

# ETHICS OF EDUCATION FOR SENIUM

Katarína Mária VADÍKOVÁ

**Abstract:** *Terminologically ethics of education differs from educational ethics by define notion education specifically for senium. Author bases her analysis in the context of dialogical personalism. She stresses the need to applicate basics of ethics of education for senium and formulates some of codes to apply it in an educational process in senium.*

**Key words:** *personalism, education, ethics, senior, person, hope.*

## 1 Introduction

Senior is the person, who lives his/her own senium. Senium, as a life-period, is the part of the continuum of a personal story, which is societally underestimated, however needed to form healthy social relations in which any society is not only situated, however out of which it becomes its origin. Any senior should be understood within his/her personal past, present and future - as a person. If a senior is defined as a person, his/her dignity is confirmed and in the same time - in this act, it is confirmed the dignity of mankind as such.

Senior is invited to continue his/her realisation of moral law according to his/her continuously trained personal conscience in senium – to stay a moral person. Education should help him/her in his/her personal way to safe his/her personal integrity and identity, to help him/her to find his/her personal way how to continue living his/her personal life-story in the period of senium.

Ethics of education for senium as such could be defined as an organon, should be used during the period of senium to live own life-story at least theoretically good. The know-how depends on anthropological, socio-economical, societal and philosophical circumstances, specified by the period senium. Both of them - ethics and education, they need terminological and methodological re-explanation according to the reality of senium.

## 2 Terminology and methodology. Dialogical personalism.

Scope of the paper made me to reduce the terminological re-explanation of notions ethics and education into the frame of one philosophical approach named dialogical

personalism (Vrána, 1996; Theunissen, 1965; Schmidinger, 1994). It offers me the most simply way how to present the concept of the ethics of education for senium.

Terminological apparatus is based on following main terms: person, dialogue, human dignity, interpersonal relation, philosophical mystery, face as an identity, personal encounter;

Methodological apparatus origins in following main methods: heuristic method, phenomenological method, method of interpersonal recognition, dialogical sharing, dialogical silence (Buber in Poláková, 1993), philosophy of hope (Marcel, 1971; Wojtyła, 2000), distinction between communication and dialogue, distinction between philosophical problem and philosophical mystery;

In the context of dialogical personalism the notion person means both – an ontological and a dialogical definition of a human being. The main anthropological theses are as follows: Man is a person all lifelong; however man becomes a personality all lifelong. Man could be understood as a dialogical being in the centre of his/her interpersonal relations and as a communicative being while he/she is acting in social and societal relations. (Vadíková, 2011, p. 83 – 91)

Personological paradigm (Dannefer – Settersten, 2010, s. 7) is implemented into the personalistic ethics. In that context, any person is invited to be a moral person. Person should decide on problems according to his/her conscience, which means to confirm the truth about the good of his/her own decision with regard to his/her own continuously trained conscience. In this way, personal conscience defends integrity and identity of the person as a guardian of his/her face and name. To live one's own public life means to be personally engaged in the public life – to face it, to be responsible. The way of engagement is defined by facing one's own life-story by the means of a "face-to-face way" and in personal (intra- and interpersonal relation) and impersonal (social and societal relation) relations. A concrete face represents a concrete person. Features of the face represent personality. (Vadíková 1, 2013, p. 28 - 35)

The value of a person is the same as the value of his/her face through which the person faces situations. Any decision in a concrete life-story is the decision of concretely named person and stays with him/her for the whole life long. The person, responsibly engaged in the public life, continuously needs to be arethologically trained, axiologically proved, in dialogical contact with his/her own conscience, to be the person whose morality is defended and whose identity and integrity is saved, while he/she is in the centre of interpersonal and other types of relations when living own life story. To stay a moral person all lifelong is related to remaining an autonomous, mature and dialogical being, who is worthy of praise and dignity, who personally is of value and remains value. (Vadíková 1, 2013, p. 36 - 37)

Regarding the personological paradigm in personalistic ethics the notion education is primary oriented to those lifelong processes, which are connected with development of human personality. It is focused on arethological training, axiological examination and continuously cultivation of personal decision making process. It is a formed effort to guide oneself or another one on personal way to be happy – to help him/her to be able to fill one's own final aim of own life – to participate in one's being a person in concrete life-story. It is both – one's own effort (auto education), someone else offer (direct education or re-education), cooperation (communication and dialogue with common aim).

