Abstract Hedegaard's (2005) article dealing with developmental and detrimental effects of coping behavior among Danish-Turkish students under pressure of opposing values and demands, and Schousboe's (2005) article dealing with the effects of freedom imposed on students in Danish after-school centers are commented upon. Complex interactions between one's behavior when coping with problems and others' behavior when creating problems are discussed in the context of conflicts between people's values, aims and strategies.

Key Words coping behavior, creating problems, development, help and counteraction, learning, teaching

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Coping with Problems Created by Others: Directions of Development

The papers in this issue by Ivy Schousboe (2005) and Mariane Hedegaard (2005) raise a number of very important problems concerning the core of social interactions in teaching/learning and their influence on development. In Ivy Schousboe's article, the disappointment of 9- and 10-year-old Danish students in an after-school program is discussed. Their teachers are beginning to give them freedom of activity independent of adults, because freedom seems a main value of modern Western society. Yet,

> . . . in the eyes of the children, the kind of free and independent choice which is practised becomes too much freedom *from* being together with others and engaged in some activity and too little freedom *to* be together with others and engaged in some activity. (Schousboe, p. 213)

Schousboe analyzes this effect from the point of view of discrepancies between the adults' good intents to provide the children with the opportunity of free development, and real results, which are presented as an inhibition of the development rather than its stimulation. Hedegaard's (2005) paper analyzes discrepancies and conflicts between values and strategies of Turkish-Danish students, their parents, who had emigrated from Turkey to Denmark, and teachers and classmates in Danish schools. Different directions of the students' development related to

complex social interactions between participants in the conflicts are discussed. In contrast with the situation described in Schousboe's article, in which adults' main aim is to give children maximum freedom of choice and independent development (though the latter do not appreciate this very much), parents and teachers described in Hedegaard's article try to manage and control an adolescent's behavior and are ready to use strong punitive sanctions in the case of his or her non-obedience. The problem of imposing the direction of development, desirable from an adult's point of view, gets more complicated because parents and teachers make the student follow very different, if not opposite, directions—according to differences in the adults' value orientations, and because of non-friendly relations with those classmates who are of a racist orientation. Hedegaard emphasizes that these problems, as well as others related to different types of conflicts, can be either developmentally helpful or detrimental for students.

The idea of complex relations between stimulation of development and its inhibition, and advantages and detriment caused by certain types of social interactions in teaching/learning, seems central for both articles. The most important objective that is being translated in the teaching/learning processes seems to be a system of values. If the recipient of teaching efforts accepts and shares the value system, it serves a main criterion of success of teaching, even if the person is not very successful in the mastery of some specific domains. However, if the person does not accept the system, the educator considers it as a very serious failure, even when the person taught has acquired great mastery in a number of concrete activity domains.

Moreover, such mastery can be thought dangerous where the person has accepted an opposite and, respectively, hostile system of values, because s/he can use this mastery to reach aims incompatible with those of an educator. For example, instruction of non-professional pilots became increasingly restricted in the United States after kamikaze pilots terrorized the country on September 11, 2001. Another example concerns natural sciences. A chemistry teacher should understand that the knowledge s/he gives to students can be used by some of them to make explosives. Teaching physics, chemistry, biology to fanatics can lead to horrifying results (Zagorsky, 2002).

Thus, usually a person responsible for the instruction of a child (or an adolescent) tries to organize the system of influences on him or her at two interrelated levels. The main level is stimulation of the child to accept and share the main values of the influencing person and the community (society) s/he presents. The subordinated level is stimulation of the child to acquire competencies and masteries in specific

domains to realize these values, and prohibition of some other directions of activities and development.

A Case of Conflict of Values: Physical Exercises and 'Showing the Body'

Most of the situations described in Hedegaard's article demonstrate deep conflicts between two cultural histories. A very demonstrative example concerns swimming training, which is obligatory in Danish schools, but prohibited by parents of Turkish-Danish girls. Based on interviews with Turkish-Danish adolescents presented in the article, one can reconstruct the following extreme case of the participants' conflicting positions.

