

VALORISING THE ACTIVE METHODS IN THE STUDY OF PEDAGOGICAL SUBJECTS

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Abstract: *The option for the activating didactic methodology is determined by the real need of the student's involvement in the learning process. In the context of teaching for learning, we choose those methods which will increase the trainees' attention and interest in the conditions of flexibility and individuality of the instruction. The study achieved reveals the fact that the methods based on action such as learning with the help of worksheets, the exercise, the role play, the project or theme of action-research contribute to the creation of an atmosphere which should stimulate the interest and curiosity of those who learn, by their total engagement in the learning experiences.*

Keywords: *active methods; pedagogical skills; involvement;*

1. Active methods in the study of pedagogical subjects

The requirement for action centred methods manifests itself in the context of the student centred education - the key of a qualitative higher education system (Balaș, 2013, pp. 62-72). Action methods require both declarative knowledge (a certain amount of declarative information) and procedural knowledge (the teacher is asking the student *to do* something) – Marzano, 2009, p. 100. “The challenge is to channel children’s natural energies toward productive ends, toward conceptual understanding of important content, toward the acquisition of lifelong skills” (Danielson, 2010, pp. 26-27).

1.1. Worksheets

Generically called “*handouts*”, these cover a wide range of learning resources distributed on paper, from notes which accompany the teacher’s presentation (and which make easier its following, the key-ideas being already grouped there), books lists, vocabulary lists, charts which can be used at courses and at home) up to copies of the presentation in PowerPoint (which often have a space for personal notes), handouts for independent work, photocopies of an article (which is to be analysed, discussed) etc. They can be used in many ways and they are, perhaps, the most used help – resource in learning.

1.2. The exercise method

Coming from lat. *exercitium*, *exercere* - repeated action having in view the acquirement of skill, effort, exercising functions, it represents a way of conscious and repeated achievement of some operation and mental or motor actions having in view to obtain and/or consolidate some knowledge and abilities, skills, competences. The method of the exercise has mainly an algorithmic character in the way it supposes certain accurate, specified, ordered in a sequence of „steps” which are repeated exactly (Cucoș, 2014). The effectiveness of the exercise method depends on the characteristics of the educational context (Bocoș, 2017, p. 237): the level and number of students and the organisation form of their activity, the goals followed, the stage they are used in, the familiarity of the students with the metacognitive strategies. For instance, in the teaching-learning of pedagogic subjects, the following types of exercises can be used (idem, pp. 237-238):

- a. the analysis of school curricula from the point of view of design principles
- b. the analysis of the selection and structuring way of the contents
- c. the analysis of the structure, the presentation, the evaluation of the school textbooks' quality
- d. the elaboration of the design documents specific for the teachers: calendar planning, the design of the learning units, the design of the lessons/didactic activities
- e. the pedagogical derivation, integration of some objectives
- f. the conception and operation of educational objectives
- g. the identification and correction of mistakes in the operationalization of objectives
- h. the approach of some pedagogical concepts, actions, processes, educational phenomena
- i. the elaboration of some glossaries of terms or mini-dictionaries
- j. the self-analysis of the instruction and formation needs simultaneously with the elaboration of some professional development projects.

1.3. The of the role playmethod

The role play represents a form of application and use in the education system of the psycho-drama – a psychotherapeutic method created by J.B. Moreno in 1921 – and enters in circulation especially after 1934. The role play is based on the simulation of some functions, relations, activities, phenomena, systems etc. By the application of this method, the students become actors of social life for which they prepare themselves; because they will occupy in society positions or professional, cultural, scientific statuses, it is useful to play roles corresponding to these, forming thus certain competences, abilities, attitudes, behaviours, convictions etc. (Ionescu, Bocoş, 2017, p. 264).

The role play „makes explicit the implicit values which orient the different behaviours and human attitudes”, in the situation in which for a teacher it is indispensable the formation and ownership of some practice competences and specific behaviours of interaction with the education subjects, the understanding and positive and constructive influence of the students (Bocoş, 2017, pp. 245-246). For instance, the pupils/students, in the preparation for future teachers can interpret the teacher role, initially in simulated situations, virtual – educational activities achieved in front of the colleagues (which play the role of students), subsequently in real educational situations – in front of the pre-schoolers and schoolers. Being put in the position of organiser and coordinator of the educational activity, the one who interprets the role play will acquire a series of transversal competences, will understand what it is expected of him, how can he make himself understood by other people, how to act and speak in front of an audience, how to use the positive component of emotions. All these simultaneously with the formation and development of theoretical and practical competences specific for the pedagogical subjects: to design, develop, regulate the didactic activities.

1.4. The project or the topic of action-research

It is a way of instruction or self-instruction by means of which the pupils but especially the students achieve a research oriented towards practical objectives and finalised in a product which can be object, apparatus, installation, thematic collection, an album, a scientific paper etc. It is specific for this method, the fact that it is a way of learning based on the mental anticipation of an action and its execution independently or in a team. The products obtained by this method are the fruit of research, design and practical action. Thus, the project combines theoretical work) scientific investigation= with practical action of the pupil or the student. The project can have various forms, can be used in various activities and materialised in diverse fields. The achievement of the project is an occasion to objectify the

theoretical preparation, to practise the experimental-constructive thinking, of learning through cooperation and formation of some social-moral qualities (Cerghit, 2006).

