

Review of: "The End of Objectivity and Subjectivity in Education Sciences"

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This article is very interesting and addresses a most relevant subject. The author asks good questions and his reflection is very well supported. Both the content and the form of the text are of high quality. It is a text with truly original content whose relevance is obvious. Probably the greatest virtue of this text is to make the reader think deeply. I will therefore share here some of the thoughts that came to me on reading this excellent contribution to the sciences of education.

First, let's clarify a few things.

In epistemology, in the eternal debate on objectivity and subjectivity, we too often forget that the first is thinkable only through the second.

Universalism: confusion !

Those who question universalism demonstrate their epistemological indigence. For them, there would be no truth but only representations. Claiming universalism would in fact be a way of concealing its domination. This is a misunderstanding of what universalism is. This is not a reality but a regulating ideal (an aim, a value). Therefore, to affirm that universalism does not exist in fact and that we cannot attain it, is to confuse the level of values (an aim, a regulating ideal) with the level of facts. Going from the assertion that there are only situated positions - which is obvious - to that universalism as a (targeted) value is illegitimate is a completely absurd posture.

Confusion between research and science !

If research is done by trial and error, that a part of subjectivity can slip in, that errors are possible, science is the product of this same research, imperfect of course, but analyzed, criticized, tested, peer-reviewed; which, in the end, constitutes a body of knowledge that a discipline recognizes as solid.

Confusion in the truth!

We often hear it said these days that the only people allowed to talk about something are those who have been through it: only black people can talk about their experiences, only women can talk about women, only immigrants can talk about immigration experience. This is a confusion between truth in the epistemic sense (that pursued by research) and truth in the sense of authenticity. To confuse the two is to run the risk of taking subjectivity as the basis of scientific knowledge. However, scientific knowledge is constructed precisely by distancing oneself from subjectivity.

Let's add that, there are two antagonistic currents in epistemology. First of all, the currents grouping the approaches of

correspondence and coherence where the language is transparent, not problematized, the theory says the world as it is: Structural vision: the theory reflects the structure of reality; Ontological vision: the theory brings to light entities that exist as they are. Second, currents bringing together consensualist approaches: language is problematized because it has the power to "constitute" the world, theory is a tool for giving meaning to reality.

In the human and social sciences (therefore in the sciences of education) there can be no real epistemological break between the subject and the object as we find in positivism and postpositivism. That is to say that there cannot be a radical demarcation between science and common sense either. Thus the knowledge produced unfolds in the same ontological field as other social practices. However, this does not lead to canceling the specificity of the scientific gaze. Interpretation and research practice are not external to the object so that theory is a moment of praxis (Freitag, 1995).

In his work entitled "Anthropology in the Absence of Man", sociologist and philosopher Fernand Dumont proposes an epistemology of relevance for the human and social sciences instead of an epistemology focused solely on analysis of methods and construction of the object. For him, "the epistemology of truth" (which dominates almost unchallenged the scientific world) has serious limits, including that of leaving aside the questions – however crucial for humans – of ethics and relevance. This means that "the epistemology of truth" relegates work for the human community to the background (the relevance of what is produced as knowledge). Thus, the knowledge produced is appreciated solely on the basis of its truth, independently of its relevance for the human community. The human and social sciences and therefore the sciences of education, by explicitly assuming ethical questions, therefore by adopting an epistemology of relevance, would be directly crossed not only by the question of the truth of knowledge but also by the question of their human relevance. They would work not only for the truth but also for a meaningful (relevant) truth for human communities.

The sciences of education undoubtedly have a key role to play in education and the development of its collective orientations. They are an essential agent of collective self-reflexivity. But, to fully play this role, the sciences of education would have to turn their backs on both classical scientism and the managerial orientation (currently dominating). In doing so, they would reconnect with a certain tradition (from the humanities). However, by fully assuming their heritage, the sciences of education could then fully play their pedagogical role.

In the sciences of education, we must articulate three questions: 1- the question of values; 2- the question of rationality; 3- the question of feasibility. In addition, the sciences of education must bring together two epistemologies: a- that of science which aims at the truth; b- that of practice which seeks efficiency. Thus, the sciences of education can be thought of as: sciences of explanation (nomothetics); sciences of interpretation (hermeneutics); sciences of right action (pragmatico-praxical). The sciences of education can feed on practical experience but they must also be wary of it and criticize it because knowledge based on experience, if it makes it possible to know, can also delude (lead to misunderstanding) ; not to mention that, most of the time, it relies more on intuition than on reason. The fact remains that the sciences of education cannot but situate themselves in relation to experience (so valued by teachers). However, we will then remember that knowledge based on experience is rather utilitarian, centered on facts (which are then weakly problematized and taken for granted), not integrated into a coherent system and quite resistant to change. On the other hand, scientific knowledge tends to focus on the relationships between phenomena, to fit into a (theoretical) system and to

integrate change.

The results of the sciences of education should at the same time be in the truth, aim at efficiency and compete with justice. In other words, the sciences of education must be interested in logos, be anchored in ethos and rooted in pathos.

This means that the scientific nature of the sciences of education cannot be dissociated from their emancipatory project because research is finalized in the first place by the social use that it allows. However, in our societies, on the whole, education aims to increase the autonomy of the subject. Therefore, the search for proof alone cannot prove everything in the sciences of education; the search for meaning is just as necessary. We then understand that in the sciences of education, the question of values constantly arises as elements regulating action.

The sciences of education must therefore always navigate between the true and the good without sacrificing one for the other. A true thing is not necessarily desirable in education. But, a desirable thing is not necessarily valid (true). And, the true and the good are not necessarily feasible (or effective).

The researcher in educational sciences must therefore accept to experience tensions between postures that are often difficult to reconcile. It will aim at both the truth without forgetting the good (the values) and the feasible. Uncomfortable posture if there is one but how stimulating.

In short, while proposing models of intelligibility of reality (which speak the truth), the researcher in educational sciences also suggests propositional models which respect the good, the fair and the feasible.

In closing, I wish to congratulate the author of this text and I hope that my modest remarks will be able to nourish his reflections.

References...

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