One can find the following phrases in an interview with a Turkish-Danish adolescent girl. She explained to an interviewer that 'one is not allowed to show one's body . . . when there are boys taking part, that's what Islam says' (Hedegaard, p. 198). This reflects a prohibition present in the Muslim religion. So, a Turkish-Danish parent may think that a swimming coach who makes girls show their bodies in the presence of boys and, thus, violates laws of the Qur'an is an immoral person and teaches 'bad things'. In this context, the father's advice given to his or her child 'not to trust' the Danish and to keep away from them (Hedegaard, p. 200) looks natural from the Muslims' point of view.

In turn, a teacher can think that a person who is ready to violate (educational) laws of the country giving him or her citizenship and who refuses to decrease a danger for his or her daughter's life in the case of drowning just because swimming training requires swimsuits is far from moral too. The most simple and rough solution found by a teacher in such a situation is to suggest that a child 'go home to where he came from' (Hedegaard, p. 197). This suggestion looks very close to racism, mentioned by Hedegaard as a reason for Turkish-Danish adolescents' strategies of 'pattern breaking'.

The problem becomes greater because of relations between children. Looking at a Turkish-Danish girl dressed in a swimsuit, a Turkish-Danish boy who has emigrated from Turkey not long ago sees not just a girl in a swimsuit but a Muslim girl undressed in the measure prohibited by the main religious laws. Moreover, she is available to be seen not only by him but by others as well. It can cause ambivalent emotions and feelings in him. Naturally, the girl understands it, and it stresses her as well. This situation of tension, which can look very curious for Danish boys and girls, may be stressful and even traumatic for Turkish-Danish boys and girls. Any rough teasing comment may provoke a fight. One can see that

this problem requires a very tactful and careful solution not only at the level of agreement between parents and teachers, but also at the level of relations between children (or adolescents).

Hedegaard's article contains a number of examples of such counter-action to children's learning. Parents of Turkish-Danish children prohibit them from learning subjects and participating in learning activities which contradict the norms of their cultural belief systems, in spite of the fact that these subjects and activities are obligatory in Danish schools.

Not only parents but teachers as well can inhibit their learners' development. This may concern teaching students from national minorities (Díaz & Hernandez, 1998). A special term, 'didactogenia', is used to signify a teacher's actions which result in negative effects in learners, and the effects themselves (Poddiakov, 2004a; Podlasy, 2000). Threats to throw students out of school, provocative suggestions that they 'go home', where 'home' means another country, and other kinds of teachers' teasing and intolerant behaviors mentioned by Hedegaard look like didactogenias, whether they are premeditated or not.

Zones of Inhibition and Counteraction to Development

The situations described above seem to be the opposite of the classical Vygotskian approach and its main concept of the 'zone of proximal development' (Poddiakov, 1997, 2001). The zone of proximal development is defined as those things that a child cannot learn by him- or herself but can learn with the help and support of a more advanced person (an adult or a peer). Yet one can see that other concepts are necessary to reflect not only positive and helpful influences on children's development, but also negative and hindering ones.

Asmolov (1996) introduced a concept of zones of inhibited and hampered development (*zoni podavliaiuschego i zaderzhivaiuschego razvitia*), in which students cannot develop their abilities because of the negative influences related to features of a system of education. Díaz and Hernandez (1998) use a similar concept of a zone of negative development to describe the negative effects on students' development. In both of these zones, because of the hindering influence of other persons, a child does not acquire competencies and develop abilities which s/he otherwise could acquire and develop.

