Ideological Influence on Educational Communication
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Abstract
The pedagogical language plays a special role in the training of future teachers. Its formative value is given both by its socio-cultural values and its pragmatic ones. Besides all these, there are also the ideological values that reflect the political conception which, at a given moment, dominated the society’s educational policy which was applied at the level of schools. Even though the effects of the curricular reform were felt at the level of the pedagogical discourse, there are still some reminders of the “wooden language” of the communist political discourse. All of these make the true educational message hard to be perceived by the future professors, and many times it seems to be inadequate for the nowadays school system and thus it looks hard to be put into educational practice. Educational communication is to be reinvigorated by making philosophical and pedagogical conceptions centred on authentic values and removing the ideological meanings on the basic concepts of pedagogy has acquired during the communist period, in order to improve the training process of the young generation.

Keywords: educational communication, ideological values, pedagogical discourse

1. Introduction
One of the characteristics of the learning process is the educational communication which faithfully reflects the typology of the relations between the main participants at the didactic act, which are the teachers and the students. Besides it, it is worth mentioning the formative value of the educational communication, the determinant of not only the socio-cultural and pragmatic valences, but also of the ideological ones from the old system.

Despite all the educational reforms and changes of the learning system, the reminiscences of the Communist ideology are still found at the level of the pedagogical discourse which has as an effect the

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inconsistency between the educational message and the today’s school reality. The main result of this is the
difficulty to achieve it by means of the educational practice.

The Communist elements of ideology and propaganda are best reflected in the dimensions of education
where the condition for building up stereotypes “is to define the situations in such a manner that it allows only
two solutions. This duality corresponds partially to the nature of stereotypes which offer only two possible
answers: either to completely adhere to or to refuse something” [1].

The present paper intends to look upon the manner in which these ideological aspects are reflected in the
educational communication at the level of one of the new educations, which is the ecological education. And this
occurs, because the main responsible for accomplishing an efficient ecological education, are still the teachers. A
more detailed analysis of the Romanian curriculum emphasizes the fact that accomplishing an efficient ecological
education is still decided by the teachers. The simple “ecological ABC” – which is repeatedly reflected at the
level of the core curriculum – is not “strong” enough and sufficient for building up personalities that should live
in harmony with nature, with the surrounding environment. The shaping of the ecological attitude is also needed
due to the fact that it plays the role of a binder towards passing to the building up of the ecological behavior.
Such a research topic seemed to be of interest due to the growing tendency and preoccupation to assimilate the
ecological education, but the gap between the recommendations, the resolutions, and the studies done at the
international or national level, is still big.

The increase quality of the ecological education can be accomplished on the one side, by improving the
theoretical and practical training of the future teachers (by means of implementing the communicational
strategies during the seminar activities), and on the other hand, by the interdisciplinary approach of the
problematics of the ecological ethics at the level of the content of the ecological education. Starting from these
observations, the present study intends to analyze the means through which the pedagogical discourse can be
improved so as to pass from the old to the new paradigms of the ecological ideology.

2. The Influence of the Ideological Dimension of Ecological Ethics on the Pedagogical Discourse

Contemporary society is still dominated by the ecological hedonism which keeps individual dynamics
focused on consumption. The ecological sensitivity has allowed, in some degree, the moralization of the
production and consumption processes, directing the demand and offer towards the ecological alternative
technologies. The ecological consensus did not stop the growth of the individualistic consumption, but gave birth
to an eco-production which was doubled by the ecology of consumption. In this context, one feels the need to
support the ecological moral which is promoted by the ecological ethics, by means of the intervention of policy
makers, and especially by those who are responsible for the education of young generation, in order to shape their
moral-ecological conscience and behavior that should lead to the safety of life and of humankind on Earth.

Even though in the last decade of the past century Romania has developed an entire strategy for
protecting the environment – the legislation regarding the environmental protection was adopted, some projects
for the preservation and care of the environment were put forth with the help of some extra-budgetary funds,
some programmes for sustainability were implemented, even some educational projects were made, etc. – all of
these were accomplished without autochthon ecological ethics, but only through the valuing of the theories
established by the Western philosophers.

