



Educational Paradigms in Contemporary Context and Educational Implications to the Potentiality Level of the Preadolescent Students

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Authors note

The teaching and research activities carried out currently as a Lecturer Ph.D., 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*.

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Abstract

The requirements for an education centred on the student and for adapting the school to the learning possibilities of the students are in accordance with the new principles of the contemporary education and pedagogy and with the European educational documents, which are the base of constructing the contemporary educational systems. The idea of the education centred on the student – as person with individual characteristics that need to be valued and capitalized in education – is highlighted by the postmodern educational paradigm and by the constructivist approach of knowledge and education. Post modern tendencies mostly correspond to the constructivist approach in education, especially through the role given to the student concerning knowledge acquisition, and altering the role of the teacher and learning strategies with a strong formative aspect. The study tries to identify a series of educational implications related to the psychic cognitive and emotional - motivational processes specific to preadolescents students under the form of applicable strategies to the educational practice, implications that are subsumed to the requirement of adapting school to the necessities and possibilities of the student, as dimension of the constructivist paradigm.

Keywords: the paradigm of education centred on the student, adapting school to the possibilities of the students, preadolescence, constructivist paradigm

Zusammenfassung

Die Anforderungen für eine Ausbildung zentriert auf dem Schüler sind in Übereinstimmung mit den neuen Prinzipien der modernen Bildung und Pädagogik und mit den europäischen Bildungsdokumenten. Die Idee der pädagogischen Bildung auf die Schüler als Person mit individuellen, differenzierenden Zeichen, die auf eine maximale in der Ausbildung bewertet werden, wird von der postmodernen Paradigma in der Ausbildung und von der konstruktivistischen Ansatz des Wissens und Lernens hervorgehoben. Die postmodernen Richtungen sind hauptsächlich sprechend der konstruktivistische Ansatz in der Bildung, vor allem durch die Rolle der Studierenden in Verständnis. Sie modifizieren die Rollen des Pädagogen und der Lernstrategien mit einem wichtigen formenden Charakter. Die Studie versucht, eine Reihe von pädagogischen Auswirkungen auf die psychische, kognitive und emotional - motivationale Prozesse der vorpubertären Studenten zu identifizieren. Motivationspezifisch unter der Form der geltenden Strategien für die pädagogische Praxis, Auswirkungen, dass zusammengefasst werden, die der Schule zur Anpassung an die Notwendigkeiten und Möglichkeiten der Schüler, als Maß der konstruktivistischen Paradigma.

Schlüsselworte: das Paradigma der Bildung zentriert auf der Student, Anpassung der Schule auf die Möglichkeit der Schüler, vorpubertären Alter, konstruktivistische Paradigma

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1. Introduction

The requirements for an education centred on the student and for adapting the school to the learning possibilities of the students are in accordance with the new principles of the contemporary education and pedagogy and with the European educational documents, which are the base of constructing the contemporary educational systems. Also are in accordance with these the other principles and dimensions of the contemporary pedagogy: education for all, partnership for education, stimulating the critical thinking, learning by solving problems, the preponderance of interactive experiences, which generates deep learning, and the preoccupation for forming competencies. The requirement of placing the student in the centre of the educational process, of adapting all activities to his capabilities and interests, is an approach to education proper to the constructivist paradigm, which, by comparison with the traditional paradigm presents a number of significant changes in design, strategy and action.

The paradigm of school adjustment to the demands and teaching possibilities of the student, a characteristic of education in the future, but also of education systems organized according to the network model (Chiș, 2005), prompts for a diversification of learning situations and experiences, and setting them up according to the possibilities and needs of all student categories in order to meet the following principles: “inclusive school”, “school for all”, “integrated teaching”.

The idea of the education centred on the student – as person with individual characteristics that need to be valued and capitalized in education – is highlighted by the postmodern educational paradigm and by the constructivist approach of knowledge and education.

