PELLA CALOGIANNAKIS & THEODOROS ELEFTHERAKIS

CLASSROOM AND SOCIALIZATION: A CASE STUDY THROUGH AN ACTION-RESEARCH IN CRETE, GREECE

Abstract

The classroom, the teacher and the students, mostly, through their activities and contacts, as well as their daily presence and personality form the classroom atmosphere that is unique and different from any other (Bikos, 2004: 104. cf. also: Bakirtzis, 2002) and it helps or hinders the school progress of each student and school process in general. In this action research we tried to record the typical situation of social interaction between members of a classroom, that is, we investigated its structure and function, in order to see whether its authoritarian, democratic or promiscuous function affects the interaction-meeting, the relationship-interdependence and interaction between students as well as between students and the teacher.

Introduction

Social scientists and scholars were led to a theoretical micro-optical approach of social phenomena, after a long persistence in macro-optical vision of society and its subsystems, one of which is the institution of education. Indeed, many research efforts that have preceded it, and sociological theories that have been recorded (Nikolaou, 2009: 30-50) show that macro-factors (economy, politics) have an important influence on school development and student performance. However, the effect of micro-factors, such as the individuals themselves, action and communication between them, can be equally important (Gogou, 2010: 237, 256; Nikolaou, 2009: 50-54; Lamnias, 2001: 175-176. cf. also: Calogiannakis, 1993: 12-13; Calogiannakis, 2002a; Calogiannakis, 2002b; Calogiannakis, 2003; Eleftherakis, 2009: 76-80).

Research Methodology

In the present study, with the sociometric test (Moreno, 1953; Jennings, 1948; Moreno, 1970) we detected and recorded some social and political skills of the students of this classroom (e.g. popularity, leadership) and after the recording of this overall environment of this classroom (authoritarian, democratic or promiscuous) we tried to see how this affects the socialization and learning process of pupils in this class. Also, we compared the results of the sociometric test, both in relation to the initial estimates of the teacher and, in relation to two different measurements-recordings, that we investigate, that is, the popularity, sympathy and popularity-leadership skill of the students in the classroom. In this way, we can understand why differences arise with the recordings of sociograms either between different skills (sympathy, leadership) or between teacher's predictions-expectations in relation to sociometric recordings of the students. Our aim is to design an appropriate pedagogical and educational intervention, so that the teacher will attempt to resolve

problematic situations in the classroom in order to promote a healthy socialization of the students.

The methodological techniques used were: sociometry, for measuring the attraction or repulsion between the students (Berg, 1998: 160) and mapping the internal dynamics of the classroom (Gurvitch, 1947; Maisoneuve, 1966; Paquette, 1979; Bastin, 1970; Parlebas, 1992; Kogoulis, 1994: 54-55); and interview, a very useful tool, which has enabled us to achieve a dual purpose: a) the 'gathering of information'; b) the 'supply of information' to the teacher to promote his actuation.

Research questions - Results - Discussion

This action-research conducted during the school year of 2010-11, in the second grade of a primary school in Rethymno, Crete, Greece that consisted of 17 students (8 boys and 9 girls) and a teacher who was participating in the research.

Our research was identified and designed by basic research related concerns regarding:

a) Investigation of the teacher's accuracy of subjective opinion-expectation for the students.

b) Does the use of a multi-methodical approach such as action-research, with the sociometric test and the interview help the teacher to identify the specificity of each student ranking him to a category to sociometric status (popular, average, controversial, neglected and rejected) (Coie, Dodge & Coppoteli, 1982) and to the formation of a more integrated view of the class as a group?

c) Does the combination of the quantitative sociometric method with the qualitative interview method, in the particular action-research, have the ability to create opportunities and educational tools for troubleshooting in the classroom? Otherwise, the collection of reliable data makes possible the composing of the pedagogical intervention of the teacher, who thereafter will be helped to differentiate the individual or team pedagogical or learning situations and, finally, to achieve the transformation of a loose or non-developed team to a team "*with constant composition, high tolerance for integration, and sophisticated social level*" (Bikos, 2004: 104).

d) Is there any differentiation between socialization and political socialization – social and political skills – i.e. is there a difference in the popularity of students deriving from either the exuded sympathy, or the leadership skill?

