

WORK PAPER

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AS AN INSTRUMENT OF COLLECTIVE LEARNING BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL MEMBER'S CULTURAL CHANGE AND GOOD SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL PRAXIS.

The relationship with politics represents a very important result of socialization and collective learning processes. In fact, the stability of the political structures of a society also depends on the ability to reproduce throughout new generations, some basic attitudes such as the concept of authority and feelings towards it a sense of belonging to one's own community, in order to encourage a common support towards the political system. Until the fifties and sixties a substantial linearity and plurality of the politics socialization path discovered: family and school, the principal transmission of values agencies cooperated to the construction the young people politics identity. The process through which values are formed is a complex one, in that different mechanisms combine and interact. As a consequence, the effect of this process not only sum up, but also combine without an a priori settlement of the result. With the eighties the social, cultural and political agitation seems wear out; on one hand, militancy and interest for politics reduce, on the other hand the number of the young people, who occasionally take part in politics increases. This is interpreted not like a form of return or fall back in private space, but like a cultural change of the politics conception, who became a normal dimension of the existence, like one of the possible ways for own spare time allocation. Political commitment besides, replace by more variables of biographic existential type, than by the social back-ground. The policentrism of the socialization and collective learning way confirm it self together a laization course and demythologization of the politics supports young people to adopt a selective attitudes towards those participation space or those institution more and more far off own life conditions. In this scenario, examples of good praxis inspire us to rediscover how important the pedagogical care of political participation is, through a constant care to single community reality, to details that finds buried under the everyday reality skin. An investigation of the experience of ourselves as we approach the everyday reality allow us to remodulate our attention towards processes of political participation since attention is a key element of all learning and data processes. According to what Freud defines as “Fluctuating attention” we can better listen to and perceive better what is new, be more open minded towards what is unexpected, and it is easier for us to not only understand individuals' words but also to understand the language of things, to feel inclined to translate silence and to understand what at first appeared to be incomprehensible. It is through the formulation of this research that we are stimulated to try a kind of interpretation which is oriented to identify a theory, which in turn allows us to clarify reality where young people move and search stability and self-confidence in order to face the challenges and the enigma of life. A theory whose meaning is to interpret the facts not according to a Cartesian viewpoint by doing without the concept of space and time, that is a theory which encourages the socio-pedagogical praxis by starting from a prospective of “psychic and existential stabilitation” of the person and which stimulated to bring his/her own resources into action to support them, to encourage them to be compared, to include them in a learning process to stir up forces of selfrecovery among the youth. Hence, a theory to cast light upon the history and cultural context which varies from one nation to the other, and where pedagogical decisions are taken. For these reasons the comparisons of results, by which cultural exchanges occur, is not so much a fundamental didactic principle as the survey and the comprehension of standards are. Here good praxis is meant as a contribution to self-identification and self-orientation. Political participation as good socio-pedagogical praxis for the settlement of a new competent community creates the tension to understand the reference civic context and contributes to wider single institution restricted circle. The adoption of good socio-educative praxis on the side of social workers and educationists suggests the sharing of socio-pedagogical interventions, in order to encourage an intercultural