The most wanted form of education is cooperation, which has parental, paternalistic, maternalistic or friendly way of relating. It is based on relating, sharing, and action-reaction systems of human understanding. It is transformed into methods of human communication and dialogue, into human participation on common aim, common happiness, and common good. Education should serve as a method to understand oneself in the centre of interpersonal relations as named person, as the concrete unique autonomous, mature and dialogical being, who is worthy of praise and dignity. Any other interpretation of the notion education is not worthy of human being as such.

The notion educational ethics differs from the notion ethics of education terminologically and methodologically. The fundament of both of notions has the same base – the notion ethics, in which is included all history of ethical theories and ethical systems and all types of ethics. It is also valid for both – educational ethics and ethics of education, that a concrete terminological and methodological apparatus, the ethical formula included, is related with a concrete ethical theory, or ethical system<sup>1</sup> or type of ethics.

The notion education refers to the distinction between notion case (a happening - objectively judged by a person) and notion situation (experience - person is personally engaged in a happening) formulated by German philosopher R. Guardini (1999, p. 21). It is ethically valid for any educational process that it is prescribed for both of persons – as educator as well as educantus, to be engaged in the happening, t. m. in the education. If they observe the education as an object and do not experience it and do not invite it into own life-stories, it will not work there, their personalities will not be formed in the educational process. This is also valid for any phase of human life.

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<sup>1</sup> Historically specification of variability of educational ethics and ethics of education is not the main aim of this paper. For more details see publications dedicated to history of ethics, f e. Hrehová (1998); Remišová (2008).

Regarding the definition of educational ethics the notion education gives to the notion ethics its origin. Consequences are implemented into the definition of the educational ethics – it is such an ethics, which contributes into the processes connected with personal developing of personality of a person, who is becoming a moral person. The definition comes out of one of functions of moral – the educative function. In this way the ethics (educational ethics) is understood as a form of education of moral. The reality of any educational ethics in the history of ethics is that it stays in the frame of theoretical way of explanation the good as such. Any action, which follows its principles, could not be evaluated more than theoretically. Moral praxis is understood as a personal realisation of moral law in accordance with trained personal conscience. In this way it is possible to conclude - any formula of concrete ethical theory, ethical system or type of ethics is able to become a code of educational ethics, or to contribute to creation of terminological and methodological apparatus for a new independent educational ethics in history of ethics.

In accordance with the definition of ethics of education the notion ethics refers to techniques of education. It is a theoretical explanation, how to stay at least a theoretically good person in an educational process. Any educational process should fill the frame of the theoretically good praxis given by concrete ethics of education. Any of techniques should be used at least theoretically well in any educational process.

Following the context of dialogical personalism the ethics of education has a wider dimension there. A personality of an educantus develops itself in education and he/she may become an educator there; however he/she stay educantus till the end of his/her life-story. His/her personality is transformed in various educational processes, it is formed in various decision making processes; however he/she stays a person till the end of his/her life-story. Also in senium it is possible to meet educantus, who has already been a professional educator and vice versa. It is also true, that it is possible that an educator is an educantus at the same time. To forget this point means to exclude the personological paradigm out of the notion education.

In the context of dialogical personalism the notion education includes both – cultivation (upbringing, instruction, training, rearing of a person) and erudition (socialisation, cultururation, civilisation). It is one from all lifelong processes, in which a person in the centre of relations fills his/her final aim to become happy – to become a person, who is identified within his/her name. Education as such means for a person great help on the way to his/her self. The help is based on the functionality of personal and impersonal relations. Any

education, which is not based on human relations, has worse base and may be judged as unethical, unjust and indecent and may be immoral.

