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A Review of the Literature on Pedagogical Approaches to Native American/American Indian Literatures

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FOREWORD

The book **Applied Social Sciences: Education Sciences** contains five chapters centred on general educational issues, early childhood, elementary school, high school, and higher education.

Chapter One, **“General Issues”**, begins with a *historical and anthropological perspective upon ancient education* written by Mariana BALACI and Atalia ONIȚIU. The authors describe the ancient educational system and compare it to the modern one focussing on similarities and differences between the public and the private school systems of Roman education, using the analogical method of written texts and comparing them with other sources. The authors state that Roman society (and Roman education) was a male-dominated elitist and pragmatic society. The focus of Amalia DIACONU’s research, *Formative Assessment: Implicit and Explicit Principles*, shows that formative assessment has significant learning gains and should cover areas of interest as well as targets. However, it seems that, in the Romanian Education System, there is a discrepancy between the need to modernize the assessment practice and the political declarations in the field. Elizabeth-Anne ERICHSEN presents, in her paper, three practices toward an embodied philosophy for transformative learning – learning mindfully, communicating mindfully, and re-scripting mindfully: her conclusion is that we can build our awareness and learning in relationship through these basic practices, for ourselves and together for change. Silvia LUCICA’s research is an attempt to explain the relationship between education and media culture. The higher educational system has to face a tremendous problem: using human resources with maximum efficiency. Traditional education is too expensive, and demands from higher education are steadily increasing. Alternative solutions like “virtual classroom”, “virtual campus” or “invisible universities” are becoming more influential in the new era. The research carried out by Narcisa-Maria NADOLU focuses *on the didactic perspective of gender stereotypes in the Romanian educational system*. The author states that educational institutions have a vital role in the generation, restructuring and consolidation of social construction stereotypes in connection with social genders. Research results indicate that girls are appreciated as being more competitive, more creative and more critical than their peers. Vesna PRODANOVSKA and Elizabeta

MITREVA examine *incorporation, authorization and encouragement of employees to improve the quality of the educational process*. The authors argue that socio-political, economic and cultural changes affect both educational institutions and educational process. The new concept of quality changes people's mind, attitude and working style. Educational institutions could adapt these new changes and meet the new demands if the quality of learning processes improved. Ileana ROTARU tackles, in her study, the impact of mediatisation on social life, particularly on the education system, which is subjected to both quantitative and qualitative constraints. In the paper titled *A Review of the Literature on Pedagogical Approaches to Native American/African Indian Literatures* by Kelly SASSI, the author claims that native peoples remain fraught with potential missteps, re-stereotyping, or even oppression. The majority White teaching force lacks the training needed to successfully teach proponents of culturally relevant pedagogy. The article is trying to reconcile the understanding gaps that non-Native teachers and (non-Native) students experience when reading Native texts. A research written by Mihaela TILINCĂ and Valentina MUREȘAN concludes that *teacher training team is the key to successful training sessions*. The research examines the difference between theories in applied linguistics and the practice of teacher training. The researchers consider that linguistic analysis of teacher training dialogues can bring clarifications and add value to both areas of study. In order to successfully train, developing teacher training and learning are essential elements.

Chapter Two contains two papers on **"Early Childhood"**. The first one, focusing on *discipline in early childhood and valorisation of the minuscule*, pertains to Liliana STAN. The content of the study encompasses the before pre-school age (the period between 3 and 7 years), the most momentous period in childhood. The discipline of early-age children is derived from the child's relationship with his/her environment and children's attitudes and behaviours are shaped at this stage. For these reasons, teaching staff training and parent/counselling education are particularly useful. Finally, Mona VINTILĂ suggests using reflective seminar as a learning method at midway between everyday language and academic expose.

Chapter Three focuses on **"Elementary School"**. Claudia BORCA debates, in her paper, the relationship between metacognition and learning in visually impaired children, concluding that cognitive skills may be developing by use of mediated learning criteria. Another paper presents *Classroom Environment, Attributional Style and Science Achievement in Early Adolescence*. Loredana-Ruxandra GHERASIM and Simona

BUTNARU emphasize that achievement is moderated by both individual and learning environment characteristics. The paper explores how attributions and classroom environment interact in predicting the achievement in sciences during early adolescence. The researchers found out that attributional style and teacher support predict achievement. Marian ILIE, Marius-Lupşa MATICHESCU, Alexandra PETCU, Gheorghe MANDA and Adrian MARCU carry out an investigation on the *Dynamics of Curriculum Design Options* in the Romanian primary school system. Students believe optional and elective disciplines are useful and helpful; however, teaching elective subjects remains a limited practice. The research on how electives are used by each curricular area revealed a more frequent use of the time slots to deepen or broaden the compulsory core subjects than to introduce new disciplines.

Chapter Four is dedicated to **"High School"**. The research on *Leadership Styles of High School Students* by Hasan ARSLAN examines the leadership styles of public high school students based on Bolman and Deal's theory of leadership frames. The author attempts to answer the questions "What kind of leadership styles are adopted by high school students?", "Is there a significant difference between leadership styles of female and male high school students?", and "Is there a significant difference between leadership styles of high school students in terms of grade level?" The findings indicate that leadership styles of high school students differ in terms of gender and grade level. The paper *Role of Modern Methods on Performance Evaluation of Secondary Education Pupils* by Otilia-Sanda BERSAN draws attention upon the influence of modern methods of assessing performance of secondary education. The researcher's analysis relies on the teachers' opinions and beliefs regarding the necessity, the usefulness and the impact of alternative methods on scholastic performance of pupils in secondary school. Results indicate that alternative methods of learning assessment have a higher level of effectiveness because they allow pupils' results to be gauged and assessed with greater accuracy and objectivity. The article titled *Truancy: A Stringent Problem in Education* by Elena-Liliana DANCIU deals with children's emotional problems that cause truancy. The author underlines that modern life is extremely complex and generates many social, psychological and economic problems. Children are impacted by peer pressure, scholastic overburdening, temptation to do drug, lack of educational activities. Because of these reasons, school absenteeism becomes a kind of rebellion and a method of overcoming the fear of helplessness. Students feel that school atmosphere is not longer pleasing to them. The author claims that school absenteeism leads in the short run to social absenteeism. Daniela DUMITRU suggests, in her paper, that a community of practice can be an educational asset by putting the teenagers in the situation to use their ability and skills to make friends online in order to increase their knowledge in their field of work. Oana-Roxana IVAN's article tries to make a connection between argumentation and the teaching experience. The author conducted a descriptive study and asked unstructured questions to 20 students regarding the issue of argumentation in school. The author claims that building a proper argumentative essay requires knowing the rules underlying the construction of an argumentation and having the ability to joggle with these skills. A further analysis of Ionuţ-Dorin STANCU, Muşata BOCOŞ and Daniel-Cosmin ANDRONACHE focuses on *Contextual and Individual Moderators in the Self-regulation of Learning.* The researchers try to find the relationship between intra-contextual learning and inter-contextual learning while focusing on age and learning context. Research results indicate that the self-regulation of learning strategies has a positive influence on thinking, emotion, and behaviour. Using the self-regulation of learning strategies, students may accomplish certain individual goals.

Chapter Five deals with **"Higher Education"**. Gabriela DOMILESCU's article tackles the issue of *Quality of Pre-service Teacher Training.* After analysing the reforms of Romanian pre-service teacher training, the author claims that providing quality in pre-service teacher training means meeting the needs of the beneficiaries (enrolled students, teacher educators, pupils, schools, and parents). A socio-pedagogical questionnaire was applied to 593 people and focussed on the objective of the research: outlining a concept of quality of pre-service teaching training in the opinion of all those involved in this type of training. Another article is dealing with how Romanian students spend their time. Ioan-Valentin FULGER conducted his research in the University of Petroşani as a case study. The author asked the students to assess their daily schedule from the perspective of the activities they have to accomplish, in general, including activities outside the university. The main results range within national averages starting with didactic activities, continuing with individual study, and ending with the effort made per day strictly on the academic activities. Gabriela GROSSECK and Carmen HOLOTESCU examine the issue of *Scholarly Digital Curation in 140 Characters.* The authors reconsider the concept of digital curation by correctly applying it to the tools used by educational actors. They claim that digital curation has a strong impact on the learning profession and performance. Digital curation is a way to discover and to filter the vast information on the web in some functional way to bring to the users' activity streams data. Laura-Ioana LEON's study underlines the importance of *Communication Skills in English for the Medical Practitioner.* The author describes that communication skills are essential in establishing strong relationships between doctors and patients. Therefore, communication skills should be systematically taught in all medical education. Medical students confronted with both linguistic and cultural barriers should become aware of the need to possess these communication skills in general, but also to get some cross-cultural communication skills early in their career. Another research, carried out by Laura MALIŢA, tries to answer the question "*Should Teachers and Students be Friends on Facebook*?" The author takes the case of social sciences Facebook teachers and students from the West University of Timişoara, Romania. They claim that academics should find a proper solution for using this tremendous potential tool for educational purposes. Facebook becomes a vital educational resource for all academic actors: students, teachers and academic institutions. The focus of Lavinia-Maria NIŢULESCU's research is on *Training and Development of Teachers' Professional Competence.* The author reviews the literature related to the achievement and the development of the teachers' professional competence and tries to improve the training of the future teachers. The comparative analysis of the results of control and experimental group indicates that there are significant differences between pre-test and post-tests. Georgeta RAŢĂ's article on *Teaching Vocabulary at Tertiary Level* focuses on making the teaching/learning of the English language as easy, enjoyable, and permanent as possible using cheap, available visual aids from the internet. The researcher claims that the choice of a visual aid is influenced by learning situation-connected factors, by lesson aim-connected factors, or by lesson strategy-connected factors. The researcher compared two groups of students totalling 224 respondents. The research results were compared between control group and experimental group. The comparison of the results of the two groups suggests that, as far as architecture is concerned, teaching the English of architecture should be done, maybe more than any other type of English for special purposes, with visual support for higher effectiveness. Florin SĂLĂJAN and Sorina CHIPER underline, in their study, the positive effects of ERASMUS programmes on Romanian students having spent some time abroad and having strived to represent their country in a positive light. The study *Initial Teacher Training from the Perspective of a Genuine Approach to Cultural Diversity in Education*, written by Nadia-Laura SERDENCIUC, focuses on the importance of teacher training in relation with cultural diversity in education. The author used a questionnaire regarding the response to cultural diversity. The students evaluated 18 items. Research results indicate that intercultural training programs conduct to increased openness regarding perception toward cultural diversity in the academic environment sustained by an increased willingness to respond of the subjects tested. Acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity are influenced by the individual's learning experiences in the academic environment. *Facilitation in the Educational Process: Perspectives and Approaches at University Level* is an article by Carmen-Maria ȚÎRU, which discusses the process of the conceptualization of facilitation in education. The author's objectives are to reveal the characteristics of university teachers, to establish differentiating aspects regards the facilitation approach in the teaching activity, to identify the significant differences between course titular and seminary titular, and to formulate suggestions of optimization of the educational facilitation in the educational process in higher education. The findings suggest that teachers largely approach facilitating teaching in the educational process in higher education.

Hasan Arslan

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL ISSUES

HISTORICAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE UPON ANCIENT EDUCATION

MARIANA BALACI AND ATALIA ONIŢIU

Introduction

In Ancient Rome, as today, education, as an institution, was a key activity certified by the various artefacts (writing instruments, wax tablets, etc.) and epigraphic, monumental and literary sources (La Penna 1990). The authors will encounter in their endeavour the beginning of today's educational system and techniques and, due to ethnoarchaeological methods and archaeological anthropology systems, will get a holistic image using written texts analogy and comparison with other sources. Roman society and Roman education were a male-dominated elitist and pragmatic society. Elitism was, in fact, a form of aristocracy government because they allowed primary school only to all classes, and a male-dominated one because girls did not attend secondary school on a regular basis and higher schools only if they belonged to high aristocracy. Pragmatism was dominant because realism was the first device in mind when instructing youths.

The Roman Educational System

The Romans had a tripartite cycle (primary, secondary and high school) imported from Ancient Greece and similar to today's one. The primary school mastered by a *Primus Magister* was attended by children aged between 7 and 11-12 years old and was dedicated to the learning of reading, writing, and basic arithmetic. The secondary school was mastered by a *Grammaticus* who taught the children (aged from 11-12 to 16-17) syntax, vocabulary, Roman religion, and classical texts in Latin and Greek. The higher school was mastered by a *Rhetor* or an *Orator* who taught the students (until they were 20 years old) rhetoric and philosophy. This last cycle was dedicated to more than one speciality (medical, engineering and law).

The term **pedagogy** comes from the Latin *pedagogus*, the slave who, in wealthy houses, was teaching and educating children from the age of 7, in good manners and social functioning (Wilkins 1905). The term **school** also comes from Roman times, from *schola*, when it referred to the practice of teaching since the school as an institution was called *ludus*.

The school in Roman times was mainly on the ground floor of a public building, with direct access from the street from at least two sides; the teacher would sit on a chair with a rounded back (*cathedra*) and at a desk (*pulpitum*). The students would sit on small chairs and hold writing tablets on their knees; they would stand up when answering or reciting. On the walls, there were clay or marble teaching materials (with historic or mythological scenes). Maps (as geography) were used only in late Antiquity (*Ibid*). Corporal punishment, very widespread, was allowed as a punitive method (Bonner 1984).

The vast majority of children attended only the basic level of education and only wealthy families would support their children in the next levels of studies.

In Roman times, schools were available only in cities, usually in the forum or in the near vicinity.

Knowing how to read and write was crucial in Roman society; therefore, in every town there was at least one public school until the 4th century A.D. (Marrou 1997). In Dacia, the situation was similar: schools were available in all Roman cities of this Roman province.

The social status of a teacher was not a respected one. In Ancient Roman, teaching in primary schools was not highly regarded: it was left to slaves, liberated slaves and poor condition citizens (*Ibid*). According to the edict (301 AD) of Gaius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus Augustus (Roman Emperor from 284 to 305), the salary of a *Magister* was 50 *denarii* per pupil per month, but only if there were 30 students in a class would the magister get a monthly payment equivalent to that of a mason or a carpenter, but such groups of students were highly unusual at the time (*Ibid.*). A *Grammaticus* would get 200 *denarii* per student per month, payment equivalent to the salary of a qualified hand for four days of work (*Ibid.*), and a *Rhetor* would get 250 *denarii* per student per month (*Ibid.*). Their social status was higher, especially that of a *Rhetor* or *Orator*, who were respected figures.

The Roman school system was as mentioned above, a copy of the Greek one; due to the Romanization process, it covered a vast area (almost the entire Empire).

Analysing the works of ancient authors from the beginnings of Rome, especially Roman historian Titus Livius Patavinus (59 BC-17 AD), we find that, before the contact with the Greek forms of education (during the 3rd century B.C., when it seems that the Romans realized their intellectual inferiority – cf. Poynton 1934), the education of the Romans took place at home, the main purpose of education being to make young Romans noble Romans. Physical education did not intend to ensure the strength of the body, but to make them into manageable fighters for their country. Roman education remained remarkably practical: thus, what children learnt was limited to the simple bare necessities (little arithmetic, a bit of law, and some history). Education referred to civil aspects and to discipline.

Bowen asserted that the complete Roman education of boys and young men was composed of four stages and not three, adding to the above mentioned cycles the military service as the fourth stage between secondary school and higher school (Bowen 1976). His opinion is supported by archaeological evidence: for example, in Roman Dacia the largest source of writing instruments (*stili*) is the military service environment.

The writing instruments used in Roman times were *stili*, *theca calamaria* (inkpot), pens and brushes and, for inorganic materials, *signalula* (a kind of stamp). The support used for actual writing varied from wax tablets, papyrus, parchment, bone, ceramic, clay, stone, metals, and wall plaster.

The most common writing instrument was the *stilus*: used primarily for writing on wax tablets, it was made primarily from iron. It had one sharpened point, and one flattened side. The sharp point was used for actual writing and the flattened end was used for erasing objectionable content. Sometimes the *stilus* was beautifully decorated with various ornaments according to the social status of the user.

Several outstanding pieces from Roman Dacia are a *stilus* from Porolissum (8 km from Zalău, Sălaj County, Romania) with a golden decoration (possibly gold) discovered near the Amphitheatre (Bajusz 2004) and a remarkably similar piece discovered at Buciumi (Sălaj County, Romania) (*Ibid.*).

In all Roman Dacian cities, archaeologists discovered *stili* in significant numbers and scarce in rural settlements. Remarkably high numbers of *stili* were discovered in *castrae* (Roman military forts). Such concentration leads to the conclusion that some form of training in writing also took place for soldiers in military service (Bowen's claim must have some truth in it). Probably, because all soldiers were required to know how to read and write in Latin, some of them took reading and writing lessons after entering military life, especially soldiers in auxiliary units (*cohors*, *alae*, *numeri*) who were not yet Roman citizens.

Inkpots (*atramentarium*) made from glass, metal or ceramic and pens were used to write on papyrus, parchment or even wood. Some inkpots were discovered in Roman Dacia at Porolissum (Sălaj County, Romania), Potaissa (Cluj County, Romania), Romita (Sălaj County, Romania) and Buciumi (Sălaj County, Romania) (*Ibid.*).

Wax tablets were commonly used as a base for writing, particularly by pupils in primary school and formal business writings. The most common design was made from two wooden frames filled with wax and tied together with a lace. In commercial activities, the wooden frame supported also writing with paint and brushes; two recently discovered wooden tablets from Alburnus Major (Alba County, Romania) have painted writing on a wood frame with economic and legal information (Volosciuc 2007).

Over 3,500 inscriptions were discovered in Dacia, and most of them are carefully written in proper Latin with capital letters (*Ibid.*). Some of them still have a lined margin for precise alignment.

Some of these writings are made in fresh clay, maybe with a stilus, maybe with a simple stick, and information is generally informal, sometimes just grammatical exercises or news about the potterer or brick maker and/or the proprietor.

Another relevant source of information about education in Roman times is funerary monuments: though the monuments depicting educational activities are relatively rare, some critical information can be obtained using them. The most common representation is that of young boys with *stili* in their hands, assisted by their parents at home; there is no representation of a young girl holding a *stilus* for Dacia (Balaci-Crînguș & Ștefănescu 2006). More common are representations of men holding *volumen* (16); the symbolic load of those representations is quite clear: men who are literate and proud of being literate (of being members of an intellectual elite) (Balaci- Crînguș 2008).

Clear evidence regarding the educational system supports the hypothesis that Roman Dacia was fully integrated in the Roman cultural life and lifestyle habits and that the newly-arrived colonists imposed their culture on the local population.

The Roman educational system and teaching processes are remarkably well known due to ancient literary writings, many of them being teachers concerned, just like their modern counterparts, by the most advanced and effective methods of learning and teaching.

The Roman educational system is extremely well known due to ancient author writings, some of them being teachers or leaders of higher or rhetorical schools such as Roman rhetorician Marcus Fabius Quintilian

(35-100) or Roman philosopher, statesman, lawyer, orator, political theorist, Roman consul and constitutionalist Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC) whose primary concern was to use better and more effective methods and techniques for learning and teaching.

Institutiones oratoriae of Quintilianus is a remarkable work due to the modernity of his ideas, underlining both the formative and the educational value of education, realizing the supreme importance of education in the raising and development of children. The ancient author emphasizes the importance of education during the first years of life, the meaning of games, the need to take into account the uniqueness of each child, including their age and the importance of the psycho-pedagogic qualities of the educator (Stan 2002).

Conclusions

Analysing the ancient educational system and comparing it to the modern one we can observe, very quickly, more than one similarity; for example, the desire of self-perfection of the teachers, the concern in spreading their knowledge to the students for better future social integration of the youths. Another similarity is government intervention and function in the public and private educational system, a role copied only in the 20th century by modern states. Similarly, in Roman times there was a clear competition between the public educational system and the private one: they used public examination in front of the notabilities of the city to choose teachers for government schools (Quintilian argues exceptionally well the necessity of a public school system, instead of private education at home). Thus, the ancient writer mentions the advantages for the pupil and the teacher: competitiveness between pupils, friendship ties during school time (hence the socialization role of the school), need, for teachers, to continuously improve themselves (a private teacher rather capping himself – cf. Poynton 1934); prize rewarding the most merited master (Marrou 1997); and, last but not least, the presence of *curriculum* and the tendency to keep modernising the teaching and learning processes (Ipola 2007). In the context of a highly dynamic and changing educational system, it is appropriate to have an insight into the history of previous human communities that can provide some solutions, if not for the current educational reform, at least for a deeper understanding of its origins.

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FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT: IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT PRINCIPLES

AMALIA DIACONU

Introduction

In the postmodern context of approaching the trainee as a partner in an individualized educational process aimed at gaining formative autonomy and self autonomy in general, the sphere of questioning formative assessment turns into a field of ideas and of certain decisions of educational policy with a major impact on the educational practice. Educational assessment scenarios and evaluation techniques used in the class can promote cognitive and attitudinal-affective evolutions towards learning, towards one's personal development, and can turn the student into the monitor and trainer of his/her own self-generative competences. The acquisition, by the pupils, of the tools necessary to process information at a high level, the awareness and control of their own learning mechanisms and techniques, the management of mental processes, promoting a metacognitive behaviour constitute as many goals of the postmodern school, which can be reached provided that appropriate pedagogical scenarios are created, where teachers capitalize to the utmost the resources of formative assessment.

Analysis and Proposals

The idea that evaluation can support learning is not a new one. In the 1990s, several studies explored the idea that approaching evaluation as an integrant part of the education process can lead to learning enhancement and, at the same time, attempts were made to correlate classroom practice and research findings especially regarding feedback, motivation, assignment and self adjustment of learning. Thus, studies concerning formative assessment indicated significant learning gains when the former was used, regardless of content, types of knowledge and aptitudes aimed at, as well as of levels of education where it was capitalized. The evaluation interpreted and applied as facilitator of the cognitive development of the student who gradually acquires the science of learning how to learn, contextualizes learning and enables each student to build up themselves within the area of independent and assumed becoming. Despite the numerous reports on the successful implementation of formative assessment in schools, its capitalization at a large scale still remains a challenge. The prospects of putting formative assessment into practice seem even more discouraging in various international contexts, where informative teaching and summative evaluation have dominant characteristics. Black & William (2009) noticed that, when teachers use formative assessment strategies in their own practice, they seem to be blocked between the new commitment to perform the assessment for learning and the often conflicting demands of the external testing system. Despite the evidence brought in by Western research regarding the formative evaluation effect of stimulating learning and increasing the efficiency of the instructive-educative processes, the current evaluative practice in Romanian pre-university education tends to be primarily oriented towards more and more precise and rigorous procedures of classifying and selecting pupils, be it external, national tests and examinations or procedures created and daily put into practice by teachers in the class. From the teachers' point of view, the strategies of the formative assessment are time-consuming and difficult to use in classes with larger numbers of students. Also, designing and implementing these strategies require high pedagogical and theoretical grounding in the field. Obviously, the teachers' decisions as to practising formative evaluation are also influenced by their own perception of the pupils' abilities and of the curriculum by the school setting in which they operate and by their professional experience (more than by their educational experience), by their views on learning, level of pedagogical knowledge, shared evaluative culture. We therefore think that teachers need to reflect on their own evaluative practice and explore the challenges and benefits of using the formative assessment in the class, particularly in the context in which, "building up an evaluative culture is one of the less aimed at and achieved objectives in schools." (Cucoş 2008) The current approach proposes an interpretation of the explicit and implicit principles that support the approaches in the field of educational policies as well as of the evaluative practice within Romania's pre-university education system, reiterating the belief that any pedagogical innovation, as important as it might be, remains a potential value as long as it is not integrated into the teachers' views and methodological repertory. A pertinent reading of the principles that explain at a certain moment the educational practice imposes the examination, *ab initio*, of the educational paradigms shared at that time, which, in their turn, are the objectification of the social-cultural paradigms. Thus, the student's docility, the conformism practised within an educational environment strongly rationalized, rigorously planned and stuck into intervention units that have already proven their maximum efficiency, the strict assessment practice oriented towards outward manifestations as marks of cognitive excellence are all landmarks of modernism which produces excellence, which denies the student's oneness and compels him/her to simulate the performance in order to "fit" into the standards that guarantee success. On the contrary, the postmodern paradigm outlines an area of educational intervention where emphasis is laid on continuing learning, flexibility, receptivity and access to information and multiple meanings, on the concern for the individual's performances referred to his own potential, on completing both theoretical and theoretical knowledge through experiments and direct personal experience. A second level of substantiation and interpretation of the principles that govern educational practice at a particular time is represented by the shared theoretical standpoints. Thus, the reflexive registers of the cognitive science and constructivism imposed a review of curriculum design, instructive design, learning and teaching strategies, evaluation approaches. Although it was quite a way of interpretation, a philosophy, a theory of knowledge, constructivism generated numerous applicative solutions for instruction, learning and assessment, particularly used in the American and Canadian educational area considered an academic (epistemological) reference frame for the educational field. Nevertheless, constructivist theories are not capitalized, at least in the Romanian educational field, but through "punctual, random, marginal measures" (Joiţa 2008: 34), as the teachers still do not have a repertory of constructivist learning practice or of assessing constructivist learning, built up and consolidated during the initial or continuing professional training. Bringing out the characteristics of the assessment practice from the constructivist approach should be preceded by an outline of the appropriate aspects and of the principles which govern the pedagogical interventions of a constructivist type (OECD 2007), principles that equally refer to the student's nature (the importance of his background and culture), to the student's responsibility for learning as he builds up his own understanding, to the teacher's role as a facilitator who maintains a continuing dialogue and evaluative feedback with the pupils, to approaching assessment as integrant part of the learning process. On the ground of these principles, a possible inventory of some descriptors of the teachers' evaluative behaviours in the constructivist class where "the pupils give up the futile effort to comply with the teacher's expectations and look for the best ways of learning" (Clarke 2011: 12), might include:

- Accepting and encouraging pupils' autonomy, who build their own questions and look for their own answers, by evaluating, not the mere agreement of the answers with the questions, but the ways of identifying and structuring possible answers;
- The assessment of the way in which, given the contexts of research and discovery created by the teacher, the pupils search for evidence and connect the basic data given by the real life situations which they personally experience;
- Encouraging pupils to express their own ideas and to reflect on the ideas of others, in order to build the new understanding starting from the previous one, by negotiating the new meanings and significances in the process of knowledge;
- Involving pupils in learning experiences that could deny their initial hypotheses and which encourage them to consider for explanations, clarifications and sharing meanings;
- Creating opportunities for divergent thinking, in a situation which should not make the pupils feel uncomfortable if they are wrong, but eager to experience the fault as a way, a step towards knowledge;
- Involving the pupils in self-evaluating approaches;
- Inserting moments of reflection on their own mental processes, in a stimulating context of the metacognitive abilities to consciously achieve the learning tasks (Nicolescu & Cucoradă 2002).

The key principles and characteristics that define the formative assessment practice have been approached in several academic or practical standpoints, in discourses built either from a comprehensive (which aims at the meaning of the formative assessment practice), a descriptive (the description, analysis of this practice) or a prescriptive perspective (suggesting ways of improvement). Many countries are promoting formative assessment as a fundamental approach to the reformation of education. In 2005, OECD studied the use of formative assessment in eight education systems: Australia, Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, Italy, New Zeeland and Scotland. The study also gathered commentaries covering the literature in the field, in English, French, and German. In order to identify the existing barriers to formative assessment and encourage its use as a current evaluation practice, OECD (2005) presented the results of the survey and policy principles. Achievements and formative assessment are described as "among the biggest ever reported for educational interventions," while the research carried out by the Centre of Educational Research and Innovation endorses these findings. In this international context, an analysis of the main elements on the current national political agenda and of the law regulating the assessment in Romanian education (The Law of National Education and the following normative acts) can constitute an objective approach to selecting and clarifying the precise principles now promoted in Romania in the field of education assessment. Nevertheless, assuming these principles which suggest transforming the current assessment practice is not enough to trigger the change. To do this, it is imperative that decision-makers ensure the convergence and coherence of the two levels of infusing the change in the field of assessment: the declarative level of supporting the change by adopted policies and the practical level, respectively, of applying the change by means of appropriate instrumentation of the actors involved in educational assessment. The two levels are inseparable, as innovating and optimizing the field of educational assessment depend both on political decisions passed at central level and propagated towards the current practice in schools and teachers' initiative and professional practice. Correlated to the governmental strategies aiming at optimizing the quality of basic education as well as of the compulsory one, the education reform in Romania has triggered, in the last 15 years, changes in all major compartments: institutional structures, curriculum, tuition, initial and continuing education of the teaching staff and, last but not least, views on assessment and its practice. After 1989, the changing of contents and the education law has been a priority of the educational policies. The way in which these policies have been put into practice has varied in time, in a series of stages: a reparatory stage just after December 1989, characterized by non-ideological education; a stage of multiplying and confronting legislative, institutional and systemic alternatives, of contents and methodological, at the end of which a new law of education was passed (1995 – Law of Education, 1997 – Statute of the Teaching Staff); a stage of systematic constructions, at the end of the 1990s, marked by a vast and fast curricular reform (new syllabuses, sets of alternative school books, institutional changes in permanent and final assessment, especially in organizing graduation examinations, authoritative approval of a true curriculum of the compulsory education). The introduction of new directions that support the promotion of formative evaluation in the Romanian education system is the result of a very complex determinative context: admitting and assuming the inherent principles which theoretically substantiate the approaches to formative assessment doubled by the experience gained as a natural consequence of the implementation of the national assessment at the end of primary education, the experience of participating in international assessments which provided a comparative frame and the OECD Report (2000) that suggests a revaluation of the utmost importance which is still attached in this country to the summative assessment carried out by means of traditional examination methods a process considered to be costly both for government and pupils and equally representing the instance of an elitist attitude which can inhibit the pupils coming from disadvantaged social backgrounds in particular. In this explicative/determinative context, they have formulated, at the level of educational policies, clear principles that govern the current assessment reform, principles in favour of formative assessment referring to:

- Focusing current and periodical evaluations on competences, not on memorizing information;
- Carrying out a periodical assessment correlated to each cycle of skill acquisition and finalized not only with a score obtained by the pupil, but also with a detailed report to be sent to the parents/tutors, containing the pupil's school record and the corresponding counselling of the parents/tutors, as well as an individualized learning plan of recuperation (for children with learning disabilities), of acceleration (for the very endowed ones) or consolidation of the acquired knowledge;
- Evaluating all themes included in the National Curriculum in order to avoid parallel curriculum;
- Finalizing the two national assessments (at the end of compulsory education and graduation examination), not with binary decisions of the "passed-failed" type, but with a final score, similar to the one in the PISA tests, which should indicate the student's personal performance related to the requirements of the national curriculum;
- Creating an instrument of detailed assessment and monitoring of the pupil, called *The Pupil's Education Portfolio,* which is to encompass not only results of periodical assessments, but also evaluation reports, individualized learning plans, teachers' and/or the school counsellor's notifications concerning the student, diplomas and certificates awarded to the students by other accredited organisms and proving the latter's special aptitudes or performances; the education portfolio will allow a much more complex and realistic assessment of the student and will be automatically transferred from one education cycle to the next one, constituting the grounds of the student's comprehensive assessment.

Conclusion

At present, the transition process from traditional assessment to "postmodern evaluation" is getting more and more apparent, at least at a declarative level of policies formulated and assumed and of legislative approaches meant to assist school assessment in the Romanian education system, the dominant changes in the educational space establishing the assessment as a means of moulding the student and of observing and supporting the development of his competences. In agreement with these directions and present tendencies, pedagogical theory and educational practice should include the following areas of interest and targets: diversification of the evaluation methodology, devices, techniques and instruments; reconsideration of the "culture of control and assessment" and promotion of the alleged "culture of assessment" centred on social-cognitive and metacognitive learning processes; provision of feedback oriented towards the finalities of the evaluative project (Potolea, Neacșu & Manolescu 2011: 25). However, the way from pedagogical theory to practice seems to be interrupted by interventions insufficiently correlated between theoretical and politically declarative level and the level of the practice provided by the teachers' training. We think that there is, in the Romanian education system, a discrepancy between the need to modernize assessment practice from the perspective of the new paradigms, theories, explanatory models and political statements in the field, on the one hand, and actual support provided to teachers through programmes of initial and continuing education which enable them access to methodologies, instruments, good use of implementing formative assessment, on the other hand. The approach to listing implicit and explicit principles of formative assessment in the educational policy and practice in the Romanian education system constitutes a possible step, subsequent to a broad national approach to training teachers in order to build up a culture of formative assessment for learning and developing the methodological competences characteristic of formative evaluation. Only within this applicative context will the current development of formative assessment research, theory and exemplary practice support assessment practices which ensure the trainees' formative and becoming autonomy within the national education system.

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MINDFUL SCRIPTING: THREE PRACTICES TOWARD AN EMBODIED PHILOSOPHY FOR TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

ELIZABETH-ANNE ERICHSEN

Introduction

Transformative learning (TL) is generally understood as a reflective learning process that leads to changes in our personal perspectives that transform our lives, and how we see and understand ourselves, our context and the world around us (Cranton 2006, Mezirow 1978, 1991, 1997, 2000, Taylor 1994, 1998). If TL is conceptualized as an ongoing process of identity development and role negotiation, and thought of as the re-scripting of socially and culturally defined relationships and behaviours, then TL can be conceptualized in a variety of new ways. As many adults reside at the crossroads of multiple social roles, and find themselves navigating conflicting societal expectations and competing social scripts, it becomes necessary to engage in learning practices that empower throughout the substructing of personal identities and facilitate a lasting transformation. In this paper, three strategies for mindful discernment will be presented as personal practices toward cultivating learning for change.

TL will be conceptualized here as the ongoing negotiation of identity and conflicting roles within adult development. TL necessarily includes multiple layers of social interaction and learning, some more reflective than others, in the processes of developing new perspectives and world views and integrating those transformative experiences into lived experience. TL can be understood as an ongoing process of feeling lost and experiencing conflicting roles and confusion, living the tension of liminality between social roles, and the self-directed process of redefining social agency (Mezirow1978, 1991, 1997, 2000) and creating the space to mindfully re-script one's social roles. *Mindful scripting*, then, will be presented here as working toward the successful integration and lived embodiment of an individual's identity work and personal TL process.

The proposed approach to instantiating this identity work is necessarily philosophical: it is ontological in practicing mindfulness as a means of achieving presence as a way of being in the world; it is axiological in purposefully selecting and using a language of compassion and caring with self and others as a way of building relationships, and it is epistemological in exercising the narrative cognitive function as cartographic and relational ways of knowing, re-scripting roles, and re-storying identities. Personal change becomes informed by, and thus mindfully transformed, through praxis: an embodied learning philosophy. The aim here is to reveal each of these practices as mechanisms that both facilitate a deeper understanding of self and others, as well as provide very tangible means for putting mindful transformation philosophy into action.

Learning Mindfully

Mindfulness, also often referred to as contemplative practice, consists of practical strategies to develop our ability to be more present in our bodies, awaken to our surroundings, and to understand ourselves and others better. It is understood as a way to use personal experience to guide us to awakening, or becoming more present in the now. It is the development of the capacity to honestly and sincerely be open to one's self, the world, and what the moment offers. Practically speaking, it is a series of breathing techniques, contemplative practices, and other regular exercises to become more aware of one's self and to focus reflection and concentration. There is a growing body of literature pertaining to the benefits of contemplative practices and mindfulness that has recently gained substantial depth (Dencev & Collister 2010, Brady 2007, Hart 2008, Helber, Zook & Immergut 2012, Hyland 2010). Recent work in the fields of psychology, neurological sciences, and the learning sciences have indicated increased focus, positive affective change, and other health benefits in response to regular mindfulness practice, as well as successful educative practices.

At its most basic level, mindfulness is the development of self-awareness and discernment through systematic practice. Mindfulness is about being one's self, and knowing something about who that is. People tend take their capacities for attention and awareness and personal reflection for granted instead of deepening them, cultivating them, and putting them to use. A person must be present to her/his self and present within their social world in order to learn. Learners cannot be reflective unless they are present in mind. Mindfulness strategies offer some concrete ways of reclaiming minds, bodies, and time as a means of fostering self-knowledge, awareness of personal needs, and resisting identity dispersion. Through moments of silence, breathing techniques, mindful movement, and exercises of personal discernment, one can increase their capacity for attention and awareness, sharpening one's presence, and becoming more aware of one's embodied needs and identity.

In the learning environment, this can take the form of quiet contemplation to increase focus at the beginning of class, practicing concentration through breathing techniques, or quietly writing down internal dialogue as a means of contemplation. In the learning environment, mindfulness can mean reclamation of the learning process as one's own valuable time and personal choice, and becoming more aware of one's own learning process. People learn better when they are present, attentive, and self-aware: to develop insight through self-examination and examination of the world directly, one must be able to be perceptive of the layers of feelings, concepts, assumptions, and labels that are in learning's way: one must be *awake*. Contributing to a mindful philosophy of learning, these practices can help form a foundation for learning and transformation.

Communicating Mindfully

The language and culture people use to learn become their tools of understanding. Conventional conceptions of learning and culture might see language and culture as instrumental and as something separate and external to the self, as something to be obtained. In contrast, the presented perspective here understands language as the quintessential cultural tool, as something internal and integral in constituting a person's intellectual presence, and another key to transformative learning. To mindfully engage in an uncertain world, a person must possess the ability to manifest their thoughts, beliefs and values through language and social interaction. As language is the matter with which a person's social architecture is built, a person must cultivate the ability to develop and to equip one's self with the skills of healthy communication, which contribute to sustaining and renewing knowledge throughout the lifespan. The language one uses is of great importance in mindfully altering a person's means of communicative interaction, and in being able to affect change at the individual level, and both internally within selves and with others.

Compassionate communication (NVC) (Rosenberg 2003) is a useful tool in learning how to analyze intra- and inter-personal communication, and how one relates to the self and to others. Through this learned four step communication process, one becomes more mindful of the specific language one uses in everyday communication. NVC involves four components for improving communication. In the first step, people learn to *observe* both self and others while refraining from evaluating the expressed words, feelings or needs, and to truly hear what is being said. Next is learning to identify the expressed *feelings* in communication and taking responsibility for what was said or done to generate those particular feelings. In doing so, people can begin recognizing the expressed *needs* that are at the root of uttered words. This step of acutely listening for and discerning expressed feelings and needs becomes a means for improving personal and interpersonal understanding. Finally, people learn to make a *request* of themselves or another to state what may be done to fulfil the expressed need. The process encourages learners to ask, *How are we really communicating with ourselves and others?* The process is one of becoming aware of the manifestation of people's most basic needs as they are expressed through language, and learning how to better communicate in relationship with one another.

One of the most problematic aspects of TL is the lived embodiment of a person's perspectival shift: making new views a lived part of a person's social experience and life. In mindfully altering the language used to communicate internally and with others, and becoming aware of one's own personal needs and the needs of those around them, one literally begins to shift their learning in relationship through language. The language one chooses to structure their views and relationships gives them the cultural tools for intra- and inter-personal growth. Practically, these communication techniques can be learned and practiced as a part of the learning environment, empowering people to communicate in healthier and more constructive ways (refer to Rosenberg 2003 for details of this practice). These communication techniques are also integral in mindfully attending to how people story their lives and build their narrative identity, and provide skills for the process of mindfully re-scripting.

Re-scripting Mindfully

Over the past 15 years, *narrative identity* has become a serious line of inquiry in personality psychology, social psychology, lifespan human development, clinical and counselling psychology, sociology, social work, and in education. In order to answer the twin identity question: *Who am I?* And, *How do I fit into the world?* people are continuously engaged in the process of constructing a self-defining life story (McAdams, Josselson & Lieblich 2006). These authors employ the term "*narrative identity* to refer to the stories people tell about themselves to define who they are for themselves and others." (McAdams, Josselson & Lieblich 2006: 4) Narrative identities are the stories people live by, and the ability to story one's self/selves is an essential mechanism in identity development. It is also argued that narrative is one of the most basic cultural tools for social understanding. The use of narrative can also be understood as a form of thinking, or as the *narrative cognitive* as it has been referred to (Pfahl & Wiessner 2007).

For a cultural tool of understanding to be effective, it must be easily transmitted through social learning or communication, it must be stored in the memory of many different individuals, and, people must be able to use it to reason about the social world. Narrative fits these criteria exceptionally well, and narrative structures are ubiquitous features of social life and function as tools for social understanding (Balkin 1998). Narrative is easily picked up in social settings, it is more easily remembered than other ways of conveying information, and people seem to naturally use the narrative cognitive as a way to explain events and personal experiences. "We glean narrative structures from life; we impose narrative order on the world." (*Ibid.*: 188) Narrative simultaneously functions as "memory storage, a method of framing and organizing experience, a method for indexing and retrieving information, a method of internalizing cultural expectations, and a method of explaining deviations from social norms." (*Ibid.*: 189-190)

Narrative organizes the world into sequenced events, defines characters and explains their actions. There is a plot, and the setting of the events and the characters define each other: the plot situates and makes sense of the characters, actions, and events. The characters have reasons for what they do, and they have goals, and the narrative ascribes (either directly or indirectly) purposes, beliefs, and intentions to the characters. Equally noteworthy are the cultural expectations behind the story; they make a story comprehensible and allow people to draw inferences. But people can only do this because narrative implicitly draws on sets of cultural expectations people already possess. Stories provide a frame to understand what is happening and give meaning to events. People recognize patterns of behaviour as meaningful in terms of patterns that are already familiar—in fact, people create stories by drawing on stock cultural stories and the expected sequence of events. These expectations frame social understanding, but also make it possible to understand stories that deviate from the norm—new stories are created to explain them. "It allows us to learn by letting us match and reconfigure old expectations in light of new experiences." (Balkin 1998: 191) Thus, narrated cultural expectations, stored in the narrative cognitive, help people frame their social reality, and people use their narrative cognitive abilities to understand events, shaping what they believe is happening, and thus defining their narrative identity and what is socially real. Narrative provides structure for social expectations, which are embedded and then connected to larger networks of social expectations. The purpose of exercising the narrative cognitive in the learning environment, then, is the uncovering of the implicit social expectations in order to fill in the blanks in a person's personal story—and then to re-story it again and again. This process supports adult learners in integrating new views, perspectives, and dimensions of identity into their lives. Learning is reinforced through the integration of the new perspectives, views, personal dimensions into one's personal understanding, and through building them directly into a person's personal stories, and then again through sharing those stories with others. The learning process is further reinforced in that the social group with whom one shares the stories also serves to confirm and further build those stories collectively.

Narrative, as the practice of exercising a person's narrative cognitive abilities, is actually a contemplative practice. Mindful transformation is about intellectual lineage, transmission of perspectives, personal and social connection, and illumination of new ideas and possible identities; narrative practice underscores each of these processes. Narrative can be employed as an orienteering exercise in learning settings, or a way for learners to encounter their own and others' developing stories. By engaging in narrative practices, both individually and collectively, people's views, social roles, behaviours and understandings can be affected by/through refracted personal narratives, or a co-scripting of new identities. The narrative cognitive is critical first-person engagement and learning.

The essence and the power of narrative are its necessarily collective form. In many ways, personal identity and social worlds can be conceptualized as related networks of story characters engaging in shifting social scripts, or individual and social change. People cannot re-script in solitude, as identities are not instantiated in solitude, but rather socially. The exercises of mindfulness, compassionate communication, and articulating and sharing personal narratives naturally fit together in the adult learning environment, where adults become more reflective and mindful of themselves and their language use and personal storying in relationship. More purposefully engaging in these practices in a learning environment together (mindfulness, compassionate communication, and narrative exercises), can enhance the safety and reflective nature of the processes of learning for learning for transformation.

