

RECONSIDERATIONS ON THE CONCEPT OF LESSON. SCHOOL AND LIFE LESSONS

Gabriel ALBU ^{a*}

^a Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești, Ploiești, Romania

Abstract

Perhaps the most significant context in which (formal) education takes place is the lesson. Most of us - whether or not part of the education system - have come to identify the concept of lesson with school lessons. The study shows that we can, however, encounter lessons at every step in our lives and at any time. The important thing is to be able to see them, understand and learn from them; not pass them by, indifferently and superficially. In this context, the study proposes a wider and more nuanced definition of the concept of lesson and captures its main dimensions.

Key words: education, formal lesson, life situation, pure and simple lesson, school, teacher

Introduction

For some, school means, or could mean, a (more or less coherent) complex system by which we manage, organize and control the growth of new generations from a wider or more restricted cultural-ideological (and geographic) space; for others, it means, or could mean, the relationship between a teacher and a group of pupils (of a certain age) unfolding within a special space and time, appropriate to the transmission of a system of validated concepts, information, meanings and values (from a scientific, psychological, pedagogical, ideological, social, etc. perspective); for others, school means, or could mean, a more or less standardized system of evaluations, tests and (periodic) examinations, and for others it means, or could mean, a (regulated) sequence of more or less stereotyped lessons, intercalated with breaks and/ or holidays.

* Corresponding Author: Prof. PhD
E-mail: gabrielalbu04@yahoo.com

Without (possibly) venturing too far from reality, we could say that for most of us - whether inside or outside the education system - school is (and could not be conceived otherwise than) a sequence of lessons (of different types, but equal in duration) scheduled according to a timetable. They represent the distinct way in which school functions as an institutional-organizational structure. Therefore, the lesson cannot (and could not) escape the scrutiny of specialists.

Formal lessons. Notes and features

It seems that for the overwhelming majority of researchers in education science, the lesson is the main form of organizing the didactic process. On the basis of this sovereign consensus, however, we can observe some (more or less significant) differences, related to certain aspects, characteristics, and dimensions of it, that they – as specialists - want to mention, emphasize, and clarify, all the more so since some of them want to distinguish between classical/ traditional and modern (formal) lessons.

For example, if for I. Jinga and E. Istrate (2006, p. 310), the lesson is "the main organizational form in which the teaching-learning activity is carried out, its structural and functional variants being dictated by the objectives of the training (be they cognitive, affective-volitional, psychomotor, personality traits or character), the contents by means of which the objectives, the available material and human resources will be attained", for L. Șerbănescu (2015, p. 113), the lesson is "a standalone didactic entity, a 'cell' which forms the basis of the educational process and which contains all the elements and characteristics thereof". Over time, it has "become the main way of organizing teaching, through which both information and training, as well as training and the education of recipients are achieved" (Șerbănescu, 2015); this elementary and extended form of organization ensures the progress of the common learning activity of the corpus of students "under the leadership and guidance of the teacher" (Șerbănescu, 2015, p. 120).

Also, for A. Silvaș (2013, p. 208) the lesson means "a fundamental unity, a form of the learning process, through which knowledge is acquired and learned, skills and competencies are formed and developed in the context of a voluntary activity, conscious and intentional, in the sense of the consolidation and positive development of all sides of the human personality"; whereas for V. Guțu (2013, p. 387), the lesson represents "the didactic and varied form of organizing the training, focused on the interconnection of teacher and pupil activities in order to achieve the intended goals, including such categories as: content, didactic strategies, methods, and means of instruction". At the same time, in the view of the same author, the lesson can be

considered a "didactic program based on "a system of structured activities" according to the general and specific objectives of the education process, appropriately operationalized at the level of the whole corpus of students, "within a convergent work environment" (Guțu, 2013 p. 388).

As far as she is concerned, M. Momanu (2008, p. 440) understands the lesson as "a pedagogical microsystem, which gives the very image of the educational process as a pedagogical macrostructure; the components, characteristics and conception that underpin the process of education are all at the level of the lesson". This entails "running certain stages, sequences or events in an order that is related to the logic of the pedagogical act" (Momanu, 2008, p. 441). According to the author, during the lesson, "the teacher is the one who decides, based on the learning context and starting from the objectives to be achieved, the manner in which these events combine, in number, weight and succession in an educational approach that is both genuine and effective" (Momanu, 2008, p. 442).

