THE SCANDINAVIAN MODEL IN THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ROMANIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD

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Abstract:
This paper aims to highlight some of the basic traits which have defined Scandinavian education ever since the 19th century. At the same time, we will point out some influences exerted by the values and principles of Scandinavian education on the appearance and development of folk art schools in Romania in the interwar period. Through the contribution of Bucharest's Monographic School run by D. Gusti, the principles of the Scandinavian school principles were adapted to the Romanian 20th century cultural space and education, and their influence has endured even to the present day.
Keywords:
Education, culture, pedagogy, *laroverk*, gymnasium, *realskole*, principles, values.

The 19th and 20th centuries represent periods of such effervescent search and achievement of a significant improvement in both the Scandinavian and Romanian education and instruction system. In this paper we will try to represent axiological and normative concerns (related to education laws and principles) which have evolved in both Scandinavian and Romanian cultural space.

Essential educational aspects were proven to be an important part in this process and they are in the attention of authorities and policymakers from this part of the world – the northern part.

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Education prioritization as a problem of national interest is based, in northern culture, on "basic Scandinavian temper traits"[1] on the one hand, such as pragmatism, love of order, the replacement of abstractness with the focus on the actual, on real interaction, on life and naturalness and on the special development of the civic sense, on the other hand.

Here are some essential traits which define Scandinavian education: firstly, its democratic spirit and its respect towards the practical values of existence; and then its tendency to search at all costs the genuine equality of odds, to assure education access to any social category which desires it. All of these traits were established in the northern culture through well defined and perfectly applicable measures such as free studies (no school tuition), the well spread scholarship system and grants handed to private schools. Likewise, the majority of social actors interested in education development, the municipality and the students' parents, both had an important role in the environmental improvement and conditions in which the instructional and educational process is taking place. This implication of social factors in education is a result of the civic spirit which marks as a distinct value the Scandinavian cultural space. The extension of the creative spirit at all levels brought folk upper level schools (open universities were created at first at a theoretical level) to the very important role that they are now playing, through the contribution of Nicolaj F. Grundtvig's ideas and program, and thus put into motion, through the foundation of the first Folk University from Denmark, Roding, in 1844, with the help of Cristian Flor. His successor, Kristian Kold, will take over the Folk University's program and organization. There are 27 folk universities which were founded in Denmark from 1844 till 1864, which shows that they had a big success and a creative spirit founded on liberty – which animated them. It is important to highlight the fact that the lead principle of education must be liberty, combined with the consideration for people's prosperity. This concept is introduced to pedagogical thinking, a concept that will later be called "the northern

[1] G. Mialaret, J. Vial, *Histoire mondiale de l`education*, Tome 3, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1981, p. 223.

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concept of liberty, defined through the request that he who wants to be free must free someone else."[2]

Another fundamental disposition of Scandinavian culture (of the specific Scandinavian temper underlying the culture) is pragmatism, understood in the way of maintaining students, through education, in contact with the practical aspects of life. In this sense, two aspects are taken into consideration: the correlation of theoretical acquisitions with practical, student-centred formative strategies, as well as the attempt to adapt schooling to nature's rhythms, so that students would not be "separated" from the succession of the seasons, but more likely in accordance with it, as well as with the circadian rhythms.

This constant preoccupation for practical aspects and education values and principles has determined a series of great northern thinkers such as Tegner, Seijer, Almquist, alongside one of the greatest occidental pedagogues – N.F.S. Grundtvig, to devote a big part of their knowledge and activity to the reflections and considerations of the pedagogical field.

We will proceed by a synthesis of the most important evolutionary dates and phases of Scandinavian pedagogical thinking in the 19^{th} century, with a special focus on such countries as Sweden, Denmark and Norway. In the second part of the paper we will analyze some principles and values which belong to the educational context of Romanian pedagogy in the interwar period. The purpose of such an approach is to compare, contrast and point out certain aspects regarding the specificity of the concerns addressed by some prominent pedagogues – in both cultural spaces – Northern (Scandinavian) and Romanian, as well as to highlight the most general principles, laws and rules that govern pedagogical thinking pertaining to these cultures.

