmodern calls (Vainshtein, 1993), then these measures in the education system look quite helpless to solve the problem, because now previous methodological bases for its solution have no effect. And both the problem of education quality itself in its present understanding and the ways of its solution belong to a close to us, but a different era – a time of modernity and industrial society.

Modern educational space which does not meet fully the requirements of the future but is willing to change, needs the other pedagogical approaches. It is obvious that the science of pedagogy is on other lines, faces new challenges. In this case "challenge" is neither metaphor nor buzzword; it is a new pedagogical reality which one should conceive and suggest something strategically breakthrough and OTHERWISE in a literal and immediate sense of the word.

3. Research Questions

This paper has the goal mainly to state the problem, to define certain current objectives for scientific comprehension and point out the contradictions in the practice of educators, both those who try to understand postmodernist concepts and who do not think about it. At the same time we should state that analysis of the problem of reflection of postmodernism in pedagogy and philosophy of education is rather incomplete in Russian scientific literature at present.

In particular, what and how should we assess, what to correlate to in the attempt to evaluate the quality of education? Why should we consider the judgment of those who measure and interpret the quality to be right if they do not know what the learning outcomes of a learner are and where they lead him/her?

4. Purpose of the Study

People assess the quality of education by their happy (or hateful) recollection about school (college, university), by their career development after the completion of their studies, and last but not least, by the fact whether they are able to learn for the whole life, flexibly treating their professional destiny and independently caring for their professionalism, as the post-industrial society requires it. Do people associate their successes and failures with training? All this manifests itself in a difficult and indirect way and usually in a temporary removal from years of training. And why cannot we consider this remote time opinion as evaluation of the quality of education? Isn't it a significant part of the evaluation of educational institutions and educational programmes? It is impossible to argue this with point, but it cannot be applied in the real pedagogical and administrative practice, where it is necessary to assess the quality of training of graduates, to evaluate the educational organization timely and at any moment.

Currently, formative or any other progressive type of assessment is rarely used in Russian practice; these approaches are being searched. In the Russian pedagogy despite the statements in regulations about competence-based and systemic-activity approaches teachers assess the level of educational achievements, i.e. knowledge, but not competence, and hardly they can assess metasubject and

personality outcomes. This is currently at the stage of scientific development; although Federal educational standards have been adopted, school and University can't wait.

Russian and foreign researchers are also concerned with finding solutions for the existing contradictions in educational practice. Thus, the modern theories of education, in particular, heutagogy, constructivism, and the "learning-to-learn" concept assume the ability to learn to become the most important. In post-industrial society the priority even in comparison with the achievement of learning outcomes is given to the participation of the student in the educational process. Emerging "hybrid" pedagogy considers the combination of "real" and "virtual" activity in the sphere of formal and non-formal education. Modern education increasingly encounters and interacts with the real educational space and the virtual one; formal and non-formal education; face-to-face training and online training; permanent study groups and learning communities; the classical school and open education; interdisciplinarity and monodisciplinarity; student model, created in the framework of pedagogical approaches, and real, live, vulnerable personality of a learner; the "analog" and "digital" pedagogy, etc. Each of these oppositions is considered by "hybrid" pedagogy with the aim of deconstructing the existing pedagogy. Hybridity manifests itself in the moment of interaction, which involves the both oppositions, intersecting and mutually influencing each other until they accept a new configuration, and so on to infinity. "Hybrid" pedagogy describes not only the outcomes that can be achieved by training, but also the process of formation of the student consciousness. An important part of the educational process is the creation of a favorable atmosphere in the training, using various including "digital" teaching methods, the promotion of collective interaction. This model focuses on the division of responsibilities between all participants, whose aim is an intellectual exchange and critical comprehension of training. This model of learning contributes to the understanding of subjectivity itself. Digital educational technology (in particular, the creation of a document by several participants, as it allows, for example, "Google Document" application) is not simply a group work where each student performs his part of the job. This is the embodiment of multiple subjectivity, when a joint work is the result of responsibility of all participants of educational process, collaborative decision-making and creative activity exclusively under the condition of collaboration between students (*"Hybrid Pedagogy"* – Digital Pedagogy Lab, 2015), (A Marked Improvement, 2012), (*ASKe (Assessment Standards Knowledge exchange)*, 2015), (*Student learning assessment options and resources*, 2015).

Here are the other examples of pedagogical activities, improving the quality of education. Thus, in Russian and foreign pedagogy and psychology studies of many scientists are dedicated to the creation of an atmosphere favourable for learning. These are the scientists who develop ideas about the facilitation of teacher's activity Zeer, 2014; Ivanova, 1997; Petrovskii, 2007; Rodgers & Freiberg, 2002; Romashina & Maier, 2013. In particular, Belkin introduced the concept of a "situation of success", when the students overcome difficulties in learning, experience the joy of their own achievements in the interaction of the teacher and the learner (Belkin, 1991).

