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Something to learn: A conflictive relationship among students and lecturers

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The present article is a narration of the author's own experiences and comments in teaching philosophy in tourism careers. In spite of the inevitable growth of tourism, ethic issues are not appropriately developed in line of the professions. In Argentina, students, like practitioners, are concerned about ethics in tourism even though they have no further idea about what it means. It is often assumed that tourism is related to travelling, hedonism, pleasure and trivial things, but students should realize that a career in tourism comprises many other issues that are not taken into consideration. Under such a context, this paper demonstrates how the professional paradox not only explains the conflicts between students and professors, but also resolves the ambivalent feelings experienced by students at the time of graduation. In this line, new practices and suggestions are inevitably needed in educative issues.

Key words: Tourism, university, professional paradox, conflict.

INTRODUCTION

Today, tourism is considered as a growing industry which attracts more and more students throughout the world, and also in Argentina, particularly. Under this context, let me relate my proper experience in teaching philosophy in careers related to tourism. Most likely, tourism is trivialized as a vehicle towards experiencing leisure, hedonism and relaxing aside from work. And many tend to see it as underestimating scientific basis.

It looks as though tourism has nothing to do with scientific perspective than "happiness or lack of responsibility". Apart from this point, a lot of students assume the last period of their studies as a traumatic matter. Indeed, hints to that effect prompted the present essay. In fact, I had been noticed in a preliminary interview by a Chancellor that students have lacked respect from some lecturers; this statement was reinforced at the time of speaking with my colleagues. The group at hand was about to graduate as guides in tourism. In addition, I received the appointment of lecturer in Philosophy, Ethic and Deontology for two courses, to be taught to 18 and 25 students, respectively.

In my first day at this university, I have bolstered a dialogue with my colleagues while drinking a coffee. Once and once again, my colleagues emphasized about their students not having any interests in studying or

participating in classroom. At that instance, I had no idea about the causes or if it was a surface manifestation of a much more deep-seated issue.

Initially, I supposed that lecturers (before me) show their fears, feelings and frustration to their students. Sincerely, I was afraid of not only making a bad impression, but also assessing myself as a bad lecturer. Preliminarily, this appeared to be a serious challenge for me. Also, the following lines are fully based on my experience in this matter. I had never seen anything like this before. Though not extensively and formally presented, the present paper is aimed at discussing the troublesome relationships between lecturers and students in Argentine superior education.

DISCUSSION

The profile of local and regional context and expectations over superior education needs a multiple diagnosis and newer interpretative perspectives. In general, the papers deal with the problematic technology in the background of modern pedagogic necessities. Theoretically, these works valorize the reflection of real professional practices and experience in the field of teaching.

Most specifically, Juan Orellana explains to us that education grants people an appropriate involvement as well as adaptation to environment. Today, mass media and information have revolutionized the way of perceiving and transmitting the proper experiences. That way, even though visual communication seeks novelty in all their dimensions but the concept of creation is based on the daily search for practical experiences and experimentation. Most likely, mankind has plenty of doubts that make them to transform the environment, alternating technology with new sensations. Basically, knowledge and investigation are natural proofs of curiosity in the heart of whole civilizations. Philosophically, the search of human's development allows them a synthesis between reason and praxis.

In accordance to Orellana, Pereyra Maria Laura analyzes the genesis of professor-student liaison by examining a film entitled *la lengua de las Mariposas*. Based on conductism as frame-work, Pereyra argues that knowledge is an issue that is continuously elaborated internally through experience with others. Learning process is transformed by new experiences, incorporating a reflexive interaction with environment. The importance of learning is not only related to the content of what we teach, but the necessary channels used for that end. Under that context, the film in question narrates the history of a child of 8 years old who lives in a Galicia, Spain (contextualized roughly in 1936) wherein all reform advances in regards to education were reversed returning to an epoch of shadows.

From her point of view, Maria Laura Pereyra assesses the film, noting that students do enter schools with a previous phenomenological background in experiences and traditions that sometimes do not match with educative institution's rules. In combination with two antagonist streams (theories) in education like constructivism and conductism, Pereyra realizes that student and teacher's encounter encourages a reflexive dialogue to create a bridge between ideas and experiences. Quite aside from this point, school should be converted in a privileged site where professors intend to wake up student's fascination for knowledge. However, that is surface manifestation of a much more deep-seated issue. Sometimes, students' lack of interest in formal education is related to fears of assessments, a poor skill in writing, lack of interests in reading literature as well as a-critical overview over political topics.

