

The individual, measure of its self-education

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Abstract

Increasingly and more intensely concerned about education in general, and formal education, in particular, we have almost forgotten about self-education. At first sight, it seems that it is no longer useful to anyone, to the extent that we're excited about training individuals capable to fully integrate in a hyper-competitive, hyper-technological and hyper-consumerist society. The study shows that self-education is our chance to take our lives back and start cultivating our inner nature.

Keywords: *self-education, education, lifelong self-education, teacher*

Introduction

However widespread the concept of self-education lately (and, in particular, within the scientific community of experts in education), it occurs rather episodically and hence equally inconclusive. It is not treated/investigated systematically, with seriousness and thoroughness as it surely deserves (and as each and every one of us deserves). Most of the times, we can find simple, transient and consequential suggestions, doubtful enterprises and unconvincing allegations.

We believe the time has come to stop and think about dealing more consistently with its significance in our lives (as individuals), in the life of the community and in the life of new generations. We believe, moreover, that it is worth discussing how our lives would (or might) look like when absorbed in

personal, uninterrupted, and lively pursuit of self-education. It is both important and wonderful to be preoccupied with a life based on self-education –, that type of existence waged in agreement with this. It is, we believe, formidable that our lives and that of future generations identify with self-education, *are self-education*.

Possible dimensions of self-education

So saying, it means that it is necessary and useful to insist (for as far as the powers of thought and our inner urge can carry us) on this moment and on this particular preoccupation with self-adjustment, fulfillment and self-actualization. In the first instance, there are three things we want to say about self-education:

The First

It is the time and the place where we are *alone*. We no longer have an (external) educator, we no longer interact with an educator (according to their wish and requirements), and we are no longer conditioned, warned, guided, and punished. We are no longer subject to authority, or power, or love.

It is just us, alone with ourselves: *we're in intra-communication and intra-relationship*. We're face-to-face with ourselves, same breath, same heart beat, same unmistakable destiny.

And because we have arrived (and we are) here, nobody requires us (or urges us) to become educated so that we adapt to the conditions (and the specificity) of the market, so that we acquire all sorts of skills, more or less necessary to our socio-economic integration and survival.

In a way, self-education is a detachment from external imperatives, emergencies, norms, constraints and rhythms. We're no longer letting ourselves be carried away and surrounded by the (loving and nurturing) attention of others. We no longer belong to those next to us (at home, school, church, and work). We are no longer their responsibility. *We are responsible for ourselves*.

Self-education is when nobody else prepares a curriculum for us (to be administered according to our "individual peculiarities and age"); where nobody else evaluates us (not even formative evaluations) based on scientifically developed objectives standards, approached in a didactic manner.

It is the period, the territory and the process by which we grow up to our soul's desire and where our minds search and imagine. It is an expansion and a deepening in understanding (outer and inner) world and our reflections on life.

Self-education has no objectives:

- When cohabiting with ourselves, *searches* result from anything and may lead anywhere. We let ourselves be carried away by it; we discover that our searches edify us, and that - as a matter of fact - our identity is closely linked to our searches. As human beings, we (always) have our searches, and with each/any search we go in one direction and we get somewhere: *to what we really are*;

- As a territory and time for searches, self-education is also *a horizon of clarifications*; as many clarifications as there are steps in self conquering, and, at the same time, in self-configuration. Clarification after clarification, we will end up in a continuous impulse to acquaint ourselves with what we are, with what we *discover* that we are.

We realize, therefore, that self-education is the most loyal and closest ally of self-knowledge. By searches and clarification we grow ever closer to ourselves, in our alleged and presumed depth. By self-education, we give us the chance to delve into ourselves and expand our existence. We conquer from within; we disturb our inner silence - so to speak - in order to be more familiar with ourselves. We threaten the self-understood status quo to take up (self) investigation, (self) discovery, and (self) creation.

In all this self-disclosure, self-knowledge and self-configuration, self-education does not come with more (or too much) love for oneself. Neither narcissism, nor histrionics is its healthy effect, but lucidity and self-clarification.

By self-education, we have an opportunity to get out of the unspecified, of misunderstandings, of inner disturbance, of the perpetual lava flow of internal awareness. It gives us an opportunity to grow, but not in the outside world, but in our inner world. *Self-revelation comes - simultaneously - with self-formation.*

In short, self-education brings, together with self-discovery, an increasing awareness and strengthening of self-consciousness. It is the support and spring of our conscience, the source of conquering the unknown in ourselves and of development from within.

The second

We know, or at least we suspect, that there is self-education. Sometimes, we talk about it.

J. Dewey (1972) stated somewhere that self-education is when an individual perfects their education (or that the real accomplishment of an individual's education is self-education).