In a relative consonance with his colleague, C. Cucuș (2006, p. 305) considers that the lesson is "*a unitary didactic approach*", which means focusing on "specific objectives, a certain specificity of the transmitted content, the main ways of actor interaction, the dominant methodological framework, the appropriate instrumentalisation with means of education, the temporality of actions". According to C. Cucuș (2006, p. 306), the lesson, as a basic didactic entity, implies "putting into action events or didactic situations, interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Events can follow a certain order, which, if the situation so requires, can be reformulated". As a micro system - as C. Cucuș (2006) calls it - the lesson "captures and reconfigures in a specific way all the components of the didactic universe: content, strategies, methodologies, ways of organizing, evaluation forms, relational specifications, psychosocial configurations, etc. Its quality depends not on each element taken separately but on the relevance of the elements in relation to the context, and the ways of articulating at the level of the didactic ensemble". Of course, the author points out, "educational practice itself may suggest or induce new ways of structuring events, prefiguring the priorities of a lesson" (Cucuș, 2006, p. 310).

The point of view of M. Ionescu and M. Bocoș (2009, p. 308) follow the same vein (but also with specific accents). Thus, the two specialists first consider the lesson "a very frequently encountered form of activity of the teacher-student binomial"; it takes place in class, "under the guidance of a teacher, within a specified time frame (usually 50 minutes), based on the requirements of the curriculum and within the school's timetable". Then, according to the authors, the lesson also means "a system of logically and didactically articulated ideas, in accordance with the psycho-pedagogical requirements related to the teaching and assimilation of knowledge, its

application, the verification, evaluation and marking of the results; it represents a logical, didactic and psychological unit". Also, in the conception of the two teachers, the lesson assumes an intentional, systematic, self-regulating activity that causes, within the "biopsychic sphere of students, a change in the direction of the desired formation"; it identifies, in principle, with "a unitary didactic and educational program, a system of knowledge, intellectual and/ or practical skills, operational objectives, material and methodological resources (methods, techniques, procedures, actions and operations) meant to activate students". According to M. Ionescu and M. Bocoş (2009, p. 309), the lesson holds - in the context of the other components and dimensions of the education system - "a special importance for the steps taken to achieve the educational objectives". According to the conclusions of the two specialists, more recently, the lesson is seen as "a dialogue between teacher and student, subordinated to the general and specific objectives of the educational process, operationalized at classroom level. Moreover, the modern lesson consists of a didactic and educational program, namely a system of working procedures and actions common to teachers and pupils (expositions, explanations, logical and experimental demonstrations, problem solving, etc.), structured and organized to achieve the supposed operational objectives and to actively involve students in the didactic process". Modern or not, the lesson "facilitates *the systematic acquisition of values* that represent the content of education, of the bases of science, of the fundamental system of knowledge and abilities by studying the corresponding subjects" (Ionescu and Bocoş, 2009, p. 310); it contributes, to the same extent, "to the formation and modelling of the *practical application skills* of the theoretical knowledge acquired by students, introducing them in the process of systematic and scientific knowledge of the reality". In the context of this (ideological-pedagogical) vision, the lesson has "beneficial formative influences on the development of critical spirit, observation spirit, voluntary attention, epistemic curiosity, thinking operations, logical memory, and contributes to the development of students' cognitive, imaginative and creative forces. At the same time, it offers them the opportunity to exercise their intellectual, motor and affective capacities to form and strengthen their feelings, beliefs, attitudes, positive features of character, appropriate forms of behaviour, etc."

In addition to all the above mentioned (and in relation to them), M. Ionescu (2009) also notes other aspects, such as:

a. Even if it is designed and practiced in the daily teaching activity, "the uniqueness of the lesson often remains but a desideratum, since school reality presents a number of impediments that differ in nature and nuance; in many situations, these transform the activity into a template,

lacking in efficiency and perspective" (p. 10); it seems that professor Ionescu warns (us) that - in very frequent occasions - the lesson can turn into a rigid and unbearable frame of teaching-learning-evaluation, in a monotonous and suffocating interactivity, which is not consistent with the desire for variety, novelty, and creativity felt by pupils, be they younger or older, more or less thorough, more or less cooperative.

b. Surprisingly, however, given the understanding of the unique and unrepeatable character of each lesson (of course, as much as teacher and students are able to enact), M. Ionescu (2009, p. 27) puts forward the issue of prediction and control. The author deems important to take them into consideration when it comes to the lesson, "all the more so since didactic instruction is a control system that consists in directing the assimilation, formation and development of cognitive strategies, intellectual and motor skills, attitudes, personality as a whole".

