The specific of using educational strategies in teaching and learning psycho-pedagogical disciplines from preschool and primary pedagogy specialization

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the efficiency criteria in the utilization of teaching strategies in the training and development of the students skills (students enrolled at the Education Sciences Faculty - Preschool). The study examines the determinative variables dynamics in the selection and in the use of teaching strategies for teaching curriculum subjects from the PIPP specialization. The practical implications of this study relates to the identification of an optimal criteria for development of effective teaching strategies in teaching/learning of the disciplines specific for teaching profession that can contribute to achieve high levels of professional effectiveness.

Keywords: educational strategies, training situation, student’s skills

1. Theoretical Background

The initial teacher training for preschool and primary education involves the training and development of a system of professional competences, as well as transversal competences that will help future specialists to obtain optimum performances in the teaching profession (Potolea, Toma, 2010).

Centering on the student is a fundamental attribute of educational paradigms that structure their steps depending on certain characteristics of the student-process relation and/or of the student/contents relation, as opposed to the

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We derive from the specialized literature the following general characteristics of training situation: a) active participation of students in building up their own knowledge; b) students build up knowledge based upon their own knowledge and skills; c) they understand expectations and are encouraged to use progress self-evaluations; d) they work in collaboration; e) they decide on the structure of groups and working methods; f) the students monitor themselves their own learning course, in order to understand how knowledge builds up and to develop learning strategies; g) students have an intrinsic motivation for reaching the goals they have set; h) activity represents a true learning process; i) learning is an active search for the meaning; j) teachers acknowledge the existence of different learning styles; k) teachers help students to surpass difficulties, by formulating questions and orienting them to the right solution.

The issue of using teaching strategies is a always present topic and it appears conceptualized in the specialization literature presented from two perspectives - one is the efficient use of teaching strategies in relation with the specific factors of the educational environment, and, on the other side, are the identification and optimal combination of the teaching strategies. A good teacher must master a lot of strategies and according to a specific situation, he must choose the best one, which, by the side of the others educational resources, will ensure the complete success of the educational action. The diversity of learning situations, given by the nature of the contents that are transmitted, by the learning tasks, by the pedagogical and psychological atmosphere created and of course, by the learners reactions at all this above, requests a variety of ways of action, of teaching strategies, from the teacher himself.

In teaching practice is not possible the excommunication of certain strategies and the absolutization of others, on the contrary, they combine and complement each other, depending on the concrete situation of teaching and learning. Therefore, it is imperative, achieving an optimal strategies combination, which will increase the educational effects of the activity. The present study assumes that the elaboration and development of a teaching strategy stands in the context defined by the specific variables of a training situation.

From the very broad conceptual approaches fan of the teaching strategies in recent years, it is noticed the need for a very careful methodological analysis, to highlight the reporting way of teaching strategies at the targeted objectives/targeted skills and the teaching contents in order to identify principles or criteria for selection and combination of the elements of a strategy and achieving educational aims.

The concept semantic plurality highlights his complexity in relation with the defining criteria and scientific approach. Approached as a way of combining methods, procedures, educational resources, organizational forms of learning, namely as an option for a a type of pedagogical technology, teaching strategy is a set of methods, means and forms of work organization selected and combined in order to achieve educational outcomes (Ionescu, Chiş, 1992; Cerghit, 2008; Cristea, 2002; Negreş-Dobridor, Păniloaria, 2005). Analyzed on this line, teaching strategy is a mutual potentiation of its components and not an additive amount of them (Bocos, 2008).

Approached from the action perspective, as a particular approach to learning or its conception-through questioning, heuristic algorithmic etc. the meaning of teaching strategy is to outline the best route to follow to achieve the objectives, the strategy being a flexible structure that adapts to situations and conditions that arose spontaneously. It produces a permanent adaptive restructuring which depends by many factors: the specific nature of the situation to which applies – the problematic character, undetermined; the strategy role in solving that situation-gradually provide a high degree of probability; the strategy structure - operations, steps, rules etc. (Potolea, 1989).

The directions to modernize and improve teaching strategies are in line with increasing creative interactive nature of the educational process, the application of methods with a strong formative feature, in developing active-creative learning, harnessing in new instructional technologies (like e-learning) or related to the development of multiple intelligences (expert system, drill and practice strategies etc.).