Many adults may feel as though they already know who they are, where they are going, what they are doing, and yet may be locked into personal fictions that they have constructed for themselves. Only when people are able to achieve presence in the moment and become aware of themselves and the narratives they are following, can they really begin to mindfully feel, live, learn, change and grow. Narrative practice, either individually as a form of contemplation or collectively in social and learning environments, provides a practical starting point for mindful transformative learning, through the present, conscious, self-observation of personal interiority and language use, and individually and collectively re-scripting internal and external storied discourse. Narrative practices can be employed as powerful pedagogical as well as powerful research tools.

Conclusion

First, as adult learners, we must acknowledge that learning for transformation has to be grounded in awareness. We must awaken to ourselves, to those with whom we interact, and to the social architecture within which we co-exist. Second, we need to move toward taking responsibility in our everyday language, and learn how our use of language either empowers or disempowers, both ourselves and those around us. In changing our habits of language, we ineludibly change our interactions with one another. And finally, when we realize that we are co-storying and re-scripting our collective experiences and identities together, and again, take responsibility for that storying and social scripting, we move toward an embodied philosophy of mindful transformation. We can build our awareness and learning in relationship through these basic practices, for ourselves and together for change.

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Education and Media Culture

Silvia Lucica

The educational system is required, today, as in any time of crises, to respond to the problems society is confronted with or shape the necessary human resources in maximum effective conditions. Knowledge concentration in some traditional privileged places, such as the university, has become too expensive, and the number of people that need instruction is continually growing. Concepts like “virtual classroom,” “virtual campus,” or “invisible universities” illustrate ways of doing things very often invoked and associated with “the end of the teacher’s era” (Lyotarde 1995) announced years ago.

Everything is associated with the emergence of media culture, of image culture by excellence that shapes everyday space, trying to resonate with social tendencies. Being organized based on a series production model, it distributes its results on individual channels at low prices and maximum speed, conquering through accessibility, imposing values and easy-to-follow models. School still remains primarily focused upon traditional culture, the printing culture that is closer to the specific rhythms of learning and formation of the human being. “The contemporary school crisis was born, among other things, out of the distortion between the inherent natural slowness of instruction and the technical acceleration of surrounding diffusions. […] There are periods that cannot be compressed within the professional formation hierarchy – learning, acquisition, fermentation, becoming mature, etc.; as well as in nature.” (Debray 2007: 246) Proximity to the imposed rhythms can be eased by the early development of new generations in an environment impregnated by media culture elements that have, as main propagation core, TV.

As Fidler remarked, the TV set becomes, for children, a permanent companion, “a baby-sitter and a teacher, replacing conversation, lecture and playing together with other children. For children, the joy of having fun is replaced by the joy and the expectation of being entertained.” (Fidler 2004: 102) The entire everyday ceremonial and cultural life is affected by the latest technological wonder. The image of the world offered in the first step is generally idealized because it avoids world social and domestic problems, starting with the cold war and communism and continuing with alcoholism, racism, drugs, and violence. Things change starting with news about J. F. Kennedy's assassination, the war in Vietnam and everything that followed.

The evolution of the next generations is marked by the early access to certain aspects of life that adults were able to censor through prints. The first observed effects were decreased parent authority and the reduced mirage of childhood.

TV programmes, news, entertainment and commercials still continue to represent a reality somewhat different from the one that we are all confronted with in everyday life. Lack of confidence appears, determining the viewers to look for new information sources and human relations offered by the new media that evolve spectacularly, captivating the entire population, but mostly youngsters. The number of personal computers increases and the connection with the printed book decreases, affecting reading and writing among pupils and students.

Huge expectations established for disseminating TV as a means of educating and illuminating are severely reduced because the new media culture does not constitute a simple transposition of traditional contents through technologies that gradually invade all spheres of social life, but it has its own functions and characteristics that do not take into account the human evolution rhythms or the uniqueness of the individual. Along with high and low costs access and unrestricted area of distribution, media culture assumes archetype design, uniformity, and expansion of market places that impose models of extended consumer behaviour of the same brands. In these conditions, specialists bear in mind "a project of developing media pedagogy." (Kellner 1995: 332)

Every media agent that aims for a larger public must remove differentiating elements and state things already known, despite the need for the sensational. The result is that such news leaves untouched mental structures without modifying in any way one's vision, one's way of understanding the world and its surroundings. The solution to this situation can be represented by media education that, among other aims, "also provides a different version or representation of the world." (Buckingham 2003: 4)

Regarding the actual TV's position of being a source of knowledge, we must also mention the fact that anything transmitted is selected according to the journalistic logic of the estimated impact over a medium mass of viewers and not based on key criteria, value or coherence.

The early stages of TV are characterized by Bourdieu as being pedagogical and paternalistic, due to educational aims declared, to the promotion of traditional values and to the sustained demand to the traditional culture acquisitions presented by outstanding exponents of each knowledge field. In time, trying to solve the bond between thinking and speed, TV involves "thinkers that think faster than their own shadow." (Bourdieu 2007: 43) These fast-thinkers are *specialized* in specific themes and get to become very proficient in these fields, while true researchers devoted to their work remain for a long time, if not for ever, completely unknown.

These leading thinkers that own privileged positions in order to express their positions publicly also have an unprecedented potential by becoming "conscience managers," imposing points of view and desirable attitudes concerning moral, civics, politics or literature problems. Their reflection efforts are not significant ones, as it is often noticed that they defend, depending on the conjuncture, "market values as well as traditional values, conformism and academism." (Bourdieu 2007: 75)

Opinions expressed by these people do not run counter to common sense, do not question key elements and do not overtax the superficial or negligent viewer, ready to be served understandable explanations that he/she could quickly and easily acquire. This is the exact way of proceeding for the populist spontaneity of the present stage TV. "The need for experts and spokes persons that daily produce opinions has become a part of the actual *Show Society*." (Lovink 2004: 9)

If, for the adult consumer, the problem of media is seen under these specific terms, for the one in formation, there are dramatic and serious aspects. Multidisciplinary studies undertaken, regarding the prolonged effect of screens upon children at different ages, signalize effects that should be taken into account by educational factors.

Research in this area distinguishes four types of cortical electric activity according to the prevalence of different frequency waves: *beta* waves are associated to the awakening state and even concentration: thinking, analyzing, decision making; *alpha* waves are present during the relaxation state; *theta* waves arise during meditation or moderate sleep state, and *delta* waves are associated to deep sleep.

One of the experiments initiated by Doctor Erich Peper, together with a group of specialists from the San Francisco University, on a group of children watching a favourite TV show that could produce an increased level of involvement has brought an alarming conclusion: "Almost all the time children were in the *alpha* state. This means that while watching TV they did not react, they did not orientate, they did not concentrate, they were dreamers." (Gheorghe 2005: 223) When a person concentrates visually or is oriented towards something, no matter what, and observes something, outside his/her surroundings, there is an increase of cerebral wave frequency and *alpha* waves disappear. So, instead of increasing someone's active attention, TV seems to suspend it.

The results of long term observations and experiments have concluded that watching TV at the ages of 2-5, 5-14, periods that are typically characterized by maximal cerebral development, causes an incomplete evolution of some of the neural areas deprived of certain categories of stimuli. In cases of extreme TV watching, beyond these age intervals, problems are only functional, thus recoverable. Loeys-Dietz (L.D.) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (A.D.H.D.) syndromes synthesize the main deficiencies induced to TV generation young children (Gheorghe 2005):

- The skill to ignore spoken messages and the inability to attentively follow an exposal;
- Attention decrease because of immediate memory problems;
- Inhibition of neural networks configuration, having a pivotal role in the reading process;
- Chaotic involuntary combination of images in the dream state in front of the screen that hinders the development of creative imagination;
- Excessive solicitation of the right cerebral hemisphere during TV preview drives to incomplete development of the left hemisphere that is the one responsible with sustaining the reasoning processes, the capacity of abstraction;
- Difficulties in using language, the presence of verbal tics, of jargon words, of excessive gesticulation, lack of coherence;
- Data provided by TV screens do not stimulate learning, being linked only to present attention and associated to relaxation;
- TV directly addresses the subconscious, influencing it in the way that the show accomplisher wants;
- During preview, corpus callous shuts down partially communication between the two hemispheres, affecting the capacity of problem solving or the development of sustained intellectual effort;
- Hyperactivity and petulance specific to A.D.H.D. are caused by affected prefrontal area where the cortex's executive centres are situated.

The extreme phenomenon of media consumerism is represented by addiction as in any other cases, similar to drugs and alcohol addiction; technology addiction is related to the relaxation state that it produces with varying intensity and duration. It has been ascertained that the watching of

TV programmes determines, in a short period of time, the separation from external conditions and relaxation, explained by the reduced beta waves frequency that accompanies thinking, analyzing and decision making processes and through the predominance of *alpha* waves. The prolonged state of relaxation during the day represents a choice factor for the appearance of addiction associated to passivism, separation and euphoria.

Facing these alarming signals lunched from more and more directions, the defenders of video technology use produce some arguments. To begin with, they cite the conflict that accompanies, at all times, new inventions (horse carriage, printing, telegraph, telephone, radio).

The next contention consists in the necessity of accepting the inevitable. The technological progress in industrial societies is an objective phenomenon, but we should not ignore the harmful effects.

Avoiding the conclusions of neurophysiology, researches upon the nervous system regarding the different solicitation of the two cerebral hemispheres' functions, media defenders maintain that there is no contradiction between word and vision but the synthesis of the two types in debate, the written one and the audiovisual one, is not but could become magical, only in social and psycho-pedagogical conditions that are fully prepared by expert factors in all the involved fields. So far, there have only been attempts of substitution whose results are far from being satisfactory.

Knowledge accessibility through images and its democratic character in relation to the elitism of culture through concepts is invoked.

The last mentioned aspect tries to limit the critics' viability only upon TV and not upon the entire media universe.

The virtual universe offers, at first sight, unlimited exploration possibilities outside any control mechanisms, but only specific zapping of intellectual tourism does not guarantee the formation of a systematic general or professional culture. The temptation towards the easy exchange of impressions and information through electronic communication must be balanced by the role of teachers and educators because "the hyper-modern screen will not reveal all of its potentials unless the unfailing participation of masters and sense leaders represented by the book culture and humanistic classic principles." (Lepovetsky 2008: 257)

Concomitantly with the passivism and the isolation to which screens predispose there can still be observed the provision of the desire to interact directly, to participate in collaborative manifestations, concerts, sports shows, karaoke, voluntary humanitarian activities, religious activities – all kinds of occasions to be together and to establish new contacts.

The young generation evolves in a contradictory environment, therefore, the dematerialised and de-corporalised culture (*Ibid.*) is overlapped by hedonist-sensitive quests (comfort, designing the living space, relaxation techniques, travels, landscaping, music, luxury, slow food). The general trend towards consumerism hedonism comes simultaneously with screen culture elements, the Internet facilitating the informational exchange through bogs that even focus upon refining life styles.

In the sixties an “audio-visual pedagogy” has been constituted, as a generalization of some Anglo-Saxon and North-American countries in which audio and video components were put together in order to enhance contents and to facilitate learning. In that way, the emergence of multimedia is prepared, first in the U.S.A., then in Canada during some educational and community communication programmes. Through multimedia, the optimization of the educational process due to complementary use of different sources and ways of communication is aimed at. Conquered by the possible benefits of ideal multimedia, at this first stage, researchers, pedagogues, psychologists, teachers that provide educational materials all want efficiency and profitableness in education through introducing the new communication instruments. At the same time, they wanted the school to meet the global tendencies of the industrialized and instrumental society. These tendencies turn out of the new terminology used like: “audiovisual techniques,” “educational technology,” “lecture techniques,” etc., all of them being related to the attempt of combining the use of more media than can ensure content and learning conditions, diversity in terms of the children’s interests and cognitive disposals. The Romanian phrase “tehnologie educaţională” is the translation of the English “educational technology.” Its wealth comes out of the fact that it designates some of the attempts to formalize the way of using the latest technologies and also some of the pedagogic theories (Moeglin 2003).

Through multimedia, the didactical methods ultimately tend to facilitate the shift from the educational service state to the self-service state. Although it would represent a hugely significant step before this process, it is confronted with some difficulties (*Ibid.*):

- The capacity of the final user to call to self-evaluation methods in order to achieve susceptible optimization areas at every stage;
- The possibility of discovering resources in the great range of multimedia devices that have already invaded the market;
- The maintenance of constant study motivation, beyond the simple present appeal for new, for sustaining a voluntary long term effort required by the self-formation process;

- The necessity of making information sources compatible and of constituting an accessible and coherent whole.

The main problems that have been signalled in using multimedia refer to the fact that the entire variety of discursive forms and manners to access the latest resources do not overlap linear facilitating ultimately better understanding, but they are based on underlying pedagogic models that can vary until they contradict themselves. This aspect does not only have significant theoretical consequences but also affects the immediate educational practice in which techniques must match.

Some of the conclusions regarding the use of the new media within the educational process refer to the following aspects:

- Passing from accessing more resources and pedagogical techniques within the process of formation to the cultural media consumerism is a tricky one. From a larger perspective, that has been created by the new technologies, some consumerist practices are structured, and they tend to simultaneously establish a “de-schooling” of the educational service that is doubled by a “pedagogical point of view” of the cultural industries.
- Adopting specific self-formation attitudes, the beneficiary client must combine resources, the traditional facilitator only transferring him a series of attributions because he focuses on the production of the content of some pedagogical media; the surveying processes in work division also becoming problematic.
- The most striking feature of the whole relation is the position of the formation user regarding the approach of the new resources because “in a vicious circle he is asked to already possess the competencies that he was suppose to achieve in the end.” (Moeglin 2003: 134)

Consequently, to this state of the art we think “self service” programme in education cannot hint at the formation phenomenon on its full development but it can only be feasible for certain stages of age after some individual learning techniques have been structured, some relatively stable interests for knowledge have been formatted and the motivation for work without which we cannot speak about an action of the student as an autonomous subject already functions. Even though “mass media and ministers dream about a school without teachers, a supermarket of sciences in which every student can serve him/herself directly, in which the computer’s visual would replace the text book” (Debray 2007: 381), it should not be forgotten that school's goal is to educate individuals as social subjects, this implying not only competences, but also conscience.

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DIDACTIC PERSPECTIVE OF GENDER STEREOTYPES IN THE ROMANIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Introduction

Contemporary society continues to be concerned about the inequalities between the two genders – male/female – in various spheres of social life, among them the environment and formal education. The problem turns out to be highly relevant both for the Romanian society, and for post-modern western societies, because the complexity of the subject allows a continuous restructuring of existing approaches, always synchronized with the changes manifested at macro-social level. One of the most recent investigations in this area has been made by Kimmel (in Iluţ 2006) in *The Gendered Society.* The author believes that a key factor that generates and consolidates differences and gender stereotypes is related to social institutions, among which school. It, thus, highlights the key role of educational institutions in the generation, restructuring and consolidation of social construction stereotypes in connection with the two social genders. It also highlighted the need to develop an approach based on consent and valorisation of diversity, including that of gender. In this context, investigating how the main actors of the educational field – teachers and learners – are aware of or clearly show gender stereotypes in their social interactions is an essential element of the analysis. This study aims to identify the representation of teachers on gender stereotypes and opinions regarding the form these can take the Romanian educational environment.

Methods

Current research focused on *identifying the main content of gender stereotypes (social gender) and related forms of discrimination in current*

Romanian education. The research tool is a 9-item questionnaire, which was used to investigate a sample of 216 subjects aged 30-59, teachers in schools from the Timiş County included in an in-service teacher training program: 16.7% of investigated subjects were males and 82.4% of females.

Results

The level of relevance of the results in connection with the objectives of the research required a selection of the most relevant items for this discussion and presentation. In this case, we started with the item focused on the association "feminine" and "masculine" with five specific attributes, in an order considered relevant by each respondent (Table 1-1).

Table 1-1. Attributes association with feminine and masculine

Feminine			Masculine	
Rank	Place		Rank	Place
2.2	II	Physical characteristics	1.8	III
2.5	I	Affective attributes	0.6	VII
2.0	III	Positive attitude towards life and work	2.1	I
0.1	VIII	Negative attitude towards life and work	0.7	VI
1.6	IV	Positive attitude towards self and others	1.7	IV
0.2	VII	Negative attitude towards self and others	1.8	II
1.0	V	Intelligence	1.2	V
0.4	VI	Intuition - creativity	0.2	VIII

In "feminine" features, most subjects (37.8%) ranked **affective attributes** first. Thus, in female persons, they assigned characteristics such as *sensibility*, *tenderness*, *need for affection*, *spiritual beauty*, *emotional wealth*, *empathy*, *gentleness*, *delicacy*, *emotion*, *love*, *romance*, *purity*. For male persons, **affective attributes** ranked almost last, i.e. 4.5%. The most significant attributes in the male gender are: *commitment*, *stability*, *insensibility*, *tenderness*, *coldness*, *moderate sensibility*, *detachment*, *cowardice*. In order of importance, **physical attributes** have obtained a high score in both genders (29.6% in male and 30.3% in female). In men, the most significant physical attributes were *strong*, *powerful*, *penchant* *for sports*, *strength*, *sturdiness*, *manhood*, *attractive*, *cool*, *virile*, *naturalness.* In women, the most significant **physical attributes** were: *beauty*, *delicacy*, *elegance*, *fragility*, *grace*, *coquetry*, *pedantry*, *sexiness*, *passion for colour*, *sensuality*. We can note, in this context, as expected, the important role of physical characteristics in the association of genders with features that distinguish the two genres. These results show a "*stereotypical traditional view*" of investigated teachers in connection with the two genres, especially concerning the aspects of emotional and physical spheres. Similar results – which may reveal even a "continuity" of the perception of the two roles in the opinion of Romanian teachers – were obtained in studies conducted under the aegis of UNICEF and the Institute of Education Sciences (2004) by a team of young researchers: physical and mental health is associated primarily with male persons, while kindness, sensibility and kindness are more specifically female. A significant number of participants in the research associated **attributes of positive attitude towards life and work** referring primarily to the male population (21.1%). Some of these attributes are: *courage*, *practical skills*, *will*, *judgment*, *sense of humour*, *adventuress*, *energy*, *entrepreneurial spirit*, *organizational adaptability*, *optimism*, *sobriety*, *quality management*, *leadership*, *resourceful*, *ability to earn money*, *exuberance*. Attributes of **positive attitude towards life and work** are found also in the female population, but in a smaller percentage (13.4%): *order*, *truth*, *diligence*, *perseverance*, *hard work*, *dexterity*, *honour*, *punctuality*, *flexibility*, *cautious*. A special place in the appreciation of the two genders is occupied by the attribute **intelligence**. On the **cognitive-rational dimension**, men are described with attributes from this category in almost double the percentage (12.6%) than women (7.5%). The perception of the subjects of the survey regarding intellectual abilities is clearly in favour of the male gender. They were seen as *intelligent*, *synthesis capacity*, *quickness*, *flexibility in thinking*, *concentration*, *clever*, *perspicacious*, *logical*, and *rational.* The 4th item, regarding the **assessment of learners** (comparatively girls/boys) by teachers on criteria such as consciousness, intelligence, creativity, competitiveness, communication skills, sensibility, discipline, and critically tolerance, has distinguished intriguing aspects, some of them supporting the data presented in the previous item. Thus, the characterization of genders in terms of intelligence reveals the same traditional stereotype image: boys are capable of higher intellectual performances compared to girls (Figure 1-1). Thus, schoolboys were appreciated by a percentage of 40.7% for the value "much" and schoolgirls by a higher percentage (52.8%) for the value "few." Schoolboys were assessed with high intelligence in a significantly higher percentage (13.4%) than schoolgirls (2.8%).

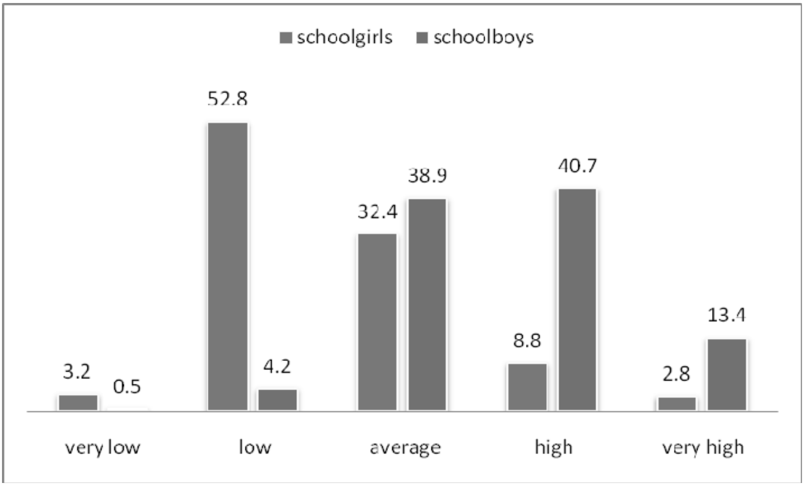

Figure 1-1. Characterization of girls/boys in terms of intelligence

The **communication skills** of schoolboys and schoolgirls have received high appreciation from the teachers. Communication is more appreciated in the case of schoolgirls, aspect, also present in the literature. Girls obtained higher percentage in case of the levels much and very much (39.4%, 26.4%) and boys for average (43.1%) (Table 1-2).

Table 1-2. Characterization of girls/boys in terms of the capacity of communication

	Very low	Low	Average	High	Very high	Did not respond
schoolgirls	1.9	5.1	24.5	**39.4**	**26.4**	2.8
schoolboys	1.9	17.6	**43.1**	23.6	12	1.9

Sensibility and **discipline** seem to be other two criteria that complement the profile of the stereotypical representations of gender. Investigated teachers considered **sensibility** as an attribute of girls. Schoolboys are valued as less sensible (25.9%), and at the opposite pole, schoolgirls are associated with a very high sensitivity (37.5%). Note that half the boys are praised to the average of sensibility. Boys were generally considered less disciplined (34.3%) than girls (31.9%). However, we note the half of boys is associated with a medium level of sensibility. Generally, boys were considered less well-disciplined (34.3%), and girls more disciplined (31.9%). We can see an almost equal appreciation for the medium value, in case of both genders 41.2% versus 34.7% (Figures 1-2 and 1-3).

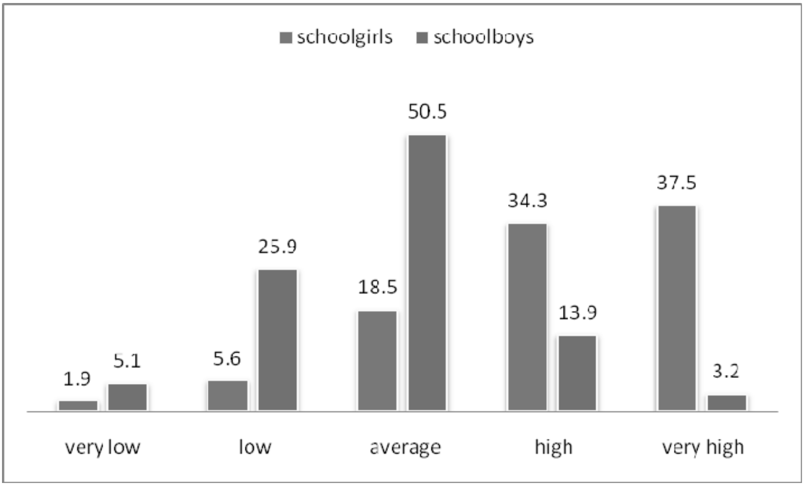

Figure 1-2. Characterization of girls/boys in terms of sensibility

Conclusions

The new elements appeared in this portrayal refer to the fact that girls were appreciated as being more competitive, more creative and with a more pronounced critical spirit than their peers: the "Feminine profile" of learners is drawn primarily by affective attributes, the second place being held by physical features, and the third one by positive attitudes towards work and life; the "Masculine profile" ranks on the first place men's positive attitudes towards work and life, followed by negative attitudes towards self and others; on the third place, rank physical attributes; the fact that respondents assigned intelligence to the male image can be an argument that supports the identification of traditional stereotypical representations of social gender, at the investigated teachers; the existence of a stereotypical images of schoolchildren – in the view of teachers participating in the study – is, also, supported by the assessments teachers made: **schoolgirls** appear as *much more conscientious than schoolboys*, with *better communication skills*, *much more sensible and disciplined*, but, also, *more tolerant.*

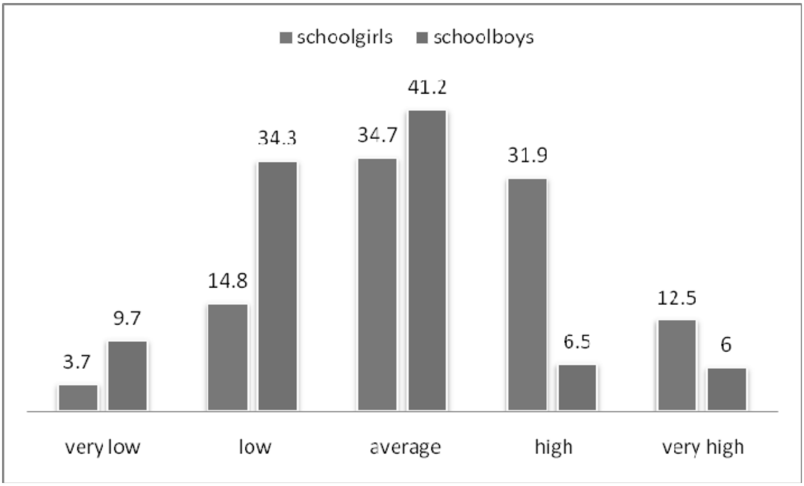

Figure 1-3. Characterization of these girls/boys in terms of discipline

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Incorporation, Authorization and Encouragement of Employees to Improve the Quality of the Educational Process

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Introduction

In the last 20 years, quite a few major socio-political, economic and cultural changes in the process of transition to a democratic system and market operation have occurred in our environment. Such changes are accompanied by changes in all segments of life, especially in the educational institutions. The new concept of quality requires constant changing of people's mind, attitude and working style in order to inspire something new. In order to allow the educational institutions to respond to changes, it is necessary for their internal change to allow them to function effectively in the new conditions. This refers to enabling the development of a new system values that will support the transformation of current behaviours and actions as well as to develop new paradigms in accordance with the requirements of the new conditions.

The Necessity of Teamwork in Building TQM Systems in Macedonian Educational Institutions

Teamwork can be a decisive factor in initiating the change of organizational culture. The introduction of teamwork in building TQM systems within the educational institutions is affiliated with emphasis on group learning (Smilevski 2000). The learning process is quite long and applies to all employees regarding their work. It takes at least 70% of the employees to control the way of achieving excellence in order to achieve the goal. The first step is gaining additional information followed by a change of attitude, change of the relationship of the individual with the surrounding environment as well as one of the team. Thus, it will result in a change of the attitude of the entire organization, which is also known as a *learning organization* (Senge *et al.* 1994). The application of TQM strategy means new construction of a legitimate documented quality system, which covers all business processes of the educational institution and is an essential foundation for successful implementation of SPC (Statistical Process Control) and effective teamwork that otherwise might not be found in case of poor quality system. In this manner, it ensures an effective control of top management positions consisted in the policy of quality and creates both favourable climate and informational basis upon which teamwork is developed. The development of team work requires patience and sustenance of long-term processes in order to obtain long-term results, while top management's desire for immediate results and forcing them suffocates the teamwork. All this leads to dissatisfaction among the team members who have conscientiously and responsibly accepted the responsibility (James 1996). The ability to work creatively thus giving professional contribution as well as respect for opinion and attitudes, sense of participation in the management of the educational institution, the common spirit to succeed – all these are elements of a company culture and teamwork that will contribute to the developing of mutual trust and respect, commitment, expansiveness, patience and loyalty to one another and loyalty towards the company, according to Druskat & Wolf (2001). The common fear of change and resistance are quickly overcome by a strong desire of changing the current situation by implementing a new approach to the quality education. This can be accomplished by applying the new philosophy of Total Quality Management (TQM) and implementation of the proposed methodology for building management teams in the Macedonian educational institutions.

Methodology for Building Management Teams for Designing and Implementing TQM systems within Macedonian Educational Institutions

The modern interpretation of the importance of the quality system for staff in order to achieve the objectives of the company is presented through coordination between the systems and the employees. The capability of the top management to unify, stimulate and coordinate the employees will depend on the ability and the managerial skills. Building management teams in solving problems are achieved through: incorporation, endorsement and encouragement of the employees in quality improvement;

achieving effective dialogue with the employees by constructing an effective communication system. When top management makes a decision to implement reengineering within the organization, the team approach in taking steps must be considered. It bears full responsibility for the execution of the reengineering business processes without having complete control over the employees who perform work because they become independent in their activities. The communication between the employer and employees should provide a new working environment in order to improve their performance in the business, and it will be accomplished only by a process of continuous learning. In addition, the employees must be trained and motivated to learn from the others, as well as to agree on updating their knowledge and experiences. Good communication between the employer and employees should require further understanding based on better mutual understanding; competency, which is accomplished by changes to better; involvement of the employees in problem solving, decision making and submission of improvements and innovations. The role of management has significant impact upon the workforce planning, which is based upon the policy and strategy of the institutions and presents a part of the strategic planning. In the process of building the managerial teams, the staff revisions should be developed in such way to display the staff's potential and its performance, but also to reveal the need of trained personnel of the organization. The hiring of new staff, the development of their career, and their active participation in the team work should be defined in a way to both enable and promote competence, creativity and participation in problem solving as well as decision making. A special task in the development of staff is coordination of both the individual and team objectives derived from the combining of the strategic and operational tasks with the personal goals of each employee. The team should not be a place of suffocation of the individual initiatives or where they are adopted on behalf of the leader of the team. At the same time, the method of operation must provide an easy flow of decision making due to the excessive individualism, exaggerated expectations, lack of flexibility, as well as achieving a consensus in building attitudes.

Incorporation, Authorization and Encouragement of the Employees to Improve the Quality of the Educational Process

The basic idea of use of the potential of the human resources presents a motivated involvement of the employees in creating solutions to problems and decision making (Ciampa 2005). This strategy relies upon the logic that all employees are familiar with the problems. Hence, new and wider development opportunities are created. The employees receive the best possible position of finding the solution or the decision for improvement, especially if they are carriers of the improvement process. When it comes to services, especially services with highly frequent repetitions, the employees are in a position to mention the judgment of quality from the users, which can provide an excellent basis for improvement or innovation.

The **incorporation** of the employees within the quality improvement presents a process where they are authorized or encouraged on behalf of the managers in order to solve problems and reach decisions relevant for their official position. This applies primarily to: problem solving and decision making for the realization of the operational activities within the scope of work, in accordance with established rules and procedures; reaching decisions and/or proposing improvements or innovations in the activities of the process that they carry or the performance results; participation in defining the strategy of the institution. Unlike the ruling institution confronting atmosphere where every idea is intentionally cut in the root, there is a need of management which is ruled by an innovational atmosphere of cooperation and communication, because even though every idea presents a potential for improvement or innovation it still generates new ideas. The methodology in building managerial teams for designing and implementation of TQM system includes the establishment of (Mitreva 2010): Quality Board; Process quality teams; Control (field) teams for quality; Quality workshops; Involvement of all employees.

The service or quality board is responsible for all aspects of the TQM strategy in an institution. The work of this committee will largely depend on the design and the implementation of the TQM system. This committee is formed by the manager of the institution with a special declaration. The structure of the board of managers includes managers from all organizational units by default. The structure of the board quality will present the meaning and importance of the quality of overall performance; provide a permanent link between the perpetrators and management; meet at least once a month to examine the effects of implementation. The responsibilities of the Board are: provision of strategic guidance; adoption of the plans for the implementation of the TQM strategy for each area; establishment and evaluation of procedural teams (process owners); evaluation and revision plans for quality improvement. The managerial board is led by management representatives for quality. The Board has a secretary who is in charge of the records, findings, decisions and obligations, as well as coordination of work between two meetings (Mitreva 2010). The tasks of the board are conducted through several steps:

- **Step 1:** The dynamics of organized plan for making the documents of the quality system;
- **Step 2:** Adoption of the plan under 1 and control of its implementation;
- **Step 3:** Adoption of documents of the system under Plan ;
- **Step 4:** Preparation of the plan for training the employees to implement the adopted documents of the quality system;
- **Step 5:** Adoption of the plan under 4 and control of its implementation;
- **Step 6:** Control of the process of testing the knowledge within the area covering the internal standardization documents;
- **Step 7:** Coordination and following of all the activities of the organization regarding the control and verification of internal standardization;
- **Step 8:** Control of the implementation of the corrective and the preventive measures that relate directly to activities under 7;
- **Step 9:** Organization of the procedure of certification of the quality system introduced by the authorized organization;
- **Step 10:** Influence over the design of the motivational system of the staff to implement the quality system;
- **Step 11:** Coordination of all activities and management of all tasks related to the overall design and implementation of the quality system;
- **Step 12:** If independent experts are hired, it should conduct the involvement of experts in process design and the implementation of quality system through joint team working, defining plans and activities, as well as monitoring of agreed realized activities.

The work of the board can come to barriers, crises and risks. The most common barriers that impair the functioning of the quality system are unrealized needs, bad decisions, vaguely defined roles, interpersonal conflicts, poor leadership, lack of feedback or information, inadequate system of remuneration, lack of trust within the team and not being prepared for changes. The core barrier is a psychological matter which can be linked to cooperation, work demotivation, vanity, and inadequate financial support, as well as lack of interest for continuous learning and improvement, or inadequate training program. These barriers are ubiquitous and require coordination through meetings where the employees are present in person. Furthermore, these meetings allow freedom of creation, establish group norms, and strengthen the sense of belonging, loyalty and promotion of team communication.

Process quality teams. These teams consist of employees who are part of the business process and have to plan the standard operating procedures (SOP) (Cepujnoska & Cepujnoski 1993). Through SOP, the rights and obligations of all employees are defined. The characteristics of these teams are as follows: mandatory attendance of the managers; ensuring top to bottom approach, which involves all of the employees; meeting at least once a month before the meetings of service quality.

Management teams of quality. The characteristics of these teams are as follows: election of the projects to improve quality; determination of the realms of the project; election of the members of the team and the leader; evaluation of the project quality progress.

The characteristics of the workshops of quality are as follows: selection of people with knowledge and skills; selection of employees who are elected directly to face the problem that needs to be solved; meet regularly under supervision; to identify, analyze and solve problems related to quality.

Involvement of all employees underlines: inclusion of a large number of employees; increase of motivation in order to improve the business processes; increase of awareness of the need to improve quality; improvement of the communication channels. Building such an organizational structure would provide participation of the staff as well as an opportunity of expressing their personal ideas, ability to communicate with others who have different aspects in regard of the proposed solutions. The top management must provide fast and competent evaluation as well as selection and implementation of the solutions in practice.

The necessity of Teams for Continuous Improvement and Innovation in Macedonian Educational Institutions

Satisfied employees tend to improve the service quality or to increase their efforts in order to raise it to a higher level. Hence, one of the key factors is the instrumental and the material equipment in the workplace, especially the informational and communicational links that present another factor of effectiveness and efficiency of the business processes. The collaboration within a reliable team is dependent on the interaction between the team members. The team will be able to provide both a credible and effective decision if it is well structured in regard of the personnel. What is highly required is cooperation with the Department of Personnel and Education in the selection of the associates for the team building, the profile of requirements and cooperation among themselves. The participation in such teams is not merely a tool for personal development, but also an opportunity to develop business processes and services. By comparing the results among the teams, we can assess both the productivity and the effectiveness of a team able to assess their awareness of the results. Top management teams are set upon specific issues depending on their nature and effects to be achieved. The teams are often formed in the following manner (Mitreva 2010):

Teams for improvement of a particular task after it was performed: it is a top management's responsibility to implement the project in order to improve the quality of the educational process; they have a multifunctional composition; they operate under the principle of virtual and/or project task; the management of these teams functions within the quality realm, apart from the function area which is to be improved.

Permanent teams to improve the quality of the educational process: it is a top management's task to follow and develop particular areas such as marketing, visual identity, SPC; they have a multifunctional composition; they work on the principles of physical and /or project task; the management of these teams functions within the quality realm, apart from the function area which is to be improved.

Promoters of quality: these are leading professionals of individual organizational units which are in charge of the quality promotion of the educational processes by applying documents to the quality system, the techniques, etc. within the institution; the promoters perform these activities apart from their regular duties, for which they are specifically stimulated.

Individual schemes proposing improvement and innovation: these are schemes by which each employee takes an initiative to suggest improvements and innovations; schemes of work in a modified PDCA cycle. The management improvements to perform the following functions are quality function for improving business processes; function of development for service innovation.

Teams for self-assessment are set by the top management and present continuous self-assessment teams that affect both results and areas for improvement.

Conclusion

The strategic management in educational institutions should include their own human resources by means of good will and persistence by forming teams from all professional profiles. Furthermore, by integrating their knowledge in order to achieve full control of quality in all business processes at the lowest cost of operation thus preventing possible complaints and eliminating the problems as well as removing the possible reasons which will be solved in a timely manner.

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MEDIATISATION AND POSTMODERNISM: IMPACT OF MEDIATISATION ON SOCIAL LIFE

ILEANA ROTARU

Introduction

While Foucault (1986) described the modern man as a constant self-creation, the concept of "mediatisation" has received a steady attention from modern sociologists. This paper considers the concept of "mediatisation" (Lang 2009) by placing it within the vast framework of the postmodern paradigm with the purpose of defining its dimensions in relation with the concept of "virtuality." (Turkle 1994)

Virtuality is one of the basic concepts carried in the post-modern paradigm due to the features it implies and to its forms of manifestation. Virtual space, communication and media technologies are marking points that can be found in the current debates regarding the specificity of society and culture. Also, the key elements that shape the post-modern paradigm are the effects or cultural forms of the new media, of the virtual space and communication through media technology. Among its main features one can number (Featherstone 1988: 203-205, Bauman 1988: 225-226): decrease of the borders between art and everyday life, collapse of the hierarchic distinction between high culture and mass culture, a vague style that favours the eclecticism and the mélange of colours, parody, irony, games and the celebration of surface, superficial culture, decline of creativity and artistic genius and the assertion of the repeating principle in art, deconstruction, lack of systematizing and proclamation of intertextuality of the hypertext (Lyotard 1984, Turkle 1994, 2005), pluralism of cultures and knowledge (Bauman 1988). The changes brought by the post-modern paradigm must be seen in relation to the new developments of the society (such as the impact of mediatisation and global restructuring of capitalism). In the same line of ideas, mediatisation is an element of modern society, tending towards globalization that presents changes of the cultural sphere, the forming of new types of audiences and publics.

The issue of media impact becomes critical in the absence of “media literacy,” of awareness of the reasons and hidden agendas of the mass media, of understanding of their specific persuasion mechanisms. Such knowledge and competencies are essential to young people so that they have the necessary reflexivity with respect to the media message which, through its inner structure, may bestow its modelling impact upon the human psychic.

Media influences, felt and admitted by the pupils, in the decisions they make in their life uniformly cover almost all the “target” domains of the media discourse, especially publicity, oriented towards the stimulation of consumption of all kinds, and particularly that of cosmetics and clothing. Moreover, mass-media is relevant not only due to its instrumental function (benefiting commercial interests) – which lies at the very heart of its reason of existence – but also, to a significant extent, through its socialization function, that of providing success standards, behaviour models (in the broadest senses), and suggestions regarding recreation, the choice of a particular professional course and personal development. The traditional purely informative function remains somewhat in the shadow of the others, making obsolete today the phrase “information means or media” as a synonym for mass-media. Media thus poignantly emerges as an informal educational agent at the macro social level, as behaviour shaper, supplier of values and “creator” of personal agendas, invading/”colonizing” all spheres of the social existence, from recreation to training and career, from family life to consumer behaviour, from ideas, beliefs and attitudes to fashion. All these influences – whose real scope inevitably escapes scrutiny – manifest themselves even more violently in the case of children and teenagers, whose plasticity and “hunger” for landmarks and identity role models are at their maximum.

Design: Perception of Mediatisation

This paper represents an empirical approach of the debate that takes place at the crossroads of communication studies and education, in a Romanian case study. We have used as a research instrument the Mixed Standard Evaluation Scale (MSS) on evaluating teachers’ media competence. We have used Blanz & Ghiselli (1972) methodology and also its enhancement by Saal (1979) in the establishment of our own scale. As a scientific research instrument, the scale for the evaluation of the media competence of the teachers in the undergraduate education system was elaborated following the model of the MSS, as a scale of behavioural anchors. The MSS model, used experimentally for the first time in Finland, was methodologically described in a scientific Romanian research by Pitariu (1994). In this research, MSS is applied on a random sample of subjects from high schools in different counties of Western Romania (Caraş-Severin, Hunedoara, and Timiş). For each step of MSS, the sample varied. The schools' managerial teams performed the evaluation on their teachers as a way to involve them in defining the school's needs in training and career development.

From a methodological viewpoint, we considered the choice of the type of research tools and their proper use in accordance with research goals. The scale supposes the definition of specific dimensions along three levels of competences; thus, the evaluator frames the subject along each level by taking notes in the margin of statements (descriptive item) of an index superior/inferior to the behaviour manner described for the assessed person. The behavioural descriptions are randomly "mixed" in a chart that the evaluator must use in his assessments. The superiority of MSS resides in the reduction of the indulgence effect as the evaluator will respond to all three description statements of a dimension, unlike the standard scale using only the appreciation of a single detailed statement. This feature will also contribute to the increase of the MSS reliability by connecting the three assessments with each dimension of the competence. The elaboration of the scale supposes a series of 5 stages, resulting in the behavioural description specific to a profession; in this case, the description of the media and communication competence, the stages specific to the MSS methodology are: Stage I – The stage of personal discussions; Stage II – Generation of behavioural examples; Stage III – Retroversion of behavioural examples; Stage IV – Scaling of examples – Grading; Stage V – Elaboration of the final form of the evaluation chart.

According to the MSS methodology, to each stage corresponds another number of teachers from different regions. Thus, Stage I took place in the Caraş-Severin County and involved a random sample of 10-30 teachers from different schools. For Stage II, based on the individual discussions (the questions grid), one would choose another representative sample (10-30 teachers) from the Hunedoara County, for generating behavioural examples. Three behaviours were generated (superior, medium and inferior) for each dimension identified in the previous stage. At Stage III, a different sample of teachers from the Timiş County was used. The sample also comprised teachers (between 10 and 30) from different schools to whom one would apply a questionnaire for the retroversion of the behavioural examples. A certain number of dimensions (over 80% reallocation) and behavioural examples were selected (reallocation over 60%). Stage IV was accomplished in the Caraş-Severin County on trial comprising school inspectors ("experts") who scaled the behavioural examples. The scaling methodology imposed, at this stage, the use of subjects with assessment experience, and that is why school inspectors were considered (30 in total). Following this stage and the calculation of the standard deviation, the final form of the assessment chart was elaborated (Stage V). The chart for the evaluation of the media competence was applied in all three counties. The analysis was performed by the managerial school team: the principal, the assistant principal and the teacher responsible with continuing education. Each evaluator analysed a number of 10 teachers from the same school. In determining the active or passive mediatisation' dimensions, the study was performed by the independent evaluation of 7 dimensions based on the correlation between the statement pointed out in the evaluation sheet and the actual teacher behaviour.

Conclusion and Further Discussions

School pupils and students should benefit from criteria meant to help them assess by themselves information, messages, and products of media culture. Media does not use innocent representations, but efficient vehicles, in a plethora of cultural goods and services. Only the identification of the domination/resistance ambivalence in and through mass-media can let us understand society and make us act in an emancipating direction. We may not invoke the alleged innate resistance of the public, especially of the young one, as long as mass-media have become a dominant factor of producing dominant forms of culture (Kellner 1995/2001). It is necessary to achieve a contextual and critical perception of mass-media messages, which cannot be built in the absence of an open educational communication. In the context of mass-media penetration into school, the question occurs regarding the "postulate of the pupil's autonomy"; the pupil, who is also a user of mass-media in the educational sense, needs a genuine autonomy, a real identity – both intellectual and socio-affective (Table 3-1).

