

## DIDACTIC EXPERIENCE IN MY CLASSES WITH STUDENTS OF PRIMARY AND PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION PEDAGOGY

VĂIDĂHĂZAN REMUS<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** The difference between a successful course and a useless one could only be a problem of perception, a problem related to the experience created for the person who comes in front of us, eager to learn new things. Effective learning may not often occur despite effective teaching. Neurons may be unprepared for the new connections needed to integrate new information into cognitive patterns if the learning situation does not produce a pleasing experience for the “user of the teaching process”. The present research was built out of my personal desire to measure as much as possible the attractiveness of my courses in a discipline that I teach in two different places. I aimed to measure the degree of pragmatism and the degree of hedonism in my courses but also to compare the attractiveness of my discipline with the education system that students experienced in high school. Last but not least, I aimed to identify if there are differences in approach in my course between students with maximum attendance and students who attended only the minimum required number of courses. The results of my research showed that the attractiveness of my courses is high, with few differences between the two groups, and the differences between the students who attended the maximum courses and those who attended the required minimum are more difficult to be identified than I anticipated.

**Key words:** *user experience, pedagogy, teaching, attractiveness, school.*

**REZUMAT.** *Experiența didactică la cursurile proprii cu studenții de la Pedagogia Învățământului Primar și Preșcolar.* Diferența dintre un curs reușit și unul nefolositor ar putea fi doar o problema de percepție, o problemă legată de experiența creată pentru persoana care vine în fața noastră, dornică să învețe lucruri noi. Învățarea eficientă poate să nu aibă loc, de multe ori, în pofida unei predări eficiente. Neuronii pot să nu fie pregătiți pentru noile conexiuni necesare integrării noii informații în schemele cognitive existente dacă situația de învățare nu produce o experiență plăcută „utilizatorului procesului de predare”. Cercetarea de față s-a născut din dorința personală de a măsura cât mai bine gradul de atractivitate al cursurilor mele la o disciplină

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<sup>1</sup> Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Faculty of Psychology and Science of Education  
\*Corresponding author: voidahazan@gmail.com

pe care o predau în două locuri diferite. Am urmărit măsurarea gradului de pragmatism și de hedonism la cursurile mele dar și compararea atractivității disciplinei mele cu sistemul de învățământ pe care l-au experimentat studenții în liceu. Nu în ultimul rând, am urmărit să identific dacă există diferențe de abordare a cursului meu între studenții cu maxim de prezențe și studenții care au participat doar la numărul minim obligatoriu. Rezultatele cercetării mele au arătat că gradul de atractivitate al cursurilor mele este unul ridicat, cu unele diferențe între cele două grupe (localități), iar diferențele între studenții care au participat la numărul maxim de cursuri și cei care au participat la numărul minim sunt mai greu de identificat decât am anticipat.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *experiență didactică, pedagogie, predare, atractivitate, școală.*

## Introduction

Teaching is one of the pedagogical concepts discussed and researched for centuries. Each year, the sphere of old pedagogy changes, taking over components that, until recently, belonged to the new pedagogy. The new pedagogy takes on new approaches, evaluating more and more the components and the relationships between them. All these synergies are motivated by a common goal, of all the actors involved: the maximum efficiency of the teaching process in order to optimally prepare the student of today to become the adult of tomorrow. For this, the student "must learn" everything that is transmitted to him through the teaching process.

Sadly, effective learning often does not happen, despite effective teaching. Teaching is a process that can be carried out perfectly and yet, at the student level, no learning will be triggered. Neuroscience research increasingly accentuates the idea that learning does not take place when the learner does not feel comfortable, when the learning situation does not produce a pleasant experience to "user of the teaching process". According to Burns (2012), when the learning situation is pleasant, dopamine and acetylcholine are released, which will prepare the neurons for new connections and support the integration of new information into existing cognitive schemes. According to this researcher, inhibitory neuromodulators that block the formation mechanism of new connections can also be released in the brain, if the learning situation is unpleasant (Burns, 2012).

I like to say that I am part of this group of teachers who believe that educators need to learn to focus much better on the child's learning experience. I believe that this approach, which is increasingly adopted in today's education

- student-centered education, should start from the experience that children have during our teaching class. Everyone who feels comfortable in this educational process will involve better and longer. If we are interested in effective teaching, then we should be interested if the student enjoys our teaching, if the student continues to think about what happened in the classroom even after the teaching is over, if the student continues to work at home on the problems proposed in class without someone forcing him, or her. Burns (2012) argues that all of these aspects are related to the chemical imprint of the brain.

