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SUMAR - CONTENTS - SOMMAIRE - INHALT

Articole - Articles - Articles

- 3 ♦ **ADRIANA BĂBAN**
 A Psychological Approach of Men and Masculinity
- 23 ♦ **OANA BENGA, ANCA DOMUTA**
 Assessment of Executive Functions in Childhood Psychopathology (I)
- 39 ♦ **SOFIA CHIRICĂ**
 Collective Construction of the Self in Romanian Culture
- 53 ♦ **CĂTĂLINA KOPETZ**
 Psychometric Proprieties of the Memory Self-Efficacy Questionnaire on
 Romania Sample
- 67 ♦ **ADRIANA BARNĂ, IRINA POP, ANA MOLOCA**
 Preliminary Testing - An Essential Step in the Biology Active Learning for
 Mentally Disabled Pupils
- 73 ♦ **MUŞATA BOCOŞ, RODICA GĂINAR, VICTOR BOCOŞ**
 Main Issues in the Problem Solving Methodology at Chemistry
- 81 ♦ **ALINA PREDĂ**
 Postmodernism and the Postmethod Condition
- 93 ♦ **ADINA GLAVA, CATALIN GLAVA**
 A Study of Differentiation and its Implications in Improving Classroom
 Achievement

- 105 ♦ **VASILE CHIȘ**
How is Received and Achieved the Reform Now (at the Beginning of New Changes)
- 117 ♦ **LILIANA CIASCAI**
Les méthodes actives aujourd'hui
- 125 ♦ **ALINA PAMFIL**
Observarea, proiectarea și evaluarea orei de literatură română: demersuri complementare
- 137 ♦ **ADRIENNE NAUMESCU–LENGAUER, ADRIANA SISERMAN BANC**
New Directions in the Frame of Educational Reform; the Role of Evaluation in the Teaching – Learning Process at Chemistry

Recenzii - Book Reviews - Comptes Rendus

- 147 ♦ **VOICU LASCUS**
Miron Ionescu, Ioan Radu, Dumitru Salade, Coordinators, *Studies of Applied Pedagogy*, Ed. Presa Universitara Clujeana, Cluj-Napoca, 2000
- 149 ♦ **SIMONA BERNAT**
Miron Ionescu, Vasile Chis, *Studies of Pedagogy*, Presa Universitara Clujeana Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2000
- 151 ♦ **DUMITRU SALADE**
A remarkable publication within the field of didactics

Cronici - Cronics - Croniques

- 153 Manifestări științifice ale catedrei de Științele Educației

A PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH OF MEN AND MASCULINITY*

ADRIANA BĂBAN**

ABSTRACT. The aim of this article is to provide a critical review of the main perspectives and theories (biological analyses, psychoanalysis, role theories, social theories, cognitive theories, cultural studies and feminism) through which the topic of men and masculinity has been understood. This structure allows us to consider the relative adequacy of different theoretical perspectives through a series of contrasts and it also encourages a view of these theories as alternative approaches which make different assumptions. The article presents the psychological approach of male forms of identity and practice and explains why masculinity takes the particular shapes that it does.

KEY WORDS: masculinity, femininity, gender differences, social and psychological theories.

Introduction

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, feminists began to develop a radical view of society and the relations between men and women. They began to talk in a new voice about "sexual politics", patriarchy and the dominance of the male gender class. One consequences of this challenge was to create a new interest in men and masculinity. The term *masculinity* has rich meanings and a widespread use which are applied to a diversity of phenomena by both laypersons and scientists. According to Brittan (1989), masculinity refers to those aspects of men's beliefs and behavior that are always local and subject to change. Any account of masculinity must take into consideration both sides of gender: masculinity and femininity. Masculinity does not exist in isolation from femininity - it will always be an expression of the current image that men have of themselves in relation to women.

The terms masculinity and femininity have been used by investigators in at least three areas: stereotypic views of males and females; studies of sex differences and similarities in cognitive abilities and personality traits; gender identity and self-reported masculinity/femininity. These three areas are equally important to a better understanding of the meaning of masculinity and femininity. Research in

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each of these areas has been relatively vigorous, particularly in the past 10-15 years. Different disciplines use different evidential bases to define masculinity. I will not attempt to survey this broad conceptual range, but I will restrict my analysis to the uses of the terms in psychology.

Theories of masculinity

I. The first studies on sex differences began with the late 19th century debates on the *biological basis* of these differences, the brain included. For those working from within the biological perspective, the substance of masculinity is chromosomal and hormonal. Masculinity is the consequence of the possession of an Y chromosome and of the stimulation of the production of male sex hormones which act directly upon the vital organs of the body, especially the brain. Gay men, for example, are often regarded as men who lack proper hormonal balance and therefore are not "real" men (Brod and Kaufman, 1994). The resistance to women's emancipation was bolstered by the doctrine of innate sex difference. Women's exclusion from universities, for instance, was justified by the claim that the feminine mind was too delicately poised to handle the rigors of academic work. The resulting mental disturbance would be bad for their capacities to be good wives and mothers (Connell, 1995).

Deaux (1987) points to the importance of physical characteristics in the construction of gender stereotypes. Cues as to physical appearance have been found to carry the greatest weight in gender-related judgements, influencing inferences of traits, role behaviors and occupational position. Males who have a frail constitution or those whose voice is relatively soft may be particularly vulnerable to judgments of femininity or homosexuality. In other words, the stereotypic inference process may begin as soon as the visual information is available, and observers may not wait to find out whether their inferences are actually based on facts.

Lately, research has proved that the biological basis for sex differences is minimal (Edley and Wetherell, 1995). Sex differences in almost every psychological trait measured (mental abilities, emotions, attitudes, interests) are either non-existent or fairly small. Even the identified sex differences are difficult to prove if they are generated by biological differences between men and women, or if they reflect gender stereotypes. Research in the past decade pointed to only four areas in which reliable sex differences could be established: verbal, mathematical abilities, spatial abilities, and aggressive behavior. However, these differences have been found to be small, generally accounting for less than 5% of the variance in these analyses. In many other areas no evidence for sex differences in behavior (including sociability, suggestibility, self-esteem, achievement) were found (Reinnisch et al., 1987). Insufficient data or ambiguous findings revealed differences in other areas, such as competitiveness, dominance, compliance and nurturance. All these areas proved to be closely connected with the pervasive gender stereotypes. Furthermore, most of the behavioral differences between women and men are strongly affected by situational factors. On many of the

measures that psychologists have devised, males and females proved to be capable of comparable performance. Those differences that do appear may be understood best in terms of social construction of the gender and, more generally, in terms of sexism.

From a somewhat different perspective, Carol Gilligan (1982) has postulated fundamental sex differences on the basis of reactions to moral dilemmas. Men and women, Gilligan asserts, speak in "different voices", men being concerned with separation and women with attachment. Her thesis thus affirms that there are two different styles: a "masculine" and a "feminine" one, which are quite different from each other, with implications over a wide range of human behaviors. A simple glance at the social world shows considerable variation in the behavior of women and men. Occupational distributions, child-care practices, and other realms of social life suggest distinctly different male and female patterns.

Nobody denies that there are biologically based sex differences. However, a distinction must be made between what men and women *can* do, and what they actually *do* in situations that provide options. Thus, in assessing sex differences, researchers must take into account both types of evidence: inherent capabilities and behavioral choices. We should let the distribution of activities and roles across males and females reflect nothing but biology. Accordingly, if the gender-differentiated practices that abound in our culture will be eventually eliminated, we could finally begin to return to the basics of biology. In other words, men and women could finally begin to be as similar as their biology permits (Bem, 1987).

II. For the *psychoanalytic theorists*, masculinity is a specific organization of psychical structures within the mind of the individual male. According to psychoanalytic tradition, the reproduction of masculinity is a "family affair" in the sense that the gender identity of every male is determined by the pattern of relationships that he experiences early in his life. Sex-role identity operates at the most basic, subconscious level. A person internalizes the sex-role to such an extent that it usually becomes indistinguishable from his or her sense of self. Freud equated masculinity with activity in contrast to feminine passivity. On the other hand, society indirectly influences the development or socialization of the male individual by helping maintain a sexual division of labor which has puts fathers out into the public realm of paid employment while mothers are left in the private realm, at home. The psychoanalytic theory sees masculinity as a product of the boy's initial identification with the mother followed with a subsequent re-identification with his father. Masculinity gets into the boy via a range of psychological processes, including identification, repression and introjection. The acquisition of sex role identity in males is threatened by the absence of male models and feminized environments (Pleck, 1993). Psychoanalytic theorists assumed that the internalized sex role contributed to social stability, mental health and the performance of necessary social functions. According to this theory, an insecure male identity leads to difficulties in establishing and maintaining heterosexual relationships, to homosexuality and negative attitudes toward women

(Frosh, 1994). Research has not confirmed the psychoanalytic theory of male sex role identity. Measures of the consequences of father absence on male role identity found no relations which allow prediction of heterosexual adjustment (Pleck, 1981). Current research on masculine role identity gives relatively little emphasis on identification as the primary mechanism for the acquisition of gender role identity.

III. The first important attempt to create a social science of masculinity was centered on the idea of *sex role identity*. This approach was the dominant psychological theory about masculinity from the 1930s to the early 1970s (Pleck, 1981). Sex-role theorists see the substance of masculinity as a set of social scripts. According to this theory the constitution of the male sex-role is determined by the needs of society. The first landmark in the development of this approach was the publication of Terman and Miles's book *Sex and Personality* in 1936 which had an important contribution to the development of a role perspective on men and women. The authors conceived masculinity and femininity as two opposing types of personality located on either end of a single bipolar dimension. Masculinity and femininity were seen as variable and flexible states, as opposed to biological sex. Terman and Miles's other major contribution was the development of the first psychological measure of gender (masculinity and femininity scales).

The key figure in the development of sex-role theory during the middle part of the twentieth century was the sociologist, Talcott Parsons (Berger et al., 1995, Howard and Hollander, 1997). His basic assumption was that societies require two different types of social activity in order to contribute to the equilibrium of the social system. Parsons assigned the labels *instrumental* and *expressive* to the two different types of social activity. Men are more instrumentally oriented (making tough decisions and getting things done) while women are better suited to expressive sorts of activities (creating things, caring for others). Together, Parsons figured, they appeared to form a perfectly complementary partnership. The critics of Parsons's theory looked for alternative theories of sex-role assimilation.

IV. The second broad social-psychological approach to the male gender role is the *traits perspective* that focuses on the sources and consequences of the extent to which men actually have characteristics culturally defined as masculine. According to this theory the male role is viewed as a constellation of traits that are more frequent or occur at higher levels in men, as masculine gender-related personality traits. Most commonly, a distinction has been made between *instrumental traits*, viewed as more characteristic of men, and *expressive traits*, seen as more characteristic of women. Thus, men are described by traits such as independent, dominant and assertive, while women are typically viewed as being warm, gentle and aware of the feelings of others (Rutherford, 1992). These attributes are formed in the context of the existent social system and reflect both the cause and the consequence of the distribution of men and women into specific social roles. In one of the most extensive recent investigations which involves data collected in 30 different countries, researchers found "pancultural generality" in

many aspects of gender stereotypes (Morawski, 1994). Specifically, they report that men are typically viewed as stronger, more active, and higher in achievement, autonomy and aggression. Women are seen as weaker, less active, and more concerned with affiliation, nurturance and deference. Masculinity and femininity are typically viewed as opposite ends of a single dimension. Thus, the common perception exists that what is masculine is not feminine, and vice versa. The commonly used term *the opposite sex* captures this mode of thinking which resorts to opposition in order to explain differences. Such a dialectic assumption is evident not only in lay conceptions, but also in the conclusions of scientific investigators.

Bem (1974), as opposed to other theories, sees masculinity and femininity as independent rather than oppositional states. To be a masculine man does not necessarily mean that the man must lack most or all feminine traits. These concepts are operationalized by the masculinity and femininity subscales of Bem Sex Role Inventory. According to Bem masculinity and femininity are constructed as categories that contain a variety of characteristics and associations. From the cognitive perspective, we could view these attributes as varying in their degree of prototypicality to the central concepts. It is positively advantageous for someone to have a combination of masculinity and femininity traits. The trait perspective hypothesizes that masculine personality characteristics may have negative correlates, whereas the male identity theory held that secure masculine identity had only positive correlates. Several studies suggest that masculinity by itself has negative implications for close relationship. Men high in masculinity and low in femininity proved to show less nurturance toward the partner and commit more physical aggression in the relationship (Thompson, 1990). Other authors differentiate between positive and negative components within masculinity. Mosher (1991) speaks about *hypermasculinity* which is empirically associated with hostile-dominant style in interpersonal situations, and proclivity to aggressive sexual behavior. Personal redress has been proposed in new conceptions of sex role, suggesting the utility of postulating an *androgynous personality* type that combines both masculinity and femininity attributes. Masculinity and femininity are no longer conceived as mutually exclusive characteristics. Several studies suggest that *androgynous men* are more expressive, loving and have more positive beliefs about their relationships than masculine individuals (Pleck et al., 1993). The concept of androgyny has strongly influenced gender theories. It challenges the conceptualization of dependency and autonomy as polar opposites and argues that incorporation of both behavior patterns in the same individual is a step toward healthy psychological development. Relational androgyny offers a different view of attachment and dependency as aspects of strength, necessary for psychological growth. The ability to grow psychologically is an ongoing process that inevitably involves feelings of vulnerability. In this sense, the ability to admit weakness is an important resource to personal growth (Seidler, 1992). According to this theory, people need to learn that the feelings of weakness, dependency, and vulnerability are not shameful or abhorrent. Compared to men, women are more able to be

consciously aware of their own neediness. In contrast to women, men seem to flee from these feelings before they experience them. Men deny their dependency needs, seeing dependency as a threat to autonomy. Adoption of a male model has led to a perception of adulthood based on autonomy (Seidler, 1989). The male model has influenced psychological theories of mental health such that autonomy is considered more normative. Relational androgyny attempts to alleviate the rigid dichotomizing of male and female spheres of activity by attacking the conceptualization of dependency and autonomy as opposites. If men and women could both acknowledge and work within their needs for connectedness and communal attachment, there would be less need for insisting that masculinity and femininity must be opposites. In this framework, being related to others, understanding the feelings of others, can enhance a sense of self, empowerment, and well being.

V. More recently, Bem has introduced into the psychological literature the *gender schema theory* (Bem, 1981, 1985). According to the gender schema theory, the developing child invariably learns his or her society's cultural definitions of femaleness and maleness. Gender schema theory proposes that in addition to learning such content-specific information about gender, the child also learns to invoke this heterogeneous network of sex-related associations in order to evaluate and assimilate new information. The child learns to encode and to organize information in terms of an evolving gender schema. A schema is a cognitive structure that organizes and guides an individual's perception (Neisser, 1976). A schema functions as an anticipatory structure, a readiness to search for and to assimilate incoming information in schema-relevant terms. Schematic information processing is highly selective and enables the individual to impose meaning onto a vast array of stimuli. Gender-schematic processing involves spontaneously sorting persons, attributes and behavior into masculine and feminine categories regardless of their differences on a variety of dimensions unrelated to gender. For example, people spontaneously place items like *tender* and *warm* into a feminine category and items like *assertive* and *eagle* into a masculine category. The child also learns to evaluate his or her adequacy as a person according to the gender schema, to match his or her preferences, attitudes, behaviors, and personal attributes against the prototypes stored within it. Gender schema becomes a prescriptive standard or guide and self-esteem becomes its hostage. In this way gender schema becomes an internalized motivational factor that prompts an individual to regulate his/her behavior so that it conforms to cultural definitions of masculinity or femininity. Gender schema theory construes perception as a process in which interaction between incoming information and an individual's preexisting schema determines what is perceived (Bem, 1987). Bem proposes that gender-schematic processing derives from the society's ubiquitous insistence on the functional importance of the gender dichotomy even in institutional context where sex needn't matter at all. The gender-schematic processing plays a major role in creating and/or enhancing male-female differences.

VI. The *social learning theory* represents the most widely known alternative framework to trait theory for understanding the process of gender socialization. Masculinity could be interpreted as internalized sex role, the product of social learning or "socialization". Based upon the principles of conditioning and reinforcement, social learning theorists such as Albert Bandura (1986) and Walter Mischel (1968) argued that people acquire and perform sex-type behavior through a combination of observation, imitation, indoctrination and conscious learning. For Bandura, the process of gender socialization is an explicit process. Young boys are simply thought to behave in a "sex-appropriate" way through the administering of punishments and rewards. For instance, while the parents tend to reinforce the assertive behavior of young boys, they generally suppress the same kind of behavior in their daughters. The learning process of male role would emerge in the young boys as they observe and imitate the actions of their fathers. Social learning theorists identified a number of important factors which encourage conformity to sex-role norms. The theory draws attention to the fact that most of the people, for most of the time, behave in ways which are socially prescribed. They are like actors on a stage, playing out parts which have been assigned to them. A set of lines and stage directions exist which all men and women have to learn in order to perform (Edley and Wetherell, 1995). Masculinity, therefore is not so much something that someone *is*, as something that someone *does*. There is a great deal of experimental evidence which shows how parents, teachers, peer groups and the media utilize an array of techniques to encourage sex-appropriate behavior. This perspective could be called *normative perspective* on males and females, which concentrates on the nature and consequences of the standards by which cultures define masculinity and femininity (Connell, 1987). Viewed in the normative conception, the traditional man is one who believes that men should have these characteristics. In these terms, masculinity becomes seen as an act, a kind of performance rather than an essence. Normative definitions recognize these differences and offer a standard: masculinity is what men ought to be (Connell, 1995).

VII. Since the late 1960s *the cognitive developmental perspective* of gender socialization, as proposed by Lawrence Kohlberg, has become a popular resource for psychologists working in this area (Segal, 1990). While the social learning theory holds that the internalization of the masculine role occurs primarily because the boy is rewarded for performing its constituent behaviors, the cognitive development theory claims, conversely: the boy becomes aware of his gender status from within the child himself. He does not need to be rewarded or punished. A supposedly natural tendency "to ascribe worth to himself" impels the boy not only to see his own gender as inherently superior, but also to view the activities associated with his gender as preferable. Thus, the identification with the same-sex parents is a consequence, not a cause, of gender identity.

VIII. Most often in the new trends research, sex roles are seen as the cultural elaboration of biological sex differences. Being a man means enacting a general set of expectations which are attached to one's sex-the sex role (Seidler,

1994). The social constructionist approach thus views masculinity not as a dimension of personality in the trait sense, nor as a biological characteristics, but as an ideology, a set of beliefs about what men are like and should do. *The cultural perspective* on men sees the substance of masculinity in terms of ideology (Mac an Ghaill, 1996). As applied to men's behavior, the idea is that men act in the ways they do not because of their male role identity, or their level of masculine traits, but because of the conception of masculinity they internalize from their culture (Gilbert et al, 1999). A culture which does not treat men and women as bearers of polarized character types, does not have concepts of masculinity and femininity. Other writers have recognized the fact that cultures very often contain more than one version of a particular role; the various ethnic, sexual, and social class groups may have their own particular definitions of the male sex-role (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994). Within cultural studies researchers have begun investigating the images of men in the popular media (Craig, 1994).

IX. The sociologists of gender see men as the products of various institutional structures. *The social relations perspective* on men sees masculinity as a set of distinctive practices which emerge from men's positioning within a variety of social structures. As such, masculinity takes its shape from the institutions in which men are embedded. The social relations perspective explains the differences between men emerging from different social groups: race, class (Seidler, 1994). With growing recognition of the interplay between gender, race and class it has become common to recognize multiple masculinities: black as well as white, working class as well as middle-class. We have to examine the complex relations between them and to prevent the acknowledgement of multiple masculinities collapsing into character typologies.

X. *The feminist perspective* on men sees the substance of masculinity as a set of power relations. The primary factor determining the shape of masculinity is politics. According to this perspective men adopt those forms of activity and identity which bring them the maximum rewards, both materially and in terms of self-esteem (Moravski, 1994). The feminist viewpoint has no implicit theory of masculinity. It draws upon the ideas of psychoanalysis, role theory and even biology to explain how female and male become constituted as woman and man.

The most important strength of the sex-role theories is that they are derived from a broad theoretical perspective which explains all differences between people's behavior in terms of different social expectations rather than biological factors. Sex-role theories provide a frame for the understanding of the relationship between society and the individual. From this perspective, the sex-role theory is a social psychological theory. Another major strength of the sex-role perspective on men is the idea that masculinity as the internalized sex role allows for social change. Since the role norms are social facts, they can be change by the social process. This will happen whenever the agencies of socialization - family, school, mass media, etc., transmit new expectations. If masculinity is a reflection of biological forces, then the way to challenge the status quo is difficult, if not hopeless. The positive political implications of sex-role theory can be seen in the

development of non-sexist school curricula, anti-discrimination laws, equal opportunity policies and programs.

The work of Bob Connell (1987), Arthur Brittan (1989), Michael Kimmel (1987) and Joseph Pleck (1981) provided good repers for a critical evaluation of the usefulness of the concept of *the sex-role* in studying masculinity. One of the strongest criticisms of the role perspective comes from the work of Connell (1987). He claims that the role theory as a form of social determinism sees people trapped into playing sets of stereotypical roles. A number of critics have suggested that the sex-role theorists simply assume the existence of two sex-roles on the basis that there are two biologically distinct sexes. Brittan (1989) implies that sex-role theorists not only see biological differences as coming before gender differences, but they also imagine that the biology of the two sexes directly influences the type of roles which go on the top of them.

The American psychologist Joseph Pleck in his book published in 1981, *The Myth of Masculinity* re-examined the sex role literature. He criticized this paradigm above all for its assumption of concordance between norm and personality- the idea that conformity to sex role norms is what promotes psychological adjustment. Pleck saw the socialization of males as an oppressive process which forces young boys into playing a limited and constricting sex-role. He criticized the notion that the masculine male was an image of health and happiness, as had been suggested by Terman and Miles. Instead, Pleck proposed a non-normative sex role theory, one that disconnected the role from the self. He proposed a model of the sex role which allowed that sex role conformity might be psychologically dysfunctional. Role theorists fail to acknowledge the way in which the categories of masculinity and femininity have come to be define, as well as the way in which they actually function to reproduce or maintain the power difference between men and women.