By *predicting*, the author understands "to sense what could happen, to foresee, to assume. In other words, the prevision consists in the possibility to deduce the course of future events, to figure out what will happen on the basis of known facts". In the context of the lesson, prediction means "the anticipatory imagination of the way in which action is taken on the basis of a thorough knowledge of the ideational content, of the collaborators, and the circumstances that would make work easier or harder".

By *control*, M. Ionescu (2009) understands "the action taken in order to know the facts, the way in which school activity is carried out to prevent or eliminate some dysfunctions and to increase school performance". This concept (and its corresponding practice) refers to "actions such as orientation, guidance, redirection, etc. very useful to know and master the educational activity". According to the author, research shows that "during the lesson there are many possibilities to improve control and prevision and to reduce the influence of the random factor".

As we can see, even if the random factor - as most of us realize - has a significant weight in social and private life, even if working with students is a live activity, always surprising, even if we are interested (at least declaratively) in the blossoming and manifestation of the students' individuality, even if education belongs to a time and space of love (and not so much one of power), however, the coordinates of the prevision and control can be understood by some school specialists and practitioners as important in the design, progress and success of a lesson.

For A. Ilica (2015, p. 369), the lesson is "a didactic structure in which systematic activities are carried out, so that knowledge 'taught' leads to a change in the student's intellectual, emotional and physical condition, forming skills and improving behaviour". It assumes elements

like "students, teacher, specifically furnished classroom, timetables, school curriculum, and quite hierarchical relationships". Classroom lessons "ensure, - notes the author - a suitable environment for the proper functioning of the didactic relationship; facilitate the acquisition of skills and competences resulting from the processing of learning contents; facilitate the consolidation of a positive attitude and influences the development of intellectual, affective and volitional operations". Professor Ilica states that the lesson has "a systematized structure which is motivating from a psycho-pedagogical point of view. It has clear-cut moments, part of an effective learning algorithm: organizing the class, announcing the goals, activating the content, using learning methods and means, evaluating the learning outcomes". At the same time, he warns that the organization of learning within lessons can favour: "spatial and organizational monotony, stiffness, dogmatism, restraint in the face of change, a stressful and too algorithmized a program, boring atmosphere, random intellectual demands etc."

As it can be seen, like (many) many things, events, phenomena and processes of this world, lessons too have their lights and shadows, their contribution and their limits. In view of this reality, we can - as teachers (specialists and/ or practitioners) - promote, develop the constructively-stimulating aspects (from the point of view of the healthy growth of younger generations) and restrict (or even eliminate) the damaging - discouraging ones (from the point of view of the plenary, creative and healthy manifestation of the younger generations); eventually, to the extent that the latter aspects become overwhelming, we can think about and launch into other alternative ways – more appropriate to the blossoming of the mind and soul of children - to attract them and invite them into the universe of culture, values, profound and necessary truths, and essential meanings.

As far as I.T. Radu and E. Soare (2006, p. 281) are concerned, "in all the various types of instructional-educational activities, the lesson holds a central place, concentrating most of these activities and distinguishing itself through a rigorous organization". It is the main form "in which the educator's activity is organized and carried out with students of a class"; this refers to "the joint work with students of a class in order to achieve certain instructive-educational objectives, ensuring the delivery of content, the organization and directing of students' learning activity".

