# "Postmodern shift" in German textbooks on pedagogy at the beginning of the XXI century

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**Abstract.** The article is devoted to the analysis of the current state of the theory of pedagogy, which is moving to a new stage of its development - the stage of postmodernity. On the example of the analysis of textbooks on pedagogy published in modern Germany, the author examines the characteristic features of postmodern pedagogy.Based on the content analysis, the representation of postmodern problems in textbooks is established, a classification of the approaches of the authors of textbooks to the reflection of this topic in different parts of the didactic apparatus of textbooks is carried out. Three leading directions, which are the pedagogical projection of the ideas of postmodernism, are characterized in detail. These include: clarification of the conceptual differences between modernity and postmodernity and their pedagogical projections; ideas that contain criticism of metanarrations; the issue of human identity in the era of pluralism of ideas and forms of their objectification. The conclusion is made about the weakening of theorists' attention to postmodernism problems, while postmodernism practices tend to spread.

## 1 Introduction

The appearance in pedagogy of a new subject of the methodological level is a rather rare phenomenon. In the modern theory of pedagogy, this marks a new stage in its development and its openness to new problems, which arose under the influence of a certain "sharpening" of the intellectual vision of representatives of science who turned to the study of a weakly structured thematic field. Methodological "shifts" and "turns" are associated with theoretical searches of scientists who are aware of the limitations of the idea of constant, endlessly continuing differentiation of branches of science and believe that for the successful development of a new topic, it is not necessary to change the very essence of the methodological apparatus [1-2]. It is only necessary to change the general focus of methodological optics [3].

A change in the methodological format and vector of consideration of the problem, as scientists [4] rightly believe, will better highlight both traditional [5, 6] and new subject areas of scientific knowledge and pedagogical practice.

In modern pedagogical science, German scientists have identified several fundamentally significant moments, which were called "turns"or "shifts" [7]. According to the concept of

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O. Raithel, B. Dollinger and G. Hörmann [8], in the second half of the twentieth century in pedagogical science there were several "shifts":

- *a realistic shift,* that began in 1963 and included three phases of its development until 1975;
- *a technological shift*, which tended to be theoretical in 1971;
- *an anti-pedagogical shift* that has become the focus of attention of many theorists since 1973. This direction has been the object of research in humanitarian sciences;
- *a constructivist shift*, the impetus for understanding the essence of which in pedagogical projection was the theory of systems (1988);
- *a postmodern shift* (since 1991);
- *an evolutionary (sociobiological) shift*, the impulse for the registration of which in 1992 was biological research [8].

These "shifts" do not exclude some mainstream movement of science as such. However, according to the methodologists of science, they indicate the need to revise the logical and substantive accents in the consideration of new phenomena, processes and conditions that determine the state of modern pedagogical reality. Within the framework of the methodological shifts indicated by theorists, of particular interest is the position according to a postmodern shift has been observed in the theory of pedagogy since 1991. Guided by the idea that as the volume of knowledge in a certain field of science increases, it becomes necessary to transfer this knowledge to the next generations in the logic of transmission from generation to generation, let's consider when and how the topic of postmodernism entered the textbooks on pedagogy. To do this, we will conduct a study of the corpus of textbooks on pedagogy published abroad in the last quarter of the XX - first decade of the XXI centuries in modern Germany.

## 2 Methodology

The purpose of the study is to determine the time limits and the qualitative originality of theories and concepts of pedagogy focused on postmodern attitudes.

The empirical source of this research is the corpus of textbooks on pedagogy published in the last quarter of the 20th - early 21st centuries and used to teach pedagogy as an academic discipline at universities. In total, the object of the research is 13 author's textbooks published in various publishing houses [9 – 21].