As a result of this, it is an interesting contribution the article written by M. Rosa Rago aimed at promoting in students a critical glimpse amidst a convulsed world. The author contends that sometimes teachers are obliged to adapt the previous student's knowledge to the scope of superior education. The objective of a university is to offer to students, the likelihood in participating in the construction of their proper pathway towards professional insertion in which case the curricula may be accompanied by a critical view. One of the main problems that

current education has left unresolved is that students are unable to analyze and criticize which part of knowledge may be incorporated and may not. That way, the planning of syllabus is of vital importance at the time of giving students necessary weapons for a potential practitioner's performance. Different essays in conjunction with a direct involvement will result in more interest and motivation in the process of learning.

In addition, just as problems wake up questions, so also doubts are vital for the formulation of answers. In writing an essay, students are not only forced into interpreting a specific reality but also merge their own experience with new solutions. In such a process students are guided by professor who will work as a facilitator and not as a leader. The principle of authority at schools or university should encourage the scholar's curiosity for knowing. Informality in classroom might be alternated by a hard planning in the appliance of ends and methods. For Rago in few words, writing merges ideas with practices permitting to students a new synthesis whereon a critical posture is based. In order to avoid the frustration of being disapproved, the way we assess students merits a substantial change. New times need alternative form of evaluations.

Analogically, in our last paper, Monica Toyos is devoted to highlighting recurrent fears students feel when doing exams alongside their career. Taking her cue from the necessity for permanent changes, the universe system of assessment should be substantially reconsidered. In like manner, an evaluation is not only a follow-up in education quality, but also a mechanism useful to valorize the performance of others. In educational realm, it is common that students are impressed by the opinion professors have of them. Most specifically, evaluation would be deemed as a way of emancipating or oppressing, depending on interests at stake. In superior institutions –in general- there are mandatory exams which sometimes are undue and excessive for applicants. It is often assumed that students keep in mind that instance as painful, traumatic and stressing. Whenever an individual expectation is so high in comparison with the affordable resources, it surfaces an inevitable stadium of anguish and anxiety; as the previous argument given, sometimes the pressure may not be withstood and the involved youngster decides to abandon the career or to pend the course for a future season.

Although, it is true that students will be examined in the rest of their life time job, no other evaluation is further emotive and troublesome than it happens at the university. As a result, some professors abuse this situation and enjoy having the authority to approve and disapprove their course. The conflict is eliminated when reviewers use that fear to impose their personal point of view over certain matter or reproducing their own prejudices. From Toyos point of view (please give the citation), the formal moment wherein some are evaluated and others evalua-

tors should be left behind, if possible.

Following this explanation, M. Toyos proposes some suggestions that will improve exam-related practices to motivate students in learning. An interesting task for professors consists of investigating how much profound can their students be in the topics they taught. Certainly, it is not difficult to see teachers claiming that scholars have several grammatical issues as well as orthographic mistakes in writing, but Toyos admits that under these circumstances the proper teacher is being questioned. Most specifically, students reflected the proper professor's performance and perhaps it is the main cause of conflict between some and others. Democratic debates in classrooms contribute to decompressing the pressure a youngster suffers in the previous instances in exams.

In sum, the present review has just selected four articles (of many others) with the intention to analyze the reasons as to why a much more number of students are abandoning their career at the universities. The advent of a new millennium appears to request new method in superior education and consequent economic production. Under that context, the present review is intended to explain the different and complex issues which involve superior educative institutions to students as future practitioners. In practice, many professors have surely come across situation like this in the past and more will be coming in future. Not only a flexible and assertive dialogue between students and professors will create a more efficient system than current, but also will promote their undermined authority in classrooms and lower today the educational desertion.

The first impression

My class was intended originally for Professional Ethic and Deontology as previously mentioned. The syllabus was set up according to practical example of tourism-based experience in the field, combining stoic philosophy with practical exercises of reading analysis. As I opened the door, I found almost thirty students who welcomed me with certain indifference. After my formal presentation, students did not give any evidence of insubordination or lack of respect as I have occasionally been warned. The class was intended to discuss the liaison between epicurean and stoic philosophy, regarding the Ethic and Moral life in Ancient Greece and Rome.

Although students were captured by my explanation, it was unfortunate they had no background in Philosophy or Ethic. Even though, a great majority noted that Ethic is in fact related to the norms, rules and thoughts of certain community, they had no clear understanding as to what extent Ethic would be applied on tourism issues; and that was a problem for me. After the class, I was inclined to think that my colleagues had just exaggerated their experience or they had no intention to work conscientiously.

Basically, the thoughts struck me that students were

astonished (under temporarily control) because of their interest in knowing the ancient history. In turn, my colleagues decided to teach something that nobody likes to learn. In other words, like these students (who were next to graduate), once graduated we had got a bit empty. The bottom line is that any end implies certain distress which is balanced by mean with certain feelings such as fears, aggression, apathy or a supposedly lack of interest.