Besides the fact that it aims, as it has been seen, towards achieving the instructive-educational objectives formulated by the school curriculum designers, the lesson has - according to I.T. Radu and E. Soare (2006) - "a defined content, a certain structure and a determined duration, it involves the development of working ways, methods, processes and means of education". At the same time, "the variety of actions and processes that it incorporates -

communicating information, repeating it, consolidating it, and putting it in place, as well as exercising knowledge and performing logical mental operations with it - makes the lesson a complex spiritual training, an effective way of learning, thus ensuring thorough learning of the contents of the training, the formation of the skills and abilities concerned" (Radu and Soare, 2006, pp. 281-282). By means of the more or less strenuous intellectual exercise it originates, the lesson constitutes - in the view of the two specialists - a "decisive activity *in the development of the students' intellectual abilities*". At the same time, "through its entire organization and deployment - which requires students to integrate into the classroom, to respect the curriculum and the norms of school life, constantly regulating their conduct in relations with colleagues and others - the lesson exerts a systematic influence with a formative function in terms of modelling some personality traits, with a strong incidence on pupils' school performance". In this respect, it helps us to "form the habit of working systematically, cultivating perseverance, taking responsibility for the fulfilment of school duties, manifest disciplined conduct, feel motivation for school activity, etc.". According to the mentioned specialists, "the success of the lesson (probably in relation to the requirements, objectives and standards of the system – a.n. - G.A.) depends, above all, on the extent to which, through its internal structure and its development, achieves the interaction and interdependence between the defining variables (components) of the didactic process"; these components concern: the instructive-educational objectives of the lesson, the content of the lesson, the elaboration and implementation of a training strategy (2006, pp. 282-283). In the view of I.T. Radu and E. Soare (2006), "due to the valences they possess, the lesson imposed itself, in the evolution of didactic activity, as the main way of carrying out the didactic process, across all educational systems, being subjected to a continuous process of improvement" (p. 285); it also regards "the work of the teacher and the student, instruction and education, their information and training, all of which are subordinate to the teaching-learning process" (p. 282). The lesson consists of several sequences, "educational situations", which the educator creates in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the educational process. In this way, the lesson - as a complex educational activity - represents the total of such subsumed educational situations". It seems that, more recently, in modern didactics - as I.T. Radu and E. Soare (2006, p. 290) noted - the lesson "is regarded not only as action enforced by the proponent and "accepted" or "supported" by the students, but above all as a *multiform interaction between the human factors engaged in these activities*").

A distinct and welcome note in the design, presentation, definition (and practice) of the lesson was provided by M. Stanciu (2015). For him, the lesson represents "a high scientific, moral, aesthetic, professional activity, etc. It is a true initiatory act designed to create an

atmosphere of *temple and laboratory* (M. Eliade, p. 191)"; this vision and approach is, we believe, worthy of a more open and more in-depth reflection. It seems to make the transition from the stereotypical technical discourse to a revealing, magical and clear-sighted one. Perhaps that is why, in his searches and research, M. Stanciu (2015) discovers and appreciates, retains and proposes the concept of lesson formulated by Șt. Bârsănescu. For example, for the Romanian educator of culture, the lesson "was and remains the main bridge between the realm of ignorance and the enlightened and full of culture realm of the spiritual world" (apud Stanciu, 2015, p. 198). Also, among the lesson types that Șt. Bârsănescu distinguishes we also name the one whose purpose is to "experience ideas, awaken the spirit, open the mind of school children to what is holy and good, beautiful and truthful, just and useful" (apud Stanciu, 2015, p. 199).

Therefore, from all we presented so far, we can draw the conclusion (partial and possible, among many others) that many scholars in the field of education science have the tendency to assimilate the concept of lesson with that of formal lesson, previously laid out, conducted in the classroom, under the guidance, responsibility and control of a teacher. We are encouraged to believe - and consequently to assimilate almost automatically – the assumption that the lesson, any lesson, is indisputably and totally identified with the didactic lesson as a fundamental form of development of the instructive-educational act, in the conditions of organizing the education system by classes and lessons.

Taking over this concept from the times of the teachers' initial training (and then consolidating it, during the continuous training, daily professional activities and in the context of more or less formal debates, be they more or less scientifically rigorous), teachers come to believe that this is the only status that can be attributed to it. Most educational science specialists and most educational practitioners thus come to believe that the lesson is only an organizational framework in which certain activities take place within a certain timeframe and in a given space - according to a plan - in order to achieve pre-formulated objectives, as stipulated in the official documents. The curriculum and the objectives of the lesson mainly take into account the curricular constraints and system standards for a particular age group of the school population rather than the interests, motivations, curiosities of said students, oftentimes belonging to heterogeneous cultural backgrounds and displaying various peculiarities of extracurricular growth.