Considering the circumstances of the communication society, of mediatisation and the rise of the extent of media and information consumption, we expect that the chart for the analysis of media competence should be of paramount importance, and it represents an element of originality for the research. This chart may be improved with new dimensions or updated through modifications of behavioural examples by means of using the evaluation chart for students' perception; one may outline a teacher's portrait based on the profile outlined by the

Table 3-1. Teachers' perception of mediatisation

Dimension	Description
1.A. Openness	Capacities of showing interest for the new and of being open to change; interest for scientific, social and professional development.
2.B. Communication	Teacher's capacity to send and receive messages in good conditions as a good orator based on an efficient feedback, on his/her capacity to ensure an active listening, to show empathy towards students (by decoding their subliminal and nonverbal messages); the capacity to manage conflict situation and operate efficiently in all communication spaces (Face to Face – FtF- or mediated).
3.C. Technicality	Active and efficient use of media and new technologies of information and communication (NTIC); their correlated use with the scientific and didactic content.
4.D. Integrity	Constant concern for the use and adaptation of the media content as didactic material; for the use of media in the learning process and also for the provision with the necessary criteria to select the useful information according to pupils' individual needs in order to obtain a better learning and understanding (applying the media to educational demands).
5.E. Tolerance	Concern to promote true values, respect for the other and ethnic and cultural diversity.
6.F. Creativity	Capacity to identify adequate solutions to various class events and circumstances; to adapt the media content using teaching strategies shaped to pupils' needs and particularities.
7.G. Management	Efficient and active management of the media content; pupils' training to use, search and evaluate the media content; the proper and active use of NTIC.

dimensions of the media competence, portrait achieved by the colleagues from school. Consequently, the influence of school, of formal education, should go beyond school's fences into the family and community life by giving the adequate answers to children training and learning in the media communicational society context (Rotaru 2010).

In conclusion, the educational system is subject to all these transformations and quantitative constraints (the increasing need of training, the increasing number of pupils and students, the technologies multiplication), as well as to qualitative ones (changing the knowledge need, changing the pedagogical general theory, unique and personalized training programs, underlining the principles of lifelong learning, etc.).

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A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES TO NATIVE AMERICAN/AMERICAN INDIAN LITERATURES

KELLY SASSI

Introduction

This paper aims to review the literature on the teaching of Native American/American Indian literatures. Because reviews can be perceived as "gatekeeping, policing and productive rather than merely mirroring" (Lather 1999), it is important to approach such a review with a critical awareness of one's own position[1] and the potential to intellectually recolonise American Indians. The term used in the first sentence – Native American/American Indian literatures – signals an understanding that there is dissension in some North American indigenous communities about which descriptor is appropriate to use, while adding a plural to the word "literature," acknowledges that Natives (a word I will use for the sake of brevity in this review) are not one monolithic group; there are multiple literatures, just as there were hundreds of distinct cultures and language groups when Europeans arrived on the North American continent (*Native American* 2012). Despite this rhetorical move, research involving Native people remains fraught with potential missteps, re-stereotyping, or even oppression. One reason to persist in such a review despite the racial and political challenges is social justice. Despite widespread knowledge of the achievement gap between Native students and White students in the United States, the gap persists (*Centre for Education Policy* 2012). One of strategies for increasing the success of Native students is to include elements of their culture in the curriculum, such as oral narratives, stories, and literary works, according to proponents of culturally relevant pedagogy (Banks 2006, Nieto 2002). However, the majority White teaching force may lack the training needed to successfully teach these texts. This comprehensive review of literature seeks to bridge the "understanding gap" that non-Native teachers and students experience when reading Native texts.

Methods and Techniques

The most significant part of the methods used in a review is the selection of the analytical frame. Bridging the "understanding gap" is complicated by U.S. history and the concept of manifest destiny – the belief that Whites were destined to settle across the continent – as well as by genocide: the population of Native people was decimated by disease, war, and starvation. Therefore, the analytical frame used for this review draws from Native scholars who have advocated the centrality of Native people in any research on Native topics (Swisher 1996, Swisher & Tippeconnic 1999). When it comes to studying the teaching of Native literature, we must listen to Native scholars like Vizenor (Anishinaabe Indian) who asserts, "to impose archetypes on tribal remembrance and narratives is to sustain manifest manners[2] and the literature of dominance" (Vizenor 1994: 171). When Native literatures are brought into the classroom, educators should consider what systems of thought have authority in the way these works are discussed (Deloria 1994). Educators with a social justice vision may turn to pedagogical approaches like critical pedagogy to try to solve such ethical dilemmas. However, well-intentioned liberal educators taking a critical pedagogical approach may be disheartened to learn that Native theorists assert that even "critical pedagogies retain the deep structure of Western thought" (Grande 2004: 3) and are not considered libratory for Native people. In such a milieu, how can one avoid "cultural imperialism"? (*Ibid.*).

Shanley (2001: 46) asserts "learning to read 'real Indians' in American cultural art media requires a subtlety of mind, clarity of purpose, and a willingness to hear the 'silence of heard stories in translations'." However, Giovanni asserts, "listening is not as necessary in U.S. culture for white people as it is for nonwhites." (in Ratcliffe 2005: 21) Researchers should make visible that some people "read and listen from a different space, and to suggest that […] it is time we all learned to hear that difference." (Powell 2002: 398) So, as we review the literature on the teaching of Native literatures, let us listen especially closely to what Native teachers and scholars say about it. In the following section, the results of the review of pedagogical approaches are discussed.

Results and Discussion

A review of the literature led to my creation of the following pedagogical frame.

•*Pre-teaching phase:* - importance of cultural background knowledge; - attention to misconceptions about Native Americans; - acknowledgement of the breadth of the literature, issues of translation.
• *Active teaching phase:* - explanation of the literary conventions of Native American literatures; - pedagogical structures that reflect/complement Native American Literatures; - ongoing reflection by teacher and students; - continued attention to misconceptions about Native Americans.
• *Post-teaching/reflection phase:* - a rethinking of how we envision "American Literature"; - a return to issues generated in the pre-teaching phase.

Cultural background knowledge is clearly relevant when teaching Native literatures (Roemer 1994, Bruchac 1994), though teachers and scholars disagree about the kind and degree that is necessary. For Mclaughlin (1997), it is less important. He resists the use of Native American background because he and his students believe it would detract from their natural interest in the literature. In contrast, Laguna/Sioux Indian scholar Allen (1983) believes, "instructors should present these literatures as they were intended to appear to the primary audiences, so that the student or reader can enter into the universe in which the material belongs." "Spoonfeeding background information to students would be simple, and there are ample resources. However, to even begin to think about tribal perspectives, most students need to make major paradigm shifts" (Griffin & Hafen 2004). The "need for background knowledge is compelling" states Grobman (2000: 102), because "students must get beyond their stereotypes of Native people and idealized understanding of American 'settlement'."

This leads to the next part of the framework that teachers must attend to misconceptions about Native Americans prior to teaching the literature, and this includes stereotypes. The "noble savage," "squaw or princess," and "redskin" are just some of the stereotypes that need to be interrogated (Susag 1998). Allen (1983: xii) admonishes, "Critics and teachers must avoid the danger of taking a paternalistic attitude toward the materials and the people they reflect." To make matters more difficult, many of the texts themselves include stereotypes (Grant & Gillespie 1992). Bruce (2003: 54) explicitly positions herself socially and politically: "English teachers can address […] anti-Indian racism and the neglect and misrepresentation of American Indian cultures in most K-12 curricula through study of Native American oral traditions and literatures. Literatures and personal testimonies by Native Americans help illustrate important contributions made by Indian peoples and contradict negative stereotypes." The author advocates an activist approach to teaching: "we need to do more than simply include works by Indian authors, we need culturally responsive pedagogy, which helps us to examine the work's cultural roots and to construct anti-racist interpretations" (*Ibid.*). Unlike Hoeveler (1988: 20), who "let the literature speak for itself," Bruce (2003: 55) emphasizes the importance of teachers challenging "students' prior misconceptions and stereotypes of Indians before undertaking a course of study." This comprises the first step of Bruce's four-phase approach: (a) pre-reading research and deconstruction of stereotypes and bias, (b) reading and discussion, (c) presentation, and (d) storytelling. Bruce (2003: 59) reflects on the success of her approach: "As students tell their stories at the end of the unit, "they call our attention to the diverse ways humans formulate […] connections and help us reflect upon the various narrative genres and cultural backgrounds of each storyteller." A different approach is to create a climate in which the student can initiate cultural understanding rather than having it directed by the teacher (Purdy 1992).

Before introducing a work of Native literature, there needs to be an acknowledgement of the breadth of the literature and discussion about the issues of translation, if the work was originally published in the Native language. Stensland's (1973) *Literature by and about the American Indian: An Annotated Bibliography for Junior and Senior High School Students* helped raise awareness of the vast amount of published Native American literature. Citing the "veritable explosion" of literature by Native Americans since the publication of Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* in 1968, what is known as the Native American renaissance, Hoeveler (1988: 20) asserted that educators have a "substantial corpus to use in teaching contemporary Native American literature." However, the quality of that corpus is questionable. Bruchac (1994: 149) asserts, "From my own knowledge of certain Native American languages and some of the translations that have been foisted off as legitimate, I can assure you that I am not exaggerating the injustices that have been done."

In addition to translation issues, there is the issue of conventions for studying literature, which can be problematic when reading across cultures. Allen's *Studies in American Indian Literature* (1983) has the original emphasis on literary criticism of Native American literature, and it contains several possible lesson plans for teaching the literature. Rather than trying to make these plans fit into conventional methods of teaching literature, Allen incorporates some features from Native American culture, such as hoop dancing and talking circles. Hoeveler (1988: 21) recognizes the difficulty of preparing to teach Native literature: "Approaching the field in order to teach it can be a daunting prospect, simply because there is a wealth of fairly specialized material that is quite foreign to the average English teacher." To remedy this gap in background knowledge, Hoeveler recommends several texts, such as the anthology *The American Indian Speaks* because of the variety of contemporary poems, essays, and short stories, and feels the essays give "theoretical background on how Indian art differs from and must be evaluated by different criteria from white/Anglo art" (Hoeveler 1988: 20). Ruoff's (1993) analysis of the ways in which Native American literature can be read and taught differently than other literature is an especially important contribution to these ideas. Price (2003: 47) noted specific literature strategies among Alaska Natives: "[S]torytelling is a natural form of instruction used by elders to teach important life lessons and values, and I have learned that my students are much more engaged when I tell stories and give anecdotal examples rather than teach straightforward lessons."

Bruce (2003: 54) finds literature circles to be "an especially useful pedagogical tool" to achieve these goals. Through an analysis of the importance of the circle in Native American literature and culture, Bruce (*Ibid.*: 55) asserts, "Literature circles honour the cyclical and episodic nature of Indian stories. Literature circles help communities of readers weave together varying threads of interpretation through interaction and collaboration." Besides echoing the structure of the literature itself, the use of literature circles promotes other pedagogical goals in her classrooms, such as using a literacy model that is student-centred and constructivist. Bruce (*Ibid.*) also believes literature circles "reallocate power in the classroom" and "can promote social change and social justice." Price (2003: 47), prior to teaching Alaska Native literature, informed herself about the general types of pedagogy traditionally used in Yup'ik culture: "[W]atching the elders model traditional crafts and activities while interacting with and quietly correcting the students during Yup'ik studies classes has allowed me to see firsthand how the children are naturally instructed."

Such insights are more likely to happen when reflection is an intentional part of the pedagogy. Price (2003: 48), in describing three years of teaching in Tununak, Alaska, a remote village, acknowledged her role as a learner in the teaching of Native American literature: "I spent three years living here before attempting a unit on the portrayal of people of the North in literature." Hoeveler (1988: 24) reflects, "Teaching Native American Literature has been as much a positive growth experience for me as a teacher as I know it has been for my students. We are no longer trying to speak for the Native Americans, we are simply letting ourselves hear them."

This deep listening includes continued attention to misconceptions throughout a teaching unit. While recognizing that her students bring negative stereotypes about Indians to the course, Hoeveler (1988: 20) does not start with a "lecture that debunks these attitudes," she lets "the literature speak for itself." Within the 6-week unit, she includes multidisciplinary audiovisual materials, field trips, and guest lecturers on themes, such as Indian values, Manifest Destiny, and the Indian struggle for survival. Together, these sources indirectly counter the stereotypes her students bring to class. Price (2003: 46) activated some internal overrides of her own cultural reactions to the literature in order to privilege the traditional cultural interpretations: "As a teacher in Tununak, I have had to balance my desire to inspire inquisitive lifelong with my desire to respect and uphold Yup'ik cultural values." For example, when teaching the *Bird Girl and the Man Who Followed the Sun: An Athabaskan Indian Legend from Alaska* by Velma Wallis, Price (*Ibid.*) said she resisted the strict gender roles in the novel but "had to let go of [her] personal beliefs and expectations to honour those of [her] students."

For Goebel (2004: xi), teaching Native literature "offers an important counterpoint to the heroic mythmaking of secondary school history textbooks that all but ignore the role and plight of Native peoples. It calls into question the ways in which we [Americans] have constructed notions of race and nation and forces us to reexamine our values." This kind of deep listening and reflection is an important part of the framework. Teachers should not just rush on to the next book in the curriculum, but pause and return to the issues generated in the pre-teaching phase. *What misconceptions have been replaced by cultural understanding? If a "paradigm shift" occurred for students, what is different now in the way we think about the rest of American literature, as well as about American history? What questions still remain? Teachers should also return to the social justice aims – how did our Native American students do? Did this pedagogical approach contribute to their success?*

Conclusions and Recommendations

The pedagogical framework derived from this literature review seeks to promote greater understanding of effective Native pedagogy, insight into the particular challenges of teaching Native texts, and a re-visioning of what the project of culturally relevant pedagogy entails for Native texts and students. While insightful, most of this literature is about individual practitioners reflecting on their approaches or about scholars making theoretical recommendations. More empirical research needs to be done on how the use of such a framework affects teaching and learning.

Notes

1. A note on my own race and background: my great grandparents immigrated to the United States from Finland (maternal) and Norway (paternal) around the turn of the 20th century, and my Finnish great grandmother took advantage of the U.S. Homesteading Act to literally colonize 160 acres of land in North Dakota with her 13 children, land that had previously been populated by the Anishinaabe and Dakota Indians before they were moved onto reservations.
2. "Manifest manners are the course of dominance, the racialist notions and misnomers sustained in archives and lexicons as 'authentic' representations of *Indian* cultures. Manifest manners court the destinies of monotheism, cultural determinism, objectivism, and the structural conceits of savagism and civilization" (Vizenor 1994: vii).

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TEACHER TRAINING TEAMS AND THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL TRAINING SESSIONS: A CASE STUDY

MIHAELA TILINCĂ
AND VALENTINA MUREŞAN

Introduction

The aim of this research report is to bridge the gap between theories in applied linguistics and the practice of trainer training revealing how knowledge is created and how collaborative relationships are shaped. Insights into the process of planning a teacher training session are given, and the research concentrates on how the team of trainers works together and "talks together" – how the team roles and relationships between team members develop and are "re-written," how "new knowledge" is constructed through dialogue among the trainers and what the "verbal" interactions reveal about the team's conceptions about learning, training and teams. In this paper, we argue that linguistic analysis of teacher training dialogues can bring clarifications and add value to both areas of study (applied linguistics and teacher education and training).

Research Methodology

Data and Participants. The data for this small scale research are the e-mail exchanges between the four members of a team of teacher trainers as they develop a training session on the issue of "Web 2.0 in education" for teachers in western Romania. The e-mail messages under investigation now cover the discussions preparing the last of three training sessions conducted by the team around "Web 2.0 in education" (conversation that spans across 2 days in December 2011); the texts of the messages (1,550 words) can be labelled as "natural" occurring data (not initiated, nor recorded in view of the present research). We have to say, as well, that data to be analysed was recorded in Romanian and that for the purpose of this research report the quoted excerpts have been translated into English so as to be as faithful as possible to the original text. Several products of the planning dialogue (session plan) and the training session itself (photos, worksheets, cards) have been used (though not examined in all possible detail) as secondary data.

Context of the Research. The e-mail exchanges analysed are constructed around a 16-hour training weekend. The training “happened” within the larger context of a European Social Fund financed programme, “Blended Learning,” intended for teachers in the Banat Region, called “Blended Learning,” which covered 12 months. Every month included 16 hours of face-to-face training, 4 hours of mentoring sessions and 2 unconventional (non-classroom) events. The team of trainers for the 1st series consisted of four experienced trainers and a beginner trainer while for the 2nd series, two of the senior trainers have started trainer teams. The written exchange under investigation so happens between one experienced senior trainer (coded MI in the data), who had designed the course and had delivered it for the 1st set of teachers in partnership with V (a younger trainer with limited experience in teacher training). The other two members of the team (coded ME and T) had been participants within the 1st series and were invited to become trainers for the 2nd series. Thus, for the 2nd set of participants, the teacher trainers for this particular issue (Web 2.0 in education) were V, ME and T, while MI assumed the role of “resource” to be used if needed, but also that of a mentor trainer, who was invited to observe the training session and provide feedback, as well as lead/facilitate debriefing meetings.

Research Paradigm and Analytical Frames. For reading the data in the context of communication as social practice, we have applied several lenses: the grounded theory of Glaser & Strauss (1967), as well as CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis) and ethnographical content analysis (Barton & Hamilton 1998, Mason 2002). The concept of social practice is essential for a discourse view of language and a social view of literacy and *it can function as an interface between ethnographic and linguistic approaches to language*. The advantage of focusing upon practices is that they constitute a point of contact between conceptual structures and their mechanisms and the positive events. In addition, as seen below, the concept of social practices can be deconstructed into elements (operational in analysis). Fairclough (2003: 25) defines **social practices** as *articulations of different types of social elements associated with particular areas of social life.* The social elements (both discourse and non-discourse elements) indicated by Fairclough (*Ibid.*) and Van Leeuwen (1993: 204) as constituting social practices are: “**action and interaction**” (“activities” and "reactions" to participants or activities for van Leeuwen), "**social relations**," "**persons**" (including beliefs, attitudes, and histories), and the "**material world**" (appropriate "time" and "places" for van Leeuwen) as constituent elements. To those, Fairclough adds "**discourse**" and van Leeuwen "performance indicators" (ways in which activities should be performed), "**tools**" needed for the performance of practice, the "dress" prescribed for the practice and the "eligibility criteria" for the participants, places, tools or dress. To this framework for analysing the data and interpreting the findings, during the research we have added other dimensions, since we moved between two levels of interlocked practices. That is, on the one hand, we have looked at planning training and, on the other hand, we have looked at learning in training, two practices having the same categories: actors and relationships, actions/events, discourses, material world, texts/tools/products.

Findings

Actors and Relationships. The members of the trainer team are MI, ME, T and V and, although, for the training session in question, the stronger voices are those of ME and V, V is the coordinator, but ME initiates the exchange. In order to provide a holistic image of the kind of texts analysed, we give below the complete first message in the exchange:

> *Dear all*
> *Since there are only a couple of days till the last [Web 2.0] module and because, as far as I have learnt from T., it's only [the two of] us, I wonder whether we will meet or talk via mail?*
> *I've assumed the intro on Friday, and you V could take over the Excell; for Saturday I can present Prezzi and Real Player; we are still left with Sunday for which I think I'll leave the digital taxonomy to you and will deal with the closing bit.*
> *I still don't know whether we should keep the game on Saturday or not? Maybe we can find something else... I think that if we have people who already know how to work, to ask them to be tutors for the beginners (if there are many). [...]*
> *What do you think? T. I promise you to scan things for you, too. Waiting for suggestions from you.*
> *Have a nice evening, ME*

Regarding each member's participation in the pre-training stage, the e-mail exchange reflected that each of Belbin's roles (Belbin, Smith & Yates 2011) was occupied by someone and that one person assumes more than one role during this planning stage and during the training itself. ME and

V, whose responsibility for the actual training session is greater assume roles from all three categories (action-oriented, thought-oriented and people-oriented roles), while MI and T, who would not actually participate in the session, take on roles from the last 2 categories. Both MI and V assume roles from the analyst/monitor/evaluator series, but not the same one, MI would be a monitor, while V the analyst. According to business theories, in order for the team to achieve its best, a balance of key roles is needed – a coordinator/shaper as a leader, but not both, a workshop to come up with ideas, a monitor/evaluator to maintain clarity, and one or several team workers, implementers, resources, investigators or completers/finishers to help things happen. However, for a better understanding of this team's dynamics, we must emphasize the fact that the four team members have not undergone formal training in team efficiency, nor have they sat any test so as to identify their "team role profile," or their "affinity with [any particular] team role" (Belbin 2010: 46) and the assumption of each role was a spontaneous reaction relying on what was needed. Furthermore, each member's role within the group was not preassigned, so their participation and position within the team varied according to the situation and depended on the preferred roles on a/the team. It is also worth looking at the potential risk factors which could have affected the team's effort that we consider in retrospective since they were not identified as "problems" by the team members at the time of delivery. What might have caused an imbalance in the team is what we have identified as symbolic power, and there are several areas in which the team members might not have equal "power": status, expert knowledge/information, experience as trainers, experience in projects and personal features and skills (communication skills in particular). The analysed text shows that these threats did not become issues in this particular team; the control of the power differential among the members of the team was done through language and was supported by a discourse of "learning by doing" and "trial and error" complemented by constructive feedback and argumentative debriefing sessions.

Actions/Events. Given that we investigate here the practice of planning a training session (and the learning behind it), the actions we look at are primarily linguistic ones: moves and steps in the dialogue among trainers. The moves/steps are in direct connection with the different roles assumed by the team members. We have identified the following pattern of linguistic "action" in the conversation examined: input/idea put forward → call to endorse → validation + recommendation for changes → changes → (invitation to (re)validate) → decision. On the one hand, ME put forward the idea of using "Tapscott's recommendations" (A) referring to Don Tapscott's book *Grown Up Digital* (2009) (in the final part of the training weekend as a kind of concluding food for thought) and invited the other team members to ratify it. As can be noticed, the idea goes through a full validation circle: ME puts forward an idea for a project and invites to validate, then T validates, V validates and suggests changes, ME considers changes, V comes up with further suggestions for changes and ME re-invites to validate the changed idea. What is not visible here is the final step in decision-making, which can be traced in the training session plan, which V sends to ME and the latter validates it. There are, of course, additional elements to take into account at the level of dialogue such as each member's participation, the extent and amount of detail, or the response time. The more detailed participation plan in the conversation shows that ME initiated the e-mail exchange and the other team members responded in the following order: ME1 – T – MI – V1 – ME2 – V2 – ME3 – MI. The more active participation can be again justified by ME's and V's presence in the training session. In terms of extent, we can note that the longest message is V2 (436 words), in which each step of the training session is dealt with; this is a fairly detailed message with a draft of the session plan attached and the justification for both extent and amount of detail may lie in the roles of implementer and finisher assumed by V. Another factor which can be considered is the promptness of response, the quickest responses being ME3 and MI2. This may be a variable of three factors: the person's internet connectivity and the nature of mail notification favoured, the amount of time spent online and/or personal skills at the level of time and work management. As we have mentioned before, the researchers' interest was to see the mechanisms of co-producing "new knowledge" through dialogue within the team of trainers. So, what the researchers did was to take the most influential "themes" in the conversation (Tapscott's recommendations, acquiring competence, the good start on Friday) and to follow the moves and steps of dialogue, through the lenses of producing "new knowledge," and see how the team members coproduce this knowledge. The example above shows how each move adds/questions the previous move, and how new elements are invited and contributed by team.

Discourses: Politeness, Cooperation (Discourses around Learning). The authors use Fairclough's *discourse view of language* (Fairclough 2000, 2003) when they look at the interaction among the members of the team of trainers. The authors conclude that discourse refers to the whole process of social interaction of which text is a product; the process includes the text, the process of production (of which the text is a product) and the process of interpretation (for which the text is a resource).

Language and context are integrated: social phenomena are (in part) linguistic phenomena. The text the authors have analysed is produced by and it is a trace of the process in which the trainers work towards planning a "new and better" training weekend of the "Web 2.0 in education" module. The text functions within a context, the "social context" of producing the text – the text is produced and interpreted while planning training, but the training weekend and the actors are part of a larger context: they work within a EU funded project, in a school, with actors involved in schools in Western Romania. All these elements are implicit or explicit in the process of production of the text and the text (analysed dialogue) itself.

For the sake of this study, there were three questions referring to discourse construction, the first being **how TRAINING is constructed**. And data show that, in the analysed dialogue, training is about the trainees' needs; that proper training is seen as participative, and that training is about relationships, as in the extracts below:

> *Maybe we find something else… I was thinking that if we have **participants** who already know how to work to invite them to act as tutors (ME)*
> *...I believe that those recommendations have been appreciated by the **trainees**, and they would like to have them (T)*
> *...I would further process the Tapscott idea, that is, it would be in **their interest** to discover them rather than giving them things already 'chewed' on (V)*
> *...I believe **they haven't internalised** this idea and that's why they haven't thought of putting the resources together (T)*

The second question of interest for us was **how LEARNING in TRAINING is constructed**. The data reveal that learning needs to be reflective (see the difference between reflective and recognition made by Hasan 2006), where, in order to achieve reflective learning, there are some dimensions included: participate, reflect, analyse, relate critically to previous knowledge, recontextualise information and examine their own working context); learning needs to be situated (*vs*. autonomous), learning happens better through experiential cycle. Here, one can clearly see that discourse is a trace of practices and shapes practices, too.

Finally, we looked at **how TEACHING is constructed**. The trainers' discourse construct teaching as being about the student's future needs, as seen in the extracts below:

> *...for the final part I was thinking of giving them a postcard on which to write two things they plan to do with what they've learnt in this module, and after a month to send the postcards to them **to remember**. (ME)*

> *...to avoid dead moments I am going to give them drawings of all sort of kids on which they have to write two features of our students, from their everyday practice; then to present in front of the others and to post it on a wall or on a rope. This way, they will have in front of them for the rest of the training module the kids for whom we try to do something. (ME)*
> *...I have another film which could be a bonus, you tell me what you think, for the final part, and the message is that we prepare the students for their future, not for our past. (ME)*

Conclusion

We argue that the analysis of the dialogue within the team of trainers is not just a method to crosscheck the strategies of team work in practice, but it is an effective tool for reflective learning and for creating new knowledge and can serve as reference for improving team work strategies. As shown in the analysed text (planning conversation), the mechanisms of producing "new knowledge" are based on recontextualising the lessons learnt from previous training experiences, on a strong commitment of unlearning manifested by the trainers in dialogue (based on learners' feedback and observations of learners, based on such validating questions as *why this? why here? why in this manner?*) and an effective team effort for relearning together through dialogue (as shown above, idea is put forward, each team member processes it through her own experience, questions it, adds to it, finally validates it). Last but not least, "new knowledge" is produced due to the "co-operative" and "politeness" dimensions each team member observes and integrates in his/her moves (minimising the effort and cost for others and maximising their own effort and action, maximising cooperation, being empathic, being "modest" in their statements; on the other hand, all the moves are examples of clarity, relevance, honesty and "essentialised" information). Such a small qualitative research shows there are open linguistic arguments that show that "new knowledge" is produced through communication conscientiously constructed as polite, collaborative and empowering action. Finally, the authors showed that any case in which language is produced and discourse constructed brings important examples and arguments that add to theoretical principles. Complementary, this research shows that communication and language are essential elements in developing teacher training and learning while training.

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CHAPTER TWO

EARLY CHILDHOOD

DISCIPLINE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD AND VALORISATION OF THE MINUSCULE

LILIANA STAN

Introduction

Over the 20th century, everywhere in the world, there has been an undeniably visible manifestation of a major interest for the educational problems of all categories of persons, irrespective of the chronological level at which they are: children, youth, adults, or elderly. The before the pre-school interval (up to 2-3 and even 4 years old) has been consistently tackled in an analytical approach only over the last years, against the background of the rise of the new philosophy and practice of early education. Especially after the year 2000, the before pre-school age has attracted a large part of the investigative efforts of educators, psychiatrists, psychologists, paediatricians, social workers, etc. without abandoning Debesse's opinion about the fact that the period between 3 and 7 years is "the most characteristic of all childhood" (Debesse 1980: 174).

Circumscribed to the topics of intentionality sought in the education of early age children, this article tackles specifically the issue of their discipline, with a focus on the before pre-school period – a decisive period for the entire education and shaping of the individual. In fact, "specialists in child care generally agree that, except during the pre-birth period, which is particularly noteworthy, the first year in one's life is, generally, the most important. What is more, the first month in the first year is the most important, and successively, each month is less important than the previous one. *Why is that so?* Because the human being matures the fastest during the first month and then, with few exceptions, the rate of maturation diminishes gradually over the next ten up to fourteen years" (Glover*,* in Pelt 2002).

The main idea underlying the content of this article is that educational interventions on a certain person during his/her first years of life are automatically oriented by a set of final goals: socialisation, autonomisation, discipline, literacy, etc. The elements of this group, of which parents and educators are more or less aware, in different spatial and temporal contexts, gain variable values from which what derives is either their unique status, which is prioritized in the completed actions, or their recurrent nature of a common "thing." Although learning remains a constant feature of considerable interest, it is prioritised over certain well-determined contents, depending on the stage at which the person who is being educated is. *We think that disciplining, the steps taken to internalise discipline (that discipline which is desired to be "learnt" by children during the first years of their life) must be considered a prevailing goal for their education, since it is the premise for the reasonable actualisation of the other intentional dimensions established in the act of modelling human personality. To put it simpler, we argue that especially during the before pre-school age, the fundamental goal of education is the training of disciplined children, and that disciplining small children must be perceived as a recurring ultimate goal of education for the time frame of one's first years of life.*

Of course, such a statement reasserts one of the leitmotifs of traditional pedagogy (which has been recalled and made famous by Comenius in *Didactica Magna* – in the message of the adage *a school without discipline is like a mill without water,* by John Locke, Immanuel Kant, John Dewey, and so on). This poses the risk of making ineffective the analytic undertaking to which this paper is circumscribed. The idea of reconstructing something that has already been structured can become faded or annihilated by rediscussing the precise definition of discipline in general, of the discipline expected from an early-age child especially, and of disciplining, by considering early-age children who are younger than 2-4 years old.

Methods

Discipline is to be considered according to the following points of view: relationship between being disciplined and discipline, specific content of the discipline and discipline in early childhood, minuscular – context, value, and means of being disciplined. We shall design an ideational support by seeking answers to the following questions:

- *What is discipline, in general, and what does discipline expected from an early-age child consist of?*
- *What is disciplining, in a generic understanding, and what does disciplining an early-age child suppose?*
- *Does it make sense to talk about disciplining via the minuscule and what should be understood by it?*

Results

Considered primarily a question of school groups and a consequence of classroom management, the discipline of small-aged children has a message derived from the child's relationship with the abundance of everyday aspects of his/her life; the details, the small common aspects of life of the child and adults, the minuscular – these are the aspects that shape the disciplined behaviour and favours its existence.

What is discipline, in general, and what does the discipline expected from an early-age child consist of? The primary meaning, given by the dictionary, of the word *discipline* refers to the set of behaviour rules that must be adopted by a person, or to the entire set of requirements (where the latter are considered intrinsically compulsory) that are addressed to the members of a community. Discipline means the subjection of persons to the dispositions issued by the leadership agents of the group organization to which individuals belong (Marcu 2002). According to Immanuel Kant, discipline represents a crucial structural feature of instruction (together with culture, civilisation and morality) which, once internalised, allows the human being to make the difference between animal behaviours and human behaviour by refraining from primitive impulses and by adopting the laws of humanity: "a mistake in discipline can never be mended." The biggest mistake in someone's education occurs precisely when discipline, respectively disciplining, is neglected, during the first years of one's life. As one can see, the dictionary meaning of the word *discipline* showcases a clear content, namely "rules," but it does not specify the "object" or the standard against which the normativity invoked is instituted. If the goal is to identify the references of rules for the condition of early-age children, we can note that they have a double substance: the former is offered by their belonging to the family group and the latter comes from their relation with the universe of objects within their proximate domestic or natural environment. By accepting the true and total dependence of early-age children on the family that they belong to (mainly parents but also brothers and sisters), then we obtain the conclusion that the discipline of small children becomes a discipline of family life and a discipline of the integration of children in the material environment relative to residential circumstances. Parents and siblings mediate the **discovery of the generic human features** (speech, human reactions, including rules of how to relate to one's close persons in terms of values), while the material elements of the existential context stimulate the interest for the **knowledge of the non-human proximity of the small child, while at the same time assimilating the opportune ways to use them**.

What is disciplining, in generic terms, and what does it suppose in the case of the early-age child? Disciplining, within the same basic sphere of meanings, refers to the action of getting someone used to discipline or to order (Marcu 2002). Acquiring discipline "means to learn. [...] in disciplining, the highest objective is that, ultimately, the child should learn how to control his behaviour alone so that it should no longer need to be based on disciplining coming from others" (Kuzma 2003: 89). In Kant's axiological register, both for the isolated individual and the social person, to discipline means to control animal impulses; the endeavour must start "very early, because, unless one does so, man can change with difficulty later" (Kant 2002: 18). Children's level of intellectual development during the first years of their life transfers over to adults all the action paths peculiar to this endeavour: the institutions in which children are integrated during the first years of their life (family, nursery, kindergarten, day centres, etc.) and which become disciplining institutions, the living environment, the actions initiated conscientiously and, especially, life's non-programmed, informal episodes that are implacably connected to objects with which the infant has contact – and which are identified with disciplining modalities and instruments. Therefore, the responsibility of disciplining a child falls entirely on the adult in the child's immediate surroundings; if the mature person fails to understand his/her role, it is highly likely that the *child* would discipline the adult, of course, in a non-desirable sense. "The disciplining power" held by various agents and/or by the disciplining institutions that they represent does not "chain" forces in order to diminish or reduce them, argues Foucault. On the contrary, adult persons and institutional staff seek to correlate all forces involved, "so as to both make them increase and be able to use them" (Foucault 1997: 249). We should point out that this is true for those rules or limits agreed upon in the adults' universe at a given time and integrated (also) in the infant's life. Disciplining is particularly often understood as one person's "obedience" towards another person. From our point of view, we consider that this way of understanding makes sense fully *only* during the first years in a child's life just in the context of the exclusive responsibility that an adult has in disciplining children. Seen through the lenses of obedience, as Pelt (2002: 77) points out, disciplining recovers its older meaning, which is less known and rare, and which references the idea of *acting as someone's disciple*. Pelt brings into focus the meaning of *being someone's disciple*, as an existential way that presupposes, structurally, behavioural normativity. In the same register, the acceptation of the term *disciplining* becomes richer by acquiring the stipulation mentioned in the *International Webster Dictionary* where the word "discipline" is materialised in the action of “teaching others, instructing.” Thus, the meanings of the traditional Comenian pedagogy are easily invoked, which consider both relational disciplining (“a school without discipline is like a mill without water”), and the mental disciplining of reason. Howard Gardner writes about the “disciplined mind” in the sense of a mind in which ideas have a proper order, argument that reflects types, categories of issues made available to the educated with the support of educational disciplines (Gardner 2005).

Does it make sense to talk about disciplining via the minuscule and what should be understood by it? The materiality of the life framework which is characteristic of the residential environment of the child’s family (macro-materiality) is prolonged or completed by the materiality of the objects to which a child has access (micro-materiality). **Macro-materiality** consists of the immediate physical environment, as well as in the “farther” one which is less or not at all familiar to children and in which the experiences of the first years in a person’s life are structured (the house, the street, buildings of different functional purposes, etc. which are all situated in their proper natural environment). It is perceived by children both directly and indirectly, through the miniature substitutes created especially for children, i.e. *via* the minuscule. The adults of the 20th century have proved an impressively creative spirit in designing toys for all childhood stages. The toy industry brings the “big” world down to the scale of the minuscule in which the little child is insinuated. The minuscule recreates macro-materiality and becomes the indispensible tool for access to the world of infants. In parallel with the structuring of this piece of industrial production and/or manufacturing production, the consciousness of adults integrates the idea that shaping or modelling children’s personality in the absence of material support is difficult both within the family and especially in specialised institutions meant to ensure proper support for early-age growth, care and education. Some educational institutions for early-age children (Spectrum in USA, Suzuki in Japan, the Reggio Emilia approach in Italy, the experience of doing engravings in China in primary schools, and so on) have been acknowledged as valuable educational instances, recognised after reforming transformations that have capitalised on material resources in particular ways. With respect to the American experience of Spectrum, Gardner (2005: 112) highlighted the fact that the latter asserts “faith in the relevance of materials and technology, because children need to be given a set of objects to play with and the bigger their variety, the better it is.” **Micro-materiality** consists in the set of objects whose exact beneficiary is the small child; what we have in mind is the things that are necessary for infant care as well as other categories of products which are integrated in the process of educating infants (teaching materials). Infants' contact with objects constitutes the experience that mainly supplies information on their identity and the specific ways to use them. In addition, small children have the opportunity to note that things cannot always be used, that those who look after them do not accept certain ways of using them and that different ways of handling objects bring about different effects on their own person or those around them. Relating with objects from their living surroundings gives children limits, interdictions and rules. The skills and attitudes shaped in the universe of the material minuscule will then be transferred towards other reference systems, mainly to the system of interpersonal relations in the socio-human universe. The order of things, suggests Gardner (2005: 97), will extend to the order of the human group that the child belongs to: "the first lessons come from the environment, an environment that one enjoys due to its beauty. The next lessons come from the human factor, namely from people interested in the success of this activity." The effectiveness of disciplining children is thus proved during the first years of their life in their interaction with various objects that they discover via different senses, they "seize" through experience and integrate in situations lived solitarily and/or in the presence of other persons. Similar to Lips's research (1964), who was interested in discovering the "origin" of things, those who are in charge with the education of early-age children must engage in a careful investigation of the effects of everyday things, of the minuscule materiality (in its proper and symbolic reasoning) on human beings *via* the first contacts that the latter have with them. Such an undertaking is facilitated both by similar comprehensive analyses (for instance, the analysis of the effects of television, of the new mass-media on children, etc.), and by the reality of the general consumerism of the last decades. The latter holds small children in the captivity of the world of objects without horizon, makes them the latter's innocent prisoner, and in the long run (also) the victim of the temptation to acquire "at any behavioural price" the things, the minuscule – from which at a given time they will separate easily, quickly, without regrets, but with the renewed wish to have more and more other objects. In fact, any adult who is involved in raising children can easily remember that small children's revolts, angry outbursts, existential "catastrophes," i.e. their expressions of indiscipline, finally (when we do not consider cases that are totally deprived of reasons or apparent causes) emerge from "something" material; on the other hand, they can also remember that the saving solution, which cures the same manifestations, can come from a "something" and/or "something else" that is material. In fact, the most visible and various occasions for difficult disciplining are circumscribed to the experience of shopping. For a small child, we consider that the minuscule found in macro-materiality, as well as in micro-materiality, holds full disciplining power *if* it is assimilated to a fundamental disciplining tool. The material minuscule thus enriches its functions in an individual's life; it is both an element that satisfies different needs, the positive and inherent support of the knowledge process, and its instrumental value in the difficult process of disciplining. In parallel with the appropriate relation to the material minuscule, adults activate a *minuscule set of (their) reactions to children' manifestations*. Foucault, Bailey, Campbell, Pelt and so on draw a list of the numerous modalities in the register of the alleged banal everyday manifestations: to ask, to thank, to offer affection (Campbell 2007), to encourage, to assign people positive intentions, to have positive intentions, to organise disciplining meetings, serene look, patience, calm, self-control, giving genuine care, how one talks, in general, a controlled tone and, especially, the verbalisation of affirmation and negation, etc. These manifestations compose a few notable examples in the analysis. Thus, in their pursuit of "new" ways to discipline infants, educators must rediscover the value of "small" things (Bailey 2011) that are "commonsensical"; they must re-signify traditional acquisitions, as well as salvage and reactivate the natural practices of education, in general, and of disciplining, in particular. Strategic thinking on education is grounded on the most recent discoveries of psychology, neurology, biology and anthropology, but at the same time, as Gardner (2005: 122) recommends, "we have to seek to harmonise these discoveries from science with the traditional teaching in ways that would serve those for whose education we are responsible." Obviously, by summing up these "small things," we indicate a "big result" – the adult's attitude and behaviour in his/her relationship with infants. In fact, Bailey (2011: 17) concludes, quite significantly, in a study dedicated to disciplining that "as parents change their attitude and behaviours, children will do the same too."

Conclusion

As clear the meanings invoked for the notions *discipline* and *disciplining* are, as hard it is to apply them as such in the case of minor age children, especially for the before pre-school interval. The discipline of early-age children has a substance that is derived from the child's interaction with the multitude of aspects of his/her everyday life; the details and the banal incidents in children's and adults' existence, the minuscule universe of objects and attitudes shape disciplined behaviour and creates the right conditions for its emergence. Disciplining is configured as an endeavour of the valorisation of the minuscule, an element that holds, in parallel, the responsibility of disciplining context and instrument. The persons who educate children during the first years of their life should become fully aware of the training valences of material resources from the perspective of disciplining an infant. The results of an updated analysis of discipline and disciplining of early-age children provide an appropriate content for the teaching staff training and parent counselling.

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USING REFLECTIVE SEMINAR AS A LEARNING METHOD

MONA VINTILĂ

Introduction

At national level, the new legislative framework in the field of child protection is defined by Law No. 272/2004; unfortunately, it does not have the status of a support legislation that could provide general principles to be followed by other specific laws. This law regulates the legal framework regarding the compliance, promotion and safeguarding of children's rights.

The term "wellbeing" is mentioned in this law in the section on family environment and alternative care, art. 30: "Parental rights and obligations exercising must consider the child's best interests and provide material and spiritual wellbeing of the child, especially through caring, maintaining personal relations with the child, ensuring growth, education and its maintenance, as well as legal representation and management of its assets." (*Legea nr. 272/2004*)

There is no legal definition of well-being or legislation/political documents on this topic in Romania. This does not mean that there is no focus on children's wellbeing. Though child well-being is not explicitly present in legislation, there are documents that provide normative in that direction.

In Romania, the responsible bodies and Levels of Responsibility for *Designing* Early Childhood Education Council (ECEC) Policies are: the Ministry of Labour, Family and Equal Opportunities – responsible for social protection aspects – and the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth – responsible for the educational aspects. Responsible Bodies and Levels of Responsibility for *Implementing* ECEC Policies are: the Labour and Social Protection Departments, which are responsible for social protection aspects, while County School Inspectorates are responsible for educational aspects.

Pre-primary Education (0-3 years) is part of the first level of school education, named early education, aside to preschool education (3-6 years). Early education providers can be private or public, but it is necessary to be accredited by the Education, Research, Youth and Sports Ministry in collaboration with the Health Ministry.

According to the new law, early childhood education is organised in kindergartens, crèches or day centres.

Early education is supported and sustained by the State as part of lifelong learning program. Although there is a significant number of schools and institutions organizing pre-primary education, both in urban and rural areas, it was extremely difficult to obtain the necessary information about them as we had to struggle with their high resistance.

Regarding the formal structure of crèches, it can be private or public. Public crèches receive about 20 children in a group that are taken care of by 2 persons: a teacher and a nurse, while the same number of persons handle 10 to 12 children by class in private units. These realities might affect the child's wellbeing.

The curriculum for early education is centred on children's physical, cognitive, emotional and social development and remediation of early development deficiencies. Multidisciplinary early intervention teams are designed by the County Resource and Educational Assistance Centre to assess all children, to monitor them, to detect children with special educational needs or at risk, and to give them proper assistance.

