

# Pedagogical Mediation and Learning

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## Abstract

The educational act is a complex process. Teaching is an art. Even at present time, most classes in different institutions, schools, high schools or universities, are orthodox lectures that make the students lose their interest for learning. Pedagogical mediation is a valuable instrument that should be applied by most educators so that the educational act does not end up being a monotonous and boring suffering for learners.

**Key words:** pedagogical mediation, education, teaching, learning, educator, learner, creativity, art

## Resumen

El acto educativo es un proceso complejo. Enseñar es un arte. Incluso actualmente, la mayoría de las clases en distintas instituciones, escuelas, colegios o universidades, son clases magistrales ortodoxas que provocan que el estudiante pierda el interés en aprender. La mediación pedagógica es un valioso instrumento que debería ser usado por la mayoría de los educadores para que el acto educativo no termine siendo un sufrimiento monótono y aburrido para los estudiantes.

**Palabras claves:** mediación pedagógica, educación, enseñanza, aprendizaje, educador, aprendiente, creatividad, arte

## Introduction

Throughout history, man has been eager to learn. Everybody is born without knowledge. The cultural background gets richer through life by means of an integral education. Life is a persistence of learning processes. Every human being develops himself in his environment and expresses

his emotions through culture. Knowledge has become something really important in the development of society. Assman (2002: 24) utilizes the terms knowledge and learning societies to refer to the development of our environment.

In the diversity of the fluctuating contexts of education, its rules and systemic evolution, it is essential to establish what changes need to be implemented in order to guarantee a learning process of high standards according to the needs of UNESCO for the XXI century. The evolution of life and technology goes on and on and we are exposed to new challenges and ways of self-organization. Humanity evolves towards new cultural paradigms that affect society both positively and negatively. It is a dynamic model of change that appears as a way of transformation. Indeed, Capra (1998: 30) proposes a structural change, a change in the social institutions, in our values and in our ideas. The educational system is not the exception. We are facing a new change of paradigm in the educational process.

We have to concentrate on situations with very well-defined objectives and it is necessary to be open to new and flexible changes to advance along with reality at present time. We are living a process of transition in a change of paradigm, which Capra (1998: 31-32) calls a deep change in our mentality, concepts and values that compose a particular vision of reality. Some of those values that we need to preserve are those related to spirituality, such as justice, aesthetics and beauty. According to Sorokin, some of these values co-exist within a global unity that makes some equilibrium between art, philosophy, science, and technology (cited in Capra, 1998: 32-33).

Assman (2002: 29) also states that knowledge only emerges in its vitalizing dimension when it has a link with pleasure. Thus, if learners are submitted to torturing processes of memorization and massive consumption of texts, they will not learn in the same way as if they were exposed to a fascinating, creative and aesthetic world, where they could develop their knowledge integrally and practice what they have learned, with access to sources of information about different topics towards a globalized world. Capra (2002: 59) affirms that the human being becomes integral in a society that goes towards progress and whose main tool is technology.

### **Pedagogical mediation**

We are living in an age of changes in the emerging paradigms. The world is opening to globalization and it brings new modifications not only on people's life but also on education of society. These modifications imply changes in the rules of the game, in which the main actors, curriculum designers, instructors, and learners fight to have access to the possibility to interpret the "true" educational context on the basis of their daily experiences and realities. The educational practice is a process in which not only those who learn get benefits, but also those who teach can learn new experiences from the apprentices.

The pedagogical mediation is a useful tool to help the actors of education to interpret these experiences and realities. According to Gutiérrez and Prieto

(2002: 50), “it is the treatments of contents and ways of expressing the different topics in order to carry out the educational act within the horizon of education perceived as participation, creativity, expressivity, and rationality.” The educational act should be ludic, a space in which all learners may build knowledge through games or dynamic activities that let them use their imagination, creativity and spontaneity. If we want education to make sense, everything that the student does should be significant for him or her.

