

## MODERN ELEMENTS REGARDING EDUCATION IN THE WORKS OF UTOPIAN WRITERS FROM GREEK ANTIQUITY AND ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

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*Abstract: Education is considered one of the basic pillars in ensuring the stability and harmony of the state. The purpose of our study is to find modern elements of education in utopian writings. Thus we used the contrastive analysis for utopian works from the Greek Antiquity (Plato) and the Italian Renaissance (Doni, Patrizi, Agostini, Zuccolo, and Campanella). The study of the content of the utopian works has led to the identification of innovative ideas such as: enrollment in an educational system, the state as an organizer of education, non-discriminatory educational system, physical and art education; specialized trainers. We can conclude that even nowadays the study of utopian works is a source of innovative ideas on improving education in present and future societies.*

*Keywords: Education; Greek antiquity; Italian Renaissance; innovative ideas; perenity*

### **Introduction**

Since remote antiquity, from the very beginning of the social organization, the question of a 'perfect society' has preoccupied philosophers' and writers' thinking. These concerns have resulted in the emergence of a utopian philosophical and literary current that has developed since Aristophanes and especially Plato, in Ancient Greece, continued during Roman antiquity in the works of Ovid, Virgil and Horace, gaining an unexpected flowering in Renaissance and especially in the Italian Renaissance.

This trend has never disappeared, emerging in various forms in the centuries that followed until now through the appearance of a communist society in Russia, China, Cuba, Vietnam and others. The main cause is the fact that in the subconscious there remained myths that refer to a "lost paradise" that should be found and reconstructed. All works aimed at creating new "perfect" utopian societies targeting the organization, management, ownership of the goods and their distribution, family and status of women, education, labor, defense, etc.

Of these, without exception, education is given particular interest, considering it the main factor of balance and harmony in society.

This is a postulate that is true even today and, for this reason, we intend to identify the structural elements of education in the utopian works of ancient authors and those of the Italian Renaissance and to identify which of them kept their permanence until modern times.

### **Material and method**

In order to identify the modern elements of education in the utopian works, the research focused on the content of Plato's works - the Republic and the Laws from the Ancient Greece

and for the Italian Renaissance we stopped especially on Campanella's work - *City of the Sun*, but also on other Utopian writers such as Doni, Patrizi, Agostini, and Zuccolo.

Through a contrastive analysis, we sought to identify common elements but also those of differentiation in the content and methods of education in the works of authors from the two historical periods, and finally, the elements that have kept their freshness throughout the centuries until now.

Through this research, we wanted to demonstrate that the educational process of all members of society, even if it has undergone profound changes, since the beginning it had perennial elements intuited by ancient authors and those of the Italian Renaissance, on which modern education is based and which we believe that they will be kept in the future.

### **Results and discussion**

After analyzing the works of the utopian writers mentioned above, the educational process was structured on nine elements that, in the author's conception, show the importance of this process. They refer to: level of expansion of education among inhabitants, who has the responsibility of education, organization of this process, status of women, if there are differences between the sexes regarding the acquiring of education, content of education, who is in charge of educating, its main goals, connection between education and religion.

Regarding these issues, there were established elements of similarity and difference between the two historical periods and we identified those elements that are available even nowadays.

#### *1.1. Level of expansion of education among inhabitants*

Of the ancient authors, the first in Greek Antiquity to show the importance of education in building a harmonious and perfect society was Plato.

It believed that all people should be educated and that this process should begin in childhood. He appreciated that education should be done differently, dividing citizens into three categories: ordinary citizens, guards, and the ruling class.

Among the authors of the Italian Renaissance, except for Patrizi, with his *La citta` felice* and Zuccolo (*Repubblica d'Evandria*), all the others appreciated that it is necessary for all the citizens to receive an education. Both Campanella, in *La citta` del Sole* (p. 72), as well as other authors such as Doni - *Il mondo savio e il mondo pazzo*, Agostini - *Reppublicaimmaginaria* (p. 99) show that education is no longer reserved for a minority but is extended to all children who continue to study to obtain a qualification.