exchange on which prejudice and preconceived patterns do not weigh before hand. A wide-ranging reading of good praxis examples demands a great empathy as well as spiritual mobility and flexibility on the side of learning instructors. The formulation of e-learning strategies allows whichever person should embark on a serious socio-pedagogical research to examine ever-new subjects and learning context which are more differentiated. This challenge becomes a stimulus to enter an intercultural prospective which encourages the pedagogical tension between man and polis, where the subjective and asymmetrical objective dimension of the relationship among educationists social workers and young people may turn into a collective learning process whose main characteristic is spontaneity. Here the spontaneity does not refer to pure instinctiveness of the reaction or stimulus of the person which leads to militancy, but it refers to the energy which characterizes the voluntary behaviors within the community and political context. Spontaneity as the ability of a human being to start by using his/her own means something new, which cannot be explained in terms of reactions to the environment and to the happenings, but as political characteristic of the action which is absent in a society where the political conscience of citizens becomes weak and the sharing, that is the participation of the individuals to the public space, does not exist or is extremely scarce. The propensity of the individual to passively accept reality inadvertently increases, thus he/she finds him/herself at the mercy of the so called mass society persuaders, that are advertising, the mass-media, the majority policies. According to what Hannah Arendt said, political participation as collective learning process gives us the opportunity to react and to prevent our existence from being reduced to bare undifferentiated life and it urges the individual to start something fresh and new to the point that his/her existence can be defined as a second birth, a true source of differentiation in which one can discover the values of community, sharing commitment and interaction of all individuals within the public space. Politics without critical supervision from the civic community itself tends by nature to make use of opinions and lies in order to achieve its aims and it misuses power as an instrument of domination and verbal violence too. Hence the necessity for our thinking not to remain theoretical, not to cling to models of interpretation but to involve a moral imperative: every individual must be able to discover and value his/her independent responsibility within his/her political community's life circle. So a pressing invitation originates to get to know oneself better within a wider participative context, to discover and to realize about his/her own sources of identity as well as to get to know the others, to tolerate and to respect differences, to be ready to accept others cultural models as sources for inner richness and to question ours. All this gives us the possibility to develop an intercultural logic whose goal is not the homologation, but the multiplicity of cultures through a socio-pedagogical interaction which tends to define the participative process as a necessary element of a collective learning process.

1.1 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AS COURSE OF CIVIC SELFDETERMINATION AND SELFORIENTATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL.

What are the circumstances and the experiences which encourage or interfere with political participation approaches? In order to try to answer this question it is necessary to start by analysing different forms of political participation among the youth and then to focus on the analysis of socio-structural conditions and of socio-pedagogical experiences that encourage them. In the socio-educative praxis there is a common sense which considers the youth as being insensitive to everything of great importance in their life. The educationists and the traditional agencies for the education of the individual have the duty to instill the essential knowledge and life basic values in young people's hearts. According to some theories of socio-pedagogical evaluation there is as much spread a belief that young people, so Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), make everything with feelings of great intensity. Despite a lack of direction, young people have innate perceptive and cognitive faculties and by means of their heart they can find new orientations and so they gradually shift their focus from what continuously progresses, from the appearances of things to reality and basic values of life itself as well as the collective goods. Their ability to change direction, the so-called art of civic self-orientation allows them to be able to acknowledge and to become aware of what is essential in their life, that is reality not appearances and so they will discover what is good for them.

However, can political participation really be considered as an instrument of self-determination of the individual within a democratic community? As Plato suggests political education by means of civic participation to the life of the polis is but a “change of route” therefore to educate to political participation means to teach young people the art of changing perspective. Hence, the socio-educative value of participative method has a redeeming and emancipatory character. Only by means of this change of sense, so Plato, does the individual come to improve him/herself and so to reject such deceptive models of orientation and self-fulfilment communicating the immediacy of success and anaesthetizing the stimulating curiosity which gives the opportunity to enter reality and to appreciate the taste, the fascination and the meaning. The youth age lacking the critical challenge of comparison with experience is characterized by an upward moving life and places the young person in the status of awareness of his/her own personality, strengths and vitality. Hence, a deep feeling originates and opens to the absoluteness of one's own ideas, moral convictions and positions consequently one's own behaviour opposes all compromises with the conviction that reality, which is external and extraneous to one's own principles, can in fact be transformed and dominated. Reality is not actually perceived, yet overtaken. A critical comparison with experience leads a young person to realize that through an idealistic attitude he/she is likely to be considered quite out of place, and so he/she becomes aware that he/she will not be in a position to achieve much of what had been arranged before hand. He/she then tastes how complicated things are and how difficult is to come up with a situation according to those simple and straight forward rules that are the basic values of his/her absolute principles are, and bitterly notices that compromises are necessary in that through them one can achieve one's own goals by reshaping the absoluteness of one's own claims. The leading idea for political participation derives from becoming aware of this reality and so the young person works on him/herself, builds him/herself, self-determines both the self and the other than him/herself, therefore he/she senses the need for the values which moved our lives as adults. Without transcending and exaggerated adultism he/she accepts dignity, as an infallible feeling sensation about what is right and what is wrong and so he/she acquires the faculty to distinguish language behaviour action, what is untrue, what is available and what is generative. The passage from the phase of collective learning to the phase of self-determination, the take on of tasks and commitments, the accepting of caring about other people and the public goods as guide-principles in political action, all this leads the young person to make free choices, to be able to stand in front of the so called “supreme discrimination” between good and evil and so he/she will be able to build a fair polis. He/she becomes aware of the fact that participating above all means interacting dialoguing, understanding the others, their differences within yet a culturally non-homogeneous public space, but still able to encourage human beings as absolutely necessary elements in order for a future dialoguing community to develop. Political participation, therefore, becomes a practical and pedagogical instrument to fully exercise the democratic rules which show innumerable pluralities of perspectives, which in turn lead to change of route, the overturning of facts and the rejection of results coming from a humiliating conformism.