The pedagogical mediation allows the educator to teach in a non-orthodox way that is fun for the apprentices, and at the same time they are learning in a significant approach; they are learning not only for their future but also for their whole life. The act of mediating means to be a conciliator between knowledge and the learner.

According to Gutiérrez and Prieto (2002: 160), there are diverse, possible, and real ways to mediate the educational process through an integral learning without limitations of space, time, distance, or resources. The pedagogical mediation promotes the practice of learning communities. In the context of these communities the teaching and learning process is not necessarily limited to a school or a university. It can take place anywhere: a house, a park, a garden, a beach, a prairie. The place is not relevant. The important thing is the learning practice.

The learning communities constitute a source of hope to solve the dilemmas that the sustainable society of the new culture faces. Their holistic and transforming nature stimulates the development of the collective conscience through the cooperative and creative work developed by their members. The work of the learning communities is well-developed and supported by the digital technology. Technology can reach to those places where there is not a teacher or a person in charge of a group of individuals eager to learn.

On the other hand, an alternative proposal of pedagogical mediation is, for example, teaching to take over history and culture. It is important to teach how to create, recreate and utilize the technological resources, which we have access to. In our society nowadays, we have computers and programs that may help us in the teaching-learning process so that the boring things become more innovative and fun for the apprentice. When an individual is motivated, s/he becomes much more creative.

Making a piece of art is the chance that a creator has to conceive something that comes directly from his or her mind. It is a way to express the most sublime feelings and capture them in a work of art so that everyone can see what the creator feels inside his or her soul. It is to work on what we like and develop it in a project of life. The personal satisfaction conveys a major creative production.

Learning creatively and spontaneously is enjoying knowledge. The enthusiasm that an individual has in everything that s/he does is a common effort because not only the creator will be satisfied but also the people who will appreciate his or her creation. Every person has a valuable contribution to share. Everybody is able to innovate. Gutiérrez and Prieto (2002: 25) express that an educational process based on enthusiasm makes all participants feel alive, share their creativity and imagination, generate original answers, enjoy, play.

It is very important to teach for expressing. Gutiérrez and Prieto (2002: 27) mention that without expression there would not be education. The individual must know how to express him/herself in a free and integral way. Everyone has much to show to the world and we can do it through art and culture. Culture and society allow people to fulfill themselves and reach their targets in life. Man is not only a "*homo sapiens*", but also a "*homo faber*", a creator, a maker, a producer. He has the capacity to create the most beautiful things and show to the world what he is able to do. Morin (2003: 39) states that there would not be culture without the aptitudes of the human brain, but there would be neither word nor thought without culture.

All the artistic manifestations are the results of the individual creativity combined with the collective creativity which show the expression and ways of communication of society. The expressive capacity of individuals "is conveyed through clarity, coherence, security, richness, and beauty when managing the ways of the diverse languages" (Gutiérrez and Prieto, 2002: 27). These languages are painting, sculpture, dance, music, poetry, or theater, among others, which are also resources of knowledge and supporters of imagination and invention. The activities of the individual behavior can be mental, aesthetic, physical, but above all cultural.

## Culture

Man is the reflection of culture. He is a cultural being. Through the personal idiosyncrasy we can identify a particular individual. Man, as a cultural being, can be distinguished from the rest of the human beings for his capacity of consciousness, communication, and rationalization. Every person is the reflection of his or her culture. We are different from others through the different conceptions of the world, religion, gastronomy, technology, music, art, history, and traditions. Every culture is singular. It is the social heritage of humanity.

