

APPROACHES AND PERSPECTIVES OF ADAPTIVE DIDACTICS

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Abstract: At the beginning of the twentieth century, many educationalists, psychologists, sociologists, and even many teachers argue that teacher-centered teaching is proving to be inadequate to the needs of children and labor market requirements. Consequently, a formidable pedagogical movement called "new education" arises as a reaction to the traditional school and its intellectualism and authoritarianism. This movement created a unified vision on the teaching and activating of children, which was materialized by a few milestones in understanding basic education and training. In the second half of the twentieth century, psychology guidelines emphasize the dialectical relationship between action and thinking, placing it in the center of the issue of active methods. Subsequently, student-centered teaching rediscovers the child and learning as an interaction, showing that passivity in the classroom as a result of the traditional teacher-centered teaching results in very little learning... So perspectives of adaptive didactics appear.

Keywords: traditional education, new education, adaptive didactics.

Argument. It could be said, without being considered a value judgment without equivocate, that action assumes transformations on objects, information, knowledge. By the actions caused (either external, or by mental action) the thinking that reflects the reality grows, giving to the knowing subject the ability to predict the activities. In terms of its inference with knowledge and thinking, external action (objectually/concrete) and mental action (operation) give to the thinking an operative character. Continuing on the same route, the mental actions are formed based on the concrete actions (external) due to their internalization process, i.e. their translation in the mental plan. Basic theory that also develops in the perspective of which we approach this article is: **who wants to learn must build the knowledge through their own understanding and nobody can do that in his/her place.** Learning becomes more attractive when children are interacting with each other, which corresponds psychologically to child's social foundation.

I. Approaches regarding the adaptive didactics. During the first two decades of the 20th century, numerous pedagogues, psychologists, sociologists and other teaching staff argue that teacher-centered didactic represents a suitability lack to children needs and requests of the labor market. This reaction to the traditional school, its intellectualism and authoritarianism was made itself felt by a formidable pedagogical movement - "the new education". Within this strong pedagogical movement having as purpose the scientific refocusing of pedagogy, two orientations are detached: the experimental and sociological pedagogy. Experimental pedagogy had as

support the development of positive science and experimental method, generating a new direction by which the education issues had to be analyzed from the psychological perspective, but on experimental way. The representatives of this pedagogical current were, among others: Alfred Binet (1857-1911) who showed that in the development of a child's intelligence an important role has his work, Wilhelm August Lay (1862-1926) who brilliantly sustained that school has to prepare the student in order to respond adequately by action the challenges of environment and Ernst Meumann (1861-1915) who in his pedagogic plea said that intellectual work gets formative valences if it has an active and spontaneous character.

Sociologic pedagogy attempts to approach the educational steps and issues in sociological perspectives by treating them through the normative paradigm. As representatives of this orientation we may mention: Emile Durkheim (1857-1917) and Georg Kerschensteiner (1854-1932). As the normative and interpretive paradigms are complementary, so these two lines complement each other in terms of psychological and sociological perspective.

"The new education" current has famous representatives: John Dewey (1859-1952), Maria Montessori (1870-1952), Edouard Claparede (1873-1940), Ovide Decroly (1871-1932) as a first-generation and Adolphe Ferriere (1879- 1961), Henri Wallon (1879-1962), Roger Cousinet (1881-1973), Celestin Freinet (1896-1966), Jean Piaget (1896-1980) for the second generation. They claim the free development of child individuality, his moods and inclinations and the care of educators to leave him a free field for expressing his hereditary dowry. Thus, the training is requested to be designed as a natural activity that has not to be based on the coercion or authority of the teacher, but just on child's natural interest for activity, the school being assimilated with the authentic own life of the pupil/student.

"The new education" created a unitary vision on training and child activation that was materialized by several basic marks in understanding the education and training:

- a.) education and training are true and effective only in the conditions that ensure the full freedom of the child;
- b.) the teacher mission is to organize a favorable environment for the free expression of the trend toward the child activity, this assuming the knowledge of his interests to meet the knowledge needs of the child;
- c.) the main source of knowledge for the child is his spontaneous and free practical activity;
- d.) satisfaction of child interests is the main criterion in the selection of education content and organization of educational process.¹

Between the two World Wars, when economic development, especially the industrial one, demanded an active enterprising and well developed intellectually and physically individual, within the "new education" movement appears and develops as didactic theory and practice the "active school", whose most notable representative was Adolphe Ferriere. The keywords that define the message of that school are: intellect, activity, feeling and character.