A solid foundation for effective teaching means planning the best learning experience the educated person can have when we want him, or her, to take a keen interest in the content of the course and to solve our teaching tasks, whether assigned individually or in teams. I, also, believe that we can get the best learning experience only if we have feedback from the learners, and this feedback should be the source of the continuous changes that we bring to the teaching process when preparing our courses. Dewey said, "If we teach today, as we taught yesterday, we rob students of tomorrow" (Hebert, 2018, citing John Dewey).

## **Objectives**

The objectives of my research were:

1. Measuring the attractiveness level of my courses, carried out with Primary and Pre-school Education Pedagogy students, in two different localities: Cluj-Napoca and Târgu-Mureş.
2. Measuring the level of pragmatism of my teaching process (perspicuity, efficiency, dependability).
3. Measuring the level of hedonism of my teaching process (stimulation and novelty).
4. Comparing the attractiveness of my didactic process with the didactic process that students experienced in high school.
5. Comparison of the didactic experience of the students with maximum attendances with the didactic experience of the students with minimum attendances (the minimum number is the mandatory one for the final examination).

## **Material and methods**

The research took place in May 2019, at the end of the 2nd semester of year 3, with the students of the Primary and Pre-school Education Pedagogy of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Babeş-Bolyai University

Cluj-Napoca. The students were divided into two groups: the Cluj-Napoca (CJ) group with 46 respondents and the Târgu-Mureș (MS) group with 24 respondents.

The evaluated discipline had the same didactic content, prepared according to official curriculum, combined with didactic games with the help of technology and without the help of technology (Văidăhăzan, 2018) and with dynamic games specific to the discipline curriculum.

Data collection tool used was “User Experience Questionnaire”, version 7 (February 8, 2019), developed by Hinderks, Schrepp & Thomaschewski (UEQ Team, 2018). Data analysis and processing was done with the accessories that the UEQ Team offers on their website.

The UEQ contains 6 scales with 26 items: Attractiveness, Perspicuity, Efficiency, Dependability, Stimulation, and Novelty. Attractiveness is split into 2 categories: Pragmatic (Perspicuity, Efficiency, and Dependability) & Hedonic (Stimulation, and Novelty). After the raw data centralization stage, the answers that had inconsistencies were eliminated.

The following table presents the 6 scales with corresponding items for each scale.

**Table 1.** Items for each scale of UEQ

Scale	Items	
Attractiveness	annoying	enjoyable
	good	bad
	unlikable	pleasing
	unpleasant	pleasant
	attractive	unattractive
	friendly	unfriendly
Perspicuity	not understandable	understandable
	easy to learn	difficult to learn
	complicated	easy
	clear	confusing
Efficiency	fast	slow
	inefficient	efficient
	impractical	practical
	organized	cluttered
Dependability	unpredictable	predictable
	obstructive	supportive
	secure	not secure

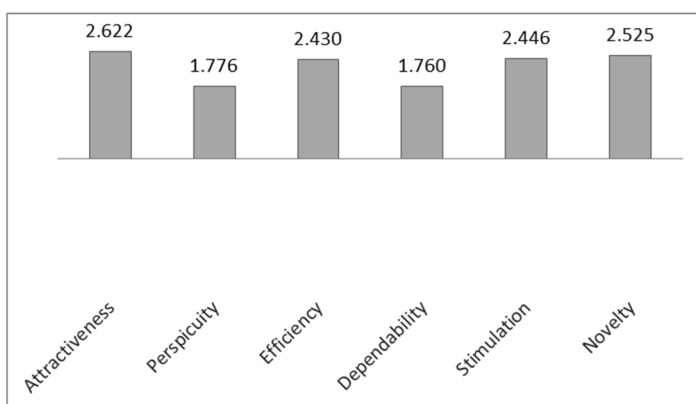
Scale	Items	
	meets expectations	does not meet expectations
Stimulation	valuable	inferior
	boring	exciting
	not interesting	interesting
	motivating	demotivating
Novelty	creative	dull
	inventive	conventional
	usual	leading edge
	conservative	innovative

The questionnaire was first used to measure the learning experience of students in the didactic process in high school. The second application of the questionnaire aimed to record the student learning experience in the didactic process of my courses.

The items are scaled from -3 to +3. Thus, -3 represents the most negative answer, 0 a neutral answer, and +3 the most positive answer.

