

## THE DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLE OF FREEDOM OF EDUCATION IN THE PEDAGOGICAL CONCEPTION OF J. H. PESTALOZZI

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In this scientific article, we elucidate the premises of J.H. Pestalozzi's thought and pedagogical conception transposed into the actuality of the democratic need for education. The purpose of the research aims at a retrospective analysis of the conception of pedagogy by J. H. Pestalozzi with directions for implementing the democratic principle of the freedoms of European education. As a constant of this scientific research, we argue that the Swiss pedagogue sought to develop a theory of education in which the principles of education are brought into line with the course of human nature; according to the conception of J.H. Pestalozzi, through instruction/training, the accumulation of knowledge must be ensured, as well as the development of the child/learner's psychic powers; the function of the school is twofold, to inform and train the students. The scientific results of the research are relevant by documenting international educational reports, specialized scientific literature on the democratic principle of educational freedom in the pedagogical conception of J.H. Pestalozzi with practical themes for the formation of the competence of democratic education at the level of initial and continuous training of adults.

*Keywords:* principle, democratic, freedom, education, pedagogy of J.H. Pestalozzi.

### PRINCIPIUL DEMOCRATIC AL LIBERTĂȚII ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI ÎN CONCEPȚIA PEDAGOGICĂ A LUI J. H. PESTALOZZI

În prezentul articol științific elucidăm premise ale gândirii și concepției pedagogice a lui J. H. Pestalozzi transpusă în actualitatea necesității învățământului democratic. Scopul cercetării vizează o analiză retrospectivă a concepției pedagogice lui J. H. Pestalozzi cu direcții de implementare a principiului democratic al libertății învățământului European. Drept constante ale acestei cercetări științifice, argumentăm că pedagogul elvețian a urmărit să elaboreze o teorie a educației în care principiile învățământului să fie puse în concordanță cu mersul naturii umane; potrivit concepției lui J.H. Pestalozzi, prin instrucție/formare trebuie să se asigure atât acumularea cunoștințelor, cât și dezvoltarea forțelor psihice ale copilului/celui ce învață; funcția școlii este dublă, de a informa și a forma elevii. Rezultatele științifice ale cercetării sunt relevante prin documentarea rapoartelor educaționale internaționale, literaturii științifice de specialitate privind principiul democratic al libertății învățământului în concepția pedagogică a lui J.H. Pestalozzi cu tematici practice pentru formarea competenței educației democratice la nivel de formare inițială și continuă a adulților.

*Cuvinte-cheie:* principiu, democratic, libertate, învățământ, pedagogia lui J.H. Pestalozzi.

#### Introduction

In the democratic thinking of the pedagogue J.H. Pestalozzi, as for J.A. Comenius, the leitmotif „Man becomes man only through education” becomes brilliant for a European education, starting from the 19th century. Through the directed influence of society, J.H. Pestalozzi, the negative tendencies of human nature are annihilated, developing the positive ones. The fundamental principle of his pedagogical theory is the conformity of education with nature, with the laws of human nature. The Swiss pedagogue sought to develop a theory of education in which the principles of education are brought into line with the course of human nature. According to the conception of J.H. Pestalozzi, through instruction, both the accumulation of knowledge and the development of the child's/young person's psychic powers must be ensured. The function of the school is twofold: to inform and to train the students, especially to train them: We believe above all that the education of the youth must be, in its entirety, more formative of powers, than imparting knowledge. Thus he makes the two functions of instruction become more distinct. Sensing the limits of an informative education, he insisted on the formative function of knowledge in the educational process. Thus, in his theory, the means are provided to the school to ensure the unity of the two functions. The Swiss pedagogue remains one of the great theoreticians of intuition, whose content he enriched.