At the same time, they come to believe that the (school) lesson is the most important (if not the only) institutional informational-formative framework for transmitting knowledge, exercising skills and enhancing general attitudes, or specific to a particular type of activity or another, of a

particular educational subject or another; as well as that it includes the inevitable moment/ act of evaluating what (and how) a certain group of students had mastered (either individually or collaborating as a team) in relation to the (working) tasks and, of course, the required system of criteria.

The lesson pure and simple

If we looked more closely and - as far as possible - without professional prejudices and self-sufficiency beyond the classical (from Kuhn's perspective) paradigm (almost unreservedly accepted), we would discover that the concept of lesson is not (and we believe it would be impossible to be) reduced to the formal, school lesson. By following such (more generous and nuanced) point of view, we can propose, accept, and possibly remember, that a lesson means (or can mean), in a first instance, any (personal) experience, any (more or less anticipated) moment, life situation or existential state that possesses at least the following characteristics:

- A lesson is a situation, a circumstance, where we *have discovered something new/ or it was revealed to us* (new in relation to what we already knew or thought we knew until then); it is, one might say, that life situation in which or from which we have learned a thing unknown to us until that moment.

- Another characteristic is that the lesson is the situation or the occasion in which *we understood what we have/had previously not understood*. We might say that it is that circumstance in which we understood what we, in our self-sufficiency, believed impossible to grasp: namely, another (deeper, more extended) significance given to things (or the connections between them), life, death, self/ego, human relationships, the meaning of existence, our own searches and motivations, intentions, the behaviours and attitudes of others, etc. The lesson is (or can be) the moment we figured out what we hadn't understood until then, or we had understood too little, too superficially or perhaps, why not, wrong.

- Together, and in conjunction with the above mentioned characteristics, the (pure and simple) lesson also meets the criterion that states *we have revealed to ourselves* (in a gesture of honesty to others) *the limits of our own self-sufficiency*. We always believe that what we know and understand is certain, everything we need to know and therefore cannot be questioned. Sometimes, however, we face circumstances where some of our assumptions, our personal premises, are uprooted from our cognitive-emotional system and confronted with the inevitable tests of life (always in continuous flow, progressing, tense, tumultuous, conflicting and

problematic). As a result of the lesson we receive, we may grow into a different stage of our mental and spiritual development, of our awareness and perception of the inner and outer world and of the relationship between them.

- The lesson is, to a similar extent, the fact that someone or something (an event, for example) helped us become aware of an idea, a meaning, a feeling (to which we didn't have or wouldn't have had access by ourselves); a situation in which *we were helped to draw a conclusion*, knowing that any conclusion is a step towards self-growth, self-refinement and personal maturity and away from any self-limitation. Basically, we could say that our inner spiritual development pertains, to an essential extent, to the conclusions that we are able to grasp from what we live through, from the (more or less elevated) experiences we are going through. From this point of view, the lesson is the (more or less articulated/ disarticulated) sum of the conclusions we have been able to reach, those we have been able to extract from life's challenges. In this game, the sense of observation, focus and attention (Goleman, 2014), the agility of the mind and the quality/ clarity of our perceptions cannot be overlooked.

- We can also call a lesson the moment when we took *a step or a leap into the clearer and/or deeper self-knowledge*; we realize that we have revealed to ourselves a new side, a new dimension, one unpredictable feature. In the same context, the lesson can be the moment when we best know what we want; when we know more clearly where we want to go, what we have to do, what we can do with our endowment, skills, talent or with our lives.

- Next, and in relation to the previous characteristic, the lesson is (or may be) *that situation, that moment when we come out clearer, more enlightened* about our purpose, our goals and objectives (Tracy, 2016), about the truth and the lies of this world, the vulnerabilities and the grace/ nobility of its culture, etc.

- The lesson also implies the occasion in which (and by which) *we were given the opportunity, we were able to get to know our fellow neighbour* (better). There are circumstances when we reveal to ourselves new sides, dimensions, attitudes, intentions, abilities, values of others so different than what we knew or imagined (that they are or might be). In this situation, such lessons give us the opportunity to either appreciate more solidly and truthfully our fellow neighbours, or to be ashamed of the superficiality with which we regarded them.