Inhibition of some directions in children's development seems regular (Dotsenko, 1997; Poddiakov, 2001; Rogoff, 1990, 1997; Valsiner, 2000). Dotsenko (1997) thinks that any education reveals the educator's 'selective unpacking' of definite resources of the human psyche, but

also 'a cutting off' of everything which the educator does not deem to be necessary and appropriate. So the other side to any educational process is that it contains built-in limitations on the development and growth of personality. Valsiner (2000) emphasized that 'it is important for social institutions to *promote the development of ignorance and competence* in the case of children *at the same time*' (p. 243), and adults' guided participation in children's development regularly includes not only support, but also the adults' hindering intervention into the children's activities (Rogoff, 1990, 1997; Valsiner, 2000).

As a result, a Turkish-Danish girl will not become, for example, an Olympic champion in swimming, though her psychomotor and physical development perhaps would give her such an opportunity. Yet it does not make her parents upset, just as parents of a Danish girl or a boy are not upset with the fact that their child cannot become 'the best learner' in some other activities seeming immoral for Danish people. This a matter of differences in values.

To make the Vygotskian approach more flexible, Valsiner has introduced concepts of zones of promoted action and of free movement. The zone of promoted action is a set of activities, objects and areas that constitute the child's environment, within which the child's actions are facilitated and encouraged by other people, but non-compliance with the social suggestions has no repercussions. The zone of free movement specifies the structure of the environment functionally available to the developing child at a given time (Valsiner & Hill, 1989). One can enrich this idea, taking into account not only values of facilitation, but also values of inhibition and prohibition of some activities. Then one can present the following continuum of zones determined by values, namely zones of (a) prohibited actions, (b) non-desirable and inhibited actions, (c) free movement, (d) desirable and promoted actions, and (e) obligatory actions.

From this point of view, the main problem of the students described in Schousboe's article seems to be that the zone of the children's free and non-structured movement is too large for them—at least, subjectively. The main problem of students described in Hedegaard's article, meanwhile, is that too many activities look to be in opposite zones for teachers and for parents, and free movement is thereby inhibited.

Hedegaard describes positive effects of development when Turkish-Danish adolescents successfully solve problems of existence in two different cultures in spite of the counteraction. In such cases, the zone of proximal development can be defined as those things that a person cannot learn by himself or herself, but can learn and develop in the course of counteraction with other persons. The reasons for this

seeming incongruity are the high motivation and the socially positive creativity aimed at overcoming the barriers set up.

Altruistic and Egoistic Inhibition and Counteraction

It seems reasonable to distinguish between:

(a) altruistic inhibition of and counteraction to the other's learning and development related to the main values of a society, from the point of view of which some activities are detrimental, dangerous, and so on; and

(b) egoistic counteraction to and promotion of ignorance related to the counteracting persons' own interests (Poddiakov, 2001).

The ability to learn faster than competitors is considered the only sustainable competitive advantage in knowledge-based economics (de Geus, 1988). Respectively, keeping secrecy in teaching/learning and, in general, inhibiting someone's abilities to learn and acquire competencies in new activities and domains is a most effective way to make a competitor inadequate in the modern technological and social world (Poddiakov, 2001, 2004b). A case of such a conflict between a teacher's and a student's interests can be described by the following reformulation of a case from *On Being a Scientist: Responsible Conduct in Research* (1995):

> John, an assistant professor, is participating in a department-wide seminar. A third-year graduate student prefaces her comments by saying that the work she is about to discuss is sponsored by both a federal grant and a biotechnology firm for which she consults. In the course of the talk John realizes that he has been working on a technique that could make a major contribution to the work being discussed. But he consults for a different, and competing, biotechnology firm.
> How should John participate in this seminar?

If John does not tell the student about the technique, this would be an example of keeping secrecy in teaching as a result of interpersonal egoistic competition. Yet, for example, in the case of additional information that the competing firm is somehow concerned with 'dirty business' or terror activity, the keeping of secrecy and the counter-action to the learning would be altruistic.

