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Two Paradigms in the History of Pedagogy

Abstract: The study aims to analyse pedagogical teachings from various historical periods and to compare the classical (philosophical-theological) and non-classical (socialisation) paradigms in the history of pedagogy. The article is devoted to the problem of paradigm comprehension of pedagogical doctrines from the 17th to the 20th century. It is shown that in the history of pedagogy, the classical (philosophical-theological) and non-classical (socialisational) paradigms were distinguished, and at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, pedagogical thinking began to gravitate towards the post-non-classical (informational) paradigm. It is explained that the classical (philosophical-theological) paradigm is part of the history of pedagogy. It is explained that the classical (philosophical-theological) paradigm in the history of pedagogy was marked by the centralisation of pedagogical teachings on issues of spiritual education and the nature-conformity of schooling. Within this paradigm, education was understood exclusively as a gradual path of bringing out the individual abilities of the human soul and improving them with the aim of a person's knowledge of his fateful destiny and its realisation in earthly life. It is noted that the intensive movement of reformist pedagogy at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, despite not being unified, caused a large-scale socio-pedagogical turn from the classical (philosophical-theological) paradigm to the non-classical (socialisational) one. It is also noted that within the socialisation paradigm, education was conceived as a creative organisational force to create an environment favourable for developing the human personality. It illustrates the pedagogical works of Jan Comenius, Konstantin Ushinsky, Pedro de Alcantara, Anton Makarenko, and other prominent teachers of the world, who reflected the most expressive ideas of the era.

Keywords: history of pedagogy, classical (philosophical-theological) paradigm, non-classical (socialisation) paradigm, post-non-classical (informational) paradigm, pedagogical doctrine, reformist pedagogy.

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Дві парадигми в історії педагогіки

Анотація: У статті порушено проблему парадигмального осмислення педагогічних вчень від XVII століття до XX. Показано, що в історії педагогіки вирізнялися класична (філософсько-теологічна) і некласична (соціалізаційна) парадигми, а на межі XX — XXI століть педагогічне мислення

почало тяжіти до постнекласичної (інформаційної) парадигми. Пояснено, що класична (філософсько-теологічна) парадигма в історії педагогіки позначилася центрацією педагогічних вчень на питаннях духовного виховання та природовідповідності виховання. У межах цієї парадигми виховання розумілося виключно як поступовий шлях виведення назовні індивідуальних здібностей душі людини та вдосконалення їх із метою пізнання людиною свого доленосного призначення та реалізації його у земному житті. Зазначено, що інтенсивний рух реформаторської педагогіки на межі XIX–XX століть, попри те, що не становив єдності, спричинив масштабний соціально-педагогічний поворот від класичної (філософсько-теологічної) парадигми до некласичної (соціалізаційної). Зауважено, що в межах соціалізаційної парадигми виховання мислилося як творча організаційна сила, націлена на творення сприятливого для розвитку особистості людини середовища. Проілюстровано, в яких педагогічних творах Яна Коменського, Костянтина Ушинського, Педро де Алькантара, Антона Макаренка та інших видатних педагогів світу відбилися найвиразніші ідеї епохи.

Ключові слова: історія педагогіки, класична (філософсько-теологічна) парадигма, некласична (соціалізаційна) парадигма, постнекласична (інформаційна) парадигма, педагогічне вчення, реформаторська педагогіка.

Introduction

The application of the paradigmatic approach in the history of pedagogy enables the representation of the development of global pedagogical thought within the framework of three paradigms: the classical (philosophical-theological), the non-classical (socialisation), and the post-non-classical (informational). A paradigm in the history of pedagogy allows for the establishment of a coordinate system to navigate the diversity of pedagogical theories, doctrines, and teachings, to identify them with traditions of education and upbringing, and to study pedagogical reality by distinguishing typical ways of formulating and solving problems related to human education and learning.

The task of paradigmatic reflection in the history of pedagogy is to construct generalised models of the ideological platforms on which various pedagogical teachings were based at different historical times.

The study aims to analyse pedagogical teachings from various historical periods and to compare the classical (philosophical-theological) and non-classical (socialisation) paradigms in the history of pedagogy.

In studying the pedagogical legacy and teachings of prominent educators of the past, both general scientific methodological approaches—such as the systemic and problem-based approaches—and specifically scientific ones were employed: the paradigmatic, comparative, problem-historical, biographical, and hermeneutic approaches.

The most important research methods were the pedagogical-retrospective method, which made it possible to comprehend the conceptual sphere of various pedagogical teachings throughout history; the comparative-contrastive method, which enabled the identification of the originality of a particular educator's views and their similarity to the pedagogical thinking of contemporaries; and the hermeneutic method, which allowed for the interpretation, analysis, and commentary of historical-pedagogical sources, considering both the author's subjective traits and the objective historical context.