Men, reason and emotion

A familiar theme in patriarchal ideology is that men are rational while women are emotional (Peterson, 1998). It is one of the leading ideas in the sex role theory, in the form of the instrumental/expressive dichotomy, and it is widespread in popular culture too. The roots of this theme could be identified back to the time of Martin Luther and the Reformation (sixteenth century). Luther believed that if people are left to follow their own selfish inclinations, the society would disintegrate into chaos (Sleider, 1991). Civilization, therefore, depends upon the ability of people to ignore their basic emotions and desires and to concentrate instead upon the dictates of reason. By portraying men as much more rational than women, men managed to establish themselves as the guarantors of civilized society. Within Protestant tradition there is a close identification of the emotions and feelings with a threat on the rational and civilized men. Hegemonic masculinity establishes its hegemony by its claim to embody the power of reason. Science and technology, seen as the motors of progress, are culturally defined as masculine realm. Men's domination of women is now legitimated by the technical

organization of production, rather than legitimated by religion or imposed by force. Masculinity as a whole is reshaped to fit the corporate economy (Connell, 1995).

Victor Seidler (1989) argues that one of the most profound consequences of the way of thinking of men as a much more rational gender, is that men became alienated from their own feeling and body. Seidler notes that the working practices within a capitalist system, encourage men to split their sense of identity between a "real me" of private life and a work personality. Men become emotionally inarticulate, because the capitalism ethos tends to favor self-control, stoicism and self-discipline. The institutionalization of competitiveness causes a process of "depersonalization" and alienation. Men have little alternatives within this sets of social relations but to become "working machines", fearful of emotions, intimacy and dependency, controlled and disciplined. Men repress the emotional dependence by sublimating it into the pursuit of archetypal male behavior.

According to psychoanalytic theorists, the inter-sexed nature of the mother-son relationship is the key to the understanding of men's related problems of fear of commitment and intimacy (Maccoby, 1987). They consider that these feelings are not simply concerns with the loss of freedom or autonomy within a relationship but a more basic fear about the loss of their sense of maleness. Behind this fear there appears to be a wish to surrender to the woman, to be in union with her. This wish touches upon the central dilemma of heterosexual men: the desire for women and the need to be separate from them.

Men and work

The roots of gender identity are interfused with expectations of achievement, of "becoming someone" through working. To be a man implies that one has to be a "breadwinner". As individuals, men are brought up to value work, and to fix their personal identities around particular occupations. A successful man is measured by his ability to achieve at his job. As many scholars have noted, men were long typecast in "instrumental", economically derived positions whereby masculinity, male identity, and male role performance all center around work. Hood (1993) assumed that men identified themselves with work and derived their self-esteem from performance at work. Public sphere of work is considered to be "masculine" whereas the private sphere of family is "feminine". Men are identified with the public arena (Watson, 1997, 1998). The young boy first learns that being a man like one's father involves being centered outside the home, in the world of work. Boys quickly learn to associate work with masculinity, and earning money becomes an important sign of manhood. Work is thus seen as a privilege, an instantiation of masculinity. In our society there is a firm distinction between "work" and "leisure", or "career" and "family". "Non-work" is seen usually as a compensation for effort, or a reward for success (Tolson, 1977). According to Tolson, men's experience of work is dual. Men become caught in a trap: on the one hand men look for paid work to validate and affirm their masculinity. Work structures the man's life in such a way that he finds it difficult to imagine life outside of it. Work can also be a place where man can act out a macho sense of

being a "proper man". On the other hand, for many men, especially working-class men, work can become an experience of powerlessness and humiliation through subordination to authority. As Tolson suggests, man can not rebel, because to rebel means to endanger the crucial patriarchal masculine identity of the breadwinner. Unemployment seems to strike at the heart of masculinity. Seidler (1994) notes how internalization of the Protestant work ethic makes many men uneasy about relaxing. Men can feel guilty if they are not working. Even male friendships are typically based around activities; they *do* things together whereas women tend more just to *be* with one another. Men treat their bodies like machines, often driving them to the point of exhaustion and beyond. This aspect is often view as a sign of victory of man's mind over body.

Men and behavior

Perhaps the most popular image of masculinity in everyday consciousness is that of man as the competitor, the conqueror, the hero, the hunter (Seidler, 1989). These are the images celebrated in literature, art and in the media. The main actors in the history were men, they were the conquerors, the explorers, the soldiers, the statesmen, the inventors. However, the presentation of history as the unfolding of male history gave men a view of themselves which was often unflattering. Men have not only written history, they have also appeared in it as the authors of atrocities. Although there is a great deal of cultural variation in the expression of male aggressivity, the question remains, why is it that men are usually the soldiers and hunters? Several answers are given to this question. First, there is the argument about the innate aggressiveness of men. Because women bear children, men are programmed for chase. One version of this argument claims that the ills of our society are caused by there not being sufficient outlets for male aggression. So, problems like rape and other forms of sexual harassment are largely a consequence of the frustration of aggression. There is no real evidence that male biology is used as an instrument of domination.

There is the counter-argument that posits learning as the critical dimension in the explanation of male aggression. Man-the-hunter and man-the-conqueror are learned roles acquired in social context which positively evaluate aggression and competitiveness. The belief in man-the-hero, would seem to have no foundation in the everyday world for most of the men. There are very few occasions available for men in a routinised work in a factory or an office to be a hero. Although men are no longer hunters, their behavior still exhibits the same competitiveness. Now, men compete in the political, social and economic arenas. The winners take the prizes, the losers are left with the scraps and despair. Masculinity from this point of view, is measured by a man's capacity to win.

Men and sexuality

Masculinity ideology in general tends to give a special status to male sexuality. It is often regarded as being some kind of primordial force. It is sharply distinguished from feminine sexuality which, until very recently, was seen as

being passive and male dependent. Male sexuality is construed as autonomous, adventurous and exploratory (Brittan, 1989). This image has been supported by certain versions of psychoanalytic theory, which attribute greater sexual potency to men. For Freud, male sexuality is assertive and it seeks immediate gratification. In the psychoanalytic theory sexuality is, as many commentators have pointed out, comparable to the hydraulic mechanisms associated with flood control. Sexual abnormality and violent male sexual behavior can be attributed to the failure of repression. And, because Freud seemed to imply that repression is never completely successful, it is not surprising that male libido is always straining to express itself in whatever way it can. This view has become the dominant one, despite the fact that for most men there is a discrepancy between their actual behavior and the demands of masculinism. Recently, the psychoanalytic model of male sexuality has come under attack from Foucault (1978). He argues that sexuality is not a global and universal force, but is constructed within particular sociocultural contexts and discourses. The male sexual drive discourse is the main discourse in the production of meanings concerning contemporary sexuality. The themes associated with male sexuality reflect the view that men's sexual urges are natural and compelling. Male sexuality is often considered to be uncontrollable and women are often viewed as responsible for male arousal. Women who do not accommodate themselves to what is viewed as normal male sexual arousal may risk being rejected by male partners or labeled as deviant or bad.

Other studies argued that sex is more central for men than for women and that males tend to isolate sex from intimacy (Lear, 1997, Seidler, 1992). Consistent with these generalizations, other researchers found that male students rate sex more important as a goal in dating than do females, and are less likely to cite lack of emotional commitment as a reason for abstaining from sex. Men with traditional beliefs about male sexuality, one component of attitude toward masculinity in general, report using unilateral power and avoidance strategies in their intimate relationship (Wetherell and Edley, 1999). Traditional attitudes toward masculinity also have negative correlates from a public health perspective. Males with traditional attitudes have more sexual partners, use condom less, and have less favorable attitudes toward condoms. They disagree that males have a responsibility to prevent pregnancy, and are more likely to believe that making a partner pregnant validates their own masculinity. The greater frequency of sexual partners, the lower usage of condoms, and the contraceptive beliefs associated with traditional attitudes toward masculinity increase adolescent males' risks of unintended pregnancy, AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases. This difference reflects prevalent societal discourse themes associated with women's and men's presumed sexual natures and roles (Gilbert et al, 1999). Assumptions about sexuality and sexual practices are embedded in how women and men construct the relations and how they conceptualize and explain women's and men's rights, responsibilities and behaviors in this kind of relationships.

Cultural discourses typically reflect and preserve gender inequality in the form of male preeminence and female subordination within male-female

relationship. Such discourse includes the notion that women are diminished by sexual expression viewed as normative for men; and that women who are sexual do so to meet men's needs, not their own. Engaging in sex not associated with a committed relationship provides a good illustration. It is a common practice to devalue a woman in this situation. In contrast, a man in this situation is often esteemed and viewed as "doing what men do".

In our society we tend to think of sexuality and reproduction as private and asocial experiences. However, these experiences are highly regulated by social and economic patterns. Men, within patriarchy, control the reproductive activities of women through abortion legislation, through male avoidance of childcare work, or through the threat of sexual violence. By learning to question and disrupt dominant discourses tied to gender as an ideological justification for behavior in heterosexual relationships, partners can allow for a more satisfying, authentic and healthy relationship.

Men and marriage

In the 1950s there was a firm expectation that required men to grow up, marry and support their wives (Walby, 1990). To do anything else was less than grown-up, and the man who willfully deviated was judged to be somehow "less than a man". Starting with the 1980s men's attitudes to marriage began to change. The man who postpones marriage even into middle age, who is dedicated to his own pleasures, is likely to be found not suspiciously deviant, but healthy. Some researchers talk about the changes that occurred in the last decades on the marriage pattern. The new democratic family in which the division of labor is not determined by the husband's role as breadwinner, but by the mutual negotiating strategies of each partner emerged. This optimism about the new type of family has been tempered by the evidence which question the shifting in male attitudes and behavior.

Men and fatherhood

For much of the 20th century, people associated fathers with the act of working and the responsibility of "providing" for their families. Parenting was culturally perceived as mothering (Woollett and Marshall, 1997, 2000). Social scientists studying families have paid little attention to fathers and husbands. Studies of parenthood relied on data drawn primarily from mothers (Pringle, 1998). Researchers studied men's lives almost exclusively in their more public dimensions, as if men's family experiences had no bearing on their daily realities. Fathers' connections to their children were portrayed as chiefly financial; good fathers were good providers and good providers made good fathers (Lorber, 1994). Numerous cultural implications followed these emphases. For example, maternal employment was perceived as a potentially serious problem in that it implied the absence of mothers and a lack of nurturing. Because fathers were inexorably associated with providing, their job-induced absence was normal, and their full-time presence in the homes (via unemployment, disability or "role reversal")

assumed to be problematic. As Pleck (1981) noted the dominant, though not exclusive, cultural image of the 20th century fathers has been the "father-breadwinner model". Within this model, fathers are the ultimate sources of both morality and discipline, but physically, socially, and emotionally removed from the family by their concentration on work. Cultural messages about men's roles in the family discouraged much open deviation.

Recent years have seen an increase in research on fathering. There are indicators of greater male investments and involvement in parenting and childcare. However, even late-20th century alternative "new father" has failed to completely replace the "father-breadwinner model" or challenges its position of cultural dominance.

Men and women

Connell (1987) suggests that perceiving women and men as antagonistic gender classes acting as different social categories, with different interests, is too simplistic and unproductive. Is it possible to see men as a collectivity with a collective set of interests? Should men be regarded as a ruling class? It is doubtful if such an entity exists. If this is the answer, which is the ruling group of men who define the masculine ideology? Brittan (1989) argues that, although men clearly have some interests in common, they cannot be described as a class in the sense of being united by their material interests, their common identity, community and social position. In other words, it can be said that there is a pattern of male's behavior, but men are positioned in very different ways in relation to this pattern. The advantages and disadvantages of gender divisions are not distributed equal between men and women. Some men are acting to oppress or control the masculinity expressed by other men. There are struggles between groups of men over the proper expression of masculinity. The solution is to focus attention not on men and women as pre-given categories, but on how gender system is working in a particular society (Nicholson, 1993). This system can constrain or not people's actions. Certain practices become dominant in certain areas of society. As a consequence, there emerge different types of men and women, as well as different types of masculinity and femininity. There is considerable variation depending on people's local circumstances and the way they interact with the social systems of class, race, religion. Men's different positions in relation to women, in terms of class, race, and sexual expression, construct men with different personalities and ways of being men. Connell suggests that what masculinity researchers should be investigating is what he calls "hegemonic masculinity". Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of certain men and the subordination of women and men. In other words, the power of certain groups of men forces an interpretation of what masculinity should be, thus subordinating or repressing other styles of masculine and feminine expression.

In the previous centuries, masculinity and femininity were circumscribed by a world in which gender differences were taken for granted. Nowadays, everything is in a state of flux. Masculine crisis theory is founded on the observation that both women and men deviate from the master gender stereotypes of their society. The presumption is that this crisis was brought about by the erosion of male power in the work place and at home. In the past, men supposedly knew who they were; their roles were minutely specified, and they also knew who women were supposed to be. In the last decades, all this has changed and men lost their gender certainty. (Brittan, 1989). Masculinity as a research topic did not really exist until feminists began to attack the presuppositions of traditional political and social theories. How should men respond to feminism and the social changes in women's position since the 1960s? Can a man be a feminist? Generally speaking, men move between various, sometimes contradictory, responses to feminism. Some social scientists went along with liberal feminism, but not with radical feminism. It is radical feminism which shocked the sensibilities of male academics and intellectuals. Surely, to claim that "all men were potential rapists" would simply mean falling back on reductionism and essentialism. One obvious response of men was the anti-feminism attitude. The attack on feminism was more or less virulent (Morgan, 1992).

Anti-feminist writers suggest either that patriarchy is imaginary, or that it is a highly desirable form of social organization. Other conservatives advocate a third position based on biological theories. These authors argue that patriarchy and women's subordination are inevitable because of the biological differences between men and women.

Some male authors argue that men and not women are the real victims of the "sex war", and that men's position, rather than that of women is under threat and needs to be protected. The main focus of this movement has been on divorce and child custody legislation, along with the opposition to the criminalisation of rape within marriage. These men claim that feminism has undermined the rights of fathers and the position of men in the family. They see themselves as a victimized and disadvantaged social group. Although they recognize the economic and social benefits of women's labor force participation, men assert their belief in the priority of women's family role in the maintenance of home and family. According to this perspective, it is the erosion of family life brought about by women's movement that took them out of home and placed them into the labor force. This stands at the heart of men's resistance to gender role change. Along similar lines, there are authors who suggest that male power is a myth rather than a reality. Consequently, men are considered to be enslaved by current work practices and the responsibilities of being the breadwinners. They are also threatened by self-destructive macho cults. The consequence, they argue, is that men die younger, commit suicide more frequently than women, are forced to go to war. But according to semioticians such as Roland Barthes, myths are not falsehoods or fairy tales, but uncontested and generally unconscious assumptions that are so widely shared within a culture that they are considered natural, instead of

recognized as products of social and historical circumstances. Myths provide ready-made answers to universal human questions about ourselves, our relationships with others and with our environment. Through myth, as a form of cultural communication, the role of human beings in inventing and reinventing masculinity and femininity is disguised, and therefore naturalized and biologicized.

Could the different theoretical perspectives produce a total picture of masculinity? Unfortunately, the answer is no. The problem was generated by the fact that they developed competing explanations for the same phenomena. The main currents of the 20th-century research showed that they had failed to produce a coherent explanation of masculinity. This does not reveal so much the failure of the scientists, as the impossibility of the task (Connell, 1987). Many of the conceptions of masculinity oversimplified something which is not simple at all. Also, they unidimensionalized that which is multidimensional, and conveyed a sense of stability and permanence to that which is flexible.

However, the concept of masculinity might be maintained in our repertoire. Still, important distinctions need to be made between the theoretical concept of masculinity and the specific gender-related behaviors and attitudes. Analyses of possible differences between males and females have not been well served by the simple invocation of the conceptions of masculinity and femininity. It is necessary to recognize that these terms are not explanations, but merely labels. Masculinity and femininity do not exist in the world as objective realities waiting to be found, but rather as cognitive and social constructions produced by gender-schematic processing. In other words, masculinity and femininity exist only in the mind of the perceiver. Biology determines whether we are male or female. Culture determines what it means to be male and female, and what sorts of behavior and personality attributes are appropriate for each gender role (Unger, 1979, 1993). Masculinity and femininity are what a culture expects of its men and women. In other words, masculinity and femininity are social constructions. The main research question must refer to how particular groups of men gain positions of power and wealth and how they legitimate and reproduce the social relationship that generates their dominance. It is counter-productive to see men as a coherent gender class interested in controlling women since men and women exist only in relation to each other.

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ASSESSMENT OF EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS IN CHILDHOOD PSYCHOPATHOLOGY (I)

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ABSTRACT. The aim of this paper is twofold. The first one is to describe the level of executive functions in childhood; we described two diagnostic categories (attention deficit disorder and autism) that have major impairments in executive functions. The second aim of the paper is to present the assessment process for ADHD children.

KEY WORDS: executive functions, ADHD, autism.

Theoretical Background

Executive functions and their corresponding deficits represent a hot topic in nowadays psychology, both in terms of normal functioning and in terms of pathology.

One reason for this increasing interest can be found in the large spectrum of disorders that seem to involve deficits on executive function tasks. In the landscape of childhood, there are a number of executive function disorders with - Early Treated Phenylketonuria (Diamond et al., 1997) and without a known etiology - Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism, Tourette syndrome (Ozonoff et al., 1994) Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) (Insel, 1988), Childhood -Onset Schizophrenia (Karatekin & Asarnow, 1998), Conduct Disorder (Daugherty & Quay, 1991).

In the spirit of adult neuropsychology, the most frequently used explanation for this whole range of deficits would consist in the so called "frontal metaphor" (Pennington and Ozonoff, 1996) – that is, the assumption that frontal lesions would stay at the origin of such cognitive deficits, highly similar with those manifested by adult patients with documented frontal lesions. There is already a tradition of considering frontal lobe pathology linked with specific sets of deficits, dorsolateral area damage (Brodmann areas 46, 9 and 10) being invoked in case of impaired planning, distractibility, working-memory deficits, problem-solving, cognitive flexibility, all of which are popularly grouped under "executive functions" (Fuster, 1989, Goldman-Rakic, 1990, Knight, 1991 (apud Kertesz, 1994, Robin & Holyoak, 1995, Duncan, 1995). These deficits have been established through lesions/lobotomies. However, the localization of lesions in the frontal lobe syndrome is complex, and the clinical picture is variable.

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Moreover, the age at which dysfunction begins is very important (Damasio and Anderson, 1993). The effects of frontal lesions starting in childhood cause cognitive deficits related to organization and planning, coupled with lack of self regulation and abnormal social behavior – deficits that in adults are more linked with ventral or orbitofrontal damage (Brodmann areas 11, 12, 25, 32 and 47) and medial damage (cingulate gyrus, considered to be part of the limbic system - Brodmann areas 24 and 32, and the medial aspects of areas 6, 8, 9 and 10), that are translated in the loss of inhibitory control, affective disturbances, socially inappropriate behaviour, poor social integration.

The problem with most of these childhood disorders is that they do not have a known structural or functional neuropathology. So, in the best case, we can find executive function deficits that cannot be directly linked with certain neural structure impairments. The importance of clarifying these disorders in terms of clusters of executive deficits is even bigger from this perspective.

What are the executive functions?

A comprehensive definition was offered by Welsh and Pennington (1988, pp. 201-201), executive function being acknowledged "...as the ability to maintain an appropriate problem-solving set for attainment of a future goal (Bianchi, 1922; Luria, 1966). This set can involve one or more of the following: (a) an intention to inhibit a response or to defer it to a later more appropriate time, (b) a strategic plan of action sequences, and (c) a mental representation of the task, including the relevant stimulus information encoded into memory and the desired future goal-state. In cognitive psychology, the concept of executive function is closely related to the notion of a limited-capacity central processing system".

Being partly overlapped with domains such as attention, reasoning and problem-solving, typical lists of executive functions include set-shifting and set maintenance, interference control, inhibition, integration across space and time, planning and working memory. Central ideas in the concept include: 1) context-specific action selection, especially in the face of strongly competing, but context-inappropriate, responses; 2) maximal constraint satisfaction in action selection, with the integration of constraints from a variety of other domains, such as perception, memory, emotion and motivation (Pennington & Ozonoff, 1996).

In a tentative of finding components of molar executive function tasks, two computational simulations using the same architecture (Cohen & Servan-Schreiber, 1992, Kimberg & Farah, 1993) tried to model performance across several tasks. The interesting finding was that the same change in the model produced performance very similar to that observed in adult patients with prefrontal cortex dysfunction – so the same "lesion" of a common architecture could generate similar disruptions in performance across tasks. The other important finding was that two dimensions are critical for understanding various executive function tasks: working memory demand and demand for inhibition.

In spite of such computational models, that provide finer-grained measures of different executive functions, there are still a lot of unanswered questions, because the specific differences which turn out into different symptomatologies are still unclear. There are few reasons for this unsolved problem:

- 1) The executive function deficits are not specific enough, due to the fact that the umbrella term of "executive function(s)" has usually been operationalized through a large variety of tasks, mostly neuropsychological tests, having a highly complex structure.

An impaired performance on clinical executive function tasks, such as Wisconsin Card Sorting Test or the Tower of Hanoi, cannot be the primary deficit neither in ADHD nor in autism, because such a deficit is too broad to be specific. The executive function deficits might be artifactual – due to clinical ascertainment – or a nonspecific, secondary effect of growing up with some developmental disorders (Pennington & Ozonoff, 1996). On the other hand, such molar tasks may tap multiple executive functions, so that different disorders may be distinct in either their level or profile of executive function deficits.

- 2) The neural locations of the hypothesized deficits have been also "spread" over a large, yet very heterogeneous "territory", including not only cortical – frontal, but also posterior– areas, but also subcortical ones – thalamus, cerebellum, basal ganglia, the limbic system.

The prefrontal cortex has extensive connections to these other areas of the brain, and such connections could give birth to two kinds of disorders as intrinsic and extrinsic "frontal" disorders (Weinberger, 1992). So executive function deficits could be produced either by frontal cortex neuropathology, or by pathology in other regions, like basal ganglia, that have close connections with prefrontal cortex. But this way the localization of symptoms to one or the other structure may be problematic.