- Another peculiarity of the lesson may also be *the situation in which we were able to be ourselves* - better, more generous, more courageous, more determined, more benevolent, warmer, more sincere, more patient, more understanding, more responsive, kinder - when those around us

were pushing or exhorting us (by their way of being and/or by their (big) numbers) to be more like them: more selfish, expeditious, more hypocritical, more nervous, more arrogant, colder, more lazy, more insolent, more indolent, more flattering (Stengel, 2017). There are such moments in life, lessons, in which we gather strength and realize that we can withstand the flow of society, its decay, the soul dissipation, and that we can protect what ultimately gives beauty to mankind. In short, *the lesson is the situation in which we expand, deepen, enrich our life experience and, with it, life itself.*

In a second instance of identifying the concept of lesson, we can consider lesson any existential circumstance that *imprints on our minds, our emotional world, the options, aspirations, behaviour, our interpersonal relationships, our attachments.* There are, in our lives, reversals, reorientations, re-evaluations, reconsiderations that get triggered in our minds, in our souls, in our beliefs and expectations that become a part of our own personality, our vision of people, of life and death, of divinity/transcendence.

All these open us to another, new understanding of existence, of our own meaning; they give a new meaning to our personal life. The pure and simple lessons mark our memory (either cognitive or affective, or both). *They cannot be forgotten.* They can come as a result of existential shocks, of admirable encounters, unexpected discoveries, relevant occurrences (rich in significance), extraordinary coincidences, serious mental-conceptual upheavals. In such an approach, the lesson has at least the following effects:

- a. It breaks us and puts us together again – in a new paradigm – our perspectives, our category systems, conclusions, projections and limitations;
- b. It disrupts, settles and/or dissolves our spiritual, attitudinal and axiological deposits;
- c. It upsets the fundamentals of our beliefs and convictions, from deep within our hearts.

In short, pure and simple lessons are those moments, circumstances, stages of life that are rich in content and cognitive, emotional, spiritual meanings; those moments that - whether we want it or not - *change us, provide us with an alternative or open a path for us, create a new horizon, make us doubt (or even overthrow) - in whole or in part - a system of concepts, values, beliefs; those are the moments that, whatever we do, we cannot unlive.*

The lesson is always unique and unrepeatable. A missed lesson is irrevocably a lost lesson. All that matters is that we - as responsible characters in our own lives – do not pass it by; that we do not remain unaware or move on indifferently and - as a result – risk being left unchanged, equal to ourselves (in our superficiality), self-sufficient, confused and/or ignorant.

Lessons can be (are and will be) everywhere. They can appear at any moment. It is important that - in relation to our own nature, our inner dispositions, our beliefs, endowed as we are with certain intellectual peculiarities - *we may be able to understand something*, know how (and be willing) to draw conclusions and teachings (whether or not we are inside the school building or courtyard, whether or not we are in class, before or after class).

Consequently, there is no need to use formal lessons and active-participatory methods, as such a didactic requirement is not necessary to motivate, challenge and attract students. All that matters is that they do not pass by indifferently, that they do not reject reality, that they understand (what happened), and then be able to deepen (the life event they went through) and learn from it. "The teacher" is the life event itself, the triggered event, as it was experienced by the individual, the circumstance in which they found themselves or through which they were forced to go, and the "curriculum" is life itself, its novelties, successions, correlations, unpredictability and its interpretations.

At the same time, it is worth mentioning that we may get happy lessons and painful lessons. Both can help us grow.

- Happy lessons prove us that life is beautiful, that we can trust it and we can do extraordinary things, that it can lead us towards bright horizons; that we can be optimistic and dedicated to our goals;
- Painful and dramatic lessons shake us from our sleepwalking, from our limitations and superficiality, from our cosiness and self-imposed inertia. They disturb us, scatter us, strike us, hurt us, disconcert us, but also help us – to the same extent – to realize how little we know of life and people, how ignorant and average we are.

We may receive lessons from our children, friends, enemies, colleagues, subordinates or leaders, animals, plants, nature itself, hyper-technologies, formal and/or informal relationships, tendencies and/or constraints of the ego, cultures uncontaminated by urbanism and rivalry, books, ordinary people, lives and destinies of historical personalities or other significant people for our growth, religions, philosophies, artistic, scientific, historical creations; we can receive lessons from our successes and achievements, but also from our defeats and failures, from the accomplishments and performances of others, but also from their failures and frustrations, and so on. In order to be triggered and unfold, lessons do not (necessarily) require a specific place, a certain space, a given moment or a sufficient amount of (usually pre-set) time. They may be (or may be based on) a simple gesture, reaction, act, decision, word, invitation, engagement or

surprise, sacrifice or look, a phone call or resignation, a simple gift or just a recommendation, denial or support, disappointment or postponement, etc.