Culture is constituted by a series of habits, traditions, practices, rules, norms, prohibitions, strategies, beliefs, ideas, values, myths, and other elements that are perpetuated from generation to generation. These elements are produced in each individual and it could provoke the social complexity. Culture accumulates what is kept, transmitted, and learned. Human capital is mainly culture. (Edgar Morin, 2003: 40)

According to Morin (2003: 57), the human trinity is composed by brain-culture-mind. In this concept, the human being is perceived in his or her universality. We are creators; we are able to provide this world with wonders such as technology, literature, art, and science. We can create big cities in a few years, but unfortunately there are technological devices that can be used to destroy them in minutes. Man has to discern between good and evil, between right and wrong, between what must be done and what must not be done. Not

only the individuals are immersed in society, but also society is inside every individual and it prints its culture since the moment in which a human being is born. (Morin, 2003, p. 58)

Every person is different; nobody is or can be equal to another and it represents the richness of humanity. We could be similar to others, according to the culture where we come from, but no human being is a copy or repetition of another one. Varela (2000: 394) refers to mimesis, which is the phenomenon of men imitating other men in their search of identity. When we imitate someone, we should imitate the good actions. The human being likes to imitate other cultures, but the idea is to improve what others have done. Such is the case of the Japanese, who take the best part of different elements of the market and improve them. Man is a complex being.

Man is rational (*sapiens*), crazy (*demens*), productive, technical, constructive, anxious, static, singing, dancing, unstable, imaginative, neurotic, erotic, destructive, conscious, unconscious, magic, and religious. All these features are composed, dispersed, or recomposed depending on the individuals, societies and time, and it increases the incredible diversity of humanity. (Morin, 2003: 71)

Teaching for taking over history and culture is an important part of humanistic learning. According to Gutiérrez and Prieto, we are the product of previous experiences, knowledge, memories, technology, culture, mistakes, encounters treasured throughout generations (2002, p. 29). Human beings are the product of centuries of history written in books, and they are identified as individual, particular and unique beings in their environment.

Every society identifies with its own popular culture, which makes them be unique and original. Morin mentions that the human being, in his autonomy, is not only 100% biological, but also 100% cultural. He experiences the authority of the social Superego, and the imprint and the norm of culture. He constantly lives in the dialog exposed by Freud between the Superego, the pulsional Id and the Ego. The individual is in the knot of interferences of biological order related to the pulsion and social order of culture. (2003, p. 59)

Gutiérrez and Prieto (2002: 29) comment that the school is also history because it responds to a social restriction and an accumulation of ways to perceive man and locate him in this world. This conception is also ahistorical to be turned over the past, not only in its contents but also in its methods. Many schools, due to their linear and rigid process, do not give their apprentices freedom to learn. Education is orthodox and the students do not have the possibility to learn in a ludic way. There is no room for creativity and spontaneity.

Most of the time, traditional schools teach in a way not really creative. Spaces for art and culture are closed and teachers concentrate on old-fashioned texts which are not innovative. Contrary to this, they could use less orthodox methods oriented towards pedagogical mediation.

## Creative and innovative teaching

Gutiérrez and Prieto (2002: 30) state that the action of teaching must be understood as building knowledge, exchanging experiences, and creating new things. It is necessary to teach for cultural production. The traditional school privileges passive virtues, such as obedience, submission, memory, and it punishes active virtues, such as creativity, criticism, imagination, and intuition. The important matter is to choose between an individual submitted to history and a man who makes history.

Santos Guerra assures that the learners must be left alone to work with more freedom, because it stimulates creativity (cited in Melero, 2003: 55). The environment must be appropriate for the apprentice to feel comfortable and express his or her feelings and emotions freely. Nevertheless, there are educators who still think that in order for a class to be efficient, there should be the figure of the instructor as an authority. Sometimes, educators think that classes should be strict, lectured, linear, and dogmatic in order for an individual to learn. It eliminates the learner's inspiration because it limits all the possibility to be original, ingenious, and innovative and it conveys him or her to a structured universe which does not accept art, aesthetic, and creativity.