2. Dimensions of the contemporary educational paradigms

Adapting the school, the educational strategies and the entire instructive process to the individual needs of the students, to their learning capacities and particularities are one of the dimensions of the postmodern paradigm in education. E. Păun (2002) highlights the following characteristics of postmodernism in education in a study dedicated to the analysis of theoretical developments in terms of the postmodern pedagogical paradigm:

- learner-centered education, the student being seen as a person with individual, different characteristics that should be valued and used to the maximum (an idea situated at the center of the existential-humanistic paradigm, subsumed to the postmodern perspective);
- upgrading of the subjective-emotional dimension in relation to education, to the subjects' actions and behaviors of subjects who have a unique, situational, contextualized character;
- considering the relationship of education as a teacher-student interaction. Both the teacher and the student are engaged in a process of cognitive and emotional investment, and the teacher works with students so that they develop and acquire the status of being students;

- creating a balance between promoting competition and cooperation in school;
- overcoming the prescriptive normative formalized vision on the curriculum theory and integrating it into the classroom space (cultural space) in order to analyze the cultural contexts in which curriculum is structured and to re-elaborate and to continuously process it.

In the context of post-modern vision on education, on pedagogy, constructivist approach to knowledge and learning has also its place, being considered a post-modern paradigm in education. Orientation towards the individual and his values, subjective way of individual knowledge, personality development in an authentic social context, his own construction of knowledge by developing various meanings and significances, by interpretation, by reasoning according to a cognitive own experience, are some of the constructivist dimensions that are also found in postmodernism.

Post modern tendencies mostly correspond to the constructivist approach in education, especially through the role given to the student concerning knowledge acquisition, and altering the role of the teacher and learning strategies with a strong formative aspect.

Summarizing the references regarding constructivist learning, E. Joița (2006: 62, 65) describes the following dimensions of the idea of centering the educational process on the student, as the main element:

- the students look up the information, process it, and then discuss it;
- the students gain subjective knowledge by asking questions, correlating, forming hypotheses, finding solutions, bringing arguments;
- focusing on understanding, critical analysis, self-interpretation and argumentation;
- encouraging autonomy of knowledge and actions, initiatives and curiosities;
- students shift from the passive attitude of receiving information to an attitude of mental and active involvement;
- the student solves problems by: learning through discovery, searching, formulating, making decisions;
- the students' new knowledge is the result of rebuilding the old one, of integrating the new data;
- the student organizes and performs his/her own teaching by forming the capability to "learn to learn, to know";
- the role of the teacher is to organize the information, problems, assignments, materials, to facilitate, guide, coordinate, offer support, formulate and encourage asking questions, encourage individual responses, debates, negotiations, and to give the final summary.

A series of documents of international educational policies promote and support dimensions of the student-centered paradigm and of a real school adjustment to the possibilities and needs of the student: the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Dakar Framework for Action at the World Education Forum, the Millennium Development Goals, UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy, 2008-2013. The need of school adjustment to the various educational needs, to the learning and development characteristics of each child is also reflected by the concept "education for all" launched by Jomtiem at the World Conference on Education for All (1990). Providing a quality basic education, acknowledging

the diversity of the educational individual needs, engaging in a pedagogy that is student-centered, the right of every child to a complete cycle of elementary school, are a few of Jomtiem's recommendations in order for everyone to get a basic education. (Vrășmaș, 2001: 22).

Flexing and individualizing curricula by adapting the educational offer to the individual needs is one of the priorities of the Romanian pre-university education reforms, representing an essential aspect of the curricular system reformation. Generating a new type of curriculum is characterized by: transitioning from a teacher-centered school to a student-centered school by promoting interactive learning methods, flexing the curriculum, adopting an inter- and transdisciplinary approach to the curriculum, is in accordance with the paradigm of adapting the school to the demands and possibilities of the students, giving all of them an opportunity to identify their interests and to fully use their aptitudes and capabilities.