Research concept and methodology. We proceed from the hypothesis that the introduction of new terms and concepts into the conceptual-terminological series of science indicates the dynamics of its development in a certain direction. We are fully agree with the theoretical position of authors, according to which the term acts as a kind of catalyst, a source of posing and understanding the problem [22-23]. Therefore, the fixation of the fact of using the terminology, which is characteristic of the terminology of postmodern pedagogy, or the presentation of ideas associated with these issues, will determine the direction of development of pedagogical knowledge and reveal the features of the forms of its objectification. This will make it possible to determine the intentions of the authors of textbooks, acting as communicators, regarding the appropriateness of presenting to students a particular set of information on the problems of the development of modern pedagogical knowledge.

Research methods are content analysis, interpretation, comparison [25-26]. When conducting content-analytical research, the semantic category is the concept of postmodernity and related concepts (and / or lexical units) that have a recognition potential. The unit of account at the first stage of the study is a textbook, in which a thematic layer related to the problems of postmodernism can be found (or not found). The counting results

are entered into the EXCEL coding tables for their visualization and further interpretation [27].

The research was carried out in two steps.

## 3 Results

At the first stage of the research, the problem of discovering and fixing facts was solved, indicating that the authors of textbooks turn (or do not turn) to the topic of the development of pedagogy in the postmodern era [28, 29]. The results of the study of 13 textbooks on pedagogy for the university education system are reflected in Figure 1.
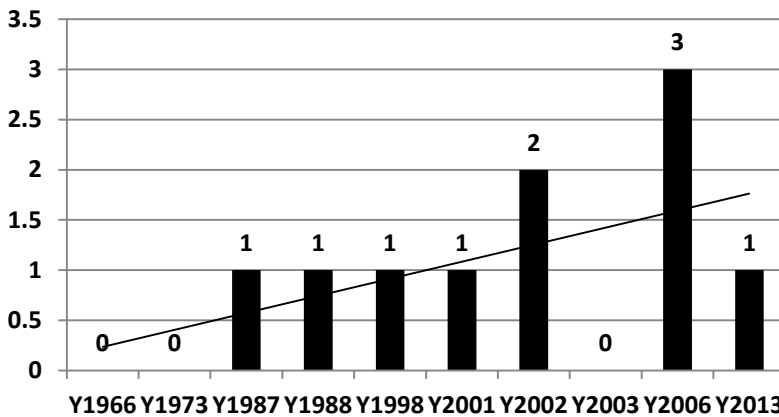


**Fig. 1.** Distribution of German educational books on pedagogy, reflecting postmodern themes, in chronological order.

As shown in Figure 1, for the first time, the problems addressed to the issues of postmodernity in a pedagogical projection appear in a textbook in 1987. Subsequently, up to 2007, there is an upward trend, indicating that the authors of all textbooks included this issue in the content. The peak of interest falls on 2006, after which there is a decline.

In terms of content, it should be noted that the problems of postmodern development of pedagogy in textbooks are presented with varying degrees of depth. They are presented in different sections of educational books [30-31]. There are three main approaches to the placement and layout of educational materials related to the issues of postmodernism:

1) In the didactic apparatus of the textbook - in the parts "Subject Index" or "Index" with the subsequent disclosure of the essence of the phenomenon in the content of the textbook [9, 12-21];

2) In the content of the textbook without placing the categorical identifier in the "Subject Index" section [14-16];

3) In the textbook in the form of statements meaningfully characterizing the author's position as a reasoned objection or protest against the classical attitudes of authoritarian pedagogy [11].

The second stage of the research is devoted to the analysis of the thematic content presented in textbooks on pedagogy published in modern Germany.

The most detailed problems of postmodern pedagogy are presented in the textbooks A. Kaiser & R. Kaiser [9]. The subject index for the position "postmodern" contains eight references, while the "modern" position is represented by only three references.