In the 21st century, the democratic principle of freedom of education is applied in the pedagogical conception of J.H. Pestalozzi through the functionality of the PESTALOZZI Program - a Program developed by the Council of Europe - intended for teaching staff in general and higher education, trainers and other actors in the field of education, who intend to achieve the quality of a training program. Therefore, both at international and national level, current topics are addressed [5]:

- Democratic citizenship and participation;
- Respect for human rights;
- Cultural and linguistic diversity;
- Development of democracy in schools;
- Access, quality and equity in education;
- Average etc.

Next, we retrospectively approach the pedagogical conception of J.H. Pestalozzi from the democratic perspective of the freedom of education.

### **The educational context of the first half of the 19th century in Western Europe**

The end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century were an era of the development of science and the flourishing of education. Cultural and political thinkers have demonstrated that the state has a duty to establish and finance schools, to manage and supervise them. Thus, as a result of the ideas promoted by the French revolution of 1789 about the equality of people in rights, girls' schools were established, in order to ensure women an instruction appropriate to the place occupied in the new society, as a mother and a citizen.

In this context, the idea that only specially trained teachers can work in schools is increasingly being promoted. Therefore, more attention was paid to general schools, preparatory schools, as teacher training institutions.

Thus, the practical achievements in the field of education only partially corresponded to democratic ideas, the democratic principle of freedom of education and free education being realized only partially, due to the lack of material conditions. Therefore, a dualistic education system developed: schools of all levels accessible mostly to the sons of the wealthy and others – elementary – for the sons of the popular masses; not all educational subjects were scientific in nature, nor did they sufficiently prepare for life. The Romanian pedagogic historian, St. Bârsănescu, states that „the bourgeois school constitutes an appreciable progress compared to the one in the feudal system, through the much wider access of children to education, through the realistic orientation of the content of education and through the application of new, more effective methods” [1, p. 89] .

Pedagogy also knows an assault, so:

- pedagogical theories are formulated that are based on a good knowledge and understanding of the child's nature, the need to make instruction more attractive in order to provide the child with a greater volume of knowledge and skills necessary for subsequent practical activity;
- a harmonious development on several dimensions, methods of instruction and education with greater effectiveness;
- professional teaching staff, with specialized and pedagogical training.

The new pedagogical imperatives imposed by the realities of the changing world, as well as the preface of the coordinates of a pedagogy in formation, supported by educational theory and practice, would manifest themselves through the work of some illustrious pedagogues, such as: J.H. Pestalozzi, J.F. Herbart, A.W. Diesterweg, F.W. Froebel, H. Spencer, K.D. Usinski, L.N. Tolstoy etc.

The founders of pedagogical science, in this sense, often advance from practice, from the needs of the development of the instructional-educational process, they synthesize and theorize first of all their own experience.

Under these conditions, the process of establishing pedagogy as an autonomous science, with its own object of study, with a separate conceptual and methodological system, is stimulated and systematized during this period.

### **The foundation of the science of education on human nature in the vision of J. H. Pestalozzi according to the democratic principle**

The Swiss pedagogue, J. H. Pestalozzi (1746-1827), was one of the most valuable successors of the theoretical conception of J.-J. Rousseau on child education - focused on the freedom of the learner's personality. Through his teaching activity and his pedagogical conception, he is one of the most prominent practitioners and theorists in the history of universal pedagogy.

J. H. Pestalozzi has a pedagogical conception with a social and democratic character. However, a brief analysis of his pedagogical works will give us the opportunity to remember some doctrines regarding the contribution he brings to the development of educational theory and practice:

a) *Man, by his nature, is not perfect* - as such, he can only become so by exercising an appropriate educational influence from society. By influencing the way education is conducted throughout society, it is possible for the negative tendencies of human nature to be diminished and the positive ones to be amplified.

b) *The purpose of education is the development of the internal forces specific to human nature* - these can only be developed if the educational activity is based on love and faith.

c) *The internal forces with which nature has endowed man are developed through exercise* - this will be achieved through a continuous gradation of the tasks that need to be performed.