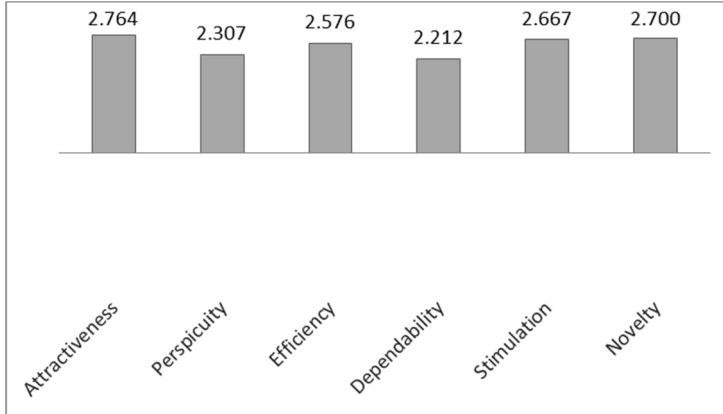
## Results

The didactic experience of students from CJ group at my didactic process is presented in Chart 1.



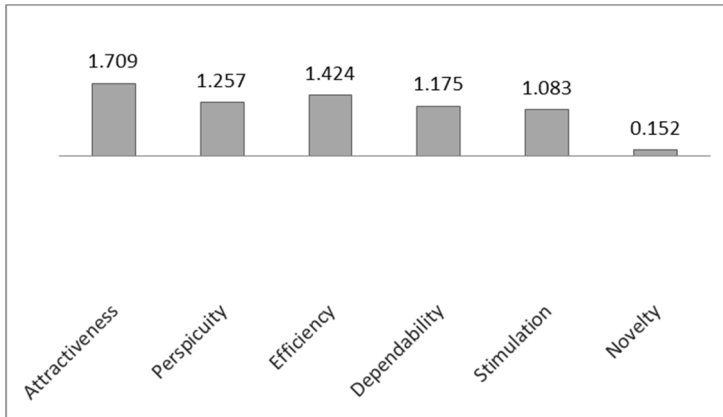
**Chart 1.** The didactic experience of CJ students in the didactic process of my courses

The didactic experience of students from MS group at my didactic process is presented in Chart 2.



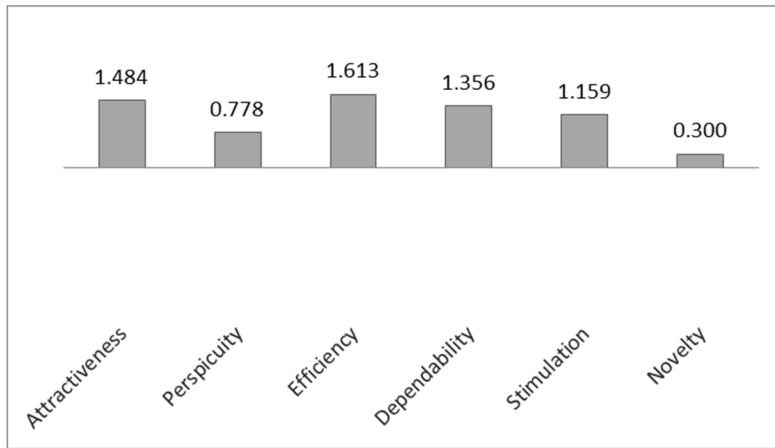
**Chart 2.** The didactic experience of MS students in the didactic process of my courses

The didactic experience of students from CJ group at the didactic process carried out in high school is presented in the Chart 3.



