Philosophy of Education

Filosofía de la educación

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1. Philosophy of education is both a kind of reflection on education in its current state, as well as the projection of an already prefected conception of education within a rational frame of interpretation.

In the first sense, it reveals the guiding role of education; it discusses what education *must be* based on principles and ends that are translated into rules. In the second, it is primarily based on analysis of what education *is*.

Both perspectives are legitimate and necessary and, although inverse, interact. I can think of what education should be -from the perspective of some worldview-, and guide it towards ends which are consistent with this perspective. But the sociological analysis of educational phenomena, the investigation of how education is in reality, is also necessary. And why is it so? To find out main themes, weaknesses, inconsistencies, that is, points where one could intervene by introducing the rationalization that any activity requires.

2. Both views are controversial –one theorizes about what (and how) education should be, the other analyzes and rationalizes what it really is; one establishes value judgments, the other reality judgments. This opposition explains, somehow the confusing situation of philosophy of education. Because today it is an unrewarding task to tell educators what,

from a philosophical point of view, education should be; educators do not recognize the authority of philosophy on this point. However, philosophers, in the current critical situation, have no very confident ideas in this respect. On the other hand, to start from educational practices with the intention of improving them through rationalization, also presents its theoretical difficulties. In fact, this perspective implies the former and so faces the same difficulties. On top of that, within the dominant scientific paradigm, educational research cares little for the philosophical kind of thinking and its educational effectiveness.

3. Asking about the meaning or evolution of philosophy of education raises the question of what it serves. It is thus necessary to know what are the major problems faced by education nowadays. This, implying certain analysis, forces to do philosophy of education showing its usefulness, since the disorientation within practices and the dissolving of convictions are obvious. This being so, someone has to guide and give strength to this action because individuals and societies can not dispense with education nor live with confusing, even contradictory forms of education. Educational research does not solve the problems of educational principles and purposes, without which there is no education. All education presupposes and requires an answer to these two questions, but these responses are now weakened. How are we to break out of this circle?

The weakening of normative education research and enhanced value of sociological education research leads us more towards a scientific and sociological educational theory than towards philosophy, understood as a foundation based on a worldview. The rules and prescriptions are weakened by the social destruction resulting from the collapse of the forces of modernity. But, as it is evident today that there is a lack of philosophical thought in education policy, sooner or later philosophy will advance. Because education is a process of transformation for the better (if it was not it would not be education), this deficit must be overcome by strong and mobilizable educational ideas, which only philosophical work can provide.

Therefore, the analysis of what education is today, and the awareness of its major problems, especially at the level of principles and purposes, force us to turn to philosophy. And it is the growing strength of the problem that will force philosophy to reorganize the educational intention, integrating, however, scientific contributions that never cease to come forth. To predict the future of philosophy of education we should know where the weaknesses of current education are pointing. It is in this way that philosophy will have to move forward, since only she can solve the problem.