The word authority comes from the Latin expression "*autoritatem, auto augere*", which means to make someone grow, but Santos Guerra thinks that it is related with making someone obey (cited in Melero, 2003: 59). He explains that there could be a wish for making someone obey, which is contradictory with the process of education, learning and development. Instructors should give their learners a little freedom to grow without restrictions by promoting creativity and significant learning. According to Maturana, we could open little spaces between obeying and having the flexibility for free choice, until they learn that everything is a game of knowledge (cited in Melero, 2003: 59-60).

The educational process should not be a torture for the child, adolescent or adult, but on the contrary, it should be a process of integral development in which educators stimulate art and social values by offering innovative options and alternatives, such as technology. Lessons should be dynamic and integral, and they should specially stimulate the criticism of their learners. Gutiérrez and Prieto (2002: 35) mention that creativity must be expressive so that it incites the creation of new, innovative and original products that go beyond the simple academic matters. On a blog or web page, for example, we could develop a topic through visual images, sound and a different approach when studying certain themes. We could make emphasis on certain important points, details, colors, shapes, sizes of letters, among others. This will make the learner be more concentrated and interested in searching more about this specific topic.

Many educators do not want to change or innovate because they are afraid of the system. Some of them are afraid as well of being criticized for using methods not very orthodox or simply because they prefer not to complicate their lives and they could jeopardize their job positions. Maturana thinks that a change is difficult, especially for some people who are unwilling to be exposed to the

unknown, innovative, or new matters (cited in Melero, 2003: 56). If we do not change completely, at least we open a little space for tolerance and acceptance of certain different new things.

This change is difficult, but not impossible to reach. According to Gutiérrez and Prieto (2002: 23), technology is a good and valuable instrument to attain this goal. Lessons do not have to be boring. We could use the audio-visual equipment, video beam, compact discs, CD players, software programs, or any element that allows the learner to get knowledge in a less traditional and monotonous way. We should have time for creating spaces to use networks in order to exchange information and personal experiences so that the learners can communicate with others and interact with people around the world cybernetically. Turkle (1995: 16) mentions that we can create virtual communities in which we can participate with people around the world.

Technology and the Internet network permit the teachers to be updated and acquire more precise knowledge in just a few seconds. According to Gutiérrez and Prieto (2002: 26), the Internet is a source of freedom for the learners, because it empowers them to be exposed to knowledge in an individual, agile and dynamic way. It provides us with a new model of mind in which we could project our ideas and fantasies. We are learning to live in virtual worlds. When we do this, other people are there, too. We live in the current society of information in which globalization plays a very important role.

According to Castells (2001: 138-139), the uses of the Internet are related to work, family, and daily life of the users. A clear example of that is the e-mail, which is linked to communication at work and relationships with family and friends. With the e-mail now distance and time are not an obstacle. As Negroponte (2000: 283) quotes the poet: "the e-mail is the brevity of soul." The e-mail is such a great invention that it is used by educators and learners as a good tool of communication, especially in our current society in which time is gold.

Technology and the Internet has become an answer to man's self-organization as a social process of building knowledge for action. All educators should get knowledge and technique-pedagogical skills. It is essential to be aware of the importance to use these tools in the learning process and learn how to develop them in our classes.

Since its creation, the digital technology has acquired a great importance in all fields of human development, and education is not the exception. We could reach people and information in just a few seconds without territorial or temporary limitations. We are living a new educational revolution thanks to the process of globalization and the technologies of information and communication (TICs). According to Negroponte (2000: 113), knowledge is no longer slow and static. The school is not the only channel through which the new generations get in contact with knowledge and information. The educator and the text stop being the exclusive supporters of educational communication. There are new teaching technological scenarios, which are more oriented to the pedagogical mediation.

Educational methodology becomes more versatile. The apprentice builds actively a new comprehension of the world through the digital pedagogy. Thus,

the computer or the tablet become a prolongation of the pencil, the marker or the board, which is a much more efficient support for the educator. The new technologies provide the student with a powerful and creative tool to control his or her own learning.