d) *Physical education plays an important role in the development of students' physical qualities* - free exercises are based on the natural movements of the body, but they contribute, to a large extent, to preparing young people for work.

e) *The instruction will ensure the accumulation of as much knowledge as possible, as well as the development of the child's psychic powers* - in this sense, the school will have to act both in the direction of informing young people, and above all, in their training. In this process, intuition plays, in his view, a decisive role, especially in younger children. For example, the teaching-learning of the alphabet was preceded by the intuitive knowledge of things. On this basis the child was taught to use a certain language before learning to read. At the same time, learning to write had to be preceded by drawing exercises that would have completed the children's knowledge of the things that surround them.

f) *Moral education based on the affective life of the child* - such a conclusion was not entirely original, it had been expressed, in a similar form, by J.-J. Rousseau. But, if at J.-J. Rousseau could talk about the possibility of a moral education only after the age of 15, for J.H. Pestalozzi this fact became possible at an early age. The simplest element that could stimulate the development of the child's moral forces was the feeling of love towards his mother. Later, this feeling will extend to the other members of the family, and once the child enters school, he will feel closeness and appreciation to his peers as well. Extending still further, this feeling will form the foundation upon which the consciousness of his belonging to humanity will be built. The feeling of love, once developed, will also be the basis for the development of the child's tendency towards moral actions. By exercising such actions, the child develops discipline, self-control, the feeling of helpfulness, etc. Only with the formation of moral skills can moral maxims, notions and moral rules be acquired.

g) *The works of J.H. Pestalozzi with a social and pedagogical character* are built on the conviction that education through work is fundamental to the formation of the child for life. Learning a trade was the main mission of the teacher who would necessarily combine theoretical training with practical training: „any theory about the profession is insufficient if it is not related to actual practice” [4], said J.H. Pestalozzi in the pedagogical novel „How Gerturda teaches her children” [3].

h) *The teacher, as a guide/facilitator and trainer of the child* - needs to be a guide for people, to raise their level of culture. For this, J.H. Pestalozzi proposed that rural teachers be recruited from among the poor in order to know their needs and be able to address them more easily.

### **The democratic pedagogical system of J. H. Pestalozzi**

J. H. Pestalozzi is the author of a system of pedagogical ideas through which he gives answers to the main problems of pedagogy. He tried to show how the harmonious development of children's native dispositions can be ensured, and how a society can be created with the help of education in which the school facilitates the development of physical, intellectual and moral forces for all children.

The purpose and essence of education in the pedagogical conception of J.H. Pestalozzi is focused on human nature and consists of three categories of forces or powers: intellectual, moral and physical - these exist in man only as germs, as dispositions that must be developed harmoniously - a process that is achieved through education.

*The importance given by J. H. Pestalozzi's application of intuition in education* - an idea that becomes one of the central theses of his pedagogical system. Thus, he concluded that „Only intuitions, observations give man the strength to resist prejudices. To see and hear well, here is the first step towards the wisdom of life” [apud 1, p. 92-93]. At the same time, J. H. Pestalozzi proposed that three elements should be established by intuition: the number, the form and the word (name). For the knowledge of each object, he required the determination of the dimensions or quantity, the determination of the shape and the specification of the name by word. Also, through the three aspects - number, form and word - J.H. Pestalozzi believed that obtaining the necessary data to move from a confused perception to a clear, precise notion. This way of knowing constitutes an advancement compared to the conception of J.A. Comenius, who made intuition a means of acquiring representations.

Starting from the general means of education - number, form and word – J.H. Pestalozzi establishes its content as follows [apud 1, p. 93]:

- the number - the teaching of arithmetic corresponds to it;
- form - corresponds to the teaching of geometry, drawing, writing and manual work;
- the word - corresponds to the teaching of the mother tongue, the natural sciences and the humanities;
- gymnastics is added to all these contents.

The great pedagogue, J. H. Pestalozzi, has the merit of having laid *the foundations of elementary school methods*, formulating interesting guidelines for the method of reading-writing, arithmetic, history, geography, natural sciences and gymnastics.

