

Edu World 2016
7th International Conference

**VALUED EDUCATION FOR A GOOD SOCIETY AND A BETTER
LIFE**

Crenguța Lăcrămioara Oprea (a)*

* Corresponding author

(a) University of Bucharest, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Science, Dept. of Teacher Training, Romania, Bucharest, Romania, e-mail: crenguta.oprea@fpse.unibuc.ro

Abstract

In initial and continuous training of teachers, requirements growing are about the need of integrate new technologies in education, to enhance interactive learning using strategies collaborative learning and assessment that constitutes the imperative of development of a society and a modern education and postmodern. This does not mean total abandonment of the traditional strategies, but blending effective with those that require a deeper involvement in the student's own training and development. This is due to the evolution of digital society, the emergence of new areas of knowledge and new individual and social needs of adapting to the flow of information which are in a constant effervescence. Teachers must learn how to motivate students to go through learning experiences proposed to apply the acquired acquisitions in new situations, building their new knowledge. If learning is a constructive process, then teacher training should be so designed to create opportunities for this construction. The education made with love is the highest form of training.

© 2017 Published by Future Academy www.FutureAcademy.org.uk

Keywords: Education; initial and continuous teacher training; constructivism; learning.

1. Introduction

It is well known that the human knowledge is built creatively and actively; learners construct their new knowledge on the foundation of previous learning, reflecting on those experiences. This perspective comes to contrast of those how regarding the process of knowledge as a mere transmission of information from one individual to another, in which the reception is fundamental.

Two important concepts revolve around the idea of knowledge building. The first is the fact that learners build new understandings using what they already know. New knowledge is not print on a "tabula rasa". Learners receive the new learning experiences with purchases that they had acquired, reflecting about the changes that will build on new learning situations.

The second notion is the fact that learning is an active process, more than a mere passive receipt of information. Learners face their personal knowledge with the new opportunities created by learning. If the new material does not match with what students are familiar, then they must seek ways to adapt and enrich the understanding to the situation. This requires reflection on the experiences of knowledge and meditation about it.

The principles of active learning revolves around the idea that learners remain active during this process: they exploit initial/current procurement, retain relevant elements of the new experience, analyze the consistency of prior knowledge and the emerging and, based on this judgment, knowledge can change their behavior and the future process of learning.

„Three major points that teacher education programs must address to be successful: the complexity of learning to teach, the need to demystify the knowledge we do have about how people learn to teach, and the necessity of conceptualizing learning to teach as an ongoing, enduring process.” (Spalding, Klecka, Lin, Wang, Odell, 2011, p. 4). Research that examines the learning of individual teachers indicates “that meaningful learning is a slow and uncertain process for teachers, just as it is for students” (Borko, 2004, p. 6).

2. The Concerns For Teacher Training Programs in Order to Create Active Learning in School

The constructivist perspective on learning leverages a series of interactive teaching strategies in which students learn to formulate their own ideas, to test them, to argue, to collaborate, to conclude etc. From this point of view, it requires a continuous updating and improvement of teacher training programs. In 2008, Feiman-Nemser wrote (p.704): „we need more conceptual work on the content, mechanisms, and contexts of teacher learning, more longitudinal studies of teacher learning over time, more attention to the learning of teachers with different cultural and educational backgrounds, and more thoughtful efforts to link teacher learning to meaningful student learning”

When students discover problems, searching and solving them, they become active participants in building their knowledge and reflect on how their own understanding can be change. Students learn not only by themselves but rather from others. Reflecting on learning in groups, they can acquire the methods and strategies of learning from each other. They become aware of the relative nature of reality, recognize the perceptions of partners, while accepting diversity, variety and even opposition interpretations. Such an arrangement determines cognitive deconstruction and reconstruction interventions based on new and emerging changes, trasforming the novelty as resources and requirements for their own needs.

Current school is not as quickly with the movements taking place in the socio-human field and because of this, the teachers training programme must continually rebuild themselves. In this regard, several authors aim „to offer a new model for a teacher preparation course that features reflection and teaching as integral” (Naidoo, & Kirch, 2016). The reasons for these arguments considers that "school is

still unprepared to form an authentic personality, spiritual well-rounded, capable of completing." (Cucos, 2008, p. 166).

On the other hand there are authors (Kleickmann, Richter, Kunter, Elsner, Besser, Krauss, Baumert, 2013) who consider that: „pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) and content knowledge (CK) are key components of teacher competence that affect student progress. However, little is known about how teacher education affects the development of CK and PCK.” (2013, p. 90).