A variety of socioeconomic factors can have a significant negative impact on children's emotional development and chances of success at school. These include poverty, belonging to disadvantaged social classes, functional illiteracy and low levels of educational attainment of parents, and religious traditions associated with a cultural life where literacy is not highly regarded. Although low income or ethnic minority status alone may not be a decisive factor in development, it is the *combination* of factors that leads to serious consequences for child development. (EACEA 2009)

Most often, socially disadvantaged children are not explicitly identified and, therefore, there are no specifically designed programs for them. There are no programs designed that aim at identifying the socially disadvantaged children. The government would rather embrace the idea of putting them in classes with other children as part of the non-discrimination approach.

There are, however, educational units addressing only disadvantaged children. Those units offer programs that aim at the recovery of these children and provide support both them and their families. There are nurseries with special programs, targeting children with disabilities, where classes consist of about five children.

Pre-primary education can contribute importantly to countering educational disadvantages, if certain conditions are met. The most effective intervention programmes *involve intensive*, *early starting*, *child-focused*, *centre-based education together with strong parental involvement*, *parent education*, *programmed educational home activities and measures of family support.* Most researchers also agree that the training of staff responsible for educational activities in ECEC should be at the bachelor degree of higher education and should be specialized. (EACEA 2009)

Pre-primary education most evolve at three levels: economic, educational and social in order to provide comprehensive support in accordance with the needs of the toddlers.

Through pre-primary education, the wellbeing of the child is cared for at all levels: physical, psychological and social. In order to utilize the child's enormous potential of learning at this age, we need a multidisciplinary team consisting of educational counsellor, educators, social workers, psychologists, medical doctors, speech therapists (when needed) and even other professionals might be included.

Through pre-primary education, the family also takes care of the child: parents can go back to work, in the case of families with financial disadvantages the parents can be sure that their child has decent meals during the day. For the above to be functional, the working hours of the parents and the programme of the pre-primary facilities must overlap. The fees for the child should also be and indeed are covered by the state.

There are two kinds of approaches in this type of education:

- The child – a centred approach in which the focus is on the child and its development as a complete person through the guidance of the educators, while the emphasis is put on interaction.
- Teacher – a directed approach, where conservatory teaching methods based on direct instructions are used. The emphasis is put on academic skills and knowledge transmitted by teachers.

Combining care and education is the ideal solution for the child's complex development. In Romania, although there is special teacher training for primary school and a bachelor degree needed in order to teach at this level, at pre-primary level in some facilities emphasis is put on caretaking. The parents are happy to know that their child is taken care of for while they are working, that he/she gets food regularly and plays with other children. Personnel in some facilities consist of nurses or untrained personnel.

Another key-aspect is working together with the families. Both parties, educators and parents, must admit that they cannot succeed alone and that working together is the best chance they can provide to any child.

The children also need to strengthen relationships with other children, which is natural in some families, while in others children might be surrounded only by adults. At this age, they also need contact with peers in order to develop properly.

Methods

The idea and the carrying out of the reflexive workshop are part of one of the projects' work packages coordinated by Lene Busch Caroe and Andre Danielsen from the UC Sydanmark who proposed framework for the reflective session (*Towards Opportunities for Disadvantaged and Diverse Learners on the Early Childhood Roads*).

We aimed to observe the understanding and the importance given to wellbeing at this age group by those in training to become part of the multidisciplinary team involved in the caretaking of toddlers. The students are educated on topics like children development, educational sciences ore clinical aspects of childhood but are not highly qualified concerning toddlers and wellbeing.

The time-table was quite strict, the whole session lasted 2.5 hours, and we had a lot of 30 students. When the reflexive class started, the team was originally divided into groups of 5 students. The idea was presented, and the students' first task was to relate it to a given situation marking the relationship between theory and practice. That is, the student had to apply the concept to their own experience. Thus, each group came up with a case they believed exemplifies best what the concept is in practice. This result was used later as a basis for further discussions. This part lasted for 20 minutes.

After this stage, we had the first part of the reflexive seminar. This began with the students telling each other, and the instructors what they believe is relevant in relation to the chosen concept. Afterwards, the moderator identified common features from the presented situations. The next step was summarising, using effective ways of listening and by using different communication techniques as paraphrasing, mirroring patterns in the student's ways of understanding praxis. The aim was to broaden and deepen the understanding of the concept in relation to concrete practices. This part took about 45 minutes.

In the next phase, for about 20 minutes, the students gathered again in small groups and discussed the examples that the other groups had brought into consideration always relating these to their own situation.

The students debated whether and how the other cases had put the group's own situation into perspective, challenged or confirmed it. The purpose was to identify movements in the student's understanding of praxis.

After finishing this stage, students and facilitators gathered again. The facilitators introduced some new perspectives about the wellbeing in toddlers. These perspectives were a combination of theoretical knowledge using theoretical models, acknowledged definitions. The perspectives were used as tools in the process of putting the idea in discussion in the small groups once again for other 45 minutes.

The last part of the reflexive seminar was another round of reflections with the whole group.

Observation device consisted of both written observations and video recording of the seminar.

Results

The students were asked to translate the word **wellbeing** into Romanian – they found two highly similar terms, "stare de bine" and "bunăstare."

In the small groups, as a result of brainstorming starting from praxis, the following terms occurred related to wellbeing: welfare, harmonious relationships with the others, feeling good in your own body and mind, contentedness, confidence, spontaneity, safety, fulfilment of emotional needs, social recognition, feeling competent, health, vitality, healthy development and growth, spiritual values, energy, happiness, life satisfaction, children's wellbeing related to their parents.

Other concepts were balance, feeling comfortable, quality of life, need for tenderness, affection, feeling competent, trust, energy and happiness.

With regard to the wellbeing of the 0-3 year olds in accordance to the students' perception, we have:

- Health – physical, psychological – age appropriate care;
- Vitality – interest for different inputs, energy;
- Comfortable environment – free from violence and aggressiveness, healthy and clean environment, tenderness and safety;
- Healthy food – bio food, avoiding fat, preservatives and sugar;
- Good family environment – healthy parents (physically and psychologically), without aggressiveness, with education, balanced parental style, informed and involved parents;
- Mothers should always be present near their children, mainly during the first year of age;
- Education – early education activities with physical and cognitive stimulation; gradual accommodation with the crèche;

- Socialization – more adults should be involved in child care, education and communication; children should be formed not to be fearful and withdrawn, to communicate and play with peers.

Afterwards, the students had to develop a short definition of wellbeing. The ultimate aim was to come to the description "Children wellbeing refers to their needs and problems, to society and its impact on children, to families, governments, agencies/organizations and professionals. Wellbeing refers to what we do for children and how to make them better. Children's wellbeing is dependent on the interaction between them and their environment." (Stănescu 2006-2007)

The moderator, then, presented the definition of wellbeing, existing in the other countries involved in the TODDLER project.

We now give some examples of the student's reflective competences:

- "Wellbeing as a general concept meaning to feel good, to have energy and faith."
- "Related terms are full-potential, prosperity, welfare, life satisfaction, health and happiness."
- "Children's and adult's wellbeing are closely related, but there are certain particularities defining every age group."
- "For children, wellbeing means safety, group integration, educational performances, parental support and attention, encouragement and validation from parents, self-esteem, and encouragement of free expression, teachers support, performance, valuing recognition."

Conclusions

The purpose of applying reflexive workshop was double: practicing using everyday language, on the one hand, and developing an academic expose, on the other hand. The ideal way is to meet at midway and to be able to integrate theory with practice and develop real, applicable knowledge. This can be the most practical approach for the students. The practical background of the students involved was quite different so that they saw the task through different perspectives but at the same time they were easily able to discuss the topic. They were extraordinarily receptive to the idea of complexity and become truly interactive when different approaches were presented by the other subgroups. They argued and motivated their choices. In the teaching practice, it is quite common to work like this, so that they were not at all worried or confused, they felt confident. They did not see the workshop as a problem, but as a comparatively easy task to manage.

Although there is a strong academic conceptualization of the term wellbeing, in practice, in crèches, child wellbeing is limited to providing care and nutrition while the parents are working. In Romania, the persons employed in crèches to take care of the children are medical nurses and caregivers (women with average education who take care of children). There are no specially trained educators.

Being able to “go beyond the information” given “to figure things out” is one of the few untarnishable joys of life. One of the great triumphs of learning and teaching is to get things organized to see more than one “ought” to, which takes thought, brooding about what it is that you know (Bruner 1996: 129).

As Brookfield (1995) said, “we must distinguish between thinking in general and reflection it the latter is to have any meaning as a learning promoting process. Reflection is the particular kind of thinking where one explores whether and how things could be different.”

We, as educators, should ask ourselves a lot of questions, not to take assumptions without reflecting upon them and integrating them in knowledge and life. This ability to reflect has to be learned and practiced during the educational process.

For this to happen we always start from a certain term, than we relate to practical experience related to the analysed topic, thinking about the range of contexts when we might have to deal with that particular term, so we come to generalising experience, by comparing it to previous experiences or to those of others. We also have to make connections to the knowledge already existing about the topic, which requires time and access to these knowledge resources, and see how experience fits or not these pre-existing definitions. Using all these steps, we observed a considerable degree of homogeneity in the students’ answers. It also reveals their ability to go from simple to more complex and to be able to handle the differences in perspectives.

The moderator, teacher and trainer – any expert on a subject – should not jump to make fast statements and decisions, but let the others follow through the process of thinking, allowing them to develop.

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CHAPTER THREE

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

METACOGNITION AND LEARNING IN VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN

CLAUDIA BORCA

Introduction

This article relies on the premise that metacognition influences cognitive development and potential for adaptation and modification of the individual in relation to his own learning experience. If we refer to human learning as a result of the interaction between human beings and the environment, then we can talk about direct learning (appears when the subject, in this case the child is directly exposed to stimuli). On the other hand, we talk about indirect learning- mediated, when another person is interposed between the child and the environment in the learning process. Learning environment is an intentional learning based on the intervention of a mediator in the relationship between the body and the universe aiming to help subject to interpret stimuli and give them meaning. Mediation involves changing situation (stimulus and responses) by influencing such factors as intensity, context, frequency and order, while arousing vigilance, awareness and sensitivity of the individual. Interactional experience can be repeated or eliminate by various stimuli quality, networking event saturation time or space or experience with meaning. Reuven Feuerstein introduced the concept of mediated learning, as a result of his mediated learning experience which allowed children to be more responsive to direct interaction and benefit more from it. Mediation is a form of adult-child synergy that supports the development of attitudes and skills involved in self-regulation learning (Mentis & Dunn 1996). Feuerstein & Jensen (1980) believe that the ability to benefit from direct relationship with the stimuli become higher and also the mediation process is more efficient, when children are exposed to more mediated learning experiences.

Mediated Learning Experience requires the presence of 10 parameters: intentionality and reciprocity, mediation of meaning, transcendence, competence, self-regulation and control of behaviour, participation, individualization, planning goals, interesting challenges, mediation of auto change.

Preliminary Research

In 1997, a pilot study was conducted by us: the target group was made up of sixty visual impaired students between seven and eleven year old boys and girls – with IQ scores between 65 and 85. This research applies the formative diagnosis: pre-test, intervention, posttest, using the Stencil method. The prevailing results confirmed the hypothesis initially established: a high value of the transfer coefficient of the learning rhythm as a result of psychopedagogical achieved intervention. The M.L.E. influences the development of cognitive structures and the potential of adapting and modifying of the person, relating with his/her own experience in moments of direct learning, highlighting the scholar and extra scholar acquisitions (Borca 2007).

Research Sample

This study aims to highlight the awareness of 60 teachers from Romania working with visually impaired students, over the particularities of metacognitive skills training in school.

Method

The purpose of this study is to set out the characteristics of metacognitive processes in relation to the 10 parameters of mediated learning experience. For this objective, data collection demands to use a scale assessment of mediated learning experiences. Instrument developed by adapting assessment scale for mediated learning experience advanced by Mentis & Dunn (1996). The scale includes 10 dimensions operationalized by sets of actions and behaviours, of instructions and educational activities. The ten dimensions correspond to specific parameters of the learning environment: intentionality and reciprocity, mediation of meaning, transcendence, competence, self-regulation and control of behaviour, participation, individualization, planning purposes, causing interest, and mediation of auto change.

The working hypothesis of the research is that ***teachers of students with visual impairment develop their cognitive skills through the use of mediated learning criteria.***

Presenting Data, Processing, and Interpretation

Figures (3-1 to 3-5) and tables (3-1 to 3-8) below show the statistical processing of responses given by respondents to the questions included in the assessment scale. We present briefly the processing results, organized and grouped by the 10 parameters of Mediated Learning Experience.

Intentionality and Reciprocity

Table 3-1. Increase student interest and motivation

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	rarely	2	3.3	3.3	3.3
	often	19	31.7	31.7	35.0
	always	39	65.0	65.0	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Mediation of Sense

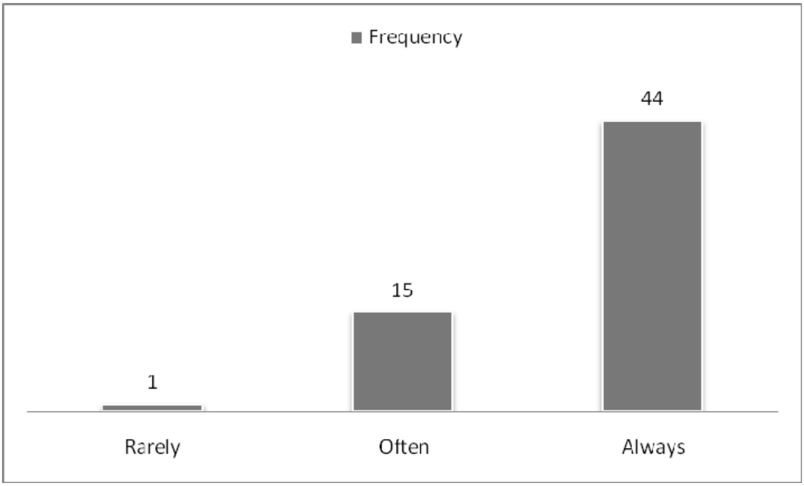

Figure 3-1. Explain the importance or value of the subject

Table 3-2. Ask process-related questions such as "how" and "why"

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	rarely	6	10.0	10.0	10.0
	often	21	35.0	35.0	45.0
	always	33	55.0	55.0	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Transcendence

Table 3-3. Explain a principle or concept going beyond reality

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	rarely	6	10.0	10.0	10.0
	often	29	48.3	48.3	58.3
	always	25	41.7	41.7	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 3-4. Explain how problem-solving can be used in different situations

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	sometimes	1	1.7	1.7	1.7
	rarely	7	11.7	11.7	13.3
	often	24	40.0	40.0	53.3
	always	28	46.7	46.7	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Competence

Table 3-5. Select and present material in an accessible level of development

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	rarely	6	10.0	10.0	10.0
	always	54	90.0	90.0	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 3-6. Encourage students to be aware of the progress they make against each standard

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	rarely	3	5.0	5.0	5.0
	often	25	41.7	41.7	46.7
	always	32	53.3	53.3	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Self-regulation and Behavioural Control

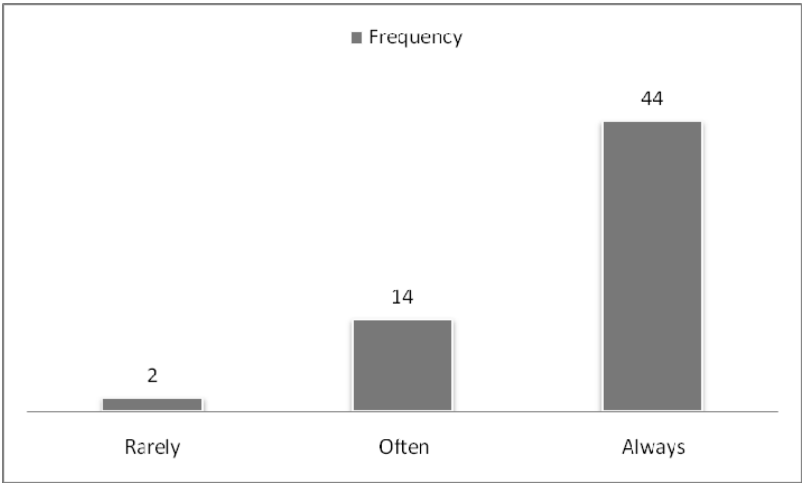

Figure 3-2. Encourage self-discipline

Participation

Table 3-7. Encourage students to help each other (encouraging tutoring)

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	rarely	1	1.7	1.7	1.7
	often	19	31.7	31.7	33.3
	always	40	66.7	66.7	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Individualization

Table 3-8. Allow students to choose a part of classroom activities and encourage diversity in the use of leisure time

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	rarely	14	23.3	23.3	23.3
	often	21	35.0	35.0	58.3
	always	25	41.7	41.7	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Planning Purposes

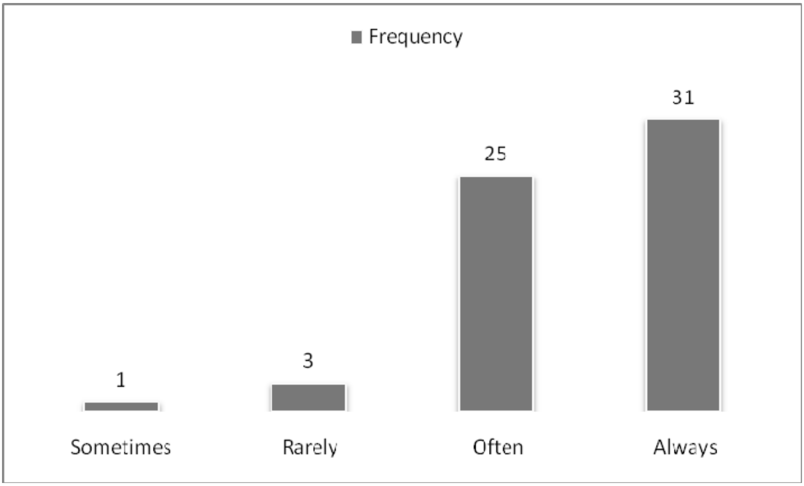

Figure 3-3. Develop in students the need and ability to formulate goals circumstances and needs change measure

Interesting Challenge

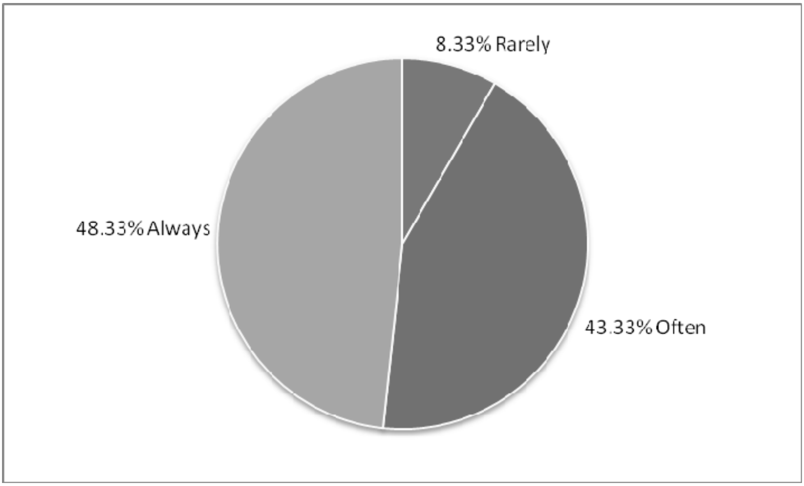

Figure 3-4. Help students to anticipate the pleasure of reaching an activity

Mediation of Auto Change

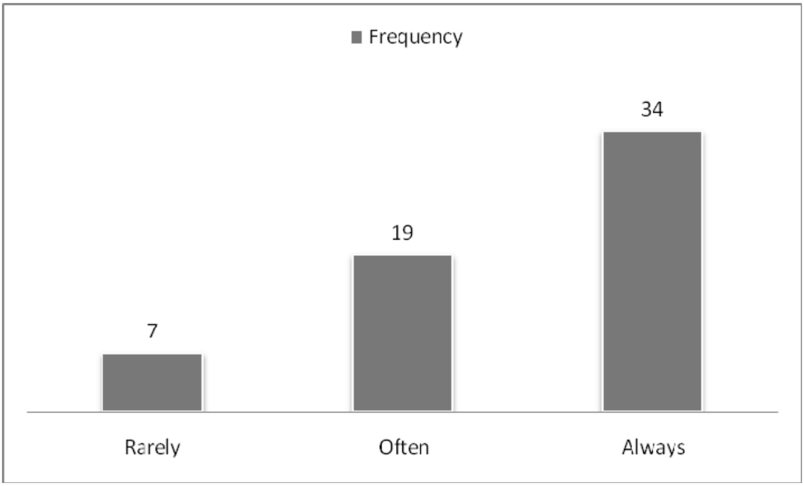

Figure 3-5. Promote self and individual progress

By analyzing graphs and tables above we can state that teachers enrich the student's cognitive and affective experience by relating the current situation with past events/situations, namely the design of new relationships between them.

Most teachers of visually impaired students communicate the meaning and purpose of their work, are interested, emotionally involved, and discuss the importance of the activity.

The majority of teachers aim to include in their students value system the need for understanding, reflective thinking and creating relationships between things.

Conclusion

Successful academic tasks in children with visual impairment requires connection between functions impaired, mentally and implementation phases act, metacognitive strategies, specific junction allows defining specific factors affecting the successful resolution of task, suggesting types of strategies for correcting them. In conclusion, cognitive skills may be developing by use of mediated learning criteria.

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CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT, ATTRIBUTIONAL STYLE AND SCIENCE ACHIEVEMENT IN EARLY ADOLESCENCE

LOREDANA-RUXANDRA GHERASIM
AND SIMONA BUTNARU

Introduction

Contemporary theories of learning endorse the idea that achievement is moderated by both individual and learning environment characteristics. Researchers found that both personal (Gherasim, Butnaru & Mairean 2012; Yee *et al*. 2003) and environmental characteristics (Oelsner, Lippold & Greenberg 2011, Wentzel *et al*. 2010) influence adolescents' achievement. In line with the ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 1998), the study explored how attributions and classroom environment interact in predicting the achievement in sciences during early adolescence.

Classroom Environment and Science Achievement

In this study, classroom environment refers to the teacher-student and student-student relationships. Previous studies indicated that the adolescents' academic achievement is related to the teachers' beliefs, attitudes, expectations and methods (Ahmed *et al*. 2010, Gherasim, Butnaru & Mairean 2012; Wentzel *et al*. 2010). A decreased level of perceived teacher support in middle school was correlated to low self-competence and academic engagement (Chen 2008, Patrick *et al*. 2008).

Early adolescence is described as a period of decline in perceived support from teachers and school performance, but an increase of social activities with peers (Oelsner *et al*. 2011). Classroom cooperation and peer interactions could provide instrumental aid for learning, shape the academic competencies, and determine positive outcomes only if the classmates adopt adult standards for achievement (Buhs, Ladd & Herald 2006, Wentzel, McNamara-Barry & Caldwell 2004). However, some studies highlighted the negative effects of peers' interactions during middle school. Thus, the expedient help-seeking from peers, such as copying answers from peers when children do not understand the work, is related to poor academic results (Ryan & Shin 2011). More research is needed to improve the role of perceived peer support in students' academic engagement and achievement.

Although classroom environment is a key determinant of adolescents' school performance, recent studies support the importance of the interactions between teacher and peer support with the personal characteristics of students in explaining the achievement (Ahmed *et al.* 2010, Wentzel *et al.* 2010).

Negative Attributional Style and Achievement

The attributional style is defined as a cognitive personality variable that reflects the usual way of explaining the causes of events (Abramson, Seligman & Teasdale 1978). People with a negative (or pessimistic) attributional style explain negative events with more internal, stable, and global causes. Empirical research on the helplessness theory validated the hypothesis that a negative attributional style increases the risk of depression and other helplessness deficits (Morris, Ciesla & Garber 2008, Gherasim *et al.* 2012).

More recently, the negative attributional style was shown to be a significant predictor of educational outcomes (see Au *et al.* 2009 for review). Specifically, students with a negative attributional style have a lower academic performance than those with positive attributional styles (Forsterling & Binser 2002, Martin-Krumm, Sarrazin & Peterson 2005, Gherasim *et al.* 2012). Conversely, other studies have reported that students with a negative attributional style obtained a higher academic performance (Yee *et al.* 2003).

Researchers invoked different explanations for these controversial results. Thus, prior performance (Yee *et al.* 2003), the subject area (Siegle *et al.* 2010) or the classroom environment (Ahmed *et al.* 2010) could interact with the attributional style, determining the performance. More research is needed to examine the relationship between attributional style and achievement in different age groups and educational contexts. The first goal of the study was to examine the direct effects of classroom environment and attributional style on early adolescents' achievement in science. The second goal was to investigate whether the effect of the negative attributional style on achievement was moderated by classroom environment, measured as a mentor and peer support.

Method

Participants

Two hundred and fifty eight-graders aged 12-15 were recruited for this study. The participants were enrolled in three public secondary schools comprising children from different socio-economic backgrounds within the same town. Prior to the adolescents' participation, consent statements were signed by parents and school authorities. Adolescents who provided incomplete data were excluded from analyses. The final sample consisted of 260 subjects (111 boys, 149 girls; M=13.19, SD=.57). Two hundred and sixty eight-graders aged between 12 and 15 participated in this study (111 boys, 149 girls; age M=13.19, SD=.57). The participants were enrolled in three public secondary schools from Iasi, which is the capital of a north-eastern county in Romania. The sample comprised children from different socio-economic backgrounds. The testing was voluntary, but prior to the students' participation, consent statements were signed by parents and school authorities.

Measures

The Children's Attributional Style Questionnaire – Revised (CASQ-R, Thompson *et al*. 1998) is a commonly used 24-item questionnaire, developed to assess children's causal explanations. Half of the items addressed positive events and half addressed negative events. In this study, we considered the attributional style only for negative events. In this sample, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .37, similar with those reported in other studies (Morris, Ciesla & Garber 2008). The higher the positive score, the more pessimistic the attributional style was.

To assess classroom environment, a 32-item version of *What Is Happening in this Class* (WIHIC, Aldridge & Fraser 2000) was used. Two scales measured peer support (Student Cohesiveness and Cooperation) and two scales assessed teacher support (Teacher Support and Equity). Each scale contained 8 items in a 5-point Likert response format (from 1 – almost never, to 5 – almost always). The factorial analysis confirmed the 4-factor structure of the original scale accounting for 44.25% of the total variance. A composite mean score was computed for each scale, and then a composite mean score was computed for each classroom environment element – teacher support (TeSup) and peer support (PeSup). Higher scores indicated higher levels of teacher and peer support, respectively.

Achievement in sciences. We collected the participants' grades for each of the four subjects (Maths, Physics, Chemistry and Biology) at the end of the second semester. The overall average grade across the four subjects was computed.

Procedure

Questionnaires assessing the negative attributional style (CASQ-R) and perceptions of classroom environment (WIHIC) were administered to all students during the first semester of the seventh grade. The grades were collected from the schools' registers 6-7 months later.

Results

Table 3-9 shows the descriptive statistics of the variables analysed. The achievement in sciences was positively correlated with peer support (PeSup), as well as with teacher help (TeSup) but was negatively related to the negative attributional style (NAS). The results revealed gender differences in achievement and TeSup, $t(258)=5.91$, 2.51, all $ps<.01$. Girls obtained better grades ($M=7.70$, $SD=1.45$) and a higher level of TeSup ($M=3.57$, $SD=.73$) compared to boys (Grades: $M=6.64$, $SD=1.40$; TeSup: $M=3.33$, $SD=.75$).

Table 3-9. Correlations, means and SD-s of analysed variables

	Mean	SD	1	2	3
NAS	3.77	1.91			
PeSup	3.60	.68	$-.14^{*}$		
TeSup	3.46	.75	$-.17^{**}$	$.54^{**}$	
Grades	7.25	1.55	$-.18^{**}$	$.23^{**}$	$.26^{**}$

Note: N=260; $^{**}p<.01$, $^{*}p<.05$, NAS – Negative Attributional Style; PeSup – Peer Support; TeSup – Teacher Support

We computed a series of multiple regression analyses to assess the extent to which the effect of attributional style in predicting grades was moderated by classroom environment. The NAS was introduced in the equation in Step 1; the TeSup and PeSup were introduced in the equation in Step 2, and the interactions between the NAS, TeSup and PeSup were introduced in Step 3.

Results in Table 3-10 show that NAS and TeSup were significant predictors of grades in sciences. The findings indicate that only the NAS x PeSup interaction was significant in predicting grades in sciences. The nature of this interaction is illustrated in Figure 3-6.

Table 3-10. Regression models predicting achievement in sciences using NAS, TeSup and PeSup

	B	SE	B	ΔR^2	R^2
Step 1					
NAS	-.27	.09	-.18**	.03**	.03**
Step 2					
PeSup	.17	.10	.11		
TeSup	.26	.10	.17*	.06**	.08**
Step 3					
NAS x PeSup	-.18	.09	-.13*		
NAS x TeSup	.03	.10	.01	.01	.09**

Note: N=260, $^{**}p<.01$, $^{*}p<.05$; NAS – Negative Attributional Style; PeSup – Peer Support; TeSup – Teacher Support

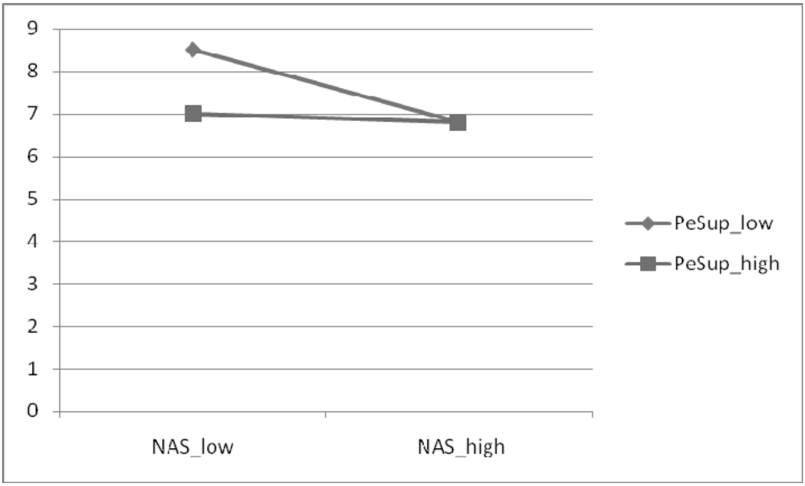

Figure 3-6. The Moderating Effect of PeSup on the Relationship between NAS and grades in sciences

Conclusion

The first goal of the study was to investigate the direct effects of classroom environment and attributional style on early adolescents' achievement in science. Findings suggest that attributional style and teacher support significantly predict achievement. Students who reported a less negative attributional style or a higher teacher support were more likely to report better grades in sciences. These findings are in concordance with previous research results which highlighted that the low level of negative attributional style (Forsterling & Binser 2002, Gherasim *et al*. 2012, Martin-Krumm *et al*. 2005) and a high teacher support (Ahmed *et al*. 2010, Wentzel *et al*. 2010) have a fostering effect on achievement. Although previous research showed that peer support is related to achievement (Buhs *et al*. 2006, Wentzel *et al*. 2004, Ryan & Shin 2011), in the study peer support did not predict achievement in sciences. These results are similar to previous research on Maths performance (Gherasim, Butnaru & Măirean 2012). The findings could be explained by the particularities of learning in sciences. The teacher has a critical role in developing students' abilities and skills because the topics require critical thinking, scientific experimentation, formulation and testing of hypothesis, etc. The role of colleagues, with whom students may initiate discussions, is less noticeable. Thus, friendships and cooperation within classroom did not foresee the achievement. The second goal of the study was to investigate the moderating effect of classroom environment in the relationship between negative attributional style and achievement. Results showed the moderating effect of peer support. Students with a low level of negative attributional style had the tendency to get better grades when they perceived a higher peer support. Students with a more negative attributional style obtained lower grades regardless of the level of peer support. These results suggest that peer support and attributional style could have cumulative effects: peer support determines better grades only when students have a less negative attributional style. Also, little peer support determines lower grades, regardless of the attributional style. Results have practical implications in education. Since attributional style was found to be a significant predictor of achievement, it is necessary for teachers to recognize that attributions play a pivotal role in students' success. Reminding learners that their failure could be caused by their attributions helps them understand that they may improve their performance through developing more positive attributional style. Teachers should also ensure that students are aware of the role peers play in learning situations. Consequently, teachers need to focus more on the emotional climate within the classroom in order to promote academic achievement.

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DYNAMICS OF CURRICULUM DESIGN OPTIONS: A CASE STUDY (PRIMARY SCHOOLS FROM THE CARAȘ-SEVERIN COUNTY, ROMANIA)

MARIAN ILIE, MARIUS-LUPȘA MATICHESCU, ALEXANDRA PETCU, GHEORGHE MANDA AND ADRIAN MARCU

Introduction

The present study shows the dynamics of curriculum design options in the Romanian primary school system. It presents teachers' options for the complementary curriculum use and the factors that affect the curriculum design options.

After December 1989, the Romanian educational system has been reformed several times (1994, 1997, 2005, and 2011) and each time the concept of the *curriculum* has had a key role. First educational reforms (1994, 1997) have created the premises and framework for dynamic curriculum designs meant to identify the teaching/educational approaches that best answer the pupils' individual needs. Thus, for the first time in Romania, we heard of concepts such as reference curricular framework for compulsory education, curricular area, time slot, expended core curriculum, electives, topic curriculum, etc. (Crișan 1998). Unfortunately, starting from absolute misunderstanding or incomplete understanding of the concept "curriculum" and, after establishing its definition (Potolea 2002), of the term "competence" (Negreț-Dobridor 2008), these concepts have not generated as good practices as expected. For example, electives have been used to protect teaching positions instead of being an answer to the actual demands and needs of pupils.

Curriculum design stands on four complementary pillars: topic of study (discipline matter), learners (pupils), educators (teachers) and environment (Schwas 1973). For a long time, the practice in curriculum design has stressed the importance of core curricular disciplines (Martin 1970) and the idea of a curriculum considering pupils' needs has been disregarded by the educators (Eliot & Macdonald, in Ben-Pertz 1980). Using a curriculum reflecting social issues (Pilder 1968) respectful of the local, government and general society values (Kirst & Walker 1971) also raised the need for educational programmes based on pupils' free, individual choice (Stretch 1970). Nowadays, it is clear that, for the curricula to be efficient, it should provide a differentiated approach of pupils based on data gathered scientifically (Bosma, Hessels & Resing 2012). With the differentiation of the educational/teaching process comes responsibility of teachers (Pameijer 2006, Pelco, Ward & Young 2009).

Teachers have a dual role in the curriculum development process: one, as curriculum developers, and other, as autonomous implementers of the curricula (Ben-Peretz 1980). Teachers' active role in curriculum development was initially denied, the expectation being that they just use curricula plans and materials (Shulman & Tamir 1973). With the understanding of their need to adjust curricula materials to real educational cases (Olson 1977) came the need for an investigation of factors that could affect the process:

- Teacher reluctance to change and innovation (Ben-Pertz 1980);
- Teacher autonomy in front of external curricular changes (Connelly 1972, 1975);
- Training of skills and habits needed for curriculum design (Connelly 1975);
- Development of curriculum analysis tools (Ben-Peretz 1975);
- Teachers' limited capacity to employ pedagogical knowledge (Fuller 1969, Haysom & Sutton 1974, Stenhouse 1975);
- Teacher tendency to avoid responsibility for curricular decisions (Simpkins & Friesen 1969, Olson & Kitto 1977);
- Teacher difficulty to approach education beyond its local boundaries (Taylor 1970, Walker 1971).

We expected these facets to determine the dynamics of curricular options inside the sample, leading to a secondary use of electives as curricular design options given that they require a greater curricular conception effort.

Methodology

The methods employed have been: literature review and questionnaire-based survey.

The literature considered was: the framework programme for primary education, the compulsory (core) curricula, the list of electives approved by County School Inspectorate, and the electives programme.

The questionnaire included both structured and unstructured questions aiming to highlight the specific motivation behind the choice of electives. The sample was made of primary school teachers. We chose the Caraș-Severin County (Romania) to carry out the survey. The County School Inspectorate distributed 500 questionnaires, but only 450 came back. Of the latter, 409 have been validated and constitute the basis for the present analysis. Questionnaires were unknown and self-completed by teachers who then returned them to the research team through DSI.

Data, Interpretations and Discussions

Data from the empirical research has been interpreted so it answers the following key questions:

- *To what extent are optional classes (elective disciplines) used?*
- *What is the dynamics of electives?*
- *What are the reasons for the identified curricular options?*
- *What are the most common difficulties encountered by teachers in addressing complementary curricula?*

Regarding the number of optional classes, we have discovered that the average is 1.32 h per week. Seeing that the Framework programme for Education estimates 1-3 hours in the 1st and 2nd grades and 1-4 hours in the 3rd-4th grades, an average of 1.32 highlights a limited use and capitalization of optional classes.

The research of how electives are used by each curricular area revealed a more frequent use of the time slots to deepen or broaden the compulsory core disciplines than to introduce new disciplines. Only in the curricular area *Counselling and Guidance* we can speak of exceptions since new materials input frequency exceeds the general approach pace.

Speaking of electives' distribution per Framework plan-curricular area, we noticed a greater use in *Language and Communication* (36.4%) and *Mathematics and Natural sciences* (27.4%). A medium use frequency was noticed in areas such as *Counselling and Guidance* (15.8%) and *Man and Society* (14.7%). The lowest frequency of use has been encountered in areas as *Technology* (4.6%) and *Arts* (4.2%), and their use in *Physical education and Sports* (0.2%) can be regarded as exceptionally low. The fact that *Language and Communication* or *Mathematics and Natural* *sciences* are top choices is not random. One possible explanation for such a hierarchy is the Romanian tradition in education that prioritizes these two curriculum areas, which have a mandatory character in secondary school and baccalaureate exams (Figure 3-7).

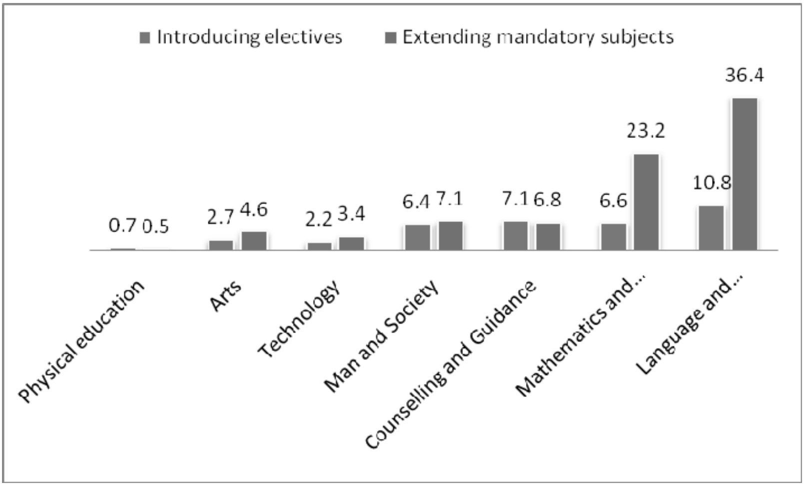

Figure 3-7. Electives' dynamics per curricular areas

This situation whereas the main choice is for a deeper and/or extended core curriculum occurs although 94.5% of the surveyed teachers say that complementary curriculum development is useful and helpful. We sought an explanation to this paradox in the motivational analysis of curricular choices and analysis of those difficulties that teachers have to deal with while making curricular choices.

As seen in Figure 3-8, the already crowded weekly schedule is the most common excuse. With a relatively similar frequency, the subjects have cited other reasons as favourite for the introduction of new topics to compulsory disciplines or difficulties in finding the necessary teaching materials and designing the study programme. Thus, the motivational profile fully explains the low proportion of electives.

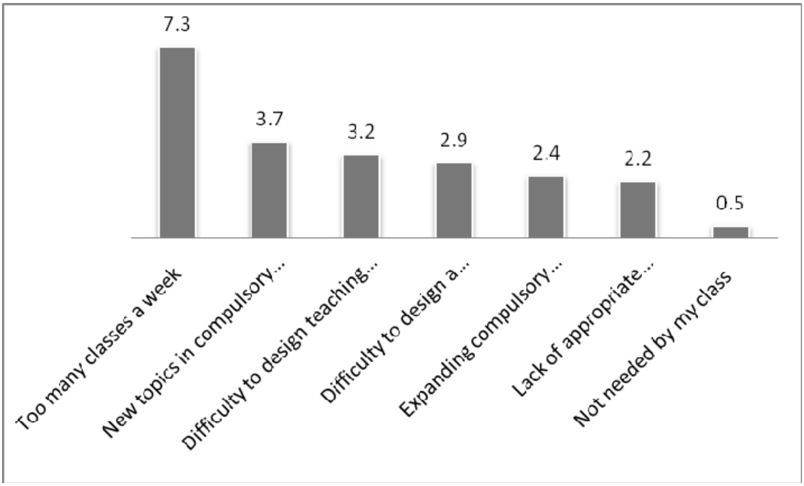

Figure 3-8. Motivational profile of the dynamic of curricular options

Another focus was on the topic of the newly introduced school disciplines. Health education, English or Children literature are the most frequently invoked new disciplines. The reasons behind the choice of an elective are: parent request (64.8%), child request (34.7%), related teaching programmes (17.8%) and teaching materials (17.6%) and, finally, the introduction of specific, local aspects (7.1%).

The difficulties most frequently encountered while developing teaching tools needed at the introduction of an elective are: difficulty to find/develop appropriate teaching tools (35.5%) and difficulty to start a new teaching programme (31.8%). Their existence can be attributed to teachers' lack of adequate training in curriculum design (Figure 3-9).

This study's main limitation is the territorial coverage being that we have been covering only one of the Romanian districts. Results are not statistically representative at country level. Despite this geographic limitation, we believe results are relevant for the territory because the population sample was validated by the diversity of its variables: school environment, type of school, class level, teacher level, gender, seniority and age.

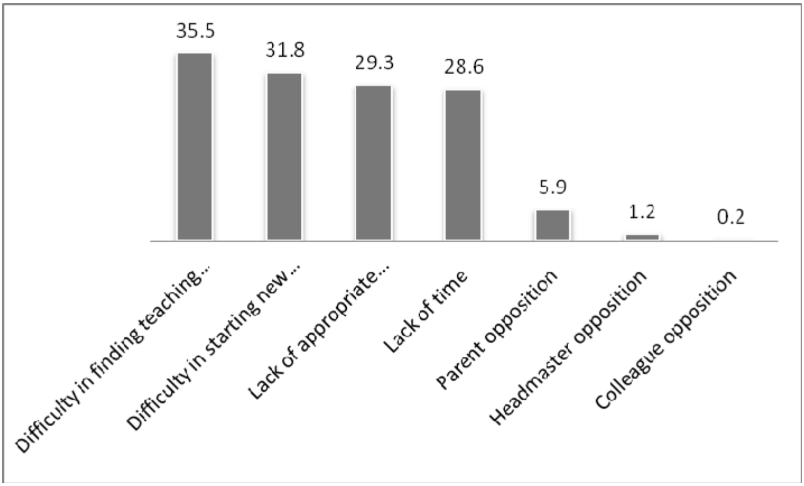

Figure 3-9. Difficulties in the introduction of an elective study limits

Conclusions

Additional (optional) courses are seen as useful and practical, but their use as elective disciplines remains a limited practice. Detrimental to the introduction of new disciplines, teachers prefer to use these hours to deepen the knowledge of compulsory disciplines or to introduce new topics inside these disciplines. However, a number of electives are often introduced at the request of either parents or students, or because of an available teaching tool. If the latter is not available and needs to be designed, the teacher will complain about difficulties in making it possible. Among the complaints, the most significant practical problem is curriculum design. This confirms previous studies stating that teachers are having problems with teaching concepts (Fuller 1969, Haysom & Sutton 1974, Stenhouse 1975). Amid these difficulties, it may explain the relatively small number of electives newly introduced by teachers in the curriculum. On this line, it is more than necessary for teacher training to develop and implement projects that support primary school teachers in their efforts aimed at designing and implementing new electives (Wang *et al*. 2010).

