CONCEIVING, DESIGNING AND DEVELOPING TEACHING STRATEGIES IN INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

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Abstract
        This research is a meta-analytic enterprise departing from three premises:
a) playing and training should be consistent with the constant deepening of knowing,
b) for this purpose, it is necessary to improve instructional design methodologies,
c) above all, it requires critical attention to the most effective components of instructional design, teaching strategies.
The study is based on a systemic vision oriented to ensure an active and creative learning of knowledge and to rationalize the training process.
At the heart of our approach is to clarify the characteristics of teaching strategies and defining operational steps of conceiving, designing and developing teaching strategies

Keywords: Education, didactic communication, instructional design, teaching strategies

1. Introduction

        Given the nature of the training activities conducted in schools, some aspects are necessary to support and complement, from a didactic point of view, all the steps of organizing the educational process in the study groups, organized according to regulations. However, customizing the specific theoretical training, especially those involved in specific training programs, is a necessary condition that must support the removal of formal character that can be set up in this kind of activity.

2. Designing teaching strategies

        Some general considerations, however, are welcomed to ensure a sufficient degree of rigor and logical teaching to the permanent learning in schools. It should be noted that whatever level it takes place, the educational

process is not a simple sum of its constituents, but the system as a whole, a whole structure with integrated functions, where each element must be understood in its relations with all the other elements, at the same time. This dynamic -systemic perspective perceives the components as involved in a joint activity, where the contribution game and the strategy interaction vary in relation to the objectives and conditions of deployment. Any changes made in one of the components of the education system and processes affect the functionality of the system, requiring corresponding changes in the other components.

Conducting a teaching activity is essentially a network or set of decisions that the trainer takes to correlate the priority elements of his work and to build the best solution with respect to the educational situation again. The one who instructs must find a rational and appropriate formula to combine methods, procedures, techniques, means and forms of organization that lead to an optimal use of the potential of the trained subjects (Neacşu, 1990, pp. 219-220). Choosing the procedures for training in relation to the trained subject is the teaching strategy. It is well known that the teaching strategy is the key tool in the instructional design (Ştefan, 2003; Reiser & Dempsey, 2011; Regeluth, 2013).

The teaching strategy results in a didactic approach to teaching and learning, combining and optimal organizing of the methods, means and forms of grouping of the participants (Cerghit, 2006). These elements, integrated into the operational structures, are based on a systemic vision and designed to ensure an active and creative learning of knowledge and to rationalize the training process. The concept of "strategy" is operated both at the macro level, the intermediate level and the micro level, the latter level being directly linked with learning pedagogy, training theory and practice. Adopting a strategy means adopting a guideline for action, and associating it a certain global way of organizational learning and learning conditions, the use of certain methods and means. It should, naturally, be pointed out that in reality we adopt mixed and combined strategies, according to the objectives, the level of the group we are working with, the contents covered etc.

It is understood that any trainer has great freedom to design their work, drawing graphs, charts, value tables or simply mental schemes which can help increasing their ability to decide and to use effectively combined sets of methods, tools and other training resources (Iurea, Neacsu, Safta & Suditu, 2011; Keegan, 2013. Experience has shown, moreover, that each teaching activity is unique through the configuration of factors and interactions that constitute it, therefore the permanent correcting of some strategies thought beforehand can bring more rigor or rather can provide a positive feedback.

2.1. Characteristics of teaching strategies

As mentioned before, teaching strategies suggest a way in which a teaching situation can be approached. It is important to underscore their essential characteristics:

a.   they have a normative character without the rigidity of a rule; they are the training component of dynamic situations, characterized by flexibility and internal elasticity. The general teaching approach outlined by educational strategies can be "adjusted" and adapted to the training events and conditions. The strategies largely carry the footprint of the trainer's teaching style, creativity and personality;

b.   they have a structuring and modeling function to link the learning situations where learners are placed and to trigger their psychological mechanisms of learning;

c.   the components of the strategy (methods, means and organization forms of the work) form a system, establishing the connection between them, even interrelations and interdependencies. A teaching strategy can be decomposed into a series of operations, steps, rules of conduct specific to different teaching sequences so that each decision indicating the transition to the next sequence by exploiting the information obtained in the previous step;

d.   they do not identify either with the opted methodological system or the basic teaching method because the teaching strategy aims at the training process as a whole, not a single training sequence;

e.   they have probabilistic meaning, that is that a particular teaching strategy, although scientifically founded and appropriate for the psychological resources of participants, cannot guarantee the success of the training process because there is a large number of variables that can intervene in the process;

f.   they involve the students in specific learning situations and rationalize and adequate the training content to their personality;

g.   they create an ideal framework for interactions between other components of the training process (Ionescu & Radu, 2001, pp. 184-185).