From the point of view of development, there is one more aspect that should be retained. Neonatal lesions of the medial-temporal lobe (including the amygdala, entorhinal cortex, hippocampal formation and parahippocampal gyrus) in monkeys have profound effects over the regulation of the dopamine response in the caudate nucleus by the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex. This is a proof that early focal lesions may have substantial and long-lasting impacts on the function of a distant neural system (Saunders et al., 1998). The most challenging thing is that monkeys with neonatal lesions of the limbic structures have shown increased locomotor stereotypes, especially in stressful situations such as social interaction. In such a way, certain environmental stimuli (such as stress) may have unexpected or problematic effects on brain function in the context of developmental injury.

- 3) There might be some diagnosis/comorbidity problems.

For example, between 50% and 80% of children with ADHD also meet diagnostic criteria for other disorders (Tannock, 1998), including oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, but also anxiety disorders or developmental learning disorders.

Up to the moment, comorbidity has not been characterized adequately in many of the recent cognitive, neuroimaging or genetic studies.

4) Many studies have ignored the importance of developmental processes.

From an ontogenetic point of view, at the very beginning of self-regulation stands the amygdala-cingulate interaction. The same mechanisms used to cope with self-regulation are then transferred to issues of control of cognition during later infancy and childhood (Posner & Rothbart, 1998).

At the end of the first year of life an "anterior attention system" develops (Posner & Rothbart, 1991) assuring the regulation of behavior. The primary form of regulation consists in distress control via attention focusing, suggesting an inhibitory control on the amygdala by mid frontal regions. By the end of the first year of life, direct control of attention is passed from caregivers to the infant. So, the mature visual orienting system is now more and more supervised, probably by anterior structures.

At the same time, the child also passes in resolving conflict between reaching and the line of sight in order to retrieve an object in a box. He can look at the closed side of a box, yet reach through the open end to retrieve the toy inside the box (Diamond, 1991).

The lesson from development is that the cingulate becomes a locus of control for controlling distress, which may, step by step, generalize to other situations where conflicting demands must be resolved.

The next step is around the end of the second year. Posner, Rothbart, Thomas-Thrapp and Gerardi (1995), Clohessy, Rundman, Gerardi, Posner and Rothbart (1995) have shown that children as young as 18 months show a generalization of conflict resolution behaviors, transparent in the ability to learn *context dependent and ambiguous associations* (sequences like 1→2→1→3). This kind of learning has been linked to the development undergone by *executive attentional systems*, involving frontal networks (midfrontal lobe structures, mainly the anterior cingulate areas).

A next dramatic change has been shown during the third year of life, using a more direct measure of executive attention – a variant of the Stroop effect based on visual dimensions of locations and identity of objects, not words (Gerardi, 1997, apud Posner & Rothbart, 1998). It seems that around 30 months children become more and more able to inhibit prepotent responses. The even more remarkable finding was the correlation between the cognitive measurements of conflict resolution and the aspects of effortful control and negative affect in parental reports of infant behavior in their normal environment.

The executive attention undergoes further development throughout childhood and adolescence, development usually assumed to be based on the maturation of the prefrontal cortex (Luria, 1973). Due to the new techniques of noninvasive magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), few steps further have been done in the validation of structure-function relationships in the anterior attention system during development. Neuroanatomically, it was possible to show in children ages 5

to 16 (Casey et al., 1997a) that the size of the right anterior cingulate region was correlated with age and with attentional performance. Functionally, it was shown a significantly greater activation in children 7 to 12 years age relative to adults, when performing a response inhibition task (Go-NoGo paradigm), activation distributed across both the dorsolateral and orbitofrontal cortices. However, only activity in the orbital frontal and anterior cingulate cortices correlated with behavioral performance (Casey et al., 1997b).

Developmental demands on executive functions

Deficits at the level of executive functions may not become apparent until the child is required to utilize those particular functions. Preschool children, for example, are not expected to manage much for themselves; there is little demand for self-management beyond complying with parental directions at this stage of development. Usually parents or other caretakers take the responsibility for starting, directing and stopping most of the young child's activities and in this way the adult typically provides most of the "executive management".

Entry into nursery school or other group care situation gradually introduces the child to more demands for self-regulation and for accommodation to the needs of caretakers or other children. Entry into kindergarten and the first grade brings increasing demands for the child to regulate behavior, e.g. to sit still, refrain from talking out, and to complete tasks within given time frames. The school environment also demands increasingly that the child regulates cognition, e.g. to maintain focus on specific tasks, to organize and prioritize activities, and to remember particular concepts and skills. Children whose executive function impairments include severe problems with inhibition of impulsive behavior are likely to be identified very early in their school career; those who can manage basic behavioral self-control adequately, but have significant problems with inattention spectrum ADD impairments may not be identified until they advance to increased demands of upper grade levels.

Demands for exercise of executive functions usually escalate rapidly in junior high school, high school, and the first two years of college. This is the period of time when most individuals are faced with the widest range of demands to organize and direct themselves in the broadest range of cognitive and social activities with the least opportunity to escape from those to which they are not well-suited. Moreover, this period of early and middle adolescence is the time when parents and teachers are expected to taper down their management efforts and gradually require the teenager to take primary responsibility for self-management, i.e. for the exercise of executive functions.

Executive functions become progressively more necessary and complex as an individual gets older. Denkla (1983) has suggested that growing up is essentially the development of increasing competence of executive functions. Complex tasks like dealing with multiple courses and different teachers in high school, driving a car, managing your one job are a few of many tasks that place strong demands upon

executive function. The increasing demands to executive function as an individual grows up may explain why inattention symptoms of some individuals with ADHD, predominantly *inattentive* type, particularly those who are bright and not hyperactive, are noticed not in early childhood, but in mid to late adolescence or early adulthood as demands of executive functions increase.

Considering ADHD as a developmental impairment of executive functions that may not be recognizable until an individual confronts the demands of upper grades of school has important implication for the assessment. Existing DSM-IV diagnosis for AD/HD stipulate that at least some of the symptoms must have been present before seven years of age. Recently the validity of that age requirements has been challenged by further analysis of the empirical field study data on which was presumably based (Lahey et. al., 1997). Barkley & Biederman (1997) following this same reasoning, have argued that the age-of-onset criteria for ADHD should either abandoned or "generously broadened" because it has no scientific basis and may impede recognition of cases of AD/HD inattentive type, where the onset symptoms was not apparently as early as age seven.

Childhood Psychopathology and Executive Dysfunctions

Cognitive evidence

For most psychiatric conditions that have a history of associations with executive function deficits, there is a confusing variety of instruments and tasks that assessed these. Further experimental studies are needed to dissect the executive function deficits in disorders like ADHD or autism, and test their specificity.

The cognitive model linking executive function deficits to the behavioral symptoms of *ADHD* is that three cardinal symptoms of ADHD, hyperactivity, distractibility and impulsivity are all due to a deficit in the executive function of inhibition (Sandberg, 1996, Pennington and Ozonoff, 1996).

Pennington and Ozonoff (1996) highlighted deficits in executive function tasks in 18 studies of ADHD, especially for Tower of Hanoi, Stroop, Matching Familiar Figures Test and the Trail Making Test. They could reveal abnormal performance in purer motor inhibition tasks (like Go-NoGo, Anti-Saccade, Conflict Motor Task) as well as in working memory tasks. So that, the authors suggest it might be a mixture of specific and general deficits: a core executive deficit, perhaps in motor inhibition, and some general cognitive inefficiency.

Other studies have shown reduced negative priming in children with ADHD (McLaren, 1989, apud Houghton & Tipper, 1994). The subjects appeared to have difficulty responding to stimuli when distractors were present, appearing to be unable to efficiently select. If we accept that inhibitory mechanisms are involved in selective attention, then less negative priming will mean less effective inhibitory mechanisms.

The model of Barkley (1997) suggests that ADHD comprises a deficit in behavioral inhibition. Due to the links between inhibition and 4 executive neuropsychological functions that seems to depend on it – working memory, self-

regulation of affect/motivation/arousal, internalization of speech and reconstitution (analysis and synthesis of behavior) – ADHD should be associated with secondary impairments in these 4 executive abilities and the motor control they afford. This model could explain the strong evidence for deficits in behavioral inhibition, working memory, regulation of motivation and motor control.

Executive dysfunction in *autism* has been an active topic of investigation since the work of Rumsey published in 1985. A lot of the traditionally executive functions have been found to display abnormalities in autistic subjects: perseveration, cognitive flexibility, working memory, inhibition, and selective attention. Deficits in executive function tasks have been consistently found in autistic samples across many studies, using a wide variety of measures with subjects of all ages and functioning levels. The metanalysis of Pennington and Ozonoff (1996) showed how in 13 of 14 studies a significant difference between autistic and control subjects could be found on at least one executive function measure, for 78% of 32 executive function tasks. Their inventory included a variety of executive function tasks, like Wisconsin Card Sorting Test, Word Fluency Task, Tower of Hanoi, Tower of London, A \bar{B} task, Delayed Response Task, Go-NoGo task, Working Memory Sentence Span, Working Memory Counting Span.

One question arising in the light of these studies is how the executive function deficits might be related to other cognitive and behavioral symptoms of autism – particularly with the "theory of mind" deficits. It has been proposed that there might be some similar underpinnings of mental state processing impairments with executive function deficits.

McEvoy, Rogers and Pennington (1993) have shown that executive function and joint attention deficits are highly correlated, the potential reason being that both require some capacity to shift between competing alternatives (executive function - shift between two cognitive sets, joint attention - shift between two attentional perspectives).

A longitudinal study performed by Ozonoff and McEvoy (1994) revealed the fact that both executive function and theory of mind abilities are seriously deficient in autistic individuals, improve little with development, may never reach normal functioning levels and hit a developmental ceiling.

There are some suggestions that the main problem in autism should not be the lack of inhibition, but the lack of flexibility. Ozonoff & Strayer (1997) tested this hypothesis using two kinds of tasks – the Stop-Signal paradigm for motor inhibition and the negative priming for cognitive inhibition. They didn't find any differences between autistic subjects and control subjects. However, their subjects were only 13 nonretarded children with autism.

On the other hand, in most of the studies addressing the issue of executive dysfunctions in autism, comorbidity was not considered – not for ADHD or other disorders, including anxiety.

Neurobiological conjectures

It has been acknowledged how important is to dissociate the components of executive control so as to provide a more analytic treatment at both cognitive and anatomical levels (Posner & DiGirolamo, 1998). And also, beside the understanding of executive functions developmentally as a key to normal development, it has been suggested more and more the relevance of studying neuropathological cognitive development – and particularly, the biological mechanisms underlying developmental psychiatric disorders characterized by prefrontal dysfunction (Casey et al., 1997b).

Though it is improbable that the dysfunction of a single structure – like the anterior cingulate – could explain the whole constellation of symptoms characterizing a psychiatric disorder, the view of the brain through its circuitry can shed light on a lot of issues. For example, there are at least five parallel circuits involving the frontal cortex and basal ganglia (Alexander et al., 1991, apud Casey, in press), circuits that involve the same brain regions but differ in the projection zones within three regions: the basal ganglia, thalamus and cortex, of which only two are prefrontal circuits that have projections in the dorsolateral and lateral orbital frontal cortex, and are involved in representing and maintaining stimulus information (e.g., object, spatial, verbal, etc), respectively response information (e.g., different behavioral sets). The disruption of specific behaviors could imply a certain circuit affected in a certain class of pathology.

The case of *attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)* is relevant in the light of such complex interactions between neural structures. MRI-based anatomical measures of frontostriatal circuitry (prefrontal cortex and basal ganglia) have shown that behavioral inhibition performance of children with ADHD correlates with abnormal volume in the right regions of prefrontal cortex, caudate and globus pallidus. The authors (Casey et al., 1997c) suggest that the right prefrontal cortex might have a role in suppressing responses to salient, but otherwise irrelevant events, while the basal ganglia appear to be involved in executing these behavioral responses. On the other hand, the basal ganglia are the source of dopamine input to the anterior cingulate, and thus the two frontal structures have a very close relationship (Posner & DiGirolamo, 1998).

In the case of *autism*, the close anatomical connections between the anterior cingulate and other frontal areas have to be considered. There are studies suggesting reduced blood flow to the right, left and midfrontal lobes (George et al., 1992; Gillberg, 1994; Zilbovicius et al., 1995; apud Pennington & Ozonoff, 1996) in children and young adults with autism and Asperger Syndrome. Indirect evidence comes from neuroimaging studies, that showed right orbitofrontal activation for auditory processing of mental state words, using SPECT (Baron-Cohen et al. 1994; apud Baron-Cohen, 1995), or medial frontal gyrus (Brodmann 8) and posterior cingulate gyrus activation for story comprehension (Fletcher et al., 1995), using PET. Or a theory of mind deficit in autism is one of the prominent models of the disorder.

ADHD Definition

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is one of the most extensively studied mental disorder and also one of the most controversial. The clinical description of this disorder, its labels and criteria have a long, rich history. Almost a century ago in *The Lancet* Still (1902) described impaired "inhibitory volition" and "marked inability to concentrate and sustain attention" as "defects of moral control".

"ADHD" is a heterogeneous disorder of unknown etiology". This is opening line of major review of literature on medication for treating ADHD by one of the leading child psychiatry research teams in the country (Spencer et al., 1996, p. 409). The name, definition, and prevailing diagnostic criteria for what we call today "ADHD" have change at least five times in the past decades, reflecting changes in the conceptualization of the disorder but at the same time creating confusion among the practitioners, public and making the task of standardizing samples in research very difficult (Barkley, 1990).

Currently, ADHD is defined by the fourth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM-IV, APA, 1994) as "...a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that is more frequent and severe than is typically observed in individuals at comparable level of development. ... Some hyperactive - impulsive or inattentive symptoms that cause impairment must have been present before age 7. ... Some impairment from the symptoms must be present in at least two settings. .. There must be clear evidence of interference with developmentally appropriate social, academic, or occupational functioning. ... The disturbance does not occur exclusively during the course of a Pervasive Developmental Disorder, Schizophrenia, or other Psychotic disorder, and it is not better accounted for by another mental disorder...".

It is now well - recognized (Barkley, 1997; Brown, 2000) that the ADHD is the result of impairments at the level of executive functions. The four executive functions responsible for behavioral inhibition deficit in ADHD are: 1). nonverbal working memory, 2). verbal working memory or internalization, 3). self-regulation of affect/motivation/arousal and 4). reconstitution (see Barkley, 1997 for a complete description of this theory).

Establishing the AD/HD Diagnosis

To make an accurate assessment of ADHD requires more areas (Robin, 1998):

- medical status
- inclusionary criteria for ADHD
- comorbidity
- differential diagnosis
- cognitive functioning
- family functioning

We need to know the *medical status* of person. Is he or she in a good health? Are vision and hearing normal or corrected to normal? Does the person have any chronic disease or neurological condition which might contribute to ADHD-like symptoms, or are any of the medications being taken by the child leading to such symptoms? The medical interview focuses more on child's health history, genetic background, pre- and perinatal events, current health, nutritional status, and gross sensory/motor functioning. This part it is designed to provide a differential diagnosis of ADHD from other medical conditions. The physician will carefully assess whether ADHD symptoms are secondary to factors such as central nervous system (CNS) injury, CNS infection, cerebrovascular disease, sleep disorder, endocrine disorder, metal poisoning or environmental toxins. It is important also to evaluate medical conditions that may be comorbid to ADHD and may influence the medical management of ADHD as well as medical contraindication to the prescription of stimulant medication (E.g. high blood pressure and cardiac difficulties).

The inclusionary criteria for ADHD refer to the DSM-IV or International Classifications of disease (ICD) -10 diagnostic, supplemented by dimensional measures such as rating scales. Despite more recent research demonstrating differential brain activity (Zametkin, A.J. et. al., 1990) and research supporting a significant genetic component (Hechtman, L., 1994) the diagnosis process remains dependent on the report of characteristic behaviors by those observing the children, mainly parents and teachers. The child's behavior is observed using different kind of rating scales. The minimum acceptable battery of rating scales should include a DSM-IV or ICD-10 ADHD symptom checklist and at least one parent, one teacher, and one adolescent rating scale. There are 3 main types of rating scales:

1. ADHD symptom-specific measures;
2. ADHD symptom and general psychopathology/classroom performance;
3. Family functioning measures.

When interpreting even the reliable and laid rating scales the practitioner should keep in mind the following points:

1. The rating scales are based on subjective impressions of individuals who do sometimes have a vested interest in the outcome (e.g. parents or teachers searching for a positive ADHD diagnosis or adolescents who deny the presence of any problems);
2. secondary education teachers typically have not had the opportunity to get to know a student as well as elementary education teachers;
3. many of the manifestations of the ADHD in adolescents are not overtly observable (e.g. mental restlessness), and can only be ascertained by adolescent self report;
4. the normative data are not always applicable throughout the entire age range of adolescence.

Taking into account those remarks, we can suggest that the practitioners should never use only rating scales criteria for diagnosing an individual with any disorder such ADHD.

The rating scales are designed to provide the practitioner information about four essential points:

1. *Core symptoms* of inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity;
2. *Chronicity* of these symptoms over the course of time; that is have they been present since childhood even if never diagnosed before?
3. Pervasiveness of these symptoms across situation and settings. ADHD must cause problems in a variety of situations with a variety of people, even though it may not cause problems in every situation.
4. *Impairment* in daily living or the extent to which these symptoms interfere with functioning in school, at home, and in community. Some individuals may exhibit symptoms of inattention, impulsivity or hyperactivity, but these symptoms may not be getting in the way of their functioning. We would not diagnose a disorder in such cases. Even if an adolescent meets the inclusionary criteria for ADHD, he or she may not truly have this disorder. We need to conduct a *differential diagnosis*, that is rule out alternative condition that may look like ADHD (e.g. oppositional behavior problems, mood disorders, anxiety disorders, and chaotic environments leading to adjustment problems). In the course of ruling out these alternatives, we often find that they may be occurring in addition to ADHD rather than instead of it; that is, they are *comorbid conditions*.

One of the most common comorbidities or differential diagnosis to ADHD is learning disabilities. Even when no learning disability is present, adolescent with ADHD typically present underachievement. To assess patterns of underachievement and learning disabilities, we need to know the adolescent's *cognitive functioning*, that is his or her intellectual abilities and skills level in such academic areas as reading, writing and mathematics. Knowing intellectual ability also helps us to understand the chronicity and pervasiveness of the youngster's impairments, because high intellectual ability may be a "protective" factor against early impairments (Robin, 1998). The smart child only needs to pay attention part of the time in the average school classroom to obtain passing grades, but it becomes increasingly more difficult to do so as youngsters move up to the upper educational grades.

Although evidence suggests that ADHD has its roots in neurobiology, the clinical expression of the disorder is the results of the interaction of nature and nurture, therefore, we also need to assess patterns of *family functioning*. Not only we need to assess how the child and his or her parents get along, we also need to assess parental depression and marital conflict - the types of parental pathology to be most predictive negative outcomes for children with ADHD.

In addition to interviews and rating scales the comprehensive ADHD evaluation includes cognitive ability and achievement testing, a continuous performance measure, and at times directs observational data.

Gathering objective data from cognitive tests and schoolwork samples is an indispensable and critically important aspect of a comprehensive assessment of ADHD. Such data are necessary for two major reasons: a). to determine the

presence of educational impairments arising from ADHD, and such a determination is necessary to seek educational services for the child and b). to make a differential diagnosis between ADHD and learning disabilities. Researchers and clinicians studying ADHD and learning disabilities have typically relied on the definition of learning disabilities as a significant discrepancy between scores on an IQ test and achievement test. The size of discrepancy may vary from study to study or to school system to school system, but a 1.5 or 2.0 standard deviation discrepancy is fairly common.

The most common test of cognitive processes used in ADHD assessment are Wechsler Scales. It is already known the utility of the third factor from Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC), third edition in the assessment of ADHD. The main problem in using this scale is that we can not make a differential diagnosis between ADHD and learning disability using WISC-III. We can obtain information about general cognitive functions, but we can not make a differential diagnosis.

In order to be sensitive to the executive and attentional problems seen in children with ADHD an ability test must measure these processes. Executive and attentional processes are included in Planning, Attention, Simultaneous, Successive (PASS) theory described by Naglieri (1999). From this theory children with inattention problems would likely to be poor in the Attention dimension of Pass theory and hyperactive/impulsive children could be expected to have cognitive problems in planning processing. The performance of children with ADHD on the four PASS processes is examined in recent researches involving Cognitive Assessment Test (CAS; Naglieri, Das, 1997).

Many literature data (Paolitto, 1999; Wasserman & Becker, 1999) suggest that CAS can have utility for identification of the cognitive problems children with ADHD have. The suggestion that these children have a Planning weakness (e.g. failure of self-control and response inhibition) is also consistent with the view that many ADHD children have difficulty with executive functioning. Because traditional IQ tests do not measure self-control and response inhibition, executive functions, or planning and CAS does, the current findings are also consistent with research that has questioned the differential diagnostic utility of such as the Wechsler Scales when used to identify the problems ADHD children have. When used with other information such as rating scales and developmental histories, it is anticipated that CAS may assist practitioner in assessment process.

After sifting through all the rating scales, interviews, tests, direct observations, the practitioner must come to a decision about the diagnosis of ADHD or a differential diagnosis, any comorbid conditions, and educational impairments. At the point of having all the above information about a case, practitioners should ask themselves the following questions:

1. to what extent do the interview data, parent, teacher rating scales converge upon a diagnosis of ADHD? If there are internal consistencies between these various sources of data, have we sufficiently explained them to conclude that ADHD is present?
2. to what extent have we ruled out competing explanations of whatever ADHD symptoms we uncovered, or ruled them in as comorbid conditions?
3. to what extent can we rule out family and/or environmental factors as alternative explanations of ADHD symptoms?
4. does the information show evidence of educational impairments?

The practitioner must reach on of three conclusions regarding the ADHD diagnosis: 1) confirmed, 2) disconfirmed, or 3) deferred. He or she should defer the diagnosis when the information is incomplete, or there is so much environmental chaos that we cannot rule ADHD in or out.

After reaching the diagnostic decision, the practitioner completes the evaluation giving the child and parents feedback and recommendations and in many cases writing a report of assessment. The process of giving feedback and recommendation blends into treatment.

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COLLECTIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SELF IN ROMANIAN CULTURE

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ABSTRACT. This study is designed to examine the correspondence between psychological processes and social situations in various Romanian educational settings, as this correspondence was predicted by a collective constructionist theory. Undergraduates' responses to situational definitions sampled from five faculties were analyzed.