#### *1.2. Responsibility for education*

The problem of education in the utopias has been tackled by many critics. For example Servier in his *History of utopia* shows that "the republic ensures the conditioning of his future citizens through education. First and foremost the gymnastics, due to which the ephemeral body becomes stronger and more harmonious; then music, without being science, contributes to the harmony between body and soul; [...] the rulers of the city have to be first initiated in the universal sciences: arithmetic, geometry and above all, logics". (Servier, p. 39) Plato says that education should be provided at all levels by the central authority to ensure coherence, unity, uniformity and to impose a proper behaviour to all citizens.

The utopian authors of the Italian Renaissance the public education is offered by the state, either from birth at some authors, Campanella (p.72) and Doni (p. 164), who explicitly mentioned the abolishment of the family, or from a certain age, such as at Zuccolo, starting with the age of 10 (p.148), takes the obligation to ensure a specific level for each society. Only at

Patrizi (*Citta` Felice*) there may exist illiterate citizens, as Bonaiuti implies that it is gone as far as to become a model of society for philosophers and sacerdotes, thus transforming the way of life of citizens (Buonaiuti, pp. 144-145).

### *1.3. Organization of education*

In his works, Plato shows the need for education to be comprehensive, combining both intellectual and physical training, the state being interested the people to be healthy and then educated, thus ensuring harmony and balance in the perfect society.

Plato in the *Republic* proposes to organize the education on categories and cycles. The citizens of the Republic were divided into three categories corresponding to the three classes of society, i.e. ordinary citizens class, guard class and the ruling class. Whichever category the mature citizens will choose, in Plato's *Republic* education starts early in childhood, based on the idea that a good soul with character is built through education and training.

The well-educated character essentially requires harmony of soul, elevated speech, a beautiful outfit and a balanced life rhythm.

For those who will have positions of a leader, especially philosophers, the education lasts longer. Taking into consideration that in order to achieve a high degree of knowledge they need to acquire solid knowledge of mathematics (geometry, arithmetic), but also knowledge of astronomy and dialectics, as the latter is the top science of knowledge of nature.

At some authors of utopias from the Italian Renaissance, the organization of education varies depending on the different social classes existing in their imagined societies. In Campanella's *City of the Sun*, since there are no social classes, all inhabitants receive the same education (moral, professional, artistic and military), whether at maturity they will become useful citizens, scientists or enlightened rulers. Later, after a certain age, they will improve to reach higher stages. The philosopher Negulescu, referring to the education of the youth in the city of the sun shows that "preparing the future generations is a superior interest of the state, especially because this training encapsulates the progress which cannot be left adrift." (Negulescu, p.439)

In all utopias, be it Greek antiquity or Italian Renaissance, the citizens are educated by professional teachers from early childhood. In Campanella's and Doni's societies children are taken immediately after weaning and give in the care of specialized trainers. The practical training begins with the age of 3 years and is organized by cycles: 3-7 years, 7-10 years and after 10 years, when it is considered that they have mastered basic training and then are taken up by authorized instructors who trained them according to their skills.

The brightest of them will study the difficult sciences: prophets and astrology. For them the duration of studies will be longer, but will know in advance who will be the Sun and will not be able to reach this level before thirty-five years:

*"dunque sis a chi ha da esser Sole, e se non passa trentacinque anni, non arriva a tal grado"* (Campanella, 2006).

The people of Evandria pay much attention on education, as it „cements the social harmony” (De Boni, 2012). Thus Zuccolo explains that the children of rich families are given to Pedonomi at the age at ten, to be taught everything that is needed in order to become good and civilized citizen:

*...” Perciocche` i figliuoli de` gentiluomini e de` cittadini comodi de` beni di fortuna dai dieci fin ai venti anni sono raccomandati alla cura di certi Pedonomi, uomini attempati, e de` piu` saggi e da bene che sieno nelle citta` i quail gli fanno apprendere lettere per uso, e qualche*