The distinction between classical and non-classical paradigms in the history of pedagogy contributes to a more accurate perception of a particular pedagogical teaching as belonging to a specific historical period and a more comprehensive understanding of the significance of a given pedagogical doctrine in the history of global pedagogical thought—its scope, influence, and innovativeness.

Results

Since the 17th century, pedagogy has been understood as an independent science. The towering figure of John Amos Comenius (1592–1670) became symbolic in the formation of pedagogical science. His works, *The Great Didactic* and *General Consultation on the Improvement of Human Affairs*, held unprecedented significance in global pedagogy.

Until the mid-19th century, pedagogy remained largely speculative and philosophical; pedagogical thought was confined within the framework of a philosophical-theological paradigm. The roots of this paradigm reach back to antiquity, but the “classical” worldview in pedagogy was established during the medieval period. The human being was understood as created according to God’s design, with a destined purpose that could be fulfilled in earthly life through the soul. The physical body was seen as sinful and had to be subordinated to the spiritual. The soul, granted by God, was meant to comprehend earthly life’s mysteries, accumulate spiritual experience, and achieve spiritual refinement. Through the righteous conduct of worldly existence, the soul must earn the right to eternal happiness—God’s grace, which would come to a person after the body’s death.

With its unique intellectual, moral, and aesthetic capacities, the individual soul requires timely nurturing to fully unfold and ascend toward its destined goals. The soul must understand that divine revelation manifests in the earthly world’s truth, goodness, and beauty and that its entire journey leads toward God. Human relationships will encounter many contradictions and difficulties, yet they will never feel unhappy if they remember their individual, destined purpose and unwaveringly follow God’s commandments.

In *The School of Infancy*, Comenius wrote: “People train the ox for plowing, the dog for hunting, the horse for riding and carrying loads, because they are created for such purposes and cannot be adapted to other ends. Man—a being higher than all these animals—must be led to the highest goal. Therefore, parents do not fully fulfil their duty if they teach their children merely to eat, drink, walk, speak, or dress, for all this serves only the body, which is not the person but rather a house for the child. The master of this house (the rational soul) dwells within; it is this master who must be cared for more than the outer shell... Thus, the soul, as the main part of the person, must be given the greatest care so that it may emerge from the body as beautifully adorned as possible. And the body should be cared for to become a dwelling suitable and worthy for the immortal soul...” (*Comenius..., 1893, pp. 8–9*)

In pedagogical treatises, a person’s education was viewed as consisting of two components: the education of the body (physical education) and the education of the soul (spiritual education). Unlike the physical body, the human soul is governed by its unique laws of development. The human soul possesses three higher faculties—sensation, will, and reason—which enable the individual to act consciously and freely. These faculties—sensation, reason, and will—are the three most important sources of human individuality.

The main path of education is exagogical. It allows for the external unfolding of the individual abilities hidden deep within the soul—intellectual, moral, aesthetic, and religious. Therefore, all pedagogy within the framework of the philosophical-theological paradigm is understood as being according to human nature: it does not aim to change human nature, it does not possess creative power; rather, it is a means of revealing and perfecting (ennobling) the spiritual potentials of a person.

The essence of this pedagogical approach is aptly described in the *Compendium of Theoretical and Practical Pedagogy* (Madrid, 1891) by the renowned Spanish educator Pedro de Alcántara García (1842–1906): “The soul of a child is not a *vast vacío* or a *tabula rasa* that must be filled or layered upon over time. The education of the soul does not consist in giving it talent or imposing virtues; education is a task that does nothing more than develop what has already been given to a person by nature.” (*Alcantara Garcia, 1891, p. 3*)

In Spanish pedagogical treatises at the end of the 19th century, it was emphasised that pedagogy is a philosophical science, as it is “an integral part of the system of philosophy” (*Alcantara Garcia, 1896, p. 5*).

“Metaphysics, natural or real philosophy, the general study of the nature of things, encompasses four branches: ontology (the doctrine of being or existence), theodicy or natural theology (about God), cosmology (about the world), and anthropology (about the human being),” according to *Elementary Philosophy* (Barcelona, 1896) by Juan Arolas (*Arolas Juani, 1896, p. 4*). Anthropology, in turn, is divided into psychology (the study of the human soul) and physiology (the study of the body) since the human being consists of two parts—soul and body. It is precisely psychology, as a philosophical-anthropological science with its numerous independent branches, that served as the theoretical foundation of pedagogy aimed at studying the spiritual and physical education of the individual.