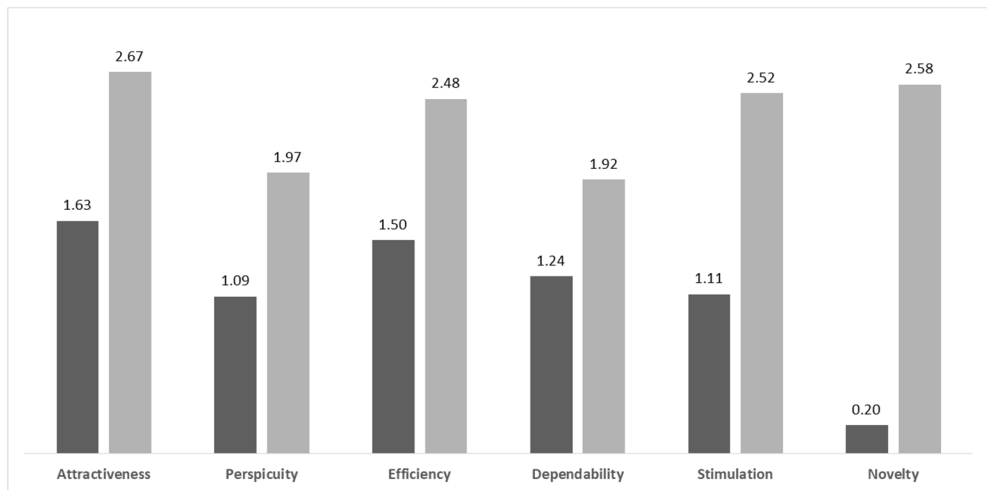
**Chart 3.** The didactic experience of CJ students in the didactic process in high school

The didactic experience of students from MS group at the didactic process carried out in high school is presented in the Chart 4.



**Chart 4.** The didactic experience of MS students in the didactic process in high school

Chart 5 presents a comparison of the didactic experience for all my students (CJ & MS) between the didactic process in high school and the didactic process in my courses.



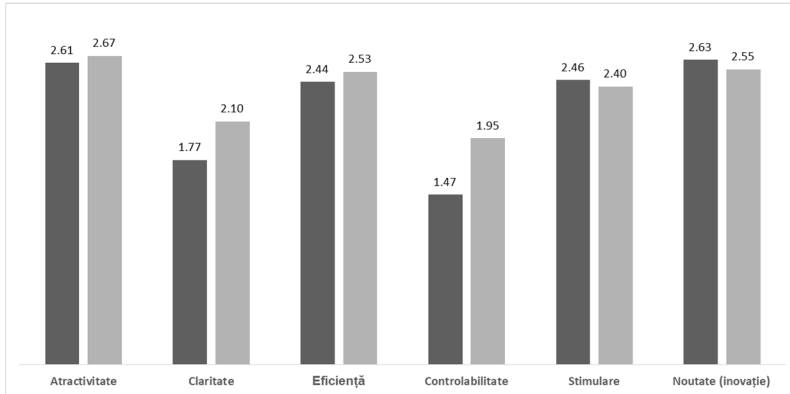
**Chart 5.** The didactic experience of all students (CJ & MS) in the didactic process in high school compared with the didactic process of my classes

Two sample T-Test (Alpha-Level 0.01) is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Two sample T-Test (Alpha-Level 0.01) for didactic experience in high school compared with the didactic process of my classes

Attractiveness	0.0000	Significant Difference
Perspicuity	0.0000	Significant Difference
Efficiency	0.0000	Significant Difference
Dependability	0.0002	Significant Difference
Stimulation	0.0000	Significant Difference
Novelty	0.0000	Significant Difference

The didactic experience of the CJ students in the didactic process of my courses, a comparison between those with the maximum number of attendance and those with the minimum number of attendance, is presented in the Chart 6.



**Chart 6.** The didactic experience of CJ students in the didactic process of my classes (maximum number of attendance and minimum number of attendance).

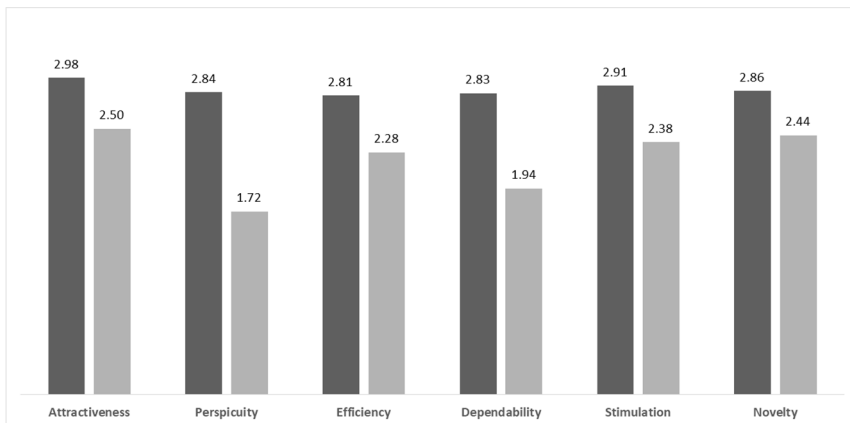
Two sample T-Test (Alpha-Level 0.05) is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Two sample T-Test (Alpha-Level 0.05) for CJ didactic experience of my classes (maximum number of attendance and minimum number of attendance)

Attractiveness	0.6663	No Significant Difference
Perspicuity	0.2256	No Significant Difference
Efficiency	0.5175	No Significant Difference
Dependability	0.1964	No Significant Difference
Stimulation	0.7625	No Significant Difference
Novelty	0.5573	No Significant Difference



The didactic experience of the MS students in the didactic process of my courses, a comparison between those with the maximum number of attendance and those with the minimum number of attendance, is presented in the Chart 7.