The reminiscences of the Communist ideology upon the today’s ecological education must be searched
among the influences and the pedagogical orientations from the totalitarian époque which had multiple influences
coming from the Marxist- Leninist philosophy. So, one of the explanations for the appearance and the
development of the pedagogical science may be found ultimately “in the development of the material basis of
society, in the changes occurring at the level of the production relations” [2]. The progressive pedagogical ideas
that defend the interests of the Proletariat and implicitly, those of the undermined people, set the grounds for a
new and better pedagogical science to which the Marxist philosophical conception assures its superiority “by
means of the preciseness of the theoretical theses, and its practical objectives, by means of the way in which it
solves the tasks concerning the Communist education of the young generation” [3]. From this perspective, the
basic concepts of pedagogy gain some ideological meanings. For instance, if in a narrow sense, education must be understood as an assembly of educational influences of the lesson, as the educational work among students, in a broader sense, education is concerned with the process of training the young generation, which means “to offer them all the knowledge needed and to shape them around the Marxist-Leninist conception about the world and to build the communist features of their personality; to develop their intellectual and physical abilities, and also their aptitudes and skills for a productive work” [4]. But on what concerns the relationships and the communion between man and nature, these focus only on controlling the latter, because “… we are capable of knowing even the most natural and remote consequences, at least those that result from our most commune actions from the field of production, and thus we are capable to control them” [5]. The anthropocentric perspective of the relationship between man and nature marks even the role played by science, which is that of knowing, of transforming and of using nature. Only by knowing the surrounding nature as his own nature, man can establish surviving relationships both with nature and with society. In this sense, P.L. Kapita wrote: “The front of science is unique, and its strategic mission is to conquer nature in order to know it better and to transform it so as to allow the development of the human society. Man is different than the animal mainly because the animals adapt to nature while man, by conquering nature, adapts it to his own needs. This represents the main difference” [6].

After four decades of censorship during which the ideological concepts were being imposed, the Communist mentalities and their traces impose a re-analysis of the pedagogical literature, under the ethic and aesthetic aspect. Therefore, it is imposed a review of the relationships between man and nature as they were reflected in the literary texts, so as to change the mentality according to which Earth is an inexhaustible pantry of resources, found always and at any time at the disposal of man, that man is the master of nature and that he could take advantage of it as he pleases. In this context, the mission of the future builders of personalities is extremely hard, especially when it is difficult for them to understand and to accept these stereotypes of the pedagogical language. This is why, my proposal is to have a greater openness of the ecological education content towards the ecological ethics that could bring back the power of ecological values and virtues, the return to the abstract significance of them and to the concrete reality that they express.

The ecological ethics is an applied one because it represents the practical replica of the abstract theories regarding the normative ethics. It intends to offer an ethical perspective on specific problems and on practical situations. The solving of some controversies regarding the problems of the environment presupposes an appeal to principles that should offer a moral orientation to our actions towards nature and them (the death of animals, the ground erosion, a lifeless stream of water, the generation of new wealth, etc.). “Such principles which guide our attitude towards nature make up the ecological ethics in general. There is a wide range of ecological ethics that are either different or partially coincidental.” [7].

The Ecological Ethics focusing on Humans is based on the principle of evaluating the environmental policy just according to the way in which it affects people. It is possible that the destruction of some national parks or wild areas may have a series of negative effects on the human wellbeing: their sensibility towards the animals’ grief, their sadness towards a species’ extinction, their lack of access to some aesthetic and recreational pleasures. Such an ethics, even if it may lead to the making of some real agreements with the ecologists on what concerns the environmental problems, focuses on the realities concerning the effects that they have on people. According to it, only humans are important from a moral point of view. For example, from the perspective of the ethics focusing on the humans, a species at the verge of extinction is not considered valuable from a moral viewpoint no matter if it is seen as a whole or as individual parts. What is important is only the human happiness or unhappiness, and these may or may not be affected by the extinction of a certain species [8].