In this direction has developed the concept of blended learning which is a common approach to learning, but which is based on a mixture of teaching methods, of support and advocacy of necessary skills for learning a top job, thereby: web-based technologies, virtual classes, self-paced training, collaborative learning, streaming audio and video; different pedagogical approaches (constructivism, behaviorism, cognitivism); any form of technology used in the educational activity (video, CD, web, digital video, blog, portal) with training face-to-face, led by professor; instructional technologies with the current jobs requirements in order to create a harmonious effect of learning; the synchronous with the asynchronous learning (Bersin, 2008).

The extension of the concept promoted a different view on the structure of the didactic strategy: From a pedagogical perspective, including this type of learning experiences and the mechanisms of formation of students'
skills and capacities, style/learning styles required, motivation for learning/self-learning, teaching methods, teaching means, the forms of organization of the students' activity, the configuration of learning tasks, the ways to structure and presentation of teaching contents, the assessment methods; in terms of psychosocial outlook, educational teaching strategy includes student-student relationships, teacher–pupil relationships, socio-cognitive interactions in the classroom, educational communication components (Bocos, 2008). The sufficiently large palette of teaching strategy components offers the exhaustive picture of the diversity of actionable strategic alternatives, as the possible combinations, that remains in the teacher task to identify the optimal strategic combinations.

The design, structure and teaching strategies in academic cycle has as premise the competence paradigm, which is grounded in relation to professional competence grid covered by the initial training program of academic specialization (the notification of the general objectives specific for the subjects taught and their operationalization in the lessons; designing teaching activities, especially in the organization, direction and coordination of students in their efforts to learn; the processing, essentialization, illustrating and representing the content; adapting content to the specific stage of mental development of the child; capturing and highlighting the educational and pedagogical valences of the content; valuing the educational contents by structuring the behaviors to the values communicated; making correlations inter, intra and multidisciplinary etc. (Albulcescu, Albulescu, 1999).

In this respect, methodological recommendations are taken into account in studying pedagogical disciplines and also for training students skills for the teaching profession: the correlation on the general skills axis - specific skills - units of content, the selection and differentiation of teaching methodology and teaching tools assembly in relation to the types of skills and the level of learning acquisitions, the development of some interdisciplinary approaches, which will allow the students to define the connections between these disciplines, promoting active/interactive learning into teaching pedagogical contents, promote flexibility and creativity in teaching these subjects through the development of active spirit, entrepreneurial and constructive to students. (Bocos, 2008)

As a result of redefining teaching strategy and its components and the concept analysis considering the specific of teaching situations in teaching pedagogical disciplines, are recommended constructivist teaching strategies to promote professional skills training specific to the teaching profession of which we mention, without introducing a taxonomy of them: the personal reflection, defined as an active learning method with a big heuristic value (Piaget, 1972; Cerghit, 2008), methods of independent activity, which provides skill development through personal effort and active-creative involvement in developing knowledge- SINLEG, personal reading, systematic observation and independent work, learning using worksheets, which can have a strong problematic and heuristic character (Bocos, 2008), the conversation, learning by analogy, exercise, case study, cooperative learning, role play, discovery learning, problem solving, learning using ICT, interactive strategies favoring exchanges between participants at the activity by processes of cooperation and constructive competition which stimulate students activism in the student a relationship with both others students and the taught content. (Negreţ-Dobridor; Pânişoară, 2005; Oprea, 2007)

2. Design of Research

2.1. The Purpose, objectives and hypothesis of study

The purpose of this study is to identify the perception of educational factors - teachers in higher education which teach at PIPP specialization - regarding the efficiency of teaching/learning strategies that are used for teaching pedagogical and psychological contents at the courses in which they attend. In conducting the research we started from the hypothesis that the perception of subjects is different between this two categories of subjects.

2.2. Participants

The sample of subjects consisted of 45 teachers in higher education which teach at PIPP specialization, 35 women and 10 men, with teaching experience between 5 and 40 years, and also 150 students at licence studies. Of the 45 subjects, depending on the criterion of domicile, 16 were from rural areas, 29 from urban areas, including a diversification on teaching experience levels- a) rural: 2 little experience (below 10 years), 10 average experience (11 - 25 years), 4 great experience (over 25 years); b) urban: 2 with little experience (under 10 years), 21 average experience (11-25 years), 6 great experience (over 25 years). Of the 150 student subjects participated in psychosocial investigation 50 students in each grade.
2.3. The Methodology of Research

For this study were developed two questionnaires in accordance with the study objectives and they collect qualitative and quantitative informations (on a Likert scale in 5 steps) regarding the variables that determine the elaboration of teaching strategies used in the teaching of pedagogical and psychological subjects from PIPP curriculum.