Senium specifies the notion education in various ways. Educational process could be explained as a way to personal face – own personal identity. It fosters also process of socialisation, civilisation and enculturation. It works in upbringing, instruction, training and rearing of a person and also in erudition to paint concrete unique one name face – personal identity. Senium is characterised by another process – recapitulation. In senium the education is transformed into such a specific form, what needs specific approach, re-evaluation and reformulation of educational standards. At the end it is based on the same essentials – way of interaction between cultivation and erudition; however the interaction is experienced in partly different circumstances newly defined by specific relation educator – educantus situated in senium.

In senium the relation educator – educantus loses it's one line authoritative way of influence. Education is based on cooperative active sharing more, than on passive 'give-accept' acting. It works more often as a dialogue than as a communication (Glasa – Glasová, 2007, p. 3 – 4). The cooperation is developed into friendship more often than in other periods of life-story (childhood, adolescence, adulthood). In the relation an influence of an authority is not measured by erudition any more, however by wisdom (Kováč, 2011, p. 215 – 216).

Senium is a scientific object reflected by various scientific disciplines. It is a hot problem interdisciplinary researched in contemporary society. However, it needs more – to be understood trans-disciplinary. It is important to reflect on the connection between pedagogic, andragogic and geragogic approaches, to solve problems of intergenerational and trans generational communication on the topic. In my opinion it can help to overcome tensions in the relation educator – educantus and also it can become the significant contribution to solve problems of living own senium in the contemporary society.

Missing or underestimated trans-generational education is another one of important origins of intergenerational misunderstandings in field of senium in the contemporary society. It is no doubt that education as such can catch the problems of education deeply that pedagogy, andragogy or geragogy, however it is their condition. According to the personological paradigm it is ontologically and humane important to apply complex and holistic understanding of a person in the centre of interpersonal relations in all periods of his/her life-story, and to apply it in solving any problem in this field. Philosophy of hope enables to see human life in a perspective of all lifelong tendencies to be happy conditioned only by staying a moral person. It is based on the vision, which confirms a possibility to

realise own personal life-story by own face and in own name and with own mission. That is all equal for any human being. Philosophy of hope is the assumption to achieve trans-generational understanding. (Vadíková 2, 2013, p. 184 – 185)

Problems of senium is not dedicated only to seniors and to those, who are in any way personally in touched with them; however the questions of senium are addressed to all mankind. Nowadays<sup>2</sup>, a senior is accepted as an autonomous, more-less self-sufficient part of society, who participates in his/her personal way to his/her development. The hot question for him/her is the way and measure of an active participation on it. It is defined by his/her understanding of personal human dignity. In this way he/she is asking him/her self: How much is my engagement in societal life, in societal relations according to my understanding of my dignity? Where is the borderline behind which is my personal space to rest, to be respected, to be appreciated, to be cared for - the space of that all I should learn to be given or I should have be able to accept as a part of my own life-story? Ethics of education for senium should be oriented to solve such questions, to offer techniques in the way to not hit the face of questioning person, to teach senior to hope, to accept, to respect his/her own senium as a part of his/her way to be a moral person in the centre of interpersonal relations.

### **3 The Ethics of education for senium**

The quality of life in senium depends on prevention, on measure of arrangements and on education. Education is not prescription as a medicine, or rehabilitation, even it is able to fill those functions. The condition of an ethical education of seniors is an autonomous decision to discuss, to communicate new concrete problems, to which he/she is facing in his/her life story. Senior needs motivation. Engagement and 'will to face news' are the first steps on the way to be educated. Education in senium needs also recapitulation - to take whole named life-story in account, to count on senior as on the person in the centre of interpersonal relations. It is a way of responsible forgiving to self and to others. It is based on re-evaluation, re-classification, and verification. It is the right time to know own disposes, to know, what should be change or left in past. It is a process of re-identification a re-discovery of oneself in senium. To recognize own face in own life-story, to identify him/herself in the story and to learn to accept it – those are challenges addressed to senior in this period of his/her life. The