The founding of the New Elementary School in Sweden took place in 1828 – in order to apply a series of new and modern pedagogical methods. At the same time with the School Law establishment, in 1842, a new educational system was inaugurated, which lasted for over more than a century. The structure of this system included primary school, compulsory and tuition free – which was based on a period of 6 years and was

[2] E. Noveanu, D. Potolea, *Ştiinţele Educaţiei, Dicţionar Enciclopedic*, vol. 1, Published by Sigma, Bucharest, 2007, p. 150.

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established around the parish (every parish had a school which was functioning around a church, whose program was coordinated by a teacher, prepared for didactical culture). After this compulsory 6 years period, students could continue their studies, optional, by enrolling in a folk school, known as "*folkskold*".

An attempt to free education from church domination resides, for Sweden, in the establishment of some measures, through which secondary education with the duration of 6 years is placed outside religious institutions; these measures were put into practice between 1849 and 1878. These dispositions represent an attempt to secularize education, although religious education will always be an integral part of the scholar route instituted within secondary schools – the so called "*laroverk*".

In Denmark, too, primary compulsory education, instituted by law, lasts 6 years and its main purpose is to encourage and develop natural gifts, "to strengthen characters and to instill necessary knowledge"[3]. This educational system differs through the students' extraction – either rural or urban areas, as follows: regarding the students from urban areas, these will first attend 4 years of fundamental education in the first part of municipal schools (or "*grundskole*"), after which they can choose to continue their studies either through a secondary school route, with a duration of three years (*horedskole*), without finalizing it through an exam after the first 4. To continue their studies to a superior school level, students from the city could attend a practical school (*realskole*) or a high school (*gymnasium*).

Students from rural areas had a school system that was more adapted to the needs of their environment – depending on the rhythms of naure and agricultural work. They could attend a seven-year primary education, to which they added another complementary 4 years. These dispositions regarding the educational system and its structure were used in both Denmark and Norway; in the latter's case, it started with the law promulgated in 1848, which was later modified in 1860.

As for higher education, it was to evolve and develop significantly in the entire Scandinavian area, beginning with the second half of the 19^{th} century.

Thus, universities of Uppsala and Lund (Sweden), the one of Oslo (Norway) and of Copenhagen and Aarhus (Denmark), went through an

[3] G. Mialaret, J. Vial, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

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extensive development in the second half of the 19th century. Within some of them, we remark the establishment of some higher technical education institutions, including the Technical Institute in Stockholm, which was inaugurated in 1827 and became the Technical Superior School in 1870, the Chalmers Handcraft School in Gòteburg, which was founded in 1828 and earned its title of Superior School in 1914. It is also important to bear in mind that this remarkable development occuring within the educational system of northern countries in the 19th century was to encourage the appearance of a unified administration of universities – in Sweden – in 1993, through the establishment of a Chancellery of all Universities, in the attempt of introducing a unitary approach to the administration and management of these institutions experiencing a peak of cultural and scientific excellence.

Towards the end of the 19th century, the content of normal schools recorded two major innovating trends for that historic period. The first one regarded the detachment from traditional practices in education (through the almost exclusive study on the classical language and culture), by means of centring on the more technical aspects in the education field. And thus, we can see the decrease of the interest (for both the curricular level and the educational system in general) in the Greek and Latin languages, while subjects such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, natural sciences and modern languages elicit greater interest from both professors and students.

On the other hand, the weak international circulation of Scandinavian languages determined an interest in the early learning of widely used modern languages (thanks to the political and economical impact of the nations to which these languages belonged), namely French and English. The French language had priority, which was later to be superseded by English, to the detriment of the German language and of the Scandinavian languages, not much used outside the northern countries.

