

## STUDY ON THE DIDACTIC METHODOLOGY EMPLOYED IN ONLINE INSTRUCTIVE-EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

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### Biographical note

The teaching and research activities carried out currently as a Associate professor, on the major field of education sciences, materialized in teaching / evaluation educational actions (for the initial training of the future teachers), preparation of training materials (courses, guides, etc.), but also in designing and implementing research / development / training projects (especially sighting the continuous training, the primary and secondary education teachers' improvement), and in carrying out researches on topics directly related to certain issues of school education, and also in a scientific contribution materialized in a series of articles, studies published in famous national and international journals, are especially focused on the following areas of interest: General Pedagogy, Curriculum Theory, Classroom Management, Educational Communication, Educational Policies, Theory and Practice of Evaluation.

**Abstract:** *Among the directions of action and study in which the current didactic tendencies are concretized at the level of educational practice, we emphasize: the intensification and streamlining of the learning process; promoting collaborative, cooperative relationships between teacher and student that would facilitate the student's individual work and the capitalization of their individual skills; identifying strategies and forms of organization of the didactic activity that involve the students in a responsible manner, while being at the same time operative and productive; ensuring a permanent feedback in the information circuit between teacher and student. The problem under study is to what extent these directions for the restructuring of the educational reality, and especially the teaching strategies, which emerged and developed in response to the challenges of the contemporary world and are reflected in the principles of the new educational paradigm, are found in the educational practices specific to instructive-educational activities conducted online. Through the application of a questionnaire to a group of first- and second-year students, we aimed to identify their perception of the teaching methodology used in conducting online instructive-educational activities. The purpose of the investigation was to identify the extent to which the active and interactive teaching methods that are valued by current educational paradigms are used in conducting online teaching activities.*

**Keywords:** *online instructive-educational activities; didactic methodology; current educational paradigms; the active and interactive teaching methods;*

### Perspectives regarding the didactic methodology in current educational paradigms

In-depth learning based on the action and accountability of the learner, developing competencies, integrating knowledge into application structures, interactive teaching, inter- and transdisciplinary curriculum are but a few of the concepts and ideas that form the foundation of contemporary pedagogy, concepts that are generated by the movement of European societies towards globalization and a society based on knowledge, by the need to synchronize the development of society and the development of education, by the new results of certain evaluations

and applications within the educational systems, by the need to integrate and globalize education itself (Tăușan L., 2016).

In an extensive paper that analyses and presents the results of evaluations and applications undertaken within the educational systems, Chiș V. (2005, p. 32) summarizes the following characteristics and trends of future education: focus on performance; organization according to objectives and results; intense, in-depth learning; centring on the process of learning, on competencies and learning abilities; learning through problem solving and critical thinking; monitoring through high performance, success; design and management in a school-community partnership; learning in any place and at any time, at the beneficiary's option; education centred on the pupils/adults; varied learning rhythms and styles; personalized, individualized instructive-educational activities; adapting school to the characteristics of the learner; inclusive, integrated education, education for all.

The transformation of students into subjects of the educational activity through their involvement in it, accountability, and the methodology used is mentioned by M. Stanciu as being one of the ways to achieve the democratization of the contemporary educational systems (Stanciu M., 1999, pp. 34-36).

In a study devoted to the analysis of the evolution of pedagogical theory from the perspective of the postmodern paradigm, Păun E. (2002) highlights the following characteristics of postmodernity in education:

- Education centred on the learner, seen as a person with individual, differentiating characteristics that need to be capitalized and maximized in the educational act (idea that sits at the centre of the existential-humanist paradigm, which is subsumed to the postmodern paradigm);
- Revaluation of the subjective-affective dimension in the educational relationship, of the actions and behaviours of the subjects that have a unique, situational, contextualized character;
- Considering the educational relationship as an interaction in which the teacher and the student are engaged in a process of cognitive and affective investment, and in which the teacher works together with the students in their development and building the status of student.

Postmodernist outlooks correspond, for the most part, to the constructivist approach in education, especially through the role assigned to the learner in constructing knowledge, modifying the roles of the educator, and learning strategies with a strong formative character. Joița E. (2006, p. 62, 65) summarizes the dimensions specific to constructivist learning, among which we find:

- Students search for information on their own, process it and then collaborate;
- Students achieve a subjective knowledge, asking questions, establishing correlations, formulating hypotheses, solutions, and arguments;
- Shifting the emphasis onto understanding, critical analysis, interpretation and individual argumentation;
- Students move from the passive attitude of merely receiving information to that of mental and actional involvement;
- The student solves problems by: learning through discovery, research, construction, decision making;
- The student organizes and constructs his own learning, forming his abilities to 'learn to learn, to know';
- The teacher's role is to organize information, problems, tasks, materials, to facilitate, guide, coordinate, provide support, to formulate and support the formulation of questions, to support the formulation of individual answers, debates, negotiations, and to achieve the final summary.