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<sup>2</sup> See more in a publicly opened research dedicated to changes in senior-lifestyle in Slovenia: Sonda do životného štýlu seniorov na Slovensku. IN Nadácia Orange. Prieskumy. Život seniorov. (publ. 3.10.2010) Správa z projektu zverejnená IN: SENIORHUMOR. Smiechom proti starobe. [online]Dňa 12.6.2012 dostupná z <http://www.seniorhumor.org/?p=4004>.

response towards the challenge, t. m. strong will to face own senium by own face, it means to find peace, satisfaction – to recognize and to find him/herself. In my opinion the help on this personal way to own happiness should be the main aim of the education in senium.

In senium ethics of education means to respect basic moral principles in the relation educator – educantus, who are acting in an educational process. Senium is the space which specifies conditions for application of the moral principles. Moral principles are classified according to needs of the educantus (senior) as well as the educator. Classification of educational techniques and the way of their applications should be matter of moral consensus and informed consent of both – primary of educator and educantus, secondary of all whom it might concern (family members, nurses, friends, etc.). Principles of justice (f. e. adequacy, fairness, likeness, equality, uniformity) should be explained according to understanding of the notion justice and own understanding of human dignity and own dignity. Rights should be required on base of common respect to human dignity. Education should take its origin in partnership and friendship and should come out wisdom. Addressing by name should follow convention at least (etiquette). However, an informal, friendly addressing by name is in senium more often required by seniors, the first addressing by surname and title should be formal (respect to social, societal statuses).

Sensitivity to differences in life-stories, characters, circumstances, body-spirit dimension of both of persons engaged in education is required. Also generational, cultural, social and societal, socio-economical statuses are invited to be known and to be respected. Empathy and sharing rather than directive authority and communication are the way out of paternalistic or maternalistic approach into a friendly calm, patient nearness - the participation on education in educational process. Education in senium is a donation into life stories of both – educator and educantus. The gift for education in senium should be evaluated more than in other periods of life. There educator as well as educantus are participating on their life-stories and create the way of transgenerational communication of transversal goods for better society. They both are worthy of praise and dignity.

In deep respect it has to be agreed: To speak about senium is able only the person, who knows something about it. Senium may be truly known only by those who are personally engaged in it. (Guardini, 1997, p. 90)

Ethics of education for senium offers various codes to educational good praxis. They serve as encouraging motivation to do education well. Codes should be taken as instruments, guidelines, offer, recommendations, how to stay moral in and such an educational process, rather than requirements only on to be ethical.

I have already listed some of them into the scriptum *Specifika edukace seniorů* (Šauerová – Vadíková, 2013, p. 217 - 220) for those, who are preparing themselves to serve seniors in various ways in institutions – in family, in old people's home, hospital, hospice, etc. The scriptum was dedicated to students, however also to seniors to fill their free time full, to care for their physical and psychical health, to open the doors of their creativity, to make them feel needed, loved and spiritually well. I do hope they may help in an educational process to create a friendly creative atmosphere. Here they are, as follows:

**Take lessons rather than give them.**

The educational process in senium requires knowledge of both – educator and educantus. Senior is an equal partner also in a dialogue on educational topics. It should be senior, who invites into friendship and if so that means the relations are healthy, ethical principles are well used, the educational process as a cooperation of two related person can bring some outcome.

**Precede rather than command.**

Patience conquers the world. Patience should be a part of the regular arethological outfit of every educator. Commanding causes demanding, frustration and paralysation of senior. It may be experienced as an attack against integrity, it touches human dignity. The problem originates not only in age-differences. The usage of paternalistic approach to a senior seems to be a comic way of educator's satisfaction. However, it happens. It could be overcome in common looking for personal limits and in adequate guessing on senior's possibilities. The educator should try to know his/her protégé – his/her background, axiological and arethological outfit, disposes and also fair measure of engagement of the senior. There is much to do to create a calm atmosphere for cooperation and dialogue – to solve the way of adequate addressing; to not forget the importance of personal invitation into the cooperation; to not underestimate common deciding on limits, value and consequences, on sharing of own experience.

