

EVALUATION OF PEDAGOGIC PRACTICES THROUGH THE NARRATION OF THE LIVES OF FUTURE EDUCATORS

SIDIROPOULOU T., Assistant Professor, Department of Early Childhood Education, TEI of Athens
SHIZA M., Teacher of Scientific Applications, Department of Early Childhood Education, TEI of Athens
SIDIROPOULOU M., Teacher

The Department of Early Childhood Education of the Technical Educational Institute of Athens, following the general objective of the Technological Educational Foundations regarding theoretical and practical education, aims at training educators that will be responsible for the education and care of children from their birth to their entry into Elementary School, through theoretical lessons and workshops, which are all mandatory.

During the course “Child – Game” of the second semester (professor in charge was Ms Sidiropoulou) it became obvious that school social representations of students constitute a subjective view, whose “data that is stored in long term memory is activated and put into operation during everyday life in the form of beliefs, opinions, knowledge, desires, plans etc” (Zavalloni & Louis-Guerin, 1996, p. 14). It has become obvious that with life narration we can understand the way people recognize and give meaning to historic and structural factors, which constitute a network of meanings regarding their lives, their choices and their activities (Pantazis, 2004). “The Self, the Other and Society are simultaneously the ones acting and the objects of activity” (Zavalloni & Louis-Guerin, 1996, σ.18).

In addition, according to Mr. Donald Winnicott the game is an essential form of life and the transitional objects in potential space are of decisive importance for the transition from the oceanic feeling (Freud) of infancy and self-awareness. Sullivan (1964) dealt with the social origin of the self and self-esteem, emphasizing the importance of interaction between the individual and *significant others* in his life. The self or the *self-system*, as used by Sullivan, is structured based on the individual’s experiences towards the reactions of the significant others to him. The frequency, stability of experiences and their long time duration, and not some isolated experiences of success and failure, influence decisively the individual’s self-perception (Leontaris, 1998).

During the examination of social interaction, the birth of the self is related to the continuous increasing ability to assume the role of the specialized “other” initially, and the general “other” later. Even though the individuals’ interactions with the social

environment seems to be part of life, it is complicated to explain the interaction that takes place as well as its results.

MATERIALIZATION FRAMEWORK

Within this framework we have conducted a research aiming at the examination of the image of the educator and the view of the game as an educational means, from future educators of early childhood. We also wanted to discover to what extent these are determined by their personal experiences and how do their studies differentiate their attitude. The objective is to determine the way through which future educators perceive the role of pre-school educator, as well as the importance given to his educational practices, his anthropocentric attitude and his personal culture.

The method used in order to collect the data of our research was the *biographical approach* and more specifically the technique of *life narration* (Mertens, 2005). When someone narrates something from his life it doesn't mean that he just talks or reminisces. It is an action, a meeting with reality. Biography doesn't consist just of simple accumulative narration of past events, but it is a continuous reconstruction of those events, which assume specific meaning in the framework of the present situation. The form and the content of narration, as well as the inter-subjective framework of the instance of narration indicate that biography itself includes a series of elements of rebutting reality (Pantazis, 2004).

As part of the course "Child – Game" in the department of Early Childhood Education, 92 students of the second spring semester 2003 were asked to record their personal experiences, related to game, from childhood to the present day.

Furthermore, all 206 students of different semesters of 2005 were asked to answer in writing one question: how was your first educator?

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The narration emphasized the "voice" of the social subjects themselves, their own interpretation of social reality, representations and personal and collective experiences (Iosifidis, 2003). Then, there was an effort to trace the data and we agreed on their codification based on the qualitative approach.

A) Regarding the role of the game: formulating 12 parameters that we believed they reflect, to a large extent, the quality and quantity of personal experiences as well as the quality of the students as future educators in relation to the use of game as an

educational tool. Parameters 10-12 have to do with the present day attitude of students regarding the educational value of the game, while the previous ones (1-9) have to do with the memories of game during their childhood.

TABLE 1: Codification parameters (Second semester)

	PARAMETERS	Second semester. %
1	Seeking information	31,52
2	Use only of memory	68,48
3	Positive experience	97,80
4	Negative experience	18,47
5	Emotional expression (then and now)	56,52
6	Preferences, influences	65,21
7	Testimony of events, descriptions	54,34
8	Descriptions of individual game	73,92
9	Descriptions of team game	26,08
10	Present day positive attitude towards game	84,78
11	Expectations	34,78
12	Pedagogic reason	35,86

Research demonstrated that the 84,78% of the sample has a positive attitude towards game. This indicates that experiences, interests and preferences in a large percentage of the sample, are in favor of an attitude that allows productive and constructive use of the game. However, on the other hand, the 34,78% of the sample seems that it doesn't consider game as an educational means, a conclusion that is enhanced by the fact that only the 35,86% of the sample includes pedagogic argumentation. Female students do not yet have the specialized knowledge –given the fact that they are in the second semester.

B) Regarding the first educator: with pedagogic criteria-elements we have divided data about the first educator into 12 categories (table 2).