Therefore, as they are formative, revealing, enlightening, providing new data, correlations, ideas, conclusions, as they are transforming, changing, (mental, spiritual, attitudinal and behavioural) (re)modelling, lessons are not (only) a framework for organizing and carrying out activities articulated by and oriented towards the achievement of formal-institutional objectives; instead, they are, I would say, education itself. Education is the lesson itself. If they are really lessons, they are educative, formative by their very substance. From this point of view, the lessons learned, gained, acknowledged and accumulated represent, in fact, accomplishing a process of education *per se*; just as well, the forgotten, missed lessons mean - basically - missing one's chance at education. Everything that we forget from the lessons received or experienced throughout our life amounts to impoverishment, degradation, the limitation of education as such. Therefore, we cannot speak of a forgotten lesson of education without accepting its degradation and alteration of the very core of its content and meanings.

Some aspects regarding the relationship between formal lessons and pure and simple lessons

Between the two ways of understanding and practicing education, we may come across at least the following possible situations:

- a. There are school lessons that do not contain pure and simple lessons. Students see them as merely formal and binding opportunities to retrieve certain information, formulas, algorithms, etc. to be demonstrated, used, and displayed in upcoming evaluations and subsequent tests. Information, data, algorithms, formulas are then forgotten, since they are no longer of any use to students. There are only meaningless trials left, an existential fluid as homogeneous as it is scattered and insignificant. Eventually, some funny events or ways in which they made us feel uncomfortable or embarrassed might linger in our memory.
- b. The lesson may also hold some moments/ contexts/ situations that are pure and simple lessons. Students are sometimes impressed, attracted, fascinated, astonished, shocked, awakened from their semi-conscious torpor or shaken from their peaceful and naive detachment. They feel that these moments/ contexts/ situations transform them, change them, give them another perspective from which tasks may be regarded; they

understand – somehow – something a little different (than they have understood before); they acquire a different meaning of things, they see themselves facing new correlations, they feel greater and better dexterity, an inner joy caused by the new, a novel way of understanding themselves or colleagues.

- c. There can also be school lessons that almost identify with pure and simple lessons. These lessons are full, dense in challenges, situational changes, spectacular discoveries that open new horizons, new correlations/ connections, new cultural temptations in the mind and soul of students. There are lessons that remain in the memory for a long time, if not forever, as parables and/ or as foundations.

Within the same analysis, we further specify that a formal lesson does not remain a formal lesson for all students. It is possible, for some of them, indeed, that the pure and simple lesson does not occur; for others, it may occur later (within a certain shorter or longer time after it started); for others, it may end earlier (than the 50 minutes of the officially regulated interval).

There may also be students who, over longer or shorter intervals (perhaps even semesters or full-time school years), do not go through pure and simple lessons. They actually feel the spiritual-cultural gap, the void of wasted time, the numb or alienated state of being. Hence, disgust, boredom, detachment (more or less ostentatious, displayed, and camouflaged). In this case, we believe, the taxonomy and classification of the types of formal lessons is less relevant than is their significance and value for students' knowledge, feelings and lives situation (as long as they are willing to grow in the direction they think they can express their potential, individuality, creativity, their own budding personality).

As teachers, we can offer lessons at any time, not only when we are (or feel) compelled to, not only when we want, but also when we do not want; not only when we intend to, but also when we do not intend to; not only as people behind the desk, but also as people; not only in school, but also in any environment and context we find ourselves in; not only during formal lessons, but also in the before and after. What can be deduced - among many other possible interpretations - is that, by focusing on the preparation of school lessons and overwhelmed/ taken over by their routine, we can overlook, as teachers, the pure and simple lessons; we can neglect or subvert them, leaving them thus unabsorbed in our daily practice; we would then be unable to use them psychologically, cognitively, for an axiological or interactive purpose. As people involved in education, we can provoke and stimulate spontaneous, unique, impressive lessons, surprise-lessons that constitute real solid points in building our students' lives, in the beautification of their souls.

