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POTENTIALS OF INTERDISCIPLINARITY: NORBERT ELIAS' THEORY IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCOLOGY

In the modern context, inter- and trans-disciplinary studies are deservedly gaining more and more popularity. In the educological context, combinations with related disciplines, such as sociology, can be fruitful. Despite some difference in the subjects of research, relevant borrowings have great generative potential.

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate, on the concrete example of the social theory of Norbert Elias, that the theoretical-methodological interaction of sociology and educology is productive and important for finding new research questions and, accordingly, for a deeper understanding of the research subject.

With the help of qualitative content analysis and general scientific methods of theoretical research, the author analyzes the social theory of Norbert Elias and reveals its content. The analysis took place in three stages: summarizing, explicating and structuring. At the first stage, the corpus of Elias' texts were studied in detail in order to create a single text that includes all the elements of the theory. At the second stage, expert comments were added to unclear passages of the text, explaining some ambiguous points. At the third stage, the text was subjected to interpretation-coding, which enabled a deeper understanding of what was written.

As a result, it was established that the theoretical-conceptual apparatus based on the concepts of figuration, power relations and individual and social habitus, developed by Norbert Elias for studying and understanding the surrounding reality, has the potential to be applied in educological research. The advantages in this case include the possibility of simultaneous micro-, meso- and macro-analysis, an additional point of view and an expansion of the arsenal of research questions in educology. Dangers include thoughtless eclecticism and inadequate attention to the peculiarities of the subject of research in each of the disciplines.

The article may be of interest to anyone who is interested in issues of interdisciplinarity in educology.

Key words: *interdisciplinarity, theoretical and methodological base of research, educology, Norbert Elias, qualitative content analysis.*

Introduction and the current state of the research problem

Characteristic features of the scientific landscape in the last three to four decades are content digitization, internationalization, and the search for new knowledge using hybrid theoretical and methodological concepts. The latter trend is explained by the rather large generative potential of interdisciplinary research. In the field of pedagogy, these processes were embodied in the emergence, legitimization and development, first in the Australian and American (Biggs, 1976), and then in the European and Ukrainian (Ognevyuk & Sysoyeva, 2012) scientific perception of a new scientific phenomenon, the name of which is educology.

The basis of the emergence of educology is the synergy of pedagogy as a science of education and training and the psychology and philosophy of education. The purpose of its creation was to shift and expand the research-theoretical emphasis of pedagogy at the expense of systematicity and inclusion of the entire educational sphere in the process of its development into the research umbrella. Thus, educological research in the pure sense is such that should *a priori* include theoretical perspectives and methods from various scientific disciplines.

The issue of inter- and transdisciplinarity in the study of educological research questions attracted the attention of many scientists, especially in the English-language scientific discourse (Fisher, 2003). First of all, the positive

features of this phenomenon are noted, such as, for example, the achievement of methodological pluralism with the consequent increase in the quality of scientific works.

In the methodological field, interdisciplinarity is expressed in the exchange of perspectives and methods, which often develops into the creation of hybrid synergistic methods according to the needs and conditions of a particular study. The practical recognition and desire for inter- and transdisciplinarity is expressed by the frequent involvement of representatives with different cultural and educational backgrounds in project activities.

Criticism of this phenomenon (Hitzler, 2008) is directed not at the very essence of synergistic combination, but at inconsistency and mindless mixing of incompatible elements, a kind of eclecticism in science. In addition, the lack of understanding or deliberate inattention to the theoretical division of disciplines is criticized. Such criticism once again emphasizes the need for deep professional and general theoretical knowledge for the correct use of inter- and transdisciplinarity in scientific research.

Researchers pay relatively less attention to the analysis of theoretical interdisciplinary combinations of educological research. However, theoretical generalizations are, on the one hand, the source and basis, and on the other hand, the ultimate goal of research. The principles and process of combining different scientific approaches are also insufficiently researched. The issue of meaningful search,

selection and matching, as well as proper coordination of inter- and transdisciplinary scientific projects, under the condition of frequent impossibility of complete possession of all scientific information, remains outside the due attention of scientists.

However, these questions are extremely important for the further successful development of educology as an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary science.

Aim and tasks

The purpose of this article is to make a contribution to the research on the issue of theoretical synergy in education. The generative potential of sociological theories in education will be illustrated on a concrete example of the theory of Norbert Elias. To achieve this goal, the following tasks will be performed: first, the content of Elias' theory will be analyzed; and, secondly, it is shown which types of research questions will be covered and solved by the involvement of this sociological theory in educational issues. The conclusions will present the prospects of such interdisciplinary research.

Research methods

To conduct the planned analysis, the author chose the interpretive paradigm (Wilson, 2017) as a methodological basis. Unlike the normative paradigm, which involves the establishment and observance of certain norms, the interpretive paradigm is based on explanation, interpretation, that is, interpretation (hence the name). The contents of oral or written texts are considered to be established in the context of assigning certain, socially conditioned meanings.