In the textual fragments of the textbook corresponding to these references, the periodization of the stages of development of pedagogical knowledge (starting from the

early modern period), the content of the concept of postmodernity, signs of postmodernity in relation to pedagogy in general are revealed. We can see differences between the theoretical positions of the famous German theorist W. Klafki and the author's position, coupled with the understanding of postmodernism as a manifestation of three features, to which the theory of pedagogy gave a symmetrical answer [32-33]. These signs of postmodernity, based on a protest against existing pedagogical canons, are:

1) clarification of the conceptual differences between modernity and postmodernity and their pedagogical projections;

2) ideas containing criticism of the metanarrations;

3) the problem of human identity in the era of pluralism of ideas and forms of their objectification.

Let's consider them in detail.

1) Turning to the position of distinguishing between modernity and postmodernity, we emphasize that the authors attach great importance to the analysis of significant differences between these concepts and their content. Noting that "the concept of postmodernity began to be used in literature around 1960" [9, p. 84], the authors believe that students should master the current state of the transition of pedagogy from modernity to postmodernity by visually demonstrating the change in the way of thinking and a complex of styles in art. Showing the stylistic differences between modern and postmodern architecture is chosen as a sphere of public practice, combining art, science and technology. To create a more visual and holistic idea of the peculiarities of thinking of representatives of modernity and postmodernity, the authors of the textbook on pedagogy [9] use an original technique, presenting and commenting on illustrations (masterpieces of architecture) made in opposite style paradigms, reflecting the peculiarities of the worldview orientations of their creators. (Fig. 2, 3).



**Fig. 2.** Bauhaus building in Dessau [9, p. 85].

**Fig. 3.** VAUXHALL CROSS building in London [9, p. 85].

Indeed, the differences in the appearance of buildings are so significant that it becomes possible to assume that modernity and postmodernity are phenomena of a different order, and their consideration can be carried out only in the logic of binary oppositions or contrast. In describing these illustrations, it is emphasized that the simplicity and functionality of the building of a German art school (the Graduate School of Construction and Artistic Design), located in Dessau, reflects the logic of thinking of architects of the modern era. It is beautiful and correct that which is utilitarian and convenient, does not contain decorations. Unlike simple forms, the VAUXHALL CROSS building (the building of the central office of the British Secret Intelligence Service), according to the authors of the textbook, evokes multiple associations - in its architecture you can find features of Aztec sanctuaries (top of the building), elements of a Gothic cathedral (middle of the building) and elements typical for Art Deco (semi-circular elements at the base). The description of these architectural masterpieces ends with a quote belonging to the famous theorist of postmodern pedagogy W. Welsch: "the phenomena of postmodernism are found where there is a fundamental pluralism of languages, models, experience, and not just in different works, being presented next to each other, but in the same work" [18, p.10]. In the textbook B. Hamann "Pädagogische Anthropologie" [17] also suggested that global concepts of improving the world are not in demand. Utopias, dogmas, generalizations and abstractions of a universal scale are suspicious. What is appreciated is the proximity of personal interests, the joy of playing with heterogeneous, the possibility of self-realization and self-presentation. While communication, interaction and aesthetic needs play a special role [17].

B. Hamann's position can be assessed as more radical than the position of A. Kaiser & R.Kaiser. He does not establish positions that would allow defining the lines of similarity or successive development between the pedagogy of modernity and postmodernity. The author unequivocally asserts that postmodernity has nothing to do with the theoretical attitudes of modernity: postmodernity "breaks" with the enlightenment attitudes and characteristics of modernity [17]. Postmodernity and its pedagogical projections are a qualitatively new stage in the development of pedagogical knowledge.

2) Analyzing the characteristics of postmodern pedagogy, A. Kaiser & R .Kaiser state the following. Postmodern pedagogy retains in its arsenal some thematic lines that belong to the category of "metanarratives". In particular, according to K. Hytten, the metanarratives of pedagogy are traditionally widespread myths that have been mastered from childhood. For example, this is the myth "about the possibility of ordering the world", "on the steady progress of science", "on the possibility of the coming of the kingdom of God on Earth", "on the victory of the socialist revolution" [19, p. 5] and many others.