The Ethics focusing on Animal implies giving a moral consideration to animals seen as individuals, not as species, because the way in which the species is affected matters only indirectly and only if the individuals are affected. So, we can observe that even if all individuals are significant morally speaking, this does not mean that they are equal. Different moral value is being given to different types of animals. This way of differentiating involves the arbitrary neglect of the animals’ interests, as to the human ones, thus allowing to similar interests to be treated in the same manner, and those which are different, to receive a certain degree of moral significance [9].
The Ethics focusing on Life claims that beings are important from a moral point of view, regardless of their moral significance (the more complex is a living thing, the more important it becomes from the moral viewpoint). This type of ethics says that the choice of the paths of action must be made according to the impact of our actions over every involved being. Under a radical form, the ethics focusing on life sustains that every living is significant from the moral point of view, but they also have an equal moral importance [10]. According to it, a difference in meaning can be made inside one class of beings, thus not making men the most important ones. In some situation, the preservation of the biosphere and of the complex ecosystems may be considered more important than the conservation of a large number of human beings [11].

“The Ethics of the Wholeness” says that things, which like some living things, do not have a conscience and no rudimentary biological organization, are significant morally speaking. According to it, one can attribute to rocks some “rights”, and mining or testing missiles are considered to be bad as such [12].

The Ecological Holism considers that only two categories are relevant from the moral point of view: the biosphere as a whole and the complex ecosystems that compose it. The animals seen individually, including men, plants, rocks, molecules etc. that make up the complex systems are not significant from the moral viewpoint. Their value is given by their contribution to the preservation of the whole they are a part of. From the holistic perspective, the individuals lack moral significance, but a species’ extinction is against the purpose of preserving the biosphere or the ecosystems. This type of ethics promotes the environmental policy which is similar to the ethics focusing on life, on animals and “the ethics of the wholeness”, having in common the mechanisms of conservation of the ecosystems and of the biosphere [13].

The problem that emerges is what kind of ecological ethics is to form the basis of the educational policy decisions regarding the environmental education. The first impulse would be to appeal at the one focusing on humans, at the expense of the non-anthropocentric ethics which state that beings, others than the human beings, should become the subject of a moral concern in the same way as the wellbeing of humanity.

It is clear that in the today’s society, the role of the ecological ethics is to establish new directions, new markers on what concerns the relations between man and nature. Ecological ethics must not be perceived as a notion that forbids the use of nature, but it is actually concerned with its proper, careful and respectful use. It must be taken into consideration in all the political and economical decisions so as to have in mind the impact of these decisions over the environment. But now, a new problem emerges: which of the notions of ecological ethics must be taken into consideration when reaching a decision. If it follows a human centered ethics, than they will be the only ones with advantages, only their needs and interests will matter, at the expense of the non-human beings. The present ecological crisis is the result of the fact that for years and years the world has been based on such a notion. If men were to revise their notions towards their place in the world, if they were to turn from masters into protectors of nature, in what extent will the adults (the moral agents) change their option on their own interests and will give them up in favor of nature? In what degree and on what extent will people take care of the domestic animals’ wellbeing, will invest in assuring some living conditions that would allow them to develop according to their own purpose, and will respect their specificity, when for the people primary is the economic benefit and their mentality is shaped even from childhood towards controlling and exploiting nature? Maybe the young generation that will benefit from a new orientation of the notion about nature, will have a more responsible attitude towards it which will be an interest for the people in itself. And if the decisions would be taken according to the non-human centered ethics, people will feel disadvantaged and limited in exercising certain freedoms. If decisions are taken from a deontological perspective, than the main disadvantage will be the fact that some rules are just stated on what concerns the relation with the non-human beings, while taking the decisions from a consequential perspective, will emphasize the fact that only the consequences are taken into consideration. Also, if the decisions are taken from an integrating perspective, the main problem would be giving the moral consideration only to animals that are characterized by sensibility or that posses a life story. Another disadvantage would be the fact that it takes into consideration only the equality of interests for the sensitive beings in order to increase their utility and happiness, respectively the right of the inherent value of each living entity to an impartial and respectful treatment, permitting also to exploit animals, but only if their wellbeing is being assured. The defenders of the wild animals might say that people are allowed to use them in different
scientific experiments, some of them useless, and that they are seen as equals of the domestic animals whose
destiny, somewhat “created”, is to serve man and his interests. Also, the bio-centrists will say that plants are not
taken into consideration and the eco-centrists will defend even the non-living entities.