The respondents in each department were more likely to choose the own department-made situations as relevant to their self-confidence. The own department-made situations were also judged to have more influence on the respondents' self-confidence than were the other department-made situations. This culture effect was especially qualified by the success situations. Romanian undergraduates judged that their self-confidence would increase more in the success situations than it would decrease in the failure situations.

Gender effect has proved less significant than department culture effect. However, first, the female respondents have chosen more situations as relevant to their self-confidence and have also judged the situations as having more influence on their self-confidence comparatively with the male respondents. Second, the situations originally generated by women have been perceived, by both men and women, as having more influence on self-confidence than those originally generated by men. Third, both male and female respondents judged that their self-confidence would increase more in the success situations than it would decrease in failure situations.

The model applied in the study

The collective constructionist theory of the self (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto and Norasakkunkit, 1997) maintains that "many psychological processes, including self-enhancement or self-criticism, result from and support the very ways in which social acts and situations are collectively defined and subjectively experienced in the respective cultural contexts". The data collected by an interesting method support the theory, showing first, that "American situations are relatively conducive to self-enhancement and American people are relatively likely to engage in self-enhancement and, second, that Japanese situations are relatively conducive to self-criticism and Japanese people are relatively likely to engage in self-criticism". Further the authors have argued that an array of psychological processes

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(e.g. causal attributions) underlying such tendencies (i.e. self-enhancement or self-criticism) "are importantly afforded and sustained by the ways in which the attendant social realities are collectively constructed in each cultural context. Once developed, these psychological tendencies enable a person to act, live, and function naturally and adaptively in the respective cultural context" supporting and sustaining the very cultural system from which they derived.

The interpersonal communications play an essential role in the construction of social situations. The "acts of meaning" (Bruner, 1990) are constitutive processes of the social reality. In any given social setting, a situational definition is first produced by one or more members and communicated to others, in a direct or covered way. Whether the others confirm, modify or challenge the communicated definition in a negotiation process or automatically adhere to the proposed definition, this depends on various characteristics of group and group members. The shared definition of the situation is not "a matter of an interpretive frame applied after the situation occurs but an active and critical element of the situation itself" (Kitayama et al. 1997)

There are major differences between what is considered to be a person within different cultural contexts. In Western European countries a person is an autonomous entity, defined by a set of attributes, qualities and processes. It is the configuration of these internal attributes and processes that determine person's behavior that, being the expression of that configuration, is consistent in different situations and stable in time. In many Asian cultures the person is primarily viewed as a part of a set of social relations, the behavior is a consequence of the reaction to the others with which the person is in interdependence and the origin of the behavior is the relation itself. The collective constructionist theory of the self implies that cultural views of the self as independent or interdependent are represented in each culture's philosophical and ontological assumptions and, as a consequence, are also reflected in attendant patterns of social situations, social acts, practices and public meanings that are associated with such ontological assumptions of the culture. As individuals become meaningful, well-functioning participants in a given cultural system, they gradually develop a particular set of psychological processes that are attuned to and therefore support and reproduce the prevalent patterns of this cultural system.

As the authors of collective constructionist theory showed, the independent view of the self, as that common in many western cultural contexts and probably rooted in the ideals of the enlightenment, emphasizing on rational thought and expression of "natural self" gives rise to a general sensitivity to positive information on the self. Western cultural contexts are organized according to meaning and practices that promote the independence and autonomy of the self. People in western cultures may then be motivated to develop a variety of social and psychological processes that enable them to discover and identify positively valued attributes that may maintain and increase their self-esteem. In terms of the

ecological theory of perception (Gibson, 1966) these individuals may be especially attuned to positive characteristics of the self. The interdependent view of the self as reflected in the contemporary Japanese culture and rooted both in the Buddhist ideal of compassion and the Confucian teaching of role obligation gives rise to a general sensitivity to negative information on the self. Asian cultures are organized accordingly to meanings and practices that promote the interdependence of the individuals within significant social units (e.g. family, classroom, and workplace). Individuals that are socialized in Asian cultures may then be motivated to adjust and fit themselves into significant social relationships. A self-critical attitude vis à vis socially shared standards of excellence may be instrumental for affirming individual's belongingness to the social units (Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

The tendency to self-enhancement in Romania

Romanian culture is probably historically organized accordingly to meanings and practices that promote the interdependence of the individuals within significant social units (e.g. family, classroom, and workplace). An interdependent view of the self as that widespread in the Romanian contemporary cultural context is also rooted in the Procrustian communist ideology of "making equal people" by meanings and practices that promote differences erasing and people homogenization. The standards of excellence in formal groups are not defined by negotiation in the communication process among group members. They were imposed by the totalitarian ideology. Individuals that are socialized in this culture do not control either the definition of group's standards of excellence or the means to fit these standards. A totalitarian power controls both the definition of covered and declared standards of almost every social unit and the instrumental means to meet them. To adjust and fit into such a social relationship individuals must privately deny the declared standards and redefine the covered ones, together with corresponding means to meet the covered standards. Because redefined standards and means remain privately covered, they cannot be socially shared and benefit by the reciprocal verification and adjustment. The privately redefined group standards are consequently not stimulating for a self-critical attitude. A *general sensitivity to positive information on the self* may be, instead, instrumental both to denying or discounting the declared social standards and privately redefining and meeting the covered standards. Shared representations of such individual adaptive strategies appear within social interactions that afford psychological processes underlying both self-enhancement (e.g. self-serving biases in causal attribution), and group compliance tendencies. Compliance may be a sufficient symbolic act to affirm individual belongingness to an oppressive group.

Some few studies have demonstrated the general tendency to maintain and enhance a positive evaluation to the self. Thus, in the academic performance domain the success situations raise the participants' self-esteem more than the failure situations depreciate the self-esteem. The success expectancy after an initial success was significantly frequent (87.09%) among individuals who explain their own success in

term of their own internal attributes, such as abilities and effort, than among those who explain their own success in term of some external factors, such as task difficulty and chance (44.44%). The success expectancy after an initial failure was, instead, more frequent among the individuals who explain their own failure in terms of the external factors (i.e. task difficulty and chance) (88.33 %) than among those who explain their own failure in term of their own attributes (i.e. reduced abilities and lack of effort) (67.64%). Among Romanian students, participants to the study, the extent to which the success kept the expectancy raised was bigger than the extent to which the failure kept the expectancy decreased. (Nemeş-Chirică 1987). In causal attribution of managerial performance individuals from Romanian organizations tend to explain their own success in terms of their own internal attributes more than in term of some external factors. The Content Analysis of Verbatim Explanation method (Peterson, Schulman, Castellon, and Sellingman, 1992) was used in the analysis of 1002 event attributions extracted from a verbal material resulted from the interview of 153 incumbents of managerial positions in 9 Romanian organizations. 611 external and 215 internal attributions were scored in the explications of the five classes of events: perceived organizational problems, organizational changes, personal success and personal failure in the organizational context, and perceived noncontrolability of organizational situations. External attributional patterns have generally characterized the event explanations. Participants to the study showed, however, an internal attributional pattern in the explanations of personal success in the organization context. The mean score for internal explanations was significantly higher than the mean score for external explanations given to success situations. (ANOVA evidenced $F=6.017$; $p=.01$). The difference between internal versus external explanations of the personal failure in the organization context was statistically nonsignificant, although in favor of external explanations (Chirică, Ivancenco and Grindean, in press.).

A study conducted by Băban, (1998) with 220 students, 80 males and 128 females showed significant correlations between the scores at Rotter (1966)'s internality-externality scale and the scores at Rosenberg (1965)'s self-esteem scale and the scores at Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1993)'s Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale, respectively. High internality scores correlated conversely with perceived threatening of life situations. Locus of control was also measured in a study conducted by Chelcea, Motescu and Tighel (1994). 382 participants (most of them below 35 years old) responded at Nowicki and Strickland (1988) CNS-IE scale. 26.43% participants manifested internal locus of control, while 25.91%, manifested external locus of control, and 47.64% were ambivalent. The participants with an external locus of control accept more than others "the open society values". The evaluation of societal events in the period of transition to free market economy is a difficult task that may modify the control strategies. (Rad and Bivolaru, 2000). This study reported significantly lower means of primary control indexes 0.92 (0.99), 0.57 (0.79), and 0.69 (1.10) comparatively with the means of secondary control indexes 1.20 (0.93), 1.89 (1.04), and 1.51 (1.13); ($t: 3.109$; $p<0.001$).

Therefore, a general sensitivity to positive self-relevant information has been evidenced in the first two studies. Romanian students' expectancy was more affected by an initial success than an initial failure and Romanian managers explain their success in term of their own internal attributes more than their failure. According to the results of other two studies mentioned above, a general internality norm seems to be promoted in Romanian culture by an important part of its members that adhere to the open society values and are characterized by self-efficacy and self-esteem. Finally, the last mentioned study emphasized changes in control strategy toward a higher externality due to social milieu changes. If the collective constructionist theory is correct or, as the authors of the theory specify, if the shared definition of the situation is not a matter of an interpretive frame applied after the situation occurs but an active element of the situation itself, *we may identify subculture differences in self-enhancement or self-criticism tendencies and their underlying processes.*

A testable implication of the model

Because the Kitayama et al.'s theory assumes that a bias inherent in situational definitions is transformed into the corresponding bias in each person's tendency, which in turn is instrumental in reproducing similar situational definition in future occasions, one may predict a close correspondence between the characteristics of social situations of each culture and those of psychological processes of each individual in the culture.

The objective and hypotheses

This study is designed to examine the predicted correspondence between psychological processes and social situations in Romanian educational settings. Because "situational definitions are reasonable proxy for social situations" (Kitayama et. al., 1997), undergraduates' responses to situational definitions sampled from five faculties were analyzed.

Hypothesis 1. Situational definitions will be relatively more conducive to self-enhancement than self-criticism in Romanian educational settings.

Hypothesis 2. Undergraduates will find relatively more self-relevant situational definitions sampled from their own subculture (faculty and gender) and their self-confidence will be relatively more affected by these definitions

Method*

Participants and procedure

187 respondents, male and female undergraduate students in the last year of their faculty (22-26 years old) participated in the study.

* This method is replicating the method used by Kitayama et al. 1997.

Material

Other 99 students, male and female, also distributed in the five faculties were asked to freely describe (a) as many as possible situations within their faculty in which they felt good because they succeed or (b) as many as possible situations in which they felt bad because they failed. 200 hundred situations, generated by males and females in the success/failure conditions were randomly sampled. Department subculture, instruction and gender are situation variables. The 200 hundred situations were randomly included in the questionnaire.

Questionnaire

The respondents were asked to read each situation and imagine that they were in the situation. They were then asked to think about whether their self-confidence would be affected by the situation. If their self-confidence would not be affected they were to proceed to the next situation. If their self-confidence would be affected they were to indicate whether their self-confidence would increase or decrease and in what extent, by choosing one number from a scale ranging from 1 (slightly) to 4 (very much). At the end of the questionnaire the respondents were to fall in some date: age, gender and faculty.

Results

Number of the Situations Selected as Relevant to One's Own Self-Confidence

Each respondent indicated whether his or her self-confidence would be affected in each of 200 situations that varied in (a) the department subculture (Psychology, Mathematics, Philosophy, Geography, and Biology called situation subculture) (b) the gender (male vs. female called situation gender) of those who originally generated them, and (c) the instruction under which they were originally generated (success vs. failure called situation valence). The number of the situations chosen as relevant to one's self confidence was analyzed as a function of these three between-situation (and within subject) variables and two between subject (and within situation) variables, that is the respondent subculture and respondent gender.

First we computed these numbers for each respondent separately for each of the conditions defined by the three between situations (and within subject variables). These were then submitted to a Repeated Measure GLM analysis of variance (MANOVA). Significant F1 indicates the generalizability of the effects across respondents. Significant F2 indicates the generalizability of the effects across situations.

Culture effects

The respondents in each department were more likely to choose the own department-made situations as relevant to their self-confidence. The MANOVA revealed a significant main effect for respondent culture only for the situations generated under success instruction. $F1=8.46$ $p=.00$, $F2=2.79$ $p=.02$ indicating that

the respondents in each department chose a significantly greater number of own department-made success situations as relevant to their self-confidence than did the respondents in the other departments.(Figure 1).

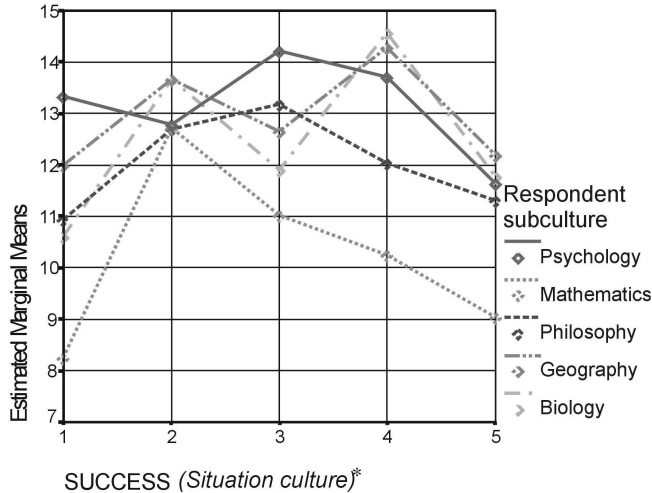


Figure no. 1
 Culture effect in the success situations
 (number of self-relevant situations)

*Note: Situation culture includes the success situations made in the five departments: Psychology (1), Mathematics (2), Philosophy (3), Geography (4) and Biology (5).

Gender effects

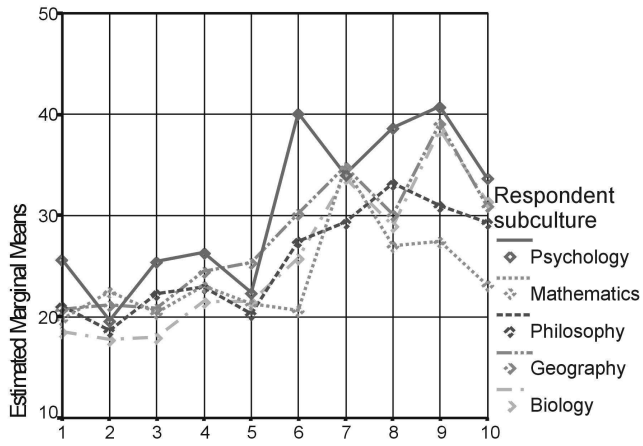
At this indicator the MANOVA did not reveal a significant main effect of respondent gender. Neither male or female chose a significant greater number male-made situations and, respectively, female-made situations, as relevant for their self-confidence.

Extent of Self-Confidence Change

For those situations each respondent reported to be relevant to his or her self-confidence, the respondents were asked to indicate whether their self-confidence would increase or decrease and to what extent it would do so. They were to choose one number from a 4-point rating scale that ranged from 1 (slightly) to 4 (very much). On the basis of these data we computed the extent to which the respondent self-confidence was predicted to increase for success conditions and decrease for failure conditions, by adding partial scores (1,2,3 or 4) of the items in each condition category. The extent of self-esteem change was then submitted to a MANOVA.

Culture effects

Effects of both situation subculture and respondent subculture are significant (F1=5.51 p=.00, F2=2.50 p=.04)The culture effects are summarized in Table 1 and Figure.2.



FAILURE 1-5; SUCCESS 6-10 (Sit. Culture x Sit. Valence)

Figure no. 2

Culture effect in the success and failure situations
(the extent of self-confidence change)

Table 1

Culture effect: the extent of self-confidence change

Situation Valence	Situation Subculture	Respondent Subculture	Mean	STD. Deviation
Failure	Psychology	Psychology	25.67	11.93
		Mathematics	19.73	10.56
		Philosophy	21.06	12.32
		Geography	20.71	11.35
		Biology	18.55	11.68
	Mathematics	Psychology	19.79	11.22
		Mathematics	22.45	10.76
		Philosophy	18.70	15.37
		Geography	21.23	11.98
		Biology	17.81	12.81
	Philosophy	Psychology	25.44	21.61
		Mathematics	20.36	10.51
		Philosophy	22.24	13.53
		Geography	20.83	11.35
		Biology	18.03	10.36
	Geography	Psychology	26.31	12.24
Mathematics		23.06	13.73	
Philosophy		22.94	14.82	

COLLECTIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SELF IN ROMANIAN CULTURE

Situation Valence	Situation Subculture	Respondent Subculture	Mean	STD. Deviation
		Geography	24.49	14.01
		Biology	21.52	13.11
	Biology	Psychology	22.40	11.04
		Mathematics	21.33	10.45
		Philosophy	20.27	13.62
		Geography	25.37	13.37
		Biology	21.55	13.49
Success	Psychology	Psychology	40.15	12.01
		Mathematics	20.67	10.13
		Philosophy	27.42	20.01
		Geography	30.17	18.41
		Biology	25.84	13.17
	Mathematics	Psychology	34.11	12.84
		Mathematics	34.70	13.76
		Philosophy	29.30	15.92
		Geography	24.83	15.51
		Biology	33.77	11.54
	Philosophy	Psychology	38.69	11.84
		Mathematics	27.00	12.43
		Philosophy	33.21	17.76
		Geography	20.06	17.49
		Biology	29.03	14.66
	Geography	Psychology	40.75	11.49
		Mathematics	27.45	13.28
		Philosophy	31.03	17.41
		Geography	39.20	14.71
		Biology	38.48	15.15
	Biology	Psychology	33.78	13.94
		Mathematics	23.21	10.26
		Philosophy	29.36	16.92
		Geography	30.97	16.20
		Biology	31.43	12.15

The own department-made situations were judged to have more influence on the respondents' self-confidence than were the other department-made situations. The culture effect is especially qualified by success situations: $F1=10.89$ $p=.00$, $F2=3.96$ $p=.00$ (Figure 3).

Situation valence

Romanian undergraduates judged that their self-confidence would increase more in the success situations than it would decrease in the failure situations. (Table 1 and Figure 2)

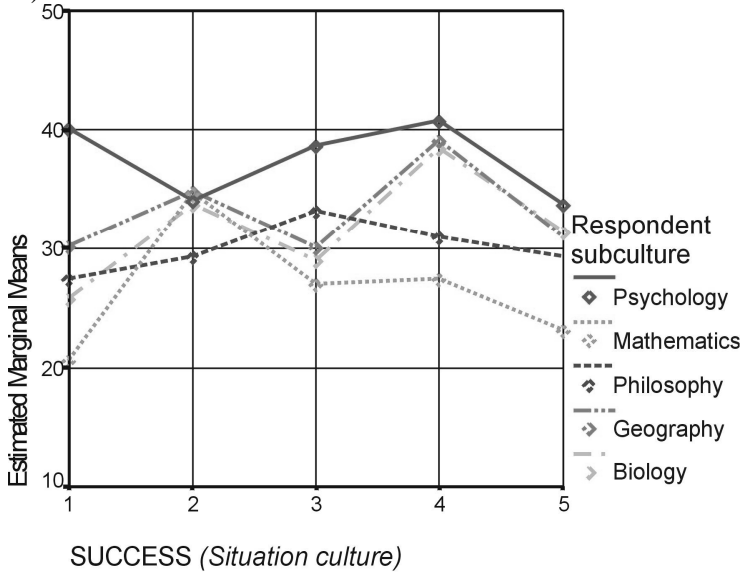


Figure no. 3
 Culture effect in the success situations
 (the extent of self-confidence change)

Gender effects

Means relevant to gender effects are displayed in Table 2. and Figure 4. Effects of respondent gender proved significant. ($F_2=3.79$ $p=.05$) First, the female respondents responded more strongly than did the male respondents. Second, the situations originally generated by women have been perceived, by both men and women, as having more influence on self-confidence than those originally generated by men. Both male and female respondents judged that their self-confidence would increase more in the success situations than it would decrease in failure situations.

Table 2

Gender effect: the extent of self-confidence change

Situation Valence	Situation Gender x culture	Respondent Gender	Mean	STD. Deviation
Failure	Female Psychology	Male	9.59	5.75
		Female	12.49	6.78

COLLECTIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SELF IN ROMANIAN CULTURE

Situation Valence	Situation Gender x culture	Respondent Gender	Mean	STD. Deviation
	Female Mathematics	Male	10.47	6.70
		Female	12.48	7.71
	Female Philosophy	Male	8.98	5.16
		Female	11.23	6.69
	Female Geography	Male	11.43	7.60
		Female	12.49	7.92
	Female Biology	Male	11.88	6.30
		Female	13.50	7.50
	Male Psychology	Male	9.12	5.88
		Female	10.15	6.50
	Male Mathematics	Male	6.82	5.47
		Female	8.42	6.47
	Male Philosophy	Male	11.25	6.06
		Female	11.32	6.52
	Male Geography	Male	10.00	5.83
		Female	12.56	7.16
Male Biology	Male	9.61	6.80	
	Female	9.27	6.86	
Success	Female Psychology	Male	13.78	8.87
		Female	16.05	9.34
	Female Mathematics	Male	14.80	7.46
		Female	16.49	7.89
	Female Philosophy	Male	10.78	8.07
		Female	18.64	8.59
	Female Geography	Male	13.14	7.36
		Female	15.67	8.05
	Female Biology	Male	10.49	6.91
		Female	11.84	8.08
	Male Psychology	Male	13.43	7.50
		Female	15.59	7.98
	Male Mathematics	Male	16.84	7.57
		Female	18.07	7.30
	Male Philosophy	Male	18.06	7.37
		Female	14.41	7.86
Male Geography	Male	19.27	8.60	
	Female	22.45	8.28	
Male Biology	Male	16.73	7.32	
	Female	19.57	8.01	

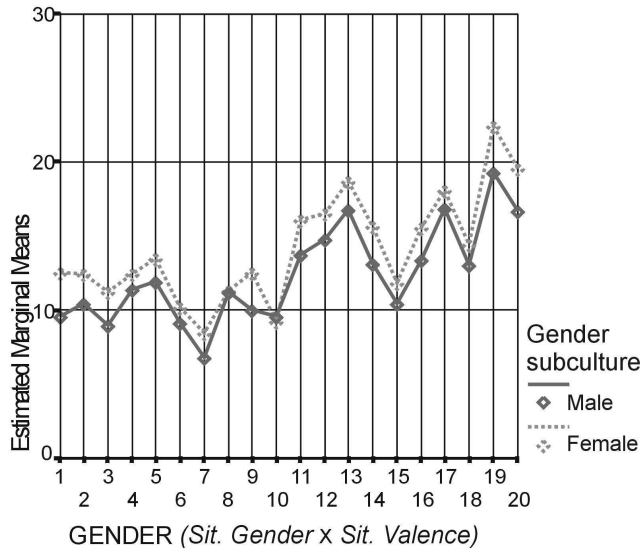


Figure no. 4

*Gender effect in the success and failure situations
(the extent of self-confidence change)*

General discussions and conclusions

Romanian undergraduates chose a greater number of success situations than failure situations as relevant to their self-confidence. Further they judged that their self-confidence would increase more in success situations than it would decrease in failure situation. These results support the notion that the meaning of social situations available in the Romanian educational culture is biased in the direction of self-enhancement. As the authors of the collective construction of the self have argued, the tendency toward self-enhancement has positive social and psychological consequences within a cultural system that is organized to foster and promote the independence and the uniqueness of the self. The sensitivity to negative self-relevant information has positive social and psychological consequences within a cultural system that is organized to foster the importance of maintaining, affirming and becoming part of significant social relationships. Information about where one failed to meet the standard of excellence shared in a given social unit is used to improve one's actions and thus serves to affirm one's belongingness to the unit. One can wonder what kind of consequences a general sensitivity to positive self-relevant information might have within a cultural system that is organized to promote the relationality? How the individuals may affirm their belongingness to a

social unit, when they fail to meet its standard of excellence, without a self-critical attitude needed for improving their actions? A collective constructed view on the self stresses the necessity to conditionally accept or protect the individual by every social unit for so long he or she does not threaten the existence of the group by affirming his or her autonomy. A collective covering of the inconsequent affirming and applying of the group standards of excellence is developed, otherwise the group is blamed for or threaten because of its weakness. Romanian cultural contexts are not organized according to meaning and practices that promote the independence and autonomy of the self, but group responsibility. People in Romanian culture may be then motivated to develop a variety of social and psychological processes that enable them to discover and identify positively attributes valued by their groups.