The national documents for educational strategies, trying a harmonization between internal priorities and the European ones, stipulate the following objectives and lines of action, converging with the paradigm of school readjustment to the student's needs:

- Ensuring equality of chance and growing the participation to education, through the stimulation of participating to compulsory studies, post-compulsory and academic studies (centring the teaching – learning process on the students; ensuring the equality of chance to the admission to the pre-academic studies; eliminating any form of discrimination; specific programmes to prevent and fight the school abandonment);
- Ensuring basic education for all citizens; forming key-competencies (ensuring continuation for the objectives and the content of the curricula for pre-school, elementary school and gymnasium; the usage of modern and interactive teaching methods; promoting modern study techniques and methods, also efficient learning styles as “learn to learn”, “learn how to do”, “continuous learning”);
- Substantiating the educational process on the needs of the students for personal and professional development (analysing the field of interest and the educational needs of the students; developing flexible and individual learning and professional routes; offering school and professional counselling and orientation).

We underline the fact that then national educational strategies sustain and promote the principle of school readjustment to the needs and to the capacities of the students, at the level of objectives and lines of action contained by the official strategic educational documents, trying to create a qualitative education and the insurance of chance equality during the entire educational route.

3. Optimizing the potential of the preadolescents students

Pre-adolescence, as stage in the ontogenetic development, ranging between the ages of 10-11 to 14-15, also known as mid-school period, marks the ending of childhood and the beginning of maturity stages, the beginning of integration in adult society. Its main characteristic is the intense development of personality. It is a period characterized by spectacular changes, which shall include: increased growth process, changes in intense psychosomatic, cognitive development, especially the thinking that goes into developing a new level of mental activity characterized by the ability of interiorization, increasing aspiration towards independence, autonomy and increased self-awareness.

All the changes from the preadolescence (biophysical, intellectual, emotional, moral, social) must be well known by teachers and parents to better integrate them in understanding the preadolescents and

adopting the most adequate solutions in fighting the educational difficulties, especially in the period of entering the middle school. Knowing the age particularities, the specific of this stage in the development of the students, including resources, motivations, adaptation mechanism, psycho-physical transformations and their consequences, will avoid an overstressing the limited possibilities of this stage and will offer an improved understanding of the behavioural manifestations and reactions of the preadolescents.

Knowing the age and individual particularities of the preadolescent students is an essential condition of ensuring the instruction centred on students – one of the dimensions of the constructivist paradigm that rehabilitates the role of the student in education, considering knowledge as specific to the age and also based on an own model where the student integrates, explains and interprets the reality, based on his own cognitive knowledge.

Knowing and respecting the age and individual particularities of the students is one of the classical principles specific to the traditional didactics, which, together with all the others principles, contributes to an optimal achievement of the aims of the instruction process, serving to an instruction centred on the teacher and on the informational content and ensuring an exact, active and guided teaching. From another point of view, researches upon the constructivist approach of instruction identified a series of principles related to modalities of centring the teaching on the student, principles that may be considered specific norms for the application of the general classic principles. Thus, the numerous principles of constructivist instructions may be considered particularizations or application norms to the principle of knowing and respecting the age particularities of the students.

The new particularities of *thinking* influence all cognitive processes, especially the pre-adolescent's learning activity. The diversity of school subjects studied and the increase in the degree of complexity of their content determine a development of the system of knowledge and notions acquired by the pre-adolescent. In order to put the whole potential of the student to value and to organise efficiently the educational activities, it is necessary to identify the cognitive style for each student. The task of the teacher, related to the diversity of learning styles, is to know the students' learning styles, to help them become aware of the characteristics of their own styles and to support them in solving learning tasks, according to each individual's style.

Knowing the varieties of the students' learning styles and recognizing the need to use a wide variety of didactic strategies create the premises for obtaining superior school performances, regardless of the learning style developed (Neamțu, 2003).