To be teacher is undoubtedly the most important and noble profession of humanity because it has direct access to the children's soul and the entire human evolution depends on the efforts of the educators. For this job it is not enough to study three years at the faculty; it takes a long and a lot of dedication, for life. You must have inside, in the heart, in the soul, something like a calling, which makes students listen to you. Teacher's concern regarding the needs of student it is not only to make him understand the science but also to make him feel the excitement to studying it.

There are more and more varied concerns to create a teacher training program based on reflection and on the student's needs, „by examining the learner-centered and contextually sensitive aspects of teacher educator mediation, authors such as Stillman proposes a manuscript that challenges notions of “best practices” in teacher education and adds nuance to discussions about “rich” clinical experiences.” (2016, p. 683)

Current school prepares adults for over 20 years so, as the time changes, education must change (with all that implies it: curriculum, goals, teachers, facilities, etc.) It must keep pace, evolve, anticipating the time which will come by a valued education, which means the way in which education and training carried out in school and family helps develop the latent forces of the people in the making, that the future of humanity depends of them.

Training of a teacher is not limited by the scientific competence. "To dare to teach someone must have reached an inner building, to discipline, to be in order, to be even a example. Norma which you propose for the others should become your way of being, of thinking or acting. Pedagogy has not a dull theory, is the embodiment of values and a way of life. If your interior is not well placed, you can not hope for an edifice which it surpass yours." (Cucos, 2008, p. 165) The same idea reborn, with foundations in ancient theories and we meet in the conception of J.-J. Rousseau (1960) which revolutionized at this time the whole edifice of teaching, addressing the next urge to all those concerned with education: "Remember that before intend to start to form pupils, you should have made yourself, you must find inside the example that you must give it."

Not only in Romania is signaled the need for innovation the initial and continuous training of teachers. „For several historical and cultural reasons, the United States has long pursued a strategy of improving teaching by improving teachers.” (Hiebert, & Morris, 2012, p. 92). One thing is certain: there are many concerns for the initial and continuous teachers training programs, as one of the external conditions of learning school.

3. The Principles of Active Learning

The essence of the learning process consists of emotional involvement that complements intellectual. To ensure a thorough learning, the individual uses all resources: senses, emotions, intellect.

Underscoring the importance of activism in learning, Horst Siebert adds, "usually the knowledge that is only delivered, will remain passive, superficial. Situational knowledge has hopefully long-lasting effects and is active." (2001, p. 109) He also sets out the principles of such a learning situation:

- Orientation to situations / problems;
- Authenticity / relevance subjective;
- Change of perspective / multiple contexts;
- Complementarity and building instruction.

Such a teaching process can not be seen merely as a transfer of knowledge from teacher to student, from one who "knows" the one who "does not know and have to learn." A first implication of this is the following: the teacher should not assume the role of omniscient but of the student guide, providing him with opportunities to test his ability to make links between knowledge to solve tasks.

A novice teacher, preparing to begin his teaching career, write a list of things he wished he had learned in his teacher education program: "motivating kids to do their homework, dealing with parents, reading a teacher contract, using classroom technology and whether it's okay to accept friend requests from students on Facebook" (Blankinship, 2010, p. 1).

In this regard, teachers have to be concerned about not "how much" delivers students but more than "opportunities" they can give students to come in contact with various information, pausing to give them "ready-made". In this sense, they are preferred problematic situations in which students are placed in the position to explore the differences between the powers they hold and new applications that must face. Of course, each student has its own pace of learning and different levels of training, requiring differentiation and adaptation tasks.

Several studies about the initial training of teachers draw attention to the following insider influencing their training as good educators, creating differences and complicating the process of completely professional, namely: „the role of self, identity, beliefs, attitudes, expectations and dispositions” (Spalding, Klecka, Lin, Wang, Odell, 2011, p. 4). The authors continue drawing attention to the need to encourage and cultivate pleasure to come in contact knowledge in a pleasant way, because „making students uncomfortable can be unpleasant for teacher educators as well, who, like most teachers, want their students to be comfortable and happy.” (idem)