*The role of the family and especially the mother in the education of children* - emphasized in the pedagogical conception of J. H. Pestalozzi. In the family, the mother begins the educational work, especially ensuring the education of the heart and the cultivation of moral virtues, which form the beauty of the person, the citizen, the patriot. Therefore, the work of the family is continued by the school, which is one of the main levers of social transformations.

*The role of work in educating children and combining education with work* - this activity develops both physical strength and mind and prepares for morality.

J. H. Pestalozzi mentioned that the formation of man is slow; nature must be helped; for each child to develop all his dispositions it is necessary for him to acquire the necessary elements of all sciences and trades, as a factor in stimulating his innate powers.

The pedagogue J. H. Pestalozzi, formulating *the theory of elementary/primary education*, aims to provide the teaching staff with a simple method of education and instruction, thus [ibidem, p. 94]:

- education has the task of ordering and clarifying students' perceptions and generalizations and raising them to the level of clear notions and obvious ideas;
- education cultivates and intellectual skills - provided by a volume of knowledge - as the philosopher-pedagogue wrote increases the powers of the mind;
- education requires to develop the student's thinking more (formal culture), than to endow it with knowledge (material culture) - the author did not make an explanation, but overestimating the role of verbal exercises, with a mechanical character, for the development of thinking.

*The theory of elementary/primary education* covers three important areas of training: intellectual education, moral education and physical education. J. H. Pestalozzi is a follower of formative culture, a principle according to which instruction is considered a means of intellectual education, the goal being the exercise and development of soul valences.

J. H. Pestalozzi made a special contribution in *the field of elementary school methods* - the teaching of reading and writing proposes the phonetic method, in the teaching of mathematics he imposes the box or crate of specific didactic material, in the teaching of natural sciences I consider it necessary to observe the studied plants and animals. All these acquisitive elements will settle down based on the observance of certain methodical principles, states C. Cucuș [2, p. 171]:

- to gradually increase the circle of intuitions;  
 - to plant in children's consciousness, clearly and distinctly, knowledge that they can assimilate and mean;  
 - to teach him a language which embraces all the representations which nature and art have procured or are about to procure.

Therefore, the ideas of J. H. Pestalozzi about the education and learning of all children, the theory of elementary education, intuition in the education process, etc., influenced the development of pedagogical theory and practice, which is still currently being implemented in the educational system.

Democratic activity in the didactic context of the great neo-humanist pedagogue, J. H. Pestalozzi, was carried out in several stages and in different localities [1, p. 90-91]:

*Neuhof School (1774 – 1779)* - J.H. Pestalozzi procured an agricultural land, where he built a house, which he called the „New Court” (Neuhof). Here he collected a few dozen children - orphans, vagabonds - whom he began to teach to work, giving them the first elements of instruction at the same time. Not having ensured material conditions, the educational establishment at Neuhof lasted only a few years, which remained in the history of pedagogy as a first attempt to combine physical work with instruction in practice.

*The Stanz School (1798 – 1799)* - the passage of the French armies through Switzerland and the founding of the Swiss Republic gave J.H. Pestalozzi new business opportunities. He opened a school for orphans in Stanz, where he gathered about 80 of them. The activity carried out in this school by the great pedagogue was led by the idea that it is possible to educate children, providing them with the conditions and an atmosphere typical of family education. He showed great love to the students, sitting among them from morning till night and treating them as his own children. But after 8 months of pedagogical activity, the school was closed.

*Pedagogical experiences at Burgdorf and Münchenbuchsee (1799 – 1804)* - J. H. Pestalozzi continues his work as a teacher at Burgdorf. Here he applies his pedagogical ideas regarding the training of children and achieves appreciable success. Thus, in 1801, the great pedagogue publishes the famous work „How does Gertrude teach her children” [4], in which she presents her theory on elementary education. Then the Burgdorf school was taken from him by the authorities, J. H. Pestalozzi retires to the Münchenbuchsee school which will not last long.