**Invite into the world of possibilities rather than talk about duties.**

Duties are respected only if they are accepted as personal necessity. An appeal to obey the requirement of the personally accepted necessity it may come from a) personal conscience (moral duties); b) public opinion (decent duty); c) moral authority (obligation) d) authority (imperative duty, bidding). In a dialogue with senior it is at least questionable to stress what is



necessary. It is wisdom of senium, what gives to 'logically' gained solutions their value. In this way senior is not obliged to act according to the duty, however he is invited to the possibility to act according to that, what he is asked to do in obligation.

### **Confer rather than speculate.**

Older people have much of experience and they are able more-less easily to recognise, if someone hesitates or fails to feign. The best way, how to eliminate such a situation, is to invite senior into cooperation on educational process.

### **Act rather than make a presentation.**

Senior has already had a lot of theory. He does not need it anymore. He needs praxis, action, ideals, excitement and paragon. He likes to enjoy the process, the cooperation. He does not take it all so serious anymore. He takes it more as an amusement, a play or an entertainment.

### **Show rather than lead.**

Definition of educator points to the fact that he/she is someone, who has already been 'there' and wants to speak about the topic. In cooperation with senior it is possible that both of them – educator as well as educantus, have already been there; however each of them had been there in other way. In such a situation it is very nice to looking for such places, such objectives there, which are interesting for both of them. There is still plenty of staff to observe and to discuss and it waits to be shown and to be discovered via cooperation.

### **Face rather than take too much of responsibility.**

It is typical for senium to draw an interference, or consequence, to look for trespasser and to shake responsibility off. Educator should never account to senior for theses he has never hold, for story or part of history he has not experienced personally as a witness, for consequences he could not be aware of, etc. Educator is obliged to apply ego-syntonic imperative and to be mature autonomous erudite person. In a dialogue he should be brave and do not loose own face.

### **Recuperate rather than worry.**

It is also darkness, what senior can bring into an educational process. He/she may be apathetic, depressed, frustrated, to feel underestimated, not understood, unloved, not needed,

etc. It is important to face the situation with love and comprehension. If educator fails under the pressure of the influence of darkness, his/her fight is lost. If he/she is able to transform the darkness into lightness, to use the situation and to make senior engaged and exited, the consequence of this transformation will be recuperation of the senior and him/her – the educator, too. Their cooperation will bring joy not only in their life-stories, but to those all they might meet.

### **Hope for person for the sake of mankind.**

Lack of confidence defeats any relation. Mutuality makes possible any cooperation. The respect to human dignity of any human being refers to the respect of own human dignity included into dignity of mankind. The bonding of concrete persons in mankind refers to requirement of respect to human rights and is conditioned by their engagement for needs of each other in sharing and in dialogue. People are dialogical beings. The hope of both – of an educator as well as of a senior, is conditioned by their good will, concern, personal engagement and a kenotical sacrifice in the name of common weal. The common challenge of the educational process is to find out how to face the end of own life wisely and not alone.

## **4 Conclusions**

Ethics of education for senium may help educator as well as senior to cooperate in better way, to motivate them, to initialise an active dialogue and should serve for well-being. Senium should be recognised as such a period of human life, which is rich on wisdom, memories, well-being and hope. Senior is a dialogical person of great value and is unique. He/she is worthy of praise and dignity. Educator should feel honoured by possibility to share the time of senium with those they are living it. For him/her it is a school of life. He/she participates in transgenerational wisdom as anybody else in each of the educational process; he/she is personally initiating, leading and giving.

Ethics of education for senium, as one of applied ethics, should be implemented into courses in ethics not only for professionals, however it may become interesting for anybody, who lives his/her own life-story wisely and responsible.

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## 6 Contact:

Mgr. Katarína Mária Vadíková, Ph.D.

Dept. of Ethics and Moral Philosophy

Faculty of Arts, University in Trnava

Hornopotočná 23, 918 43 Trnava

Email: [vadikova@yahoo.com](mailto:vadikova@yahoo.com)