*poco di musica e di ballo: insegnano loro di disegnare, di cavalcare, di maneggiare ogni sorte d'arme, e gli fanno alcune ore al giorno esercitare in giocare alla palla, al maglio, alla pilota, al calico, in correre, in saltare, in fare alla lotta, e in simili alter azioni laboriose e utili alla milizia, e conferenti alla sanita': ma con tal misura, pero', che la soverchia fatica del corpo o non offuschi i sentimenti o non perturbi il giudicio della mente. Ma quello che piu` importa, gli avvezzano a temere e rivenire Iddio, a ubbidire ai Magistrati, ad onorare i padre e le madri, a portare rispetto agli uomini attempati e gravi, ad amare e accarezzare gli amici, i compagni, i parenti, a non mentire, a non ingannare, a non fare oltraggio". (De Mattei, p.48)*

#### *1.4. Status of women*

The status of women in society has been a point for debate both for ancient authors and Renaissance ones, considering the women's role in ensuring the continuity of the human species.

For the first time in philosophy in the works of Plato there appeared the idea of communion of women and children in the guard class, showing that women wardens/ guards must belong all in common to these men, and not to live separately with one, and the parent should not know his own child and neither the child, the parent.

In the Republic, it is pointed out that the duty of the rulers of the city is to match the pairs fortress in view of procreation based on specific attributes. It is shown that

... "*they do would be an unhallowed thing in a happy state and the rulers will not suffer it,*"

and it continues

... "*Obviously, then, we must arrange marriages, sacramental so far as may be. And the most sacred marriages would be those that were most beneficial.*"(Plato, 458 e).

Young people that stand out in battle through bravery acts will have as reward the most beautiful and brave women.

Among the authors of utopian works from the Italian Renaissance, Campanella was the one who pleaded for the communion of women, given that the family was nonexistent at the solar citizens.

Another writer in the same period, Doni (p. 168), advanced the idea that shared ownership of women is beneficial, it represents a form of social liberation, considering that elements such as strife, envy and violence are associated with the family.

Subsequently, over the centuries, this idea was considered scandalous. However, during the early Bolshevik revolution from Russia and during the Nazism in Germany there emerged an attempt to introduce women communion and elements of eugenics.

#### *1.5. Education according to gender*

Plato advocates for joint education of boys and girls for all classes of citizens, but especially for the class of guards who, in his view, is the most important class for its role in the city and which require innate physical fitness, and especially special instruction.

Given that women have equal rights to men but also obligations, the gymnastic exercises will be common, without clothing, considering that virtue is the one that covers both men and women.

At Campanella in the *City of the Sun* (p. 72), as there are no social classes, education was commune for all citizens, regardless of gender. On the contrary, Doni considers that education should be made according to gender:

„*si levava dalla madre subito che era grandicello, e si dava a governo degli uomini, e le femine ad altre femine che insegnavano*" (Doni, p. 165)

This education extends to the arts of war, considering that women must learn military arts under the guidance of the master, to help men in wars near the city. In all utopian works of Italian Renaissance, it is considered that women should be well prepared to have an active role in the society. These ideas had a strong, innovative character for that period, and the credit is that many of these ideas regarding the equality in the education of women have proven their durability to the modern age.

#### *1.6. Content of education*

In order to have an educational process as complete as possible for the citizens and to fully satisfy the interests of the society they live in, the authors of utopian works from the two eras also provided appropriate "programs" for their goals. All authors consider that the education in utopian countries believes is not made in the interest of individuals to ensure "equal opportunity" as it is currently considered, but to ensure the stability of the state. The education also aims to provide, in addition to the moral and specific training, the physical education, as all the citizens to be healthy and strong. The education in Greek Antiquity, among other things, fosters the artistic skills such as painting, embroidery art, all providing a beautiful and useful behaviour for the individual and the society. These elements are found currently in kindergarten and primary school programs, being useful for the harmonious development of individuals. Finally, another component of training in the utopias of the Italian Renaissance is represented by the physical training. Campanella believes that young people need movement and exercise to create healthy bodies in which to have a harmonious spirit (p.72). Also, he sensed the value of the games for children from an early age. It is a concept still valid today when it is demonstrated that the games are meant for entertainment but also for learning. A particular aspect is the education for preventing drunkenness, especially for the guard class, this scourge being considered particularly harmful, a thing that is very topical even today.