Concerning the elements specific to modern didactics from the perspective of the learner's status, of the source, and of the mechanism of knowledge, we note: acquiring knowledge through their own effort, by considering the learner as both object and subject of the action, achieving knowledge as a result of effective, external actions and mental, internal ones, as well as through active reflection and discovery of the real, not only by mimicking reality (Ionescu M., 2009, pp. 49-50, Iucu R., 2001).

Among the directions of action and study in which the current didactic tendencies are concretized at the level of educational practice, we emphasize: the intensification and streamlining of the learning process; promoting collaborative, cooperative relationships between teacher and student that would facilitate the student's individual work and the capitalization of their individual skills; identifying strategies and forms of organization of the didactic activity that involve the students in a responsible manner, while being at the same time operative and productive; ensuring a permanent feedback in the information circuit between teacher and student (Ionescu M., Chiş V., 2001, pp. 54-56, Bocoş M., Ionescu M., 2009).

## **Methodology**

The problem under study is to what extent these directions for the restructuring of the educational reality, and especially the teaching strategies, which emerged and developed in response to the challenges of the contemporary world and are reflected in the *principles of the new educational paradigm*, are found in the educational practices specific to instructive-educational activities conducted online.

Through the application of a questionnaire to a group of first- and second-year students, we aimed to identify their perception of the teaching methodology used in conducting online instructive-educational activities.

The items in the questionnaire through which we investigated these aspects are:

- ✓ *I consider that the explanations within the face-to-face teaching-learning activities are more effective because they are adapted to the needs of the students, as a direct result of the interaction with them, while in the case of online activities they are not so frequent.*
- ✓ *I understood more easily the contents taught in the face-to-face teaching activities, compared to the online activities.*
- ✓ *I find that the lectures given by teachers in online activities are more monotonous, and my ability to concentrate is lower in their case than traditional face-to-face teaching activities.*
- ✓ *The use of interactive teaching methods, which promote understanding and deepening knowledge, is extremely limited in online activities.*
- ✓ *In online teaching activities, debates are slower and more difficult to conduct, and do not have the effectiveness of debates during traditional activities.*

**The purpose of the investigation** was to identify the extent to which the active and interactive teaching methods that are valued by current educational paradigms are used in conducting online teaching activities.

### **Research objectives:**

- Identifying certain difficulties in using active and interactive teaching methods in online activities;
- Evaluating the percentage of interactive teaching methods used in online activities;
- Identifying the role of expository methods used in the context of online teaching activities.

**Research hypothesis:** we assume that active and interactive teaching methods are used with difficulty in conducting online teaching activities and thus the traditional methods based on exposition become predominant.

**Target group:** the questionnaire was applied to a sample of 100 first- and second-year students from several faculties in a Cluj-Napoca university.

## **Results and discussion**

Following the application of the items from the questionnaire to evaluate the students' perception regarding the teaching methodology used in online activities, we recorded the following results (Table no.1, Table no. 2).

Table no. 1. The explanations in the face-to-face learning activities are more effective and they are not as frequent during online activities.

|                         | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>%</b>     |
|-------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Agree                   | <b>42</b>        | <b>42</b>    |
| Partially agree         | <b>28</b>        | <b>28</b>    |
| Disagree                | <b>25</b>        | <b>25</b>    |
| I do not know/No answer | <b>5</b>         | <b>5</b>     |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>100</b>       | <b>100,0</b> |

Table no. 2. Easier understanding of the contents taught in face-to-face teaching activities compared to online activities.

|                         | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>%</b>     |
|-------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Agree                   | <b>53</b>        | <b>53</b>    |
| Partially agree         | <b>24</b>        | <b>24</b>    |
| Disagree                | <b>19</b>        | <b>19</b>    |
| I do not know/No answer | <b>4</b>         | <b>4</b>     |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>100</b>       | <b>100,0</b> |

We find that online teaching brings with it a deficit in the understanding of the content taught, most of the students surveyed agreeing that the teacher's explanations were more effective and led to a better understanding of the content in face-to-face teaching activities. The explanation of these findings lies in the increasing share of expository methods used in online activities, centred on the teacher's activity, to the detriment of methods that involve the educated in the learning process in a real manner.