1.2- POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AS A MEANS TO CHECK THE EXERCISE OF POWER AND AS A GUARANTEE OF THE DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLE.

Power has always been one of the most characteristic constant factors of the human history, during which it has yet assumed many different forms but always according to a primary characterizing feature, what is the ability to obtain obedience by means of force if necessary, by exercising coercion. Power is a will that imposes itself, it is an institutional organization as well as a legitimation speech; it is reality as well as representation, it is personal experience as well as collective experience. On one side, power has a structural and mutual relationship with the law which serves yet to limit and control its exercise, but uses it for its efficacy, on the other side power meets the psychic and intersubjective dynamics from which human identities originate. Power regarded as such is not a generic social power, but a power which is considered according to its political quality in as much as it implies a command-obedience nexus where an exclusive use of force exists and the collective self-perception, which in turn is connected to a specific power

structure, can be defined as political. Power, therefore, as main constant factor of politics, which is but a struggle for power. One cannot understand power's subject declination unless one moves from its original channel of formation: the polis. This is the ground place, the primary matrix of all that is called politics according to the western thinking. According to the classical conception politics represents by nature a space of achievement as well as the specific associative quality of men, that is why Aristotle would assert that "Good life" is only possible within a community of working citizens. Law and justice, mutually identity, as well as politics and religion are directed towards the community ethos. The polis membership, the political participation to public affairs gains a sacral meaning that is controlled by specific democracy principles, which in turn rule the balance between social groups and public powers and avoid the ever possible degeneration either in the democratic government or in the monarchic and aristocratic ones. Power, so the classical thinking, is not to be interpreted in a mere formal meaning, but must express and form part of a substratum of substantial values, that is power as necessary orientation towards wisdom. According to what Plato said, a rightly exercised power, which encourages the education of conscious citizens, therefore free, must above all be impartial and can not let itself be distracted by division and favouritism. In the contemporary conception a vision of power as a group of political phenomena prevails. These political phenomena are by now devoid of forms and systems of legitimation as well as of the horizon of meaning in which power itself is structured and which is represented by the sovereignty of the people. Hanna Arendt counters the idea of power as legitimate force with that of public space for the mutual action. Power is the possibility to act in concert, it is a public exposure to judgement and also to interaction. Power is polis not sovereignty. The public sphere is not a static acquisition and it is always potentially dynamic since it depends on the ability of citizens to share action and speech, therefore it must be continuously encouraged and shared so that a political connection, among men arises, that is common power, everyone's power or better said omniscience. The loss of such resources of legitimation brings about a drying up of political communities. Power originates as a constitutively plural instrument whose only limit is represented by the existence of other people. This suggests by nature the civic exercise of political participation be incorporated into a prescriptive legitimation which of course comes from the law State. Going from the horizontal socialization of citizens who mutually recognize rights, as far as the vertical organization of citizens within the State, the civic praxis of self-determination meets different form of democratic legitimation. The informal establishment of public opinion, the political commitment within or without parties, the taking part into the elections and the deliberation of both national and local legislative organs, represent the exercise of people sovereignty in which strong individual freedoms and the organized power of the State mingle. In the democratic law State, political power divides into communicative power on one hand and administrative power on the other. Since people sovereignty has become polycentric by now and does not identify itself with a specific collective any longer thanks to a responsible political participation, both people sovereignty and its most fundamental principle, that is the democratic principle have started asserting themselves again within the circularity of dialogue and intersubjective deliberation. The exception of the participative moment becomes common democratic rule and so people sovereignty regains its radical content of vitality.

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