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NARRATIVE. PEDAGOGICAL POTENTIAL OF NARRATIVE IN EDUCATION

Стаття присвячена аналізу поняття нарративу та його використання у сфері освіти. Звертання освіти до нарративу зумовлена потребами педагогічної практики. Інтерес до нарративних методів є спробою компенсувати наукоподібність і «безчеловечность» сучасного педагогічного процесу. Присутність нарративних структур, способів істиллю викладу, технік і методів викладання стає демонстрацією специфічної педагогічної установки, яка вбирає в себе такі риси, як послідовність, зв'язність, переконливість, цілісність, закінченість, що стимулюють інтерес учнів до теоретичного знання. Нарратив стає інструментом розвитку рефлексивного мислення і вдумливого ставлення до досвіду.

Ключові слова: освіта, нарратив, наратологія, мозаїчність, фрагментарність, цілісність, гуманізація.

Статья посвящена анализу понятия нарратива и его использования в сфере образования. Обращение образования к нарративу обусловлено потребностями педагогической практики. Интерес к нарративным методам является попыткой компенсировать наукообразие современного педагогического процесса. Присутствие нарративных структур, способов и стиля изложения, техник и методов преподавания становится демонстрацией специфической педагогической установки, воплощающей в себе такие черты, как последовательность, связность, убедительность, целостность, законченность, что стимулирует интерес учащихся к теоретическому мышлению и теоретическому знанию. Нарратив становится инструментом развития рефлексивного мышления и вдумчивого отношения к опыту.

Ключевые слова: образование, нарратив, нарратология, мозаичность, фрагментарность, целостность, гуманизация.

*This article is dedicated to the analysis of the concept **narrative** and use thereof in the field of education. Education appeals to narrative due to the needs of pedagogical practice. Interest in narrative methods is some sort of attempt to compensate for excessive scientism and “inhumanity” of the contemporary pedagogical process. Narrative structures, means and styles of narration, techniques and methods of teaching demonstrate specific and pedagogical attitude embodying in itself such characteristics as consistency, coherence, credibility, integrity, and completeness. These are the elements of narrative which stimulate the interest of students towards theoretical thinking and theoretical knowledge. Narrative becomes the instrument for development of reflective thinking and thoughtful attitude towards experience.*

Keywords: *education, narrative, narratology, mosaicism, fragmentariness, integrity, humanisation.*

The role of narrative in education is controversial and not well researched. Increasing interest about narrative in teaching can be explained as a response to the existing rather scientific, fragmented, mosaic-like and cold-hearted approaches to pedagogy.

Contemporary interest in pedagogy about narrative is also a response to the practical needs of teachers. The use of narrative elements prompts students to think theoretically, acquire and interpret theoretical knowledge, discuss different types of relations among people and aspects of their behaviour by expanding on and activating positive emotions about the topic being addressed.

The narrative provides a holistic approach to interpreting knowledge, combining objective and subjective, rational and emotional elements.

Traditionally, narrative (lat. *narrativus* – narrative) is defined as a text describing a sequence of events. The narrative approach originated from existential philosophy. M. Heidegger, P. Ricoeur, and M. Merlau-Ponty believed that authentic human existence is conversing existence directed at understanding and explaining itself in relation to the world. Narration is a primary form of manifestation of existence. It is through narrative that life finds unity and can be narrated. In post-modern philosophy the notion of narrative becomes one of the key concepts. While classical philosophy was mainly focused on the problem of cognition, i.e. correlation between thinking and the world, the contemporary philosophy is making a turn towards language concentrating on the problem of language and the linguistic nature of consciousness.