The theoretical pedagogy of the mid-19th century represents the culmination of the classical philosophical-theological paradigm, initially established by medieval scholastics. Concepts concerning the education of the human soul remained dominant despite large-scale efforts to “anthropologise” and “scientify” pedagogy. In his book *Man as the Subject of Education*, the renowned Ukrainian educator Konstantin Ushynsky (1823–1870). An Attempt at Pedagogical Anthropology (1868–1869) formulated the leading slogan of the era: “If pedagogy wants to educate a person in all respects, it must first know that person in all respects as well.” (*Ushynsky, 1983b, p. 199*)

Reflecting on the significance of a comprehensive understanding of the human being, the educator further explained: “The educator must strive to know the human being as they truly are, with all their weaknesses and all their greatness, with all their mundane petty needs and lofty spiritual aspirations. The educator must know the person in the family, in society, among the people, among humanity, and alone with their conscience; at every age, in all social classes, in every situation, in joy and sorrow, in grandeur and humiliation, in the prime of strength and illness, amid boundless hopes and on the deathbed, when words of human consolation are already powerless. They must understand the driving forces behind the basest and the noblest deeds, the origins of criminal and great thoughts, and the development of every passion and character. Only then will they be able to draw, from the very nature of the human being, the means of educational influence—and these means are immense!” (*Ushynsky, 1983a, p. 207*)

At the same time, in the same pedagogical work, Konstantin Ushynskyi identified one of the principal aims of all education as “to continually involve new generations in the common cause of humanity in its endless striving towards absolute good” (*Ushynsky, 1983a, pp. 469–470*).

Earlier, in his article *On National Character in Public Education* (1857), the educator emphasised: “There is only one ideal of perfection before which all nations bow—the ideal given to us by Christianity. Everything that a human being, as a human being, can and should be is fully expressed in the divine teaching, and the primary task of education is to root the eternal truths of Christianity as its foundation. It gives life and indicates the highest aim of all education; it must serve as the source of all enlightenment and eternal truth for the education of every Christian nation. It is an inextinguishable beacon, moving eternally like a pillar of fire in the desert, leading individuals and nations; the development of every nationality and all true education that goes hand in hand with national identity must follow it.” (*Ushynsky, 1983a, pp. 101–102*)

The prominent Ukrainian educator Pamfil Yurkevych (1826–1874), in his *Course in General Pedagogy* (1869), asserted: “There is no doubt that an educator who not only understands Christianity as a doctrine and a discipline but also embraces it as spirit and life, would grasp the ultimate aims of life and education with clarity and would not become lost in the endless variety of human aspirations, needs, wills, abilities, conditions and ways of life.” (*Yurkevych, 1869, p. 11*)

Explaining what constitutes the “individual principle of humanity”, the educator stated: “The whole person stands in fear of God and observance of God’s commandments: this is the source of law and freedom, culture and happiness; everything human, however diverse, is concealed and preserved in the spirit that fears God and serves Him. The essential task of education lies precisely in imparting to the pupil a clear perspective on life, strengthening the heart with sobriety and courage, and preparing them for life’s struggle, engraving in them an indelible faith in goodness and in God; and this can only be achieved in the days of youth when the heart is still receptive to all that is noble and beautiful.” (*Yurkevych, 1869, p. 27*)

The emergence of reformist pedagogy (“new education”, “free education”, “learning by doing”, experimental pedagogy, social pedagogy, and so forth) and its culmination at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries serves as vivid evidence of the exhaustion of the philosophical-theological paradigm in pedagogical thought and educational practice. The methodology of educational classicism, rote learning, and the messianic role of the teacher could no longer meet the challenges of the “industrial age”. Reformist (alternative) pedagogy became a distinctive milestone in the history of global education—a bridge from the philosophical-theological to the socialisation paradigm in pedagogical thinking. The leading historical significance of reformist pedagogy lay in the fact that, for the first time on such a scale, the ideologemes of the educational process were being rethought—and the “pedagogy of fear” was decisively opposed by the “pedagogy of freedom”. (*Zaichenko, 2024, p. 50–51*)

Precisely because the socio-pedagogical discourse of that time was imbued with powerful socio-political and civilisational reformist intentions (not merely social-oriented ones, as seen among the Enlighteners of the 18th to the first half of the 19th century), the further development of global pedagogical thought unfolded within the framework of a socio-pedagogical turn. From the 1920s onwards, pedagogical thinking rapidly shifted towards a new worldview paradigm—

the socialisation paradigm—which accepted the determinative influence of the environment on the individual, as opposed to the nature-aligned exagogy of the human soul.

