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Organizing the Personal Reflections of Students – An Essential Element In Achieving The Education, And Training For The Didactic Career

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Abstract

The present study is an approach meant to encourage the teacher to organize and to participate with the students in reflective activities and also to organize his own reflections regarding what he is planning to do and what he has accomplished through that activity. In this sense, we emphasize the problems which are being raised by doing the above, and also the practical measures which can be taken so as to reach a certain result. Our paper's contribution will be to help the students to stimulate them to learn efficiently and actively.

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1. Introduction

A teacher must teach his/her students to become aware of what they are learning, of their own cognitive features and strengths so as to make the learning process an efficient one. There are many strategies and examples of a good practice meant to contribute towards reaching this goal, but we do wonder in what degree are these really understood. Or are these simply techniques useful on a short term for a better learning and for greater results, but which prove to be inefficient if they are being used in new learning contexts? In what degree is the learning process a durable one, if it is not the result of the will of the one that acquires it? It is a known fact that the learning process is an efficient one if it represents the product of a deliberate and well understood action coming from the learner

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side. But what is the best procedure to reach this? Besides the rich literature in this field, some books concerning the methodological and the theoretical aspects, there are some new preoccupations which approach learning from the metacognitive perspective (Miclea, 1999).

This is the direction that we are following also by considering that the (self)caused reflection helps to improve learning (Moon, 1997). But to apply it correctly to students, it is crucial that the future teachers be prepared in this regard. When students learn how to constructively reflect on their own experience, this will help them teach their future pupils to do the same. Moreover, we find useful that this reflection be a reference also for the emotional register of the one gaining a learning experience, because, in general, feelings become a stimulator or inhibitor for the learning activity (Mark, 2007). Therefore, we emphasize the understanding and setting of the learning experience by means of the personal reflection which combines the cognitive with the emotional field.

The existent literature gives a great importance to the problem of reflectivity in education, but in reality, this is not happening (Nagata, 2006).

2. Premise, objectives

Our approach starts from the premise that a good understanding of the emotions associated with the school learning process helps the learning process and stimulates the cognitive processes involved in learning. But, since talking about one's personal feelings is quite hard and it is considered as an intimacy issue, a "delicate" problem, these reflections of an emotional-volitional nature must be combined with those of a scientific nature, with the cognitive acquisitions and with the learning skills obtained. Also, the choice of the reflection techniques cannot be done randomly because they need a timely training for both pupils and students, and they need also diversification, and a "neutral" attitude from the part of the teacher, without being an indifferent one. In this sense, we have initiated a series of actions meant to observe the changes happening in the students' training for the didactic career for the pre-school and school environment, after applying during the seminar activities and the didactic practice of some (self)reflection techniques.

These actions resulted in having to answer to questionnaires and in some other research methods such as: the systemic observation, the analysis of the individual products of their learning activities, the conversation.

These observations were linked to the particular situation of each person that was the object of our analysis, so as to pinpoint the main causes which have influenced them, and also the possible solutions to improve the situation registered. We mention that this approach is part of a larger research we have started since last year and which has not closed yet, on a sample of 50 IIIrd year old students which take part in the programme called "Teacher in the Primary and Pre-school Learning System". *Even if our action does not represent a thorough research, and even if it is not a representative one, we are still hoping that it constitutes a good argument for supporting our above mentioned perspective.*

Our objectives were focusing upon the following aspects:

- In what degree are the students willing to have reflections of an emotional nature?
- Which are the optimal strategies to stimulate personal reflection?
- What was the improvement brought to the learning experience by those who have applied methods and techniques of personal reflection?

We hope that our proposal may contribute to the development of teaching practice.

3. Observations and discussions

For a better presentation of the perceptions of those 50 interviewed, we will correlate the information given with its interpretation, which, we hope, will improve their utility for those that are interested in becoming teachers.

The results obtained during one year can be grouped in the following table which contains even the possible explanations attributed to these observations. The students' attitude towards what we were following can be included, even though it seems a little bit farfetched, either in an optimistic perspective or a reserved one:

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