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CHAPTER FOUR

HIGH SCHOOL

LEADERSHIP STYLES OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

HASAN ARSLAN

Introduction

Organizations are complex entities often difficult to understand. Many factors make organizational life complicated, ambiguous, and unpredictable. The biggest challenge for managers and leaders is to find the right way to frame organizations in a world that has become more global, competitive, and turbulent (Dereli 2003). Leadership in organizations is creating and maintaining a sense of vision, culture, and interpersonal relationships. However, management is coordinating, supporting, and monitoring the activities of an organization. Leadership is a broader concept than management. Leadership involves working with and through people so as to accomplish goals but not necessarily organizational goals. High school students are preparing to fulfil various roles within their school and in the communities in which they live and will live after completing their schooling: one such role is that of a leader. To combat many of the current challenges in society, there has been a thrust in schools to provide programs which promote moral responsibility- and value-based decision-making in today's youth. It is essential to examine the nature of existing programs to determine what kind of effect they have on students' learning, community, and the way in which students live their lives. It is also crucial to question whether the programs are simply maintaining the *status quo* with regards to social behaviours, or whether they are challenging and transforming the ways in which we relate as members of a community (Robertson 1997).

Bolman & Deal (1995) suggest that the essence of effective leadership lies in knowing which frame to apply in a particular situation. A structural frame will be helpful in organizations with clear goals, strong technologies, and stable authority, whereas a human resource frame will work in an organization where employee morale and motivation are low. A political frame will be prominent where resources are scarce, and conflict and diversity are high. A symbolic frame will be of particular importance where goals are unclear, and ambiguity is high. Davis (1998) states that two fundamental elements of effective school leadership can establish a school vision and foster positive interpersonal relationships. He also acknowledges that developing a school vision takes time and the principal should have the ability to determine the status of the school, identify key aspects of improvement, and have a contingency plan to solve problems.

Leadership Frames

Bolman & Deal (1995) attribute human qualities to organizations when attempting to define them as "having huge appetites" and almost consuming unlimited resources but often producing unsatisfying results. Several theories have emerged so as to analyze organizations. Rational system theorists focus on organizational goals, roles, and technology. Their main focus is to develop the best fit between people's skills, needs, and values, and the organization. Political theorists regard power, conflict, and the distribution of scarce resources as the central issues in organizations. Symbolic theorists, on the other hand, focus on meaning and manager's abilities to bring about organizational unity through power and rationality (*ibid.*).

Structural Leadership. Structural Leadership relies on a variety of core assumptions. Firstly, organizations exist primarily to achieve established goals. For any organization, a structural form can be designed and utilized to fit its particular set of circumstances such as goals, strategies, environment, technology, and people. Secondly, organizations work most effectively when organizational choices and individual preferences are restricted by norms of rationality. Structure stipulates that people focus on getting the job done rather than doing what they please. Lastly, organizational problems typically stem from inappropriate structures or inadequate systems and can be solved through restructuring or devising new systems (*ibid.*).

Human Resource Leadership. Human Resource Leadership maintains that an organization's most critical resources are people's skills, insights, ideas, energy, and commitment. The human resource frame relies on the following set of assumptions: Firstly, organizations serve human needs such as physiological, social, self-esteem and self-actualization. Secondly, organizations and people need each other; organizations need skill, energy, and ideas. Similarly, people need work opportunities, salaries, and careers. As a result, organizations will exploit people or people will find ways to exploit the organizations.

Political Leadership. Political Leadership views organizations as political arenas that accommodate a complex variety of individual and group interests. The political frame relies on the following set of assumptions: Firstly, organizations are coalitions made up of different individuals and interest groups, for example, hierarchical levels, departments, professional groups, gender, and ethnic subgroups. Secondly, there are deeply-rooted differences among individuals and groups in their values, preferences, beliefs, information, and perceptions of reality. Such differences change slowly, if at all. Thirdly, allocation of scarce resources, which constitute decisions about who gets what, are vital decisions in organizations. Lastly, organizational goals and decisions emerge from bargaining, negotiation, and competition for the position among members of different coalitions.

Symbolic Leadership. Symbolic Leadership aims to interpret and elaborate on the basic issue of meaning and faith that make symbols extremely powerful in every aspect of the human experience, including organizations. It relies on a set of assumptions. Firstly, the importance of any event lies in its meaning. The same events can be interpreted differently by different people for they use a variety of schemes and points of view to give meaning to their experiences. Secondly, many of the most significant events and processes in organizations are difficult to interpret. Thirdly, it makes it harder to use rational approaches to analysis, problem solving, and decision making when the ambiguity and uncertainty is greater. Lastly, many organizational events are processes which are more noteworthy for what they represent than for what they cause: they are myths, rituals, and ceremonies that aid people to find meaning and order in their experiences.

Overall Design of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the leadership styles of public high school students. This study bears the characteristics of a "survey research" as it attempts to unveil the leadership styles of public high school students based on Bolman & Deal's theory of leadership frames. As in a survey research, the researcher is usually interested in how and how much of the responses differ – their variability, how closely some responses are related to others, and how responses vary within certain demographic variables or with measures of social, political or psychological variables (Krathwohl 1998). Quantitative research methods were employed to carry out the study. They were used to collect information regarding the principals' self-ratings and the student's ratings through Leadership Orientations Questionnaire.

Methods

This research describes the leadership behaviours of high school students (9^{th}-11^{th} grade). The leadership behaviour description questionnaire was applied to the selected high school students who have leadership skills. The sample included 88 females and 70 males. Bolman & Deal's leadership questionnaire (1995) was used as a scale in order to describe leadership styles of high school students. The leadership styles of higher school students were researched. Additionally, the effect of grade level and gender on leadership styles has been researched. The scale includes four leadership styles: structural leadership, human resources leadership, symbolic leadership, and politic leadership. The data were analyzed by mean, t-test, correlation, one way Anova tests. The following research questions were responded in the study:

Finding

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test of The Scale was applied to the data. Reliability results ranged from 0.84 to 0.93. The reliability score was 0.93 in human resources framework, 0.87 in symbolic framework, 0.86 in a structural framework, and 0.84 political framework. The overall reliability of the scale was 0.94 (Table 4-1).

The leadership survey was applied to 158 high school students (1^{st}-4^{th} grades). The number of students was grouped into four groups. There are 46 students in the 1^{st} grade, 39 in the 2^{nd} grade, 38 in the 3^{rd} grade and 35 in the 4^{th} fourth grade. There were 88 female and 70 male students in the study (Table 4-2).

Table 4-1. Reliability Analysis of the Scale of Leadership Behaviours

Dimensions	Cronbach's Alpha
A. Human Resources Framework	0.93
B. Symbolic Framework	0.87
C. Structural Framework	0.86
D. Political Framework	0.84
E. Total	0.94

Table 4-2. Number and Percentage of High School Students in terms of Gender and Grade

Gender	Grade 1 N %	Grade 2 N %	Grade 3 N %	Grade 4 N %
Female	25 15.8	18 11.4	25 15.8	20 12.7
Male	21 13.3	21 13.3	13 8.2	15 9.5
Total	46 29.1	39 24.7	38 24.1	35 22.2

As indicated in Table 4-3, the highest leadership score of high school students is the human resources framework ($\bar{X}$= 4.05). This was followed by political framework ($\bar{X}$ =3.73). The other two frameworks have same scores. Structural framework and symbolic framework have $\bar{X}$ =3.72 mean scores. Human Resource Leadership explains that most critical resources are people's skills, insights, ideas, energy, and commitment. The second highest score was found at the level of political leadership. It means that high school students accommodate a complex variety of individual and group interests. (Bolman & Deal 1995)

Table 4-3. Leadership Behaviour of High School Students

Boyutlar	N	$\bar{X}$	SS
Structural Framework	158	3.72	0.62
Human Resources F.	158	4.05	0.57
Political Framework	158	3.73	0.64
Symbolic Framework	158	3.72	0.62

The correlation among the frameworks indicated in Table 4-4 shows that the highest correlation was found between symbolic leadership and structural leadership (r=0.757). The second highest correlation was found between political and structural leadership (r=0.626). There were moderate correlations between human resources and political resources, between human resources and symbolic leadership, and between political and symbolic leadership.

Table 4-4. Correlation of Leadership Behaviours

	Human Resources	Political	Symbolic	Structural
Human Resource	1	0.581	0.577	0.580
Political		1	0.568	0.626
Symbolic			1	0.757
Structural				1

The researcher looked for a significant difference in the leadership behaviour of high school students in terms of gender. Table 4-5 indicates that there is only one significant difference in human resources leadership ($p<0.05$). The other leadership frameworks have no significant differences in gender. If we look at human resources leadership, it seems that the mean score of female high school students ($\bar{X}$=4.17) is higher than that of male high school students ($\bar{X}$=3.90).

Table 4-5. *t*-test of leadership behaviours of high school students in terms of gender

	Cinsiyet	N	$\bar{X}$	S	ss	t	p
Structural	Female	88	3.77	0.61	156	0.99	0.32
	Male	70	3.67	0.63			
Human resources	Female	88	4.17	0.50	156	2.98	0.00
	Male	70	3.90	0.61			
Political	Female	88	3.66	0.66	156	-1.51	0.13
	Male	70	3.82	0.60			
Symbolic	Female	88	3.69	0.65	156	-0.75	0.45
	Male	70	3.76	0.60			

One-way Anova test was applied to the styles of leadership in terms of grade levels. It was found that there are significant differences in all leadership styles (Table 4-6). After the significant differences were found in the one-way Anova test, Tukey test was applied to the data in order to see what grades have significant differences. Tukey test indicated that there are significant differences between grades 1 and 3, and between grades 1 and 4. The mean scores of leadership behaviours decreased as grade level increase in high schools.

Table 4-6. One Way Anova Test of High School Students in terms of Grade Levels

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P	Difference between grades
Structural Frame	Between Groups	3.47	3	1.15	3.08	0.02	G 1-3 G 1-4
	Within Groups	57.72	154	0.37			
	Total	61.19	157				
Human Resources Frame	Between Groups	4.13	3	1.37	4.51	0.00	G 1-3 G 1-4
	Within Groups	47.01	154	0.30			
	Total	51.14	157				
Political Frame	Between Groups	6.37	3	2.12	5.53	0.00	G 1--3 G 1-4
	Within Groups	59.06	154	0.38			
	Total	65.43	157				
Symbolic Frame	Between Groups	9.04	3	3.01	8.79	0.00	G 1-3 G 1-4
	Within Groups	52.81	154	0.34			
	Total	61.85	157				

Discussion

One of the keys to establishing an effective leadership curriculum in high schools is the acceptance of the concept that leadership is a skill that can be learned. Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other. Fiedler (1967) states that it should be evident that not only students can learn these skills: we should teach them to our students. All high school students participants reported that their role as a leader was to respect the student body and to encourage them participate in school and community activities. They identified “communication” as the primary relational skill needed to represent others. The participants maintained that they had developed effective communication and collaboration skills to work positively and productively in their peer relationships. Such skills were necessary since the findings showed that students most often worked in groups when planning school activities and events. The leadership behaviour of high school students are at a high level, and human resources behaviours have the highest score. The mean scores of the other leadership behaviours are extremely close to each other. The correlations among leadership frameworks are high. It means that high school students have more than one leadership behaviour. An intriguing result was found at grade level. As grade level increases, the mean scores of leadership behaviours decrease in high schools. As we look at literature, it seems that there are opposite findings. The possible reason for the decreasing mean scores of leadership behaviours is that high school students take the national entrance examination at the end of the 4th grade, and this is such a very comprehensive examination that high school students begin to study from the 3rd grade. For this reason, high school students cannot find time to increase their leadership skills.

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ROLE OF MODERN METHODS ON PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION PUPILS

OTILIA-SANDA BERSAN

Introduction

The research analyzes the teachers' opinions and beliefs regarding the necessity, the usefulness and the impact of alternative assessment methods on the scholastic performance of pupils in secondary education. Many teachers use alternative methods of educational assessment, which they believe to be useful, and helping the pupils feel that they are appreciated and valued. Alternative methods of educational assessment have a higher degree of effectiveness because they allow pupils' results to be gauged and assessed with greater accuracy and objectivity, and at the same time they give pupils a higher degree of psychological comfort. More so than traditional assessment methods, alternative methods measure and assess pupils' originality and creativity more, they encourage pupils' intellectual capacity, their active participation in the process of learning, they arise pupils' interest and curiosity, favouring a heuristic type learning (Rea-Dickins & Germaine 1992, MacDonald 2007).

Research Objectives. The overall objective of this study consists of investigating secondary education teachers' opinions regarding the necessity, the usefulness and the impact of alternative assessment methods on the academic performance and results of pupils in secondary education (Wagg 2001).

General Hypothesis. As teachers become more aware of the necessity and the usefulness of alternative assessment methods, they start using them more often in their didactic activity.

Research Design. In the investigation, we have used several research instruments that we devised, namely, **the structured journal** which was used to find out what the teachers' opinions and beliefs were regarding the necessity, the usefulness and the impact of alternative/complementary educational assessment methods on the scholastic performance of pupils in secondary education. The items of the structured journal looked at four aspects: assessment planning; elements of formative assessment; elements of summative assessment; teachers' feedback and opinion regarding the impact of alternative assessment methods on pupils' performance and on achieving an adequate psychological comfort level for pupils.

The Subject Sample. The subject sample we studied consisted of 151 secondary school teachers. The participating teachers had an academic semester at their disposal to respond to the research instruments we have described previously. Their supervision took place through periodical (monthly) meetings in order for us to establish and encourage them to record their responses to the tasks that they were given. At the same time, we also took care to ensure the confidentiality of their answers.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The factor analysis applicable to the variables inherent in the "*assessment design*" activity led to a correlation matrix (Table 4-7). After determining the saturation degree of the parameters and their rotation (operation that identifies those variables that describe a particular parameter) we could confirm that: the items referring to the "assessment design" are structured in three dimensions (parameters): designing the assessment strategy, by (also) taking into account alternative methods; the quality of the teaching-learning process, the pupils' learning performances and their psychological comfort (determined by an assessment that is as objective as possible); the teachers becoming aware of the existing deficiency when it comes to educational assessment and establishing new objectives concerning an increase in the objectivity of the assessment.

Thus, using alternative assessment methods of gauging academic results leads to an increase in objectivity, as perceived by both teachers and pupils. Subsequently, it also enhances pupils' psychological comfort giving them greater confidence in the assessments' accuracy, diminishing their fear of being graded, increasing their learning motivation, etc.

Factor analysis has indicated the correlation of variables of formative assessment (Table 4-8) and their organization in two dimensions: assessment of alternative methods stimulates student cooperation and collaboration in carrying out learning tasks; assessment of the learning process focuses on assessing the effort put in by the student in acquiring knowledge (Table 4-9).

Table 4-7. Correlation Matrix: Assessment planning

		1	2	3	4	5	6
Correlation	Assessment design 1	1.000	.085	.280	-.115	-.096	.203
	Assessment design 2	.085	1.000	.483	.001	.258	.096
	Assessment design 3	.280	.483	1.000	.158	.126	.112
	Assessment design 4	-.115	.001	.158	1.000	.360	.005
	Assessment design 5	-.096	.258	.126	.360	1.000	.434
	Assessment design 6	.203	.096	.112	.005	.434	1.000

***1. The teachers becoming aware of the lack of proper information concerning educational assessment;
2. Designing assessment strategies;
3. Diversifying assessment methods (using alternative methods);
4. Objectives concerning the improvement of assessment objectivity;
5. Pupils' psychological comfort (determined by objective assessment);
6. Predictions concerning the quality of the teaching-learning process and pupils' performances.

Table 4-8. Matrix of rotated components concerning assessment design

	1	2	3
Assessment planning 3	.876		
Assessment planning 2	.804		
Assessment planning 6		.913	
Assessment planning 5		.708	
Assessment planning 4			.739
Assessment planning 1			-.686

Consequently, with the support of alternative assessment methods, it is possible to assess the pupils' learning process, their cooperation and collaboration more and more objectively.

The factor analysis applicable to variables inherent in the "summative assessment" activity has emphasized that variables such as those referring to the ways in which pupils approach learning tasks, the novelty of learning outcomes and cooperation among pupils are assessed better (more objectively, more fairly, more realistically) by means of alternative assessment methods (Table 4-9). We can also note that teachers believe assessment through alternative methods to be (more) fair and that the pupils' increase in formativity is greater when tested with the help of these methods. (Tables 4-10 and 4-11)

Table 4-9. Correlation Matrix : Formative assessment

		1	2	3	4
Correlation	Formative assessment 1	1.000	.039	.245	.002
	Formative assessment 2	.039	1.000	.181	.117
	Formative assessment 3	.245	.181	1.000	.241
	Formative assessment 4	.002	.117	.241	1.000

***1. The pupils' effort put into the learning process;
2. Pupils' cooperation and collaboration in carrying out learning tasks;
3. The assessment of the learning process;
4. Assessment through alternative methods and the pupils' interest in learning.

Table 4-10. Matrix of rotated components regarding formative assessment

	1	2
Formative assessment 4	.766	
Formative assessment 2	.624	
Formative assessment 1		.912
Formative assessment 3		.594

Teachers' metacognitive activity of obtaining feedback from the evaluated pupils and of personal reflection concerning educational assessment is particularly useful for improving educational practice.

The correlation matrix (Table 4-12) indicates the saturation degree for the variables we have taken into consideration. The rotated components' matrix (Table 4-13) indicates that variable 4 (the teachers' reserved attitude concerning the use of alternative methods) needs to be eliminated because it participates almost equally in two factors. This signifies that the teachers participating in the study are not reticent about using alternative methods of educational assessment.

Table 4-11. The components' matrix: summative assessment

	1	2	3
Ways of approaching the schoolwork task – 2 a ***	.770		.430
Summative assessment: the originality of results – 2 b	.763	.416	
Summative assessment - 4	-.655	.501	
Summative assessment: pupil cooperation and collaboration - 2 c		.638	-.475
Summative assessment - 3	-.619	.635	
Summative assessment - 1			-.714

***1. Focusing on evaluating learning results;
2. Composite factor (2a, 2b, 2c);
3. A (more) objective assessment through alternative methods;
4. The gain in formativity of those pupils evaluated through alternative methods.

Table 4-12. The rotated components' matrix concerning summative assessment

	1	2	3
Summative assessment: the originality of results	.931		
Summative assessment: ways of approaching the schoolwork task	.903		
Summative assessment 4		.898	
Summative assessment 3		.896	
Summative assessment 1			.816
Summative assessment: pupil cooperation and collaboration			.799

The correlation of the five variables left after eliminating variable number 5, and the matrix of rotated components emphasize that the two dimensions (parameters) are significant in relation to the teachers' personal (metacognitive) reflection concerning the use of alternative assessment methods. These parameters are:

- The teachers' concern for diversifying the methods of educational assessment by using alternative means of assessment (Cardinet 1994);
- The teachers' concern for determining the effectiveness of an alternative method of educational assessment and for improving pupils' psychological comfort (Figure 4-14).

Table 4-13. The correlation matrix: Feedback and personal reflection

		1	2	3	4	5	6
Correlation	Feedback pers. reflection. 1***	1.000	-.054	.140	.126	.385	.355
	Feedback pers. reflection. 2	-.054	1.000	.681	-.160	.356	.346
	Feedback pers. reflection. 3	.140	.681	1.000	-.157	.212	.285
	Feedback pers. reflection. 4	.126	-.160	-.157	1.000	.026	.094
	Feedback pers. reflection. 5	.385	.356	.212	.026	1.000	.310
	Feedback pers. reflection. 6	.355	.346	.285	.094	.310	1.000

***1. The pupils' reactions to the methods of evaluating their academic results;
2. The teachers' analysis of assessment methods;
3. The diversification of assessment methods;
4. Teachers' reticence regarding alternative assessment methods;
5. The efficacy level of alternative assessment methods;
6. The evaluated pupils' level of satisfaction and emotional comfort.

Table 4-14. Matrix of the six rotated components concerning feedback and personal reflection

	1	2
Feedback pers. reflection. 2	.883	
Feedback pers. reflection. 3	.820	
Feedback pers. reflection. 4	-.488	.406
Feedback pers. reflection. 1		.795
Feedback pers. reflection. 6		.680
Feedback pers. reflection. 5		.669

Research Limitation

Through its particularities, the structured journal, which asks for subjects' answers about themselves, their attitudes, their beliefs and personal opinion, could be and, to a certain extent is already influenced by the social bias phenomenon (the subjects' tendency to shine a positive light on themselves).

Conclusions

A qualitative analysis of the teacher's opinions regarding their assessment activity and the pupils' academic performance emphasizes the following elements:

- Most teachers, regardless of the their specialization, prepare their assessment activities taking into account their pupils' abilities, the nature of the subject that is taught and the established teaching-learning objectives;
- the use of alternative assessment methods should occur in parallel with the use of classic/traditional methods;
- More so than traditional assessment methods, alternative methods measure and assess pupils' originality and creativity more, they encourage pupils' intellectual capacity, their active participation in the process of learning, they arise pupils' interest and curiosity, favouring a heuristic type learning;
- Alternative assessment methods are liked by students;
- Some teachers' reluctance to use alternative assessment methods derives from the lack of knowledge surrounding these methods' positive characteristics and the lack of knowledge in how to use them;
- Alternative assessment methods fulfil a motivational function stirring pupils' interest in learning.

Alternative assessment methods that are complementary to traditional ones have always remained a challenge for teachers, despite the increasingly frequent attempts at using them. Gradually, more and more teachers arrive at the conclusion that it is in their pupils' advantage to diversify the methods of educational assessment, thus making this activity more acceptable to pupils, who are reluctant and suspicious of academic assessment, often feeling that they are not evaluated in a (sufficiently) objective and equitable manner.

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TRUANCY: A STRINGENT PROBLEM IN EDUCATION

ELENA-LILIANA DANCIU

Introduction

Contemporary life has increasingly complicated social life, but it has also generated some mutations at the family level, mutations that have reshaped family financial problems (professional overburdening of parents, working abroad), as well as the level of interaction between parents and children (low social and emotional support, the redistribution of roles, less time spent with the family). Then, it should not come as a surprise that children's emotional problems are becoming more and more complicated and intense, aggravated by peer pressure, scholastic overburdening, drug temptation, and lack of attractive educational activities. The daily routine turns into permanent stress factors that whittle away the desire of the learners, diminishing their interest in school life and their self-confidence, and make them vulnerable when they come up against difficulties. Pulling back from school life, truancy becomes a solution that does more harm than good to the learners. The phenomenon's ubiquity has generated the drive to identify it and to find some possible solutions at both educational and social work levels. The research involved specialists in education, psychologists, social workers, parents, school managers, and representatives of various institutions with impact on social life from different geographical regions, who have implemented an exploration strategy and a specific methodology for diminishing the phenomenon at the social level and improving the truants' maladapted behaviours, while at the same time trying to think of new solutions for monitoring the student daily over two years. The method of implementing research, the methodology used, the positive results we obtained, which have led to the obvious decrease in the number of absences and the increase in the pupils' performance, the inevitable problems that came up and the solutions used, the limits of the intervention, the collaborative strategy among all the participants in the research, the decision to push on with the recovery strategy and to attract other participants, especially legislative ones, all of the above represent the essence of this paper.

Problem Statement

School absenteeism, which can take many forms, may be:

- **Typical**, when it happens without the adult's approval and knowledge;
- **Tolerated**, because the student is required to carry out household activities and also to look after his/her younger brothers;
- **The alleged "strategy for school absence,"** when the phenomenon occurs with the parent's knowledge who do not want their sons/daughters to have poor grades;
- **School phobia**, which is frequently accompanied by physical reactions (vomiting, nausea, paleness, asthma, sleep disorders, agitation, etc.).

Because it starts only after parents drive children to go to school, absenteeism becomes a kind of rebellion and a method of overcoming the fear of helplessness, especially when they feel their self-image is affected, that school atmosphere is no longer pleasing to them. Their most frequent response will be to respond with fear to anything related to school, failure to learn, negative behaviour, association with other individuals of the same age in similar situations in order to spend time in railway stations, parks, gambling houses, movie theatres, bars, clubs for young people, etc. Absenteeism is defined as a social problem (Wuhl 2008) whilst running away from school is interpreted as an affective problem. When school life becomes a tiresome and monotonous routine, the student finds it more convenient to spend his/her time consuming alcohol, experience different types of hallucinogen substances, increase adrenalin levels by violence (Débarbieux 2008), and commit crimes.

Methods

Initiated by a group of friends interested in obtaining a radiogram of the absenteeism phenomenon in order to try to sort out obvious aspects within the schools they worked in, the research involved 56 specialists in educational sciences, psychologists, social workers, parents, heads of educational institutions, representatives of institutions with impact on social life coming from different geographical areas of Romania (north – Satu-Mare and Suceava, east – Neamţ and Bacău, south – Teleorman and Dâmboviţa, west – Arad and Timiş, central area – Braşov and Sibiu, southeast – Constanţa) who implemented an investigation strategy and a specific methodology meant to reduce the phenomenon at the social level, having the aim to improve disturbed behaviours of students and, at the same time, to find solutions to track their daily activity during a period of two years.

The assumptions set to be demonstrated by diagnosis and solution finding intervention were:

- The steps meant to prevent acts of maladjustment stand as premises for a harmonious development of the pupil/student personality;
- Changing mentality regarding school and student and increasing the attractiveness of the teaching-learning-assessment process will lead to a decrease in the number of maladjustment and absenteeism phenomena;
- Turning family members into educational partners will allow the prevention and reduction of maladjusted behavioural phenomena;
- Conducting joint activities in school, school inspectorates, social institutions, legal institutions, cultural institutions on topics related to education, professionalization and social life will lead to a change in social behaviours and will increase the level of respect and self-esteem.

The experimental sample group consisted of the students of one high school in every county seat, in a smaller town and a countryside school (commune) in order to have the chance to compare different problems occurring in large and small communities and determine the potential solutions for sorting them out. Documentation and direct and indirect investigation methods, case study, mathematical-statistical processing and graphical representation of results in conjunction with instruments such as survey, questionnaire and interview represented the main source for gathering the required information. In order to obtain diagnoses as close as possible to reality, questionnaires were prepared for teachers and students, aiming at highlighting, by means of the answers received, the causes of this phenomenon and its coverage area, the solutions planned at different levels, the types of relationships in relation to family and school, the protective measures which may be initiated and the changes that should be done within the teaching-learning-assessment process, improvement and new factor-attraction strategy, including legislative factors.

Results

In order to make sure that all investigations and interventions carried out are within legal limits, the approval from both school institutions and parents was requested, by sending explanatory letters and work questionnaires on-line, by mail or personal handing over. Of the total number of persons having received questionnaires – equal number of parents and children (10,856), 21% of parents (2,269) and only 7% of children (761) failed to respond to the questions asked. The others expressed their availability and endeavoured to find the best answers. It is necessary to point out that, within families, mothers strived more to respond to the questions 82% (7,140). Fathers were more reticent and fearful that their answers might become public and alter their social image (Pease 2007). Only 73% responded to all questions whilst the other respondents reserved the right to respond selectively and only to the questions they considered less vulnerable (Killen & Olofsson 2008).

The 800 teaching professionals having responded to the questionnaire clearly indicated causes and solutions for absenteeism, expressing a particular concern for it because of the large variety of manifested effects.

The most frequently mentioned causes of absenteeism originating in the family were:

- **Special family circumstances**: domestic violence, alcoholism, presence of persons suffering from mental or chronic disorders, small amount of time spent with family, redistribution of roles within the family leading to child overstressing;
- **Disorganised family because of** divorce, death, departure of family members abroad for working, joint living;
- **Other causes originating in the family**: lack of interest in raising children and assigning this responsibility to grandparents, parents' failure to observe the children, extremely high level of tolerance/intolerance in the parent-child relationship, parents that are too busy because of the struggle for existence, high number of children in a family resulting from different relationships, poverty, poor social and affective support from parents, affective problems because of the family situation.

Amongst **the causes originating in school are**: lack of attractiveness of school activities, lack of specialized teaching professionals, disinterested teachers, reversal of values and easy acceptance of non-values, improper equipment of the schools with illustrative materials and audio-visual devices, irregularities in the assessment and grade-awarding process, inconsistent educational methods inappropriate to age and to the interest and motivational level of the student, school overstressing, pressures of the school group on certain individualities.

The other types of causes include: school overstressing**,** lack of communication both in the parent-child relationship and the student-teacher relationship, truancy because of failure to prepare homework or bad mood, distance between home and school too far, impassable route to school or weather conditions endangering student health, lack of appropriate or inexistence of means of transport, laws not sufficiently rigorous for absenteeism and disturbance of classes, good weather tempting for activities outside school, boredom generated and maintained by different factors, easy access to medical certificates for absence motivation, fear of exams, risk of drug consumption and other forms of addictions (alcohol, internet, games of chance), need to stand out.

The comparative analysis of the answers received indicates that the highest number of absences is reached in large cities but also in certain rural areas and that absenteeism is constantly presented in families with problems, being caused not necessarily by inadequate behaviours or child's failure to adjust but by existing sticky situation. For instance: older children look after their younger brothers, take care of a person suffering from a chronic disorder, work for earning a living and financially helping the poor family (Neagu & Stoica 2004).

Given that child benefit is granted only if children aged 0-16/18 do not take more than 40 school absences, most of the families involving children in the day-to-day work for earning a living (they go mowing, picking vegetables and fruits, etc.) are extremely careful that they do not reach this number, this benefit being the sole source of income in a certain period of the year.

Amongst **contemplated solutions**, the following have been the most frequently mentioned:

- Direct discussions with absentees, parents or next of kin, group of friends, schoolmates from other classes, teachers;
- Jointly setting a mandatory code of conduct which shall prohibit getting out of the school premises during school activities;
- Setting an absentee monitoring program both at a family and school levels;
- Restructuring educational activities and increasing their attractiveness by *introducing inter-, intra- and cross-disciplinary elements; involving information technology in the teaching-learning process; turning*

parents into educational partners; partnership teaching; frequently using learning strategies through collaboration and development of critical thinking;
- Assigning accurate and mandatory tasks at class group level according to the specificity of personality traits;
- Parenting counselling activities;
- Student assessment in order to support school and professional guidance;
- Collaboration with the competent police station;
- Applying penalty measures by principals, form teachers, parents;
- Adapting educational programs according to individual development;
- Communication with the parents and family on a weekly basis;
- Setting clear and controllable social responsibilities;
- Electronic monitoring of students during the time they are on the school premises;
- Implementation of time cards for students, custom-made, with their photos on them;
- Implementation of cards for access in different school areas;
- Use of electronic coded registers informing the parents of the school situation of their child on a regular or daily basis;
- Presenting the rules of organisation and management of educational institutions;
- Video surveillance of all school areas;
- Actions aiming at informing and raising awareness of students and parents on the effects of absenteeism;
- Collaboration with the competent police station regarding student supervision and their sanctioning for different misconducts but also for raising awareness on the extension of the offending conduct;
- Carrying out specific activities for learning and using strategies and techniques in order to get to know the personality of the student.

Because every geographical region has its specific situations related to this phenomenon, the solutions adopted were different. However, in order to protect the unity of educational interventions and the coherence of influences, the following joint general actions were set for every school community:

- **Actions** providing permanent counselling to absentees and parents within school counselling offices;
- **Concentrated** actions of all teaching professionals in order to:

- Carry out school activities that are appealing and involving and that are adapted to the intellectual and chronological age of the concerned individuals;
- Customise the teaching-learning-assessment methods for absentees;
- Maintain a constant school-students' parents connection by planning a pivotal meeting program;
- Involve students in activities meant to allow the development of self-confidence, the development of skills and competencies specific to school age.

Conclusions and Recommendations

All steps taken to identify and find the most appropriate solutions in order to improve the problems involved by school absenteeism impact, to a certain extent, both the life of individuals having initiated them and the individuals they have been intended for. The higher the amount of time and thoroughness used for analysing absenteeism problems, the more evident became the complexity of this phenomenon with socio-economic, political, psychological and legal connotations. It takes time to get these problems sorted out, but a loss of focus in relation to these steps means, in fact, a failure, not at the present time but in the long run, both for teachers, and families and students.

If absenteeism may also be construed as a kind of stable, permanent evading conduct reflecting an attitude of lack of respect, interest, motivation and confidence in school education, then more educational intervention should take place at various levels. A simple effort from the part of caring persons willing to bring change in social life and educational sector is not sufficient. We shall be able to incorporate widespread and effective actions only when these interventions take place at a country level, based on unique laws and concerted steps and when people become effectively aware of the fact that school absenteeism leads in the short run to social absenteeism.

The results of the research had a regional effect and even if they cannot be generalised they at least drew the attention, once more, on absenteeism and indicated the fact that such phenomena occur in every particular geographical area.

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How Can a Community of Practice Be an Educational Asset?

Daniela Dumitru

Introduction

The learning process has vital importance in education and, for this reason, we must be aware of the learning theories involved and of what is going on when we learn something. Behaviourist, constructivist or cognitivist learning theories talk about how the human mind becomes "learned." Starting from early age to adulthood, the individual pursuit of knowledge is seen as a continuous endeavour for each of us, until reaching the ultimate goal, the independent mature thinker.

The Concept and the Issue of Community of Practice

We see the learning process as an individual enterprise; all theories say that learning is a process that starts with the need to add something to what we already know in order to solve a new problem. This is not the whole picture, though. The need to add something comes also from the need to be with others, meaning that an individual starts to learn something that permits him/her to be a part of a larger community – socialization (Parsons 1967). At early ages, the child learns through osmosis capturing meanings, actions, symbols, feelings from his/her parents and nearby adults or older children. This is Vygotsky's (1978, 1986) theory of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which implies a social constructivist approach of scaffolding, meaning that the teacher (broadly speaking) provides the new learner with a context, a motivation and a foundation from which to understand the new information. The scaffold is gradually removed as the new learner progresses, until he/she independently comprises the new item (Harasim 2012). Lave & Wenger (2003) introduce the term *situated learning* in connection with *peripheral participation* (Wenger 2006). This approach is a continuation and particularization of Vygotsky's social learning theory legitimating the newcomers in a community of practice

(Wenger 1999). Before they are caught in the mainstream activity of the community, they sit and watch (observation as a learning method). So, a social theory of learning has the following components: *meaning* (a way of talking about humans' ability – individually and collectively – to experience life and world as meaningful); *practice* (a way of talking about the shared past and social resources, frameworks, and perspectives that can support joint participation in action); *community* (a way of talking about the social configurations in which human enterprise is defined as worth pursuing and participation is identifiable as competence); *identity* (a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities) (Wenger 2006).

The characteristics of a community of practice can be extrapolated to all communities to describe them, a process that allows us to establish an organization and a setting for the best approach to use the community as an educational opportunity. So, using apprenticeship as a compelling learning process, the new concept of community of practice takes the relationship from a master – student or mentor – mentee to changing participation and identity transformation from the community of practice. The community has in its centre a social learning theory, which comes from a combination of two main axes: one linking theories of social structure and theories of situated experience, and another linking theories of practice and theories of identity.

Talking about Wenger's theory of learning, we link the learning to the communities, regardless of type (community of practice, community of inquiry, community of learning, etc.). When someone is engaging in a learning process no matter the age, he/she is in a community, in a social context, and someone else is showing, directing or motivating him/her to build the knowledge for himself/herself. The individual pursuit of knowledge (not the information) is always situated in a social and cultural context that makes the person become, eventually, a part of a larger group of people sharing a common pool of knowledge and practice. *Children legitimate peripheral participation in adult social worlds* (Lave & Wenger 2003). The socialization process can be seen as an apprenticeship that takes many forms, but all have *situated learning* (Lave & Wenger 2003, Lave 1982).

Situated learning means that learning occurs in social situations, rather than being a form of propositional acquisition. Instead of asking ourselves what kind of cognitive processes and conceptual structures are involved, *we ask what kind of social engagements provide the proper context for learning to take place* (Hanks 2003). The community (of practice, but not only the community) has a crucial role in skill acquisition and general human understanding, interpretation and communication. Lave & Wenger advance a new theory of social learning with a bigger stake than it may appear *prima facie*: they say that verbal meaning is a product of speakers' interpretative activities and not a "content" of linguistic forms. This shows that meaning, understanding and learning are defined in relation to actional contexts and not to self-contained structures (Hank 1991).

Every child experiences a kind of apprenticeship since his/her birth where the community in which he/she practices construes the identity and the meaning of life (Wenger 2006). From apprenticeship to situated learning is a natural step to make, because only in social contexts the mentor teaches his/her disciple. At this point, we must say that learning/apprenticeship takes place in a community that has its own history and cultural background and the interpretation, related meanings and identity are in accordance with deeper historical facts. It is a phenomenological social act that one which introduces the child into the worlds of meanings, which later becomes the personal world of meanings (the classical process of internalisation).

Above all, we have to accept the fact that, before being an active member of a community, a person is a newcomer. He/she becomes a member through a process of apprenticeship or through a zone of proximal development (e.g., Vygotsky). The newcomers are *peripheral* to the centre of the community and to the old-comers. This position is not exclusion or marginalization, but a way of participation of a learner in the actual practice of an expert to a limited degree and with limited responsibility for the ultimate product as a whole (Hanks 2003). If we think of all forms of apprenticeship, for example, midwives, tailors, butchers (all are Lave & Wenger's examples, 2006), we have some masters that teach some apprentices how to do their job. Learning is a process that takes place in a participation framework, not in an individual mind (Hanks 2003). Here is what Hanks says in the *Foreword* of Lave & Wenger's book: "Learning is, as it were, distributed among the participants, not a one-person act. While the apprentice may be the one transformed most dramatically by increased participation in a productive process, it is the wider process that is the crucial locus and precondition for this transformation. *How do masters of apprentices themselves change through acting as co-learners and therefore, how does the skill being mastered change in the process?* The larger community of practitioners reproduces itself through the formation of apprentices, yet it would presumably be transformed as well." (Hanks 2003)

So the increased knowledge does not mean that the person (apprentice) had an acquisition of a new structure, but he/she had an increased access to the roles in expert performance.

We have a broader understanding of the notion *community of practice* (involved here by the two authors) referring not only to a productive process, but to all social learning activities (situated learning opportunity) that involve a newcomer, for whom an old comer plays the role of the mentor or a co-learner. We are encouraged to argue this point with Wenger's own words: "Communities of practice present a theory of learning that starts with this assumption: engagement in social practice is the fundamental process by which we learn and so become who we are. The primary unit of analysis is neither the individual nor social institutions but rather the informal 'communities of practice' that people form as they pursue shared enterprises over time" (Wenger 1999). Moreover, we believe (keeping it as an open discussion) that all other communities can be subsumed to the community of practice. Communities of learning, of research, of inquiry, even online communities are eventually communities of practice, social activities of people that share a goal and have a purposeful collaborative problem solving activity.

As far as we can see, this theory is nothing but new, it is a refined social constructivist learning theory that adds to the "old" one the interesting concept of *legitimate peripheral learning* and gives more importance to the concept of *practice*.

What we think will be a gold mine for a new pedagogical theory is the apprenticeship concept *position*. The central role of apprenticeship could be the key to a new construction of a curriculum. This construction should lay upon a foundation represented by the community of practice that supports a learning process for a long time, submerged in a social structure. What we have in mind is vocational curriculum, with a lose sense of "vocational," as a program that is centred on a "job," a possible job in the adulthood. Along with theoretical preparation in the classroom with specialized teachers, pupils will benefit of practice with mentors and actual work situations. The value of this kind of curriculum, which is nothing new, of course, is revealing itself in the case of adolescents.

A teenager is finding himself/herself in the pursuit of their identity. This is a hard to get asset, especially nowadays, when the media (including the Internet or the VR – virtual reality) offer so many opportunities for identifying oneself with superficial alter-egos and reduced to skeleton personas. This can confuse and abduct the true personal identity, and it is possible that it will never fully develop in the adulthood.

In ancient times, education was different, in the sense that a mentor, or someone who proved his/her skills and competences in a field, had some novices of different ages that were taught how to do a job or guided to acquire some skills. This situation was to the benefit of both parts, the novices were trained and also mentored, adding a style to their personality, shaping their character in the close relationship with their mentor and using the mentor's example as a practitioner. This rich environment is everything that a teenager needs for developing his/her personality, because it is a rich stimulating environment and not only a rich informational environment, which most educational environments tend to be lately (especially in Romania).

Conclusion

What we tried to argue is that nowadays school has to keep up with the developments of the society and how they shape, spontaneously, the teenagers. What they want now are social networks. So, let us give them social networking. A community of practice is capable of bringing social networking to be in the service of the educational system. Putting the teenagers in the situation to use their ability and skills to make friends online in order to increase their knowledge in their field of work is a desirable, even an effective, idea.

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ARGUMENTATION AND LITERATURE: A TEACHING EXPERIENCE

OANA-ROXANA IVAN

Introduction

The aim of the present paper is to create a link between argumentation and the teaching experience, since the argumentative discourse plays a pivotal role in teaching pre-university students. The problematization of argumentation is not just extremely complex but also extremely actual (Rovenţa-Frumuşani 2000, Sălăvăstru 2003). In the context of modern life, when the information-communication paradigm is apparently predominant, the analysis of the resources, the power and the limits of argumentative acts, is claimed to be a real field of research by more or less scientific areas of study (Borchin 2007). Therefore, building a proper argumentative discourse requires knowing the rules underlying the development of an argumentation and having the ability to joggle with these skills, as Marga has pointed out particularly clearly that:

> *Knowing the processes of argumentation has remained a definite evidence of handling effectively a decent culture. This knowledge represents a measure of control of one's rationality and also of avoiding being mislead and manipulated by others. Mastering the argumentative theory means having the chance to control yourself and to broaden your knowledge* (Marga 2006: 11).

Why...? This might be the first question in a long list of questions in a person's life. If, during the first years of life, a child waits for an answer just to satisfy, at least partially, his curiosity and his need to get to know the world he lives in, but he does not understand yet; later on, other determinant situations depend on the answer to this question, such as getting the gift we want (*Why do you think you deserve a PC?*), getting the job we want (*Why do you think you are better for this job than someone else?*), or getting the high position we want (*Why do you think you are suitable for the position of mayor?*). If the answers to these questions are convincing, therefore, not necessarily true, we get to win the cause (Crăciun 2000). In school, and also in different life situations, people are supposed to convince others of the truth or falseness of certain statements, otherwise, the pupils get low marks, the radio X loses its listeners, the detergent Y stops selling, etc. Argumentation is present in school from the beginning, but there are three determinant moments in the argumentative skills' crafting of a student who studies Romanian language and literature in the pre-university teaching system. Pupils are presented with the specifically theoretical notions in the 7th form when they perform using an argumentative text, followed by a case study in the 11th and 12th grades, and an argumentative essay as part of the written subject in Baccalaureate.

Argumentation from the Pupils' Perspective

Method

The problem of argumentation must also be tackled from the pupils' point of view, since they are the ones directly affected by its use in the didactic process. Thus, we have questioned 20 students that have already taken the assessment of Baccalaureate (which means they are familiar with all the three forms of argumentation they have met along the years of pre-university schooling). The questionnaire we have used was based on open questions which did not imply Yes/No answers, but rather free answers and comments, since the students have been asked to communicate and maintain their opinions (for/against) regarding the matter of argumentation in school.