Concentrating on the use of predominant didactic methods, at the expense of a variety of methods, which would develop more learning styles, could determine difficulties of school adaptation, especially at the beginning of the secondary cycle, when the students are forced to adapt to different teaching styles used by each teacher. The use of varied and adapted didactic methods make the chances of success equal.

Taking into consideration the new particularities of the pre-adolescent student's *memory* as well as the new educational requirements which the student confronts once he goes to the secondary cycle, the teacher must permanently train and stimulate a logical memory of the students and create optimal condition which ensure the students' proper learning, avoiding situations in which some students are privileged or disadvantaged. To facilitate the integration of the new knowledge in the system of the existing ones, the following are recommended (Sălăvăstru, 2004:62):

- realising and using schemes to represent the relation or hierarchy of concepts;

- using analogies with similar contents acquired before;
- using pre-established organisers, which represent the ideas presented by the teacher before the system of knowledge which is to be assimilated, having a superior level of abstraction and generality, with the purpose of realising a pre-established orientation, making ideas more accessible, offering a general image on what is next to be learned.

To keep the knowledge its repetition is required, through an active participation of the student, which supposes:

- understanding thoroughly by realising associations with previous knowledge;
- establishing precise and varied goals for each revision;
- solving problems, doing applications, practical work, which require the use of the information assimilated.

One of the conditions of the development of students' *creativity* is stimulating independent thinking, through the use of heuristic didactic strategies, by encouraging students to formulate, analyse and solve problems, discover knowledge. The effects of this type of learning are felt not just at the level of creativity, of the creative solving of problems, but also at the level of the student's entire personality (inter-personal relations, communication, trust in own forces, etc). Using didactic methods such as: brainstorming, Phillips 6-6, panel discussion, the method of creative solving of problems, favour the free association of ideas, by removing critical spirit and using the unconscious' resources to the fullest.

The enrichment and development of language facilitate the social integration of the student, give security, develop thinking, imagination, sensitivity, contributing to the achievement of superior school results. But, an exclusive and obsessive orientation of the pre-adolescent towards reading by the parents and teachers risks to generate a decrease in the interest for learning. In order to favour the enrichment and development of language, it is recommended, both for teachers and parents (Cozma, 2001):

- to orientate the pre-adolescent's desire for reading towards well-known, valuable works;
- to put the student in situations of communication as varied as possible;
- to have patience to listen to him every time until the ending of the message he wants to transmit;
- to encourage him in the desire to communicate his thoughts or narrate events or films;
- to offer a model of neat ways of expressing himself.

Although stimulating educational motivation is considered to be an art, depending on the pedagogical capacity of the teacher (Sălăvăstru, 2004:90), the knowledge and usage of motivational strategies guides the teacher to accomplish some desiderates: highlighting the practical importance of the discipline; expressing the trust in the learning capacity of each student; ameliorating the perception of the student regarding his own potential and competency, using adequate tasks and educational activities; avoiding the involvement of students with learning difficulties into competitive situations to avoid discouragement and demotivation; optimally dosing the intensity of motivation in accordance with the nature of the learning task; involving the student during educational activities through the usage of active – participative, student centred teaching methods, in order to activate the cognitive and operative structures of the student; building a positive attitude for the learning tasks and for a new learning content through the usage of problem simulations; using charts for the learning content to highlight the

relationships between different concepts; using a stimulating progressive evaluation, centred on educational efficacy of the students from one stage to another, especially for students with learning difficulties; evaluating the fields of interest and the preferences of the students, in order to establish connections between these items and curriculum.

4. Conclusions

We underline that the evolution of the instruction process according to the principles of the paradigm of centring the teaching on the student and adapting school to the possibilities and the necessities of the student will help the students to discover themselves and will not try to form them after patterns, instead forming them as autonomous persons, based on their wishes, interests, motivations and feelings. The educators must pay more attention to the emotional motivation and orientation. Valuing inside the educational practice the ideas and the principles of the education centred on the student, the teachers will create complex personalities that are interested in the problems of their fellows, also following their dreams and ideals without pre-established trajectories.

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