Plato advocates a balanced education, having in view the skills and defects meant to encourage and promote those who have special qualities. The identification of those with special skills who can become potential philosophers must be accompanied by a special training programme that would ensure a high degree of knowledge. This concept exists even today, and that presupposes that those who want to occupy high positions in the state need to graduate university courses and some additional specializations.

In the Renaissance utopias there appear important elements, even revolutionary ones on how education is to be accomplished in terms of content. The methods based on memorization and learning by heart of grammar and logic of Aristotle are criticized and abandoned. In terms of content, the focus is mainly on several new disciplines such as chemistry, physics, botany, anatomy, but also some older ones, such as astronomy, mathematics and astrology. There are left in the background the study of Greek tragedy, grammar, rhetoric, logic, and learning of foreign languages because there are sufficient translators to facilitate contact with strangers.

All citizens receive the same moral, physical, professional and military education. The education of superior level is no longer reserved for the elite but is extended to all children, so the overall level of education is high. Campanella emphasis on the visual means through the graphical representations of all knowledge the children need to assimilate to complete the study cycle. They are to be found on the circular walls of the City of the Sun. And, as Campanella says, that children only by watching the images and playing, they learn without getting bored.

...”*dopo li tre anni li fanciulli imparano la lingua e l’alfabeto nelle mura, caminando in Quattro schiere; e Quattro vecchi li guidano ed insegnano, e poi li fan giocare e correre, per rinforzarli*” (Campanella, p. 72)

The educational system proposed by Campanella at first involves acquiring some general knowledge and then specializing in a particular field. Direct learning on the basis of images was new for its time and to a great extent, even nowadays, especially for the first phase of the educational cycle. Apart from this training based on images, each citizen receives four kinds of education: moral, academic, vocational and military. In the moral education, all Renaissance authors include the religious component. A special feature is presented in Agostini’s work where the young doctors, after finishing their studies, have to practice medicine together with an older doctor for five years:

“*tutt’i medici giovani siano ubligati per cinque anni continui andare assistenti ai medici vecchi*” (Agostini, p. 99)

During the training that children receive, a part is represented by agricultural training. The residents of the city of the Sun take part in agricultural works performed outside the city, especially during the harvesting season and, at Agostini, there are specialized persons that offer their knowledge about agriculture to the inhabitants.

Regarding the military training, it is provided to all residents in the Renaissance utopias. The exception is Patrizi’s state, where the guards forming the army receive this kind of training. Also, in Doni’s work there appears the idea that the spirit of moderation, that the residents should have, should prevent them from the feeling of envy and from the desire to seizing among neighbours, leading to the elimination of armed conflict, making unnecessary the military training (p. 169).

#### *1.7. Who makes education*

In all the utopian works, the education of the youth is entrusted to specialized people (trainers) to handle the different segments of the educational process. They are chosen from leaders and serve to shape the characters and to train young people to become citizens capable of ensuring the stability of the state.

In Plato’s work, physical education is provided by a gym instructor. This instructor had vast knowledge in training and, at the same time, he was a doctor, a hygienist, and a nutritionist. By training young people, the young were ensured a healthy body, able to withstand all the difficulties.

In Campanella’s *City of the Sun*, one of the three Princes, Sapienza (Wisdom) is responsible for the education of all the inhabitants. He subordinates the scholars and instructors of the liberal and mechanical arts, those who provide training to young people (p. 64).

#### *1.8. Means of education*

The main purpose of education in the utopian works from the in the two analyzed periods is the preparation of perfect citizens for the perfect social state. For this reason, the state has ownership of the process safety is not left to individual educational process.

In Plato’s Republic, the state is primarily interested in ensuring the health of the population, considering that, in order to achieve the perfect society it is necessary that its members be first healthy and then be educated.