In the initial training of teachers it is important „to be discovered about how individuals learn to think, know, feel, and act like teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2008). Rodgers and Scott (2008) argue that it is the how that remains underexplored. How do preservice teachers experience the process of becoming “aware of their identities and the political, historical, and social forces that shape them” and begin to author their own stories (p. 733)? And when teachers are at so many different stages of personal, professional, and psychological development, how can teacher education programs both challenge and support them in cultivating their teaching selves and identities?” (Spalding, Klecka, Lin, Wang, Odell, 2011, p. 5)

4. Enthusiastic Teaching, Student-Centered Learning

The relationship between the enthusiasm of the teacher and the act of learning of the student is obvious. The enthusiasm of the teacher is one of the means that can improve student performance, as a

catalyst in maintaining student attention in raising awareness and developing a positive attitude regarding learning. Enthusiastic teachers are very expressive and this is demonstrated by the way he expresses, through gestures, body movements and energy level at which they operate. Because enthusiasm is contagious can happen and vice versa, in case of lack of enthusiasm. Then it decreases willingness to be involved in activities, the learning motivation is not authentic and its effects are not valuable.

The existence of a society depends on her level of education - the most precious treasure. Today's educators were the children of yesterday and those of tomorrow will continue in their footsteps. Monotony courses / lessons, humorless, unimaginative acts can seriously affect the ability of knowledge, everything being reduced to stereotype.

The education made with love is the highest form of training (Oprea, 2009, p. 303) because of that we advocate for a pedagogy of "ascension and illumination" in which "understanding and kindness are the keys for human spiritual ascension" and "teacher is not above the student, but is in his service" (Cucos, 2008, p. 171).

Teachers must learn how to motivate students to go through learning experiences proposed to apply the acquired acquisitions in new situations, building their new knowledge. Interactions within the group are also very important for the construction of individual and collective knowledge, as it provides a source undeniable achievement for comparisons and evaluations of their agreements with the partners.

If learning is a constructive process, then teacher training should be so designed to create opportunities for this construction.

Which would the professional development practices that could lead teachers to teach in student-centered style, lovingly teaching?

First of all, is important the awareness of the need of the student for activity, his inclination towards exploration and discovery, ensuring his deep involvement in a thorough and intensive learning process. Teaching with love "implies openness, generosity, emotional availability. If there is no love, education can not be achieved." (Cucos, 2008, p. 20).

Second, recognizing that the learning is not specific only for the pupils, but for all who want to know, even the adults. Teachers themselves learn and build their own knowledge and understand of the difficulties and the most effective ways of working. On the other hand, the way they are taught students - future teachers will influence the design and conduct their teaching.

Thirdly, the use of interactive teaching strategies (for example: starbursting, lotus technique, jigsaw, conceptual map, project, portfolios and so on) maintain good energy both for the teacher and for the student in an captivating and motivating activity, beneficial both in cognitive and social development. "Enthusiastic teachers create in the class the conditions that invite pupils to develop their own original meaning by determining their knowledge and build on these acquisitions a new understanding." (Oprea, 2013, p. 602) They are facilitators who mediates between current learning and emerging understanding, between current knowledge and new acquisition resulting from a new learning experience, helping them to complete operations intellectual increasingly sophisticated, making the material studied relevant for students. This is the cornerstone of education in a school that wants to be a temple of initiation. "Paideia of the ancient hermits experience can teach us something: to live is always to learn, learning involves knowing how to listen, to listen patiently means moving forward to meanings and understanding assumes to move in the horizon of value" (Cucos, 2008, p. 167). The today educator prepares the tomorrow's

generations and for that, he must be a doctor of souls, being more and more conscious that what we do close to a child influences his spirit, his soul and his body. The school's education as a therapy becomes a looked goal increasingly by parents for their children and reflected that educators help their students to build their identities, be confident and to take responsibility for their own development. The health of the lifetime depends on how we react, speak and behave ourselves around those who are preparing to become adults. Patience, faith and love are elements that bring light into the souls of children, and children will remember for a lifetime about those who have contributed at their personal development.

Taking into account the multiple intelligences (Gardner's (1999) theory) of his students, the teacher knows and appreciates/capitalizes different views of them. Their views represent some windows open to their own judgments, illustrating how they think and understand the world. Giving them the chance to express their views, the teacher stimulates self confidence of pupils.

Given that the learning must be built around key elements, concepts - key in a field, students must be familiar early on with goals and ideas from the study material, achieving interdisciplinary connections. Learning requires the existence of previous structures because all knowledge is based on existing reservoirs and new experiences relate to other experiences, focusing on the interaction between the subject and the world. This is because learning can not be conceived as an input-output model and can not be compared with data entry and processing in a computer. Human cognitive systems are structurally determined, meaning that these individual sets according to own structure, determine what significance can be give for all events (messages) coming from outside.