We also found a significant effect of situation subculture. The respondents in each department chose a significantly greater number of the own department-made situations as relevant to their self-confidence than did the respondents in the other departments. The own department-made situations were generally judged to have more influence on the respondents' self-confidence than were other department-made situations. Subculture differences is an optimistic result showing that controlled changes may be possible within a group subculture as planned by its members.

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PSYCHOMETRIC PROPERTIES OF THE MEMORY SELF-EFFICACY QUESTIONNAIRE ON ROMANIA SAMPLE

CĂTĂLINA KOPETZ*

RÉSUMÉ. Les propriétés psychométriques du questionnaire d'efficacité de soi mnésique sur la population roumaine. L'article présente les propriétés psychométriques du questionnaire d'efficacité de soi mnésique (QESM) (Memory Self-Efficacy Questionnaire) sur la population roumaine. 119 sujets ont été testés avec QESM, un questionnaire d'efficacité de soi générale (SE) et le questionnaire de meta-mémoire pour les adultes (MIA). Les résultats montrent une très bonne consistance interne du questionnaire ; on a obtenu des corrélations significatives entre les scores au pre-test et post-test et les estimations de la stabilité varient entre valeurs modérées et hautes. La validité de construct a été testée par des corrélations entre les scores du QESM et ceux obtenus au MIA. Les corrélations fortes entre l'échelle de capacité du MIA et les scores au QESM soutient que les deux mesurent un construct commun – l'efficacité de soi mnésique- qui reflète les croyances que les gens ont concernant leurs capacités mnésiques dans les différentes tâches. En même temps, les corrélations faibles entre les scores au QESM et ceux obtenus sur les échelles de tâches et stratégies du MIA, soulignent le fait que l'efficacité de soi est indépendante des connaissances que les individus ont sur les processus de la mémoire ou sur les stratégies qu'ils utilisent pour résoudre une tâche. Nous avons pu montrer aussi la validité discriminatoire du QESM liée à l'âge.

QESM est un questionnaire développé conformément à la théorie d'efficacité de soi de Bandura. Les critères de la spécificité des mesures sont respectés ; QESM permet en même temps d'évaluations séparées du niveau des capacités mnésiques et de la confiance que les gens ont en ces capacités. La séparation de ces évaluations permet une identification plus précise des différences individuelles en termes d'efficacité de soi mnésique.

Self-efficacy as a predictor of memory performance

Bandura (1977) first introduced the concept of self-efficacy with the seminal publication of "Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change". Since then, the concept has received an increasing attention and its predictive value has been tested in varied disciplines and settings, from clinical problems to athletic performance (Pajeres, 1998).

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According to Bandura, self-efficacy is a component of a self system and represents "beliefs in one's capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (Bandura, 1997, p. 2). Self-efficacy beliefs are concerned with individual's sense of competence and confidence to produce desired results in specific situation and tasks. It is important to emphasize that there is no global self-evaluation, but an evaluation highly related to a particular situation or domain - as memory self-efficacy that concerns the present study.

The self-efficacy mechanisms play a central role in human agency. Self-judgments of operative capabilities function as a set of determinants of how people behave, what they choose to do, how much effort to invest in their actions, how long to persevere in face of obstacles and failure experiences, which is their thought patterns and their emotional reactions (Bandura, 1992).

Research findings over the past 20 years generally support the idea that efficacy beliefs mediate the effects of skills on different subsequent performances (see Berry & West, 1993; Pajeres, 1998 for an over view) being a good predictor of performance in different situations.

Self-efficacy theory is accompanied by a specific research methodology. The most important distinction we encounter in the evaluation of self-efficacy is that concerning the specificity with which self-efficacy is measured. We speak about "generalized" self-efficacy, "task-specific", "domain-specific" even "course-specific". Clarification of these terms should be made before a meaningful self-efficacy evaluation can be advanced. Bandura (1990) made the distinction between global measures and domain-specific measures. In order to maximize the predictive validity of self-efficacy relative to performance, task-specific measures is preferred. Judgements of self-efficacy that are specific responses to performing a particular task is central in the recent research. Self-efficacy level and strength are usually assessed. According to this methodology, a set of behavioral targets are identified and ordered hierarchically in terms of increasing level of difficulty; confidence ratings are made for each level. Self-efficacy level is the sum of the number of the tasks individuals indicate they can perform. Confidence ratings in 10-unit increments are obtained for each task level on a scale where 100% represents complete certainty and 0% represents complete uncertainty; self-efficacy strength is represented by the average of the confidence ratings across the task (Berry & West, 1993).

Our study is focused on memory self-efficacy. The purpose of the present study is to adapt the Memory Self-Efficacy Questionnaire on Romanian Sample. We investigated questionnaire's psychometric characteristics in order to develop an utile instrument to examine the relationship between memory-self efficacy and memory performance.

Why memory self-efficacy?

Memory is not only a set of cognitive skills that inevitably decline with age and that are not personally controllable; it implies also a set of beliefs regarding one's own capacity to use memory efficiently - *memory self-efficacy* (Hertzog & Dixon,

1992). Belief in a memory as a controllable skill is associated with confidence in one's ability to improve it, to generate solutions to everyday problems and to live independently and with reduced anxiety and depression (Bandura, 1997).

A variety of methods have been used to assess memory beliefs and knowledge. Five different methodologies have dominated the literature: a) *metamemory questionnaires* such as Metamemory in Adulthood (MIA, Dixon, Hultsch, 1983); b) *memory complaints questionnaires* such as Inventory of Memory Experiences (IME, Hermann & Niesser, 1978); c) *self-efficacy measures* (Berry, West & Scogin, 1983); d) *single task-specific predictions*, and e) *feeling-of-knowing measures* (Lachman & Lachman, 1980).

The present study used self-efficacy methodology – Memory Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (MSEQ) (Berry, West, & Dennehey, 1989). One advantage of this kind of methodology is that it uses multiple indices to obtain direct predictions. Multiple indices increase the accuracy of direct estimates (Zelinski et al., 1980). Memory Self-Efficacy Questionnaire allows confidence ratings, so that individual variability and age-differences can be examined and understood more accurately. Self-evaluations individual makes using this methodology correspond directly to different memory tasks and allow domain specific predictions and correlation between performance and the way it is self-evaluated (Berry et al., 1989).

MSEQ derives directly from Bandura's self-efficacy theory and methodology – individuals are asked to evaluate how well they believe their performance will be on a given task (Bandura, Adams, & Beyer, 1977). The tasks are ordered hierarchically, so a target level of mastery is set and self-efficacy judgements are made at each level of task difficulty (Berry et. al., 1989). According to Bandura's theory, the predictive validity of self-efficacy judgements is maximized when we use a task specific measure of it (Bandura, 1990). MSEQ responds to this specificity criterion by assessing multiple, multilevel memory tasks within the broader domain of memory (Berry & West, 1993).

Memory Self-efficacy Questionnaire

MSEQ is a paper pencil questionnaire that describes 10 memory tasks (some of the most common memory tasks used in the cognitive aging literature) for which subjects are asked to assess their memory abilities. The present study used the alternate form of the original questionnaire – A-MSEQ (Berry et. al., 1989). The ten task described (5 from MSEQ and 5 new tasks) are grouped in 5 laboratory tasks and 5 everyday tasks; 2 tasks are fillers. Laboratory tasks are *word list recall* (remembering a list of animals), *digit span* (digit recall), *cubicles* (recalling the picture placed in a matrix of 3X4 matrix of cubicles), *word-pair* (paired associates using abstract, unrelated nouns). Everyday tasks are *grocery* (remembering a friend's grocery list), *phone* (remembering seven telephone numbers), *location* (remembering the location of objects placed around the room), and *couples* (paired associates test using relatives). All levels of one complete task (grocery) and the lowest level from each remaining task are presented in the appendix 1.

As in the MSEQ, each task was described in five items representing different levels of task difficulty, presented in descending order of difficulty (the most difficult level being listed first). Subjects indicated whether they could perform each task, at each level, by circling "no" or "yes". These responses represented self-efficacy level (SEL). Individuals provide also their degree of confidence for their "yes" responses, these ratings representing self-efficacy strength (SEST). SEL scores were calculated by summing the number of "yes" responses that were made with at least 20% confidence. This represents individual's assessment of his (her) basic memory skill. Responses were summed to form SEL for each of the eight specific tasks (5 items for each task). Self-efficacy strength (SEST) scores were calculated by averaging confidence ratings across the eight specific task (five items for each task) (Berry et. al., 1989).

Method

Subjects

119 undergraduate students, 17 to 27 years of age ($M = 20,33$; $SD = 2,61$) at different universities in Cluj-Napoca participated at this study. The students received seminar credit for their participation.

Procedure

Alternate Memory Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (A-MSEQ) was translated from English to Romanian and then from Romanian to English, by a psychologist and an authorized translator. We keep the original presentation of the questionnaire and respect the indications from the author.

In the first session, all subjects completed the A-MSEQ (for details about the instructions and presentation form see Berry et al., 1989), a general Self-Efficacy scale (SE translated and adapted in Romania by Adriana Baban, 1998) and Task, Strategies, Change and Capacity subscales from Metamemory in Adulthood (MIA, Dixon, Hultsch, & Hertzog, 1988), in this order. One week to two weeks after the first session, 75 of the participants completed A-MSEQ a second time. Thus A-MSEQ reliability data and test-retest data are available.

MIA data provide us supplementary data for the construct validity of MSEQ.

Results

Item and Scales Characteristics

Table 1. shows the means and standard deviations for self-efficacy level (SEL) and strength (SEST) for both administration phases. All of the A-MSEQ variables are distributed normally.

Table 2. displays the intercorrelations between the eight A-MSEQ scales. The correlations between the scales varied from .18 to .67 ($p = .05$ and $p = .01$) for SEL and from .28 to .75 ($p = .05$ and $p = .01$) for SEST. These correlations suggest that there is a general self-efficacy that influences the responses on most of the

items. Bandura’s hypothesis about self-efficacy specificity is supported by our data. Even if the responses on the eight scales are influenced by a general element of self-efficacy, it is rather a memory self-efficacy, not a general one. This idea is supported by the low correlations between A-MSEQ and the general Self-Efficacy Scale for both SEL and SEST. These correlations range from .065 to .170 ($p = .05$ and $p = .01$) for SEL and from .036 to .256 for SEST. For SE scale the internal consistency was $\alpha = .77$. (items from SE scale are provided in appendix 2). (for details about administration and scoring see Baban, 1998).

Table 1.

Means and standard deviations for A-MSEQ scales

Task	SEST				SEL			
	Pretest (n=119)		Posttest (n=75)		Pretest (n=119)		Posttest (n=75)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Grocery	69.98	19.59	73.20	20.00	4.37	0.99	4.52	0.79
Phone	63.74	28.52	66.18	25.10	3.89	1.43	4.17	1.2
Word	77.22	19.74	77.09	19.13	4.52	0.89	4.52	0.82
Cubicles	50.78	23.70	56.32	21.71	3.50	1.46	3.84	1.25
Word Pair	72.16	21.18	74.74	18.87	4.39	0.91	4.52	0.81
Digit	51.56	29.92	55.68	27.12	3.32	1.67	3.68	1.56
Location	78.11	19.35	75.49	21.10	4.63	0.81	4.46	0.94
Couples	78.55	29.29	79.76	20.62	4.52	0.95	4.64	0.87
Average	69.54	15.81	70.69	16.67	3.94	0.65	4.33	0.78

Note: maximum SEL=5; maximum SEST=100

Reliability

The internal consistency was obtained using alpha coefficients. Internal consistency for the eight scales was quite high for both applications: r (SEL)=.92 and r (SEST)=.94 for the first application and r (SEL) = .91, r (SEST) = .96 for the second application.

We calculated the test-retest stability of the A-MSEQ for 75 of the participants. Pretest and posttest A-MSEQ scores were correlated and yielded moderate to high estimates of stability: r (SEST) = .86 ($p = .01$), r (SEL)= .83 ($p =.01$)

Table 2.

The correlations between A-MSEQ scales

Task	Self-Efficacy level							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Grocery	1.00	.201*	.611**	.401**	.264*	.497**	.392**	.395**
2. Phone	-	1.00	.471**	.208*	.675**	.279**	.297**	.394**
3. Word	-	-	1.00	.428**	.314**	.683**	.475**	.397**
4. Word-Pair	-	-	-	1.00	.180*	.416**	.584**	.438**
5. Digit	-	-	-	-	1.00	.289**	.330**	.504**
6. Location	-	-	-	-	-	1.00	.462**	.535**
7. Couples	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.00	.528**
8. Cubicles	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.00

Task	Self-Efficacy strength							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Grocery	1.00	.285**	.753**	.536**	.326**	.601**	.364**	.487**
2. Phone	-	1.00	.365**	.325**	.689**	.276**	.172	.419**
3. Word	-	-	1.00	.583**	.312**	.701**	.427**	.494**
4. Word-Pair	-	-	-	1.00	.299**	.452**	.500**	.493**
5. Digit	-	-	-	-	1.00	.326**	.231**	.525**
6. Location	-	-	-	-	-	1.00	.441**	.536**
7. Couples	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.00	.322**
8. Cubicles	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.00

** correlation is significant at 0.01 level

Criterion-Related Validity

The participants in the present study did not perform memory tasks. Thus, we were not able to investigate directly the criterion-related validity. In the development of A-MSEQ, the authors obtained a significant efficacy-performance relationship for everyday tasks (SEL $R_c = .52$, Wilk's $\lambda = .58$, $p < .01$; SEST $R_c = .50$, Wilk's $\lambda = .63$, $p < .05$) more often than for laboratory tasks (SEST $R_c = .56$; Wilk's $\lambda = .58$, $p < .05$, SEL not significant).

Construct Validity

To evaluate A-MSEQ construct validity we asked participants to answer the Task, Capacity, Change and Strategy scales of Metamemory in Adulthood (MIA) (Dixon et al., 1988). MIA was designed to be a multidimensional representation of the metamemory construct: "strategy" reports use of different types of strategies; "task" represents knowledge about basic memory processes; "capacity" evaluates individuals' beliefs regarding their own memory processes; "change" reports perceived change in remembering capacities.

Dixon and his collaborators (1988), Hertzog (1992) have identified self-efficacy as a component of metamemory. Some of the MIA subscales (e. g. capacity and change, task and strategy) seem to measure a factor the authors identified as memory self-efficacy (Berry et. al, 1989; Hertzog, 1992). They suggested that memory self-efficacy may account for age differences in scales measuring aspects of metamemory. Berry and collaborators suggested that self-efficacy level (SEL) may relate to Task and Strategy subscales of the MIA and self-efficacy strength (SEST) may reflect the more affective components of the MIA (e. g. Capacity and Change).

MIA has 108 items distributed in 7 scales. Subjects are asked to rate on a 5 point Likert scale statements describing their own memory functioning and their knowledge about general memory processes (Dixon et. al., 1988). The forth scales we used in the present study represented 68 items (for details about items distribution, administration and scoring, see Dixon et. al., 1988). In the appendix 2, one item from Task, Capacity, Change and Strategy subscales is presented.

The forth scales are distributed normally and have high internal consistency: Table 3 presents means, standard deviations and α Crombach coefficients for MIA scales.

Table 3.

Means, standard deviations and α coefficients for MIA scales

Scale	M N=119	SD N=119	α Crombach coefficient
Task	61,36	6,67	.76
Strategy	56,24	9,45	.81
Capacity	60,31	6,45	.69
Change	61,06	8,81	.77

Table 4 presents the correlations between MIA scales and A-MSEQ scales. Capacity is the only MIA scale that correlates significantly with A-MSEQ scales, both SEL (r ranges from $r = .182, p = .05$ to $r = .303, p = .01$) and SEST (r ranges from $r = 0.195, p = .05$ to $r = .349, p = .01$). Change correlates only with Word, Word-Pair Location, and Couples from A-MSEQ. There are negative correlations between Strategy and A-MSEQ scales. MIA task scale correlates only with Couples from A-MSEQ.

Table 4.

Correlations between MIA subscales an A-MSEQ subscales.

MIA scales	A-MSEQ scales Self-Efficacy Level (SEL)							
	Grocery	Phone	Word	Cubicles	Word-Pair	Digit	Location	Couples
Capacity	.303**	.182*	.236**	.267**	.237**	.165	.240**	.251**
Change	.123	.171	.201*	.101	.216*	.141	.218*	.205*
Strategy	-.034	-.126	-.123	-.180	.029	-.039	-.088	-.111
Task	.054	.020	-.040	-.016	.040	.076	.025	.187*
A-MSEQ Self-Efficacy Strength (SEST)								
Capacity	.349**	.195*	.293**	.303**	.232*	.117	.338**	.248**
Change	.175	.215*	.223*	.111	.197*	.122	.249**	.228**
Strategy	-.039	-.092	-.124	-.149	.100	-.041	-.075	-.098
Task	.103	.062	.010	.060	.093	.070	.073	.133

** correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

* correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

These results support the idea that A-MSEQ general construct – memory self-efficacy – does not account for task and strategy scales, but it is one of the factor evaluated by capacity scale; it may share a common factor with Change scale too. Both A-MSEQ and capacity scales seem to evaluate people’s beliefs about their own memory. This idea support Hertzog’s theory about memory self-efficacy as an aspect of metamemory system (Hetzog, 1992). On the other hand, task and strategy scores seem to be independent of self-efficacy construct. They

reflect people's declarative knowledge about general memory processes (e.g. "For most people, it is easier to remember information they need to use immediately than information they will not use for a long time") and the strategies they may use (e. g. "Do you keep a list or otherwise note important dates, such as birthdays and anniversaries?"). But they are not related to the beliefs people have about the efficacy of their own memory for different tasks.

Change correlates only partially with A-MSEQ scales. The items from MIA change scale reflect people's perceived negative changes in remembering abilities. The results are probably due to the age of the participants – they are young adults between 17 and 27 years of age. At this age, most of them may perceive an evolution, but not the decline of their memory abilities. Nevertheless, the few significant correlations we obtained, suggest that participants have some implicit theories about memory decline in elderly, independent on their own experience (e. g. "As people get older they tend to forget where they put things more frequently").

Participants do not have perceptions of negative changes in their memory capacity to affect their memory efficacy. But A-MSEQ and MIA change scale seem to be sensible at people's implicit theories about memory decline in elderly. The results may indicate that efficacy beliefs are derived both from inferences about actual memory-related experience and from internalization of stereotypes about persons as rememberers (Ryan, 1992; Hertzog, 1992; Levy & Langer, 1994). The relation between MIA change scale and efficacy beliefs might be better understood using a sample of older adults.

In summary, significant correlation between MIA capacity scores and A-MSEQ scores suggest that both of them evaluate a common construct – memory self-efficacy. This construct reflects people's beliefs about the efficacy of their own memory in different tasks. It is independent on the general knowledge people's have about memory processes and on the memory strategies they may use. Self-efficacy construct might reflect people's beliefs, derived both from their own experience, and from implicit theories they have about memory functioning across the life span. Self-efficacy beliefs, general knowledge about memory functioning and about memory strategies are some aspects of the metamemory system.

Age-Related Discriminant Validity

The A-MSEQ was individually administrated on a sample of 40 older adults, between 56 and 80 ($M = 68,40$; $SD = 6,33$), 16 men and 24 women. The participants were retired persons, members of the "Retired Persons Association" in Rm. Valcea. We selected 56 years as the starting age for the old group because in Romania, the retire age is 55 years for women and 60 years of age for men. We matched the participants by years of education and socioeconomic status. All the participants had a medium to a high socioeconomic status. The old participants attended at least the high school; some of them attended the University. Older participants were in a good physical and psychological health. All the subjects participated at the present study as volunteers.

A multivariate analysis of variance was performed with SEL and SEST as dependent variables and age as independent variable. The age effect was significant for SEL, $F(1, 78) = 89,249$, $p < .01$ (R squared = .534, adjusted R squared = .528) and SEST, $F(1, 78) = 56,289$, $p < .01$ (R squared = .426, adjusted R squared = .418). A univariate analysis of variance showed that young adults had higher SEL scores than older adults on all subscales, $F(1, 78) > 19, 156$, $p < .01$. Older adults' ratings of confidence were also lower than those of young adults, $F(1, 78) > 15,128$, $p < .01$.

General Discussions and Conclusions

The goal of the present study was to adapt Alternate Memory Self-Efficacy Questionnaire in order to be used in empirical investigations of developmental and individual differences in self-evaluations of memory ability.