This methodological choice formed a list of requirements for methods that can be used in research. First of all, these are non-standardized methodical procedures that must correspond to the subject and purpose of the research. The peculiarity of such methods is openness to data, an attempt to understand the author's intentions and (most importantly) possible social interpretations of a certain text.

The choice of this methodological perspective is explained by an effort to understand the nature of the phenomenon under study as fully as possible. Allow the text to "speak", "reveal", reflexively minimizing the role and knowledge of the author of the study.

Since the author's focus is on one sociological theory, this research project is a kind of case study consisting of several stages. Based on the specifics of the research question and the purpose of the research, the author singles out the following methodical vectors united by one goal. First, the analysis of the content of the sociological theory of Norbert Elias; secondly, the analysis of its compliance with educational issues; and, thirdly, an assessment of the generative potential of this theory.

To analyze the content of the social theory of Norbert Elias, the method of qualitative content analysis according to Philipp Mayring (2021) was applied. Since this method, unlike quantitative content analysis, is based on interpretation and induction, it can be classified as qualitative and, accordingly, belong to the interpretive paradigm. On the other hand, qualitative content analysis allows you to focus

on the text itself. Thus, this method is well suited to the task of research, as it allows to reveal the content of the theory in detail and qualitatively, step by step (Mayring, 2021).

At the first stage, a summarizing technique was applied. The corpus of Elias' texts was reduced to the limits of one text of up to ten pages. It is important to note that this text has retained all the main thematic sections and ideas of the theory. This stage of the analysis was of particular importance, as it made it possible to study the content of the theory in detail.

At the second stage, elements of explicating were applied. Those parts of the theory that needed additional analysis and interpretation were analyzed in detail and supplemented with expert comments, as well as additional secondary literature. This process had a systematic nature and took place in accordance with the research objective.

The third stage of the structuring in this study consisted in the coding-interpretation of the text based on the search for correspondences with educational research and the disclosure of interdisciplinary potential. Categories were created both inductively, based on the text itself, and from secondary literature. Sociological experts were additionally involved in the interpretation of complex parts of the texts.

During and especially after the completion of the third stage, the process and the results of the entire procedure were again analyzed for compliance with the three main criteria of research quality: transparency, reproducibility and intersubjectivity.

At the stage of the transparency check, the entire analysis was subjected to a critical check for clarity of presentation and comprehensibility for the appropriate circle of readers. When reproducibility was tested, it was determined whether the results obtained would be similarly reproduced if the same procedure were repeated. When checking for intersubjectivity, experts from the circle of teachers and students were additionally involved in order to reduce as much as possible the subjective influence of the author on the process of data analysis.

In addition to the main method of qualitative content analysis as a kind of umbrella, general scientific methods of theoretical research, such as abstraction, induction, deduction and abduction, analogy, logical method, specification, were applied in the research process.

The correct combination of induction, deduction and abduction was extremely important in the construction of theoretical reasoning. At the time when deduction as a method of forming a logical argument from general to specific took place at the initial stage, induction as a logical opposite played a significant role during the main analysis of the text. Abduction was used when building hypotheses during material analysis.

Thus, the analysis of the potential of sociological theories in education based on the example of the theory of Norbert Elias is the basis of this study. That is, the original texts of Elias, which reproduce his theory, became the empirical material. The method of qualitative content analysis, in combination with other general scientific research

methods, helped to study and reproduce the content of the theory, as well as to explore the potential of its application in educational research projects.

Research results

The process approach offers its own focus and its own conceptual apparatus for the study of *the social*. Its main feature is the understanding of social phenomena not in statics, but in dynamics. The first fundamental variant of the process study of social reality was developed by Norbert Elias (1977; 1978; 1987; 1989; 1990; 2014). He formulated the basic principles that underlie societal transformations, opposing the egocentric picture of the world (Elias, 2014).

Within Elias' approach, *the social* is understood as a set of human interdependencies, i. e. *figurations*, of a different order, based on transferable balances of power (Elias, 1987; 1977; 1978; 1989; 2014). Such understanding solves the problem of opposing the individual and his inner "I" from the one side, and society from another: In the sociology of Elias, they form each other and cannot be studied separately.

The transfer of the research focus to the individual and figurational levels leads to theoretical integration and relativization of the classical micro, meso and macro levels of analysis. The distinction between them becomes intracategorical, and therefore relative and more open. Which figurations will be assigned to the macro, and which to the meso or micro level will depend on the situational theoretical decision of the researcher, based on the objectives of the study.

In addition, the theory of Elias excludes the rigid definition of the framework and exact forms of the social process. Here the main question is not "*What?*" (form), but "*How?*" (principle). The result is a symbiosis of conceptual rigor on the one hand and openness to possible directions of social processes on the other.