At present time, it is necessary for students to learn how to use a word processor, an e-mail, or a data base; it is as important as mathematics, science and literature. Technology means progress and this makes a country improve the lifestyle of its citizens. The new technologies can transform and passionate the minds of the new learners as an innovative tool for pedagogical mediation.

### **Humanistic learning**

Miguel López Melero (2003: 56) thinks that the human beings should keep everything that makes us human. Society nowadays has dehumanized little by little by transforming the human being into a materialistic individual dependent only on technology. Industrialization has good and positive aspects, but it has also made man be replaced by machines.

Values and creativity humanize people, especially when they stimulate art in a universe open to aesthetics and appreciation of beauty. In order to teach values we have to live them, Maturana says. We must teach family, social, and professional values. It is necessary to create social awareness so that the pupils may act freely and responsibly. Maturana is convinced that the true human progress is not based on the technological development, but in the human development that depends on education and culture, the only tools that may humanize people (cited in Melero, 2003: 16).

The new learning environments are a source for projecting knowledge and information. They are important to interact with others, have fun and be entertained. The new digital environments promote pleasure. In these environments we do not memorize, but we apply knowledge. It is a way to encourage the use of creativity, originality, and inventiveness.

As educators and mediators of education, our main work is to take advantage of the diverse and unlimited possibilities that the TICs have to promote and complement the learning processes through creativity, innovation, pleasure, and joy to learn. We live in a new age of building knowledge through the digital creativity, the virtual innovation and the cybernetic originality.

Mediating between knowledge and learning is an art. The most important thing is to self-satisfy the individual needs of each one of the learners who have different problems. We must help them to think, be critical and creative. Digital technology is a mediator for learning, as well as art. Everything that we do should have a significant sense. In the educational process, every activity that we do must be meaningful for the learners; otherwise, instead of educating we are not helping them to learn. When we teach, we are having an exchange of ideas, knowledge, and experiences that give sense to the educational process.



## Conclusion

Learning is a process that should not be a distress for the apprentice. Its main purpose should be to give the learner the opportunity to feel pleasure in order to find the motivation to build his or her world, universe, and environment. Assman (2002: 29) thinks that we need to feel the taste of life in order for us to offer our apprentices a nice teaching quality so that they may learn in a ludic way through significant learning experiences.

It is necessary to involve the actors in the educational process to improve it. What would be the future of education if we could improve the educational system? The answer is a world full of opportunities for children, youth, and future generations. Indeed, Castells (2001: 177) believes that the Internet can be an ideal instrument to promote democracy, because it is easy to access information through it, which means that citizens could be as well-informed as their leaders.

At present time, we live in a society where the digital technology is seen from different perspectives. Some people see the technologies of information and communication as some advances in our culture, while others, called “technophobic individuals”, still disagree with this change, although the new globalized era of the XXI century is driving us towards benefits for our system. In fact, nowadays due to globalization, a person who does not know at least how to use a computer and someone who does not speak a second language could be considered an illiterate. Another example of lack of literacy is the socio-cultural type, because the minimum requirement for a person is to know about the culture and society where s/he lives.

The cyberspace offers a new model of mind in which we can project our ideas and fantasies. Through the virtual communities we can have contact with people all over the world. In the learning processes we should create spaces and virtual environments to share new processes, transmit and exchange knowledge through the TICs. The Internet is a useful educational tool to be implemented in the educational process. People can study on line without being in a classroom, a school or a university. It is a versatile and efficient invention in the age of information.

Summarizing, technology and the cybernetic environments are part of our daily life. Education has become agile, dynamic and in a constant process of change. The TICs are treasured tools to mediate between the learner and knowledge. In this globalized world we should be updated with the new technologies. We do not have to forget about creativity as an important part of the human development. The pedagogical mediation is a valuable instrument to be used in education. Education now is dynamism. As educators, we must be aware of changes and implement them in our classes so that our apprentices may learn in a more efficient way.

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