We can observe that the students that have the most negative experiences are those of the 1st semester at a percentage of 31,5%, while those that have the least are the ones of the 2nd semester, at a percentage of 7,6%. Regarding positive experiences, we observe that all semesters present large percentages, while the semester that stands

out is the 2nd with a percentage of 73%. The students of all semesters mention the name and appearance of their first educator. In addition, the students of all semesters with particular large percentages mention the character of the educator, with the most representative the 1st semester with a percentage of 78,9%.

TABLE 2: Memory data about the 1st educator per semester

ELEMENTS /CATEGORIES	1 st SEMESTER %	2 nd SEMESTER %	5 th SEMESTER %	8 th WINTER SEMESTER %	8 th SPRING SEMESTER %
NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE	31,5	7,6	22,2	27,8	22,2
POSITIVE EXPERIENCE	60,5	73	61,1	68,8	64,4
NAME	36,8	38,4	38,8	29,5	31,1
AGE	13,1	7,6	5,5	26,2	20
APPEARANCE	26,3	26,9	30,5	60,6	15,5
CHARACTER	78,9	73	55,5	72,1	60
MENTION OF A SPECIFIC INCIDENT	26,3	50	19,4	39,3	31,1
INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS	5,2	30,7	8,3	6,5	15,5
PEDAGOGIC ARGUMENTATION	2,6		13,8	8,1	11,1
ACTIVITIES	31,5	26,9	38,8	24,5	33,3
MENTION OF FOOD			8,3	4,9	2,2
MENTION OF PUNISHMENTS	15,7	7,6	5,5	11,4	6,6

Most reports to a specific incident are made by the students of the 5th Semester (19,4 %). The percentages from all semesters that mention interpersonal relationships, food or punishments are very small, or in some cases are not mentioned at all. Most of the students speak about the activities that were carried out, with the largest percentage the one of the 6th semester (50 %), in contrast with the 8th winter semester (24,5 %). It is remarkable that the students that use a pedagogic argumentation are very few, with the largest percentage of those of the 5th semester (16 %), while there are semesters that do not use it at all.

Then, we present a general result (table 3) which includes the percentages of characterizations used by the students for their first educator per semester.

TABLE 3: Characterization of the first educator from the students per semester

CHARACTERIZATIONS	1 ST SEMESTER %	2 ND SEMESTER %	5 TH SEMESTER %	8 TH WINTER SEMESTER %	8 TH SPRING SEMESTER %
FUNNY			2,7		2,2
SEVERE	23,6	3,8	8,3	14,7	11,1
SWEET	13,1	23	5,5	18	22,2
GOOD	28,9	26,9	27,7	19,6	28,8
BAD		3,8	8,3	1,6	
ACTIVE	2,6	7,6	2,7		2,2
GENTLE	2,6		5,5	9,8	8,8
LOVING				3,2	6,6
SMILING – PLEASANT	10,5	15,3	11,1	11,4	8,8
CARING				1,6	
LOVEABLE	15,7			13,1	6,6
COLD		3,8	5,5	3,2	
UNDERSTANDING	7,8		2,7	1,6	2,2
PATIENT – CALM	2,6	3,8	5,5	6,5	8,8
FRIENDLY	5,2	3,8	2,7		8,8
GOOD-NATURED – GOOD HEARTED			2,7	1,6	4,4
WILLING				1,6	4,4

If we make some comparisons regarding the characteristics that result from the answers of the students it is ascertained that there are some characteristics that are mentioned in some semesters at all, while in some semesters they are mentioned rarely. The characterization that has the greatest percentage in all semesters is “good”. In contrast, the characterization that has the smallest percentage is “funny”, which appears only in two semesters. Most references to the characterization “strict” are made by the students of the 1st semester (23,6 %), while the least ones are made by the students of the 2nd semester (3,8 %). Regarding the characterization “sweet”, we observe that it is mostly used by the students of the 2nd and 8th spring semester with percentages of 23% and 22,2% respectively. We note an increase to the frequency of characterization “gentle” as semesters progress, since in the 1st semester it is 2,6 % while in the 8th winter semester reaches 9,8 %. Most probably this is due to the fact that as their studies progress, students become more knowledgeable about how should the character of the educator be, but also about how he should behave to children. Exactly the opposite occurs with the characterization “lovable”. As semesters progress the percentage falls. Probably this occurs because students become more knowledgeable about the personality of the educator, with the result that they stop using some characterizations that they used in the first semesters, believing that they are not suitable when describing an educator.

Finally, there are some characterizations, such as good-natured – good-hearted and willing, which while they don't appear in the first semesters, they appear in the later ones but with a small percentage.

DISCUSSION– RESULTS

The memories of certain students are very “fresh” and we see that they can make descriptions with great detail, while others have very few memories. According to Freud ego is non-existent in birth, it is created gradually, as the child starts to distinguish himself from the outside world, it is an activity simultaneously conscious and unconscious (Leontari, 1998). The method of *life narration* assumes greater educational value since it is understandable that every student formulated a personal story that includes his own internalizations from his interactions with his social and cultural environment. As a result the same stimuli are selected or not, they are internalized by the students and become manifest in various social activities in a different way by each student (Siriopoulou, 2005). The behavior is a manifestation of the stimuli internalization, how each individual perceives notions such as me, the other, the team.

