Linguistic orientation and methodological perspectives in the philosophy of the contemporary education

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Abstract

The present study aims at evincing the fact that upon the careful examination of today’s curriculum, all educational systems exhibit a series of compatibilities. Thus, in contemporary society, the stress lies on forming social, intercultural, linguistic, scientific and entrepreneurial competences, giving up the mere in-depth study of the educational contents. Departing from these aspects, the present paper examines a range of linguistic structures and proposes a series of operational methods to be practised in the education according to the new curricular requirements, also adaptable to the philosophy of modern education. The purpose of this study is to recommend action strategies resulting from their application into a restrained educational framework, aiming at establishing the relation between an individual, seen as a complex, adaptable and perfectible entity and the social environment where s/he is placed at a given moment.

Keywords: key competences, educational systems, social integration

Introduction

In the present day context of internationalisation and globalisation, each citizen should possess a set of key competences necessary in the process of adaptation and activation in the social environment the individual finds himself in at a given moment. Education has the task of preparing man as an active element of social life, all the same being instrumental in forming the key competences indispensable to the personal development and professional training.

Today’s society needs the support of political decision makers, education providers, employers to build a reference framework encompassing the following key competences (\textit{Official Journal of the European Union}, 2006):

\begin{itemize}
  \item communication in the native language: requires the individual to possess knowledge of vocabulary, functional grammar and language functions. Communication in the mother tongue/official language represents the ability to express and interpret concepts, ideas, feelings, facts and opinions in writing, as well as
\end{itemize}

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orally (listening, reading and speaking) and to interact linguistically in the proper and creative manner in all situations generated by social and cultural life;

- communication in foreign languages: compels the individual to acquire fundamental skills such as: the ability to understand spoken language, to start and finish a conversation, to read, comprehend and produce texts, to possess vocabulary and functional grammar and be aware of the main types of verbal interaction and language registers;

- basic competences in mathematics, science, technology: the individual has to possess skills in applying basic mathematical principles and processes in day to day situations, at the workplace, at home, to follow and assess chains of arguments. The knowledge necessary in science and technology include basic principles of the natural world, fundamental scientific concepts, principles and methods technology, technological products and processes, as well as the understanding of the impact of science and technology on the natural world;

- social and civic competences: for a successful social and interpersonal participation, it is essential to understand the conduct and manners codes which are unanimously accepted in various societies and environments. It is equally essential to understand the social-economic and multicultural dimensions of European societies and the manner in which the national and European cultural identities interact. The most important part of this competence includes the ability to communicate constructively in various environments, to show tolerance, to express and understand various points of view, to negotiate astutely in order to induce trust and empathy. Individuals have to be able to manage stressful and frustrating situations, express them in a constructive manner, and also distinguish between the personal and the professional spheres. This competence is grounded in an attitude of collaboration, assertiveness and integrity;

- entrepreneurial competences: they include the ability to identify opportunities for personal, professional and /or business activities, mainly including a good knowledge of the economic evolution, the opportunities and challenges confronting an employer or an organisation. Similarly, the individuals have to be aware of the ethical side of the enterprising spirit, and the fact that they can set a positive example, as in fair trade and social actions. They also need to possess the skills of proactive project management (the ability to plan, organise, manage, lead and delegate, analyse, communicate, report, assess and record), to effectively represent and negotiate, as well as the ability to work as an individual and as a member of a team. The ability to assess and identify the strong and the weak points, to assess and to take risks, as well as to innovate.

The European states focus on 8 key competences which need to be acquired in school along each study level, always bearing on the perspective of lifelong learning. The key competences that have not been enumerated above, viz. the learning competence learning to learn, computer competences and the competence of sensitisation and cultural expression, are definitely linked to the other types of competences. In order to support this thesis, the following arguments may be advanced: learning skills are the following step in acquiring basic skills like literacy, numeration and TIC, necessary for further learning; computer competences demand a higher understanding of knowledge on nature, and also on the role and opportunities provided by the technology of the information society of today in daily contexts, in the personal and social life; the competence of sensitisation and cultural expression appreciate the creativity of the ideas put forward as a result of experiences and emotions in various environments. (OECD, 2005).

**Purpose of the Study**

Taking these aspects as the starting point, the following will present certain linguistic and cultural compatibilities at work in the European countries, proposing some operational strategies that may prove beneficial to all the European educational systems; in addition, it will attempt to assess the process of instructing the individual in accordance with the newest curricular requirements, based on the key competences mentioned above, and the possibility to adapt the individual to the criteria imposed by contemporary society.

**Methods and Results**

Upon the careful analysis of the educational documents, and the keen observation of today’s social and cultural context, a series of linguistic similarities were found at the European level. In the educational field, all European countries seem to use terms such as permanent education, inclusion, integrated education, basic skills while in the cultural field, terms such as identity, interculturality, cultural integration are employed, which leads us to
assert that the change of the socio-political, socio-professional, economic, and educational environment, as well as the adaptation to the requirements of a certain European system may become a current reality in case any individual possesses the necessary abilities to adapt and operate in the new context.