By the end of the 20th century, it was strongly believed that functioning of various forms of knowledge could be understood only through consideration of their narrative nature [1]. Attention of science towards potential of narrative is connected with comprehension of the importance of narration in life of human beings. Narrative undoubtedly plays a great role not only in literature and elocution but also in scientific discourse, in everyday communication and pedagogical practice. People often use narrative as a means of explaining different processes. Narrative is one of the most universal types of verbal interaction. Narrative is present in everything we say, think or imagine. Telling stories is an integral part of human life. It is a natural manner of a person's communication with other people, as well as a way of acquiring knowledge. Narrative structures a person's perception of the world, puts in order personal experience, facilitates one's self-discovery and acquisition of knowledge. Being part of human reality, narrative implies a possibility to organize and provide consistency to the experience of constantly changing human existence and change it. J. Brockmeier and R. Harre believe that narrative acts as an extremely changing form of mediation between personal and generalised cultural canons, i.e. narrative simultaneously is a model of the world and a model of one's self [2:38].

Narrative has a universal semiotic nature and can be manifested both verbally and non-verbally. A direct perspective in painting, symphony in music or a novel in literature may serve as an example of narrative forms. According to Lyotard, narrative form as a mechanism of organising the human experience is omnipresent. However, due to historically specific ways of development realization of narrative always has definite forms. This is exactly why narrative possesses social instrumentalism and pragmatic potential [3].

A particular role in distinguishing narrative means of understanding of reality was played by literary theory. In literature, narrative allows a person to bring meaning to the world around and perception thereof. Besides, people always try to shape events of the real world into literary forms by describing them according to the laws of traditional genres and using various narrative schemes [4].

Later, apart from literary theory, the notion of narrative becomes the centre of attention of socially-humanitarian and other natural sciences, such as medicine, law, history, historiography, anthropology, psychotherapy, philosophy, cultural anthropology, theology, and pedagogy. Owing to such great influence of narrative, a new science – narratology was developed. This science researches the nature, forms, functioning, and common characteristics pertaining to all possible types of narrative. Narratology sets criteria making it possible to distinguish narratives among themselves, as well as constitutes a system of rules under which narratives are created and developed.

Narrative consists of the following structural components: a plot, point of view, evaluation, time, personage, and cast of characters. Narrative must have a beginning, middle and end, which, thanks to detalization, comprises a well-built unity devoid of any unrelated elements. Characters, conflict, style, and setting are other characteristic features of narrative that are auxiliary in terms of a plot. For proper functioning, narrative should be preceded by an abstract and concluded by a coda that brings the listener back from narration to the real time. For logical development of narrative, events should not necessarily be described in sequence. Arrangement of these events may be aimed at confirmation and intensification, even creation of models representing values for human existence. In the long run, success of narrative depends on realisation of the following principles: simplicity, unexpectedness, concreteness, credibility, emotions and a good story.

The plot of narrative consists of questions about time, about one's own self, about one's mission, and such question as from whence the man has come and where he keeps going, and what people should do while they live. By formulating this kind of questions and responding to them, narrative becomes a form of transmission of cultural experience. Culture and its development are maintained by stories about human experience. From the very childhood, people are enveloped in stories (myths, legends, fairy tales, epos, etc.) and are in constant need not only for stories but also for their endless repetitions. Moreover, narrative not only tells about events, but also interprets and models the world of human culture. The world of culture provides a wide repertoire of plots used by people to organize events in their lives in time sequence. Any personal narrative is built on the basis of and around cultural models. That is why narrative gives a clear vision of norms and values existent in a given society, as well as of the position of the narrator.

As a result, narrative is not only a phenomenon reflecting culture; it also is this culture's invisible creator. According to Miller's research, the term narrative derives from the Latin word *gnarus*, which means "knowing", "an expert", "acquainted with something". By telling a story, a person not only follows the sequence of events but also interprets it: narration is *gnosis*, it tells to those who know. Besides, it also is diagnosis, the act of identification or interpretation [5:127].

The above-mentioned allows narrative to fulfil numerous functions. Firstly, it is organization of ideas, intentions and experience in some kind of discursive order. Narrative creates a model of behaviour in various situations acceptable for human consciousness. Narrative gives sense

to practices and experience that have not found explanation and justification in linguistic and conceptual forms yet. Creation of a holistic model of human existence can be considered a specific function of narrative. In such a way, narrative is the basic component of social interaction fulfilling the function of creation and transmission of social knowledge, as well as self-presentation of individuals.

