

The potentially repressive power in defining models of education

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In a report to the IPA Board of Representatives on July 29-30 2006, the Education Committee, chaired by Shmuel Erlich, presented the results of an investigation into the three models of psychoanalytic education existing within the IPA: the Eitingon (most common), the French, and the Uruguayan. This was an important moment, for whereas earlier the Eitingon model had been the only one to be mentioned in the IPA's Procedural Code, at this meeting all three models were given official recognition.

Among the issues of concern that have arisen as a result of the report, the most urgent seems to be what should be "IPA's role in monitoring the application of its standards" (IPA President Cláudio Laks Eizirik on page nr 13 in the IPA News Magazine, vol. 15/ Winter 2006), or what has subsequently come to be generally known as the question of "oversight".

In a summary from the Opening Ceremony of the Presidents and Directors of Training Meeting on 24th of July 2007 in Berlin one can read that "it had been agreed that the IPA will carry out an oversight function when a Society wishes to change its model". It is also reported that the Board of Representatives had taken the position that "since models have their own internal consistency a model needs to be maintained in total. Therefore 'Hybrid models' will not be allowed."

It must be kept in mind that the kind of "model" mentioned here is an abstract entity constituted on the basis of interpreted qualities belonging to practices and traditions within local psychoanalytic institutes, which if viewed in detail may turn out to be quite variegated. However accurate they may be descriptively, the formal characteristics of the three models

enumerated in the documents from 2006, do not amount to definitions of three distinguishable forms of internal *consistency*. To truly ascertain anything like that would require a much more encompassing and philosophically informed investigation than what has been presented so far.

It is true that the mandate approved in January 2008 for the Education and Oversight Committee does include the goal of discerning philosophical dimensions of the three models. However, the assertion already promulgated that each model should constitute a unique unit with a “consistency” of its own remains an arbitrary and unproven statement that is more of an ideological or political standpoint than a statement of fact. It is indeed unsettling that the Board should allow such a standpoint to precede the very investigations needed to support it!

The implication of the position taken by the Board of Representatives is that models are to be held apart and in the name of the purported consistency each one can be implemented only as one distinguishable whole. Thus, the only kind of major change expressly allowed for in the decisions that have been taken so far is that an institute may make a switch from one model to another (to be monitored by the IPA). But to be honest: it is hardly probable that a psychoanalytic society would choose to effectuate such a fundamental changeover in one fell swoop. To preserve stability and the spirit of its historical traditions, one would rather think that it would want to carry through any changes in incremental and controllable steps.

As is well known, the desire that the Eitingon model – especially those parts of it that pertain to frequency and the training analyst system – shall remain unchanged is strong in many quarters. Were the conception of internal consistency and unalterable models to become a guideline for a future body assigned to conduct “oversight”, that body would have a potent instrument at its disposal to stifle any attempts at more deep-going change that it may disapprove of, even when local decisions have been reached through considered deliberation and democratic procedure.

Under such conditions, psychoanalysis would have great difficulty in responding meaningfully to the wide-ranging changes taking place in the late modern society of the 21st century.

It would seem clear that the issue of educational models and its handling is of central importance to the future development of the IPA as a democratic organization. But since the topics involved are being dealt with by committees and high-level groupings, what actually ought to be a general discussion of policy among the membership has in effect become a procedure for the creation of an agency and ideological tool with the power to determine the destiny of individual psychoanalytic institutes and thereby psychoanalysis itself. I seriously doubt whether that is a desirable prospect.

As an alternative to the fuzzy ideology of “consistency” and a risky institution for “oversight” to interpret and implement it, I suggest that one adopt a clear and unambiguous set of minimal requirements for all IPA institutes to live by. These should be based on what through the decisions presented in July 2006 in effect has been accepted as minimal requirements within the IPA, e.g. a minimum frequency of 3 sessions per week for personal and supervised analyses and no obligation to support the TA institution. Beyond the minimal requirements, equal for all, it should be left to each local society to define and arrange its form of education.

Let the discussion begin before it ends!

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