Even children of age 5–6 understand simple situations of justified altruistic help and counteraction to others' learning (Poddiakov, 2003, 2004b). In an experiment a child was told the following story about the characters of the cartoon movie *The Lion King*. Three hyenas wanted to hunt defenseless nestlings and their mothers while their fathers were

absent. Young brave lion Simba decided to prevent it. The child was instructed to choose from a variety of skills for these personages (e.g. to teach them to turn into other animals, to speak other animals' languages, to climb trees, etc.). Most of the children gave opposite answers about teaching the positive and negative characters, trying to save the nestlings. In other words, the children 'helped' the positive character to learn something good, but 'prevented' him from learning something bad, wrong or unnecessary. By contrast, the children 'prevented' the negative characters from learning something that could help them to reach their bad aims. The children also 'helped' them to learn something wrong, disadvantageous or even bad for them (e.g. to smoke). Thus, even preschoolers have definite and similar beliefs about different social situations of teaching and learning which require either help for or counteraction to other person's learning, depending on the main values and attitudes (Poddiakov, 2004b).

An Attitude to Another Person and Help and Counteraction

Decisions as to what to develop and inhibit in another person are determined not only by the system of main values of the person guiding development, but also by an attitude (e.g. positive or negative) to the individual person taught. Actually there is an interaction between the values and the attitude. To clarify this idea, let me mention an amusing example of a modern retelling of the tale of Cinderella. In contrast with the traditional version of the tale, a modern bad and hostile stepmother who hates her stepdaughter does not allow her to do any work in their house, but stimulates her to rest, eat and visit parties all the time in an ostensibly tender way. Yet she really loves her own daughters and so stimulates them to work and acquire mastery in real businesses. One can see here that the opposite attitudes to friendly and hostile persons lead to the application of the opposite tools to stimulate or stop their development in some directions.

Leaving tales aside, one can distinguish between three different types of attitudes to another person in creating difficulties and problems for this person (Poddiakov, 2004a):

(a) Consideration of the other person as someone who needs to be helped by the suggestion of some developmental tasks, problems, and so on. This reflects a humanistic attitude to teaching. These tasks and problems can be simple or very difficult and even provocative, but their main purpose is to stimulate development in the other person.

233

(b) The second type of attitude is related to consideration of another person as a partner having equal rights in a dialogue, and mutual changes of tasks and problems is a part of this dialogue. Scientific informal communication often includes such a dialogue based on discussion of the problems 'swapped'. Moreover, different informal, playful and competitive forms of changes of tasks and problems are widespread in children's and adolescents' subcultures.

(c) The third type of attitude is related to consideration of the other person as very non-friendly or an enemy who must be stopped, expelled from a social (academic, professional, etc.) group by any means, and so on. One of the ways of doing this is by creating for him or her some special problems or a whole environment which is a 'problem' in the sense of presenting multiple difficulties and barriers that the person must encounter. These hindering, 'anti-developmental' problems can concern the person's learning, both formal and informal.

This classification makes evident that often to understand developmental and detrimental effects that influence a person and features of the person's behavior when coping with problems, it is necessary to understand the attitude and behavior of the others who premeditatedly create problems for that person (Poddiakov, 2004a).

Coping with Problems Created by Others

By contrast with coping with problems occurring independently from anybody's actions and intentions (like sequences of natural events), coping with problems specially created by others often requires so-called 'reflexive' (Lefebvre, 1977) or 'recursive' (Flavell, Miller, & Miller, 2002) reasoning. This reasoning considers the others' values, intentions and strategies and should predict their responses to one's own actions, real and potential. For example, teasing can work only if the person teased understands that s/he is being teased. Understanding the other's malicious joyful wish to tease seems no less important than the content of teasing itself, which can otherwise be considered as a friendly joke or neutral comment. Understanding or misunderstanding the real aims of another person will lead to different coping strategies.