	COGNITIVE ACQUISITIONS		ACTIVE SKILLS		ATTITUDINAL SKILLS	
	Conceptual understanding	Problem solving	Procedural knowledge	Pedagogical skills	Involvement in the activity	Interest for the activity
Pre-test	3,8	2,87	1,87	3,53	3,68	3,90
Post-test	4,98	3,51	2,51	4,03	4,06	4,31

”While they are involved in the action-research activities, the teachers understand better the instructional-educational process. The new elements that

they learn will have an impact on the situation in the class, school and region. The future directions of the development programs, the curriculum for the preparation of the teachers and the initiatives of scholar improvement will be significantly influenced by the elements that the teachers learn in the action-research activities, which require the critical investigation and rigorous examination of their own practices, of school curricula and school development in general.” (Kovacs, Văcărețu, apud Nedelcu, 2011, on line, mentoraturban.pmu.ro)

2. The research design

The design of the research required an experimental plan of pre-test/post-test type, the sample consisting of 29 students from the 2nd year of the study program The Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-school Education. On pre-test we have used expositive instruction methods such as the *exposition*, *explanation*, the description, concurrent with the lecture course reading method. On post-test we have used active instruction methods such as the exercise, role play, project elaboration, worksheets for students.

We presented below the results obtained, having in view the comparisons between the pre-test stage and the post-test stage:

Pre-test/post-test comparisons

We observed some significant differences between the pre-test and post-test for the indicators of cognitive development. In the post-test phase, the active skills are improved. The modifications are significant for the attitudinal-behavioural aspects in post-test.

The averages for cognitive development indicators (*conceptual understanding* and *problem solving*) are highlighted in Figure 1:

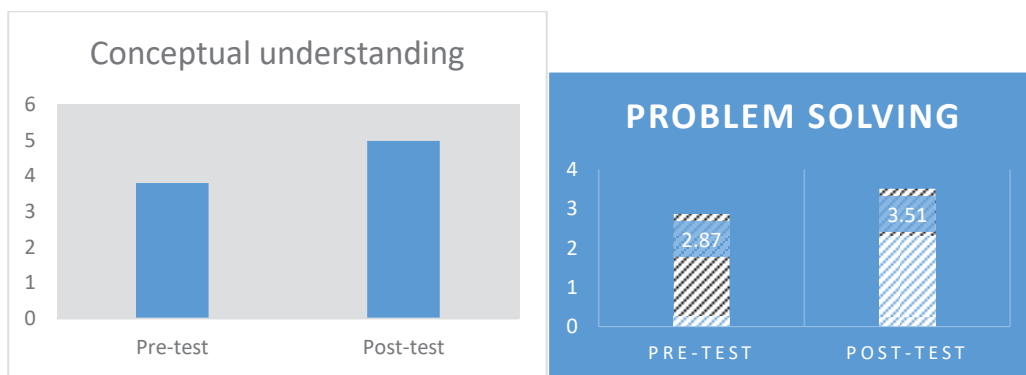


Fig. 1 The averages for cognitive development

In post-test, the averages for active skills shows a real progress of the surveyed indicators: *procedural knowledge* and *pedagogical skills* (Fig. 2):

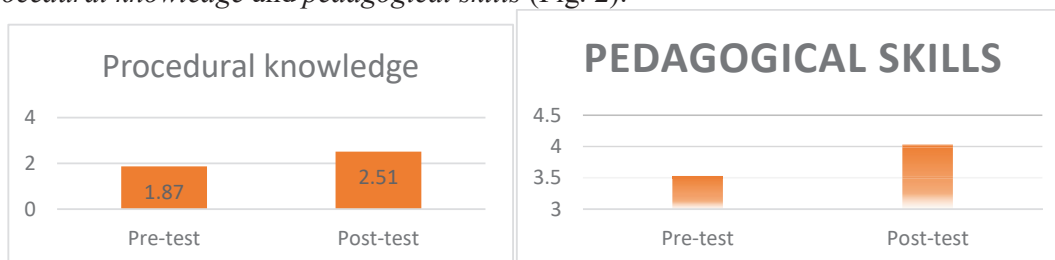


Fig. 2 The averages for active skills

The attitudinal modifications are significant in post-test for behavioral indicators: *involvement in the activity* and *interest for the activity* (Fig. 3):

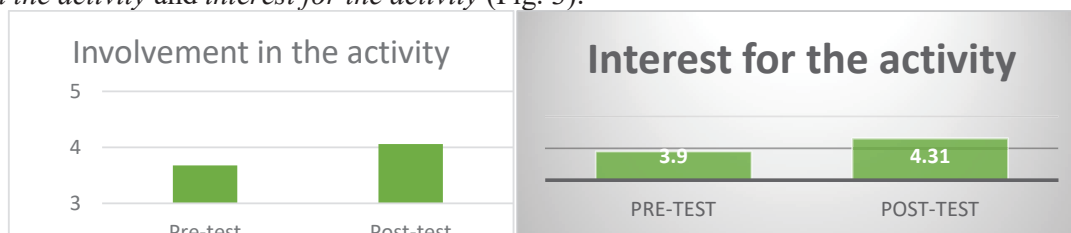


Fig. 3 The averages for attitudinal skills

The conclusions of the study

Being given the frequent use of active methods, we have obtained significant cognitive acquisitions progress for each student. The progress of active skills observed has confirmed the fact that the organisation of the activity in educational contexts based on active methods leads to the formation of pedagogical competences required for future teachers. The trainees' participation in the organised activities in an active manner had as effect a positive attitude towards learning.

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