According to A. Kaiser & R. Kaiser, cautionary stories that describe the facts of someone else's life as an example or edification have already lost their effectiveness. They do not coincide with modern realities, when success is achieved not by the most diligent, and vice is not always punished by virtue of the norms of current legislation. But, nevertheless, some of the positions characteristic of the ideological attitudes of modernity still retain their significance. They allow to evaluate the pedagogy of modernity as an "unfinished, open project" [9, p. 98].

The "small metanarrative" retains its significance, for example, the understanding of education as a tool that allows making the right decisions, or the idea of recognizing adulthood as a stage of maturity [9]. Therefore, pedagogical activity remains focused on solving the key problems of preparing a person for life with the help of the means at the disposal of the education system.

3) The corpus of educational books, the authors of which did not include the categories of postmodernism and the names of pedagogical theories developing this topic in subject

indexes (but they also consider this issue) pay less attention to determining the similarities and differences between modernity and postmodernity. An exception is the position of O. Raithel [8]. He considered the "postmodern shift" as one of the positions characterizing the phenomenon of intra-object synthesis. It should be noted that, highlighting the "postmodern shift" as one of the phases of the development of pedagogical science, O. Raithel fully identifies with the system of arguments expressed by G. Root [20]. The argument is that the term "shift" does not mean a paradigm shift. This is just a shift in emphasis in the consideration of problems to new thematic fields that are acquiring relevance.

In the textbook of G. Auernheimer "Introduction to Intercultural Pedagogy" the author pays great attention to the problem of identity. He examines the analysis of the current situation related to the search for national identity through the prism of the concept of "Patchwork" – a picture consisting of various (multi-colored) pieces assembled into a single canvas. Addressing the problem of identity among representatives of national minorities living in mono-ethnic territories, the author states the following. The national consciousness of the representatives of these groups of the population is a mosaic formation, consisting of multiple and multi-level inclusions that characterize the elements of ethnic identity. However, this statement is refuted when analyzing the ideas of theorists related to the "human dimension".

So, K. Gergen believes that as postmodernist thinking spreads, there is a decline in the desire to search for authenticity, sincerity, faith in leaders, depth of feelings, faith in progress. In their place appears an empty board (eine leere Tafel), on which people write down their identity, erase and can write again [24]. It can be concluded that in the system of reasoning of K. Gergen, the general algorithm for considering a person as an independent creature is preserved. As in the approach of John Locke, each person fills with his patterns the still unpainted "canvas" of his life, or "redraws", corrects what was painted earlier. The differences in the position lie in the fact that in modern times the "patterns of life" were given a certain strength of color. It pointed to the good quality of the dyer's work and confidence in the result. However, the postmodern vision of man does not imply any requirements in this regard.

## 4 Conclusion

The study showed that in the pedagogical support of the educational process, aimed at training pedagogical personnel in modern Germany, since the late nineties, there has been a tendency to reflect the new positions that characterize the "postmodern shift". It manifests itself with varying degrees of intensity in different educational publications and reflects different aspects of postmodern pedagogy. Like the pedagogy of the modern era, postmodern pedagogy has a certain idea of what the pupil can expect in the future. It promptly corrects its ideas about the educational ideal, the parameters of its change under the influence of the technological, economic and ethical component of society. A distinctive feature of the approaches presented in the reviewed educational books on pedagogy devoted to the problems of postmodernism is the fact that the authors pay great attention to the problem of the correlation of pedagogical constructions of the modern and postmodern epochs. The authors consider postmodern pedagogy as a "spiritual current / geistige Strömung" [17, p. 173], a methodological direction or a system of philosophical reasoning about the differences that characterize the era. The textbooks use non-standard forms of comparing modern and postmodern in the form of photographs of buildings [34-35].

The textbooks do not contain specific examples explaining the essence of the new teaching or upbringing practice based on the stated postulates. This testifies to certain discrepancies that exist between the actively spreading postmodern pedagogical practices

and their theoretical reflection in educational books on pedagogy published in the modern Germany.

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