Therefore, we ascertain that the percentage of positive attitude towards game that is recorded does not translate to an expectation pedagogic use. The conscious or not selection of profession seems to have played a role.

The shaping of the image of the educator from the students seems to be defined both by references to the character, appearance, age, class organization, interpersonal relationships and to his attitude towards specific events described by the students.

Examining the answers of the students that have **positive** experiences, we observe that their image of him is also positive. Most of them mention that they had excellent interpersonal relationships among them. They characterize the educator good, tender, sweet, willing, patient, pleasant, friendly, good-hearted. They mention that he treated them with love and tenderness and that he was beside them in their every need and desire. He demonstrated great interest and willingness in his work and spent plenty of time in learning new things to children through activities he organized. Examples from the answers of the students:

“My first educator was excellent. She showed great interest in her work and spent a lot of time teaching us new things. She made sure that all the children's needs would be satisfied. Children viewed her very positively”.

“The first educator I remember is my kindergarten teacher. I still recall the way she looked and how good and sweet she was. I still remember all the children gathering around her while she read us fairy tales or the times we sang all together. I also remember giving her our paintings and she wrote our names on them. I liked what we did there a lot. She was always smiling and calm. She was my favorite teacher”.

On the other side we see that the students who have **negative** experiences naturally have a negative image of their educator as well. They use characterizations such as strict, bad and cold to describe him. According to what they say, this is due to the fact that they didn't treat children with love, didn't hug them when they needed to, didn't allow them to play freely, yelled at them and punished them. Regarding interpersonal relationships, students mention discriminations on the part of the educator. In addition we see descriptions of negative events they experienced due to the educator, as well as their participation to activities unwillingly.

Examples from the answers of the students:

“She was particularly strict and cold with children. She didn't hug any of the children, but we had a lot of activities. She didn't left us to play for long, most of the time we sat at the tables and we've made various constructions”.

“I remember that she was tall and brunette. I remember that she gave us photocopies with numbers and animals to work with. She was very strict and frequently punished us or pulled our ears”.

According to what the students mentioned about their first educator, we can arrive at their views about how an educator should be and consequently how they themselves should be as future educators, preserving the positive and eliminating the negative elements. Therefore, based on their views, an educator should have a continuous and emotional relationship with all the children, he should show respect and love, he should behave gently and caring, avoiding punishments and threats as well as any expression that may insult the children's personality. The image that students form about themselves –through their interaction with the environment– seems to influence decisively information processing and the motives for action and as a result it is capable of directing and determining future behavior of children (Malikiosi 2000). The educator should organize activities that provide opportunities for knowledge; he should be in a friendly and pleasant mood, but also be able to set some limits, so that children will recognize what is allowed and what is not (Sidiropoulou et al, 2005).

Regarding the fact whether **memory or education** shaped the students' views about the image of the educator, through their answers we arrive at the conclusion that both influenced them. From the study we have detected some elements that indicate the way that students shape their views about the image of their educator based on their memories. In other words, we see that even the students of the 1st semester, who don't have adequate pedagogic knowledge describe their first educator with elements that are also used by the students of the final semesters. Regarding education, it also plays a significant role in the formulation of the students' views since students of the final semesters, who are more knowledgeable, can evaluate with different criteria some of the elements that compose the image of the educator, such as his work, his attitude and his behavior. As they become more knowledgeable they are able to ascertain whether the activities in which they participated were organized and suitable for children or not.

Finally, regarding the question whether the students' view of their first educator improves or changes through as they move ahead in their studies, we came to the conclusion that it is differentiated but doesn't change. The reason why we mention this is because we see that as semesters progress and students acquire knowledge they become capable of justifying specific attitudes and behaviors from the educator, however this doesn't mean that this changes their initial view. An example is the one mentioned by a female student: "What I remember from my first educator is that she treated all children well, with respect. There were some times when she yelled but that was reasonable because we were too many children". In addition, a number of students evaluates certain behaviors and practices as not pedagogic but this doesn't influence their positive view of their educator.

As Epstein distinguished (1991) there are two notional systems that have to do with self as an object. A logical system which consists of the conscious perceptions of an individual about his self and a system that exists on experiential level and includes intellectual constructions that come from emotionally significant experiences, which the individual may or may not be aware of (Leontari, 1998).

In conclusion we could say that the students' image of the educator seems to be the result of educational, social, family, personal experiences from their own childhood-school age, which have been instilled in the subconscious and influence their reactions as adults, but certainly as educators in the future. The reality of the subject of the narration is based on the past, present and future of the narrator with numerous

mediations (Pantazis, 2004). It seems that *life narration* is a work tool. It is not just a method to the extent that it attempts to approach the essence of the individual's life as a whole. This essence if it is perceived as the whole of man's social relationships, cannot be comprehended except through the study of the individual's social relationships which are transformed into psycho-social realities (Pantazis, 2004)

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