Possible conclusions

During this (modest) study, we have tried to show that we cannot reduce the concept of lesson only to the formal lesson. Lessons do not exist and are not learned/ retained only in an institutionalized setting, solely within the space and time of school activities. The lesson is any life situation, any moment of it in which we have learned, understood, and clarified something; any instance from which we have gained a deeper and clearer understanding of what we represent, the stage at which we are in our lives, the significance of what we do, what we did or what we have to do; and the significance of what we do not do, of what we have not done, and - eventually – of what we will not do.

The lesson is in fact a more comprehensive concept than the one agreed upon and cultivated by a certain part of education specialists and practitioners; it is the moment, the interval, the period in which learning can take place spontaneously but deeply, when evaluation may or may not take place, when the increase in knowledge and wisdom marks our understanding, organization or even the meaning of our life. We know neither the place nor the moment when lessons will occur, but we know that they exist, that they come and go. So, as teachers, we can happen to spend 50 minutes on a formal lesson, but without having to do with a pure and simple lesson, just as we can have a pure and simple lesson during or beside the 50 minutes of a formal lesson. What is important is the significance – if any – of the experienced moments and events for the life, mind and soul of students or for anyone in a given situation. In short, the lesson is an occasion for enrichment, enhancement, deepening on the mental and/or spiritual break from limitation; the moment a new horizon is created in later (interior and/or exterior) life; the moment when external and internal socialization are triggered and merge.

References

- Cucoș, C. (2006). *Pedagogie* [Pedagogy]. Ediția a II-a revăzută și adăugită. Iași: Polirom Publishing House.
- Goleman, D. (2014). *Focus. Motivația ascunsă a performanței* [Focus. The hidden motivation of performance]. București: Curtea Veche Publishing House.
- Guțu, V. (2013). *Pedagogie* [Pedagogy]. Chișinău: CEP USIM.
- Ilica, A. (2015). *Pedagogia contemporană* [Contemporary pedagogy]. Arad: Tiparnița Publishing House.

- Ionescu, M. (2009). Probleme speciale ale lecției [Special issues of the lesson]. in M. Ionescu and V. Chiș (eds.). *Fundamentări teoretice și abordări praxiologice în științele educației* [Theoretical fundamentals and praxiological approaches in education sciences]. Cluj-Napoca: Eikon Publishing House.
- Ionescu, M., & Bocoș, M. (coord.). (2009). *Tratat de didactică modernă* [Treatise of modern didactics]. Pitești: Paralela 45 Publishing House.
- Jinga, I., & Istrate, E. (coord.). (2006). *Manual de pedagogie* [Pedagogy Textbook]. Ediția a II-a revăzută și adăugită. București: All Publishing House.
- Momanu, M. (2008). Forme de organizare a instruirii. Proiectarea și desfășurarea activității didactice [Forms of organizing instruction. Design and achievement of didactic activity]. in C. Cucuș (ed.). *Psihopedagogie* [Psychopedagogy]. Ediția a II-a. Iași: Polirom Publishing House.
- Radu, I.T., & Soare, E. (2006). Organizarea și desfășurarea procesului de învățământ [Organizing and conducting the learning process]. in I. T. Radu, & L. Ezechil (eds.), *Didactica. Teoria instruirii* [Didactics. Theory of instruction]. Pitești: Paralela 45 Publishing House.
- Silvaș, A. (2013). *Pedagogie* [Pedagogy]. Cluj-Napoca: Eikon Publishing House.
- Stanciu, M. (2015). *Teoria instruirii și a evaluării* [Theory of instruction and evaluation]. Iași: „Ion Ionescu de la Brad” Publishing House.
- Stengel, R. (2017). *Arta linguşirii* [The art of flattery]. București: Baroque Book & Arts Publishing House.
- Tracy, B. (2016). *Realizarea ţelurilor* [Achievement of goals]. București: Curtea Veche Publishing House.
- Şerbănescu, L., & Liţoiu, N. (eds.). (2015). *Pedagogie. Teoria și metodologia instruirii. Teoria și metodologia evaluării* [Pedagogy. Theory and methodology of instruction. Theory and methodology of evaluation]. Vol. 2. București: Politehnica Press Publishing House.