We repeat in other words: isn't it more correct to measure the quality of education with the quality of relations of subjects of educational process, the quality of life of the graduate, his relation to his life and his achievements?

5. Research Methods

However, how to find such measuring tools? Can the quality of education be measured? Probably it is possible, if the tools are prepared from the same position, not for linear, but for rhizomatic structures. This idea is difficult to be realized, however, the researchers have already addressed it. In this study, we use qualitative methodological analysis to define possible directions of the further development for the education quality evaluation in the modern society.

6. Findings

The ideas about rhizomatic learning began to take shape, mainly in connection with the development of massive open online courses (MOOCs). Interpreted theoretically, "rhizomatic learning" emerges in practice. It is understood as the creation of a situation within which both the educational process and knowledge are constructed by the participants in the learning community. Learning experience is gained as the result of communication or discussion with the members of wide learning community net, uniting formal and non-formal sources of information (Innovating Pedagogy, 2012). Rapid development of the distant education technologies, on the one hand, allows simplifying education; on the other hand, there is a certain danger in this close communication between a man and computer. One of the risks of information society is the exclusion of live communication, dialogue, from learning when information technologies are used (Ivanova, 2016). Within the framework of our paper we discuss assessment of learning outcomes, and in this regard, it is important to understand how to "fit" subject orientation, i.e. the dialogue itself, in this process, and how to assess its outcomes.

Philosophers of education assume education in post-industrial society to be the situations of communication. Emerging dialogue between the learner and educator needs "relatively possible equality of the participants' position", a paradoxical (for our work) conclusion being the following: assessment in this situation is difficult because it violates the principles of equality and trust, makes the student be afraid of giving the wrong answer. However verbal general appraisal is possible in the final stages (Ivanova, 2012). In our opinion, this point needs a certain clarification: assessment of student achievement should exist, because the teacher can understand, whether the student has mastered new knowledge or a new skill, only having compared to his/her previous achievements. In this case the assessment procedure as well as appraisal itself can have not only quantitative but qualitative nature, and it can be applied to stimulate the learner to continue his/her education, not only to reckon up at the definite stage. Deep internal motivation to continue learning is the "driving force" for the learner. Accountability for their own learning necessitates reflection on the academic achievements, so along with the "external" expert evaluation, self-assessment and peer assessment become core components of the overall assessment of learning outcomes (Elkina, 2012). In terms of the resource-rich educational environment, using a wide range of techniques and teaching methods, it is impossible to limit the assessment of learning outcomes with the usual tests, control works, etc. Quantification, even if it is calculated on a 100-point grading scale, does not exhaust all possibilities of comparison of student academic achievement with the definite benchmark outcome.

We see in the modern educational process, that the role of the learner as a subject strengthens, as his/her interest to develop his/her own personality grows. It is more interesting than the correlation of real

learning outcomes with the expected learning outcomes of some ideal model of the student inherent in the educational programs. Consequently, the question of assessment is deeper: how to associate the idea of assessment, for example, with the concept of rhizomatic learning, where it is difficult to assume a predetermined result of the training? Cormier, the author of the term "rhizomatic learning", suggests paying attention to the efforts of the learner to find and mastery the new knowledge, the links he/she establishes with the other subjects, etc. (Cormier, 2014). We can assume that the estimation of effort or interaction the quantitative assessment is unlikely to be able to give at least some idea of what the student achieved in learning. In this situation, qualitative assessment is most likely to be effective.

Here we see the problem of the qualitative assessment (but not the quality of education evaluation!) which has hardly been used in the Russian education. The attitude to the qualitative appraisal has not been legitimized yet, it is not accepted officially. The learner does not know how to work with it and does not know how to use it and how to treat it in practice. It is obvious that in the future life when the educational process is over the man faces qualitative rather than quantitative assessment of his various activities. In our opinion, there is another problem that the learner should be taught to work with the qualitative "external" appraisal of his/her activity. There are, certainly, the examples of qualitative appraisal use in International Baccalaureate schools in Russia; however, the educational process is organized in specific way there, that is why the use of quality assessment has not become a mass practice in the national education.

Self-esteem of the student is an example of the qualitative appraisal. It is one of the features inherent to the personality. The combined use of qualitative assessment of the teacher and self-evaluation the student evaluation process can be implemented in a single system of assessment of learning outcomes. We suppose qualitative appraisal to appear in the dialogue of a learner, teacher, learning community and the group of experts taking part in the work of this learning community (Elkina, 2012).

Researchers admit that qualitative appraisal would be more efficient if the learners also know its criteria beforehand (Student learning assessment options and resources, 2015). During online study, in the situation when the learner communicates with the teacher indirectly, via computer program which also scores him/her, the exchange of information becomes much more important: it is a kind of a dialogue through feedback, introduction of self-assessment and peer-assessment into the procedure of assessment.