2.2. Teaching method, importance and role in strategy development

The teaching strategy marks the moment of choosing the appropriate means and methods underlying the aims of the curriculum. It is one of the prerequisites of quality pedagogy together with the operational definition of the objectives and organization of the curriculum (Cerghit, 2006; Enăchescu, 2010; Enăchescu, 2011).

If the method refers to the path that is to follow, the road that leads to the achievement of the educational objectives, the teaching strategy is ultimately a working hypothesis that the trainer starts teaching itself to

achieve the clearly defined objectives. More plastic, we can talk about a "tactic" at stake in terms of unpredictable training situations (Petre, 69).

The importance and role of strategy in choosing teaching methods are essential. This strategy turns into a group of two or more methods and procedures integrated into an operational structure, engaged in the teaching, learning and assessment activity to achieve its general educational, specific and concrete objectives at top quality parameters. The methods, used within the strategy, are thus operational or tactical elements (Vlăduţescu, 2013d; Vlăduţescu, 2013e).

The variety of methodology provides a more comprehensive pedagogical strategy, greater flexibility and suitability for many tasks and ways of learning situations that occur. Such a methodology expands the trainer's field of decision, offers a him/her a wide range of possible alternatives in teaching, opportunities to make the best decision for a learning situation or another. This variety will support the creativity of a trainer during training sessions, creativity which means choice, option, novelty, originality, unusual combinations, restructuring of the existing elements. However, to choose, to combine it is needed to possess a very wide range of very different techniques. A rich methodological repertoire (procedural) increases the capacity of action creatively (Cerghit, 2006; Vlăduţescu, 2004; Vlăduţescu & Ciupercă, 2013).

In this way, the teaching strategy employs a model of action resulted in the managerial decision of the trainer who stresses that one single method cannot practically solve all the contradictory processes that appear, subjectively and objectively, in teaching. This model of action attracts around a "basic methods" (imposed due to its ability of maximum activation of communication (Bejan, 2013), stimulating heuristic knowledge, employing teaching creativity, in this situation) and other methods which amplify the operational procedure of decisions made in constantly changing conditions of the relationship between the subject (trainer) and the object (course participant) of education. Where necessary, these are added the front organization levels, in groups or individual work. As an action model with legislative value, the strategy includes, as some specialists in education sciences consider, the educational styles of authoritarian, permissive or democratic type that places the teacher's decision in a psychosocial field favorable or unfavorable to concrete learning situations. The teaching strategy usually takes up the name of the "basic method" specifically chosen to meet the teaching task included in the didactic project (e.g. a problem-situation requires problematization strategy, an experienced problem calls the strategy of experimental research etc.) (Dulamă, 2002; Cristea, 2003; Vladutescu, 2013a; Vladutescu, 2013c).

2.3. Organization forms, an integral part of teaching strategy

There are three ways of organizing the teaching activity described in pedagogical literature, each integrating specific activities: front activities (the dominant organization in the contemporary educational systems, outlining the trainer's functions of planning, coordination, guidance, control, making decision and innovation in leading the teaching process), but if we refer to training, it is not found in this kind of activity; group activities (class division in teams or groups to actively involve them in the learning action) and individual activities (each participant performs learning tasks, practical applications independently etc.) (Călin, 1995, p. 157). The three ways of organizing the teaching process provide the premise of the design, implementation and development of a differentiated instruction. Moreover, the psychological foundation of these forms of organization is provided in the structure of human personality which includes three systems of general, typical and individual determinations, apparently distinct, in fact integrated into a whole (Vlăduţescu, 2009). From this perspective:

a) the front organization is founded on the psychological and overall dimension of personality that includes the background of each person's own skills;

b) the group organization aims at the particular dimension of personality. This allows the notification of some typologies whose positive development is facilitated by the creation of groups with the purpose of learning, heterogeneous in terms of immediate results, but effective in teaching by initiating inter-individual relationships, socio-emotional atmosphere created, involving leaders (formal or informal);

c) the individual organization is founded on the psychological and individual dimension of personality which in pedagogical context asks for the trainer's knowledge of the unique characteristics of each participant utilized in any training activity (Cristea, 2003; Vladutescu, 2013c).