Other students' behavior, empathy and reflexive thinking are very important in coping behavior and the development of didactogenias. Hedegaard describes both cases of teasing, fights, and so on, between Turkish-Danish and Danish students, and cases of very friendly and positive feedback to Turkish-Danish students from their Danish classmates. From this point of view, differences of value positions in

national majority students and attempts to defend victims are worthy of special attention. Hedegaard does not describe such cases, and I will give an example to analyze such a conflict in more detail. It concerns the life of adolescents in a Soviet summer camp in the mid-1970s.

A crowd of fifteen to twenty teenagers aged 12–13 years pursued and teased a teenager who was from one of the national states of the Soviet Union and whose appearance was non-Russian. Adults were absent, and the pursuing was disgusting, in spite of the absence of real fighting. There was a boy bystander who saw it and decided to intervene and stop the taunting. He began to shout in a very aggressive and confident way that Soviet people are different from the Nazis, and other similar exclamations. The teens stopped the demonstrative attack, though they continued to swear angrily under their breath.

What happened? The bystander had found a solution related to a hierarchy of values. He changed the formal qualification of the peers' behavior in their minds by elevating this behavior from the status of everyday teasing ('It was just a joke', they could say) to a behavior that violated central values, or at least official state values. Creating the analogy of the Russian boys-teasers with 'being Nazi' was sufficient to inhibit their actions.

It would be very interesting to learn and analyze Danish teachers' and classmates' opinions about the conflicts described in Hedegaard's article. Are the opinions similar or different? Are there any conflicts in values concerning national minorities? Are there any conflicts between parents in Turkish-Danish families concerning their children's participation in some kinds of activities? Answers to these questions could add essential information about the social relations in the situations described.

Coping with Imposed Freedom: A Pedagogical Mistake or Correct Solution?

Neither total control nor absolute freedom makes a child happy. It is shown in Ivy Schousboe's article that 9-/10-year-old children find themselves disliking the after-school center and feel that they are uninteresting for the adults, who are busy now with younger children. This is a consequence of the realization of certain pedagogical principles formulated by the deputy head Henrik in the following way:

> Here we like to give children *freedom*. . . . We let the children *choose*. It is probably a resistance against organized pedagogical work in us. It is troublesome and you have to *force* the children. We certainly let them follow their own inclination to a large extent. That's what we believe in long-term. (Schousboe, p. 212)

In some sense, this position resonates with some ancient cultural practices of initiation as imposed freedom when a youngster (or a group of youngsters) is left alone for a certain period to cope with all the problems by themselves and to show that they have coped. A main criterion of success is their physical survival, and their opinions and feelings concerning this practice are not so important. At least as far as it is known, the youngsters were not asked any questions in that period and were not communicated with by adults at all. Of course, the criterion of physical survival loses relevance in modern school and after-school practices. Yet some general problems remain. What is the cost of development of the young generation? Which means can be used to reach development in some directions?

A main aim of educators in the case of the after-school centers is to make children ready to live in a permanently changing world without others' prescriptions and instructions, in conditions of freedom. Paradoxically, for a responsible adult immediate care for children is less troublesome than giving them freedom. In addition the adult sees that the freedom is troublesome for the children too, and that one has to 'force' them to accept it.

Demonstrative distancing from the children and, respectively, readiness to moderate provocation of negative feelings can be a pedagogical tool to make them accept the freedom, but perhaps not to love it. The efficiency of this tool could be measured by comparison of, on the one hand, developmental steps made by the children by themselves in conditions of the freedom, and, on the other hand, damage to their emotional, intellectual, social spheres. If there is real damage, one should search for a different way to reach the aim posed. Unfortunately, Schousboe's article does not contain data on the real development of the children in these conditions, only their estimations of life in the after-school center as articulated in the interviews.

Yet these estimations are not necessarily objective. Two versions are possible. The first one corresponds to Schousboe's conclusion that the way towards development of independent behavior really leads to inhibition of this development and perhaps causes didactogenias because the negative emotions related to this method are too insuperable for the children. 'The problems can be seen as either developmental or detrimental, according to the conditions they imply for the children's feelings of happiness about being who they are—as well as for their plans for future education and life activities' (Hedegaard, p. 188).