Internal consistency estimates of reliability and test-retest estimates of stability were high. Moreover, the eight subscales of A-MSEQ were moderately intercorrelated suggesting the presence of a general memory self-efficacy element and the task-specific variance as well. In the same time, the absence of significant correlation between A-MSEQ and SE suggest the domain specificity of self-efficacy evaluations.

The correlations between MIA scales and A-MSEQ support the idea of memory-self efficacy as a belief system about one's own memory ability in different situations and tasks. This construct seems to be a component of the more general metamemory system, but is independent on other aspects of it.

Age-related differences for both the self-efficacy level and strength lend support to the construct validity of A-MSEQ. Robust age differences were observed on both memory efficacy level and strength.

The limits of the present study are the relative homogeneity of the sample. Further investigations on MSEQ should investigate people of different ages and socio-cultural levels. Another aspect that we did not investigate is the criterion-related validity. A limit of A-MSEQ that is mentioned by the authors is that it excludes some domains and aspects of memory.

The advantage of A-MSEQ is that it allows the separation between confidence evaluation from estimates of skill level. This separation account for age and individual differences – individuals with the same skill level might differ in their confidence evaluations that in turn, may lead to different behaviors (Berry et. al., 1989).

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APPENDIX 1. A-MSEQ scales

Grocery

If I went to the store the same day, I could remember 18 items from a friend's grocery list of 18 items (see example below), without using a list

NO YES 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

If I went to the store the same day, I could remember 14 items from a friend's grocery list of 18 items (cheese, eggs), without using a list

NO YES 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

If I went to the store the same day, I could remember 10 items from a friend's grocery list of 18 items (see example below), without using a list

NO YES 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

If I went to the store the same day, I could remember 6 items from a friend's grocery list of 18 items (see example below), without using a list

NO YES 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

If I went to the store the same day, I could remember 2 items from a friend's grocery list of 18 items (see example below), without using a list

NO YES 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Phone

If I got 7 phone numbers, one at a time, from the operator (901 374-1031), and I dialed right after I got each number, I could correctly dial all 7 numbers

NO YES 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Word

If someone showed me a list of 18 animals names (cobra, gazelle), I could see the list once and remember the names of all 18 animals

NO YES 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Word-Pair

If I heard 7 pairs of words and then someone told me the first word in each pair, I could remember all 7 of the second words from each pair.

NO YES 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Digit

If someone told me 7 sets of numbers, one at the time, with 7 to 10 digits in each set (36514782), I could say each one of the 7 number sets correctly, right after hearing it.

NO YES 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Location

If I placed 18 common everyday objects (rubber, fork) in different locations in one room, a few minutes later I could remember where I had put all the 18 items

NO YES 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Couples

If I heard the names of 7 pairs of relatives (Uncle Fred – Aunt Beth) and then someone told me the first name from each pair, I could remember all the 7 of the second names from each pair.

NO YES 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Cubicles

If I placed 18 line drawings (#, //) in different boxes on a table top, a few minutes later, I could describe where I had placed all the 18 of the drawings.

NO YES 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

APPENDIX 2.

GENERAL SELF-EFFICACY sample of items

I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.

1 = Not at all true 2 = Hardly true 3 = Moderately true 4 = Exactly true

MIA Scales (sample of items)

Strategy

When you are looking for something you have recently misplaced, do you try to retrace your steps in order to locate it?	a. never b. rarely c. sometimes d. often e. always
---	--

Task

For most people, facts that are interesting are easier to remember than facts that are not	a. agree strongly b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. disagree strongly
--	--

Capacity

I am good at remembering names	a. agree strongly b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. disagree strongly
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Change

I can remember things as well as always	a. agree strongly b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. disagree strongly
---	--

PRELIMINARY TESTING - AN ESSENTIAL STEP IN THE BIOLOGY ACTIVE LEARNING FOR MENTALLY DISABLED PUPILS

Testarea preliminară - etapă esențială în învățarea activă a biologiei
la elevii cu cerințe educative speciale

ADRIANA BARNA*, **IRINA POP****, **ANA MOLOCA*****

REZUMAT. Lucrarea prezintă un studiu referitor la învățarea activă la biologie la clasa a VIII-a, desfășurat la Școala Specială pentru copii cu cerințe educative speciale din Bistrița. Temele lecțiilor predate se regăsesc în sistemul de lecții "Organele de simț" (Anatomia și fiziologia omului). Am utilizat *testele preliminare* pentru a asigura implicarea elevilor în activitate chiar din primele momente. În același timp, cea mai importantă funcție a testelor preliminare a fost de a descoperi cunoștințele pe care elevii le dețineau deja despre subiectul dat. Apoi, activitățile au luat forma atelierelor, prin utilizarea muncii în grup și a metodelor de predare-învățare interactive. Rezultatele evaluării finale au arătat că ipotezele de lucru sunt valide: 1. elevii au dobândit cunoștințe științifice; 2. s-au format deprinderi importante pentru menținerea sănătății; 3. elevii au devenit mai încrezători în forțele lor și mai spontani (achiziții importante pentru copiii cu cerințe speciale).

Introduction

The mentally disabled children within auxiliary schools are taught and educated on behalf of a particular schooling platform. Biology is a discipline in gymnasium, starting with the 5th grade and states as its objectives: achievement of knowledge about nature and human being and development of intellectual operations by building representations and concepts from this field. The mental handicap, manifested through a weak development of curiosity (cognitive interest) and of the observation spirit, difficulties in the spatio-temporal organization and orientation, low focussing of the attention, imposes the use of tailored didactic strategies. If in the beginning of the Biology activity the children can depict from

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objects and images only few details (which makes that their perceptions be insufficient, that there appear frequent confusions), with the years of study and through repeated exercises, by using varied didactical methods and means, the analysis and synthesis capacity improves significantly. By putting the children repeatedly in the situation to completely describe plants, animals, causal phenomena, they enrich their scientific vocabulary. The exercises, games, outdoor activities, by which the verbalization of all the activities is being achieved, stimulates and contributes to shaping and developing the language, the behaviour of actively protecting the environment and its inhabitants and the interest in the surrounding world.

Biology is therefore a discipline with great educational and compensatory resources. The superior feelings develop later in mentally disabled children and only as an effect of a sustained and organized educational work. That is why it is necessary that the content of Biology classes generate permanently affective reactions. A great evocative force lays in legends, stories, curiosities that may give path to sentiments of profound admiration, care towards plants, animals, and humans. The Biology knowledge and the affective states it associates with also have an integrative function on their contribution to the shaping of the human behaviour, of a high living standard.

Work requirements

In the process of learning, at mentally disabled children a series of peculiarities are revealed (Radu, 1993). The learning capacity of the mentally disabled is influenced by the alteration of the intellectual possibilities and of every other personality characteristics. The psychic functions, especially the cognitive ones develop at a much slower pace and remain at a much lower level than those of a normal child. The entire activity of a mentally disabled child, including learning, is influenced by other factors as well, for instance: affection, the limited character of capacities, motivation. Still, the working capacity at these children must be sustained within the classes through various methods, as are:

- mobilization of the thinking capacity at the beginning of the class through a clear and attractive formulation of the class's objectives;
- inclusion in every class of activities that imply objects;
- introduction of special didactic games all through the class, tightly linked logically to its content;
- use, as a starting point in learning, of what the children already know about the subject.

The curiosity towards the surrounding world is a natural quality of every child. They ask themselves questions and formulate ideas, whether they are disabled or normal. Active learning implies getting to education by starting from the very curiosity, discovery; it encourages the pupils to ask questions and it leads them to think "in the frames of the discipline" (Temple, 1996). But since activity only

exists where there is a problem to solve, the pupils must have something to do for real in every Biology class, such as a drawing, a scheme, an inventory, an experience proposal, a text, etc. (Tavernier, 1992). In active learning one starts from one's own exploratory, discovery and thinking activities. In the entire didactical strategy, the teacher bases himself upon what the children already know about the subject, on older experiences, already constructed and which are milestones for what is about to be constructed (Piaget, 1972, Aebli, 1973, Gardner, 1991, Johnson et al, 1991). But how do we know what the pupils know about the subject, what their representations on it are? Before a new study, we have to start with *preliminary* (Tavernier, 1992) or *initial* (Aebli, 1973) *tests*. Which can be drawings, questionnaires, definitions, etc. They allow the teacher to appreciate the level of knowledge, but also to detect confusions and errors.

The children of auxiliary schools must study Human Anatomy and Physiology in the 8th grade, while children of mass schools study it in the 7th grade.

Our study

At the auxiliary school in Bistrița, preliminary tests have been applied to pupils of two 8th grades when „The Human Senses" were taught. The two classes comprised 25 children with the following IQs (cf. Binet-Simon):

- 5 limit cases (IQ = 80-95)
- 20 children with moderate and little mental disorder (IQ = 50-80).

In the two classes, there was no student with severe (IQ = 35-50) or profound (IQ under 30) mental disorder.

The preliminary tests required three things from the children:

1. to draw the tongue (eye, nose, ear, skin) and to show which are the component parts of that organ;
2. to answer the question: "What use do we have of the tongue (eye, nose, ear, skin)?" in written;
3. to answer the question: "How do we help the tongue (eye, nose, ear, skin) function better?" in written.

The individual results of the preliminary tests have shown the followings:

- The representation of the organs of sense (the drawings of the tongue, eye, nose, ear, and skin) was quite accurate.

The majority (22 children = 88%) have made drawings in which the form and dimensions of the organ were almost natural (with the exception of the skin) and included the outstanding details of the external shape (unevenness of the auricle and the internal channel of the ear, the nostrils with hair, the tongue with its gustatory papilla, the eye with lashes and brows, iris and pupil).

Only few children (1-6 pupils = 1-24%) denominated scientifically correct the components of the drawn organs (e.g. the auricle - 2 children; gustatory papilla - 4 children; ocular globe - 1 child; pupil - 6 children; iris - 2 children).

- The majority (22-88%) used the colors red and yellow for their drawings of the organs of sense as close to natural as possible (of course, not with the eye).
- All the children have answered correctly but incomplete with respect to the function that the represented organ fulfils.
- All the children have given at least one solution to the way we help the organs of sense function better.

The individual preliminary tests were discussed afterwards by groups of 3-4 children (Barna et al, 1998). The drawings and written answers were completed by each member of the group. These discussions have shown that the children had sufficient knowledge in order to be able to go on to new subjects linked with the structure of the organs of sense, that would facilitate the understanding of their functions.

It is worth mentioning that through the drawings, the children have visualized in a perceptible way the hidden aspects of the process of thinking, and through the discussions within the group they have verbalized their own thoughts. In the atmosphere of true „workshop" that was established within the class, the children could work interactively, taking advantage of the others' thinking.

By using moldings, sketches, dias, magnifying glasses and the drawing on the blackboard (depending on every organ of sense), the children, led by the teacher, have completed the form and sometimes even the structure (as was the case of the skin) of the organs of sense. Every constitutive element was linked to its function the very moment it was studied. The separate teaching of the components, followed by the presentation of the function (as can unfortunately still be seen in the manuals for normal schools as well) does not help neither the mentally disabled children, nor the normal ones understand and learn these things.

Conclusions

The educational objectives of the lessons included in the part "The Human Senses" referred to help the children become conscious of the need to keep the integrity, hygiene and health of the organs of sense. Question No. 3 of the preliminary tests has informed upon the knowledge of the pupils in this respect. The children in the Auxiliary School Bistrița generally come from poor social categories. But, up to the 8th grade, due to living in the boarding school and therefore being constantly supervised, they have learned and they also apply a series of hygiene rules. These rules have been set out by the children after the group discussions and completed on the preliminary tests. Even so, it is important to form convictions about behavior changes, that can seriously damage the organs of sense and finally the individual's life (avoidance of sharp objects, of some toxic chemical substances, the cold and the fire, the hits, etc.). In order to do this, the children have been presented with day-to-day situations, real-life facts, examples from school and stories in which the results of some uncontrolled, evil deeds upon

the organism on the whole have been shown. In this way, the children have been actively implicated in the problems of the world around them, and thus helped to find the relevance of the learned things for themselves.

The active learning allowed the children to link what they have learned to their own experiences, to compare them with other facts, to analyze causes, to establish consequences, to imagine solutions for the problems set. The lessons taught this way determined the children to obtain better results in Biology. The average mark for the module "The Organs of Sense" was 8,12 (out of 10), whereas for the module "Nutritional Functions", where the traditional method has been applied, the average mark was 7,26. The atmosphere created in the classrooms was less tense. The children were more spontaneous, their participation in the course taught more active. Even introverted, shy children went along, starting to trust more in their own forces, due to the immediate success obtained and which is very important for the mentally disabled, who disarm easily when confronted with tougher situations.

As shown by the above, the preliminary tests have important functions within active learning. It's also well known that every mentally disabled child has his own behavioral plasticity and specific resources for learning which must be efficiently used (Preda, 1998). The preliminary tests value depends on the way they are exploited, as well as on the way they are included in the didactical strategies projected for an active learning.

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MAIN ISSUES IN THE PROBLEM SOLVING METHODOLOGY AT CHEMISTRY

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RÉSUMÉ. Cet article est centré sur la méthodique de la résolution des problèmes au chimie, qui est en fait une activité didactique avec certes et importantes valences formatives et informatives, mises en évidence dès le début. L'attention des auteurs est focalisée vers les étapes méthodiques concernant la résolution de problèmes au chimie; la dernière étape -celle d'analyse et d'interprétation du point de vue chimique du résultat obtenu et d'extraction des conclusions- a été détaillée, étant donné le rôle formatif exceptionnel de cette étape.

In the vision of traditional didactic, the concept of "problem" has had the meaning of an exercise for applying a series of knowledge, notions, methods, rules, laws and principles which were previously assimilated by the scholars. On the other hand, in opposition with this conception, the modern didactic stressed the fact that the activity of problem solving is not at all the same thing with the simple application of some structural content's elements or even of some methodological procedures already known by the pupils. Moreover, the idea of a strong implication of euristic approaches, learning by discovery, personal reflections, problematizations and even creativity elements in the problem solving activity is now supported.

The particular character of the chemistry - the experimental one - makes possible to be also solved both practical and theoretical-practical problems, which in turn have important formative valences.

From a methodological point of view, the problem solving activity could be very well integrated in various forms of organization of the instructive-educative activity, as follows:

- in the activities taking place in the classrooms (at school);
- in the activities taking place in the school, but not in the classroom: debating circle of chemistry, consultations, meditations, games and competitions;
- in the activities that don't occur in the school, like chemistry camps and Olympiads;
- in the homework (being considerate as forms of organization of the instructive-educative activity).

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From an organizational perspective, the problem solvers - the pupils - may work in the classroom either frontal or individual (with or without support points from the teacher), or in groups (again, with or without support points from the chemistry teacher).

The educational goals of problem solving

The requirements existent now in our modern society, the acquisitions cumulated in the general didactic and in special didactics fields and generally speaking the acquisitions in the science field have determined a reconsideration of the current status of the problem solving activity in the educational process and consequently in the development of the pupils' personality. Also, David P. Ausubel and Floyd G. Robinson claimed, in their paper "Learning in school. An introduction in the pedagogical psychology", that the development of the problem solving skills represents the primordial aim of the education.

In the study of chemistry, as well as it is the case for other disciplines, the problem solving activity have as a target both formative and informative objectives; some of them will be summarized below. For an effective problem solving activity, it is of paramount importance that both the person who propose the problem (the teacher) and the persons who will solve that problem (the pupils) be very aware of the educational objective to be achieved, objective that have to be operationalized.

Formative objectives:

- development of the capacity to effect intra- and inter-disciplinary correlations;
- development of the capacity to realize the transfer of the knowledge;
- development of the capacity to emit hypothesis and to verify them;
- development of the thought operations (analysis, synthesis, comparison, abstractization, generalization, materialization etc.);
- development of the divergent, imaginative, critic and creative thought;
- development of the creative spirit and creativity;
- development of the experimental spirit;
- development of the will, perseverance and trust in their own forces at the pupils;
- stimulation of the pupils' initiative and their motivation for the study of chemistry by solving problems related to day-to-day life.

Informative objectives:

- the acquisition/discovery of new knowledge, intellectual and/or practical skills and abilities;
- the enrichment of the knowledge, intellectual and/or practical skills and abilities;

- the productive-creative or reproductive settlement of the knowledge, intellectual and/or practical skills and abilities;
- the revision and strengthening of the knowledge, intellectual and/or practical skills and abilities;
- the application (productive-creative or reproductive) of the knowledge, intellectual and/or practical skills and abilities.

Methodological issues in problem solving at chemistry

Usually, the pupils' involvement in the problem solving activity is made in a step-by-step way, starting from low difficulty level problems towards higher difficulty level ones. Thus, this graded approach in the cognitive and practical tasks will allow the reach higher and higher abstractization and generalization levels by the pupils, levels which are able to ensure the realization of a progressive intellectual and practical-actional training.

The following considerations refer to the specific situations when the chemistry problem is solved by the pupils under the teacher's guidance, in the classroom and frontally. From the methodological point of view, the chemistry problems solving go through a series of steps that already were described and illustrated in the literature (M. Bocoş, 1998; F. Ciomoş and M. Bocoş, 2000). We propose here to give a detailed description of the last methodological step in chemistry problem solving, which is the *analysis and interpretation from the chemical point of view of the result found*, just because of its extremely important formative role. However, in the practical situations of the instruction at chemistry one can observe very often that this step is neglected and even ignored, as the teachers limit themselves only to a simple mathematical solving of the problem.

In the frontal solving of the chemistry problems, one should be emphasized the activation of the pupils in the achievement of each step: *understanding the problem's enunciation* (by its repetition, maybe in another proper form; the identification of the chemical phenomenon and chemical parameters which are related to the problem; the elucidation of the parameters implied; writing of the known and unknown dates on the blackboard); *setting-up a solving plan* (the pupils will be asked to find their own solving variants, then the teacher will lead them towards the optimal variant); *the application of the solving plan* (after the best solving variant was established, a pupil will solve the problem at the blackboard, and the others will do it on their notebook, under the guidance of the teacher; the teacher will also engage the entire class in the problem solving). To accomplish the step of *analysis and interpretation from a chemical point of view of the result found plus extraction of the appropriate conclusions* and to ensure the formative character of this step, there are many methodological possibilities that imply: the nature of the problem; the main operational objective which is to be accomplished by solving the problem; the pupils' preparation level at chemistry; pupils' interest and so forth.

At this point we will submit several methodological possibilities for the analyze and interpretation, from a chemical point of view, of the chemistry problem result and also we'll suggest some concrete ways for working.

1. The verification of the correctness (intuitive or formal) both for the solving procedure and for the result obtained; this operation could be effected in many ways, as described below.

1.a) The verification of the correctness for the solving procedure may imply:

1.a.1) The resume of all solving steps used, by simple repetition, by changing the steps' order or their group together, or by repetition only for the most sensitive steps in the problem solving.

1.a.2) The analysis of the alternative ways to solve the problem, found by the pupils.

Example: In the problems about mixed solutions, if in the problem solving the rectangle rule was used, the result obtained can be easily verified by using the logical (with the mathematical apparatus) solving.

1.a.3) The comparison of the formulas-based solving with logical-based (by using the mathematical apparatus) solving

Example: Problems that request finding of the concentration (procentual and molar) for a solution may be solved either with the formulas for that concentrations or by using the simple three mathematical rule.

1.b) The verification of the correctness for the result obtained may imply the following:

1.b.1) From the logical point of view - the result must be plausible and to posses logical arguments.

Examples:

- the concentration of an aqueous solution will increase when solvate is added and will decrease when water is added;
- when we are working with chemical reactions which have an efficiency below 100%, then the amounts for the reaction products have to be smaller than the stoichiometric corresponding amounts;
- at the chemical reactions which have an efficiency below 100%, the amounts of reactant compounds must be larger than the stoichiometric ones;
- the rate of a chemical reaction with catalyses have to be sensible greater than the rate of the same chemical reaction without its specific catalyst etc.

1.b.2) From the chemical point of view - the result is to be analyzed from the perspective of the internal logical valid in chemistry; that result cannot bring any conclusion which are in opposition with any scientific knowledge, relations, rules and principles generally accepted in chemistry. In fact, it is always a good idea to check (of course, when it is possible) the result obtained by effecting chemical experiments, so by using the experimental approach.

Examples:

- the density value obtained from calculations will be compared with the measured value (obtained with the densimeter);
- the value of pH obtained from calculations will be compared with the measured value (obtained with the pH paper or with a pH-meter);
- the calculated excess of an acid or a base in a chemical reaction of neutralization can be verified by mixing the amounts found theoretically and then by measuring the pH, or by adding an acido-basic indicator to the solution to identify the character of that solution;
- it is possible to verify in the real world the spontaneous character of a chemical reaction;
- the kind of a specific chemical reaction, anticipated by the pupils, can be verified by making an experiment (chemical reactions which generate precipitates, which are effervescent, which suffer colour changes, which generate a reaction product that leave the system etc.);
- choosing the optimal solution from the chemical point of view (for instance, when the composition of a system in equilibrium is calculated, then between the mathematical results it will be picked up the positive result, so the reactant amounts at equilibrium state will be not larger than the initial amounts);
- it is compulsory to ensure the validity of the result from the chemical point of view, in order to always have: positive amounts of substances; a positive and whole-number equivalent unsaturation number and also a whole-number for the n for any problem requesting to determine the molecular formula for an organic compound etc.

1.b.3) From the mathematical point of view - it is necessary to have a correct mathematical apparatus (formulas, calculations, relations).

Example:

The calculation of the variation in enthalpy for an exothermic reaction should give us a negative value. It is interesting to note that for some processes this result can be experimentally verified, for instance when sodium hydroxide is dissolved in water, or the teacher can refer to the already existing knowledge (for example, pupils know that by dissolving sodium hydroxide in water the solution became hot; another suitable example is the combustion of methane).

1.b.4) From the dimensional point of view - to obtain the final result the units of measurement for all the parameters have to be respected, and finally the parameter calculated in the problem must be expressed in the right unit. If the measurement units will be correctly written and all the transformations are done in a proper way, then correct results will be consequently obtained (for instance, if a density is expressed in grams/milliliter, and the volume in liters,

then we must transform the volume in milliliters to have a right calculation).