During learning in a community (a concept of rhizomatic learning means this very kind of education) peer-assessment also has a great significance; it is also should be included into the system of assessment. Peer-assessment is expressed as a qualitative appraisal; it will also further the creation of atmosphere favouring education (Elkina, 2012).

However, in general, confidence in the qualitative appraisal has not been formed yet in the community of educators. Under the current organization of the learning process quantitative mark / rating grade is taken into account officially while qualitative appraisal is included into final attestation only in several educational institutions; the problem of its acknowledgement is closely connected with substantiation of validity and reliability of the quantitative assessment methods. Psychologically it is not easy to recognize that qualitative appraisal is the same significant as the quantitative one. For the qualitative appraisal to be trusted it is necessary that expert or educator should have trust, too, as well as educational institution, which gives the possibility to take education regardless the country where educational process takes place. Then there is a need for international criteria of education quality (e.g.,

they are developed in the framework of the Bologna process). In such conditions, educational space really becomes barrier free, which corresponds to the notions of rhizomatic learning.

In the existing pedagogical practice, educational programs are developed through specially chosen for studying educational content; educational and cognitive interests, needs and motivation of the student are not taken into account in the development of the programs. The student may be involved only in the procedure of assessment of learning outcomes, provided that his self-assessment and peer assessment of participants learning communities is taken into account. However, the manifestation of subjectivity in learning, interest of students in this process and its results is one of the factors contributing to the effectiveness of training. All this has a direct relationship to the quality of education, understood as the quality of the process and the quality of his results.

7. Discussion

Postmodernism blurs the category of quality, despite the fact that this category is associated not only with theory but also with real life (Kuritsyn, 1992). In all constructions of postmodernism, when renouncing the seriousness people's perceptions of their happiness, their future cannot be abrogated, forcing them to abandon a serious relationship to their personal fate. When it is personal, for a person there are no refusal, interpretations and simulacra.

The postmodernist, "playful" denial of gravity ceases to exist when it comes to assessing the quality of education that is always associated with the fate of man. The symbolic meaning of the quality assessment (in the postmodern sense of the sign!) manifests itself to some extent inherent in contemporary approaches to education quality evaluation test nature, validity, and other of deeply professional characters of the education quality control.

We can assume that the simulacrum is not possible during organization of procedures of the unified state exam, however, the mechanism and procedure create the transparency or visibility of transparency (and this is probably a simulacrum!), but do not contribute to the truth that lies in the content and which is strongly rejected by postmodernism.

We also note that the apparent trend of contraction of the formal tests for the unified state exam in favor of a personally-oriented detailed answers and expert assessments is dictates of postmodernism not perceived by test developers and managers in the field of quality assessment. There is already another question: where is the final point of transition from formalized practices to student-based ones? Will not the transition to a personal manifestation of the graduates of schools to the state assessment in the form of unified state examination destroy the principle of the generalized formal evaluation? Today there is the desire to strengthen the assessment of the quality of education and make it a means of addressing the issues of the existence of the educational institutions (in the case of universities), personnel matters (in all cases), assessment of personal achievements of graduates (which determines their fate). Such objectives cannot help leading to bureaucratization, formalization of education quality assessment, which is contrary to the conditions of the time. On the other hand, there is a tendency to obtain personal obvious results of the implementation of the Federal standards that are incorporated methodologically through competence-based approach, but it still does not have the methodological, technological mechanisms and tools.

These are, in our view, multidirectional goals, and we ought rather to decide what kind of task we solve in each specific cultural and historical phase, which defines the goals and objectives of education.

8. Conclusion

The key question when trying post-non-classical methodological reflection on the problem solving assessment quality control is the following. Control measures seek to reveal the truth, that is, to objectively assess the knowledge, competencies and skills of students. Postmodernism declares: there is no truth, or it is all different. Practice shows that there is no truth. Why? The discussions of formal tests are connected with the object and means of assessment, particularly at the stage of test development. If we transfer from formal machine-measured responses to the experts evaluation of the responses, it is even more subjective at all stages of the process (with all the desire to train experts well), which means that there is no truth. The procedure of double-checks and appeals at the unified state exams indicates "conventions of truth", the divergence of expert opinions. But if there is no truth, then there is a game, chance that is the lack of seriousness in tackling the most serious, important issues of personal fate. Thus, teaching science and philosophy of education have to solve a serious problem: to find a way out of this seemingly hopeless situation. And there is one more difficult task for the decision makers in education: to put the problem and to hear suggestions of science. We recall: the problem of "hearing" in society was solved in ancient civilization and antiquity which are much closer to us than the contents of postmodernism; we have developed relying the former ones.

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