The point appears to be clear to me: students suffered an evident panic because next year they will have been obliged to compete at a market wherein everything would sound new for them. That way, this point would in part explain the reasons as to why they paid heed when I taught about Ethic in Ancient History. Sometimes, people are in distress whenever they do not know their future and paradoxically seek refuge in tradition, history and customs. As psychology system paradigm sustains, any action is counteracted by a self-directed reaction (Ceberio and Watzlawick, 1998). In this case, two questions surfaced immediately: why do lecturers gossip about their students and why do students fright to reach their graduation? Paradoxically, students were afraid to finish the career which they had put efforts, time and resources to do it.

A previous background

For many scholars, education looks to be jeopardized by modern globalisation or modernity. Besides, lost of illusion resulted in an apathy for knowledge. An extremely image saturation had damaged the education sense world-wide. The only effective steps that may revert this process is to reset ideals with aims at combining and adapting behaviours towards new forms of production (Kovadloff, 1992; Reich and Schmitt, 1998; López, 2007; Potenzoni, 2007; Beck, 1986; Habermas, 1988; Bauman, 2005; Llavador and Dobon, 2005).

In the world, pedagogic experts agreed that education would be re-thought as a complex net of interrelated systems. Even though all these sorts of components vary in each country or culture, the matter would be tackled off homogeneously instead. The fact is that these prophetic postures forgot to note that the pedagogic problems surfaced as a result of social pressure and normative rules. In consequence, Phillip Mcoombs was the first in 1971 who introduced this point on debate. From McCoombs point of view, the problem was related to the form as to how lecturers evaluated their students in lieu of a supposed emptiness of sense.

In fact, educations as a part of political system may not be analysed separately. Following Bordieu and Passeron, education should be deemed as a mechanism inherited to economic production pattern. Also, any disruption on this point entailed a problem or change in economic structure. The society needs to reproduce certain inequa-

lities to reinforce the normative order among the diversity of involved groups (Bourdieu and Passeron, 2003).

In accordance to this, Feglia and Socaire (2007) stated that modernity comes out of identity fragmentation where the identification processes turned unsteadily, creating an atmosphere wherein is predominated the lack of interest, frustration and fear. On the contrary to this thesis, other scholars sustained strongly that free and public education had caused mass enrolments not only at high-schools, but also at universities. This simplicity in question entails that many candidates lose interests in education because there are low efforts in accessing it.

From this stance, education would be transformed to return at certain values along with excellence, hierarchal order, and sacrifice. In other words, the solution to these problems is not to make education easier than today but more difficult (Fanfani, 1998, 2000a,b, 2003). Nevertheless, we suppose the possible glitch on education systems had nothing to do with modernity or some another supra-structural condition. For further understanding, it is important to analyse (once again) Thorstein Veblen contributions in regard to leisure class theory.

The leisure class

Thorstein Bunde Veblen, an American Economist, born in 1857 and son of a Norwegian immigrant, was one of the first researchers to investigate how the symbolic consumption and pecuniary emulation may be studied. His approaches and reflections were used by sociologists, anthropologist, philosophers regardless the time. Most likely, his most famous work was *The Theory of Leisure Class* written in 1899. Basically, the work of reference divides the societies in two kinds: a) technical-productive class and b) the leisure class. Even Veblen knows that there are many grades and types of communities, the influence of history determined a bipolar scheme based only on the possibility to produce certain surplus.

At one time, society comes from "savagery" to "civilization" stadium; there is a change in the style of life conditions as well as emulation incentives. Human activities became a symbolic feat and productivity was replaced by the search for trophies, pride and heroism. As a result of this, a leisure class surfaces from a set of diverse aspects. At a first instance, there is a change of mind regarding the property value. It means that consuming is symbolized as an event linked to richness; secondly, property is internalised following certain criterion along with pride and heroism. Principally, the author sustained "*the richness possession transfers pride and work like an individual distinction*" (Veblen, 1974).

On the other hand, the principle of war had been assigned towards the winners and losers. Even archaic human groups were in war against their neighbouring tribes constantly. The property was applied on the spirit of community. On the contrary, whenever mankind ac-

quires material property as a richness symbol, esteem started to be part of production line. Besides, Veblen is highly obsessed in demonstrating that efficiency is in productive classes (at the bottom of pyramid) a mechanism of social distinction whereas in ruling class prevails a "ceremonial dichotomy" wherever some trades scorned are. Ostentation tendency appears to be linked to the conspicuous consumption needs. Specifically, the members of leisure class are interested in developing abstract and theoretical points; in consequence, they strongly prefer to spend in duties regarding education, war, sports, religious and governments. For that reason, for Veblen leisure class is represented by governors, sportsmen, priests, soldiers and thinkers. This point reflects perfectly the sense Veblen gave in his theory.