Examples:

- by writing of all the measurement units for the parameters which enter in the molar concentration formula it is possible to check the right unit for that particular kind of concentration;
- by expressing the equilibrium constants in the right units (in the chemical reactions with variation in the number of moles) will allow us to obtain the right units for the equilibrium constants K_c , K_x , K_p .

2. *Identification of the theoretical and practical applications for the elements which form the structural content in the problem.*

2.a) *The identification of theoretical applications* consists usually in taking account of the fact that the chemical reactions used in the problem are actually methods to obtain (in laboratory or in industry) some classes of chemicals or some specific chemical compounds, or that reactions make reference to some physical and/or chemical properties of the chemical compounds.

2.b) *The identification of practical applications* implies the correlation of the structural content's elements existing in the problem with various practical applications from different branches of chemistry and/or other sciences (even if they are presented only by the professor itself, because the pupils don't study yet or don't know anything about them) and with various household, medicine or industry applications.

Examples:

- some solutions are well known by the pupils from the house (like syrup, brine, vinegar, tea, wine, copper sulfate solution), medicine (iodine tincture, glucose solution used in perfusions, the physiological serum - a 0.85% sodium chloride solution), industry (acid and bases solutions);
- some chemical reactions which appear in problem solving have a clear practical utility, which has to be emphasized, such as: the reaction of saponification; alcoholic fermentation; acetic fermentation; alcohol oxidation with potassium dichromate (used to measure the alcohol content in the drivers' blood); reactions that have as products substances already known by the pupils (cellophane, polyacrylonitrile PAN, polyvinylchloride PVC, glycerin trinitrate etc.).

3. *Realization of intra- and inter-disciplinary correlations* will ensure the development of the flexibility in the pupils' thought and in its operation, as well as pupils' operationalization of knowledge, skills and abilities.

3.a) *Intra-disciplinary correlations* consist in building relations between the structural content elements existing in the problem with some knowledge the pupils' already get at chemistry classes.

Example: When the representative compounds for a class of chemicals are studied, always will be reviewed the general elements valid for that specific chemical class (see also the theoretical and practical applications described at subchapter 2).

3.b) *Inter-disciplinary correlations* consist in establishing a relationship between the structural content elements existing in the problem with some knowledge get from other disciplines, such as physics, biology, geography etc.

Examples of interdisciplinary correlations with physics: Study of gases, study of electrical sources, of electrolysis, of the solvation and neutralization heat etc.

Examples of interdisciplinary correlations with biology: The photosynthesis process (which represents a source for organic compounds starting from inorganic ones); the role of proteins, carbohydrates and fats in the living organism; the importance of the biochemical processes for the human body; the effects induced by various chemicals on the ecosystems etc.

Examples of interdisciplinary correlations with geography: The connection between all the knowledge regarding oxides, salts and metals with knowledge about rocks, minerals and ores.

The activity that implies problem design, proposal and solving is an extremely complex activity, which have to be effected in accordance with a series of psycho-pedagogical and methodological requirements concerning:

- selection of the problems
- merging theoretical problems with the practical and theoretical-practical ones
- problems' formulation (enunciation) in an attractive manner for the pupils
- problem solving together with the pupils, and if possible verification of the result obtained with an experiment.

The solving step is also subordinated to methodological requirements, the most important being the necessity of making a thorough analysis and interpretation from the chemical point of view of the results obtained; as a matter of fact, this is definitely the stage having authentic formative valences for the pupils and a great role in creativity development.

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POSTMODERNISM AND THE POSTMETHOD CONDITION

ALINA PREDA

ABSTRACT. We live in postmodern times and the conventional concepts used in language teaching up to now are no longer functional and need to be replaced in order to ensure the efficiency of the teaching/learning process. The utopic idea of an autotelic method, suitable for all teaching situations, is counterproductive and needs to be abandoned. Therefore, any method or strategy is to be seen as a starting point and a guiding line in our teaching, not as a monolith one cannot step away from if our working conditions, our beliefs or our experience require it. It is to be adapted to the specific circumstances we work in, as this is the only way that can guarantee its efficiency. The purpose of this paper is to prove the existence of the postmethod condition and to establish whether it undermines or integrates the traditional and the modern methods, and whether we shall attach to its rise some radical restructuring tendency.

‘There is hardly a single field of intellectual endeavour which has not been touched by the spectre of ‘the post-modern’. It leaves traces in every cultural discipline, from architecture to zoology, taking in on the way biology, forestry, geography, history, law, literature and the arts in general, medicine, politics, philosophy, sexuality, and so on. Yet, this amorphous thing remains ghostly--and for some, ghastly--for the simple reason that the debate around the post-modern has never properly been engaged. The term itself hovers uncertainly in most current writings between--on the one hand--extremely complex and difficult philosophical senses, and--on the other--an extremely simplistic mediation as a nihilistic, cynical tendency in contemporary culture.’

Thomas Docherty

I. Introduction

‘Generally perceived as positivistic, technocentric and rationalistic, universal modernism has been identified with the belief in linear progress, absolute truths, the rational planning of ideal social orders, and the standardisation of knowledge and production.’ Postmodernism, by way of contrast, privileges ‘heterogeneity and difference as liberative forces in the redefinition of cultural discourse.’ Fragmentation, indeterminacy, and intense distrust of all universal or ‘totalising’ discourses ... are the hallmark of postmodernist thought.

David Harvey

At the centre of all the discussions on the most appropriate way to teach a second/foreign language, there has always been the continuous search for ever new, innovative methods. Language teachers have never ceased to assert their need for a comprehensive method, suitable for every possible situation of the language learning process. As Nunan (1991, p.3) points out, quoting from Richards (1987), in the history of language teaching there has always been a manifest tendency 'to equate methodology with method': 'the history of our profession, in the last hundred years has done much to support the impression that improvements in language teaching will come about as a result of improvements in the quality of methods, and that ultimately an effective language teaching method will be developed.'

As a result of this permanent search for innovative methods, we are faced with a proliferation of methods, and one might wonder if this is a proof of progress or of regress, an advantage or a disadvantage. In order to answer this question, one must analyse not only the causes of their development, which are more or less the same, -- that is, closely linked to the realisation of other methods' weaknesses and insufficiencies --- but also their effects, both in theory and practice. Such an analysis will show, on the one hand, that those who claim that one single set of principles can ensure proper learning for all, regardless of exterior circumstances, are dangerously mistaken and, on the other hand, that no single set of precepts can be faithfully followed in the classroom.

Given this realisation, the focus has been, lately, as Nunan (1991, p. 228) points out, on activities and classroom tasks 'consonant with what we know about processes of second language acquisition' and 'appropriate for the dynamics of the classroom itself.' This shift away from the perceptual, theoretical area towards the practical one, while a step forward, is not a definitive solution. What we need is neither an inflexible theorising position, nor a merely practical strategy that focuses only on classroom tasks and disregards completely all methodological principles, but a systematic, coherent framework, based on classroom experience and relevant to classroom reality, a framework that functions as a starting point in teaching and allows the teachers the flexibility and independence they need.

This shift is a proof that language teaching has itself been influenced by postmodernism, like all the other intellectual areas, and it mirrors the parallelism between postmodernism and modernism and, respectively, the postmethod and the method condition. Postmodernism seeks to displace the modernist tradition, to disrupt all discursive boundaries, to obliterate the frontiers, and to question all models. The postmethod condition seeks to displace the conventional concept of method, to obliterate the frontiers between different methods, and to disrupt the boundaries separating theory and practice, to question the belief in a perfect, universal method.

The purpose of this paper is to prove the existence of the postmethod condition and to establish whether it undermines or integrates the traditional and the modern methods, and whether we shall attach to its rise some radical restructuring tendency.

II. Language Teaching Methods

'Every sunrise was fashionable once.'

Frank Kupner

Being aware of the fact that there can be no single method perfectly suited for all situations does not mean that all the existing methods are entirely useless. All of them have contributed to language teaching at one time or another, served their purpose due to their qualities, to a higher or lower degree, of course, depending on their weaknesses. Each and every one of them has some valuable techniques and principles, that work extremely well in certain particular circumstances. Although what we need is to go beyond the concept of method, and search for a kind of 'melting pot' that is to include the most valuable parts of all these methods, along with a flexible strategy that should expand its applicability and thus increase its efficiency in all teaching situations, we need to begin our analysis with individual methods, in order to be able to answer the question: how did we come to be where we are and not elsewhere?

Out of the different ways of classifying methods we have selected for discussion the ones proposed by Kumaravadivelu and, respectively, Nunan, as they seem to be the most relevant and coherent ones.

Kumaravadivelu (1994), assigns methods to three categories: language-centred methods, learner-centred methods and learning-centred methods.

Language-centred methods (e.g., **audiolingualism**), are mainly concerned with form and practice linguistic structures through form-focused tasks meant to help learners internalise the target language system. Learner-centred methods (e.g., **communicative methods**), are concerned with both form and function, communication being ensured through a selection of function-focused activities. Learning-centred methods (e.g., **the natural approach**) are concerned with relevant communication, trying to offer the learners problem-posing/solving activities and take part in open-ended meaningful interaction.

Nunan (1991, p. 228) also classifies methods into three categories, according to their belonging to a certain tradition: the psychological tradition, the humanistic tradition and the second language acquisition tradition. Nunan specifies that, although there are 'important differences between category members', his classification is meant to 'highlight essential similarities between the different methods in each category'.

The psychological tradition comprises methods based on psychological theories of learning which were not primarily concerned with language learning and teaching, but with the process of learning in general. This is what differentiates the methods included in the psychological tradition (**audiolingualism** and **cognitive code learning**) from the ones developed within the second language acquisition tradition. The methods included in the humanistic tradition (**community language learning**, **the silent way** and **suggestopedia**), are primarily concerned with the affective and emotional factors and with the way in which they can influence (i.e., obstruct or facilitate) the learning

process. The third methodological tradition identified by Nunan comprises methods based on research and theory into first and second language acquisition, and on ‘empirical research into language development’ (**the natural approach** and **the total physical response**). The learners’ affections and emotions are carefully taken into consideration by these methods as well.

III. The Postmethod Condition Between Myth and Reality

‘The most startling fact about postmodernism [is] its total acceptance of the ephemerality, fragmentation, discontinuity, and the chaotic ... [Unlike modernism,] it does not try to transcend it, counteract it, or even to define the ‘eternal and immutable’ elements that might lie within it. Postmodernism swims, even wallows, in the fragmentary and chaotic currents of change ... Such a breakdown of the temporal order of things also gives rise to a peculiar treatment of the past. Eschewing the idea of progress, postmodernism abandons all sense of historical continuity and memory, while simultaneously developing an incredible ability to plunder history and absorb whatever it finds there as some aspect of the present. Postmodernist architecture, for example takes bits and pieces from the past quite eclectically and mixes them together at will.’

David Harvey

Method has been so far a means of explaining how a foreign language should be taught; it was given authority and, therefore, it governed the actual ‘staging’—that is, the practical side of teaching. But, as this proved to be rather inefficient, the focus shifted away from the concept of method, but the question is, what are we focusing on now?

A good teacher can never say: ‘I know exactly what I am going to do.’, but if s/he is self-conscious before, while and after the actual teaching, s/he can say: ‘I know exactly what I did and what else I should/could have done’. During the actual teaching situation, many things can happen that take the teacher along unsuspected paths, as teaching is a process of discovery, not of preconception.

We have no doubts about the privilege and satisfactions of teaching, or about the potential of putting methods into practice, thus combining so richly and intimately the world of theoretical ideas with the world of practical reality. However, we are aware of the fact that, during each lesson, for each individual class, the collaboration between teacher and students, and the teaching experience are somehow different. Therefore, whenever we teach, we have to think of the students, to empathise with them, to be aware of their perception, representation and conceptualisation, as this is the only way towards enriching and perfecting the teacher-student collaborative experience that leads to effective teaching.

Whenever we teach we should ask ourselves the following questions:

- * Which situation are we in?
- * What are we, as teachers, to do in this situation?
- * How should we do it?

- * How can we transmit the knowledge to the learner?
 - * What does the learner need to know?
 - * (What does the learner want to know?)
 - * How can the learner acquire what is to be known and for how long will s/he remember it?
- ◆ What are the limits of her/his acquiring capacity (when it comes to a specific item/function) ?

There are many factors and circumstances that can influence our lessons and their outcome, and should be taken into consideration:

- ◆ the students'
 - ◇ age
 - ◇ number
 - ◇ level
 - ◇ motivation
 - ◇ interests
 - ◇ needs
 - ◇ personality
 - ◇ heterogeneity/homogeneity
- ◆ conditions of autonomy or necessary/forceful submission to a strict curricula
- ◆ facilities
 - ◇ audio/video
 - ◇ materials (textbooks)
 - ◇ classroom layout, etc.

Due to the vast complexities and contradictions that constitute the essence of teaching a foreign language, no method can ever be a unity or a stable structure that fits every kind of teaching situation. Therefore, any method or strategy is to be seen as a starting point and a guiding line in our teaching, not as a monolith one cannot step away from if our working conditions, our beliefs or our experience require it. It is to be adapted to the specific circumstances we work in, as this is the only way that can guarantee its efficiency. Our central concerns, as teachers, should be flexibility and adaptability, as effectiveness rises out of appropriacy to a particular teaching situation.

Although each method has tried to incorporate all the practical realities, these are, actually, inaccessible as a whole since each particular situation manifests itself as a continual re-arrangement of factors and circumstances. In these conditions, one method is not enough; in order to ensure efficiency, one needs a number of variations to be applied according to the respective circumstances.

Instead of defending the value and quality of each method as a whole, one should take the best out of each of them and design a new method (i.e. a complex of methods or a strategy), more open, varied, diversified, more complete and functional. This would be a sincretic, intertextual method, the result of the coalescence of many directions in the ELT tradition. This repatterning of teaching methods manifests itself as resistance to essentialisation, which is characteristic of postmodernism. Due to the profound uncertainty of the practical teaching situation, caused by the absence of fixed points of reference, the various existing methods both shape and undermine, demolish as they build, as none of them can work as long as they are limited by sets of principles, techniques, etc. They could work only if they were able to grasp the real context, the existing realities, if they were explanatory schemes for the interpenetration of theory and practice, thus taking different forms and acting as a counter to imperfection, imperfection that characterises all the existing methods. A new conceptual tool is needed, and we could call it for now 'the postmodern method'. It requires a new perspective, and is the result of a transformation, a progressive leap into the future and, at the same time a return to a new beginning, being rather a restoration than a revolution.

The postmodern method is not fundamentally distinct from any of the older ones, it is neither new, nor new-born, because even those teachers who believed that they were using only one method, blindly following its principles, without making the smallest step outside the path, were actually bringing into their teaching whatever things they and their learners needed in order to make things work, regardless of the fact that they were not mentioned among the principles of that specific method. And there were many others who were actually using one of the postmodern method's variants, without even realising it, while still looking for that utopic guidance they did not really need. How long will it be until teachers are finally struck by the revelation of their ability to practically create an effective method, by the realisation that *they* are the only ones who can achieve that, as only *they* know what their learners need and what can be offered to them, in those particular situations? It is not always theory that leads to practice, but sometimes practice can help in the creation of theories, especially in such a field, essentially practical, as teaching.

To speak about the postmodern method is to theorise its condition of possibility by enumerating changes and modifications that occurred in the various methods which have contributed to its formation. One of the main features of the postmodern method is an immense dilation of its sphere, a transcendence of any stable set of principles and techniques, a decentering of the centre, as no method is central, because they have all coalesced into a new one, which cannot be the centre itself, being rather a nucleus formed by all the decentred fragments. The latter have a semiautonomous nature, and relatively independent traits or features, but neither of them is uniquely privileged, although each and every one of them can become, for a while, the centre again, thus recovering its undermined status.

The postmodern method pays attention to all the skills, to those undeveloped or underdeveloped by previously applied methods, thus being more comprehensive than any of them. It is not a truly new method, but a functional one,

comprising the best suited principles of all the others. Its emergence is both a break and a continuity, because the postmodern method is, to a certain extent, a continuation and a development of each of the methods belonging to the modern language teaching tradition. The postmodern method is able to welcome all the previously devised methods, proposing modifications, reworking and rewriting principles and techniques, and co-ordinating them all in a new framework, capable of functioning effectively in any conceivable situation. However, it is merely a theoretical devise, and only practice can give us something a little more decisive than a conceptual framework; it is mainly based on the teacher's selection and rejection of principles and techniques, thus we may say that the teacher is the authority here, not the method; s/he is the one factor, the unique element, able to endow the postmodern method with efficiency in all circumstances.

IV. Alternative Method Versus Alternative to Method

'The work of the avant-garde used to legitimise itself precisely by being untimely and incomprehensible, a challenge to history and to reason. The work of the avant-garde had to be proposed by one who was somehow in advance of her or his own historical moment. The work produced defies comprehension, in the sense that it defies the possibility of being assimilated into and under the governing philosophical rubric or ideology of its moment of production. It cannot be easily 'translated' into the terms and categories of the already known.'

Thomas Docherty

'The modernist assumes that it is possible to pass from Becoming to Being; the post-modernist believes that any such move is always necessarily premature and unwarranted.'

Thomas Docherty

A debate on the conventional concept of method 'hosted' by TESOL Quarterly (1994/1995), illustrates the growing concern for the future of language teaching, and the emergence of the so much needed conceptual tool able to ensure the desired efficiency of the teaching/learning process. Kumaravadivelu's article, entitled "*The Postmethod Condition: (E)merging Strategies for Second/Foreign Language Teaching*", was considered 'enlightening as well as provoking' by Dilin Liu, who provided a critical reading of the article. Liu undertakes the defence of the conventional notion of method, and refuses to acknowledge that we are faced with what Kumaravadivelu calls 'the postmethod condition'. Liu (1995) believes that it would be wrong to give up the search for methods, because they cannot be replaced by a strategic framework like the one proposed by Kumaravadivelu. In his article, "*Alternative to" or "Addition to" Method?*", Liu sustains that 'these methods are invaluable because good teachers can select the best method for the specific situation' and further argues that '[t]he problems we have are not with the

methods but with those who use the methods in the wrong place and at the wrong time.’ While we completely agree with the fact that it is the teacher’s role and duty to select whatever suits best the actual classroom situation, we realise that no existing method fits perfectly practical situations, and therefore what we need is not one single method, but something else, that should offer independence, allow for flexibility, and be functional, coherent and efficient. This is exactly what Kumaravadivelu tries to show, by emphasising the postmethod condition which ‘creates the need for an open-ended, coherent framework based on current theoretical, empirical, and pedagogic insights that will activate and develop teacher’s sense of plausibility and create a sense of interested involvement.’ (1994, p. 44) The greatest advantage of this position is that it focuses neither on theory, nor on practice, in an exclusive way, but on theory *resulting* from practice, a much more appropriate direction than the conventional one, leading from theory to practice. At a closer study we cannot help noticing that this really is the logical direction, as all the external factors, specific to each particular case, can only be known by the practitioner, and thus given the proper consideration, so as to ensure the desired efficiency of the teaching process. Within the postmethod condition teachers are given the opportunity not only to choose from a limited range of methods, principles, techniques, but to actually devise their own ‘alternative to method, [...]informed by principled pragmatism’ (1994, p. 27)

However, the fact that some scholars refuse to acknowledge the existence of the postmethod condition is not surprising, because people have always been reluctant to change, and new ideas repeatedly submitted to careful scrutiny before being, finally, accepted. It is, indeed, very difficult for those who strongly believe in the conventional concept of method, so clearly designed and delineated, to get accustomed to the idea of a flexible, open-ended framework, which does not claim to be a ‘universal’ conceptual tool, appropriate for all possible circumstances, but a ‘melting pot’ of all the methods, resulted from a process of fragmentation, followed by an eclectic mixture, meant to trace out the meeting of all methods, regardless of the tradition they belong to. This methodological attempt to frame the language teaching instruments in a new form, consisting not of one, but of many different traditions, directions, methods and having as a central point of view one that comes from the practical area is, for such people, hard to understand, let alone accept and put into practice.

This state of facts is entirely natural within the postmodern context, as postmodernism is characterised by pluralism, as a form of expressing, not denying totality, but a totality obtained through the reorganisation of all the elements, from a different, unifying perspective, in diversity.

Kumaravadivelu (1994, p. 28), considers that ‘the postmethod condition’ is a result of the growing awareness that ‘as long as we are caught in the web of method, we will continue to get entangled in an unending search for an unavailable solution’. The research perspective outlined by Kumaravadivelu stems from a redefinition of the conventional relationship between theory and practice, between

centre and periphery: 'If the conventional concept of method entitles theorists to construct knowledge-oriented theories of pedagogy, the postmethod condition empowers practitioners to construct classroom-oriented theories of practice.' This is a process of decentering specific to postmodernism, and characterised by the migration of the marginalised from the periphery to the centre.

Kumaravadivelu assigns to the postmethod condition three major characteristics, closely interrelated. Firstly, due to the impossibility to apply any method in its pure form, we are to search for 'an alternative method rather than an alternative to method' (1994, p. 29).

Secondly, the authority of theorists is to be challenged and given to practitioners, in an attempt to promote teacher autonomy by 'enabling and empowering teachers to theorise from their practice and practise what they have theorised': 'The postmethod condition recognises the teachers' potential to know not only how to teach but also how to act autonomously within the academic and administrative constraints imposed by institutions, curricula and textbooks. It also promotes the ability of teachers to know how to develop a reflective approach to their own teaching, how to analyse and evaluate their own teaching practice, how to initiate change in their classroom, and how to monitor the effects of such changes (Richards, 1991: Wallace, 1991)' (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, p. 30)

Thirdly, the postmethod condition requires us to abandon eclecticism, as it is inefficient and likely to '[degenerate] into an unsystematic, unprincipled and uncritical pedagogy because teachers with very little professional preparation to be eclectic in a principled way have little option but to randomly put together a package of techniques from various methods and label it eclectic' (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, p. 30). The alternative to method is to be informed by 'principled pragmatism' which 'focuses on how classroom learning can be shaped and managed by teachers as a result of informed and critical appraisal', and which can be followed by developing a 'sense of plausibility' and 'a sense of interested involvement' (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, p. 31). As a result, teachers will not wait for solutions coming from theorists anymore, but try to devise one themselves, using what Kumaravadivelu calls 'a strategic framework for L2 teaching' (1994, p.31), that is to be regarded 'not as a dogma for uncritical acceptance but as an option for critical appraisal in light of new and expanding experience and experimentation in L2 learning and teaching.' (1994, p. 32).