The same goals were sought by the leaders of the utopian societies from the Italian Renaissance. Education aimed to ensure high standards of perfection for both enlightened leaders and ordinary people.

...”essi (i fanciulli) sono ammaestrati ed istruiti nelle virtu` morali, con i precetti e con gli esempi” (Patrizi)

A special purpose refers to the education of those intended to govern after becoming enlightened. Campanella says that the citizens are confident that after many years of education they will have an enlightened ruler who will be led by the wellbeing of his people.

*"Piu` certi semo noi, che un tanto letterato sa governare, che voi che sublimare l'ignoranti, pensando che siano atti perche` son nati signori, o eletti da fazione potente"* (Campanella , p.74).

How current they are and how little all are respected now!

#### *1.9. Modern ideas on youth education in utopian works who are valid at present*

The analysis of the way in which education is designed in the main works with utopian character of ancient Greece and Italian Renaissance detected a number of elements of the educational process which in part or whole are still valid today. We present in Table 1 the ideas that are currently present from the two analyzed periods, separated on components of the educational process.

Table 1. Modern elements in the educational process in the utopian works of ancient Greece and Italian Renaissance

	Specification	Greek Antiquity	Italian Renaissance
a.	The area of spreading the education	All citizens undergo this process to ensure the stability of the state. Education is differentiated on classes	In most of the works it is extended to all citizens. Exception are Patrizi's and Zuccolo's works
b.	Responsibility for education	State	State, by its rulers
c.	The organization of educational process	It differs from the modern era because it is made on social classes	It is equal for everyone at Campanella and Doni There are elements of differentiation between utopian works which are not valid today (ex. Education at Patrizi). Different age groups
d.	Education on gender	Plato advocates common education for boys and girls	No gender differences regarding education
e.	Content of education	There are elements regarding the cultivation of artistic skills Encouraging elites by providing superior courses Emphasis on practical disciplines (physics, chemistry, botany)	The emphasis on visual methods and experiments and less on memorization and theoretical knowledge. Attention is given to physical education
f.	Who performs the	Specialized instructors on	Scholars and specialized

| educational act                      | various fields                      | trainers.

The analysis of the utopian works of Greek Antiquity and Italian Renaissance outlines a set of components of the educational process that are of surprisingly high modernity being implemented in the current school and university curricula. These elements refer to the fact that the educational process is extended to the entire population, and there is no discrimination on social origin, gender or religion. It is also proposed that the state is in charge of the entire educational process, providing specialized personnel in training areas. Also, we noted the importance given to the physical training, cultivating maybe even more than nowadays the idea of having first a healthy body and secondly educating and training it.

Last but not least there are many modern elements regarding the content of education. They refer to visual methods close to the current content of the experiment, the organization of education and instruction by age groups, and special groups for the elite, the emphasis on formative and not descriptive disciplines, nurturing artistic skills by drawing, crafts and games as methods of learning in the early years of school etc.

We appreciate that since ancient times until now there have been ideas and methods in education which have not become obsolete with time because they encompass the fundamental elements of the complex phenomenon represented by the educational process.

### **Conclusions**

1. Starting from antiquity, the education of the citizens has been considered as one of the pillars in ensuring stability, security and harmony of the state.

2. Throughout history, many works with utopian character have appeared that had/gathered new innovative visions, on the organization and leadership of city-states. A particular attention was paid to youth education.

3. In Greek Antiquity and Italian Renaissance, the educational process presented in the utopian works includes, surprisingly, many innovative elements whose validity is preserved these days.

4. Among the modern innovative elements we mention: the need for all people to be contained in a system of instruction and education; the state is the guarantor of education and deals with its organization; educational process is non-discriminatory, being equal for all, irrespective of religion, gender, social status; attention is paid to physical education; education is done by trained personnel for various specialized areas; grouping by age, etc.

5. We consider that even now the works with utopian content are a source of innovative ideas aimed at setting up harmonious, prosperous, based on equity and justice societies, where people have a high level of education.

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