Watching carefully the principles promoted by "the active school" – the principle of own activity, practical work, intuition, respect for the child individuality – is emerged the overall objective of this school: the child's involvement with his whole being in the act of learning so that to make him a responsible and autonomous personality. Of course, this goal for being promoted, need active methods which constitute a positive exceeding of the intuitive ones.

However, in terms of psychology, active school emphasized the potential of training the child, minimizing the instruction importance which made the results to be not the expected ones.

¹ Musata Bocos - Interactive training; Highlights for reflection and action, Cluj University Press, 2002, p 15

But focusing on the student, he becomes the center of the teaching process, leading to the rethinking teaching: elimination of child passivity and introducing active methods and more serious pursuing of education effectiveness. By this it was given a free way to a new psychological and pedagogical conception related to the activation of the student and his involvement in education (cognitivism and constructivism).

Didactics focused on student rediscovers the child and learning as interaction, showing that the passivity in the classroom, as a result of traditional teaching focused on the teacher, produces learning to a very small extent. Specialized studies show that within a system of passive learning the students are attentive only in a percentage of 44% of the time allotted to teaching (Pollio, 1984) and retain 70% of the contents presented in the first 10 minutes and only 20% of those presented subsequently (McKeachie, 1986); also, the students' attention decreases with every minute that passes during the passive learning

In order to eliminate these dysfunctions generated by the didactics focused on teacher, within the learning focused on student, is necessary to be taken into account the following aspects:

- a.) learning assumes understanding, and this means more than knowing the facts;
- b.) the students build the knowledge and understanding based on what they already know and / or think;
- c.) the students formulate the new knowledge by modifying and refining their current concepts by adding also new concepts to what they already know;
- d.) learning is mediated by the social environment where students interact with each other;
- e.) effective learning requires the taking over by students of the control over their own learning;
- f.) the transfer or the ability to apply the knowledge in new situations is affected by the degree to which the students learn to grasp and learn with understanding.²

The basic theory that comes out is that the one who wants to learn must build his knowledge through his own understanding and that nobody can do it in his place. Learning becomes more attractive when the children interact with each other, which corresponds psychologically to the child's social foundation.

Didactics focused on student puts into value its theses through that, the students learning allows the transfer of the acquisitions in new contexts, i.e. it makes the leap from the individual-active learning to the interactive one. The development of this point of view is based on Piaget cognitivism and Vygotsky's constructivism. It also should not be omitted any of the contributions of some great theorists such as: Galperin, JS Bruner, Okon and Skinner.

After the Second World War, the guidelines in psychology emphasize the dialectical relationship between action and thinking, placing it in the center of the issues given by the active methods. The action is seen from two points of view:

- a) as external action, practical;
- b) as mental action, i.e. operation.

It could be said, without being considered a value judgment without equivoque, that action assumes transformations on objects, information and knowledge. By the actions caused (either external, or by mental action) the thinking that reflects the reality grows, giving to the

²Bransford et al., How People Learn, National Research Council, 1999

knowing subject the ability to predict the activities. In terms of its inference with knowledge and thinking, external action (practical) and mental action (operation) give to the thinking an operative character. Continuing on the same route, the mental actions are formed based on the practical actions (external) due to their internalization process, i.e. their translation in the mental plan in the form of some representations of the thinking. So, if Piaget thinks that learning is related to the stages development of the child, Galperin shows that the intellectual development is produced by the action of learning (formal, non-formal and informal) with particular emphasis on formal education conducted by school.

Bruner considers, as well as Piaget, that thinking and intelligence are the result of the action and the development of an educational framework suitable to the intellectual development of the child is a process of stages, but, in the same time, he points out that development is directly related to the factors of education (schools, the instructive-educational process). Hence, it comes out that instruction determines the child's development even becoming a cause for it; in this context, intelligence and efficiency of child development approach, according to Bruner, are given by the active-interactive relationship between teacher and student and student-student; thinking is learned, and this learning can pass over the stages suggested by Piaget.

From another perspective, Skinner, a representative of behaviorism, suggests to apply to child learning techniques that should be based on the phenomenon of conditioning which he developed by issuing the theory of operant conditioning.

Another theory and namely the humanistic one on the education must emphasize the models generated by this paradigm through the founders of humanistic psychology: *A. Maslow, C. Rogers, A. Combs*.