**Chart 7.** The didactic experience of MS students in the didactic process of my courses (maximum number of attendance and minimum number of attendance).

Two sample T-Test (Alpha-Level 0.05) is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Two sample T-Test (Alpha-Level 0.05) for MS didactic experience of my courses (maximum number of attendance and minimum number of attendance)

Attractiveness	0.0235	Significant Difference
Perspicuity	0.0081	Significant Difference
Efficiency	0.0480	Significant Difference
Dependability	0.0117	Significant Difference
Stimulation	0.0316	Significant Difference
Novelty	0.0537	No Signifcant Difference

## Discussions

The overall attractiveness of my courses had a score of 2.67, calculated for all respondents, presenting a better appreciation from the MS group (2.764) compared to the CJ group (2.622). The difference between the two groups in terms of the overall attractiveness of the courses is very small, even though the meetings with the CJ group took place every two weeks, and the meetings with the MS group took place 4 times (in a modulated regime).

Regarding the other 5 scales used (Perspicuity, Efficiency, Dependability, Stimulation, Novelty) the biggest difference between the two groups was registered in Perspicuity and Dependability, for both in favour of the MS group. It is possible that the approach in a modulated regime (8 hours of teaching, continuously) will increase the clarity of the content of the course, as well as the controllability for students regarding the purpose pursued by my personal methods of teaching.

The level of pragmatism was higher in the MS group on all 3 specific scales (Perspicuity, Efficiency, Dependability), with the two major differences in clarity and controllability, as presented above. The difference between the two groups is, however, small in terms of perceived efficiency (0.146), which may mean that the teaching methods used and the way of how the meetings took place have had the same success rate. However, the success rate was a very good one, a fact confirmed by the score of 2.48 calculated for all participants.

Regarding the level of perceived hedonism, it was also higher in the MS group, with a slightly larger difference on the stimulation scale (0.221) compared to the novelty one (0.175). Overall, for all registered respondents, the level of hedonism achieved had very good results on both measurement scales: Stimulation (2.52) and Novelty (2.58).

Compared to the high school education system, my teaching system obtained statistically significantly different results, having a general attractiveness of 2.67 as compared to 1.63, for high school education system. The biggest difference was recorded on the Novelty scale, where the high school education system was rated with 0.20, and my course scored 2.58. This big difference could also be explained by the fact that in high school the education system does not have such a high degree of specialization on the needs of the student, as the faculty education system has.

Analysing the experience of the students who attended almost all classes with the experience of the students who attended only the minimum number required, no significant differences were recorded in the CJ group. In the MS group, however, there were significant differences on all scales, except the Novelty. The students from the MS group who participated to all my courses considered the didactic content to be more attractive, clearer, more efficient, more controllable, and more stimulating than the students who attended only the minimum number of courses.

## Conclusions

1. The activity of my courses was considered very attractive by both groups of students (CJ + MS).

2. The activity in modulated regime can improve the clarity of the course and the level of control perceived by the students about the didactic content.

3. The level of pragmatism of my didactic process was appreciated by both groups of students.

4. I consider, as a result of the scores obtained at the level of hedonism, that the learning situations created were very pleasant during the meetings with my students.

5. The learning situations experienced by the students in my didactic activities were much more pleasant than those experienced in the high school education system.

6. Increasing the number of attendance at teaching activities enhances the possibility that they will be considered more valuable when the activities take place in a modulated regime (8 hours for each meeting).

This research was born because of my recent hobby, Gamification, and my desire to relate more and more to the learning experience of our learners. This research provided me useful information for redefining my future teaching activities, but I have no claims that this research is part of the reference system of Romanian education. Please approach this research as “being what it is”. However, I want to continue this kind of research and I want to read many other findings of this kind, applied by more and more teachers because we need a new approach in designing the didactic activities that will minimize the lack of involvement of our children in the teaching process.

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