Taking into consideration these problems concerning the practicability of the environmental ethics, far
from wanting to establish a new conception of the ecological ethics, it seems that the solution might be a trans-
disciplinary one. This presupposes that humans must accept their new status, as being a part of nature and that
outside it they could not exist, and to place themselves on a superior reality level on what concerns their
perception of a specific problem, so as to take into consideration both the interests of the human beings and those
of the non-human ones and of non-living beings, to apply also the deontological perspective with the purpose of
preventing the disrespect of the wellbeing of nature and of humans as part of it, but also the consequential
perspective in order to increase the quantity of happiness and of utility. This perspective is based on the principle
of the third party included [14] which by its application can increase the degree of applicability for all the above
analyzed theories regarding the environmental ethics. The principles on which one should act from a trans-
disciplinary perspective: (a) To respect the moral state of nature means to respect ourselves, (b) To promote the
interests of all in an equal manner, so as to increase the quantity of happiness and usefulness in the world. The
two ideas do not reject each other, but on the contrary, they complete each other. The first has a general character
in favor of a behavior that promotes impartiality and the moral status of everyone, and the second mentions the
grounds on which to act when the conditions of the first are not respected; in other words in what contexts it can
be modified, how one can increase the quantity of happiness and utility when the moral status of nature was not
respected. The two ideas can work as a single principle: To act by respecting the moral status of nature, which
means to respect ourselves, excepting the moment when the moral status of nature is not being respected; then
one should promote the interests of all so as to increase the quantity of happiness and utility.

The respect towards nature must become a positive feature of character which alongside with conscience
and the ecological behavior should contribute at perfecting the human personality, and also as a principle of
acting and preventive coordination of the human activity in his relationship with nature. To respect the moral
status of nature must be part of the self esteem, and also of the one towards other humans, as it happens in case of
the respect towards others hat represents a part of the self esteem. During their daily actions, humans should not
throw garbage on streets or on any undeveloped places, or to destroy trees or to pollute or to destroy all kind of
components of the ecosystem, and this not because it is forbidden by law or because it is a rule that will
presuppose a fine, but because by respecting the rule, they respect others but most of all, themselves. When this
principle in not respected in evaluating the actions of humans and in taking some decisions regarding the finding
of a solution or an improvement to them, the interests of everyone will be promoted equally so as to increase the
quantity of happiness and utility for all the components of the ecosystem by re-equilibrating the relationships and
the reports between man and nature.

This trans-disciplinary means of solving the contradictions regarding the practicability of the
environmental ethics offers the possibility to take decisions and to mend many of the environmental problems by
promoting a preventive behavior of using nature that proved to be more economic than repairing the damages
caused by the excessive exploitation and the irresponsible interventions of the human activities over nature.

3. Hypothesis, Objectives and the Methodology of This Research Activity:

By introducing student/subject oriented communicational and educational strategies and by valuing the
elements of ecological ethics in the content of the ecological education, from the perspective of implementing the
ecological education in schools, superior results will be obtained during the theoretical and practical training of
students, the future teachers.

The research objectives:

- On what concerns the teacher:

  - the passage from the mentality that the learning process is just one of listening and teaching, towards the
    mentality that this process is mainly one of scientific organization of the students’ work of learning;
- the use of some methods with the help of whom the emphasis should move from the activity of teaching-listening towards the effective work, the learning and understanding of the seminar topics that are both a base for individual study and an experience in applying the student oriented communicational strategies;
- the creative application of the experimental procedures in order to prevent their exaggerated typization or their use in invariable forms so as to achieve a seminar activity done in more mental registers or according to the particularities of each individual, thus allowing students to gain an increased motivation towards that specific discipline;
- the valuing of the elements of ecological ethics during the ecological education will allow the approach of realities between man and nature not only from the perspective of the human centered ecological ethics, but also from the perspective of the non-human beings centered ones.

- On what concerns the students:
- the passage from the mentality that the learning process is just one of listening and teaching, towards the mentality that this process is mainly one of scientific organization of the students’ work of learning;
- the building up of a system of working abilities and skills appropriate for the interactive methods used at the future job, that should be immediately acquired; the capacity to easily pass from one activity to the other, the building up of the ability to follow a colleague’s argumentation, the building up of the abilities to actively listen, the skill to formulate questions, the skill to extract what is essential from a content and to sustain a presentation in front of colleagues, the skill to create a feedback, the skill to project the organization and the development of the didactic activities from the student centered perspective;
- the admittance of the experimental procedures in the student’s daily work; their frequent use during classes and then they are becoming gradually part of the homework and of the pedagogical practice;
- the valuing of the elements of ecological ethics during the ecological education will lead to changes at the level of the students’ mentality, so as to offer a moral significance even to the non-human beings.