The second version is built on the premise that negative feelings are very far from emotional suffering, and that the children do successfully develop in the directions desired by the adults, though the former do

not notice and appreciate this. A life with only positive feelings seems impossible, and negative emotions may be the price to be paid for some developmental steps.

Now let me return to the idea about the importance of understanding the aims of the person who creates difficulties and problems. Were the children told of the changes, what they should encounter, and the aims of the changes? The answers by the children interviewed do not show this. Perhaps such an explanation could help them to understand that the adults spend less time with them than with younger students not because the elder ones are no longer interesting for them. Yet this explanation of pedagogical aims and tools paradoxically eliminates the effect of 'free freedom' by turning it into 'imposed freedom'. By contrast with physical abilities, development of which can be imposed by special physical exercises and training (as in an army), development of personality and its higher mental abilities cannot and must not be controlled in the same measure. 'One can only invite to development' (Zinchenko, 2003). The development imposed will always contain elements of inhibition and counteraction to the development.

Conclusion

Social interactions in teaching/learning in different practices seem to be under the influence of the following interrelated factors.

A. *Factors related to the persons who (try to) guide and influence the others' development.*

1. Value systems of the persons who guide and influence children's development, and their readiness or unreadiness to impose these values on the others. The readiness itself can be a value position.
2. Different (e.g. positive and negative, friendly and hostile) attitudes of the guiding persons to the persons guided.
3. Setting explicit and implicit goals towards the guided person's development, based on the values and attitudes.
4. Design of tools of stimulation and/or inhibition of development and whole social environments for the persons guided. The environments contain different problem and no-problem areas to stimulate and/or stop development in desirable or non-desirable directions.
5. The guiding persons' strategies of behavior and application of these tools.

B. Factors related to the persons who are considered as being under the influence.

1. The persons' systems of values, which can be consistent or inconsistent with the values of the guiding persons.
2. Different (positive and negative, friendly and hostile) attitudes of the guided persons to the guiding persons. The values and attitudes determine whether the guided persons will accept 'invitation to development', agree with elements of imposed development, and so on, or 'keep apart', or be in opposition, resisting any actions of the guiding persons and developing in a way unpredictable and undesirable from their points of view.
3. Setting explicit and implicit goals towards interactions with the guiding persons based on the values and attitudes.
4. Design of tools for coping with problems created by the guiding persons and, more widely, cultural tools for interactions with them. In some cases this may involve design of a whole social environment for the guiding persons. For example, it can include design of 'war actions' against the person hated or defense of the person loved (a teacher, a parent) from some troubles. Elder students are capable of such actions.
5. The persons' strategies of behavior and application of these tools.

The creation of trajectories of the process of help and counteraction can change the direction of development in different ways (Poddiakov, 1997, 2003). Help and support tend to change the direction of development in a predictable way, a way desired by a helping party (i.e. an educator, a teacher, etc.), otherwise the aims of education will not be reached (if the main aim is not the stimulation of spontaneity and self-development).

The counteraction strongly tends to change the direction of development in an unpredictable way. It is related to the fact that the counteraction to learning and development tries to keep the activity of a counteracting subject in a definite channel too, but the aim of the subject is to break through this channel. Instability, dynamics and the variety of situations arising mean that this break can happen in any area and can develop in an unpredictable way.

One should note, however, that supportive education which causes real development will also inevitably bring about positive and negative effects of spontaneity and unpredictability in this development because of factors inherent in the development itself. Yet usually it will be in smaller measure and in a less critical form than through counteraction. Thus, help and counteraction in education are two

interrelated types of interaction which change the direction of development in different ways. One's creation of problem and no-problem areas and others' coping with problems can both help and counteract development and participate in unfolding developmental trajectories of different types.

Acknowledgements

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239

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