The essence of the socio-pedagogical turn as a reformist inspiration was aptly defined by the Swiss educator Robert Seidel (1850–1933) in his discourse *The Aim of Education from the Perspective of Social Pedagogy* (Zurich, 1915): “The higher standpoint from which the goals of education can and must be considered is that of social pedagogy. By this, I mean social pedagogy, which might be more accurately referred to as a socio-pedagogical philosophy. I have repeatedly defended this viewpoint before the pedagogical world in public speeches and print. For quite some time, I have predicted that the true socio-pedagogical perspective would become dominant, for this is demanded by the natural course of development of social and pedagogical ideas and dictated by social conditions and the requirements of education.” (Seidel, 1915, p. 58)

In his work *Education and Sociology* (Paris, 1922; written in 1917), the French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), explaining the limitations of the philosophical-theological paradigm in pedagogy, emphasised: “Thus, education does not have the individual and their interests as its sole or even primary aim; it is above all a means by which society perpetuates the conditions of its existence. A society can only survive if there is a sufficient degree of homogeneity among its members. Education reinforces this homogeneity by implanting the essential similarities required for collective life in the child’s mind. On the other hand, without a certain diversity, no cooperation would be possible. Education also preserves this necessary diversity; in doing so, it differentiates and specialises. Hence, in both aspects, it is essentially a process of deliberate socialisation of the younger generation.” (Durkheim, 1922, p. 6)

The most vivid advocate of the socialisation paradigm in pedagogy, Anton Makarenko (1888–1939), wrote in his *Pedagogical Poem* (1933–1935): “I asserted that it is impossible to build all of education upon interest alone, that the cultivation of a sense of duty often contradicts the child’s interest, especially as the child understands it. I called for the education of a resilient, strong individual capable of performing unpleasant and tedious work when the interests of the collective demand it. Ultimately, I championed the creation of a strong and, if necessary, strict and inspired collective, placing all hopes on it alone. My opponents confronted me with axioms of pedology and focused exclusively on the ‘child’.” (Makarenko, 1977, p. 98)

In *A Book for Parents* (1937), the educator stressed: “Education is a social process in the broadest sense. Everything educates: people, objects, phenomena, but first and foremost—people. And among them, above all—parents and teachers. A child enters into countless interactions with the complex world of surrounding reality, each of which inevitably evolves, intertwines with other relationships, and becomes more complex as the child develops physically and morally. This whole ‘chaos’ seems impossible to quantify, yet it produces certain changes in the child’s personality at every given moment. Guiding and managing this development is the task of the educator.” (Makarenko, 1973, p. 10)

Within the socialisation paradigm, education is directed at instilling in individuals the qualities necessary for social life and creating an environment conducive to the comprehensive development of the personality.

Discussion

The correlation of pedagogical thought in the history of pedagogy with the two established paradigms (classical and non-classical) proves insufficient. At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, pedagogical thinking gradually shifts towards a new—post-non-classical (informational) paradigm. Numerous innovations are progressively entering the educational reality, including distance learning, digital didactics, and artificial intelligence, which significantly transform the academic environment and human development. Pedagogical approaches and ideas developed within the non-classical (socialisation-based) paradigm are being considerably reinterpreted in the first quarter of the 21st century. The current pedagogical discourse is focused on the issues of information and communication technologies in the educational process. It explains and interprets the aims of education based on the principles of the information society, signalling a departure from the core tenets of the socialisation paradigm.

Conclusion

A paradigmatic interpretation of pedagogical doctrines throughout the history of pedagogy enables the distinction between classical and non-classical pedagogy. The face of pedagogical science changed significantly at the beginning of the 20th century. Within the framework of the classical (philosophical-theological) paradigm, pedagogical science was speculative and aimed at pursuing absolute truth. It was understood as a form of humanistic knowledge, with its subject being the upbringing (education) of the human being as a dual entity (both corporeal and spiritual), centred on cultivating the individual soul.

Within the framework of the non-classical (socialisation) paradigm, pedagogical science primarily transformed into a social (socio-behavioural) discipline, focusing on the laws and regularities of personality development (as a social being) under the purposeful influence of upbringing, teaching, and education. The vector of the educational process shifted from the “exagogical” (drawing out a person’s spiritual potential) to the “organisational” (creating environmental conditions conducive to the holistic development of the individual). While in the philosophical-theological pedagogical paradigm, the subjugation of human will to the will of God and the natural alignment with the Divine plan was paramount, in the socialisation paradigm, what is given to a person by nature (heredity) is viewed as the least significant precondition for upbringing; the most influential factors in personality formation are external (environmental) influences and internal factors (self-activity of the individual).

It is also crucial that, in the socialisation paradigm of pedagogy, “absolutes” were replaced by “multiplicities”. This refers to the multifactorial nature of the conditions, methods, forms, and means of upbringing and education.

Thus, the paradigmatic approach makes it possible to define the most general worldview foundations embodied in the pedagogical doctrines of different historical periods, to identify both the specific historical features of a particular pedagogical doctrine and its epochal originality, the author’s innovation, and the progressive development of pedagogical thought over historical time.

Conflict of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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