

## **SOCIOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND APPROACHES IN CONTEMPORARY HIGHER EDUCATION**

*PERSPECTIVAS SOCIOLÓGICAS E PEDAGÓGICAS NO ENSINO  
SUPERIOR: RELAÇÃO ENTRE O AMBIENTE EDUCATIVO E AS  
ABORDAGENS NO ENSINO SUPERIOR CONTEMPORÂNEO*

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### **ABSTRACT**

The paper explores the relationship between the educational environment and pedagogical approaches in contemporary universities. The study emphasizes the need for further research on the contribution of each of these aspects to the dynamism and flexibility of the educational environment, as well as the professionalism of educators. Particular attention is paid to the input of teachers in all areas of education both in the theoretical and empirical sense. The article also highlights the changes that stimulate the interrelation of all spheres of education and focuses on the inner differentiation of the vocational and upbringing aspects. This approach supports the unity of vocational and pedagogical culture in higher education. In addition, the study addresses the sociological perspectives in higher education in the context of its interaction with pedagogy and sociology, emphasizing the role of the latter in personality development. Particular attention is paid to the meaning of upbringing and scientific education in contemporary universities as active instruments affecting conviction in the necessity of education, especially in the light of recent research.

**Keywords:** Interrelation of education and upbringing in higher education. Social perspectives of the social humanistic approach.

### **RESUMO**

O artigo explora a relação entre o ambiente educativo e as abordagens pedagógicas nas universidades contemporâneas. O estudo salienta a necessidade de mais investigação sobre o contributo de cada um destes aspectos para o dinamismo e a flexibilidade do ambiente educativo, bem como para o profissionalismo dos educadores. É dada especial atenção ao contributo dos professores em todos os domínios da educação, tanto no sentido teórico como empírico. O artigo também destaca as mudanças que estimulam a inter-relação de todas as esferas da educação e centra-se na diferenciação interna dos aspectos vocacionais e educativos. Esta abordagem apoia a unidade da cultura vocacional e pedagógica no ensino superior. Além disso, o estudo aborda as perspectivas sociológicas no ensino superior no contexto da sua interacção com a pedagogia e a sociologia, salientando o papel desta última no desenvolvimento da personalidade. É dada especial atenção ao significado da educação e da formação científica nas universidades contemporâneas como instrumentos activos que afectam a convicção da necessidade da educação, especialmente à luz da investigação recente.

**Palavras-chave:** Inter-relação entre educação e formação no ensino superior. Perspectivas sociais da abordagem humanista social.

## Introduction

Pedagogy in the educational environment is understood comprehensively, in terms of all spheres of personal life, according to the basic essential characteristics of human beings. The requirements imposed on the teacher are enormous since they can act as a role model, a measure of the value of education and upbringing. It may be somewhat exaggerated to formulate that upbringing is accomplished through education. Conversely, it is also true that education is also performed through upbringing.

In our view, the reality of the operation of the educational environment consists of the fact that professional competence as a critical condition of higher education assumes that the student can acquire objective knowledge only if they make the respective mental effort. This epistemological stance is now beyond doubt, as is the fact that the relationship between education and upbringing maintains its original unity: upbringing is the formation of potentials (abilities) that precede the continuum (in the sense of a category that provides concreteness and realism) and, at the same time, it assumes students' acquisition of the necessary competencies, and not only them, but mainly – the skills of managing the internal and external perception of knowledge. For this, we believe, there is a need to purposefully develop quality education based on systemic theoretical-pedagogical, as well as psychological-pedagogical knowledge (since pedagogy certainly deals with education but leaves detailed theories of development to psychology, incorporating particular aspects of it into its subject matter). This knowledge we equate by its content to important personality characteristics (such as maturity, criticism, attitude to the world and, respectively, to society and culture, etc.) which should be aspired to and which are identified as the goals of upbringing in the educational environment of the university.

The purpose of this study was to determine the key social attitudes affecting higher education, as well as the role and the required set of competencies of the teacher.

## Methods

University educational and scholarly activities are grounded in educational psychology and research methods, including philosophy, historiography, and general scientific methodology. This supports the notion that the external world serves as the basis for the formation of the inner world of a person and contributes to the development and implementation of innovative pedagogical technologies, as well as the forecast of the development of pedagogical theory and practice. An important role is played by empirical evidence, its processing, and conclusions drawn from it.

Analysis of pedagogical activity and the role of the institution of higher education was conducted within the framework of humanistic and cultural approaches.

## Results and discussion

The existing social structures are now plagued by inconsistencies due to various altered systems of norms and tensions between the contexts of upbringing and behavior. University students are allowed to develop an identity because of the appropriate expectations imposed on them. Thereby, they receive a real opportunity for individualization. Thus, identity is understood as a creative skill of self-expression, always taking a stable position, which contributes, at the same time, to the flexibility of personality and adequate response to the constantly balancing identity, which may result from the inconsistency of expectations and norms and openness of the processes of interpersonal interaction in the present and future.

Professional competence, therefore, is not opposed to social relations, but in its function serves as an integral part of these relations (Dweck, 2006).

Importantly, there is an opportunity for students to grasp the internationalization of norms and their analytical reflection. Despite the existing discrepancies, this is also a condition for their participation in interpersonal and intercultural communication, considering the expectations of others. Furthermore, this creates the precondition for students to express their views through these norms, showing how they interpret them based on their upbringing, education, and cultural identity. This is especially true given today's ambiguity in the formation of identities that are imposed on a person and require a constant synthesis of conflicting identities, as well as the satisfaction of a person's interests (at least in part).