Maslow reached the conclusion that during their development, children would seek life experiences that bring them satisfaction. The approach proposed by Maslow, a quintessence of his psychological approach, expresses a requirement full of banality and almost unanimously recognized, but that is often overlooked, and namely: "let the children grow". He also detailed the issue of motivation in education, proposing the pyramid of needs hierarchy. Summarizing, he states that "the single and most important principle on which is based the whole development, because that is characteristic of all human reasons, is the trend of apparition of a higher need, once the inferior ones were satisfied."³

On his turn, C. Rogers⁴ developed a new psychotherapeutic nondirective technique, i.e. focused on child, where it is shown that he-the child must play a leading role in therapy and the psychotherapist occupies a secondary place, but he should show a positive attitude of acceptance related to the child. If the child is treated in these terms, i.e. he is in the middle of the therapeutic approach, he, the child will try to solve on his own the personal problems. C. Rogers launched in this respect, in fact, the idea of the education focused on student. Under these circumstances, the teacher is a facilitator of the learning process, i.e. he prepares the student to learn and create situations in this respect. The whole theory of C. Rogers is summarized in the statement: "Education to leave and return to the student!" and the knowledge for being taken into consideration must be an experience of the discovery rather than a simple transmission of the stored knowledge.

A. Combs (1965)⁵ in its humanistic theory started from the idea that all the behaviors of an individual are the direct result of the perceptual field from the moment of his/her behavior.

³ Maslow A. *Toward a psychology of being*, Princeton, NY: Van Nostrand, 1968, p55

⁴ Maslow A, apud Andrei Cosmovici, Luminita Iacob, *School Psychology*, Polirom, Iasi, 1998, p 282

⁵ Combs, A, *The professional education of teachers*, Allyn and Bacon, Boston, 1965, p 12

Using the cognitive perspective, he shows that the educator must understand and regard any learning situation from the child's perspective, giving more importance to the personal perception of the learner; educator appears as a facilitator, an assistant child. In this context, a good educator must fulfill six characteristics:

- a.) " to be well informed in his field;
- b.) to be sensitive to students and colleagues feelings;
- c.) to believe that his students are able to learn;
- d.) to have a positive self image;
- e.) to be willing to help the students in order to achieve the best results;
- f.) to use different training methods"⁶.

The education approach from the humanistic perspective shows that the relation between the teacher as a trainer and the contents approached in the didactical demarche is radically changed, as the triad of knowledge, skills, attitudes which was natural in this sense, is found now in formula attitudes, skills, knowledge. Also, the teacher, according to the incentive model, has to be a good trainer, possess certain attitudes in order to induce an appropriate attitudes basis to child as well, but also to facilitate the motivated participation to the educational approach.

II. Certainties for a new perspective The above mentioned theoretical approaches, in terms of the student's status in relation to the information he receives and the teacher who gives them a shape, ask for confirmations, reconfirmation and even essential reconsiderations when the teaching experience request it. In the classical pedagogy, the relation teacher- knowledge was essential, and the student was the object (the container to be filled); in addressing the teaching focused on student is essential the relation student-knowledge, therefore the education process has to promote an interactive training with accent on the learner, but also on the learning process that the child goes through in order to make the transition from "to know" to " to know - to do" for "being“.

Didactics focused on student emphasizes his activity, the effort to build the knowledge through action/non-algorithmic strategies, i.e. by problems solving. But the problems solving contains itself an epistemological obstacle between what the student knows and what he can do and what is required to do in the learning situation and experience (however, he is conducted by the teacher). This means that solving of problems is the settlement of epistemological contradictions and conflicts where is also the student, this assuming the establishing of some causal relationships between the different elements that make up the action and on this basis the most complex understanding of the phenomena, objects, relationships and events. Thus, the development of student knowledge, his whole becoming personality is done through active relationships with people, information, realities of the group, grade and community/society.

Consequence: the cognitive, affective and psycho-motility results from the student's own effort, obviously under the advice and assistance of the teacher. This, in fact, confirms only that man is an active being in relation to the environment he lives, and the education and training are the construction and reconstruction of certain situations, experiences and learning units.

Perspective: The lifelong extension of education, its integration into permanent education and its diversification in what it is known by formal, non-formal and informal education in agreement with the contemporary world issues.

⁶ apud Andrei Cosmovici, Luminita Jacob, School Psychology, Polirom, Iasi, 1998, p 282

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