Firstly the interview with the classroom teacher took place, in which he gave, initially, data for each of his students and then he made a prediction for the popular, the neglected and the rejected students, in relation to the popularity they have among their classmates, which derives from their existing sympathy or their leadership skill. During November the sociometric test was given to the students for the first time. The questions were about the selection and the rejection of up to three classmates in relation to the sympathy-antipathy and the leadership they show (cf. Appendix). Specifically, the questions were: 1st question (Leadership Skill). "*Your teacher has to leave the classroom for a while. Which one of your fellow classmates do you think that could take his place or not for a while? Can you think of someone else instead? Who else?*" 2nd question (Sympathy). "*You have agreed with your mother to invite some of your classmates over at home on Saturday. Which one of your fellow students would you prefer to invite and which one not? Who else?*" The

test results in the form of sociometric matrix were discussed in a second interview with the teacher. Then the educational intervention was designed (cf. Eleftherakis, 2009: 80-93), which was implemented by the teacher throughout the school year to eliminate the problems of both the whole class and some of its students (Queiroz, 2000: 109-117) and which included individual and team work with the parents (Kourkoutas, Eleftherakis, 2008). In May, towards the end of the year, first in a third interview-prediction the teacher was asked his opinion about the popular, the neglected and the discarded students and then the sociometric test was applied for the second time to the students of the class. The findings-results of the new test were discussed with the teacher in comparison with both the predictions of the teacher and the results of the first application of the test, into a fourth interview with him.

The results of this action-research are quite a few in number as well as very interesting and can be categorized in relation to the assumptions of the research. In what follows we present two of our main research results.

A. Criteria for student selection or rejection of their peers

According to some researchers (cf. Bikos, 2004: 100-101) the age of children sets the criteria by which they choose or reject their classmates during the sociometric test. In our study the age group of our sample is between the ages of Kindergarten to the second grade of the Primary School, where in most of the surveys we find as criteria: the public game, joint activities, sharing something, as well as the readiness to help, while criteria for rejection of their classmates are: violence / aggression, annoying behaviour and conflict for an object.

This research through teacher's observation and children's references showed as criteria for selecting students of the classroom in the following order: friendship among children; socialisation of the child (e.g. popular); emotional expressiveness; affinity; shared experiences (coexistence of the nursery, living in the same village / neighbourhood, participation in the same extracurricular activities such as dance or football); personality (mature, coherent); common interests; level of learning; appearance (cleanness, nice clothes); leadership skills. On the other hand, criteria of rejection are: annoying behaviour; aggressiveness; verbal aggressiveness; poor performance in courses; past bad experiences; poor interpersonal relations; appearance (sordid clothes, hair, lice, body weight); indifference for the lesson and learning activities. Finally, the criteria that can characterise a student as neglected, are: reduced social behaviour; non-existent interpersonal communication; non-expressiveness; reduced confidence; reduced or non-active participation in the lesson.

B. Overview of class

We do not detect "cliques" to be created in the classroom, but only a few mutual preferences, most of which are positive. The function of the order has normalized enough, but what is detected compared with the first and second application of the test is that: a. the popular students have been increased; b. the neglected and the rejected have been increased; and c. the controversial and the average students have become less. This seems to suggest that with the efforts and interventions of the teacher, the collaborative spirit and cohesion social in this classroom has been increased, but the gap between the first and the last students has grown. So, the open

issue of Sociology of Education regarding equality opportunities in education surfaces again, which transforms to an unequal / greater supply of assistance to the trailing (differentiate and individualised teaching). Also it is apparent from this survey that when the function of the classroom is being democratised, they all develop better, and those who start from a better basis are favoured even more. However, in the specific classroom there were some students who showed a behaviour that was difficult to detect by simple observation of the teacher and his subjective approach or even the simple analysis of sociometric matrix, instead comparative quotations between the four matrixes were needed, namely between the first two (first application) and the second two (second application). These comparisons yielded many of the above mentioned results and created the conditions for educational interventions.