The university educational environment allows the potential for tolerance in the process of socialization as the assimilation of variability in the strategies of interaction for the flexibility of norm systems, a space for subjective interpretation, and an opportunity for the individual development of behavior. In this context, pedagogy actively, consistently, and systemically supports educational goals, since behavior and any changes in it, as well as effective social interaction, are contingent on the quality of education, general culture, assimilated norms, and a broad understanding of their social role. The systemic approach to the education and upbringing process at the university consists of the formation of specific comprehensively covered pedagogical aspects that require the simultaneous accomplishment of subject-specific, physical, moral, aesthetic, and labor education of students within an organically integrated educational environment. The major deficiencies in upbringing usually come precisely from isolated solutions to upbringing problems, which are insufficiently implemented in the context of family, labor, and aesthetics and, consequently, behavior, which is driven by mental, physical, and moral aspects.

Knowing a person authentically is very difficult as a goal and is possible only in their social environment as a means of comprehension. Education, which itself

sets a precedent for integrated solutions to emerging problems, focuses the humanistic stance of education on the person as the highest value. The educational environment should implement the general humanistic principle of harmonious personality development and the humane nature of interpersonal communication between its participants. This value orientation points to the only possible way of personality development: the active involvement of the student in this process.

Of importance is an individualized approach in the implementation of pedagogical methods, considering the individual characteristics of students. C. Fischer describes this approach as adaptive teaching: “In adaptive teaching, the focus is on teaching and design options of teachers who implement individual support measures based on pedagogical diagnostics and ultimately evaluate teaching activities. Open teaching, on the other hand, focuses on learning and thus on the activities of students” (our translation) (Fischer et al., 2014, p. 13).

Official documents at state and municipal levels also draw attention to the need to adapt the education system to the conditions and needs of the changing society: “Lifelong learning, the ability to react to changing framework conditions and skills will be core elements for future employment and thus a central component of a future-oriented skilled worker strategy. Skills will be a key competence in a digital working world for the majority of employees across all occupational fields. Social and communicative skills will also gain importance because the transformation changes the way people work. The constant new and further development, as well as working in the changing and possibly virtual teams, require higher cognitive flexibility, stronger problem-solving skills, as well as a willingness to cooperate, strong communication skills, self-organization, and empathy” (our translation) (Senatorin für Wirtschaft, Arbeit und Europa, 2023, p. 11).

The humanistic approach focuses on helping students to feel comfortable in the educational environment and cope with socialization problems, which are significant at different stages from a subjective and educational point of view. In this context, the teacher's work is seen as a value-semantic interaction, as a transformation of the ideas and ways of their pedagogical influences.

Reflecting on the role and image of the teacher, W. von Humboldt (1994) asserts that the teacher “need not be an 'accomplished scholar', but he must have 'a thorough knowledge of all that he teaches and insist on the same thoroughness in his pupils'” (p. 244).

The humanitarian approach is closely intertwined with the cultural approach as a specific scientific methodology for the comprehension and transformation of pedagogical reality in the university educational environment in the manifestation of three interconnected aspects: the axiological (value), technological, and personal-creative (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Taratuhina & Bleskina, 2017). The university educational environment is largely defined by students' belief in a teaching and research community committed only to the truth, rather reminiscent of a period when this image of teaching and research was exceptionally valued.

Striving for truth and scientific reasoning about the world and phenomena, the study of the individual and their capabilities, the mind, and its attitude toward truth preceded the emergence of higher education institutions (Faure et al., 1972).

The humanistic and cultural approaches advocate perceiving education as a value-semantic interaction focused on students' comfort and socialization and as a methodology for learning about and transforming pedagogical reality. Teachers should not only have a thorough knowledge of their subjects but also encourage a similar thoroughness in their students. The educational environment of a university depends heavily on students' trust in teachers and in the research community, which strives for truth and scientific understanding of the world and human nature.

The importance of a humanistic and cultural approach to education has been confirmed by many studies.

In the psychology of learning and pedagogy, well-known are the works of C. Rogers (1994) and A. Maslow (1943), which emphasize the importance of centering on the person and meeting their basic needs for effective learning. These scholars also emphasize the importance of considering the individuality of the student and their emotional state in the learning process.

In turn, Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory of learning emphasizes the role of socio-cultural context and interpersonal interaction in learning (Vygotsky, 1978, 1998; Wertsch, 1985).

Contemporary research also confirms the role of empathy, consideration of individuality, and the pursuit of truth in pedagogical practice. All of these aspects are central to humanistic and cultural approaches to learning. J.A.C. Hattie (2008) has conducted extensive analyses of meta-analyses and revealed the importance of transparent learning, including teachers' demonstration of truth and purpose in learning.

The effectiveness of particular teaching approaches can vary depending on the specific context, including students' age, subject matter, cultural and social factors.

## **Conclusion**

In today's world, education is the foundation of a society's life and development, which depends on innovation. Politics is gaining in scope and power, clearly affecting all economic aspects, including education. Universities, professors, and young professionals have almost no time for research or opportunities to carry out long-term projects, especially if these cost more than human resources. On the one hand, university education is about knowledge; on the other, the paradoxes underlying contemporary higher education do not allow research processes to be carried out to their logical results. The business approach brings its contribution to the delicate labor-intensive scholarly world in the form of a clear contrast between what university and business representatives often claim and attribute to each other's mutual ignorance. Cooperation between universities and businesses does not level the interdependence but rather demonstrates it. Without hiding a consumerist approach and seeing education as a means to personal ends, students prefer a business approach to science. Analysis of the faculty's contributions to students from their practice indicates that teaching at a university in a different way



from what is currently required would make more sense relying on a commitment to the elevation of science.

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