A marked contribution to education in the cultural space of northern countries is that of one of the most appreciated pedagogues, who was also a poet and a philosopher – the Danish bishop N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783 – 1872). He is considered as one of the most widely known and prolific pedagogues the west has ever seen. The Danish bishop and great divinity scholar studied theology at the University of Copenhagen. He was a professor at Schouboe institute (from Copenhagen), and the founder of the first "high folk school"

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(*folkhogskole*) at Slesvig (Rodding) in 1844. The purpose of these schools was to promote the fundamental values of Scandinavian culture of the time, namely the inculcation – through education – of religion and national folk traditions, as well as the cultivation of a free spirit – as a fundamental value of the Scandinavian spirit. Regardless of age, these schools encouraged the exercise of free spirit, which they would not "punish" by any exam, by any form of evaluation of the skills, abilities and knowledge acquired within these schools (or obtained within them). The methods that were used in these educational institutions are also subject to this general free spirit principle, namely, open discussions, investigations, seminars and "field documentation". The purpose of these methods is not to cultivate an encyclopedic culture – as in the case of the Princely Academy from Bucharest or Iasi – if we are to make a comparison with the Romanian interwar academy model. We can rather compare these Scandinavian folk schools with the Romanian institutes known under the name of "peasant superior schools", founded by D. Gusti, which were created after the Scandinavian example, as an autochthonous educational experiment within rural pedagogy, a subject we are going to return to.

Criticizing the school of his period, Grundtvig considered that it was emphasizing unilateral concerns, favouring either the study of classical subjects or science subjects – without being capable to guide people to a social and spiritual life. Through the founding of these institutions, the Danish bishop wants to achieve a "school for life", which would highlight and valorise the vital needs of the people it will thus prepare to access a greater culture. This pedagogical conception, innovative for its time in the cultural space of northern countries, is aimed at the nation's social elevation through culture and education, through civil freedom and, in this sense, through the establishment of the Folk University. This conception of education is presented by the Danish pedagogue in many of his works, including "*The Danish Four-Leaved Clover*", "*The School for Life and the Academy in Sorö*" (1838)[4].

Therefore, the purpose of education is, according to the Danish writer, to save the soul. One of education's finalities is also the respect

[4] E. Noveanu, D. Potolea, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

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towards Danish national identity, as well as its empowerment through the nation's education and culture.

The guidelines on which this educational conception is founded, as well as the essential lines which built up the pedagogical thinking of folk schools in Denmark, later reinforced by Christian Flor and Kristian Kold, beginning with the year 1844, represent the true values specific to the Danish education of the time. These guidelines can be summarized as follows:

1. Concerned with adult education, the Danish pedagogue considered that the perfect time for education is between 18 and 30 years.

2. The coordinating principle of education is the corroboration of freedom with the preoccupation for human prosperity. The northern concept of freedom can be understood through the requirement that he who wants to be free must free someone else.[5]

3. This type of innovative education is founded on an intrinsic value that is the present life of people. Regarding the past, education has a poetic-historical nature for life, in a way that, through this type of education the new generation is confronted with the wealth and knowledge of past eras.

4. An important characteristic of this type of "education for life" is the working world and the relation to it. Consulting books, as instruments of knowledge, is of a secondary importance, because the primary goal of instruction is to relate to life, to the concrete and unmediated experiences of existence.

5. The state's role is to implement and coordinate the introduction of of this type of education at an institutional level. In Nicolaj Grundtvig's opinion, the institutional solution for applying these educational ideas would be the founding of a Folk University, as a big institution, with a central positioning and financed by the state. There are two threats that could interfere with the concrete realization of such a school, and those are: on the one hand, the risk that this school would be reserved for the privileged, superior social categories or wealthy people, and, on the other hand, the threat of individualism that could be so promoted.