Results and Discussion

As a key conclusion following this research, we have realised that pupils are quite open to this type of activity, their vote being unanimously for it. Judging from their comments, we may conclude that learning the argumentative skills and joggling with them is useful and necessary since:

- Pupils are given the opportunity to express their own point of view;
- It develops their ability to maintain an argumentative discourse (a matter essential for any student and future graduate);
- Pragmatically, pupils will face such situations later on during college or when applying for a job;
- It requires both a rational reasoning and a correct use of language;

- It tests the pupils' general knowledge in a more complex way, allowing them to make connections, developing their ability to analyse and synthesise;
- It enriches self-esteem;
- It makes the student feel involved and responsible;
- It develops a flexible, free and clear thinking.

The only negative side they have signalled refers to the fact that, unfortunately, in school, too small or no emphasis is placed on exercising the necessary argumentative skills to formulate and maintain an argumentative essay. Pupils think that, in the Baccalureat assessment and during the activities in class, there should be greater emphasis on such subjects, even though they refer to the literary texts studied in high school. These pupils have raised an extremely entertaining and urgent question regarding the alleged "template formulations," such as "Argue, in an essay of 2-4 pages, that a literary work you have studied is…" In such cases, they say, the process of argumentation is strictly based on key comments they have to learn by heart, on reproducing catchy phrases that are fashionable at the time, on statements taken from other critics; and not on their own opinions and arguments. Therefore, pupils suggested fascinating topics for the Baccalaureat exam, proving that they do not move away from literature, but they need to discover it in depth. Here, are some of the examples they have provided us with:

- Does Ghiţă, the central character in Ioan Slavici's *Moara cu noroc*, deserve his confidence? Is he a victim of his fortune or his own mistakes? Argue your answer.
- Had it been better for Ion to listen to the "love's voice" from the very beginning? Why (not)?
- How authentic are the subject and conflict in I. L. Caragiale's comedy *O scrisoare pierdută*? Argue your answer.
- Could Manole have avoided Mira's faith? Argue your answer.
- Is Otilia really an enigma? Why (not)?
- Does "love" mean "possess"? Argue your position using one or more novels you have studied.

Conclusion

The attention given to the connection between argumentation and the teaching experience has proven to be worthy of investigation, providing intriguing results as expected. Pupils proved to be particularly receptive to the use of argumentative techniques as a working method in class. Thus, their argumentative skills are being developed, and they are given the opportunity to earn an intellectual work-style they could use later on in new and varied contexts. Classes could be much more attractive if there were no "run" through the lessons and if there were more time allotted to argumentation. Argumentation should become an essential skill and it should be worked on in order to be able to bring forth the right arguments in a discussion with the other person. Living in a society under the imperative of human rights makes us conclude that the right to free speech implies a responsibility to know the argumentative techniques, so that we can sustain our points of view correctly.

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Contextual and Individual Moderators in the Self-Regulation of Learning: Age and Learning Context

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Introduction

The importance of self-regulation of learning stems both from its central role in the learning process, in general, as well as from a didactic perspective, introduced the paradigmatic shift brought about by *learner-centred learning*, which transfers the emphasis of learning from the teacher to the learner. The variability of self-regulation of learning may be due to contextual, objective factors, as well as to personal, subjective causes. Teenager students, which frequent Day-care Centres, often report very low learning performances compared with those peers which do not require such assistance. It is, thus, presumable that the individual modality of self-regulation of learning is, at least partly, responsible for their academic performances. As for this important effect, we were interested in determining if the economic challenges that a student may be confronted with in his/her living environment have any impact on the self-regulation of learning strategies and, if true, what other factors may contribute to adjust this influence. Synthetically, self-regulation refers to thinking, emotion, and behaviour planned and adapted to achieve particular, individual goals (Zimmerman 2000). The main characteristic of self-regulated learning is that the learner (the student) self-directs his/her cognitive and motivational processes towards the accomplishment of learning aims or goals. There are two main perspectives on the self-regulation of learning. On the one hand, self-regulation may be construed as a general disposition of the student in the learning context, while, on the other hand, self-regulation is a characteristic of the person-context relationship and is a function of domain specific self-regulatory skills, which develop as a result of intra- or inter-contextual experiences (Boekaerts & Corno 2005).

Methodology

Having considered the above, we were interested in determining if intra- and inter-contextual (learning) experiences can be responsible for any significant differences that may be found between the self-regulation of learning strategies of those students living in economically challenging environments and of those who do not withstand such difficulties. Thus, the research questions targeted: (a) *Are there any statistically significant differences with respect to self-regulation strategies as a result of the living conditions?* and, if so, (b) *Does age constitute a factor in moderating this differences?*

Sample

The sample groups consisted of a total of N=299 (M_{age}=16.82, SD_{age}=.06) high school students distributed into two separate groups according to their estimated level of complex living conditions. $N_{\text{challenged}}$=141 students (M_{age}=16.55, SD_{age}=.08) reported a low-level income per capita of a family member, whereas an N_{regular}=158 (M_{age}=16.91, SD_{age}=.09) students reported no difficult living conditions. Out of the total 299 high school students, N_{male}=65 were males (M_{age}=16.45, SD_{age}=.18), and N_{female}=233 were females (M_{age}=16.85, SD_{age}=.071). The level of income per capita of a family member was below the national standards of 400 RON. All participants were enrolled in high schools in Cluj-Napoca (Romania) at the time of the research.

Research Design

Research design consisted in a one-shot, transversal, cross-sectional correlational study. An independent samples t-test was employed to identify any statistically significant differences between the two groups. Data was processed using IBM SPSS ™ statistical software. The large number of participants ensures a high representation for the high school student population. Cohen's (1988) guidelines were used to interpret the recorded magnitude in mean differences and, as such, .01 was considered a small effect, .06 a moderate effect, and .14 a large effect. An analysis of covariance, or ANCOVA, was used to determine the age effect on the recorded differences. Demographic data allowed a discriminative analysis of the amount and type of preferred self-regulated strategies.

Instruments

The observed measures of self-regulated learning strategies were recorded using Pintrich *et al.*'s (1991) *Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire* (MSLQ). MSLQ is made up of fifteen 7-step Likert subscales which measure *intrinsic goal orientation*, *extrinsic goal orientation*, *test anxiety*, *task value*, *expectancy of learning beliefs*, *self-efficacy of learning beliefs*, *organization*, *elaboration*, *rehearsal*, *critical thinking*, *metacognitive self-regulation*, *help seeking*, *peer learning*, and *time and study management*. The internal consistency of these subscales ranged from very good (self-efficacy of learning beliefs and task value, with *α* Cronbach of .87 and .84), good or fair, for the remaining strategies (*α* Cronbach ranging from .75 to .55). Only *help seeking* presented a limited internal reliability measured with an *α* Cronbach of .45, which is consistent with other findings from Romanian studies *(Stanciu et al.* 2012). Table 4-15 includes a detailed presentation of all computed *α* Cronbach indices.

Table 4-15. Internal consistency of the observed measurements

Self-regulation of learning strategy	α Cronbach
self-efficacy of learning beliefs	0.87
task value	0.84
test anxiety	0.79
metacognitive self-regulation	0.75
elaboration	0.74
critical thinking	0.69
control of learning beliefs	0.68
extrinsic goal orientation	0.68
organization	0.66
peer learning	0.64
intrinsic goal orientation	0.6
rehearsal	0.59
effort regulation	0.59
time and study environment	0.55
help seeking	0.45

N = 299

Procedure

Participant students were asked to complete self-reported, paper-pencil questionnaires during training classes. The testing activity did not interfere in any way with the normal development of their schools' educational activities. All participants expressed their written voluntary consent in giving answers to the self-reported questionnaires.

Results

Statistically significant differences between the two compared groups were recorded for 5 out of the total of 15 measured strategies. The differences in means were computed using η^2 (eta squared). The biggest difference and a slightly above moderate effect was recorded for *self-efficacy of learning beliefs* with $\eta^2 = .08$ or an 8% variance due to belonging to one groups or the other. Small size effects were recorded for *help seeking* ($\eta^2 = .05$) and *task value* ($\eta^2 = .025$), *time and study environment* ($\eta^2 = .022$), and *organization* ($\eta^2 = .015$).

The economically challenged group presented statistically significant lower mean scores for *help seeking*, *task value*, *time and study environment*, and *organization*, while presenting statistically significant higher mean scores for *self-efficacy of learning beliefs.* No significant differences between the two groups were recorded for the remaining self-regulation of learning strategies: *effort regulation*, *rehearsal*, *control of learning beliefs*, *critical thinking*, *extrinsic goal orientation*, *test anxiety*, *intrinsic goal orientation*, *peer learning*, *metacognitive self-regulation*, and *elaboration* (detailed results for the independent samples t-test are presented synthetically in Tables 4-16 and 4-17).

An ANCOVA was performed in order to determine the effect of age on the variations recorded in the mean scores for *self-efficacy of learning beliefs*, *help seeking*, *task value*, *time and study environment*, and *organization* as compared between the groups. After controlling for age effect, only *self-efficacy*, *help seeking*, *task value*, and *time and study environment* continued to produce statistically significant differences, albeit most of them being quite small in magnitude. The previously found statistically significant difference recorded for *organization* was no longer valid after controlling for age effect (detailed results of the performed ANCOVAs are presented in Table 4-18).

Table 4-16. Independent samples t-test (part 1)

	t	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Self-Efficacy of Learning Beliefs	-5.213	271.385	.000	-4.185	.803
Help Seeking	3.972	295	.000	1.667	.420
Task Value	2.745	264.339	.006	1.750	.638
Time and Study Environment	2.615	295	.009	1.793	.686
Organization	2.117	295	.035	1.129	.533
Effort Regulation	1.758	295	.080	.869	.494
Rehearsal	1.440	295	.151	.651	.452
Control of Learning Beliefs	1.101	295	.272	.470	.427
Critical Thinking	-.958	295	.339	-.522	.545
Extrinsic Goal Orientation	.606	295	.545	.280	.461
Test Anxiety	-.580	295	.563	-.410	.707
Intrinsic Goal Orientation	-.543	295	.588	-.237	.436
Peer Learning	.178	295	.859	.078	.438
Metacognitive Self-Regulation	.094	295	.925	.095	1.006
Elaboration	.080	295	.936	.053	.667

$N = 299$ ($N_{\text{challenged}} = 141$, $N_{\text{regular}} = 158$)

Conclusion

A number of limitations due to the nature of the chosen methodology must be taken into consideration. A one-time, cross-sectional, self-reported study may miss variables and or responses which may manifest differently at various points in time. We tried to counteract this bias by using a very large number of participants. Moreover, the self-reported measures are often criticised as being susceptible of carrying "desirable" responses. We instructed all participants to inform us if they did not fully understand specific questions and special attention was given to a true voluntary participation. More so, the response sheets were carefully examined for intentionally wrong answers (one such response was eliminated from the raw data pool).

Special attention must be given when interpreting the significance of the difference recorded with respect to *help seeking* due to the relatively low internal consistency measured for this scale (α Cronbach = .45). An alternative measure for evaluating help seeking strategies could prove useful and more enlightening with respect to the studied influences.

Table 4-17. Independent samples t-test (part 2)

	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		η^2	Variance
	Lower	Upper		
Self-Efficacy of Learning Beliefs	-5.765	-2.604	0.083	8%
Help Seeking	.841	2.493	0.050	5%
Task Value	.495	3.006	0.025	2%
Time and Study Environment	.444	3.142	0.022	2%
Organization	.079	2.178	0.015	1%
Effort Regulation	-.104	1.841		
Rehearsal	-.238	1.540		
Control of Learning Beliefs	-.371	1.312		
Critical Thinking	-1.595	.551		
Extrinsic Goal Orientation	-.628	1.187		
Test Anxiety	-1.801	.982		
Intrinsic Goal Orientation	-1.095	.622		
Peer Learning	-.784	.939		
Metacognitive Self-Regulation	-1.885	2.075		
Elaboration	-1.259	1.366		

$N = 299$ ($N_{challenged} = 141$, $N_{regular} = 158$)

Table 4-18. ANCOVA results for the intergroup differences after controlling for age effect (ordered from highest to lowest self-regulation strategies mean differences)

Self-regulation of learning strategy	F (1, 356)	p	Partial η^2	p for age	Partial η^2 for age
self-efficacy of learning beliefs	29.27	< .01	0.09	0.11	0.01
help seeking	15.10	< .01	0.05	0.47	0.00
task value	8.14	< .01	0.03	0.38	0.00
time and study environment	7.53	< .01	0.03	0.15	0.01
organization	3.72	0.06	0.01	< .05	0.01

$N = 299$ ($N_{challenged} = 141$, $N_{regular} = 158$)

The magnitude of the recorded differences in self-regulation of learning strategies was not very high (with the notable exception of *self-efficacy of learning beliefs* and *help seeking*), which can receive at least two possible explanations. First, a number of other variables can come into play, besides the living environment, and make a contribution to the recorded differences. Second, more straightforward, the impact of living environment does not have a sufficiently large contribution to the self-regulation of learning, as far as these specific strategies are concerned.

In a somewhat positive note, we remarked that the number of strategies of self-regulation of learning for which no statistically significant differences were recorded is quite large. The "affected" strategies represent 1/3 or 33.3% of the total observed strategies, while the magnitude of the recorded effects is quite small (between 2 and 1 per cent, with the notable exceptions of *self-efficacy of learning beliefs* and *help seeking* with 8% and 5%, respectively). We have also found that age exercises an influence on the differences amongst the research groups only with respect to *organization*.

From an educational perspective, care must be paid to the direction of the recorded differences, which may be indicative for the vulnerabilities of the economically challenged students. Also, the higher scoring strategies (such as *self-efficacy of learning beliefs*) must be carefully considered, since they may also prove to be signs of vulnerabilities as well, and not strengths in the self-regulation of learning. For instance, a too strong emphasis placed on an *external goal orientation* is significant for a low self-directedness of learning.

While, due to the design limitation of the study, we cannot conclusively attribute the differences in self-regulation of learning to the living environment, a clear interpretation stems as to the existence of factors associated to the challenging environments which affect the differences in the participant students' self-regulation of learning to a statistically significant magnitude. In today's competitive world, being in the top 5 or 10 of one's group may prove to be crucial for one's future professional development. Thus, those differences in the self-regulation of learning performance that transcend 5% in variance can constitute significant separation factors. Future studies and experimental research may further the insight given in the self-regulation of learning variations found by the research.

We are, therefore, confident that both personalized intervention programmes and emotional and academic counselling programmes can benefit from accounting for the intergroup observed differences in the self-regulation of learning.

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CHAPTER FIVE

HIGHER EDUCATION

QUALITY OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PROVIDERS AND BENEFICIARIES' OPINIONS

GABRIELA DOMILESCU

Introduction

The quality of education is differently perceived by its beneficiaries and by those who provide it, since, often, quality is a subjective concept, interpreted by everybody according to his/her needs. Often, the perception regarding the quality of educational services is influenced by one's culture, traditions, values and country. In this context, talking about the quality of initial/pre-service teaching training becomes an extremely difficult approach, precisely because providing quality in pre-service teacher training means satisfying the needs of the beneficiaries (enrolled students, teacher educators, pupils, schools, and parents).

In the last 20 years, Romanian pre-service teacher training – as the entire educational system – has been the recipient of several reforms (1994, 1997, 2005, 2011). We believe that, unfortunately, none contributed to increase the quality of teaching, to improve teachers' skills or to assist students' learning outcomes, since the results of the Romanian educational system are decreasing at national and, also, at international exams.

In Romania, Teacher Training Departments (TTDs) from universities are responsible with pre-service teacher training. Before the implementation of the Bologna regulations, the pre-service teacher training program was taking place simultaneously with the four year bachelor studies (during six semesters, from the 1st year, 2nd semester to the 4th year, 1st semester, a subject each semester) or after obtaining the Bachelor's degree. The students had to gather 30 credits, and they did not need a master degree in order to practice the teaching profession.

Now, according to legal regulations, teacher training is structured on two Levels:

- 1st Level (30 credits) takes place simultaneously with a bachelor's degree and ends with a certificate of graduation that confers the right to exercise the teaching profession in Romanian compulsory education;
- 2nd Level (30 credits) can be followed simultaneously with a subject-related master, after graduating the 1st Level, and ends with a certificate of graduation that confers the right to exercise the teaching profession at all levels of the Romanian educational system.

The 1st Level includes the same number of subjects as before the introduction of the Bologna structure, but more hours and provides classroom management, computer-assisted instruction and a final assessment portfolio as compulsory. The 2nd level includes subjects like Psycho-pedagogy of adolescents, young and adults; Design and management of educational programs; Didactics of the teaching field; Practical work, two optional subjects, and a final assessment portfolio.

Methodology

This paper presents the results of a research undertaken in 2010, whose aim was to identify the implications of the Bologna Process on Romanian pre-service teacher training and the activity of TTDs. In the present paper, we focus on outlining a concept of quality of pre-service teaching training in the opinion of all those involved in this type of training.

In order to reach this objective, we have undertaken a socio-pedagogical survey. The survey was conducted on a representative sample consisting of 593 people. Before proceeding to this investigation, we established four different samples, as follows:

- 333 3rd-year Bachelor students enrolled in the 1st Level of the teacher training program offered by the TTDs of the 3 Universities of Timişoara (West University of Timişoara, Polytechnic University of Timişoara, and University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Banat of Timişoara);
- 88 students enrolled in the 2nd Level of the teacher training program offered by TTDs of the 3 Universities of Timişoara, simultaneously being master students in a specific field, according to the present regulations;
- 122 teachers from secondary and high school, teachers who were trained, before the implementation of the Bologna regulations, over a period of four years, between1995-2007;

- 50 university teachers who teach in the TTDs of Romanian universities.

Because of the material field data, we built a simple random sample, in the case of students from the 1st and 2nd Levels, based on their specialization and academic centre of origin, in order to obtain a regional representative sample, to increase the added value of the research results. School teachers and university teachers were identified using the snowball technique, a kind of non-probabilistic sampling, where we asked some of the subjects the contact details of other persons with the desired characteristics in order to include them in the sample. Because only part of the statistical data regarding Romania's basic population was available, we have encountered some difficulties in calculating the margin of error of the sample. In these conditions, on the margins of error, we specify the following: for students enrolled in the 1st Level, the margin of error was +/-4.85%: 333 respondents from a total population of 1,841 people; for students enrolled in the 2nd Level, the margin of error was +/- 9.5%: 88 respondents from a total population of 500; for teachers from TTDs, we questioned 50 people from an estimated number of 300 people (taking as reference the internet sites of the 44 TTDs of Romanian universities); in the case of secondary and high school teachers, trained during 1995-2007, we have questioned 122 people from an approximate maximum number of 25,000 people. Thus, the total population of the research (from which we have selected the samples above) is of maximum 30,000 subjects and the margin of error, on the overall sample, is +/-3.98%. We asked all respondents to relate tree items with the idea of quality of pre-service teaching training. Their answers outlined several significant categories listed in the figures bellow. We chose to calculate the weighted value (WV) using the following formula: (1x3+2x2+3x1)/(3+2+1). The WV, as an average obtained by weighting the frequencies recorded by each statement depending on its position, is a finer calculation process of ordering than the simple arithmetic mean. We present the results of the research for each group of respondents, and we make a comparative analysis of the items associated with the quality of pre-service teacher training.

Results and Discussion

Quality of pre-service teacher training: students 1st Level (Figure 5-1). In the case of this category of respondents, the highest WV (23.1) was obtained for acquiring **basic pedagogical knowledge**: actual, useful, and adequate information. On the 2nd place, with the WV of 14.8, we can identify **descriptive associations** made by respondents: quality of the initial teacher training is "important," "basic," "necessary," "good," and "useful." The **quality of practical work** (teaching practice and practical activities carried out in courses and seminars) had a WV of 12.2, close to that of **teaching skills development** (11.3). **Efficient instructional design, training structure and students' motivation** scored the same (3.1).

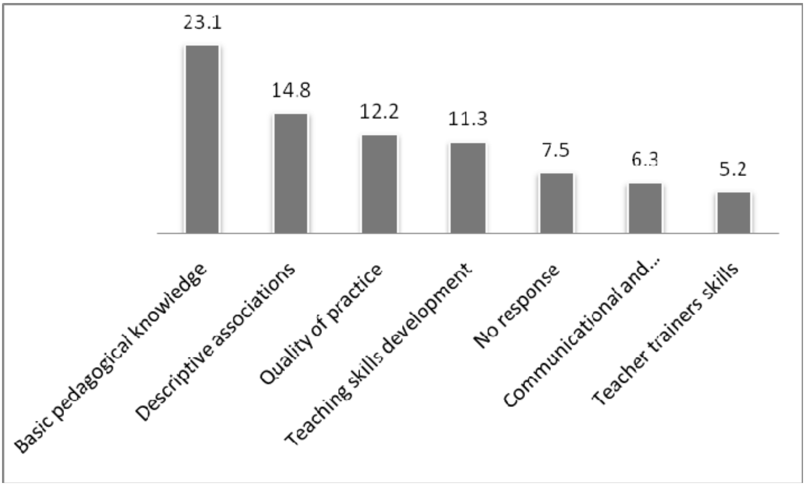

Figure 5-1. Quality of pre-service teacher training: 1st level students

Quality of pre-service teacher training: students 2nd Level (Figure 5-2). For 2nd Level students, the **quality of information** acquired in initial teacher training is the most obvious indicator of the quality of the program (26.5): appropriate, relevant, useful pedagogical knowledge. **Student motivation** ranks 2nd (14.7). Many of the **associations** (13.6) are **descriptive** such as "necessary," "good," "important." If we relate this feature with the number of **non-responses** (17.1), we can easily see that most respondents fail to identify and/or state in operational terms the meaning of the concept of quality of initial teacher training. The quality of the **teaching practice** had a value of 10.6, very close to that of developing teaching skills: 10.3, closeness explained, probably, by the fact that practical activities are those which ensure students the most significant opportunities to develop various teaching skills.

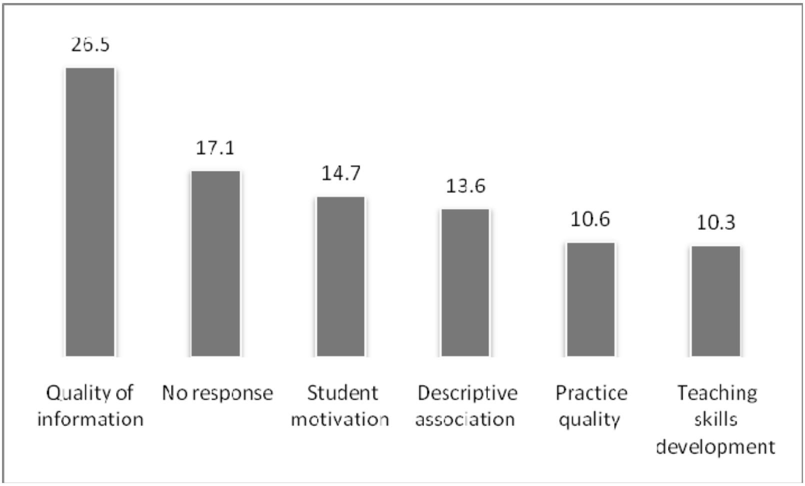

Figure 5-2. Quality of pre-service teacher training: 2nd Level students

Quality of pre-service teacher training: secondary and high school teachers (Figure 5-3). Surprisingly, the highest value was obtained for **non responses** (13.5). Also, for this category of respondents, **descriptive associations** scored high (11.5).

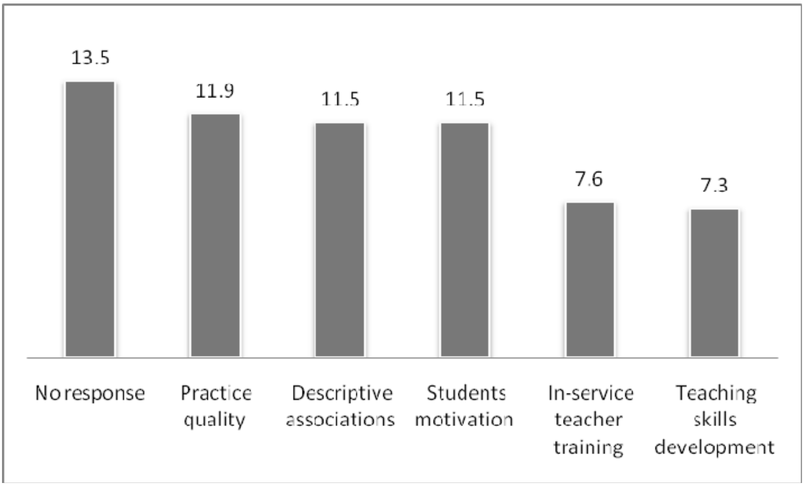

Figure 5-3. Quality of pre-service teacher training: secondary and high school teachers

We can see that the key factor associated with the quality of initial teacher training are **practical activities** (teaching practice and practical applications from the seminars) with a WV of 11.9 and **personal motivation and student interest** (11.5); according to the respondents, teachers must be animated by profession, the teaching profession is "a profession of soul; many teachers should not enjoy it, as long as they profess only for a piece of bread."

Quality of pre-service teacher training: university teachers (Figure 5-4). The main statements that teacher educators associated with the idea of quality of initial teacher training refer to (Iucu & Codorean 2009: 3): **development of teaching skills** (21), **student's interest and motivation** (11.7) and acquisition of **basic teaching knowledge** (11) are considered by teachers essential to ensure the quality of this training. Among the associations made by respondents, we found, also, **self-motivational assessment for the demands of the future profession and active teaching strategies** (WV 3).

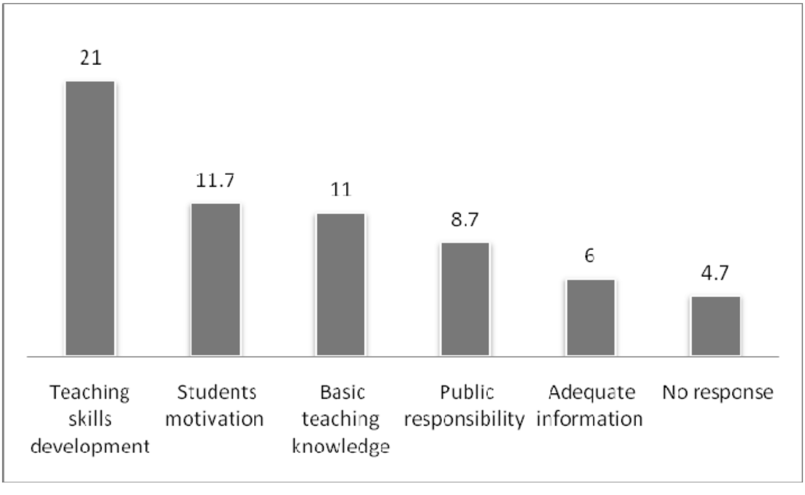

Figure 5-4. Quality of pre-service teacher training: teacher educators

Comparative analysis, although apparently, the concept of quality of pre-service teacher training has different meanings for all four categories of respondents, a detailed analysis of the results shows that it is associated with similar statements. The **quality of practical work** is the most stable aspect in terms of associations made by the respondents. It is, however, surprising that, currently, this feature registered approximately equal values for school teachers and students from the 2^{nd} Level and the smallest values for students from the 1^{st} Level and university teachers (who give more weight to the theoretical foundation of the training). **Students' interest and motivation** for initial teacher training have similar values for college teachers and school teachers. We note a significant difference between the values of this factor among students from the 1^{st} Level (3.1) and 2^{nd} Level students (14.7). We believe that this is explainable by the fact that 2^{nd} Level students are more motivated than when they were at 1^{st} Level and more aware of this conditionality of their training. University teachers most often associated the quality of training with the **development of teaching skills**, this element recording the highest value (21) though, among other categories of respondents, it has weighted less. The biggest differences in terms of WV can be seen in the case of **quality didactic information/knowledge** (26.5 for 2^{nd} Level versus 3 for school teachers). Researchers in the field believe "a solid foundation in subject matter and pedagogical knowledge [...] will enable teachers to improve the quality of education" (Popkewitz 2010: 413). Analyzing the associations made by the four categories of respondents, we can also note broad categories of **non-responses** (1^{st} Level students: 7.5; 2^{nd} level students: 17.1; school teachers: 13.5; university teachers: 4.7) and **descriptive associations** made by the respondents (1^{st} Level students: 14.8; 2^{nd} Level students: 13.6; school teachers: 11.5), which demonstrates that an important part of respondents failed to make relevant associations for the concept of quality of initial teacher training. In order to have a complete image of the perception of the quality of pre-service teacher training in Romania, we have, also, interviewed the directors of TTDs from 10 universities of Romania. We have used a partially structured interview guide, which started with the precise question, *Which are the first three statements you connect with the idea of quality of pre-service teacher training?* The main associations of the concept of quality of pre-service teacher training made by TTD directors are **professionalism and responsibility of trainers**, **development of teaching skills**, **good subject teaching**, **good pedagogical and methodological training**, and **adequate practical training**.

Conclusions

It is clear that success and quality of education – in any type of training – can be achieved only providing the necessary resources for the educational process. In the case of teacher training, the most valuable resource is the human resource involved in the process: teacher trainers and students enrolled in the training program. Naturally, teacher educators considered that their information and skills are adequate for ensuring the quality of training, and they considered that lack of quality is largely due to students' interest and motivation. Because of recent political and social developments, in Romania, the teaching profession is no longer appreciated and a significant proportion of students are not intrinsically motivated to become teachers, but they enrolled in this training program in order to have a (sometimes final) professional alternative. If students enrolled in the teacher training program are not sufficiently motivated, educational activities and, consequently, the entire training teaching is seriously flawed. We believe that one of the measures that could be taken in order to improve the quality of pre-service teacher training should be to increase the social prestige of the teaching profession. Analyzing the responses of all categories of respondents, we can define the quality of initial teaching training as circumscribed by four elements: acquisition of basic pedagogical knowledge, quality teaching practice, development of teaching skills, and students' motivation and interest for teacher training. The quality of pre-service teacher training is a wide spread problem all over the world, not only in Romania, but also in European countries and the U.S.A. This is the reason why researchers argue "efforts to transform teacher education programs to ensure higher levels of quality preparation for all teachers must continue" (Hatwood Futrell 2010: 435).

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ROMANIAN STUDENTS' TIME: A CASE STUDY (UNIVERSITY OF PETROŞANI, ROMANIA)

IOAN-VALENTIN FULGER

Introduction

Higher education, as ultimate level of professional training and cultural endowment of those who choose to attend different colleges, should be measurable from the perspective of its quality through the sum of the different indicators which have the power to generate one or more performance indicators. At least from our point of view, one of the indicators that should be measured continuously is the number of graduates who find a job in the field in which they have been trained from the total of the specializations of the faculties of various universities in the country.

Because we appreciate the importance of this indicator (the share of employments after graduation), we insist that it should be judged not only by the study programs of the faculties but also by the general conditions of the society in which they operate. We believe there is a complex of factors that influence social realities; each generation of graduates of higher education had to face another economic context, especially in the last decade.

Depending on the economic realities, the labour market becomes fluid and some specialties that were in high demand until recently might enter into oblivion. Romania, after changing the social system in 1989, has seen plenty of such changes, and we believe that it is not necessary to insist on them. The professional training of a future graduate, although it really depends on the programmes of the university or of the faculty where the student learns, also depends on how the future graduate understands adapting to these programmes, the time they allocate to effective training as a future specialist in the field they study in the university system. In the spirit of the above-mentioned details, we thought of a sociological study, it is true, of small dimensions, which allows the capture of the current reality in the Romanian higher education.

Methods and Techniques

The study was carried out at the University of Petroşani, Faculty of Sciences, specialisation Sociology and Social Work (all years of study). Although we meant it to be an exhaustive research, that had to include all the students of these specializations (154 people), from objective reasons (some of the students withdrew, others did not pay the schooling fees, others are employees, etc.) we finally questioned a number of 70 students (almost half of those enrolled in the courses of these specializations – 45.45%). We specify that we deliberately realized the field phase in just one week, in order to have a clear picture of the frequency and to obtain correct answers, with full knowledge regarding the phenomenon we analyze.

The method we used was a questionnaire-based sociological investigation. The proceeding of the application of the questionnaire was that of self-administration of an unprepared written exercise: each student received a research tool (printed questionnaire) and was asked to complete it individually, independent of other colleagues at the same time. The questionnaire was mainly a factual one without lacking questions of motivation and opinion. The data processing was realized through the programme SPSS.

Results and Discussion

At the basis of any action, there is motivation. Depending on the motivation, individually and collectively, we can assess the level of performance of those who chose to act in a certain way. The reasoning is also valid for those who chose a college and specialization. From the field data, the students from the University of Petroşani majoring in Sociology and Social Work (Social Welfare), in a proportion that has passed slightly over two thirds (67.1%), chose these specializations because of an intrinsic motivation *(I liked/like what I will do as a professional)*. There are also cases in which positive extrinsic motivations acted (11.4% – *I followed the advice of my parents in order to have a decent life*, 5.7% – greater *chances of employment after graduation)* or negative extrinsic motivation (1.4% – *I had to*; it is the case of those who had to complete their studies otherwise they were moved to a lower position or dismissed). We mention those who chose these specializations lacking any motivation (12.9% – *I* *chose at random)* or those who have cited other reasons without declaring them (1.4%) (Figure 5-5).

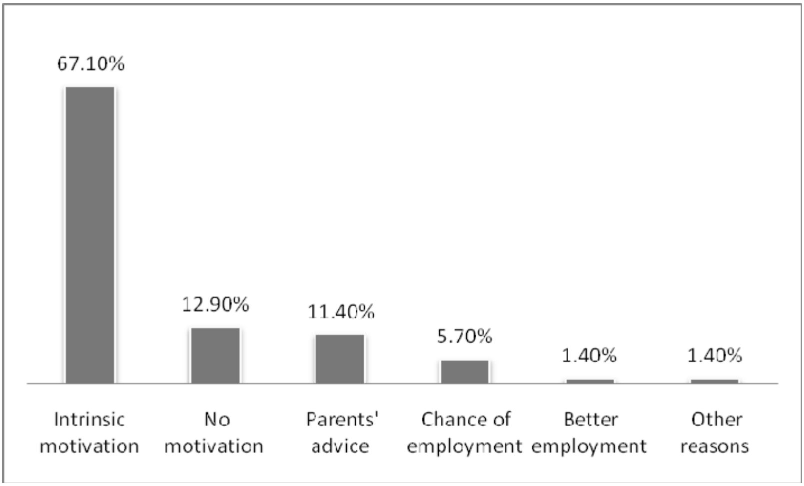

Figure 5-5. Reasons for choosing to major in Sociology and Social work

We asked the questioned students to assess their daily schedule from the perspective of the activities they have to accomplish, *in general,* including activities outside the university. Only a little above one third of students (34.3%) considered it *too loaded.* Almost two thirds (65.7%) rank outside this first rating considering that it is either *completely normal* (50%) or that they *could do many other activities* (15.7%) besides the activities they already have on the agenda. Moreover, only 10% of subjects, referring to the way they manage their time, believe they accomplish just a portion of their respective activities, other 90% believing they achieve the biggest part of the activities (67.1%) or even all of them (22.9%).

The efficient organization of the time, reflected in the accomplishment of the tasks, is a highly debated issue in sociology, especially in labour sociology, organizational sociology and sociology of education. We started from the premise that the employees (*25% of the respondents* have this quality, and 90% of them are employed full time, which confirms data already reported at national level – cf. Florea 2011) will consider the schedule that they have to observe *as students*, more charged than those who do not have a job and whose only concern is the performance of the academic activities. Before analyzing the correlation, we show that, of the total students, 12.9% believed *their* schedule was loaded, 74.2% believed it was *normal*, and the other 12.9% thought it was *comfortable/loose*. We must admit that we found with surprise there were no differences between students in the assessment of the schedule, whether employed or not, which raises certain questions related to the premise from which we started. Below, we followed, on other correlations, the manner in which the quality of employee/unemployed influences courses, seminars, laboratories or project attendance. In order to have an effective presentation of the information we condensed into one table three correlations (Table 5-1).

Table 5-1. Presence of the students at different educational activities

The quality	Participation share	Course	Seminar	Project / Lab
Employed student	Below 50%	35.3%	41.2%	41.3%
	50%	41.2%	17.6%	17.6%
	up to 75%	17.6%	35.3%	23.5%
	100%	5.9%	5.9%	17.6%
Unemployed student	Below 50%	13.2%	11.2%	13.7%
	50%	20.8%	20.8%	23.5%
	up to 75%	39.6%	35.8%	27.5%
	100%	26.4%	32.1%	35.3%

Even if the assessment of the schedule did not differentiate between employed and unemployed students, the correlations regarding this quality and participation at the various university activities demonstrate that unemployed students lead the way regarding the presence of 100% in all the three forms of activity taken into account. If we merge, the differences would become even greater. Interesting aspects resulted when we compared the data obtained by us for the students of the two specializations from the University of Petroşani, regarding the standard week of work and fun with the data resulted from the reports of ARACIS (Table 5-2).

Table 5-2. Standard week of work and leisure in students from the University of Petroşani (Sociology and Social Work)

Teaching activities	Individual study	Household activities	Leisure Time	Mean
3.38 hours / day	1.94 hours / day	2.78 hours / day	3.6 hours / day	11.7 hours / day
16.9 hours / week	9.7 hours / week	13.9 hours / week	18 hours / week	58.5 hours / week
26.6 hours/week				

We noticed some interesting elements. Firstly, the enrolment of the students on which the study was carried out ranks among national averages starting with teaching activities, continuing with individual study, daily time spent on academic activities (teaching + individual study), leisure time and average of the standard work and leisure per week. Secondly, there is a discrepancy between household activities: those from the University from Petroşani exceed from the point of view of the time allocated the double of the national average. This discrepancy is evident because the productive activities that are included in the national analysis are simply included in the household activities of those from the University from Petroşani. The explanation is a simple one: many families from the area, due to the fact that the large reorganizations from the mining sector have left them without a job, had to be involved in productive activities, other than from the state sector, to which the family members who currently have the status of student also take part.

According to the source used in Table 5-3, both averages obtained on the effort of the students strictly on the educational activities (teaching + individual study) are placed below what is required by the Treaty of Bologna. In this Treaty, they stipulated a daily effort of 8 hours (40 hours/week). The calculations show that the daily effort of the students majoring in Sociology and Social Work from the University of Petroşani is 66.5% from what is recommended in the Treaty as European average, and at the national level it reaches 70% of the same recommendation.

Table 5-3. Standard week of work and leisure in Romanian students

Educational activities	Individual study	Household activities	Leisure time	Productive activities	Mean
19 hours /week	9 hours / week	6 hours / week	17 hours /week	8 hours / weeks	59 hours /week
28 hours / week					

Source:http://www.aracis.ro/fileadmin/ARACIS/Publicatii_Aracis/Publicatii_ARACIS/Romana/barometru-final.pdf.

As we have already indicated, nearly a quarter (24.3%) of the questioned students is employed, and 55.7% of the total of the enrolled students commute to come to class. All this implies, in addition to the activities already taken into account, other costs of time, apart from the standard working week and leisure. For example, for the students who are employed (93.8% of them are employed full time), the average of time allocated daily to the job/duty is 6.8 hours. In the case of these students, there are arrangements with employers and the co-workers in order to obtain a work program to enable them to arrive at the classes/seminar/laboratory. In the case of the commuter students, the daily average of time allocated to travelling to the faculty and from the faculty is 0.98 hours, which means a weekly average of 4.9 hours. The way in which the time allotted to travel to faculty and from the faculty correlates is directly proportional with the affectation of the implementation of various activities. We found that the affectation/the damage becomes significant up to one hour, in the negative sense.

The standard of living has a vital influence on the organization of the time budget as a student. We correlated the way of living with the appreciation of its influence on the manner in which the time is used as a student, with the comparisons being between the categories the percentages do not total 100%, but the hierarchy is correct. We mention that we present only the variants appreciated positively, in descending order: only with my parents (70.8%), accommodated/lodged (33.3%), with my parents and my brothers (25%), in the students' hostel together with other colleagues (25%), with the husband/wife and the child/children (14.3%). By far, the most approved way of living is that with the parents (alone, however). There's no point in insisting on the advantages that result from this way of living, which have repercussions on the budget time, but it should be mentioned as such.

Because we studied the standard working week and fun at the students we considered opportune to determine the ways of spending the Saturdays and the Sundays, which are practically sanctioned as days of relaxation but they can be used as a means of recovery of some activities that could not be realized during the other days of the week.

For almost one third of the students (32.4%), the weekend is an opportunity to relax. For a little over another third (totalled), the weekend is an opportunity to spend some moments with the family (19.1%) or to walk through the city (16.2%). What we want to show is that more than one tenth (7.4%) intend to recover activities that they have not been able to realize in the past week or “to clear the way” for the next week drawing up papers, lecture notes, working effectively at the projects of the year or other tasks assigned to them. We also found that abreast of those who actively manage their time on weekends there are more students who are employed (17.6% of them, compared to 3.9% of the unemployed), otherwise there are no significant differences that deserve to be highlighted, the way of spending the Saturdays and the Sundays being similar for both categories.

At least from our perspective, such way of organizing the week days, not from the point of view of the activities but as a percentage of them, is not a very effective one. Our position is in conflict with the opinion of most students: 81.4% from the students believe it the best way of organizing.

In accordance with the data of another correlation, the present organization of the time budget for the weekend seems the *most suitable* for 66.7% of students from the first year, for 78.6% from the second year and not less than 92.6% of those from the third year. We consider that this situation is not satisfactory. From our point of view, we would have expected that as the students move on from one year to another, especially in the year of graduation and of the academic degree, to be dissatisfied with the time they have at their disposition, by the way they use their time, being under pressure because of the academic degree. The reality, however, contradicted us.

In the end of the work, we would like to show the availability of the students to go to a specialist (counsellor) in order to use with greater efficiency the time budget: only 30% would accept the help of a specialist in the management of their time.

Conclusions

Romanian higher education has undergone radical changes in the last two decades in its attempt to rally to the European imperatives. There are researches, including this one, which shows that adjustment takes time, our connection to the European requirements being in full process, but far from being completed. This is demonstrated by the fact that we rank below the European standard required by the Treaty of Bologna regarding the individual daily effort on educational activities. The national average regarding the achievement of this indicator is 70%. The one resulted from our research, for the students from the Sociology and Social Work specializations from the University of Petroşani is 66.5%. The pursuit of different indicators from the point of view of their achievement (quantitative and qualitative) can help reduce the differences between Romanian universities and the printing of a single speed of the higher education from Romania.

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SCHOLARLY DIGITAL CURATION IN 140 CHARACTERS

GABRIELA GROSSECK AND CARMEN HOLOTESCU

Introduction

This paper explores possible ways to integrate two of the most popular and trendy applications of the moment – *microblogging* and *digital curation* – in university environment. More specifically, the authors investigate the role of microblogging technology in the digital curation academic workflow from the perspective of teaching/training, learning and researching. Thus, in order to synthesize, analyze and extract relevant and pertinent information in terms of definitions, uses, advantages, limits and further recommendations, the aim of this paper is supported by a literature review about digital curation and microblogging in higher education. The practical part is based on studying teachers/students/practitioners' accounts on Cirip.eu, a microblogging platform widely used in the Romanian education landscape.

What Digital Curation Is: A Short Introduction

While the classic term **curation** was used mostly in museums, implying the study of specific techniques, the new buzzword of the web *Digital Curation* (DC) names a rapidly evolving field in line with the expansion of social media, being 'a promising new framework for organizing and adding value to Social Media, complementing the traditional methods of algorithmic search and aggregation' (Duh *et al*. 2012). Many researchers and practitioners in social media appreciate that 2012 is the year of digital curation. However, Gil (2012) suggests that digital curation is more than a meta-trend in social media, it is 'a big evolutionary step'.

Literature offers many definitions of curation and there are more ways of interpreting curation in the online environment. Although digital curation can be used as a synonym for aggregation, in fact it is a double for ‘intelligent aggregation’ (Rosenbaum 2011), ‘maintaining, preserving and adding value to digital research data throughout its lifecycle’ (The Digital Curation Centre 2012). In the authors’ opinion, digital curation is the collaborative activity of finding, selecting, creatively reorganising social media artefacts/assets relevant for different topics and sharing them with the aim of future consumption.