More and more frequently, lately, we are talking about the need for education throughout life or about lifelong learning. This address tends to confiscate our concepts, approaches, attempts, it tends to limit our searches and - also - throw us to the discretion of interpellations, requirements and arguments of the existing (formal education) ideology.

We are so much urged to take up lifelong learning, that we have almost ruled out what *self-education throughout life* or *permanent self-education* might be. It seems that, finally, lifelong education designates that activity in which we remain for the rest of our lives at the discretion of *external* interests, objectives, courses and training methods designed and used by (institutionalized) specialized courts, required by the trends, operation and preservation of a certain society, at a particular time in the history of humanity (Paloş, Sava, Ungureanu, 2007). They insinuate as more (the most) useful and effective - the most appropriate, anyway - than the objectives, directions, searches and

clarifications that we would be capable of and to which we would eventually arrive on our own.

We might, instead, realize that *self-education throughout life is, as a matter of fact, the only real lifelong learning*; that it is the one that can restore us to ourselves (after a long and difficult period of formal/institutionalized education), that it is - in essence - our chance to belong to ourselves (together with our lives).

Thus, the alleged and enhanced care of those who cultivate and support lifelong learning is transformed, by self-education, in an organic (self) care and permanent self-clarification.

Self-education thus appears as the great chance to recover our life, understand all its uniqueness, to always reveal our own purpose and the (camouflaged) meanings of our existence.

The third

If approached from this angle, we might be able to understand that self-education is one of the most important conquests of a teacher. Maybe crossing the realm of self-education would happen during his/her human and/or professional life. This situation can lead us to a distinction to be made between: *teacher with education, but without self-education*, on the one hand, and *teacher with education and with self-education*, on the other hand.

Researching even further in this direction, we would find that the big secret of didactic grace, of pedagogical tact, is precisely the self-education of the individual behind the desk.

When being triggered, when teachers have been made aware of it and of the desire to pursue it/ develop it, they enter not only a new stage of their life, but also a new stage of their professional life. It is also possible that only when they discover self-education teachers no longer manifest any interest for outward development, for the institutionalized "steps" of ongoing training, but

for the inward development, the "steps" of self-clarifications, of self-training and growing from the inside, toward prosperity and spiritual well-being, to the benefit of the moral health of their students.

In this unusual context, we can reveal that the pinnacle of our human and professional fulfillment - as theoreticians, researchers and practitioners of education - is not being successful in a formal, compulsory examination, but that we have succeeded - if we indeed have - to touch upon the moment, the concept and freedom of self-education.

In short, an essential, decisive, and significant moment in our lives is the conquest, activation, and practicing of self-education. It is the chance of cultivating our inner nature.

Possible conclusions

Among the numerous and various problems of education, self-education deserves (much) higher consideration. It can manifest under the form designed and tailored by any of us. It is our creation as unique human beings.

In self-education, we are both source and destination. We got rid of the burden of formal education and the obedience to external rules and regulations. We will set them for ourselves - if and when they appear - in the light of the logic and development of self-education. They arise and consolidate on-the-go, where and when our self-edification dictates it, as an inner process that self-regulates while in operation.

In self-education, we're in another existential, cognitive and axiological territory. Through self-education, we have discovered that there is something other than external impositions related to bureaucratic calculations, wages, or prestige.

It is a charming and attractive spiritual exercise we make with ourselves; a long expected and welcomed partnership with ourselves (or intra-partnership).

It is, perhaps, the most appropriate education we can pursue in our life.

Self-education is an education of suspense, of spontaneity, of revelation, of surprise, wonder and creation. It then carries us - over and over again - to another hold, to another revelation, toward further clarifications. We end up in another dimension of life. We are not the same as before.

No matter how overwhelmed or absorbed by the problems and dilemmas/daily crises, self-education is in and working in us. We are now aware of the fact that we have a world inside us, which reveals itself to us from time to time. It creates us from the inside out.

By self-education, we learn to wait for ourselves and give us back to ourselves - as we've been able to discover and cleanse our spiritual inner world. Control dissolved. It's just us, in all our honesty and dedication.

Unlike education, self-education has another anatomy and another physiognomy.

It is our subjective anatomy itself: the anatomy of our thoughts and emotions, that will be structured according to a hidden logic, unknown, but miraculous nonetheless. We are aware that there is certain logic beyond us, but yet ours, of our spiritual way of being.

Self-education is the physiology of relentless pressures, coming to the surface from time to time, but operating deeply, continuously and feverishly.

Self-education supports and helps existential, social, psychological, and axiological self-configuration. It is always fueled by what (we think) is located in ourselves, thus keeping curiosity and anticipation alive in us. Desiring to get in possession of as much of the inner nature and reality, we'll let ourselves be carried away by what's inside us.

In short, self-education always facilitates the meeting with our selves. Through it, we protect and cultivate what we have inside; we - always - give more beauty and light to our being.

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