*The activity carried out at Yverdon (1805 – 1825)* – here, J. H. Pestalozzi is the central personality of the school, rightly considered the „Pestalozzian Institute”. Thus, the fact that the models and applied principles were associated with his name, and the works he had created had created fame throughout Europe, also contributed to this. Governments, politicians and scholars are interested in the methods of J.H. Pestalozzi and send commissions to study them, to apply them in their countries.

After a long period of progress, the institute in Yverdon entered a phase of disintegration due to the discord between the collaborators of the great pedagogue. The institute closes in 1825, and he returns to Neuhof to start writing again.

Therefore, his pedagogical thinking system is based on observation, pedagogical reflection and practical, direct experimentation of his hypotheses. Dealing with the organization of elementary/primary education, he promoted the harmonious combination of productive work and actual instruction. He campaigned for a new teaching methodology, based on the laws of intellectual development.

**Table 1. Humanity goes through three ages, in the view of J. H. Pestalozzi.**

Age criteria	Particular characteristics
<i>natural age</i>	- when honest, innocent relationships are dominant;
<i>social age</i>	- relationships between people being based on coercion;
<i>moral age</i>	- which is based on moral strength and self-determination.

Thus, in his conception, three forces are at the foundation of human nature: intellectual, moral and physical power. Intellectual power causes man to find out truth and possess science; moral strength causes him to be worthy; physical strength enables him to work and act.

### Conclusions

In the context of the research of the history of pedagogy, J. H. Pestalozzi obviously contributed to laying the foundations of modern pedagogy through the originality of the theses issued and the clairvoyance of the recommendations made. He is the founder of the theory of elementary/primary education. At the same time, confident in the functions of education and propagator of a popular, general education, the Swiss pedagogue campaigned for the formation of a harmonious personality in which intellect, morality and skills form a unified whole. It grounds and applies the principle of intuition, of continuity between theory and practice, of phonetic learning to read.

C. Cucuș attests to the historical-pedagogical analysis of G. Compayré, which describes that Morf, a contemporary and disciple of J. H. Pestalozzi, compresses the thinking of the great pedagogue in the following rules or maxims [apud 2, p. 172]:

- intuition is the foundation of training;
- language will rely on intuition;
- learning time is separated from critical evaluation time;
- in each field of learning, one must start with the simplest elements, continuing gradually, following the child's development, through interwoven psychological series;
- insist on each sequence of training until the child assimilates all the data;
- education will follow the stages of natural development, and not those established based on an arbitrary decision;
- the child's individuality is sacred;
- the main purpose of elementary education is not to acquire knowledge, but to develop the valences of the student's intelligence;
- instead of intelligence, will is preferred, instead of theoretical knowledge, practical skills;
- relations between student and teacher must be based on affection;
- the actual instruction will be subordinated to the higher purpose of education.

The philosophy of education of J. H. Pestalozzi subscribes to the principle of „Learning with minds, hearts and hands” which is present in the realization of the various educational programs organized by the PESTALOZZI Foundation with the focus of ensuring children/young people from all over the world with free access to high quality education. Finally, within the PESTALOZZI Program [6] of the European Council, the pedagogical conception of J. H. is relevant. Pestalozzi, which promotes the application of the democratic principle of freedom of education through various current topics, for the formation of the competence of democratic education at the level of initial and continuous training of adults, such as:

- Pedagogy for Democracy and Human Rights;
- Multiperspectivity in history teaching;
- Career advancement of teachers based on school activities;
- School-based professional development;
- Developing democratic and intercultural competences in the classroom;
- Towards an inclusive school: addressing respect and celebrating diversity;
- Providing opportunities for the holistic development of students and teachers;
- Physical education and sport for democracy and human rights (SPORT);
- Dialog intercultural și educație pentru media;
- Intercultural dialogue and media education etc.

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