Contemporary interest of pedagogy in narrative originates from that general condition of culture that is connected with fragmentariness, mosaicism, inconsistency and clip-thinking of human perception and attitude towards the world. Abraham Moles, in his time, described culture using the term “mosaic-like”. According to him, mosaicism is composed of a number of separate fragments connected by simple and purely random intimate relationships. It consists of fragments that adjoin but do not establish any constructions; these fragments lack starting points and unifying categories, but contain a lot of concepts carrying great weight such as key ideas, key words, etc. [6:45]. Mosaicism sequentially breaks classical narrative continuum turning the elements brought out of narrative perspective into secluded and self-sufficient units, separate pictures and episodes that can be freely arranged among themselves and that create the space of collage.

Education as part of culture is subjected to the same processes. Mosaic-like education is the total of random knowledge that a man has acquired from different sources. This combination of fragmentary knowledge is formed in a person’s consciousness in the course of comprehension of books, magazines, intercourse with other people, listening to lectures, watching TV, surfing the Internet, etc. Mosaic-like education is the result of accidental and disordered selection of the most diversified, scientific and unscientific knowledge, including opinions, surmises, stereotypes, and dogmas. Mosaic-like education is built on entertainment and is mostly connected with emotional part of the human psyche. From his/her work experience, any teacher knows well that it is rather difficult to keep students’ attention by providing serious information. Maintaining their attention focused throughout the whole lecture is nearly impossible. Nowadays, a serious and in-depth discussion of questions, presentation of materials by means of gradual statement of facts and sequentially developing argumentation in the majority of cases is doomed to failure. With increasing frequency, teachers face rejection in relation to scientific knowledge on the part of students. It manifests in such a way that students reject everything that needs a long-term and intensive independent work. They accept simplified means of presentation and acquisition of instruction material. Students give preference to those forms of instruction where monitoring of their work is loosened and where teachers make use of entertaining and interactive means of instruction. A lesson prepared in a “theme park” fashion facilitates captivating students’ attention and holding their interest. Using such a technique of presentation of instruction material leads to atomisation of students’ consciousness. Fragmentariness of perception is not able to build an integral and harmonious worldview in the human consciousness.

At that, information transferred to students does not imply its multivalent interpretation. Theses must be brief and laconic. Multivalence of information slows down perception and makes a mess in students’ consciousness. Generally speaking, the simpler materials are presented the easier they are for students to understand. Teachers have long ago noticed that sentences with complex structure and various deviations and comments are perceived by students with

considerable difficulty. Many students fail to aurally make sense of utterances with subordinate clauses, participial and verbal adverbs constructions. Therefore, a teacher who wants to be heard has to take into account the above-mentioned fact – the simpler materials are presented the easier they are for students to understand.

It is not a teacher's task to build logical chains and interrelations between separate facts. It is very good if such relations appear in the process of presentation of materials or if the teacher succeeds in demonstrating them. If not, the teacher has to come to terms with it since the primary effort is focused on conquering distracted attention and bringing home to students' consciousness at least minimum of what really has cognitive and cultural value.

The mosaic-like principle of knowledge acquisition can be found in any type of culture; however, it has never been as popular as nowadays. University education with its programmes aimed at development of various competencies tries to stand up to fragmentariness and mosaicism. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that at present knowledge tends to become obsolete both physically and morally much faster. Such amount of incoming information requires constant revision of curricula, screening of obsolete knowledge with the aim to include into curricula some necessary or more specified knowledge. If earlier educational plans and programmes could remain unchanged for years, at present, they undergo annual revision. Also, training courses require similar revision. Therefore, organization of educational process requires not only regular reconsideration of the logics of distribution of instruction materials and sequence of teaching disciplines, but also revision of demands with regard to studying them. There is an urgent necessity for maximum intensification of educational processes so that the quality of education in specialists training would be in conformity with rapidly changing realities. Intensification is firstly achieved by means of navigating the whole educational process towards professionalism and specialisation.