Conclusions

In this research-action the interviews and sociometric tests created favourable conditions for research and intervention in the process of socialisation and political socialisation of the classroom. At the same time this research provided interesting results, which alone may not be of general applicability, but with their presentation to the scientific community and with further comparative approach, they will become evidence to elongate sociological and educational science and truth.

Important conclusions, some of which require further study are:

a. It was clearly revealed from this research that the subjectiveness of the evaluation–judgement–expectation of the teacher needs support to become more objective and useful. As the first and second interview–prediction of the teacher for the popularity of his students although generally successful, it included several errors which were less or more important and also they document the deficit of the subjective evaluation and the great need of subsidiary objective measurement, which is provided by the sociometric tests in combination with other forms of qualitative research recording. The enthusiasm of the teacher for participating in research-action was big, and as a result his mobilization was evident both from his activation, and the results of the second application of the test. But, on one hand the second prediction was too optimistic and on the other, the realistic acceptance of reality, finally led the teacher to the acceptance of the need to carry on with the efforts in the classroom because some stereotypes are well rooted in the mind of students and it is difficult to be eradicated from it.

b. The use of multi-methodical approach is indeed very useful in social research (Cohen, Manion, 1994: 321), so the variety of methods (research-action, sociometric test, interview) provide unlimited help into spotting weaknesses of both students and the classroom as a whole, as well as creating teaching tools to address these problems. The intersection of the results of tests revealed weaknesses of the classroom, the students and the composition of the research-action and interviews enabled a researching and intervention effort with wonderful results.

c. The effort to identify the difference between socialization and political socialization -social and political skills- (empathy, leading ability) showed that students in the second grade can both understand and distinguish these different skills of human personalities.

d. Intercultural education still requires significant effort, with specialized programmes and education of the teacher in order to reach its full potential in this classroom and generally in the Greek school. This is because the knowledge-centric school orientation and the societal prejudices, showed once again that, despite the efforts of the teacher, poor school performance and learning difficulties of weak students stigmatize them and consequently they affect the rest of the students, who are influenced by their learning and social environment (parents, neighbourhood) and so they become interested more in their progress and learning performance than in the development of their sociability and their social skills, such as empathy and acceptance of the different.

e. That class needs further care and educational intervention, while further research will be very helpful and very interesting.

Bibliography

Bakirtzis, K. (2002). *Communication and Education*. Athens: Gutenberg (in Greek).

Bastin, G. (1970). *Les techniques sociométriques* (3e éd. mise à jour. ed.). Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Berg, B. (1998). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Bikos, K. (2004). *Interaction and social relations in the classroom* (5th ed). Athens: Ellinika Grammata (in Greek).

Calogiannakis, P. (1993). *Greek primary school students and political socialization.* Athens: Grigoris (in Greek).

Calogiannakis, P. (2002a). Introductory note. In N. Polemikos, M. Kaila & F. Kalavasis (Ed.), *Educational, political and family psychopathology*. Vol. D: Pathogenicity dimensions in socio-political context (pp. 23-28). Athens: Atrapos (in Greek).

Calogiannakis, P. (2002b). The education of the citizen in the 21st century: some aspects and dilemmas. In N. Polemikos, M. Kaila & F. Kalavasis (Ed.), *Educational, political and family psychopathology.* Vol. D: Pathogenicity dimensions in socio-political context (pp. 337-347). Athens: Atrapos (in Greek).