The instruments has targeting the following objectives:
- the identification of the study participants opinion on the formative and informative effectiveness of teaching strategies in teaching pedagogical contents;
- identifying the involvement of students in establishing teaching strategies in teaching pedagogical contents;
- correlations between the nature of informational content and teaching strategies system;
- making a picture of the most effective and appropriate teaching strategies used in teaching pedagogical contents.

3. The Analysis and Interpretation of Results

We will perform a sequential analysis following the criteria and indicators that we had in view. We will present in the following the results we have measured for the three categories of teaching experience and for the students.

The first dimension of the instrument aims at identifying criteria of selection, structuring and optimal combination of methods, means and types of organization defining the structure of a strategy, in order to increase its efficiency. When being asked “To what extent to you consider the combination of teaching strategies is important in the teaching activity?” the subjects respond it is necessary in a great measure.

To the second item, “Which of the following combination criteria do you employ most in your activity?”, the subjects with less than 10-15 years of experience affirm the most combination criterion is the traditional – modern one, combining a great deal the individual activity with the frontal one and with activities on groups; those who have more than 30 years of experience consider they employ combinations the most according to the monodisciplinary – inter/ transdisciplinary criterion and the formal – nonformal criterion.

The teachers appreciate favorable the formative and informative efficiency of modern strategies. Thus, 83.5% of teachers surveyed agree that their use complementary to the traditional strategies favors the assimilation of the informational content, while only 16.5% consider their choice as satisfactory.

Regarding the relationship between informational content to be assimilated by students, on the one hand and the system of teaching strategies used by teachers, on the other hand, we find that 75.2% say yes, while 24.8% claim that there it doesn’t exist a relevant connection between contents requirements and teaching strategies system. Experience in teaching induce some changes in assessing the relationship between informational content – teaching strategies. Thus, teachers with some experience in the field, having seniority between 15 and 30 years appreciates - 86.45%, there is a close relationship between the two variables (Chi Pătrat x2(2) = 10,678 cu p < 0.05).

Table. 1 Efficient educational strategies – perception of teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>teaching experience</th>
<th>0 – 15 years</th>
<th>15 – 30 years</th>
<th>over 30 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count n%</td>
<td>Count n%</td>
<td>Count n%</td>
<td>Count n%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which are the predominant educational strategies you use?</td>
<td>conversation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>explanatory</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>44,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>questioning</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>discovery</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28,0%</td>
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<td>0,0%</td>
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Regarding teachers' opinions, we identify differences in perception from one category of teaching experience to another, and also in relation to the type of content - content of scientific pedagogy and content for education and preschool (language, mathematics, science) (Table 1).

Thus, on first place, pedagogy teachers appreciate explanatory strategies (predominantly those with large teaching experience), problem-based strategies, and those with other specializations appreciate explanatory strategies.

| Table 2 Efficient educational strategies – perception of students |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
|                               | Level of study  |                 |                 |
|                               | First year      | Second year     | Third year      |
| Modeling                      | Count | Column n % | Count | Column n % | Count | Column n % |
| Interactive                   | 8      | 32,0%      | 19    | 54,1%      | 21    | 67,0%      |
| Questioning                   | 1      | 4,0%       | 2     | 5,7%       | 0     | 0,0%       |
| Role play                     | 13     | 52,0%      | 13    | 37,3%      | 9     | 29,7%      |
| TIC                           | 3      | 12,0%      | 0     | 0,0%       | 1     | 3,2%       |

The students have a different perception in relation to the variable content type, considering in the pedagogical contents the interactive-grup strategies, the problematized strategies and the role play (Table 2). We considered analyzing effective teaching strategies in relation to the degree of training/discipline specific skills development (provided in the analytical data sheet of the discipline), and teaching strategies appropriate to the type of information content (pedagogy/psychology).