In other terms, like politicians, the lecturers scramble with other groups to reach power, fame and mental skills that help provide them with distinction and social reputation.

Under Veblen point of view, in superior education lies the influence of leisure class dreams. Initially, the knowledge was monopolized by priest circles with the aim of interceding among Gods and parishioners. This ability brings around this group such a prestige and power that suddenly they accessed certain benefits inside feudal order. Under specific linguistic codes control, leisure class assures the dominance of all working strata preventing any conflictive riots. Most likely, leisure class promotes humanism with regard to terms such as inferior, superior, high, medium, low or another esthetical sense. In other words, Veblen is convinced that educative excellence is aimed at reinforcing the power of leisure class and to proper imbalances of the system. The main criterion that considers this class to belong is the erudition which emphasizes human being inequalities.

In accordance with this explanation, Soriano confirmed "*being an academic writer is not an easy task; however, any person who aspires to a college education has to become one in order to succeed in this highly competitive world. One of the first rules is to acquire the language of the academy which requires students to do critical thinking and argumentative writing*" (Soriano, 2005). For that reason, my colleagues disdained from students arguing they not only paid any attention in class but also had several obstacles to read fluid and write correctly. It remains to be seen the reasons as to why student were afraid to graduate.

Graduation and professional paradox

Physically, any change induces fear that cuts the phenomenological world in two; here and there as well as now and tomorrow are part of the same point. As White and White (2007) had said "*contemporary relationships are increasingly conducted between people separated by significant geographical distance. One instance of temporary separation is that between tourists and their families, friends, and colleagues back home. In earlier*

times, this separation was managed with telegrams, letters, and postcards. Distance affected the speed of reliability of contact. Today cell phones, the internet, and the deducted cost of landline telephone have significantly changed the ease and timing of keeping in touch. The ubiquity and accessibility of these communication services enable tourists to remain in contact with the people from whom they are geographically distant” (White and White, 2007). This is the reason why any traveller comes back home often.

Like a journey, graduation implies an ambivalent feeling. On one hand, students are afraid to enrol in labour world when they finish their career, while on the other hand, they rush to do it and fear any unexpected inconvenience (like examination) ruins that memorable moment. For example, a final exam may place such a pressure that sometimes many students abandon their studies or decide not to take part in that process. Paradoxically, they fail not to confront their own fears.

At end of the course, a fluid dialogue between myself and students revealed that they were interested in studying tourism but on management issues and not for working as a guide. It is unfortunate in Argentina that only two universities (very expensive by the way) allow access to tourism careers without any intermediate degree. In turn, the rest are intended to offer tourism degree as an intermediate step towards a final Bachelor like Tourist Guide. The point is that most of the students do not like to work as Guide but are obliged into learning the different subjects that comprise the career. Under that context, it appears that students are not keen in studying but also are afraid to be assessed alongside their cumbersome pathway. Furthermore, in the last class one of these students told me *“thanks a lot, professor because all we have learnt, your course was complex for us. If you ask us, we had never been taught to think indeed”*.

Following this double bind, the professional paradox invites students to be part of one illusion: whenever they enrol the first time in the university, they wake up transformed by fear because the end is close. Pedagogically, we strongly acknowledge that professional paradox exists as a form of symbolic re-adaptation in all students. Therefore, some measures are strongly suggested in profession related to education:

1) Final exams would be considered oral or in written, depending on each candidate's profile. Standardized methods did not only work in reverting fear but also are self-defeating for their performances.

2) The lack of discipline in students may be explained by interpreting the professional paradox theory.

3) Lecturers would understand that a student's verbal aggression does not undermine their authority in classroom. Instead of punishing this kind of behaviour in public, they should be followed up and study the reasons

behind it.

4) Even though, a way of captivating the students' minds is to talk sincerely, sometimes this seems not be enough. For that, the syllabus has to be followed verbatim in all circumstances.

One of the other problems that lecturers come across, but not yet resolved is to motivate their students when they are not interested in learning. In spite of my colleagues' recommendations, I was able to take the attention of my students without any problem. The thoughts struck me that they and myself have something different. My colleagues not only were distinguished lecturers, but also had more than five years old experience or had gained seniority in teaching tourism, meanwhile I was very green in that concern (scarcely one year old). In sum, probably, this difference explains further than a hundreds of books or conferences. Under that circumstance, philosophy not only acts as a useful tool in expanding frontiers beyond the capacities of the mind, but also contributes critically to studying this issue in depth. This was a surface expression of a much more deep-seated issue which still merits to be researched.

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