It means that education is limited to pragmatic minimum of knowledge and skills helping people to simply adjust to their narrow social and professional niche. Education acquired by people is nothing but education here and now. It is earthbound to specific and rather constricted conditions of existence and, without doubt, does not facilitate the integrity of spiritual development of a person. In such a way, mosaic-like education is built on perception of just separate, basically unconnected and isolated from each other chains of knowledge and a question regarding any integral structure of their relation is rather problematic. In this connection, Lyotard was undoubtedly right by having pointed out that fragmentariness of knowledge and its applied character have no need for a teacher's figure. A teacher per se is someone who tells stories and, by creating a thorough action, unites separate fragments together.

Mosaic-like and visual education is maintained by achievements of information technologies rather than by a teacher's personality. Nowadays, a teacher standing in front of an audience and communicating with it is regarded as an anachronism. Codoscopes, projectors, interactive boards, and the Internet are deemed to be attributes of up-to-dateness and quality. For this reason, e-courses, distant learning and eLearning in general are so popular nowadays. Moreover, getting education at present can to some degree be described as users surfing the Internet. The network represents a structural model of how the process of mosaic-like education is built. Any webpage is a colourful image, mosaic of "windows", banners, and hyperlinks without inner relations and logic. Information in an internet page is arranged visually. Logic

of arrangement is built on the grounds of statistical demand for information rather than on narration and temporality. The Internet gives a possibility to learn about some things at the expense of losing explanation and understanding of the world in general.

In this respect, interest in narrative schemes as a means of counter weight against disintegrating tendencies in education is quite understandable. Narrative structures, means and styles of narration, techniques and methods of teaching demonstrate specific and pedagogical attitude embodying in itself such characteristics as consistency, coherence, persuasion, integrity, and completeness.

Frederick Jameson defined narration as a means of reducing various dimensions and temporalities – elements of different levels, individual biography and social history, everyday micro rhythms and politically-economic macro rhythms, etc. – to a single entity [7:29]. Narrative unites different forms, i.e. phonetic, grammar and syntactic structures, narrative schemes, genre conventions, to produce such common perspective in which separate elements are proportionate and gain their significance. In this sense, narrative becomes an integrating factor joining separate facts, fragments, details, and odd stories together, and in this quality it is a guidebook of vision and understanding.

Narrative is a means of stimulating interest in theoretical thinking and theoretical knowledge. It becomes the instrument for development of reflective thinking and thoughtful attitude towards experience. Narrative is the environment where communities cultivating certain values are built and developed. Owing to the narrative method, a teacher can focus his/her efforts on discussing with the audience various sides of human relationships and behaviour, expanding and activating positive experience in solving problems under discussion. Explicatory nature of narrative allows it to serve as an instrument of influence.

A simple and easy-to-understand story resonating with a person's values develops in a person's consciousness casual frames necessary for a teacher and by doing so creates a motivational basis for certain behaviour. On many occasions, the author of this article had seen the power of narration. A story told is more expressive, exciting and interesting for students and they find it easier to associate it with their personal experience rather than theoretical presentations and abstract reasoning. Such stories are easier to remember, students give more meaning to them; the influence of such stories on students' behaviour is more powerful than that of logical constructions.

On the other hand, narrative allows students to learn about and understand the nature of these or those events. Narrative helps students to cognize themselves and find their place in the world. With the help of narrative, they apprehend and, in a sense, construct the meaning of human life. Students as everyone else like listening to stories; it is with the help of stories that people can be manipulated. Fairy tales, apologues, anecdotes, and tall tales appeal to a person's emotions rather than mind and logic. A correct and timely told story gives birth to a chain "emotion-conclusion-action". Having caused certain feelings in listeners, it is possible to make them arrive at necessary conclusions and then impel them to action. Therefore, if contents of pedagogical activity were made brighter and presented to students in the form of stories, they would be easier to remember, would be revised better, and would be more useful than abstract statements, pseudoscientific principles and didactic guidelines.