Digital curation can be: (a) *human-driven* (finding and selecting the content on a specific issue is realized by the users, being a creative and intellectual labour – socially curated web); (b) based on *algorithmic/aggregation* techniques (selection follows one’s preferences and ‘therefore kills serendipitous discovery’) or (c) *a combination of both*. **Are there levels of DC?** For instance, *is there a professional and/or amateur level, since social media allow the latter status for any person with an internet connection?* Moreover, “anyone can be a curator”, regardless of profession, age, gender, time, etc. (Kelly 2012). Summarizing, the person that gathers and selects relevant information for one’s own audience is a ‘**digital curator**’. Likewise, curation is possible with all kind of media objects not only text and links (e.g., audio, photos, videos). Different **types of curated content** can be found on the Robin Good’s mind map/blog discovering educational news and information (presentation, case studies, tips and advice, reviews of events and books, photos, infographics, videos and podcasts), learning/narrative communities, etc.

Digital Curation Advantages

As Ingram (2012) expressed, digital curation cut ‘through the noise of all those social-media streams and summarize the content that matters’. Users have ‘ways of filtering the massive amounts of information that keep flooding their activity streams and other social media inboxes’.

Content quality, thoroughness and regularity in combing the web save the user’s energy, which is no longer wasted on other social media channels in search of quality/relevant content. Other advantages are: it opens a whole wonderland of curiosity and fascination; one can discover new things through sources we already know and trust (Popova 2012); consuming content (especially visually) is faster; it encourages serendipitous discovery; users are comfortable with the easy use of these applications; it controls the curated stream (what to receive/follow only the topics the user wants); users can express their subjectivity freely; it imposes a sort of social dynamics through shared interests/community;

anyone can do it (one does not need any particular expertise/knowledge to curate); the user is on information consumption diet; it saves time; one can stay update on a specific topic, etc.

One can note two characteristics that give digital curation its social attribute: the process is collaborative, thus social, and also curated data gain an extended social visibility. One can also speak about *social and mobile curation phases* during the last 2-3 years, characterized by an exponential growth of the content created by the users, by a boom in microblogging, social networks and dedicated curation applications, but also by the possibility of accessing them on mobile devices.

Digital Curation Disadvantages

It is known, however, that this concept has negative effects as well, derived mainly from the abuse and misinterpretation of the concept: many of the applications are not well organized, they are beta (and shoot up like mushrooms), comprehensive (for instance, the 'Discover' button in Twitter); information-overload/content abundance, and the correct information web curation *vs*. aggregation; mentioning the source – a first step in the ethic regulation of this issue is the publication of the Curator's Code (Popova 2012); opportunity cost of the content (e.g., what one wins if RT); curation can't exist without creation; 'tireless commitment to rebroadcast materials' (Rosenbaum 2011); noise of social media; curation should not be an excuse for plagiarism (Cool 2010), etc.

Digital Curation Tools That Resonate with Academia

Some of the most used digital curation application educators rely on are: (a) *Twitter* (with the help of the '*Discover'* button = interesting/relevant content to users, retweet content to their own network – tweet this/share on Twitter; and use '*TwitterList*' to curate information from other users); (b) *Tumblr* (Re-blog = 'curate content without producing original content' (Viticci 2010, Gil 2012); (c) *Pinterest* (curate content into 'boards' visually); (d) *Scoop.it* = 'curating made easy, social sharing with wings'; (e) *Flipboard* (makes a show out of the RSS flux – we talk about social aggregation here); (f) *Snip.it* (social information curation platform); (g) *Storify* (a way of telling stories by using social media such as tweets, photos and videos; useful to capture conference sessions (Kanter 2011); (h) *'Old' social media services*: Delicious, flickr, Pearltrees or Google services (Alert/Reader/Books/Bookmarks/YouTube, etc.).

We have to remind as well that there is an explosion of tools specifically designed for content curation and that the choice is difficult.

Digital Curation in Microblogging

Scoble (2009) commented the real time landscape as having two sides: on one side (the reading side), there are microblogging platforms, while on the other side, there curation applications. Curation is an unpretentious/easy and accessible form of expression like microblogging, the communication in 140 characters.

Microblogging is also seen as the ultimate "wisdom of the crowds" curation application and also a curated RSS (Suster 2010). The micro-posts streams can be seen as "curated feeds" containing news, but also comments and validation. The most popular microblogging platform, Twitter, prove "curation capabilities," able to digitally curate the stream. "Twitter comes pre-curated by people of whatever level of skill and judgement I choose. [...] Twitter demonstrates the power of curation by networks of persons" (Cameron 2012). In the microblogging environment, the persons in your Personal Learning Network gather intelligence, generate comments and share content at no cost, the microblogging environment functioning as a social-based filter. Again Cameron (2012) appreciates that one of the most notable advantages of Twitter is "mutual curation": the result of sharing mutual interests is "the knowledge growing exponentially."

Scholarly Digital Curation in Higher Education

Digital curation is a way to discover and filter the massive information on the web in some usable way, bring to the users' activity streams data that are important, relevant, interesting, meaningful, worthy to our time. "This next wave of social curation will fundamentally change the way users find and interact with content over time" (Gil 2012). Although, in the context of libraries, the term "curation" is used increasingly in higher education, a set of good practices is still missing (Parsons 2010, Cool 2010). Thus, we suggest the following issues related to digital curation in academic contexts (Papacosta 2011, Weisberger & Butler 2012, Seitzinger 2012):

- *Why must academics curate? Scholars (students, teachers, etc.) as content curators*. Live curating – the truth is that "curating" becomes a necessity: (a) for "learn in the process" (Cool 2010): curated content that best fits the teaching and training objectives, and that supports students' knowledge and learning; (b) to provide quality and relevant online information on a specific subject or theme, "to highlight unique elements and show things from a new perspective"; (c) to organize curated content on timeline, underlying the evolution of a topic; (d) to be helpful, to show one is an (effective) resource/a trusted guide for specific content/an "expert" on a specific topic (Good 2012).

- *How can scholars "comb" the web for educational purposes? What are the curation steps?* The process is pretty straightforward. According to Weisberger & Butler (2012), the steps to becoming an educator-curator are: **find** relevant information/content; **select**/filter the content; **editorialize**/contextualize resources, add one's own perspective (rating); **arrange** (presentation of the digital assets)/sort the content; **create** content in a readable format for the audience/decide on a format (e.g., a microsite); **share** with one's own network (projects, lessons learned); **engage** students in conversations; **track** engagement (feedback). Also, "as a curator, learning and performance professionals would **seek** out potential themes and **trends** and **elevate** them to a higher visibility across the entire organization" (Kelly 2012).
- *Challenges faced by scholars:*
  - *What are we going to create? What are we going to get students to create?* Curating information into knowledge = transform the educational actor into **a knowledge generator**; increasing reputation, attention, online visibility and respect, saving time, "intercepting the needs and interests of very specific niches" (Good 2012) or, as Cool (2010) expressed in a blog entry, "to augment the self-created content ... to communicate with your audience."
  - *What value to the scholars (teachers, students, other educational actors)?* (a) THE TEACHER: First of all, we're talking about the human factor (the intervention of a teacher/trainer/expert/specialist in education, etc.) who will take the "leader role" in curating the web, in order to offer enriched and augmented serious content. The teacher has to know his/her audience/resonate with his/her students/learners, have a solid expertise on the subject taught in order to offer them the most relevant content to satisfy their interest. Likewise, the teacher has to be knowledgeable, and to be a trusted curator. Weisberger & Butler (2012) argue that "the role of a teacher should be re-envisioned as that of a curator of ideas." (b) THE STUDENT: "arouse students' intellectual curiosity" – "In essence, it is about teaching students to become curators themselves." (Weisberger & Butler 2012). Secondly, it is about offering students *a new skill to be learnt for the 21st century*: "the

ability to aggregate, filter and curate content." According to Good (2010), there are 8 curatorial skills to be learnt: online research, new media literacy, communication (copywriting, presentation, visualisation, listening, etc.), editorial (selecting, contextualizing, referencing, crediting, summarizing, updating), semantic (organization and classification, sense-making), social (networking, engagement), information librarian and technical. Thirdly, there is a need of a new pedagogy involved: "a curatorial pedagogy" (Parsons 2010).

- *How can educators' efforts be kept going?* Update their knowledge and skills on a continuous basis, continually **Seek**, make **Sense** of and **Share** useful resources (integrated into the daily routine the three S's of content curation) (Kanter 2011); stay on a niche, be passionate/dedicated (full-time), "experience and familiarity with a specific topic" (Good 2012), be a social media savvy.
- *How will the success be measured/assessed?*

Educational Curation on Microblogging: The Case of Cirip

The educational microblogging platforms Cirip.eu allows a mix of *human-driven* (by teachers, students and other practitioners) and *aggregated curation.* During the 2nd semester of the academic year 2009-2010, the authors have run three university courses in private Cirip groups, all having *Social Learning and Personal Learning Environments (PLE)* as a common topic. In order to support this topic and also benefit from the opportunity that the first PLE Conference was being planned at that moment (the conference took place in Barcelona in July 2010), the courses were enhanced with curated conference-related social media interactions and content. On January 8, 2010, when the first call for papers for the PLE Conference (http://pleconference.citilab.eu) was launched, a specific group was opened (http://cirip.ro/grup/plebcn), the members being students in the three courses, but also teachers, practitioners, trainers, and other persons interested in the PLE domain (Grosseck & Holotescu 2010). Group messages represent a *curated collection* of the interaction/debate on the Cirip microblogging platform and in a worldwide community on the PLE topic and conference consisting of: (a) *tweets* referring to the PLE Conference, imported using the Twitter search API; (b) *blogs posts* which mentioned the conference, found by using the Twingly search engine API, and (c) *multimedia notes* sent by the Cirip group members. Through *interacting*, *studying and filtering* the *real-time aggregated curated* *content*, students c*ollaboratively* produced *multimedia curated content*, frequently using *mobile* devices, which consist of both *thematic curation* and *multimedia curation*. Some examples: tagged messages and comments that identify/elevate key experts and their work, main discussion topics, trends in PLE, PLE related resources of different types and reflections on interesting posts and new resources; multimedia messages embedding presentations, video and audio clips, mindmaps and/or mash-ups (a video on PLE published on dotsub.com, subtitled with comments sent by SMS and exported as a .srt file using the specific facility of Cirip, final projects published as collaborative Google docs, embedded in messages; the projects evaluated multimedia resources, and the work of the followed experts). Curated content and interactions, statistical data, and visualizations can be accessed at http://cirip.ro/grup/plebcn and used in future courses, documentation, and studies. The content can be searched by using group tags/wordcloud or search box. The group can be considered not only a *time capsule* of the worldwide practitioners' interaction on the PLE and the PLE Conference topic, but also a *learning experience*, important in PLE documentation, and an illustration of a *creatively planned collaborative mobile multimedia curation in 140 characters*.

Conclusion

It is necessary, in higher education, to reconsider the concept of digital curation by correctly applying it to the tools used by educational actors. Digital curation has also a strong impact on learning and performance profession. There are many issues that require further attention and debate: audience of curation platforms, technology behind (mobile especially), types of applications, types of digital curation, types of digital curators (content creators, content critics, etc., information transfer in education, economic models (hosts, distribution, etc.), value of the curation process (what the key problems are) for the academic environment, etc.

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COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN ENGLISH FOR THE MEDICAL PRACTITIONER

LAURA-IOANA LEON

Introduction

Over the last 25 years, there has been considerable pressure from professional medical bodies throughout the world to improve training and evaluation of doctors with regard to communication skills. Skill, in communication, is essential in establishing good relationships between doctors and patients. Therefore, communication skills can be learned, and they should be a systematic part of all medical education. The idea of my research came witnessing the increasing number of Romanian physicians who choose to carry out their medical profession in English-speaking environments. Once these graduates find themselves in the foreign medical system, they are confronted with both the linguistic and cultural barriers. A medical doctor needs to be able to fully understand and communicate with his/her patient. Therefore, the main goal is to create the possibilities to develop the language and interpersonal skills essential to the establishment and maintenance of communication between doctors and patients. Medical students should become aware of the need to possess these communication skills in general, but also to get some cross-cultural communication skills early in their career. An opportunity for them to develop these skills is during the English for Special Purpose (ESP) courses and seminars that are part of the academic curricula in the first two years of their medical studies.

Within the vast field of education, the study of foreign languages enjoys individual attention in nowadays Europe. There are many European documents dealing with various aspects of how educational policies should refer to language acquisition. Among these documents, mention should be made of the widely known and used Common European Framework of References for Languages, a system rendered easily understandable to the general public through the European Portfolio commissioned and endorsed by the Council of Europe. The project on intercultural communication effectiveness in healthcare is an Action-Research undertaking in which the scientific research and practical applications are intertwined. The Action-Research methodology serves a dual purpose, aiming both at deeper knowledge and more effective practice. The project's conceptual framework relies on EU language policy and the results support the linguistic competence in a useful and relevant way for the medical field in general. The project, thus, takes into account the more general context in which the "Grigore T. Popa" University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Iaşi, Romania (where I am currently a Lecturer teaching ESP) wants to develop and engage in international cooperation.

In its Action Plan for promoting language learning acquisition diversity, The European Commission issues a number of recommendations for universities who are invited to adopt a clear language policy, which explains in clear terms the way in which the institution promotes the national/regional language and ensures the acquisition of linguistic competencies in other languages. Universities are also invited to ensure the modalities of language acquisition for students who want to go and study abroad, and for foreign students who want to come and study at a certain university.

Objectives

The idea of this project came witnessing an increasing number of graduates from the "Grigore T. Popa" University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Iaşi who are seeking for jobs abroad. Thus, the need to be able to communicate in a foreign language becomes of paramount importance. Once these graduates find themselves in the foreign medical system, they are confronted with both linguistic and cultural barriers. Besides all these, a medical doctor needs to be able to fully understand and communicate with his/her patients. Therefore, the main goal is to create the possibilities to develop the language and interpersonal skills necessary in trying to maintain an excellent rapport between doctors and their patients. All this can be partially achieved by means of practical courses on ESP, partly by trying to establish some optional courses on developing communication skills in English with the medical practitioner/pharmacist in the academic curricula. By attending these courses and seminars, medical students may become more confident in their possibilities to carry out their duties in English effectively and may, at the same time, become aware of the different aspects of culture that could cause misunderstanding during the medical encounter.

The aim of the course is not to teach medicine or medical practices. The trainer of the course only acts as a facilitator and authority in the English language and communication skills, rather than an expert in medicine (though the collaboration with the physicians is essential). Another important goal of such a course is to enhance the grammatical and lexical features of English, employing an approach that encourages students to discover the language and its properties. Medical journal articles are used to introduce terminology and describe the key concepts of communication. The aim of the course is to train students how to sensitively handle a variety of situations, starting with the taking of the patient's medical history, going on with the physical examination, describing treatment options and breaking bad news. The courses and seminars should also train medical students to deal with different patient types, including children and the elderly. The activities inside the courses and seminars have in view the publication of a course on communication skills in English for the medical practitioner, a practical guide training the future physicians to acquire the necessary skills in communicating with the patient in English. Eventually, this course is also a handy guide for those medical doctors who want to practice medicine in a different cultural environment where English is the means of communication. Likewise, the printed material will be a valuable educational material for any professor that teaches ESP at any medical school or college in Romania.

Methodology

My project on intercultural communication effectiveness in health care is an Action-Research undertaking through which scientific research and practical applications are intertwined. The Action-Research methodology, thus, serves a dual purpose, aiming at both deeper understanding and more effective practice. The activities inside the course have in view the functional training of future doctors in acquiring the necessary skills in communication with the patient in a foreign language, drawing the students' attention on cultural issues or any other aspect of culture that could cause misunderstandings in the doctor – patient encounter. The aim of the course is not to teach medicine or medical practices: the trainer acts as a facilitator and authority in the English language and communication skills, rather than an expert in medicine. The communication techniques that the students are going to learn will help them rethink their communication strategies in their native language as well, not only in English. Thus, students are involved in a new learning activity on their own active participation in learning as practice and analysis. Looking at the professional future of the students, their involvement in this project will help them to become models of pluridimensional professional identity.

The research follows several key directions. The most obvious one refers to the students' opportunities to develop their spoken communication skills. Here, we have in view chiefly the doctor's ability to communicate effectively with the patient, trying to avoid any possible obstacle in establishing a coherent dialog with the patient. We also cover, here, the doctor's ability to build an informal dialogue with the patient when advice is given, or treatment strategies are discussed. The doctor should become familiar with the common language that patients may use jargon, children vocabulary, or any other social or age categories. Another direction would be that of developing non-verbal communication skills: the doctor's ability to understand, beyond words, non-verbal messages from the patients. All these non-verbal messages may disclose the patient's anxiety during the medical encounter and, thus, the doctor could establish the necessary steps he/she should take in order to ensure the emotional comfort of the patient. At the same time, however, by means of the same kind of non-verbal messages, the doctor should also be aware that he/she might also send different messages to the patient. Obviously, these messages may be misinterpreted by patients coming from different cultural backgrounds. Likewise, when a person enters a clinic, all his/her senses – sight, sound, touch, and smell – pick up messages, whether consciously or unconsciously. During the consultation, non-threatening body language, such as sitting at a comfortable distance, at a similar level and having a face-to-face conversation, encourages good communication. The doctor should be aware of his/her own body language, but he/she should also pay attention to the patient's body language, especially during the process of taking the history (Silverman 2005). An activity during the ESP class that would make the students aware of the importance of non-verbal cues during the doctor – patient encounter is that of asking them to take a look at some pictures describing different situations during the medical examination and then, in groups, discuss what that body language would mean in their own culture. Students may also use the internet to find other fields, besides medicine, where understanding non-verbal communication is indispensable.

The doctor should also be able to develop active listening skills, very important in the process of establishing an accurate diagnosis. Specialists say that 80% of the diagnosis is given by the patient during the interview; all other medical procedures, X-rays, blood tests, biopsies are there only to confirm what the doctor recorded from the patient's telling of the symptoms (Peterson 1992). Listening to an individual's account of his/her problems and past medical and social histories requires the doctor to be an attentive listener. Being an attentive listener is a skill that will help doctors appreciate the other person's point of view and strengthen the relationship between them. Doctors will also need to ask questions in the appointment to gather information to enable them to achieve a better understanding of a person's general condition. An open question at the beginning of the consultation such as *How are you today?* helps people express their concerns. Later in the consultation, a closed question will help the doctor focus the consultation and elicit specific information: *How often do you take painkillers?* Likewise, while explaining and reassuring, the doctor should pay attention to the correct word stress of words. While explaining investigations or procedures with the Present Passive, students should be aware of the difference between Active and Passive Voices. Active sentences say who is doing an activity, while passive sentences do not necessarily indicate who is doing the action, though they can (e.g., Active: *The doctor attaches the needle to the syringe*; Passive: *The needle is attached to the syringe – by the doctor*, which is not necessary). Some other verbs in English may require objects (e.g., Active: *Only experienced doctors perform this procedure*; Passive: *This procedure is performed only by experienced doctors"*). In terms of encouraging patients and making suggestions in English as part of the medical consultation, students should know how to use the modal verbs in English. For tentative suggestions, one can use the modal *can / could / might* (e.g., *You could get off the bus one stop earlier / You can get off the bus one stop early / you might get off the bus one stop early*. *Shouldn't / should / ought* are used for strong suggestions (however, students should be careful, these can be annoying rather than encouraging and are probably best avoided): *You should give up smoking / You shouldn't eat fatty food*.

Last but not least, mention should also be made of the importance of cultural awareness. When both the doctor and the patient belong to different cultural backgrounds, cultural awareness becomes especially critical. It begins with the doctor's understanding of the impact of his/her own cultural background on the patient, how this may affect the relationship. Doctors must establish an empathy with people coming from different cultures. This cultural competence should become a regular part of all communication between doctors and patients. Likewise, working in a team in an English-speaking environment may be a challenge for a non-native speaker. In order to be culturally aware, a doctor should know how the concept of politeness functions in that culture. What is considered to be polite in one culture may not be considered so in another culture.

Therefore, students, as learners of English as a foreign language, should be familiarized with such situations during the ESP courses and seminars. An activity that would help students to realize such details would be that in which they were involved in various types of activities such as describing how they would deal with different situations in their own culture/language (interrupting colleagues politely, working with different colleagues, asking a colleague on the ward for help, apologizing for being late, asking permission from someone you do not know to use the equipment, offering help to a colleague they see in trouble/busy). From a linguistic point of view, being polite in the English language may function a little bit different from the Romanian language. Deciding how to approach different people for help or to offer help in another language can be tricky. Therefore, it is usually more polite to ask permission to do something rather than to just do what you want to do. You may think *I want to make a phone call!* but you will have to say *Is it ok if I make a phone call?* When you need help, it is generally more polite to ask for help than to demand it. You may think *I need help lifting this!* but you will have to say *Would you mind helping me lift this?* When you see someone needs help, it is generally considered more polite to make your offer as a question rather than a statement. You may think *I can help you with that!* but you will have to say *Would you like some help with that?*

Lifestyle changes can often involve breaking habits developed over a lifetime, so making these changes can be extremely difficult for the patient. Moreover, when individual habits are part of a larger societal framework, change is likely to be even more difficult. It is also valuable, therefore, to establish the role that cultural factors may play in preventing a patient from following advice on lifestyle. When working with children, it is necessary to be aware that different cultures have different expectations of what “good” behaviour is for children. In some cultures, mothers expect children to be more independent and investigative, while, in other cultures, they reward more obedient children.

Results

During the ESP courses and seminars, students should be made aware of the fact that the most significant barrier that may arise in establishing a coherent dialogue with the patient is the language itself. Language is undoubtedly the most pressing question in cross-cultural communication. Even when the doctor is familiar with the language of the majority culture, there will always be nuances, metaphors, idiomatic expressions, and non-verbal cues that could cause misunderstanding or confusion for non-native speakers. Misunderstandings can threaten the doctor – patient relationship and have significant implications for the patient's care.

As part of my dissemination activities inside the postdoctoral fellowship, at the beginning of March 2012, I organized a workshop with my 2nd year students in Dental Medicine. The workshop was entitled "Intercultural Communication between Patients and Healthcare Providers." This issue was discussed and analyzed in a vast number of studies. However, nothing can be compared to the direct experience of a doctor who actually had the opportunity to go abroad to carry out his/her medical profession, having to face all these linguistic and cultural barriers on his/her own. Therefore, during this workshop, I invited as a keynote speaker one of my colleagues at the "Grigore T. Popa" University of Medicine and Pharmacy who, besides her academic career, worked as a full time dentist at a Dental Clinic in the UK for two years. The discussions were extremely helpful in the sense that my colleague managed to talk about her own experience as a Romanian doctor who had to face all these cultural issues in the British medical system. Going to another country often implies striving to achieve status. In addition, one's professional competence is often questioned (especially when the doctor comes from a country which is less developed from an economic point of view). Students asked how my colleague overcame all the barriers including language difficulties: understanding the patients' dialects, other physicians' accents or if she had any other difficulties in using medical vocabulary. Although, by and large, my colleague's experience in the UK was a successful one, she pointed out the problem of being singled out or the constant pressure to perform and not to disclose any weaknesses in carrying out all medical procedures.

Conclusions

The elements of novelty which render the project intriguing are multilayered depending on their addressability. At the individual level, the beneficiary students are involved in a new learning activity centred upon their own involvement in learning as practice and analysis. Looking at the professional future of the students, their involvement in this project will help them become models of pluridimensional professional identities. At institutional level, the "Grigore T. Popa" University of Medicine in Iaşi will be promoting the most recent European policies placing at the core of the learning process the acquisition of competencies (complementary competencies). At the level of language education, we may conclude by saying that medical students will gain a greater understanding and a competitive edge in an international environment for study, work and cooperation.

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Social Sciences Facebook Teachers and Students: A Case Study (West University of Timişoara, Romania)

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Introduction

The current era is an information age with free access to all net citizens. The younger generation is, evidently, inclined toward information through technology, and, for many years, they were the most significant demographic segment who used and enforced the use of technology for different daily reasons and purposes, including academic education, researching and communicating. As Internet usage of the current generation Y (or so called Digital Natives, Net Generation, or Millenials) students is profoundly social in nature, among such applications, for interaction and communication, social networking tools (especially Facebook) have become the preferred mean of communication.

Facebook was launched in February 2004 for Harvard students, then it was expanded to other universities, including British universities in February 2005. In September 2006, Facebook became accessible to everyone (although Facebook is no longer restricted to students, it is not available and free in the same way as Internet, as potential users bid to open an account), provided he/she is at least 13 and has a valid email address. Already in July 2008, more than half of registered users were outside universities (West *et al*. 2009).

Since its launch and openness, Facebook grew exponentially, and today the number of registered users is estimated to more than 900 million active users (http://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/05/facebook-third-largest-country-if/), which means that, were Facebook a country, it would be the third largest in the world. According to statistics (http://social mediatraining.ro/2012/06/29/social-media-in-romania-iunie-2012/), in June 2012, in Romania there were about 5 million registered users on

Facebook. If we look at the demographic profile of Facebook users (http://mashable.com/2012/03/09/social-media-demographics/), Facebook is dominated by well-educated people with a bachelor or graduate degree. Moreover, according to the last (June 2012) Pew Internet report on Internet usage (http://www.pewinternet.org/~/media//Files/Reports/2012/PIP_Older_adults_and_internet_use.pdf), at least 86% of Americans aged 18-29 use some forms of social networks.

Initially, Facebook was created for students, not for professors. It was a space dedicated to students, in order to enable them to express themselves freely, without worrying of what some professors will think. As students and also youth of the same age have embraced social networking as a key part of their lives, they "pushed" Facebook to become the company of today.

On the other hand, according to US statistics (http://jeffthomastech.com/blog/?p=10261), even teachers become day by day more social-networking addicted. Thus, 91% of them are engaged in social media for work activities, and they also choose Facebook for educational purposes.

Even if such detailed statistics are not available for Romania, in Romania the number of Facebook users is extremely high compared with the use of other social media tools. In this paper, the interest is in teachers' attitude towards becoming Facebook friends with their students, and in recognition of all possible consequences.

Teachers on Facebook

As teachers, we are challenged to manage cohorts of students as they flow through classes and lives. Moreover, during their teaching, teachers' job is to adapt to the new learning style of the students. As the current generation of students is getting more and more sophisticated in their use of the new social media tools and as the pedagogical potential of social networks has been increasingly recognized, teachers must learn how to handle these tools for educational purposes, including teaching and communicating with their students. In other words, as teachers know the overwhelming majority of their students are using the social network Facebook, they must understand and use privacy settings on the social-networking site to protect themselves and students, too.

As the teachers become more preoccupied with the new professional development activities (including social media teaching skills), but also with "old" activities such as teaching and communicating with their students, delimitation of privacy and keeping personal information confidential is essential. Therefore, they must learn, understand and use the privacy settings on the social-networking site to protect themselves and students, too. Moreover, doing so helps them keep some distance from their students, which is crucial in earning respect and in keeping control of their class relationship.

If teachers wish to use Facebook, the social relationship with their students could be one of the following:

- The necessity of making "friends" with them and of:
  - Accepting the students' friend request or requesting for their friendship (which is not recommended), managing other types of contacts too (teacher colleagues, friends, family; etc.);
  - Having a separate profile to communicate with the students. On the one hand, this is in contradiction with Facebook's rules which limit users to a single profile. On the other hand, managing separate accounts means spending much more time on Facebook, which is already an issue for most teachers; even they are using different tools for enhancing productivity and effectiveness.
  - Accepting students' friend request, but having two levels of privacy and thus adding students to the restricted one. As people can have different levels of privacy (but not supposed to have multiple accounts), this advanced approach will require, for some teachers, instructions to manage.
  - Accepting students' friend request, but stipulating rules to communicate with them only in dedicated Facebook groups, specially designed by teachers (or students) for educational purposes.

- Using a separate Facebook page, specially designed by teachers (or students) for educational purposes. Using this new (from February 2011) Facebook characteristic, students who view the page can choose to become "fans" of the Facebook page. If they become fans, this is shown on their personal profile page, for their friends to see and for a quicker access to it. Also, depending on the page's restrictions, they will be able to communicate with the page's community, which probably means colleagues and possibly other teachers. They can also subscribe to the page, in order not to lose content.

Therefore,

- Teachers in the (a) situation have no control of their profile content and, therefore, students can see even pieces of content that their

teachers are not comfortable to share. Students can also subscribe to their professors' accounts in order not to lose any content;
- Teachers in the (b) situation can best keep their privacy from students' indiscretion. In this paper, we are considering the notion of privacy meaning personal, secret, intimate, and security issues;
- Teachers in the (c) situation can also separate their privacy from students' eyes, but with noticeably much effort and constant attention;
- Students in the (d) situation are directed somehow toward a special place with educational content, but they can also take a look at the teacher's account, which means no privacy space for teachers.

Therefore, knowing all the possibilities and facets of having a relationship with their students, teachers must make an option between "Confirm" and "Ignore" when they receive a friend request which from their students. Moreover, if they still want to use Facebook for an online relationship with their students, they can initiate or suggest an appropriate channel of communication, collaboration, interaction and share knowledge, ideas and information.

Facebook Students

As mentioned above, Facebook was originally created for students, not for the teachers. It was a space dedicated to the students, to enable them to express themselves freely, without worrying about what their teachers think. Mainly because of their active participation, Facebook has become the most valuable piece of today's social media landscape.

Over time, as teachers become more present and visible on Facebook, this kind of online relationship becomes inevitable. As for the students, they feel more important if they become friends with their teachers, without thinking of the possible related negative consequences. Moreover, they want to get to know their teachers better, sometimes considering them as mentors and life models.

In most cases, students are the initiators of this type of student-teacher online relationship. They request their teachers to be Facebook friends, but there are also cases in which this type of online relationship is initiated by the teachers.

As is the case of some teachers, there are also students who choose to keep their Facebook for personal communication and interaction with their friends, family and colleagues. They do not want their teachers to see where, with whom and how they spend their free time or class time.

Therefore, even in students' cases, we can say once more that a modern device may complicate the student-teacher relationship, be it in an online environment (or combined with F2F relationships).

Since recent times have challenged the teacher-student relationship – sexual harassment, political correctness, etc. – students must think carefully if they want to have (and how to handle it) or to avoid a social relationship with their teachers, on Facebook, or elsewhere.

Sensitive Social Consequences of Facebook Teachers-Students Online Relationships

As mentioned above, for some teachers it is imperative to keep their personal information and privacy far away from their students' eyes. Though some students consider that a student-teacher relationship on Facebook could humanize their teachers and could also facilitate online learning (by enhancing collaboration and writing, by being part of a social learning community, etc.), some opposing arguments should be taken into account.

Apart from invading the private online life on Facebook, literature also presents some examples of inappropriate behaviour of the students who are in a Facebook online relationship with their teachers, and vice-versa. Therefore, when a student becomes a friend of his/her teacher, they are tempted to ask for more favours (Lipka 2007) such as being allowed to take a test (though they have not accomplished the related tasks, etc.), getting a better grade, etc.

Likewise, there are also some bad examples of teachers' who have made improper remarks on their students' Facebook text or photos (Allbright 2012), etc.

Anyway, there is a variety of arguments highlighting the positive and negative consequences social networks (especially Facebook) can (and do) have on student-teacher relationships. However, an appropriate recipe could not be addressed, and each relationship should be carefully monitored.

From this perspective, both teachers and students should not forget there are other online spaces for teachers and students in which to communicate, cooperate and exchange ideas and resources. Besides, some of such online spaces are even more appropriate – they support the separation between professional and private online life. Therefore, they can decide what to use, and in which conditions (to establish their etiquette of communication and cooperation with the students).

How Do Social Sciences Teachers from the West University of Timisoara Use Facebook with Their Students?

In order to show how the teachers of the West University of Timişoara (Romania) – the Faculty of Sociology and Psychology, the Faculty of Political Sciences, Philosophy and Communicational Sciences – use Facebook with their students, we conducted a survey of 24 teachers' accounts, representing about 80% of teachers available on Facebook.

With only three exceptions, teachers use their personal account with their students, without maintaining a barrier on their private online activities on Facebook. Therefore,

- Teachers are in the (a) situation above: they were not aware of the possible (negative) consequences. They are now concerned about how to best handle this teacher-student relationship without becoming unfriendly, which was demonstrated to affect the psychological relationship.
- Therefore, they are interested in passing into the (c) situation and, from now on, they will accept new students' friendship request only after acceptance of some communication rules, established by the teachers – the (d) case.

Fortunately, there are three teachers that have a separate Facebook page where to post the educational content. Thus, this Facebook page is dedicated to a specific group of enrolled students with which to share educational content like knowledge, courses and related resources, ideas, individual and group activities.

Moreover, there are even teachers who are not in any relationship with their students. They prefer to postpone having a Facebook relationship with their students until the students' graduation.

Therefore, the state of the art of the student-teacher (from the above mentioned faculties and university) Facebook relationship is not a perfect example of how to handle properly and appropriately this sensitive online relationship. Both teachers and students will pay attention to these issues if they want to see positive expected results from such an online relationship. Moreover, as in the West University of Timişoara, there are no guidelines or policy regarding such online relationship, the decision belongs to the involved persons.

Short Conclusions

As Facebook is becoming the primary means of communication for today's youth, academics must find a proper solution for using this huge potential tool for education purposes. If Facebook is used appropriately in order to find appropriate solutions to (re)engage students in academic activities, it could become a vital educational resource for all academic actors: students, teachers and educational institutions. As, in many cases, teachers are in control when they accept or reject a request for friendship initiated by a student, they should be aware of all possible consequences, both positive and negative.

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Training and Development of Teachers' Professional Competence

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Introduction

The achievement and the development of the teachers' professional competence represent the basic requirement of the teachers' initial and continuing training. The purpose of this paper is to show how we can improve the training of the future teachers.

Competence is defined as someone's capacity to utter on a certain thing, on the basis of deep knowledge of the problem in discussion (according to the explanatory dictionary of the Romanian language).

Synthesizing, beyond the various meanings given to the term, most of the theoreticians of the competence paradigm agree with the following key characteristics that can be associated with competence (Ştefan 2011: 47): its components are indivisible (knowledge, skills, attitudes ascribed to this one are integrated); the components evolve, change in content and usefulness; competences seek an ongoing process of learning and development; competences are interconnected and specified according to the context in which they are used; competences are refined by the integration of new experiences of knowledge and action, the key of effective programs of competences development being the identification of learning experiences which ensures the continuous development of sets of knowledge and skills associated to the competence.

In any field or profession, we speak of a system of general and specific competences, the acquisition and development of whom is an ongoing process: knowledge and capacities an individual owns enhance, enrich, and permanently reorganise as the professional experience grows.

Teachers' Professional Competence

When we talk about education, it is necessary to highlight the fact that ensuring quality and effectiveness of the learning process is undoubtedly connected to the associated human resources, to the modality in which they are ready and trained for the achievement of the educational ideal. The system of initial and continuing education must have in view the endowment of the teacher with a set of competences necessary for the development and delivery of the educational content adequate to the present (Balaş 2010).

A qualified teacher has "qualities, aptitudes/skills and knowledge which are involved in the fulfilment of tasks specific to an activity, which can be educable, measurable, assessable and that can be called *performance standards*" (Niculescu, in Diac 2009: 649). Psycho-educators propose the term *competence profile*, which refers to a structure of characteristics, specific behaviours, capacity, and design developed by reporting itself to a specific type of activity of the future teacher (*Ibid.*).

For the teaching profession, competency profile contains several types of general competences (concretized through specific ones): methodological, communication and relations, evaluating the students' performances, psychosocial, scientific and technological, and career management.

Research Design

The research aims at identifying the modalities by which the lectures and practical activities may be organised more efficiently, starting from the idea that psycho-pedagogic education represents an essential requirement of the teaching profession.

The hypothesis to be verified is*: the frequent use of situational learning, problem-solving and experiential learning will lead to the development of future teachers' applied competences.*

Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb 1984) is a basic model used in the design phase of the training course because it helps the students easier achieve the objectives of the course, contributing to the increase of performance. The turn of experiential learning is a process made up of four phases: (a) *Experimentation*: it provides participants with the possibility of testing their knowledge and abilities in critical situations, the appeal to the participants' experience facilitating the exchange of ideas; (b) *Reflection*: it supposes that the participants meditate on the situations experienced in the training activities; (c) *Concluding*: the participants are asked to give a verdict after the experiments connected to the new knowledge and skills they have acquired; (d) The *implementation of new knowledge and skills*: the participants are given the opportunity to practically apply the methods and techniques learnt during the training. **Stating Problems.** Lately, we have talked more and more about the psychology of wondering and interrogating (actions specific to the statement of the problems) which analyses the processes of feeling, understanding and presentation of problems, of checking the solutions found and their application. The key-concepts of stating the problems are the problems and the problem-situation. "The processes of stating the problem consist not only in *problem-solving* but also in *problem-finding*. The term *problem-finding* becomes a synonym of *statement of the problem in this context*. The statement of the problem/generalization is synonym to finding problems represents the essence of the creation process." (Dillon 1988: 12). **Situational learning.** The aim of the general theory of situational learning is to describe the way in which the individual acquires knowledge. Situational learning is considered to be centred on the student, placing him/her as an active participant in the framework of the educational context. Lave & Wenger (1991) present the design of situational learning, considering "learning appears naturally as a function of activity, of context and of culture in which it appears." They promote the idea that the participants become part of the "practice community" where these ones work together.

The sample was made up of 112 subjects – students enrolled in the programme of psycho-pedagogic studies, levels I and II. We chose *an experimental pre-test/posttest plan with comparable groups.* A number of 56 subjects were included in the control sample whereas another 56 subjects were included in the experimental group using the method of comparable samples. The equivalence between the control group and the experimental group was ensured by using the criteria constituted by the level of the research programme and the major.

Research methodology. We chose the dynamics of a development experiment using situational learning, problem-solving and experiential learning. The purpose of the research required the use of a set of methods aimed at data collecting, processing and presentation. Among the psycho-pedagogic research methods, we chose a method which corresponds to the requirements of an *experimental research*: the method of *the written questionnaire inquiry* (the students participating in the psycho-pedagogic training are educated and competent persons, able to understand their own practical progresses). The statistic-mathematical processing required the use of the following modalities: *tables of synthetic results*, *determining the predominant trend*, *identifying the relationship.*

The stages of the experiment. The research supposed the following stages:

Pre-testing. It was performed by the application of the questionnaire to both the subjects in the control group and to the subjects in the experimental group. The subjects in the control group attended the subject courses of the psycho-pedagogic training programme organised in a traditional manner, using methods such as lectures, role play, conversation, case study, debate, project elaboration, etc.

Experimental treatment. The subjects in the experimental group attended the research programme, focused on methods such as fish tank technique, GAP (group of professional thoroughness), opinion sharing, STAD (Student Team Achievement Divisions), Frisco, jigsaw, brainstorming, SWOT (Strengths – Weakness – Opportunities – Threats), PIPS – Phase of Integrated Problem Solving, etc.

Post testing. The activity took place in a different manner in the control group, and the experimental group. We applied the same questionnaire to the subjects in the two samples, with the purpose of identifying the effects of the methods.

Analysing, Processing and Interpreting Data

It consisted in the comparison of the results between the experimental and the control sample in the pre-test and posttest phases (intergroup comparisons) and comparison of the results within the same sample related to the moments of the pre-test and posttest (intragroup comparisons).

The interpretation of results as regards the **practical-applied competences** revealed several significant aspects:

- In the pre-test phase, the level of functional capacities listed in the questionnaire is somewhat similar in the case of the two groups (experimental and control group);
- In the posttest phase, inferential analyses indicate significant differences between the experimental and the control group for the following indicators of practical-applied competences' development: *use of a diversified methodology adequate to the objectives and content*, *achievement of frontal activities on groups and individual,* and *the elaboration of a knowledge test (docimologic)*;
- In the case of the control group, the values recorded for the assessment of applied competences do not exhibit significant differences from the statistic perspective.

In the case of the experimental group, the trainees consider the following capacities as significantly more developed in the posttest phase: *establishing and achieving cognitive*, *affective and psychomotor objectives*, *designing and making the contents accessible*, *choosing diverse* *didactic means adequate to the objectives and content*, *distributing various work tasks*, *choosing adequate evaluation methods*, *the elaboration of a knowledge test (docimologic)*.

Statistic data for applied competences are presented in Table 5-4.

Table 5-4. Statistic data for applied competences

	Establishing and achieving cognitive, affective and psychomotor objectives	**Planning and making contents available**	**Using a diversified methodology adequate to the objectives and content**	**Choosing diverse didactic means adequate to the objectives and content**	**Achieving frontal activities on groups, individual**	**Distributing various work tasks**	**Choosing adequate assessment methods**	**Designing a knowledge test (docimologic)**
Gc pre-test	3.47	3.73	3.45	3.46	3.66	3.75	3.75	3.03
Gc post-test	3.55	3.92	3.70	3.72	4.02	3.95	3.63	3.38
Ge pre-test	3.23	3.97	3.67	3.40	3.77	3.82	3.68	3.22
Ge post-test	3.75	4.13	4.06	3.93	4.03	4.25	4.06	3.81
U Mann-Whitney Post-test	1448.000	1374.500	1433.500	1467.000	1304.500	1560.000	1485.000	1372.500
P	.031	.020	.055	.009	.002	.165	.009	.000
T	-2.790	-1.991	-2.657		-2.816		-2.407	-2.384
P	p=.005	p=.046	p=.008		p=.005		p=.016	p=.017

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of the results in the control and experimental groups shows that the level of cognitive-applied competences of the students who participated in the activities based on *situational learning*, *problem-solving* and *experiential learning* is clearly superior to that found in the control group. We may assume that the participants who benefited from the intervention have a reasonable level of practical training, exhibiting a net advantage following training. To conclude, *the frequent use of situational learning, problem-solving and experiential learning will lead to the development of future teachers' practical applied competences.*

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TEACHING VOCABULARY AT TERTIARY LEVEL USING VISUAL AIDS

GEORGETA RAŢĂ

Introduction

This paper aims at stressing the need to make the teaching/learning of the English language as easy, enjoyable, and permanent as possible using cheap, available visual aids supplied by the Internet (Asokhia 2009). The use of visual aids in education has been debated since the '50s (Lestage 1959).

A **visual aid** is defined by English-language dictionaries as follows: 'a drawing, map, film etc. that people can look at to help them to understand a particular subject *when you are teaching or explaining it to them*' (Macmillan Dictionary and Thesaurus); 'an *instructional aid*, such as a poster, scale model, or videotape, that presents information visually' (The American Heritage); 'an *instructional device* (as a chart, map, or model) that appeals chiefly to vision; *especially*: an educational motion picture or filmstrip' (Merriam-Webster); 'an item of illustrative matter, such as a film, slide, or model, designed to supplement written or spoken information so that it can be understood more easily' (The Oxford Pocket Dictionary of Current English); 'something that you are shown, such as a picture, film or map, in order to help you understand or remember information' (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus). Only three of these definitions point to the instructional function of a visual aid/device. 2-D instructional material can, together with audio aids and multisensory aids, help the teacher shift the focus from the textbook authority to something more life-related, and substitute proper, expensive instructional materials that have become useless and obsolete. Visual aids improve learning with up to 400% (Domin, 2011) given that receiving information transferred by visual stimuli is 80% effective (compared to auditory stimuli, 10%), and memorizing information transferred by visual stimuli is 50% effective (compared to auditory stimuli, 20%) (*ibid.*). The choice of a visual aid is influenced by learning situation-connected factors (student, environment, teacher, and economics), by lesson aim-connected factors (acquiring information, developing skills, and modifying attitudes), or by lesson strategy-connected factors (Presentation – Practice – Production, or Engage – Study – Activate).