Meaningful in learning is the "significance" that learner attaches of the situation or for the experience that comes in contact. This explains the necessity and the value of students' awareness of the need to learn a specific theme, through knowledge of the objectives, by capturing the attention and maintain interest.

5. Inspiring Teaching for a Good and Valued Education

To be a good teacher requires being a good actor in the classroom, to be able to convey to the students emotion and desire to learn more about certain content. It is important the way in which the teacher manages to stimulate the curiosity and maintain the students' interest in living the joy of personal discoveries. The way he communicates with the student and using appropriate methods and techniques to stimulate creativity, the teacher may attract his interest, his curiosity and his desire for knowledge. The enthusiasm of the teacher is the key for a good learning in school. This encourages the student's interest, maintains his attention and a positive attitude. In this way, there is an increase in the student's motivation which directly influences his educational results and his performance.

Inicitative didactic relate to the fact that the teacher no longer satisfied only to delivere "ready-made" knowledge, ready-prepared to be assimilate by the students, but facilitates processes of deduction and learning self-knowledge from them. "Traditional didactic transmission is complemented by teaching of assimilation. Methodical of constructivism encourages autonomous learning by arranging stimulative educational environments and situations. In a special way, a teacher can impress by the way embodies a certain construction of reality." (Siebert, 2001, p. 208).

Without disregarding the total traditional teaching, constructivism promotes the idea that they are preferably those methods that "put you in a way of thinking, that mediate surprising knowledge and unusual observations, that stimulates a change of perspective and open eyes on some new perspectives wider."(Ibid, p. 9) Activities must be designed to be experimental, active and interactive.

Interactive teaching strategies for teaching and learning must be linked to the evaluation based on combining traditional and alternative methods. Alternative assessment methods have the major advantage that it provides a perspective on the internal learning process, requiring both the student's reflection on his work and the teacher on the process and the context in which learning took place. Based on cooperation between teacher and student, these methods are focused in particular on the discussion about stages of the process, highlighting favorable items and correct errors constructively. They are designed specifically not to penalize, but to steer a better course for the future construction of knowledge and learning pupils.

In a desirable school, both students and teachers want their activities to be enjoyable, learning to be useful with interesting knowledge and lessons to be organized using various, rich and fun strategies.

What happens when the student comes into contact with new information?

Constructivist model reveals that students compare the new information with already known (previously acquired) and are present in their mind. From this perspective there are three possible situations:

- 1) The new information fits quite well with initial purchases, being consonant and integrating the system as a piece of the puzzle;
- 2) The new information does not match, is dissonant, then the student attempts to restructure the initial acquisitions in the light of new data. It calls for a constructive effort of the student;
- 3) The new information does not match with the previous acquisition and is ignored. The student is not ready to assimilate it and requires time to develop this new understanding.

In the design of teaching, the teacher anticipates and analyzes what the student will do and how you will determine to learn. Four great questions of the teachers are important for the design of teaching: What will bring to the students attention? How will organize the work?, With what resources will do? and How do they know if the objectives were touched? Thus it becomes important to answer questions like: "How do we see what we see?" and "How do we observe?" or "How different?"

Starting from the idea that learning ability can not be taught, but can be acquired in situations that could be educational organized, we propose a change of perspective regarding teaching design. Important in education is not only knowledge but the interest of the learner to work and support his cognitive building networks. It calls upon the organization of learning contexts in order to stimulate creative and self-directed learning processes. Metacognitive skills enhance self-guided learning. The success of learning, the effectiveness of self-instruction depend on a good exercise of cognitive and emotional self-management.

Going beyond mere reflection of reality, human learning process involves combinations, construction, deconstructing and restructuring of these networks of knowledge. Building positive reality is the fact that in learning the subject achieved a consensus between their constructs and the external acknowledging differences, showing tolerance towards different modes of perception, thinking and interpreting reality on its other individuals. Deconstruction in learning means correction/change or giving up own insights, visions, ideas and concepts that have undergone a process of "aging", with the passage

of time, in favor of new ones. Learning as reconstruction, stresses that people reconstruct their knowledge systems, filtering new in terms of existing structures, selecting it, personalize it and including it, while processing rehabilitation of the previous schemes.