Expressing his desire that such a school should be the expression of the educational factor in its unity (in its full form), the Danish pedagogue proposes even the subjects that should be approached by the different

[5] *Idem*, p. 510.

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disciplines taught within such an institution: the national history, basic ethical principles and the present social situation. Regarding the study of religion in school, Grundtvig is against treating religious topics within the school premises, therefore he is against them *being thought in schools*; the reason he invoked is that religious beliefs can be very different, or students in schools should study what a whole society agrees upon, a content that can establish a group's unity. All the citizens of a country should learn the same historical and cultural traditions, thus forming a national identity specifically mediated by school.

Within such an "education for life" model, the educational relation teacher-student is called "lived interaction". The sense and significance of this educational relation is that "*it is characterized through freedom, life and naturalness. The Danish pedagogue and philosopher believes that education must correspond to the people's identity which it addresses. This identity has the brand of people's history and it is relevant in its language, sayings, myths etc. For Grundtvig, education has the purpose of understanding the historical conditions of life, what people have in common, and on this basis, it encourages the upshots of education for life.*"[6]

This original institution of a "*high folk school*" owes its big success to the far-reaching aspirations and values profoundly defining of the Scandinavian temper. Their attendant educational goals spread to the other northern countries, and later on to many other European countries.

This type of school was embraced almost immediately in Sweden and Norway and it remains functional today. This kind of institution developed and was the object of some attempts of imitation, being used in several countries around the globe. This perspective on schooling, as well as its constitutive principles, exemplifies an attempt to take education and turn it into the art of living, adapted to living personalities inserted in the "now and here" reality of life. The proliferation of these folk schools was to be achieved in the Scandinavian cultural space and to generate, thoroughout the space of the northern countries, an extensive movement of free confrontation of ideas, of discussions arising from the same instinct regarding the numerous folk academies, which spread widely in the last quarter of the 19^{th} century. Within them there were study groups devoted to every subject of interest – from the most practical and concrete to the most intellectual and abstract, night courses, folk education movements, adult

[6] E. Noveanu, D. Potolea, *op. cit.*, p. 511.

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education – all of these being of real interest for the Scandinavians, either for the acquisition of a foreign language, for the development of some artistic or handicraft talent. This determined people to come out of their isolation and get involved in open discussions, in confrontations of ideas which accustomed them to a way of learning without constraints or limits.

In Romanian pedagogy we can find some of the principles at the basis of the establishment of superior folk schools in the Scandinavian cultural space.

These schools were initially founded on grounds of national character namely, the temper, the thinking and living principles of the Scandinavian world; their own prolific character, their practical value have determined their being taken over and their proliferation in other countries around the globe, outside the northern space, including Romania.

In the Romanian cultural space of the interwar period, a favorable context was created to accommodate the model of such superior folk schools – in the rural areas. Certain education principles (pedagogical principles) resonated with those in the Scandinavian area, in spite of the huge space-time distance which sepatating the two cultures (a century had elapsed since Grundtvig's project and the actual establishment of a superior folk school in Denmark in 1844 till the implementation of this model in Romania).

Many ideas existing in the northern area – regarding the principles and values of education and the different structure of education in the rural area – unlike the urban area – can be also found in the Romanian cultural space from the interwar period. In accordance with this, we will mention one of the most important and prolific Romanian sociologists – who also addressed the pedagogical field, Dimitrie Gusti (1850 – 1955). He was a remarkable and cultured man, a pedagogue, sociologist, professor, and the minister of Instruction, Cults and Arts between 1933 and 1934.

Gusti is especially known for his sociological research, as well as for the initiative of founding the Monographic School from Bucharest, whose mentor and coordinator he was. However, we can't approach the pedagogical conception of the renowned Romanian sociologist without first highlighting some important aspects of his sociological conception.

Continuing the ideas of C. Dimitrescu – Iasi, who, at the end of the 19^{th} century, had made sociology the foundation of pedagogical thinking – D. Gusti achieved their their application within a complex work of research.

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