In the sociology of Elias, each individual is seen exclusively in his mutual connection with other people. For a theoretical analysis of human relationships, Elias (1987; 1977; 1978; 1989; 2014) introduces the concept of *figuration*, which defines any combination of human relationships based on *power balances*. Any individual cannot but participate in figurations if he is socially alive: Each of us is figurationally doomed from the moment of social birth to social death, which in most cases almost coincides with the physical one. Consequently, in the theory of Elias, the individual, on the one hand, is always included in the theoretical analysis as an immanent actor, without whom the existence of figurations is impossible. On the other hand, any individual is process-sociologically analyzed only in the context of those figurations to which he belongs, which he creates and reproduces.

The concept of figuration applies to all human relationships, regardless of their size, objectives, temporal and spatial characteristics. For sociological analysis, this means that (small) groups of people and communities, as well as nations, states, and associations of states will be equally considered as different empirical manifestations of

the same theoretical concept. It is assumed that they all develop according to the same principle, the principle of figuration.

Power balances between people form the basis of figurations. In the theory of Elias, power is also a process category, which acquires its value only under conditions of a figuration. The accent light of Elias' theory is directed on power relations and their dynamics, as they determine what shape the corresponding figuration will take, as well as what personal characteristics its members will have.

Elias observes an important ability of figurations and individuals to reproduce themselves and their position in figuration and, consequently, "preserve" power balances. To describe this feature, Elias introduces the concept of *habitus* ("der Habitus") (Elias, 1977, p. 333; Elias, 1987, p. 244). Habitus is mutually dependent on the figuration: Each figuration creates its characteristic habitus, and, as a result, this very habitus reproduces its "own" figuration through individuals. It is important to note that the habitus continues for a period, even after the disintegration of the figuration that created it. It also does not arise simultaneously with the figuration. (Elias & Scotson, 1990, p. 249).

Elias (1977; 1987) identifies two types of habitus: *social* ("der soziale Habitus"), i.e. characteristic to a particular figuration, and *psychic* one ("der psychische Habitus"), i.e. inherent in a particular individual member of figurations. Social habitus is interdependent with the psychic as figurations are interdependent with individuals. The main difference is that the social habitus is the same for the corresponding figuration, applies to all its members, and is homogeneous. Psychic habitus is directly associated with only one "carrier", but it may have several layers. This is explained by the fact that in the modern differentiated world, each person, as a rule, simultaneously takes part in several figurations (Elias, 1987, p. 33; Elias, 1977, p. 317). At the same time, a certain part of the habitus will dominate. Usually this is the part that has formed out of the figuration that has been guaranteed the viability of the individual (Elias, 1987, p. 245).

Psychic habitus contains internalized self-control mechanisms of the individual, and determines his perception of social reality (Elias, 1987, p. 31, 56–60, 128–130; Elias, 1977, p. 335, 447–448). It is the internal behavioural imperative that was crystallized through continual reproduction and is followed by migration into the subconscious. It is based on the "place" of each individual in the figuration set by the power balances and automatically imposes a rigid behavioral framework, any departure from which is strictly sanctioned within the figuration (Elias & Scotson, 1990, p. 9–21, 243). The development of the apparatus of self-control and self-coercion among individuals constitutes the central point of Elias' theory: This is the actual *process of civilization* ("der Zivilisationsprozess" or "der Prozess der Zivilisation") that has no external control but strictly follows the internal laws of figuration and habitus (Elias, 1977, p. 316; Elias, 1987, p. 72, 95; Elias, 1989, p. 50).

Into the principle of figurations, the moment of their change is laid. Elias, along with Scotson, notes that basically any figuration, based on a significant difference in power, is in a state of tension and potential conflict (Elias & Scotson, 1990, p. 29–36). Therefore, the process of civilization is characterized by periods of (violent) changes of power balances. On the one hand, these are the moments of vagueness and uncertainty. On the other hand, this is the time when the possibility of a critical reconsideration of the prevailing social habitus arises (Elias, 1977, 443). This happens depending on the newly established power balances. As a result, new standards of behavior emerge. A new habitus is born and the civilization process goes on further.

Elias' theory reveals only one of many sociological visions of reality. In the context of educational issues, the application of such a theory will provide an opportunity for a comprehensive analysis of educational reality. Due to the elasticity of the concept of figuration, such an analysis can be simultaneously applied to micro-, meso- and macro-research. The application of such a social theory will supplement the arsenal of typical educational research questions with interdisciplinary questions about behavioral structures, distribution and exchange of knowledge, forecasting the development of educational processes, the role of the individual in them, etc.

Discussion

Therefore, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary studies are designed to enable a more comprehensive study of the subject. In the context of education, research can be productive in which theoretical exchange is used with other disciplines, the subject of research and tasks of which partially coincide with those of education.