In this research activity the experiment was used, its experimental scheme being the random selection of only one sample called experimental, followed by a quiz used after every step of the research, and the analysis of the results of the activity. The education strategy used during the experiment was the following: the heuristic conversation, the explanation, the debate, the brainstorming, the problematization, learning by discovering, case study, the academic controversy, the cluster, the quintet, S.I.N.E.L.G., the double-entry journal, the Think – Work in pairs – Communicate technique, I Know/ I Want to Know/ I Have Learnt method, the quadrant method, reciprocal teaching and mosaic I, the focus being laid on group activities combined with learning through cooperating. In order to observe the students’ improvement during the seminars, they had to participate at projects and to use the strategies that they have learnt in other classes too. The sample was made up of 27 second year students from didactic theology and social assistance specialty, of approximately the same age, with high possibilities, and a medium inclination towards becoming a teacher.

The student oriented educational and communicational strategies practiced during the seminars that will not be described in this paper, are allowing students to experience with the role of teaching, helping others to study and to assimilate/understand the content, the topic studied/ the text. So, students are allowed to emphatically transpose themselves into the role of the teacher, a situation in which they can build up or use some capacities and abilities specific for the didactic work, such as: communication, inter-relation, to resume and transmit knowledge, to actively listen, to formulate questions, to make oneself heard, etc. It is considered that by using these student/subject oriented educational strategies, one can create learning experiences and can shape and develop some of the skills and abilities needed for the didactic work. [15] Thus are changed the learning – teaching strategies (the emphasis being laid on the activity and the students’ effort), this being in fact the independent variable of the experiment. Under the same category fall even the elements of ecological ethics, used as content for training with the purpose of changing on the one hand, the mentality of the future teachers over the relationships between man and nature, and on the other to make it easier for students to extract the observation of a methodological nature on what concerns the use of the student centered communicational and educational strategies.
By comparing the students’ final results with their initial ones, the optimization of their performances will be reached by acquiring knowledge and some new teaching-learning strategies at a superior level with at least 30% more, and by shaping and using some skills and abilities specific for the didactic work, these being in fact the dependent variable of the experiment.

The pre-experimental stage consisted of using the newly introduced strategies in the experimental group – the cluster, the three steps interview, the technique of the comparative graphic organizer – the Venn diagram, the table of concepts, the Think – Work in pairs – Communicate technique, followed by a debate – in order to study the topic of that specific seminar which was “The Present Day Problematics of the Ecological Ethics”. This stage ended with an initial assessment quiz that focused especially on identifying the need for the implementation of such an educational strategy in order to finalize the activities of the initial training, and also to see the students’ expectations towards them. All students have agreed that these educational strategies can contribute to the improvement of their professional performances in the following period and can also increase the quality of education in schools. Among their expectations towards the seminar activities, they have mentioned: “new methods of teaching”, “gaining new competences, and abilities to make the instructive-educative process more efficient”, “means of improving the communication with students and parents”.

The experimental stage consisted of using the newly introduced strategies in the experimental group – brainstorming, problematization, learning through discovering, the academic controversy, the quintet, SINELG, the double-entry journal, I Know/ I Want to know/ I have learnt method, the quadrant method, the case study, reciprocal teaching, mosaic I -, of studying the content foreseen in the following subjects concerning the ecological ethics: “Animal Rights”, “Principles of Ecological Ethics”, “Sources of the Dissemblance Present in the Relation Man-Nature” and “The Ecological Ethics – A Means to Rebalance the Relation Man-Nature”. The demonstration and use of these strategies was followed each time, after every student meeting by exercises of valuing them in projecting some didactic scenarios specific to the disciplines that they had to teach during the pedagogical practice. The intermediary assessment quiz has provided some data needed for correcting and improving the pedagogical discourse during the experiment, and also some information regarding the means of getting ready for the pedagogical seminar, and the students’ thoughts concerning the utility of the topics debated and strategies used during the seminars. So, all 100% students have stated that all the seminars that have taken place until the quiz, have brought extra elements of interactivity than the previous ones, and among those, more frequent were mentioned: working in groups and its increased efficiency, student oriented activities and the individual experimentation with different strategies, the possibility to learn them better so as to apply them in the future activities, an improved relationship between student and teacher. On what concerns the proposals for improving the future activities, almost all students have asked the use of more student oriented strategies so as to become acquainted to them and to be capable to decide which one is the best to be used during the classes that they will have to teach. Regarding the content studied in order to practice the strategies above mentioned, the students have appreciated the new philosophical perspective that they saw as a new challenge, and also as a new approach of the relation man-nature. They have agreed that a series of these notions on ecological ethics should be extracted, made more accessible and even studied from the pre-school age.