As for speciality of questioned teachers - psychology/pedagogy, mathematics, language, science, we found that there are differences between teachers from different specializations in the use of certain common strategic options. Teachers specializing psychology/pedagogy commonly used interactive-group strategies, role play, problem solving; teachers of mathematics specialization commonly used strategies based on practice and problem solving; specialized language teachers- in ICT strategies and explanatory strategies, and those with specialized sciences -ICT strategies.

With reference to the usefulness of establishing teaching strategies system by consulting students, teachers responses were: yes - 50.3% and 49.7% - negative responses. Therefore, the hypothesis that there are significant differences in terms of assessing the effectiveness of teaching strategies by teachers or students, it is confirmed Chi Pătrat: X2 (1) = 11,438 cu p < 0.05). The appreciation of the utility of establishing the system of teaching strategies in consultation with students decreases as the teacher accumulate experience. Of the most effective and appropriate teaching strategies used in teaching pedagogical contents, the views of the two different categories of respondents, confirming the hypothesis of the study.

Frequency of using alternative compared to traditional strategies indicates that 26.1% of teachers surveyed said they use, especially during a semester, classical strategies, 3.9% the alternative ones, and 69.9% are calling both classical and the alternative, justifying balanced attitude of teachers towards teaching strategies diversity.

Both, teachers for speciality psychology/pedagogy and teachers for speciality mathematics, language, science, assess that a growth in the students' involvement and shown interest towards teaching activity is linked to the employed teaching strategies. Therefore, the first category of subjects, teachers for speciality psychology/pedagogy, affirm that the growth in the students’ involvement and shown interest towards learning is connected to the following factors: the combination of individual activity with learning through cooperation and competition – 23%, use of modern means and techniques – 22%, a modern, interactive manner of work, with group differentiated tasks – 20%, use of student differentiated tasks – 10%, stimulation of learning through experience and practise – 9.66 %, inducement of creativity and independence in the work with the students – 5.66%, rigorous leading of students’activity – 3 %, employment of common tasks, the same for the entire class – 2%, a traditional manner of
working, with traditional teaching methods and means – 2%, an ordered, well structured and organised manner of working, coordinated by the teacher – 2%. The others, teachers for specility mathematics, language, science, consider these factors: use of modern means and techniques – 15%, well structured and organised manner of working, coordinated by the teacher – 14%, a modern, interactive manner of work, with group differentiated tasks – 10%, rigorous leading of students’ activity – 13%, inducement of creativity and independence in the work with the students – 12%, the combination of individual activity with learning through cooperation and competition – 10%, use of student differentiated tasks – 10%, stimulation of learning through experience and practise – 9%, employment of common tasks, the same for the entire class – 2%, a traditional manner of working, with traditional teaching methods and means – 2%.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The development of modern technologies opens new dimensions to the achievement of the educational activity – combining traditional strategies with modern ones (multimedia, educational software, distance courses through radio, television, internet, e-learning, virtual learning classes). The trends of updating and improving the teaching strategies subscribe to increasing the interactive-creative feature of the teaching process, to applying methods of a pronounced forming character, developing active-creative teaching, to valuing new training technologies (e-learning) or some technologies linked to developing multiple intel (expert system, drill and practice strategies etc). Within the multitude of training methods, procedures and techniques permanently developing, the issue that emerges is of an efficient, contextual combination of individual strategies with the cooperative, group learning and interdependent work strategies.

The research data can’t be generalized however we can say, as a general conclusion of the study, that there are significant differences in terms of teaching strategies in relation to the variables pertaining to the teacher, the variables pertaining to the students and the variables related to the curriculum. The traditional strategies are revigorated by the new techniques, developing them according to the new requirements.

Teaching strategy implies a theoretical approach in solving a training situation, to the extend that it creatively uses the pedagogical conception that is socially dominant at a given time and especially the educator’s conception. It also implies a practical approach when taking the concrete option of efficiently combining methods, means and types of organizing the activity according to criteria (complementarity, compensation and mutual support), on one hand and traditional criteria – modern formal or nonformal, theoretical, practical, mododisciplinary, inter/transdisciplinary etc - on the other hand.

The efficiency of the teaching activity resides as well in how the teacher succeeds in structuring and combining the teaching strategies within the circumstances of his work – human, material, time ones etc. -, on the extend to which he elaborates alternative solutions to the possibilities and optimal ways of combining the teaching strategies, based on the analysis of strengths and weaknesses of these possibilities.

References