For example, the theory of Norbert Elias (1977; 1978; 1987; 1989; 1990; 2014) with its conceptual apparatus offers a theoretical-methodological and conceptual toolkit for the study and holistic understanding of the surrounding reality. If it is applied in educational research, it will generate additional hypotheses and make the analysis deeper.

The analysis of power distributions and their potentials in the middle of figurations, made from an educational perspective, will be able to explain the processes taking place in education. In addition, it becomes possible to simultaneously forecast development and study the principles of policy in the educational sphere.

The most positive thing in the application of Elias' theory is the possibility of combining micro-, meso- and macro-levels in the study of educational issues. In practice, this means the possibility of holistic research, starting with small-sized figurations, and ending with the entire field of education as a macro-figuration.

The application of sociological theories in education is a topic that has not yet received sufficient attention. Critical remarks (Hitzler, 2008) refer to various subjects of research, characteristic of each separate discipline. However, a skillful and successful combination of the theoretical base, supplementing educational research with a sociological perspective, has great generative potential.

A new perspective born from two related disciplines can shape and help answer latent questions. This will help to understand in more detail and quality the functioning, content and prospects for the development of the educational sphere.

Conclusions

Thus, modern educational scientific thought is characterized by inter- and transdisciplinarity. The positive characteristics of the latter include, first of all, new perspectives and a deeper study of educational issues. The dangers include insufficient reflection in relation to the specifics of the subject of research within each discipline and the inappropriateness of combining without a visible goal (eclecticism instead of synergy).

The example of Norbert Elias' theory shows that sociological theories bring with them a different vision of reality through the use of a different conceptual and methodological apparatus. Thus, they can be used as a new prism for the study of educational issues. After thoughtful rethinking, they will help reveal hidden research questions and deepen existing knowledge.

Thus, Elias' theory, in combination with classical educational theories, can reveal a whole range of research questions and generate new hypotheses, giving this process greater systematicity.

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ПОТЕНЦІАЛИ МІЖДИСЦИПЛІНАРНОСТІ: ТЕОРІЯ НОРБЕРТА ЕЛІАСА В ОСВІТОЛОГІЧНОМУ КОНТЕКСТІ

У сучасному контексті прискореної глобалізації та цифровізації між- та трансдисциплінарні дослідження заслужено набувають все більшої популярності серед дослідників різних дисциплін. В освітологічному контексті плідними можуть бути поєднання із суміжними дисциплінами, такими як, наприклад, філософія, соціологія або ж психологія. Попри деяку різницю у предметах дослідження та методології, доречні запозичення мають великий генеративний потенціал.

Мета даної статті – на конкретному прикладі теорії соціального Норберта Еліаса продемонструвати, що теоретико-методологічна взаємодія соціології та освітології є продуктивною та важливою для пошуку нових дослідницьких питань та, відповідно, більш глибокого розуміння предмета дослідження.

За допомогою якісного контент-аналізу та загальнонаукових методів теоретичного дослідження автор аналізує теорію соціального Норберта Еліаса та розкриває її зміст. Аналіз проходив у три етапи: підсумовуючий, експліцируючий та структуруючий. На першому етапі корпус текстів Еліаса був детально вивчений з метою створення єдиного тексту, який включає у себе усі елементи теорії. На другому етапі до незрозумілих пасажів тексту були додані коментарі експертів, що пояснювали деякі неоднозначні моменти. На третьому етапі текст був поданий інтерпретації-кодуванню, що дало змогу більш глибокого розуміння написаного.

У результаті було встановлено, що теоретико-концептуальний апарат, що базується на поняттях фігурації, владних відносинах та індивідуальному та соціальному габітусі, розроблений Норбертом Еліасом для вивчення та розуміння навколишньої реальності, має потенціал бути застосованим в освітологічних дослідженнях. До плюсів у цьому випадку належить можливість одночасного мікро-, мезо- та макро- аналізу, додатковий кут зору та розширення арсеналу дослідницьких питань у освітології. До небезпек відноситься бездумний еkleктизм та неналежна увага до особливостей предмету дослідження кожної з дисциплін.

Приклад теорії Норберта Еліаса показує, що соціологічні теорії приносять із собою інше бачення реальності через застосування іншого концептуального та методологічного апарату. Цим самим вони можуть бути застосовані в ролі нової призми вивчення освітологічної проблематики. Після продуманого переосмислення вони допоможуть розкрити скриті дослідницькі питання та поглибити вже наявне знання.

Стаття може бути цікава дослідникам, викладачам, студентам, а також усім, хто цікавиться питаннями міждисциплінарності, зокрема в освітології.

Ключові слова: міждисциплінарність, теоретико-методологічна база дослідження, освітологія, Норберт Еліас, якісний контент-аналіз.

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