The final stage of the experiment coincided with the final assessment of the seminar activities which consisted of a portfolio including: a paper or an essay on the topic concerning the ecological education, and two didactic scenarios for approaching the ecological education during classes (one for Religion classes and the other for dirigentie*) which was valuing the student centered strategies that were analyzed during the seminar activities. The results of the assessment quiz reflect unanimity:

- of the seminar’s contribution to improving the theoretical and practical training for the future teachers through new methods and educational strategies useful in the instructive-educational process, exemplifying and practicing various strategies, a better understanding of the teacher-student relation;
- of the representations of the practical-applied dimension in these seminar activities;

* dirigentie = a class held by the class master, concerning the students’ problems.
of increasing the accessibility of the subject’s content which became easy to grasp, organized, and systematized due to the well explained and exemplified methods.

4. Conclusions

The main strong points of the seminar activities were: the systematic and scientific character of the content, the means of presenting the new strategies, the good training of teachers and the multiple examples given. One of the weak points was the relatively reduced number of student centered strategies that were practiced. Among the proposals to improve the implementation of these strategies during the didactic activities were mentioned: the practice of more methods that can be valued also as techniques of intellectual work which would be useful for the students in their preparation for an examination and in the shaping of a learning style according to the demands specific for the pre-university learning; the possibility to apply these strategies during the study of the technical disciplines and of the exact sciences.

As a result of the analysis of the students’ activity, it was found that most students used at least one student centered educational strategy, managing to pass relatively easy over the difficulties of accomplishing the didactic scenarios. This thing was reflected in the grades obtained at the final assessment of the portfolios, where approximately 78% achieved the maximum score for their seminar activity.

The outcomes of this research prove that the result of the students from the experimental group have improved in comparison with those obtained at the initial assessment. This leads to the conclusion that the experiment should be extended, the teachers from the higher education system should be trained on how to use the developmental strategies of the critical thinking and of learning through cooperation, that a new course should be introduced on student centered educational strategies (in the first semester of the third year) so as to allow students to learn how to use these methods, to create a new and more efficient style of learning and understanding all the disciplines, not only the pedagogical ones. In order to reach the European qualitative standards in accomplishing the ecological education, it is imposed that during the education practice, the accent to move from the intellectualist side of this new education, to the attitudinal one, thus valuing the casuistry and the narrative among the student centered educational strategies.

In order to build up the students’ ecological beliefs and attitudes, it is imperatively necessary to train the future teachers from the perspective of the principles of ecological ethics.

The importance of the interdisciplinary approach of the ecological ethics and its links to other fields, especially the ecological education, represents a necessity in the context of the present day society, so as to increase the role and the contribution of the educational system to the improvement of the problematics regarding the environment. This can be achieved by means of reconsidering the position and the reports of humanity towards nature. The inter-disciplinarity between the ecological ethics and education consists of the fact that the ecological ethics is the one that can offer the structure and the fond of the philosophical system from the perspective of the sustainable development, and the ecological education is the one that can implement it at the level of each individual, because by means of education one can produce the change of mentality and of behavior. Alongside the educational systems, the ecological ethics can intervene to improve the building up and the reconsideration of the human behavior towards nature by rethinking the philosophical system of each individual, and by creating a philosophy that should guide science and technology towards the future development strategies.

The ecological ethics can be an inexhaustible source for enriching the content of the ecological education by means of the problematics it approaches, by improving the ideological and the Communist propaganda influences that are still found at the level of the educational communication.
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