3. Designing teaching strategies

In literature there appear different classifications of the teaching strategies according to various criteria (level of generality, the character, the nature of the goals they are focused on, the logical thinking, the degree of guidance or non-guidance of learning). It should be noted however that there are not strategies strictly of one kind or another, but mixed strategies where the guidance and independence elements are combined in different proportions. Choosing the effective teaching strategy in a learning situation begins with its design, which is a set of processes and deliberative operations to anticipate it, to mentally fix the steps that will be covered in the instruction and education achievement. A good design of the teaching strategy is for the trainer a holistic view of teaching to be done, plus, as we

mentioned, unforeseen circumstances that may arise. However, a didactic strategy will be effective, if certain criteria are respected in its elaboration (Păun & Potolea, 2002; Vlăduţescu, 2006a; Pumili-Gnarini, Favaron, Pacetti, Bishop & Guerra, 2012).

4. Criteria for developing teaching strategies

To determine the most efficient and rational approach to training, recovery and optimal combination of material and methodological resources and active involvement of human resources in the sequences of teaching, learning and assessment, or to establish teaching strategies, we must take into account certain criteria:

a) the trainer's general pedagogical and didactic conception and personal conception of teaching as a result of their teaching experience, traditional or modern. Modern concepts are based on the intention to encourage the maximum actual work of the trainees, their full participation in the act of learning. Consequently, they will determine the option for using active-participatory methods accompanied by appropriate teaching tools in a form of group organization, for example. Traditional conceptions are dependent to some transmission and reception methods which will naturally link appropriate means (Vlăduţescu, 2002; Cerghit, 2006; Vlăduţescu, 2006b; Dinescu, Dinica & Miron, 2010);

b) the system of general education principles and the system of education principles specific to the teaching content study. Teaching principles can act as true constraints binding the choice of some methods and means or another, to some or other of the their possible;

c) the assessment exams and the type of assessment, where appropriate;

d) the time available to achieve these training sessions.

e) the objectives before the start of the activity itself. In relation to the nature of the objectives, we can determine the learning resources and constraints and one can choose or not several of their alternative combinations (Hus & Grmek, 2011; Vladutescu, 2012a);

f) learning experience that participants have, the type of training appropriate for learning situations (Dima, I. C., & Vladutescu, 2013);

g) the group of participants in the activity, with its peculiarities: the group size, the degree of homogeneity or heterogeneity of the group, the average level of training, experience, age and individual psychological peculiarities, the level of intellectual development, learning ability, motivation level, etc.;

h) the nature and the specific of the content that is the subject of the activity. In fact, some authors believe that the most powerful variable influencing the adoption of a particular instructional strategy is given by the

relationship between objectives-content-methods/means. In this sense we have outlined a whole series of variations with indicative value which, for certain sets of objectives (e.g. skills and abilities, knowledge, attitudes and opinions, etc.) associate certain contents (e.g. activities, actions, knowledge, concepts, laws, principles, etc.) and, of course, certain methods (e.g. individual study, debate, case study, etc.), means and forms of organization recommended. These options remain open, they are neither exclusive nor restrictive (Neacşu, I., 1990, p. 223). An effective trainer must not only know the depth of content, develop operational objectives, use methods, procedures and tools to assess but rather, integrate all these elements in teaching (Ştefan, 2003; Dima & Vladutescu, 2013a; Dima & Vladutescu, 2013b). We could consider that all these elements constitute the teaching field where the interactions are conducted according to certain rules. Therefore we speak today of teaching strategic teaching, a concept that highlights the trainer's role of strategist, who makes decisions on the "what", "how" and "when" of teaching and learning. Thus, making decision on the content and the best instructional strategies is the essence of strategic teaching. This approach to teaching act is mainly outlined on the teacher's role as a mediator and model, although it does not exclude his role as a manager and leader of the training process (Le Boterf, 1994; Perrenoud, 1998; Marcus, 1999; Vladutescu, 2012b).

These criteria are the basis for the choice of means and methods of instruction, their optimal combination for building the teaching strategy. Given the large number of variables involved in teaching, no precise rules can be formulated in this respect, as the trainer's creativity cannot be replaced by recipes.

5. Conclusion

Optimizing the teaching process requires the use of educational resources as an integral part of the teaching strategy. The selection cannot be made until after a number of requirements relating to: their use both in front activity or group work; the use of teaching means throughout the learning process; their correlation with all the components of the educational process; their suitability to the content, learning objectives, teaching principles; the prior preparation of both the trainer and participants to determine the level of theory and the practical skills.

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