Another possible explanation is the decrease in the frequency and quality of feedback within the didactic communication, which leads to the fact that the teacher's explanations are difficult to adapt to the personalized needs of those being educated. In online teaching activities, didactic communication between teachers and students is carried out with certain limitations (such as: nonverbal communication has a low presence and unilateral communication from teacher to student predominates, to the detriment of teacher-student or student-student interactions, etc.). The degree of interaction between teacher-student or student-student is lower in the case of online teaching activities compared to traditional ones. This specific of the communication determines difficulties in the realization of the feedback, with negative effects on the adaptation and individualization of the explanations, on the whole didactic discourse, and on the understanding of the contents.

In order to obtain the information necessary for the regulation and optimization of the didactic communication and implicitly the instructive-educational process, the educator uses various methods: interviewing the students; observing their expressive-emotional behaviour; observing how they act in order to complete learning tasks; evaluating students' answers and comments. The importance and functions of feedback derive from the dual status of the sender and the receiver in teaching situations. Thus, the sender is not only a source of information, but also an educator - that is, they are concerned with transforming the receiver, based on the information they provide. In turn, the student is not only a receiver of information, but is also a person available for transformation, educable, following a learning process that incorporates the information received.

In the circumstances when the teaching activity is carried out online, the effectiveness of the feedback is limited due to the lower frequency of teacher-student interactions. Corrections, additions, approval or disapproval of the students' answers can no longer be activities that permanently accompany the teaching-learning activities. The results of the student's work are visible after longer periods of time, materializing in completed applications, elaborated works, etc., which will be evaluated by the teacher, but the results of the evaluations do not reach the student as promptly as in the case of face-to-face teaching activities. The timely identification of learning

obstacles and of the degree of adequacy of learning, in order to regulate the activity of both teachers and students, leads to effects such as: increasing the effectiveness of the message/learning act; creating a safe climate, both for the teachers (they know how their message is received) and for the students (they can self-control their learning act based on the indications offered by the teacher); improving the interpersonal relationship between those involved in the didactic act.

The limited and difficult use of active-participatory methods, the prominence of expository methods, the monotony associated with the decrease in the ability to focus their attention are ideas highlighted by the students' answers to the following items. (Table no.3, Table no.4, Table no.5)

Table no. 3. Lectures given by teachers are more monotonous, and the ability to concentrate is lower in the case of online teaching activities compared to face-to-face activities.

|                         | Frequency | %     |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Agree                   | 44        | 44    |
| Partially agree         | 28        | 28    |
| Disagree                | 22        | 22    |
| I do not know/No answer | 6         | 6     |
| Total                   | 100       | 100,0 |

Table no. 4. The use of interactive teaching methods, which promote understanding and deepening of knowledge, is limited in online teaching activities.

|                         | Frequency | %     |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Agree                   | 48        | 48    |
| Partially agree         | 29        | 29    |
| Disagree                | 19        | 19    |
| I do not know/No answer | 4         | 4     |
| Total                   | 100       | 100,0 |

Table no. 5: Debates take place more slowly and with difficulty in online teaching activities.

|                         | Frequency | %     |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Agree                   | 58        | 58    |
| Partially agree         | 18        | 18    |
| Disagree                | 21        | 21    |
| I do not know/No answer | 3         | 3     |
| Total                   | 100       | 100,0 |

In the case of online didactic activity, the requirements and trends towards which the didactic methodology is shifting mark certain transformations: the active and interactive methods can only be used with certain limitations and difficulties in the online instructive-educational activity and expository methods are predominant; methods that involve frontal or individual activity predominate, while those that involve teamwork, group work, and cooperation are difficult to apply; the methods that require frequent teacher-student or student-student interaction are not favoured, nor those that involve the direct interaction of the learners with the objects of knowledge; methodological variety and the adaptation of the methods to the individual learning needs and knowledge of the students are also limited by the conditions and particularities of online teaching activities.

## Conclusions

Making the switch to virtual didactic activity due to the current restrictive conditions imposed by the coronavirus pandemic implies a series of changes at the level of the processes involved in the dynamic plan of the educational system: teaching, learning, evaluation. The consequences of the new conditions for carrying out the didactic activities are reflected by the teaching-learning-assessment methods used, the communication methods involved, the teacher-student interactions, the frequency of feedback.

We notice a closeness between the teaching currently achieved in the virtual environment and the traditional stance on teaching, seen as an activity of knowledge transmission. Online teaching is largely based on the communication of new knowledge using expository teaching methods. Active and interactive teaching methods can be used with difficulty and the living out of new experiences by practicing certain behaviours is limited. Active teaching that involves and engages the physical and mental resources of the student in the learning process is achieved with difficulty in the online environment.

From the analysis of the answers provided by the students, we find that carrying out online teaching activities involves many changes compared to the traditional, face-to-face teaching-learning activities, many of these changes being perceived by students as disadvantages.

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