It requires activation of the teaching, aiming at stimulating the participation of students in the discussions. And the emphasis is on what is intended to achieve, on what is causing desired achievements, overriding concern of the teacher becomes that of knowing exactly how disrupt constructive, positive structures owned by the student, such may cause/foster the emergence of new construction, deconstructing and restructuring in its emotional and cognitive system to create new configurations. The essence of the teaching consists in strategic decision on the organization of learning challenge that lies precisely in finding ways to cause the pupil participates voluntarily - meaning the interest and curiosity - in the process. The results of this active involvement are just its own cognitive constructions.

6. Conclusions

1) Children learn more and are happy when they are actively involved and participate in building their own knowledge, rather than when they are simple auditors.

2) Education and training have better outcomes when work focuses on thinking, understanding and knowledge and not just on memory. Constructivism crosses attention on learning how we should think and understand.

3) Educational activities should combine classic and modern methods of group interaction and learning material, promoting alternative methods and stimulate creativity to develop pupils' capacities to express their knowledge in various ways.

4) Promotion of learning in real life for real life, thus stimulating the natural curiosity and coming to support students' interests. Knowledge must be transferable to other contexts, applicable in situations other than those in which they were acquired.

Highlighting the importance of stimulating higher cognitive processes, epistemic interests of students and the need to self-development, Gaston Berger states that "the best disciples of a teacher are not those who repeat lessons after him, but those who are awakened by the enthusiasm of the teacher, developing forces to make them go on their own roads." (1973, p. 32)

Creating a beneficial learning atmosphere by showing a calm, attentive, support and non-directive attitude, the teacher can contribute to the construction and perfection of the pupil's personality.

References

- Blankinship, D. G. (2010, July). How should we teach our future teachers? Retrieved from <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/37366560/>
- Borko, H. (2004). Professional development and teacher learning: Mapping the terrain. *Educational Researcher*, 33(8), 3-15.
- Cucos, C-tin, (2008). *Educația. Iubire, edificare, desăvârșire*. Iași, Romania: Polirom.
- Feiman-Nemser, S. (2008). Teacher learning: How do teachers learn to teach? In M. Cochran-Smith, S. Feiman-Nemser, & D. J. McIntyre (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education: Enduring questions in changing contexts* (3rd ed., pp. 697-705). New York, NY: Routledge.

- Gardner, H. (1999), *Intelligence Reframed. Multiple intelligences for the 21st century*, New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Hiebert J., Morris A. K., (2012, March/April). Teaching, Rather Than Teachers, As a Path Toward Improving Classroom Instruction. *Journal of Teacher Education* 63: 92-102.
- Kleickmann T., Richter D., Kunter M., Elsner J., Besser M., Krauss S., Baumert J., (2013, January/February). Teachers' Content Knowledge and Pedagogical Content Knowledge: The Role of Structural Differences, *Journal of Teacher Education* 64: 90-106.
- Naidoo K., Kirch S.A., (2016, June). Candidates Use a New Teacher Development Process, Transformative Reflection, to Identify and Address Teaching and Learning Problems in Their Work With Children. *Journal of Teacher Education*.
- Oprea, C.L., (2009). *Strategii didactice interactive*, București, Romania: Editura Didactică si Pedagogică;
- Oprea. C. L., (2013). The Enthusiastic Teaching–The Actor's Art Didactically Transposed for Teachers, Original Research Article, *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, Volume 76*, 602-607.
- Rodgers, C. R., & Scott, K. H. (2008). The development of the personal self and professional identity in learning to teach. In M. Cochran-Smith, S. Feiman-Nemser, & D. J. McIntyre (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education: Enduring questions in changing contexts* (3rd ed., pp. 732-756). New York, NY: Routledge
- Rousseau, J.-J. (1960). *Texte pedagogice alese. Emil sau despre educație*, București, Romania: Editura de Stat Didactică și Pedagogică;
- Siebert, H. (2001). *Pedagogie constructivistă. Bilanț al dezbaterii constructiviste asupra practicii educative*, Iași, Romania: Institutul European;
- Spalding E., Klecka C. L., Lin E., Wang J., Odell S. J., (2011, January/February). Learning to Teach: It's Complicated But It's Not Magic, *Journal of Teacher Education*, vol. 62 no. 1, 3-7.
- Stillman J., Anderson L., (2016, July). Minding the Mediation: Examining One Teacher Educator's Facilitation of Two Preservice Teachers' Learning *Urban Education*, 51: 683-713.