In the trial, we analysed the effect of using visual aids in the teaching of English for Special Purposes (English for Landscapists), i.e. the role of visual aids in introducing new vocabulary (the vocabulary specific to the exterior of a house).

House Exterior Vocabulary

According to the **Visual Dictionary Online** (*Visual Dictionary Online*), the **main elements of the exterior of a house** are as follows: ***basement window*** 'opening in the wall of the bottom floor to let in light and air', ***border*** 'garden trimming the side of a structure or pathway', ***chimney*** 'part of the heating system that protrudes from the roof', ***chimney pot*** 'topmost part of the chimney; it is covered by a piece of metal', ***cornice*** 'extended section of a roof protecting the wall from rain', ***dormer window*** 'small window built into the roof of a structure to let in light', ***downspout*** 'vertical pipe through which rainwater flows', ***driveway*** 'private road that connects a house, garage, or other building with the street', ***fence*** 'barrier made of aligned wooden planks to demarcate a lot', ***flower bed*** 'grouping of flowers and decorative shrubs', ***gable*** 'upper triangular section of a wall supporting the sides of the roof', ***gable vent*** 'opening in the side of a gable for ventilation', ***garage*** 'structure used for parking vehicles', ***garden path*** 'walkway bordered by plants', ***grade slope*** 'inclination joining two different levels of the lot', ***gutter*** 'open pipe at the bottom of the roof collecting rainwater and channelling it to the downspout', ***hedge*** 'bushes planted in a row to demarcate a lot', ***lawn*** 'land covered by short thick grass requiring regular mowing', ***lightning rod*** 'metal spike attached to the roof; it protects the house by conducting lightning to the ground', ***ornamental tree*** 'tree planted for decorative purposes', ***patio*** 'outdoor area adjacent to the house that is often paved and adapted for outdoor dining', ***porch*** 'covered part of a house entrance protecting the door and people from the elements', ***property line*** 'boundary line between two pieces of property', ***roof*** 'house covering that protects it from the elements; it rests on the frame', ***shed*** 'structure used for storing garden equipment', ***sidewalk*** 'pedestrian walkway bordering a street', ***skylight*** 'window protruding through the roof to ventilate and illuminate the room below', ***steps*** 'outdoor staircase ending in a landing that leads to the house entrance', and ***vegetable garden*** 'plot of land for growing edible plants'.

Testing Students in Landscaping

In order to determine the importance of teaching the terms specific to the exterior of a house to students in Landscaping (a specialisation of the College of Horticulture of the Banat University of Agricultural Science and Veterinary Medicine in Timişoara, Romania), we tested two groups of students totalling 224 respondents. The control group of students were asked to match the terms related to the exterior of a house in the first column with their definitions in the second column (Table 5-5) without any visual aid, while the other group of students were asked to do the same based also on the image of the exterior of a house.

Control Group

The control group of 112 respondents were asked to match the terms related to the exterior of a house with their definitions without any visual aid (Table 5-5). The results of their answers in both figures and percentage are given below (Figure 5-6), in the increasing order of value, with the three poorest and three highest ranks marked in bold font style: ***border* – 11 out of 112 (9.82%)**, ***gutter* – 16 out of 112 (14.28%), *garden path* – 18 out of 112 (16.07%),** *dormer window* – 20 out of 112 (17.85%), *lawn* – 30 out of 112 (26.78%), *skylight* – 30 out of 112 (26.78%), *downspout* – 32 out of 112 (28.57%), *chimney* – 34 out of 112 (30.35%), *patio* – 40 out of 112 (35.71%), *fence* – 41 out of 112 (36.60%), *basement window* – 43 out of 112 (38.39%), *porch* – 44 out of 112 (39.28%), *hedge* – 50 out of 112 (44.64%), *gable* – 51 out of 112 (45.53%), *property line* – 55 out of 112 (49.10%), *driveway* – 58 out of 112 (51.78%), *grade slope* – 59 out of 112 (52.67%), *cornice* – 60 out of 112 (53.57%), *flower bed* – 60 out of 112 (53.57%), *roof* – 62 out of 112 (55.35%), *steps* – 63 out of 112 (56.25%), *vegetable garden* – 66 out of 112 (58.92%), *gable vent* – 76 out of 112 (67.85%), *chimney pot* – 78 out of 112 (69.64%), *lightning rod* – 78 out of 112 (69.64%), *sidewalk* – 79 out of 112 (70.53%), ***shed* – 80 out of 112 (71.42%)**, ***ornamental tree* – 82 out of 112 (73.21%)**, and ***garage* – 110 out of 112 (98.21%)**. It is surprising that the students could not identify ***border*** with more precision (only 11 out of 112), since they have, in their mother tongue, ***bordură*** ‘bordure, margin, strip’, but it was not surprising that they identified ***ornamental tree*** and ***garage***, terms highly similar to their Romanian counterparts (***copac ornamental*** and ***garaj***).

Table 5-5. Test applied to students in Landscaping

Terms		Definitions	
1.	*basement window*	a.	Barrier made of aligned wooden planks to demarcate a lot
2.	*border*	b.	Boundary line between two pieces of property
3.	*chimney*	c.	Bushes planted in a row to demarcate a lot
4.	*chimney pot*	d.	Covered part of a house entrance protecting the door and people from the elements
5.	*cornice*	e.	Section of a roof protecting the wall from rain
6.	*dormer window*	f.	Garden trimming the side of a structure or pathway
7.	*downspout*	g.	Grouping of flowers and decorative shrubs
8.	*driveway*	h.	House covering that protects it from the elements; it rests on the frame
9.	*fence*	i.	Inclination joining two different levels of the lot
10.	*flower bed*	j.	Land covered by short thick grass requiring regular mowing
11.	*gable*	k.	Metal spike attached to the roof; it protects the house by conducting lightning to the ground
12.	*gable vent*	l.	Open pipe at the bottom of the roof collecting rainwater and channelling it to the downspout
13.	*garage*	m.	Opening in the side of a gable for ventilation
14.	*garden path*	n.	Opening in the wall of the bottom floor to let in light and air
15.	*grade slope*	o.	Outdoor area adjacent to the house that is often paved and adapted for outdoor dining
16.	*gutter*	p.	Outdoor staircase ending in a landing that leads to the house entrance
17.	*hedge*	q.	Part of the heating system protruding from the roof
18.	*lawn*	r.	Pedestrian walkway bordering a street
19.	*lightning rod*	s.	Plot of land for growing edible plants
20.	*ornamental tree*	t.	Private road that connects a house, garage, or other building with the street
21.	*patio*	u.	Small window built into the roof of a structure to let in light
22.	*porch*	v.	Structure used for parking vehicles
23.	*property line*	w.	Structure used for storing garden equipment
24.	*roof*	x.	Topmost part of the chimney; it is covered by a piece of metal
25.	*shed*	y.	Tree planted for decorative purposes
26.	*sidewalk*	z.	Upper triangular section of a wall supporting the sides of the roof
27.	*skylight*	aa.	Vertical pipe through which rainwater flows
28.	*steps*	bb.	Walkway bordered by plants
29.	*vegetable garden*	cc.	Window protruding through the roof to ventilate and illuminate the room below

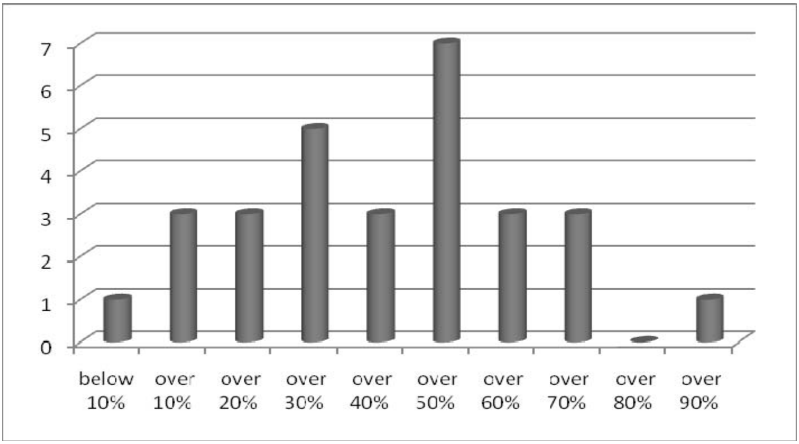

Figure 5-6. Share of word knowledge in the control group

Aid-Tested Group

The aid-tested group of 112 respondents were asked to match the terms related to the exterior of a house with their definitions and some visual aid (Table 5-5). The results of the aid-tested group (112 respondents) in both figures and percentage are given below (Figure 5-7), in the increasing order of value, with the three poorest, and three highest ranks marked in bold font style: ***border* – 31 out of 112 (27.67%)**, ***dormer window* – 32 out of 112 (28.57%)**, ***skylight* – 44 out of 112 (39.28%)**, *garden path* – 45 out of 112 (40.17%), *gutter* – 67 out of 112 (59.82%), *downspout* – 77 out of 112 (68.75%), *lawn* – 86 out of 112 (76.78%), *grade slope* – 88 out of 112 (78.57%), *gable* – 89 out of 112 (79.46%), *patio* – 92 out of 112 (82.14%), *cornice* – 96 out of 112 (85.71%), *gable vent* – 98 out of 112 (87.50%), *hedge* – 98 out of 112 (87.50%), *steps* – 99 out of 112 (88.39%), *flower bed* – 101 out of 112 (90.17%), *lightning rod* – 102 out of 112 (91.07%), *basement window* – 104 out of 112 (92.25%), *fence* – 104 out of 112 (92.25%), *porch* – 104 out of 112 (92.25%), *vegetable garden* – 104 out of 112 (92.25%), *chimney* – 105 out of 112 (93.75%), *driveway* – 105 out of 112 (93.75%), *roof* – 105 out of 112 (93.75%), *property line* – 106 out of 112 (94.64%), *chimney pot* – 107 out of 112 (95.53%), *sidewalk* – 108 out of 112 (96.42%), ***shed* – 109 out of 112 (97.32%)**, ***ornamental tree* – 110 out of 112 (98.21%)**, and ***garage* – 111 out of 112 (99.10%)**. ***Border*** is also the poorest answer, but it was identified by a larger number of respondents. Again, ***ornamental tree*** and

garage, ranked best due to their similarity with their Romanian counterparts.

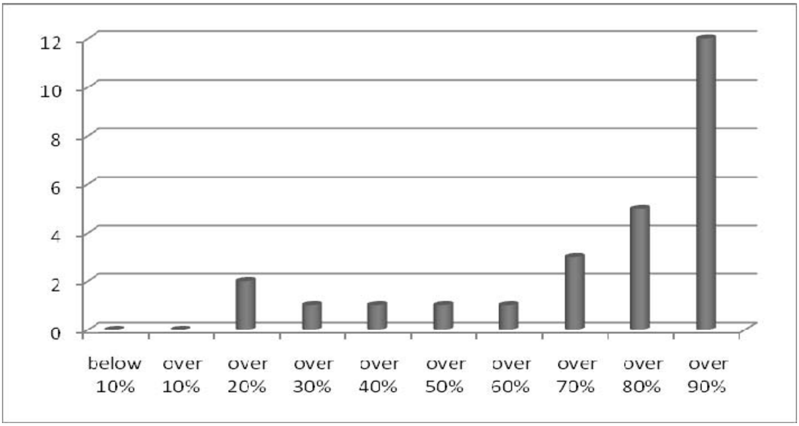

Figure 5-7. Share of word knowledge in the aid-tested group

Conclusion

The comparison of the results of the two tests (not aided visually and aided visually) shows clearly (Figure 5-8) that, as far as architecture is concerned, teaching the English of architecture should be done, maybe more than any other variety of English for Special Purposes, with visual support for higher efficacy.

Higher efficacy resulted, in the trial, from the fact that visual aids allowed students to take in information at their own pace, explained instructions clearly leading to fewer mistakes, helped students do things independently, helped students make choices by clearly showing the options (Lavery 2001), and reduced anxiety by giving a constant reference (Graham & Walsh 1996).

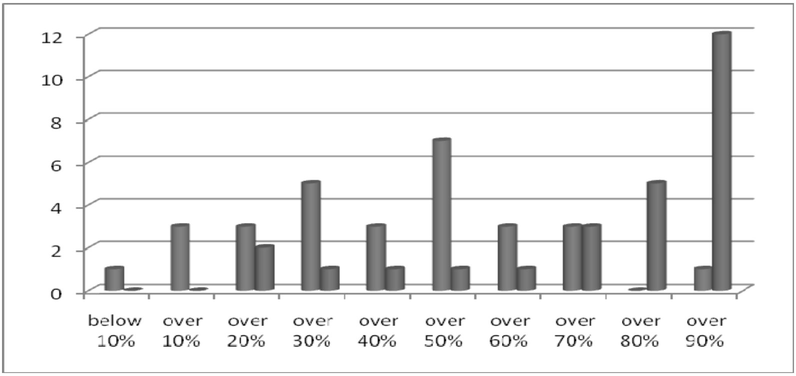

Figure 5-8. Comparison between the two tested groups (control and aid-tested)

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Erasmus Mobility through Romanian Students' Eyes

Florin Sălăjan and Sorina Chiper

Introduction

Since its inception in 1987, the ERASMUS Programme has established itself as the EU's flagship mobility initiative, with student mobility representing by far the largest of its components. They estimate that, in the past 25 years, about 2.3 million European students have taken part in ERASMUS for a course of studies at an institution of higher education or for company training outside their home countries (European Commission 2011). More remarkable, however, is the growth in annual student numbers that the Programme has witnessed, surging from around 5,000 in the Programme's first year (Teichler 1996) to more than 210,000 during the 2009-2010 academic year (European Commission 2011).

A proportion of this increase in student participation can certainly be connected to the inclusion of the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) in the ERASMUS Programme since the fall of the communist regimes (González, Mesanza & Mariel 2011). It has been documented that, for most CEEC students, the ERASMUS experience holds a higher reward value than for students from the older member states of the EU (Bracht *et al*. 2006, Janson, Schomburg & Teichler 2009, Teichler & Janson 2007). While this may be possible, qualitative research studies of ERASMUS student experiences involving individual CEEC are still rather scarce in the mobility literature with only a few published in recent years. In contrast, studies regarding student participation from Western European counterparts are more frequent (Alfaro *et al*. 2009, Di Pietro & Page 2008, Nyborg 1996, Papatsiba 2005, Pineda, Moreno & Belvis 2008, Raikou & Karalis 2007, Van der Wende 1996). More often than not, data on CEEC are published in aggregate or in comparison with other European countries as part of cross-European research studies or reports (Alfranseder, Fellinger & Taivere 2011, Alfranseder, Krzaklewska & Taivere 2011, Bauwens *et al*. 2009, Boomans *et al*. 2008, Kelo, Teichler & Wächter

2006, Krzaklewska & Krupnik 2006, Krupnik & Krzaklewska 2007, Teichler 1996, 2002, Teichler & Janson 2007). Cases on Romanian student participation tend to be condensed in these general presentations of the CEEC's place and significance in the overall analysis of the ERASMUS Programme.

Against this background, independent studies on Romanian students participating in the ERASMUS Programme are difficult to find in the published English literature to date, although three studies do specifically address the extent of Romanian students' presence in the ERASMUS mobilities (Roman & Suciu 2007, Roman *et al*. 2008, Vass 2007). These studies, however, represent secondary research relying on statistical data provided primarily by OECD and Eurostat. In contrast, the present study draws on primary data collected from a sample of Romanian students who have participated in European mobility schemes, particularly through ERASMUS, to report on student mobility experiences.

Trends in Romanian Students' ERASMUS Participation

Romania was formally included in the ERASMUS Programme, in 1998, and students have been participating every academic year since then. During the academic year 1998-99, a modest 1,250 Romanian students participated in the Programme. This initial number witnessed a steady increase, with approximately 3,000 students taking part in ERASMUS mobilities during the academic year 2003-04 (European Commission 2011). While the general pattern of participation remained on an ascendant slope up until 2009-2010, occasional dips in numbers did occur in certain years.

Research Design

The data used in this paper is part of a larger research dealing with the Europeanization of Romanian higher education. Thus, selected items from the original survey are utilized here to extract data that pertain specifically to their mobility experience. The entire twenty-three-item survey was distributed to students from Romanian institutions of higher education, who had participated in European mobility schemes. The first nine items in the questionnaire represented a combination of open, closed and multiple-choice questions related to demographic and background data. The next thirteen items consisted of bipolar symmetrical five-point Likert scales related to the students' European experience. Finally, an openended item was provided at the end of the questionnaire for additional comments from respondents.

Background Data

We received 522 valid responses from students at 37 institutions. There were 377 female and 90 male respondents in the student sample, while 55 respondents declined to report their gender. The prevalence of female respondents in this sample is not outside the average of other ERASMUS studies. Female students consistently exceed their male counterparts in student mobility participation, evidenced in numerous studies conducted both at European and national levels (Di Pietro & Page 2008, Janson, Schomburg & Teichler 2009, Pineda, Moreno & Belvis 2008, Souto Otero 2008, Teichler 2002, Teichler & Janson 2007). More than 45% of the responses were received from two institutions, and students represented in the sample were enrolled in 48 academic majors.

There were 26 different European countries reported as destination countries for mobilities. It is noteworthy that the top three destination countries for a combined 50% of the respondents were France, Italy and Spain, which denotes a natural affinity on the part of the students to locations in which languages similar to Romanian are spoken. As mentioned in the previous section, these results are consistent with other reports in the literature indicating that these countries are preferred mobility destinations for European students. This is particularly the case with students taking part in ERASMUS mobilities, further evidenced in this study by the 97% of the students who studied in another European country via the ERASMUS Programme.

Benefits of Mobility Experience

Several aspects of the mobility experience come to the fore from the respondents' views. In 43 coded references respondents considered the mobility experience as beneficial, unique or extraordinary. Some reasons cited for the positive assessment of the mobility experience were: the possibility of acquiring new skills and knowledge in a novel environment; the development of new ways of thinking, both in the academic and the larger societal context; the opportunity to experience stimulating teaching methods that differ from the ones in the home program; the prospect of enhancing one's professional career upon return to Romania; the chance to immerse oneself in the host culture and learn about its values, traditions, practices and way of life; the broader aspect of seeking and meeting a personal challenge; the opportunity to develop new relationships with individuals from other cultures; the acquisition or improvement of the host country language skills; the general satisfaction of growing more mature in the process of dealing with multiple aspects of the experience abroad.

Implications

While generalizations from the data cannot be made, several implications can be drawn from this study's results:

First, it appears that Romanian students are similar to their European counterparts in appreciating participation in ERASMUS mobilities. The benefits they listed as a result of their participation in mobilities, points to a general satisfaction with their mobility experiences. In this regard, the Romanian students' responses in the study are consistent with the results of other studies that revealed student satisfaction with European mobility programs (Pineda, Moreno & Belvis 2008, Roman & Suciu 2007, Souto Otero 2008, Teichler 1996, 2002). The positive experiences recounted by the respondents in the sample should continue to stimulate and encourage future cohorts of Romanian students to participate in mobility programs.

Second, a concerning aspect of mobility programs for Romanian students is the apparent difficulty encountered by the students in their attempts to apply the knowledge and expertise into their home programs or to obtain better employment upon their return to Romania. This issue should draw the attention of administrators in the Romanian institutions of higher education and the governmental agencies, as a matter of primary importance for the Romanian economy and society. As Romanian students continue to be disappointed by their inability to use their newly acquired skills to improve their career chances, they will continue to seek better opportunities abroad. This is a trend Romania cannot afford in the long run, as its qualified individuals maintain the brain drain process the country has been experiencing for the better part of the last 22 years.

Third, the emphasis on theory placed in academic programs in Romanian higher education institutions seems to be less valued by Romanian ERASMUS students than the practical orientation of host institution programs abroad. This perspective is somewhat consistent with trends observed in other studies that pointed to contrasts in academic value between host and home institutions (Janson, Schomburg & Teichler 2009, Di Pietro & Page 2008, Pineda, Moreno & Belvis 2008). It may be said that the inertia in the system of higher education in Romania, heavily reliant on theoretical exploration of subject areas is still impeding, to some degree, a more harmonious alignment with other European systems that favour the practical application of concepts. Consequently, Romanian students may deplore the status quo in their home programs and seek to study again abroad to gain more practical skills that can boost their careers, a finding consistent with Harzing's study (2004) on the ideal jobs students from Central and Eastern Europe target after they take part in mobility studies.

Fourth, finances seem to be a valid concern for Romanian students embarking on mobility programs. The concerns raised by Romanian students are consistent with other studies that point to the inadequate level of financial support the students receive through ERASMUS. (Di Pietro & Page 2008, Pineda, Moreno & Belvis 2008, Raikou & Karalis 2007, Roman & Suciu 2007, Teichler 2002, West & Barham 2009). Therefore, students tend to cover some of their expenses with the aid of their families. Thus, often, studies show that the students who participate in European student mobility belong to the upper-middle class families who have discretionary income to allocate to additional expenses incurred by the students engaged in the mobility. We cannot infer from the respondents their socio-economic status, but some comments do point to the very same notion that students from a more affluent background tend to be favoured in mobility studies, even though they may not be the best qualified academically.

Finally, on a positive note, it appears that at least some Romanian students do take their role of representing their country seriously. Romania can only stand to gain from this type of attitude, as Romanian students have the opportunity to counter preconceived ideas, erroneous assumptions and stereotypes about Romanians that may be circulating throughout Europe.

Conclusion

In light of the results above, this descriptive study showed an overall positive perception of the ERASMUS Programme on part of the Romanian students who participated in mobility studies under its aegis. The respondents in this study indicated that their academic experiences in other EU member states represented an investment in their professional and social development, but were less convinced that these experiences might assist them in improving the overall conditions of the Romanian economy and society.

The respondents painted a mixed picture regarding the process of credit recognition and transfer, as opinions were varied among those who encountered no difficulties and those who faced obstacles in getting the credits acquired via mobility programs transferred to their home institutions in Romania. When it comes to the value orientation of the host versus the home programs of studies, Romanian students seem to be more pleased with opportunities to apply knowledge as encouraged by institutions abroad, rather than with their home programs that they perceived as highly academic in nature. In terms of program costs, some of the respondents considered that an ERASMUS experience is generally well above the financial resources of many Romanian students but that the experience is well worth the expense.

Despite some of the difficulties noted by the respondents in this study, it appears at least some Romanian students who spent some time abroad strived to represent their country in a positive light. For this reason, but also for many of the others outlined in this descriptive study, the ERASMUS Programme is of great benefit to Romania and to Romanian students, for the foreseeable future.

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Initial Teacher Training from the Perspective of a Genuine Approach to Cultural Diversity in Education

NADIA-LAURA SERDENCIUC

Introduction

Contemporaneousness focuses increasingly on *diversity as a value* (Maruyama & Moreno 2000) regardless of sectors involved, be it economy, social area, politics or culture. Building educational policies at the crossroads of these four interest areas according to personal and social development expectations brings to attention the challenge of cultural diversity management in the educational environment. The concern for cultural diversity as a policy priority direction is emphasized by the international organizations documents (*UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* 2001) underlining the role of education in the diversity potential promotion. That is why we take notice of an increased responsibility in the behaviour of the educational institutions actors and leaders (Blackmore 2006).

A development of a supportive climate maximizing the cultural pluralism benefits (Milem 2003) is an imperative concern of educational organization development strategies according to its formative mission *through* and *for cultural diversity* (Nedelcu 2008).

The presence of cultural diversity in education, as a context and a formative value, requires a redimensioning of the relationship between theory and educational practices in a view of cultural diversity sustaining.

Teachers, as educational field actors, need to prove that they have intercultural competencies in order to manage, in a genuine approach, the cultural diversity for an effective learning experience designing.

The necessity of intercultural training for teachers and interest in intercultural competencies building generated many researches (Dasen 1999, Bhawuk & Brislin 2000, Bennett 2001, Morrison *et al*. 2006).

Literature review reveals several researches starting from the effort to determine teachers' intercultural understanding and identify the key factors that influence the cultural diversity perception in the educational environment (Baca 1974, Henry 1983, Roberts-Walter 2007).

Literature argues that there is a relationship between cultural diversity management and understanding of the attitude towards cultural diversity. An individual's learning experience influences the way he/she appreciates and accepts cultural diversity.

Teaching practices (Chang 2002, Castro 2010), learning experiences in formal contexts (Pascarella *et al*. 1996), training programs (Park & Denson 2009, Schipor 2009) and specificity of curriculum building (Park & Denson 2009) are the factors that affect cultural diversity appreciation in an academic environment along with ethnic/racial sense of belonging (Ancis *et al*. 2000, Milem 2005), experiential and dispositional factors (Garmon 2004) and incidence of intercultural contact (Serdenciuc 2011).

Problem Statement

We were interested in determining the influences of an intercultural training program on the subjects' reaction toward cultural diversity based on the idea of psychopedagogical initial training implications on future teachers' perceptions regarding the educational space configuration.

The present study focuses on cultural diversity perception in the educational environment related to the initial teacher training program in the "Stefan cel Mare" University of Suceava (Romania). The research used as a theoretical framework Krathwohl's taxonomy for affective domain (Krathwohl *et al*. 1969). We selected the *responding* category (reaction) and its structuring dimensions ordered by Krathwohl according to a continuity principle starting with the simple ones and steadily growing in complexity: acquiescence in responding, willingness to respond, satisfaction in responding.

Purpose of the Study

In this study, we intend to explore the influences of an intercultural training program modular structured and developed by the Teacher Training Department (TTD) of the "Stefan cel Mare" University of Suceava at post-graduation level, on students' reaction toward cultural diversity in an academic environment.

The working hypothesis states that the reaction toward cultural diversity in an academic environment presents significant differences depending on the evaluation moment (at the beginning of the intercultural training program and the end of the program) on the following dimensions: total score, acquiescence in responding, willingness to respond, satisfaction in responding.

Research Method

We tested (from February to April 2012) a group of students (N=50) enrolled in post-graduation courses of the initial teaching training program (2010-2012 class) developed by the Teaching Training Department of the "Stefan cel Mare" University of Suceava, using the Questionnaire regarding the Reaction toward Cultural Diversity (Serdenciuc 2011).

We developed an experiment between subjects design, with repeated measurements at the beginning and the end of an intercultural training program included in the curriculum of initial teaching training. The experiment between subjects design with repeated measurements requires the same subjects in both experimental groups distributed according to the main independent variable: intercultural training program.

The students evaluated the 18 items of Questionnaire regarding the Reaction toward Cultural Diversity (QRCD) by reference to each of the three response options (statement type), offered for each item, on a five point Likert scale with the following choices: Strongly disagree (1), Disagree (2), Somehow (3), Agree (4), Strongly agree (5). The QRCD was held in paper-pencil version, without any time limit (the average completion being 15 minutes).

The psychometric instrument proprieties show a remarkably good Alfa Cronbach reliability coefficient ($\alpha=0.95$) for the three subscales established according to Krathwohl's taxonomy: acquiescence in responding, willingness to respond, satisfaction in responding (Serdenciuc 2011).

The investigating sample of subjects N=50 (the same at the beginning, and the end of the intercultural training program) was selected using a systematic sampling design from the population enrolled in post-graduation level teaching training program developed by the Teaching Training Department of the "Stefan cel Mare" University of Suceava.

Statistical distribution normality for the two measured dependent variables (reaction to cultural diversity, total score at the beginning and at the end of the intercultural training program) indicated by the value of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test ($p1=0.28>0.05$ and $p2=0.84>0.05$) allows us to use the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 17 parametric tests.

Findings

Research results confirmed the working hypothesis (for a *total score* dimension and each of the three dimensions: *acquiescence in responding, willingness to respond, satisfaction in responding*). The subjects reaction toward cultural diversity (*total score*) presents significant differences between the mean values of the two evaluation moments: Paired Samples Test – t (49)=- 3,97; p=0.00<0.05. The mean value for the reaction toward cultural diversity in an academic environment is significantly higher at the end of the intercultural training program (M2=236.28) than the mean value at the beginning of the program (M1=225.24). The subjects' reaction toward cultural diversity on *acquiescence in responding* also presents significant differences between the mean values of the two evaluation moments: Paired Samples Test – t(49)=-2.31; p=0.02<0.05. The mean value for the reaction toward cultural diversity on the *acquiescence in responding* dimension is significantly higher at the end of the intercultural training program (Ma2=86.58) than the mean value at the beginning of the program (Ma1=85). The research proved also the presence of significant differences between the mean values of the two evaluation moments regarding the *willingness to respond* dimension and *satisfaction in responding* dimension: Paired Samples Test – t(49)=-4.2; p=0.00<0.05 (for *the willingness to respond* dimension) and Paired Samples Test – t(49)=-3.27; p=0.00<0.05 (for the *satisfaction in responding* dimension). The mean value for the reaction toward cultural diversity in an academic environment on the *willingness to respond* dimension and on the *satisfaction in responding* dimension is significantly higher at the end of the intercultural training program (Mw2=75.6; Ms2=74.1) than the mean value at the beginning of the program (Mw1=70.62; Ms1=69.62). The intention was to calculate the effect size (ES) for the two dependent groups of the experimental design and we used the values of standard deviation for each dimension of the reaction toward cultural diversity dimension in determining Cohen's *d*: d=-0.43 in the case of total score dimension (M1=225.24; M2=236.28; SD1=27.82; SD2=24.76); d=-0.18 in the case of *acquiescence in responding* (Ma1=85; Ma2=86.58; Sda1=6.88; Sda2=5.98); d=-0.47 in the case of *willingness to respond* (Mw1=70.62; Mw2=75.60; SDw1=11.10; SDw2=10.15); d=-0.43 in the case of *satisfaction in responding* (Ms1=69.62; Ms2=74.1; SDs1=12.97; SDs2=11.74). The Cohen's size value suggests a small to moderate practical significance regarding total score dimension (d=-0.43), *willingness to respond* (d=-0.47) and *satisfaction in responding* (d=-0.43). The value of Cohen's *d* calculated for *willingness to respond* is the highest of the calculated *d,* compared with other dimensions. That means an increased side effect regarding the *willingness to respond* dimension.

Conclusion

The intercultural training program, module structured, included in the curriculum of the initial teacher training program for post-graduation level students, developed by the Teaching Training Department of the "Stefan cel Mare" University of Suceava, determined changes in the subjects reaction toward cultural diversity in an academic environment. The survey results confirm the influences of the intercultural training program regarding total score dimension of the reaction toward cultural diversity, also in the case of the three dimensions: *acquiescence in responding*, *willingness to respond* and *satisfaction in responding*. Research results show that the intercultural training program conducts to increased openness regarding perception toward cultural diversity in an academic environment sustained by an increased *willingness to respond* of the subjects tested.

The survey results confirm the need for intercultural training knowing that the literature confirms the fact that *acceptance* and *appreciation* of cultural diversity are influenced by the individual's learning experiences in an academic environment (Pascarella *et al*. 1996, Milem *et al*. 2005). The research findings continue the previous studies regarding the establishment of the factors influencing the perception toward cultural diversity (Pascarella *et al*. 1996, Hurtado *et al*. 1998, Antonio 2001a, 2001b, Chang *et al*. 2005).

The relationship established between the formative learning experiences of the future teachers and their openness toward the cultural diversity in an academic environment may be used as a landmark for the educational policies development regarding initial teacher training, given the changes in the Romanian initial teacher training system, generated by Law no.1/2011 (Law of Education).

The perspective of cultural diversity as a context and a formative value of the educational environment suggest the need to build the educational policies in the light of the intercultural competencies development process, for a genuine approach of cultural diversity in education. We endorse the importance of the intercultural training program that has to be included in the new curricular structure of the initial teacher training program.

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FACILITATION IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS: PERSPECTIVES AND APPROACHES AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL

CARMEN-MARIA ȚÎRU

Introduction

In the process of conceptualization of facilitation in education, it is imperative to refer to the theory of facilitation or to the humanist approach of the educational process. This approach relies on the theory built by Carl Rogers (1969) that regards learning as a process taking place under the guidance of a teacher who has the role of facilitator, a process in which students are comfortable to generate new ideas and are not considered external factors of the teaching activity (Laird 1985). This research interferes with other educational approaches regarding the learning process. Some recent researches are: Burn (2011), who provides a solution to the question of how to conduct and promote a successful Lessons Learned Session in a business environment; Sargeant *et al*. (2011) have initiated a qualitative study using interviews to explore general practice (GP) trainer and trainee experiences and perceptions of the ECO **facilitation** model; study of Di Prospero & Shimji-Hewitt (2011) had as a goal the creation of facilitator guides with detailed debrief instructions in order to promote effective learning dialogue among all participants and providing faculty with formalized facilitator training for better guided student learning. Viewed from the perspective of facilitation, the entire educational process relies on principles like belief that students have a genuine desire to learn; resistance in giving up something that is already considered true; change over the self-image induced by the most significant type of learning. Thus, the entire educational process is presented in a positive light as a process that has a major purpose, even an infinite and enduring one: the development of the student personality at a maximum value (Rogers 1963) manifested at the level of student's self-image (built both on concrete results, and on the reflection over one's own *ego* and learning). *Facilitation in education determines a redefinition of the learning process, the main responsibility for reaching the objectives belonging to the student, with the close support of the teacher.* Burow (1997) considers facilitation as a dynamic process, purpose-oriented, in which the participants work together in an environment based on mutual respect and on learning through reflection. The result of this learning through reflection, focused on the principles of person-centring, collaboration and learning shared by the student, is the development of the critical thinking of the student (Haith Cooper 2000). While traditional teaching involves centring on content and its one-dimensional transfer, facilitation offers a balance between contents and guiding students towards gaining them independently, in an educational setting that produces an interrelation at a high level between the two educational actors. The development of a facilitation process based on the principles mentioned in the description of the humanist theory depends, firstly, on preparing certain teachers to meet the qualifications of a real facilitator. This is about a more complex process than the one of assimilating knowledge and developing specific skills. This is about embracing certain humanist values regarding the education and the student, as a unique and autonomous individuality, about assuming a relationship based on positive feelings and a maximum valorisation of the pedagogical optimism regarding the aspects of such a process in the growth and development of the student and of the teacher.

Research Methods and Instruments

The objectives of the research were:

- O_1 – To reveal the characteristics of university teachers (Course coordinator and seminar coordinator) regarding the facilitation approach in the teaching activity.
- O_2 – To establish differentiating aspects regards the facilitation approach in the teaching activity, in relation to the study year.
- O_3 – To identify the significant differences between course coordinator and seminar coordinator regarding the facilitation approach in the teaching process.
- O_4 – To formulate suggestions of optimization of learning facilitation in higher education.

The hypothesis from which we started is that in the higher education system the teachers typically reach facilitating teaching in the educational process.

Identifying the main directions of action in the teaching process of the teachers from the higher education system, ***the survey-based investigation*** we made offers a fair image of the way in which university teachers provide assistance in student facilitation of learning. We surveyed a number of 125 students from the West University of Timișoara (Romania) and analyzed the teaching style of their teachers, for courses and seminars of the second semester of the academic year 2011-2012. An analysis of the facilitative approach of teaching (a minimum of 10 teachers analyzed by each student) was highlighted through 15 items, on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (always). Thus, 1,006 evaluations from students of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd year of BA/BSc and the 1st year of MA/MSc were made.

Results and Discussion

In the next section, we describe the analysis of data on each mentioned dimension. As far as the statistical average on each item is concerned, we can note the following:

- The highest averages were noted in the following items:
    - 1st year of study: 4. Encourages debates (M=4.12). 7. Offers permanent feedback for the student (M=4.02).
    - 2nd year of study: 7. Offers permanent feedback for the student (M=3.98). 4. Encourages debates (M=3.80).
    - 3rd year of study: 3. Provides opportunities in order to assist students' personal development (M=3.89); 5. Supports the student in self awareness and acceptance (M=3.74). 7. Offers permanent feedback for the student (M=3.73).
    - MA/MSc, 1st year of study: 2. Indicates when and how the students will take effect (M=3.58). 5. Supports the student in self awareness and acceptance (M=3.52).

- The highest averages in the seminar were noted in the answers:
    - 1st year of study: 10. Considers that what the student has made is good (M=3.13).
    - 2nd year of study: 11. Uses frequently team work and focuses on the development of the group (M=2.60). 14. Is involved in team work to facilitate learning (M=2.88).

- 3rd year of study: 1. Adopts a neutral attitude regarding the learning contents and activities (M=2.49). 10. Considers that what the student has made is good (M=2.90).
- MA/MSc, 1st year of study: 11. Uses frequently team work and focuses on the development of the group (2.55).

The analysis in percentages of each item within the scale (1-5) shows the following:

- The highest percentage on level 5 (always) of the scale was obtained by:
    - The 1st year of study: 4. Encourages debates (47.9%); 8. Uses encouraging phrases for the student (42.6%). 9. Permanently motivates the student to become the best (42.2%).
    - The 2nd year of study: 4. Encourages debates (43.5%). 7. Offers permanent feedback for the student (37.5%).
    - The 3rd year of study: 4. Encourages debates (35.7%). 7. Offers permanent feedback for the student (31.6%).
    - MA/MSc, 1st year of study: 4. Encourages debates (36.8%).

- The lowest percentage on level 1 (not at all) of the scale although in a small percentage can be identified as follows:
    - The 1st year of study: 1. Adopts a neutral attitude regarding the learning contents and activities (16.5%). 14. Is involved in team work to facilitate learning (12.5%).
    - The 2nd year of study: 11. Uses frequently team work and focuses on the development of the group (26.1%). 14. Is involved in team work to facilitate learning (22.8%).
    - The 3rd year of study: 1. Adopts a neutral attitude regarding the learning contents and activities (40.6%).
    - MA/MSc, 1st year of study: 11. Uses frequently team work and focuses on the development of the group (29.9%). 14. Is involved in team work to facilitate learning (27.0%).

The average analysis in each item with a difference between course and seminar shows the following:

- The highest averages in the course were noted in:
    - The 1st year of study: 4. Encourages debates (M=4.03). 9. Permanently motivates the student to become the first (M=4.00).

- The 2nd year of study: 7. Offers permanent feedback for the student (M=3.90); 3. Provides opportunities in order to assist students' personal development (M=3.73). 8. Uses encouraging phrases for the student (M=3.71).
- The 3rd year of study: 3. Uses encouraging phrases for the student (M=3.83); 2. Indicates when and how the students will take effect (M=3.59). 4. Encourages debates (M=3.54).
- MA/MSc, 1st year of study: 4. Encourages debates (M=3.80). 5. Supports the student in self awareness and acceptance (M=3.59).

- The highest averages in the seminar were noted in:
  - The 1st year of study: 4. Encourages debates (M=4.22); 7. Offers permanent feedback for the student (M=4.17). 15. Creates tasks that belong to the pragmatic nature of learning (M=4.11).
  - The 2nd year of study: 8. Uses encouraging phrases for the student. (M=3.75). 2. Indicates when and how the students will take effect (M=3.67).
  - The 3rd year of study: 3. Provides opportunities in order to assist students' personal development (M=3.94); 4. Encourages debates (M=3.87). 7. Offers permanent feedback for the student (M=3.84).
  - MA/MSc, 1st year of study: 4. Encourages debates (M=3.69). 2. Indicates when and how the students will take effect (M=3.62).

- The lowest values of courses averages were noted in:
  - The 1st year of study: 10. Considers that what the student has made is good (M=3.02). 11. Uses frequently team work and focuses on the development of the group (M=3.03).
  - The 2nd year of study: 11. Uses frequently team work and focuses on the development of the group (M=2.24). 14. Is involved in team work to facilitate learning (M=2.71).
  - The 3rd year of study: 1. Adopts a neutral attitude regarding the learning contents and activities (M=2.56). 10. Considers that what the student has made is good (M=2.90).
  - MA/MSc, 1st year of study: 11. Uses frequently team work and focuses on the development of the group (M=2.47). 14. Is involved in team work to facilitate learning (M=2.53).

- The lowest values of seminar averages were noted in:
  - The 1st year of study: 1. Adopts a neutral attitude regarding the learning contents and activities (M=3.61).

- The 2nd year of study: 11. Uses frequently team work and focuses on the development of the group (M=2.98). 1. Adopts a neutral attitude regarding the learning contents and activities (M=3.07).
- The 3rd year of study: 1. Adopts a neutral attitude regarding the learning contents and activities (M=2.44). 10. Considers that what the student has made is good (M=2.90).
- MA/MSc, 1st year of study: 11. Uses frequently team work and focuses on the development of the group (M=2.63). 14. Is involved in team work to facilitate learning (M=2.60).

The interpretation of the *t Test*, on the basis on the analysis of the resulted averages in the courses and seminars evaluations, show that significant differences were identified on the following items, as far as the approach on the facilitation process is concerned:

- The 1st year of study has proved significant differences between the facilitation of learning activities at courses and seminars for the following items: 7. Offers permanent feedback for the student (p=0.014); 11. Uses frequently team work and focuses on the development of the group (p=0.000); 12. Determines the group to accomplish the given task in a certain period of time (p=0.004); 13. Generates experiences from which each member of the group has something to learn (p=0.006); 14. Is involved in team work in order to facilitate learning (p=0.000); 15. Creates tasks that belong to the pragmatic nature of learning (p=0.000).
- The 2nd year of study has proved significant differences between the facilitation of learning activities at courses and seminars for the item: 11. Uses frequently team work and focuses on the development of the group (p=0.014).
- The 3rd year of study has proved significant differences between the facilitation of learning activities at courses and seminars for the following items: 4. Encourages debates (p=0.015); 11. Uses frequently team work and focuses on the development of the group (p=0.031); 12. Determines the group to accomplish the given task in a certain period of time (p=0.006); 14. Is involved in team work in order to facilitate learning (p=0.002).
- MA/MSc, 1st year, teachers have not proven significant differences between the facilitation of learning activities at courses and seminars.

As far as the significant differences between the facilitation approach in course coordinators and seminar coordinators are concerned, most differences appear in the 1st year while at MA/MSc level they do not exist. It was somehow foreseeable, taking into consideration that in the 1st year of study the theoretical aspects valued during the course cannot be based on the previous knowledge of the student in the domain, and the seminar coordinator has the responsibility of ensuring the valorisation of their pragmatic aspect, communication and interaction between the members of the group.

Between the 1st and 3rd years of study, we can note significant differences between activity at courses and seminars as far as the discussions from the seminar (3rd year) and the feedback offered during the activities in the seminar (1st year). The fact that at MA/MSc level, 1st year, there are no significant differences between course and seminar proves the facilitation approach in the same style, given the students' background. These results show the evolution of the facilitating teaching process while students gain experience in the field.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Analyzing the data previously mentioned, we can express the following conclusions:

- The aspects clearly valued at a maximum (the highest average on the level 5 – always of the scale), as a support in the facilitation activity of the teacher are:
  - The stimulation of critical thinking through encouraging debates between students;
  - The focusing on the personal progress of the student through constant feedback and motivational support.

There is a certain tendency of teachers towards facilitation in the teaching activities, but some aspects have to be optimized (the statements are supported also by the highest average showed by the corresponding items on the level 1 of the scale – not at all), like:

- A stronger tendency towards the student's potential for task-solving. In educational facilitation, the teacher only guides and creates a favourable environment for the growth and development of the student.
- A more pronounced valorisation and participation in team work, although the averages obtained by seminar coordinators are significantly different from those obtained by the course coordinators in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd years. These aspects show a better use of team

work in seminar activities relative to the sampling categories previously mentioned.
- Adopting a neutral attitude over the contents, offering the student the chance to show his/her own vision over curricular contents, based on discovery and correlation with previous experiences.

The final conclusion is that the hypothesis of the research – *in higher education, teachers largely approach facilitating teaching in the educational process* – has been widely confirmed, suggesting possible optimizations of the previously mentioned dimensions. Analyzed data can be used as a support for further research, such as the identification of the facilitation style approached by teachers in the academic environment.

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