Calogiannakis, P. (2003). Political socialization and school: comparisons, views and perspectives. In: A. Kazamias, L. Petronikolos (Ed.), *Education and Citizen. Citizen Education in Greece, Europe and the World* (pp. 151-172). Athens: Atrapos (in Greek).

Cohen, L. & Manion, L. (1994). *Educational research methodology*. Athens: Metaixmio (in Greek).

Coie, C., Dodge, K. & Coppoteli, H. (1982). Dimensions and types of social status: a cross-age perspective. *Developmental Psychology*, 18 (4), pp. 557-570.

Eleftherakis, Th. (2009). Political socialization and education: The education of democratic citizenship in school. In B. Oikonomidis, Th. Eleftherakis (Ed.), *Education, Democracy and Human Rights*. Athens: Atrapos (in Greek).

Gogou, L. (2010). *The understanding of social phenomena and perspectives of social research*. Athens: Grigoris (in Greek).

Gurvitch, G. (1947). Microsociologie et sociométrie. *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, vol III, Paris: Seuil, pp. 24-67.

Jennings, H. H. (1948). *Sociometry in group relations: a work guide for teachers.* Washington: American Council on Education.

Kogkoulis, I. (1994). *The classroom as a team and collaborative teaching and learning.* Thessaloniki: Kyriakidis Bros (in Greek).

Kourkoutas, I., Eleftherakis, Th. (2008). Evaluation of a pilot counselling program for the promotion of parents-teachers communication. *Scientific Journal of Psychological Society of Northern Greece*, Vol. 6, pp. 219-246 (in Greek).

Lamnias, K. (2001). *Sociological theory and education. Distinct approaches*. Athens: Metaixmio (in Greek).

Maisoneuve, J. (1970). *La dynamique des groups*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Manuel de Queiroz, J. (2000). *The School and its sociologies.* Athens: Gutenberg (in Greek).

Moreno, J. L. (1934). *Who shall survive?* New York: Beacon House.

Moreno, J. L. (1970). *Fondements de la sociométrie*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France [first ed. 1954].

Nikolaou, S.-M. (2009). *Socialization in school*. Athens: Gutenberg (in Greek).

Paquette, C. (1979). *Techniques sociométriques et pratique pédagogique*. Québec: Ed. NHP.

Parlebas, P. (1992). *Sociométrie réseaux et communication*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Prof. Dr. Pella Calogiannakis
pkalogian@edc.uoc.gr

Dr. Theodoros Eleftherakis

University of Crete
Greece

Appendix

Matrix sociometric test

University of Crete
Faculty of Education
Department of Preschool Education

Sociometric test	
Primary School of Rethymno	**School year: 2010-11**
Classroom: B	**Total No. of students: 17**
Name of pupil: .... (…)	
(Name) (Initial letter adjective) (alphanumeric)	
Father: Occupation:	
Education:	
Mother: Occupation:	
Education:	

Question 1: Leadership	
Your teacher has to leave the classroom for a while. Which one of your fellow classmates do you think that could take his place for a while? Can you think of someone else instead? Who else? Who else?	
(First application)	(Second application)
1 .... 2 .... 3	1 .... 2 .... 3 ....
For the same reason, your teacher has to leave the classroom for a while. Which one of your fellow classmates do you think that could not take his place for a while? Who else? Who else?	
(First application)	(Second application)
1 .... 2 .... 3	1 .... 2 .... 3 ....

Question 2: Sympathy	
You have agreed with your mother to invite some of your classmates over at home on Saturday. Which one of your fellow students would you prefer to invite? Who else? Who else?	
(First application)	(Second application)
1 .... 2 .... 3	1 .... 2 .... 3 ....
For the same reason, you have agreed with your mother to invite some of your classmates over at home on Saturday. Which one of your fellow students would not like to invite? Who else? Who else?	
(First application)	(Second application)
1 .... 2 .... 3	1 .... 2 .... 3 ....