Within the framework of a professional formation activity, coordinated by a sociologist, a linguist and a didactician, which took place in the schools of the city of Galati, Romania, including the pupils in the 8th grade (150 respondents) and the senior students (150 respondents), it was attempted to find a number of competences that any individual should possess in order to be successfully integrated in the social environment at a given moment.

Thus, a couple of case studies focusing on successful situations of European-level social and professional integration of individuals formed on the basis of the competences mentioned above were analysed; a questionnaire consisting of 10 items was applied, aiming at finding the extent to which the present curriculum facilitates skill acquisition and attitude formation. Each item referred to one of the key competences envisaged in this study, aiming at finding the subjects’ perception of their abilities at the moment of the test. The answers of the subjects were recorded and represented under graphical form, so that to evince the differences between pupils and students, and to facilitate the interpretation of the final results.

Table 1. Quiz results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Do you consider that you may effectively interact linguistically and creatively in various social and cultural situations?</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Do you have the ability to understand and fluently speak at least 2 foreign languages?</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Can you use solid knowledge in numeration, measurements, structures, basic mathematical operations in daily practice?</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Can you explain the impact of science and technology on the natural world?</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Can you access, search and use services via the Internet?</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Do you try to frequently organise your own learning activity?</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Do you think that you can constructively communicate in various environments, expressing your point of view in a skillful and polite manner?</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>May one talk of democracy, justice, equality, civil rights in today’s society?</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Do you consider yourself an innovative person, or a person with negotiating skills?</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Are you open to cultural diversity?</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Graphical representation of the quiz results
Findings

Upon the analysis of results, it was found that in secondary school the level of key competence acquisition is low, which may trigger a series of negative consequences on the future students’ educational formation; therefore, we propose an alteration of today’s methodology and a reassessment of the present educational curriculum.

As expected, the students showed a better level of key competences acquisition, although in the case of item 8, referring to the acquisition of social and civic competences, the situation is reversed. Also, it is also evident that both pupils and students favoured the key competence tackled by item 5 — the ability to use the Internet/computer literacy, and item 9 — the ability to negotiate and display an innovative attitude. The lowest scores, both for students and for pupils, are to be found in connection with item 2, concerning the ability to speak fluently at least two foreign languages. Although foreign languages represent a top priority in today’s educational curriculum at all school levels (especially in secondary school), the respondents’ predominant perception in regard of the linguistic skills acquired and their ability to fluently communicate in the foreign languages they study in school is quite unsatisfactory, thus pointing out that special measures should be taken in order to improve this peculiar aspect of their education.

This strategic perspective upon the school curriculum also considers the positive aspects evinced by the quiz, viz. the fact that students and pupils possess an encyclopaedic culture of the Internet, and also develop entrepreneurial and negotiation skills. These competences, at least to a certain extent, will assist the young in succeeding on the global labour market of the 21st century, although the insufficient fixation and consolidation of the basic intellectual and practical abilities necessary in various social environments may very likely lead to instability and even failure.

The objectives of the educational process should directly aim at the balanced formation of these key competences in all the domains of activity.

Operational strategies in the process of key competence acquisition

- Development of a formative curriculum in point of integrating the key competences in the didactic process. The formative curriculum is based on concepts derived from the description of key competences (knowledge, skills, attitudes) restructured on the level of subject didactics.
- Designing innovative didactic resources in order to implement the key competences in the curriculum. This strategic orientation refers to the support of the continuous formation of pupils/students and their teachers by means of new curricular implementation methodologies, new didactic resources (grouped on subjects/topics) with a clear role in supporting the reconfiguration of the educational framework, mainly on pragmatic bases. The envisaged impact and changes focus on the exploration of the methods of development of the key competences by methodological interventions for each school subject, promoting integrative learning activities. Thus, quality in the higher education will also be stimulated; students who possess such key competences will be much better prepared for professional insertion.
- Stimulating innovation and creativity, as well as the entrepreneurial spirit on all levels of education and formation.
- External mobilities in order to acquire key competences on a European level, through mutual professional and educational exchanges, in various fields.
- Obtaining a stable, equitable, efficient and relevant educational system by integrating the unitary national educational system of assessment into the European framework.

Conclusions

The continuous monitoring of education and formation in accordance with these key competences will result in an active and efficient individual, regardless of its residence, linguistic and cultural circumstances.

First and foremost, education has the main role in the process of the individual formation under the auspices of the key competences. It facilitates the individual’s social integration by imposing conduct codes and recommending effective means of communication in various cultural, organisational and linguistic contexts.

Designing a balanced curriculum, able to put the pupils’/students’ school trajectory in agreement with the natural and artificial environment they are part of at a given moment, means that success, mobility, dynamism,
constructivism and the sense of duty may become the main advantages dominating the labour market in the near future.

The key competences represent a multifunctional and transferrable complex of knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for all the individuals in their personal development, social integration and permanent adaptation to changes in environment, activity or linguistic realm.

References


Lista de competente cheie, comune mai multor ocupații, aprobată prin Hotărârea CNFPA nr. 86/24.06.2008


Proiectul Competente cheie TIC in curriculum școlar at www.edu.ro: Programe și proiecte