A characteristic feature of narration is interrelation of meaning and sense, individual and universal, unity of image and concept. At that, the image is enriched by a thought, is

intellectualized, whereas the thought is enriched by the image. According to S. Rubenstein, “concept and prefiguration are presented as an inseparable unity” [8:389-390]. The advantage of the narrative approach in pedagogical activity is the focus of cognition on integral perception of the subject of comprehension and understanding.

Mergence of image and concept facilitates a balanced combination of scientific analysis with synthesis owing to integrating properties of artistic and aesthetic image which, due to its integrity and completeness, prevents losing the whole in order to please details. Synthesis of image and concept in narrative makes it possible to combine production of theoretically-structured interpretations sensitive towards pedagogical details.

The narrative approach does not exclude other forms of pedagogical influence. Where delicate adjustment is needed, narrative is a priceless method. It goes without saying that it is rather difficult to transfer critical skills including thorough knowledge of the subject field with the help of narrative. It is unlikely that an exciting narration of events will allow students to learn a new language of programming. To acquire specific forms of knowledge, people rely on formal education and supplement it with self-education. However, tacit knowledge that goes along with professional activity is better transferred through narration.

Conclusion

Active process of development and realization of humanistic concept of education has been caused by the teachers’ striving towards comprehension of pedagogical experience, search of new forms and methods of training and education. Many teachers do understand how narrative approach works and more often consciously place their stake on this technology. Implementation of the narrative approach in the pedagogical field allows teachers to activate the students’ ability to understand theoretical texts, formulate problems, build concepts and reflect.

With the help of narrative, facts and events are selected and transformed into some kind of “plot” which explains why those events took place exactly the way they happened and not otherwise. Narrative arranges, organizes, convinces and sets a model of pedagogical activity focusing the audience’s attention on some phenomena and facts. Thanks to narration, heterogeneous phenomena are structured into a unified system, acquire sense and meaning in a social and communicative context. With the help of narrative, a subject identifies itself as a representative of a certain community and culture, introduces itself to a social audience, becomes familiar with and transmits a certain value system.

The narrative method acts as a means of sense institutionalization striving not merely for neutral objectiveness, but rather for the objectiveness of the sense of socio-cultural experience of a historical subject which identifies itself in a context of socio-cultural attitude towards the world. This peculiarity of narrative indicates that the contemporary nature of education has changed the teacher’s status. If earlier a teacher held a position of an all-knowing and all-understanding mentor, now his/her activity is characterized by involvement into a pedagogical process and development of this process. A teacher aims at expressing things that are to be conveyed to the listener. If a teacher through his/her narration fails to meet some conditions, he/she will get a negative feedback from listeners. By complying with conditions and through a successful combination of what is already known with something new, a teacher gets the attention of the audience.

From the pedagogical point of view, it is worth speaking about two types of narratives. First of all, these are narratives that are created and reproduced by a teacher. Secondly, these

are narrative created by students. Teachers can make use of narrations circulating in culture, and also can create original narratives. However, a teacher should keep it in mind that artificially created stories will always be less effective than genuine ones. Therefore, such forms of narration as letters, confessions, autobiographies, biographies, diaries, commentaries, portrait sketches, pedagogical aphorisms, and other texts-narratives give a teacher a possibility to make a dialogue with the audience and help students identify themselves in what they understand. Simultaneously, students create their own narrative texts (retelling, interpretation, report of their work, analysis of somebody else's actions, etc.) which provides conditions for discovering and developing the value system and independent thinking. The use of narrative by students serves as a safe means of humanization of education since it is in the genre of an independently born narrative work where the student's world-attitude is reflected. A teacher, taking position of equal collaboration, creates a context in which a student can make contact with his/her own and universal values, find or create a support group for preferable direction of his/her development.

Narration is some kind of means to do things by words. A story helps something to happen in a real life, i.e. narrative offers a model of behaviour which then is reproduced by a student in the real world [9:69].

The above-listed tendencies stipulated the appeal of teachers to narrative as a defining methodological principle of educational process.

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