The strategic framework comprises macrostrategies, made operational in practice by microstrategies: 'Macrostrategies are general plans derived from theoretical, empirical, and pedagogical knowledge related to L2 learning/teaching.' and function as 'broad guideline[s], based on which teachers can generate their own situation-specific, need-based microstrategies and classroom techniques' (1994, p. 32). These macrostrategies are neither 'constrained by the underlying assumptions of any one specific theory of language, learning, and teaching' nor 'conditioned by a single set of theoretical principles or classroom procedures associated with any one particular method' (1994, p. 32), that is, they are 'theory neutral' and 'method neutral'.

The ten macrostrategies devised by Kumaravadivelu (1994,p.32), are the following:

- a). maximise learning opportunities
- b). facilitate negotiated interaction
- c). minimise perceptual mismatches
- d). activate intuitive heuristics
- e). foster language awareness
- f). contextualise linguistic input
- g).integrate language skills
- h). promote learner autonomy
- i). raise cultural consciousness
- j). ensure social relevance

We strongly support Kumaravadivelu's search for a functional conceptual tool for the language teaching process and, although we understand Liu's concern with the reality and necessity of methods, without which teachers cease to work and plan their work in a systematic, organised way, we believe that Kumaravadivelu's strategic framework is in perfect consonance with what we called the postmodern method. Therefore, it not only can, but should be accepted as a replacement for the conventional notion of method, as it is the most appropriate teaching device to be employed, given the postmodern times we live in, and the postmethod condition we are faced with.

V. Conclusion

'I would say that we have to distinguish between areas of consciousness which are genuinely open to recognition of real situations (thus allowing some real possibility of choice) and these different real pressures in which people are truly conscious of the determinations of their lives ... [T]here are disciplines...[which] exert a control on people based not so much upon positive assent as upon the absence of immediate alternatives.'

Raymond Williams

We live in postmodern times and, whether we are prepared to face it or not, the conventional concepts used in language teaching up to now are no longer functional and need to be replaced in order to ensure the efficiency of the teaching/learning process. The utopic idea of an autotelic method, suitable for all teaching situations, is counterproductive and needs to be abandoned.

The realisation that the notion of method gives too much emphasis to technicalities, thus losing sight of what really happens in the classroom, and prevents teachers from coping with the divergent reality, has led us to a redefinition of methodological concepts.

Whether we call it the postmodern method, or an alternative to method, the strategic framework is a 'modus operandi', a mode of staging that ensures the simultaneity of the mutually exclusive theory and practice, a fundamental achievement, as practice without theory remains empty and theory without practice remains diffuse.

The strategic framework constitutes itself as a network of methods, characterised by two main features:

- ◆ **synthetic genericity**, (meaning imitation and transformation of a model), as it stands in relation to the anterior methods functioning as models, but it constructs its own generic model
- ◆ **analytical genericity**, (meaning conformity to and deviation from a model), as it reproduces, but also deviates from a number of norms

Due to these two characteristics which institute a specific way of functioning in the given specific situations, the strategic framework recognises the interaction of a multiplicity of factors and is, therefore, comprehensive enough to serve as a functional instrument for all imaginable situations of language teaching.

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A STUDY OF DIFFERENTIATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN IMPROVING CLASSROOM ACHIEVEMENT

ADINA GLAVA and CATALIN GLAVA

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG. Ein Studium über die unterschiedlichen Behandlung und ihre Implikationen in der Schulleistungsverbesserung.

Die folgende Diskussion über die unterschiedliche Behandlung hat die Abstammung in der praktischen Erfahrung, die wir in den rumänischen und englischen speziellen Schulen erworbt haben und es dehnt über die Allgemeinschulen aus weil die Zentrierung auf die Besonderen Lehrenbedürfnisse die Verbesserungsmöglichkeiten der unterrichts – und Lehrenmethodologie, der alle Schüler sich zu erfreuen, hervorheben kann. Der Unterschiedlichebehandlungs begriff wird definiert sein und es wird eine vergleichende Analyse, die die unterschiedliche Natur des Herausgehens des Unterschiedsproblems in Rumänien und Gross Britannien auszeichnen wird, gemacht. Überdies werden wir ein verändertes Modell der unterschiedlichen Behandlung das auf Klaus Wedells und John Vissers Theorie über die individuellen Lehrenstrategien die auf die Verbesserung der Schulleistung jedes Schülers zielen, sich gründet, schildern.

Introduction

Questions like: "Why pupils sometimes fail to learn?" How do the pupils learn? How should I present this subject in order to be sure that it reached everyone's understanding? Which is the key for a successful teaching/learning?" – appear in every teacher's mind all over the world. The answers to these questions are obviously not expected to give recipes for a qualitative teaching and learning, as teaching is a craft rather than a science. Over the years teaching has known different approaches focused on certain variables of the teaching-learning process. In the last decade the effective classroom teaching is strongly related with the issue of differentiation. This is consequential to the teaching process' response to diverse educational needs of pupils.

The following discussion about differentiation originates from practical insights that we gained in special schools and is extended in the mainstream because the focus on learning difficulties can highlight possibilities for improving teaching and learning methodologies on the benefit of all children, everyone having particular learning needs. It is in this regard that the notion of differentiation will be defined and a comparative analysis will be made to emphasize the different nature of approaches to the use of differentiation in Romanian and British school system. In addition to it, a model of differentiation will be suggested. The discussion will culminate in possible implications for teachers intending to use differentiation as a model to improve the school achievement of their pupils.

The necessity of differentiation

The necessity for a differentiated work was realized when we conducted a research in 1995/1996 in mainstream schools from Romania – Cluj-Napoca. The research tried to probe into how the pupils learning needs differ. Our subsequent experience as teachers in a special school for moderate and severe learning difficulties, again, confirmed this need for differentiated approaches in teaching. Every child there could be seen in terms of having three kinds of needs:

Individual needs: arising because of peculiarities of individual characteristics;

Exceptional needs: arising from characteristics shared by some, e.g.: dysgraphia, high musical abilities for Down Syndrome cases;

Common needs: arising from characteristics shared by all, e.g.: emotional need to belong and feel related.

In Romania the special schools for learning difficulties work generally with a specific curriculum, having requirements that don't strictly follow those of national curriculum. However, our experience in undertaking cognitive therapy at the secondary level in special school, with pupils aged 14 – 16, showed us that not all the pupils are able to cope with the requirements of this specific curriculum and the objectives of education are not fulfilled in every pupil's case. In fact, every one of our pupils represents an individual case.

In the above context we recognize the variety of pupil factors in our classes, the necessity for differentiated teaching and learning experiences becoming obvious. But not the defect and the difficulty have to become the key defining aspect of provision in terms of what is different or additional to mainstream provision. Differentiation has to be addressed to different kinds of educational needs from those that make everyone different and unique to exceptional and common needs. In our opinion, the best way of thinking about differentiation in the context we described is considering pupil's personality as a make-up of special and common needs asking for certain teaching and learning approaches in order to achieve the same educational aims.

The visit to a large number of schools in England have given us the opportunity to study the manner in which teaching process follows the National Curriculum requirements. The recent revision of National Curriculum includes implicit encouragement towards the idea for teachers of matching their teaching to the level of their pupils achievement, whatever their age. With all the pressure that have been placed on teachers by the Key Stages requirements, League Table, GCSE examinations, schools consider the educational needs of their students and differentiation is applied to a wide range of aspects: content, interests, pace, level, access, response, structure, teaching style, time, grouping.

In a Brief Paper on the Future of special needs education for the National Commission on Education in 1993, Wedell emphasizes that: "An educational system which claims to meet the learning needs of all children and young people, surely has to be predicated on the fact that they are different. The correspondingly

obvious point is that an educational system which claims that all pupils have an entitlement to the "broad and balanced" curriculum promoted by the 1988 Educational Act, has to be designed to meet this diversity of learning needs". (21)

Different approaches to differentiation

In her original critique of differentiation, Susan Hart describes three stages for the development of the understanding of pupils learning needs. The *first stage* was recognizing the link between the difficulties experienced by some pupils and the context and opportunities provided for their learning. The consequence was the trying for a better match between the demands of the task and children's existing knowledge and skills. The *second stage* highlighted the limitations of trying to adapt the tasks to meet special learning needs once teaching decisions for the rest of the class has been made. It emphasizes the idea that in adapting the curriculum an account of the needs of all learners had to be taken at the point of planning, not as an afterthought. The *third stage* led to the realization that the alternative approaches needed to enhance learning for children with special needs could be equally beneficial to all other children as well.

Differentiation has been interpreted and defined in a variety of ways during these stages. Some of the major approaches are the following:

"The streaming of pupils according to abilities" (Lacely, 1970)

"The process by which curriculum objectives, teaching methods, assessment methods, resources and learning activities are planned to cater for the needs of the individual pupils" (NCC, 1991)

"The matching of the work to the abilities of the individual children, so that they are stretched, but still achieve success" (NCC, 1993)

"The provision of separate schooling for pupils with particular abilities" (Norwich, 1990)

The definitions listed above offer contrasting views and points of emphasis. They mainly reflect the assumption that differentiation is about meeting every child's individual learning needs as determined by their abilities, so that each one can share the same curriculum, usually in the same school.

However it can be opined that the process of differentiation should be seen in the context of group learning, with emphasis on peculiar needs of individuals.

Differentiation – an analysis on the basis of personal understanding

The elements that should meet in a definition of differentiation are the ones that give a complete view to the process of teaching and learning. The representation¹ below is intended to express these factors and the interrelation between them.

¹ Based on Klaus Wedell, materials presented to the conference "Making Inclusive Education Ordinary" at University of Birmingham, 1997

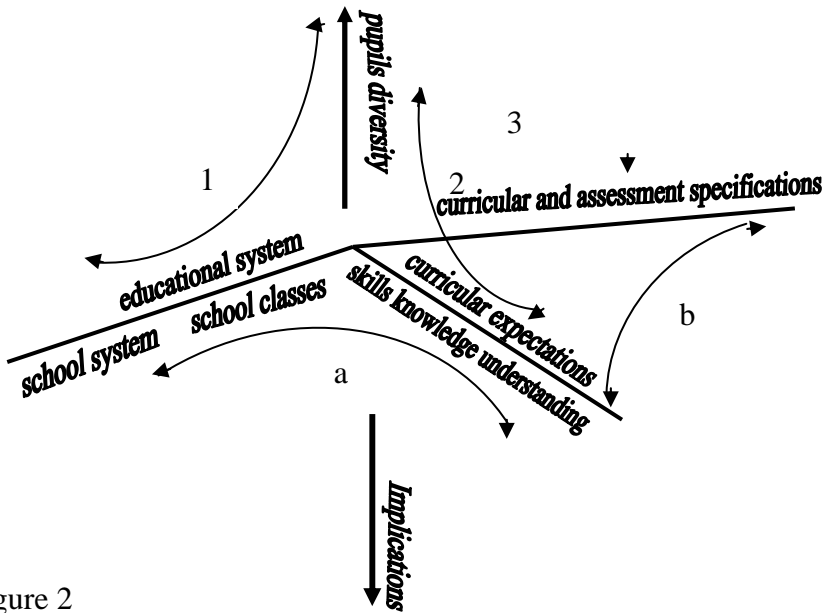
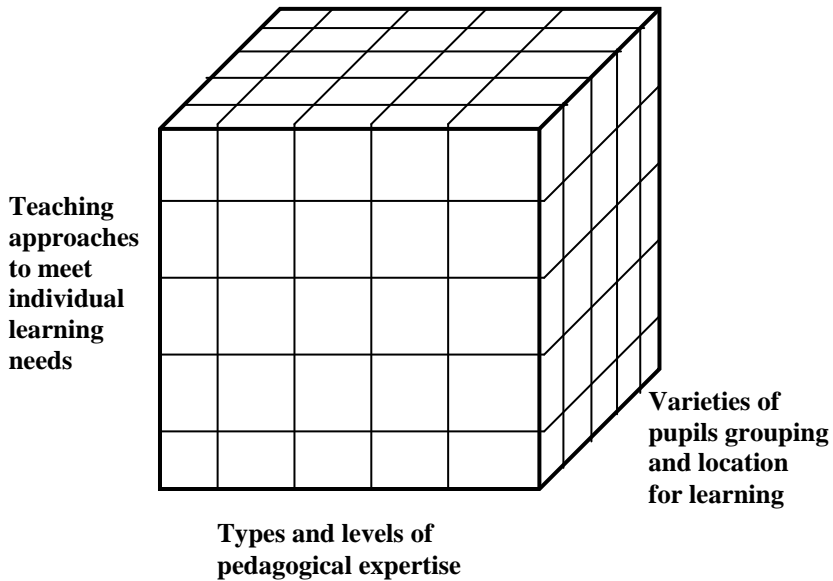


Figure 2



Based on Klaus Wedell's diagram on inclusion

The most important factor in this model is represented by the beneficiaries of the system, the pupils, characterized by a diversity of particular needs. This is the vertical dimension in Figure 1. Pupils' diversity is a variable which influences

the whole teaching process and "it is an asset, an enduring source of uncertainty and thus the driving force behind innovation, growth of knowledge and progress" (Skrtic, 1991).

In the vertical plane (1), the first correlation is that between educational system and pupils. In the educational system children are allocated to schools and to classes within them. Educational system starts from the assumption that all the children are thought in groups. And this assumption is very important for a correct definition of differentiation.

The second vertical dimension (2) of the model intends to make the point that the realization of the various curriculum goals has to be conceived in terms of particular learning needs of individual pupils.

The horizontal plane (a) shows that the grouping of pupils should not be fixed and the curriculum goals and their relevance for pupils' characteristics should determine the composition of groups.

The third vertical plane (3) describes the relation between the diversity of pupils whose outcomes have to match curricular and assessment specifications. "Differentiation should not lead to separate objectives" (Moore, 1992). The requirements for different levels of assessment are the same for all the pupils. What is variable is the way different pupils reach them.

If an educational system accepts the ownership of this diversity of pupils, while it also accepts that the aims of education are the same for all, teaching approaches have to start from the learning demands presented by both pupils and curriculum.

The second horizontal plane (b) shows the relation between curriculum requirements and different levels assessment and rises the discussion of the necessary delimitation between the curriculum learning tasks. This is an idea to be kept in mind during the planning of differentiated work.

The matrix, Figure 2, shows three main ways in which the educational system might meet pupils diversity.

- teaching approaches to meet individual learning needs
- the nature and level of pedagogical expertise required to support pupils progress
- the grouping of pupils and location where learning takes place

The vertical dimension includes teaching approaches which relate to the reconceptualization of curriculum content in order to match pupil's learning abilities. In addition, this relates to teacher's tasks to enhance pupil's motivation for learning, as well as his self- esteem and learning skills.

The horizontal dimension of the matrix refers to the different levels and kinds of pedagogical expertise required supporting pupil's progress. Teaching demands differ, for example, according to whether pupils are faced with new learning, consolidating learning through practice or extended learning. The teacher will decide for the direct involvement in teaching or for managing pupils learning

mediated by other means. These may include individual, paired or group learning, support by teacher aids, and special support from other professional groups.

The third dimension of grouping and location clearly interacts particularly with the second dimension of expertise and will tend to determine whether pupils' learning is best carried out individually or in different sized groups. This is not about the formal homogenous groups that can provide but a rough framework for meeting individual needs. It is about a grouping determined by the learning needs and the demands of the relevant aspects of the curriculum. The conclusion of this discussion proves Visser's (1993) definition about differentiation:

"The process whereby the teachers meet the needs for progress through the curriculum by selecting appropriate teaching methods to match individual child's learning strategy within a group situation"

Visser argues that differentiation should not be seen as an additional activity in the lesson but as a permanent approach during teaching process. Visser's theory about differentiation emphasizes that "teachers mainly teach groups, and differentiation must be placed in the context, even though some individual teaching may be necessary from time to time for particular pupils" (20)

The grouping of children is made on a variety of factors based on homogeneity such as: age, level of achievement, sex, and location of home. The problem of course is that grouping based on homogeneity within one variable is likely to produce heterogeneity for others. For example, children with same IQ levels may be strong in one subject and weak in another. The model of differentiation we will describe in the following lines therefor develops a new approach to grouping the pupils inside the formal groups. In fact, our model of differentiation aims to explain about the way requirements of the definition given above can be put into practice.

Critical description of a model of differentiation

The key ideas that lead the model presented here are:

- teachers teach groups but they are concerned with individual progress;
- children's differences are interesting forms of potential collaboration, pupils proving complementary skills for one another;
- differentiation should make children feel themselves as being equal in a group where differences are encouraged and valued.

Learning through collaboration

Maximizing potential is central to the notion of differentiation, and is the aim of the intervention. It is not the differences between students – these will show themselves anyway. It is the difference between where a student is now and where he/she has the potential to be.

Blagg argues that "the collaboration can help learners to reach their potential". He describes "potential" as: "the difference between the actual mental development level determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers"(Blagg, 1991)

Indeed, collaboration helps learners to:

- develop their own thinking through communication

The importance of this aspect in the "zone of proximal development" was underlined by the eminent educationist Vygotsky who believed that we can move from "known to the unknown" only through talk.

- get support

The children can get support in different ways like thought and language development, emotionally, motivation and encouragement. Barnes, Bruner and Blagg, to quote a few, in their works have comprehensively dealt with the importance of this aspect of collaboration.

- value their achievement

Another advantage of collaboration is that through it children can be helped to ascribe specific roles and to own their achievement.

Collaboration is a very useful tool in differentiated process of schooling. Therefore, it requires good interactions between pupils. Effective collaboration, in our opinion, can be arranged either through grouping or paired tutoring.

Differentiation by structured group work

"Differentiation is aided by the flexible organization of teaching groups" (McCall, 1990; materials presented to a conference of HMI at the Queens Hotel, Cheltenham²). This type of differentiation has been used already for a long time. The approach of grouping is yet traditional, the criterion used being the level of ability. This approach makes children suffering the labeling, drop in self-esteem and de-motivation which are common results of long-term setting of pupils.

The organization of mixed ability groups avoids these dangers and is a good context for collaboration. It is about collaboration between different styles and strengths and not about hierarchy of abilities. Our experiences as teachers proved us that a good approach would be for children to be in a group where everybody is working towards a target, where everyone has the opportunity to be a helper and everyone the opportunity to be helped.

Moore (1992) mentions two context of grouping children: in the class and at the school level, within the key stage or department.

In the classroom learning through collaboration has many benefits if the grouping is made by appropriate criteria. Not only the level of ability should be the criterion for grouping pupils but rather a variety of abilities should be the base for

² McCall quoted by Moore, J. (1992), Good Planning is the Key, in Differentiation: Ways Forward, NASEN, p.16

constructing heterogeneous groups where all pupils are co-operating to produce a well-defined end product. For example, every one of the students can be asked to find information about smaller parts of a larger subject. This structure allows all the children to learn and share in the whole subject whilst only being responsible for a small part. Or, for example, a good observer together with a good descriptor and a good writer in the same team will complete very well a task of evaluating for instance the phenomenon of nature's changes in the autumn. In such structure a less able pupil can make an important contribution in solving a part of task in accord with their capabilities without feeling themselves marginalized or less important.

"Using a combination of structures which allow children to carry out a task whilst being in a situation where they can give and receive feedback from one another enables them to achieve more than previously". (McNamara, Moreton, 1997)

Good results can also be obtained through grouping at the *school level*. In our teaching experience we came across fruitful situations in which two classes, a special unit and a mainstream class followed together a whole set of lessons in different subject matters. Children have been able to benefit from the team-teaching approach and from the supplementary support from teachers and peers. The strategy requires a level of flexibility that can be obtained only when there is a grouping policy at the school level. This is because an effective differentiation requires certain timetable arrangements and/or classroom resources adjustment.

Differentiation through grouping at school level "encourages shared teaching and shared grouping" (Moore, 1992).

Differentiation by paired task

In his definition to differentiation, Moore argues that "differentiation is also about peer group working" (Moore, 1992) If differentiation by structured group work is about gathering for the same task of children in a certain number with certain abilities, differentiation by paired task is about using pairs of pupils to help each other for meeting certain target set by the teacher. Pupils take the role of tutor or tutee as they strengths and/or weak points in their abilities, knowledge, personality.

Teaching through paired task is not an easy option. Topping comments that peer tutoring needs skillful teachers to organize it and a careful planning which is about "matching child pairs, finding the right sort of materials, training tutors and tutees, and lots of other points of organization."(1988).

Once correctly applied, differentiation by paired task has many advantages:

- enables children to feel the same as everyone else through the whole session;
- stops ridiculing because children starts to help one another share their fear and anxieties and come to know each other as learners;

- ensures that children get one to one help in their area of weakness
- enables children to feel supported;
- children show self-discipline during tutoring process, which may be an indication that they find it self-reinforcing;
- both, tutors and tutees improve their communication, social, reasoning skills;

This approach to differentiation stops the main danger that the differentiation could make pupils feel different and inferior to their peers, because collaboration:

- enhances pupil's self-image by:
 - "making pupils feel supported
 - making pupil feel a responsible human being
 - helping pupil feel competent
 - teaching pupil to set realistic goals
 - encouraging realistic self-praise" (Burns, 1982)
- leads to independence from teacher and support teacher
- leads to deep thinking
- allows for a variety of structures and therefore help the teachers to pace their lessons

Schools policy regarding differentiation. A comparative study of school policy regarding differentiation in Romania and U.K.

Differentiation is an educational concept which is not entirely new. Due to the educational reform that is on going both in Romania and in UK, the educational policy following relatively new thinking, places high expectations upon teachers to show evidence of differentiation in their teaching approaches. In this respect, in Romania, the new Education Law no.84/1995 consists of many important regulations concerning rights and real access of pupils with different educational needs to education within community. End of year 1995 brought the "National Plan for action regarding children" which strongly advise on "equalisation of chances" (exclusion prevent and marginalization) for all children. Another important document which designs the policy about differentiation in Romanian schools is "The Salamanca World Conference Declaration" (1994) which emphasizes the necessity for a flexible curriculum and teaching strategies in order to meet varied educational needs. These documents were in the last years doubled by the new documents developed by the Ministry of National Education that describe the content and requirements of Romanian National Curriculum.

In England, since its emergence in "Better Schools" (DES, 1998) as one of the four marks of the acceptable curriculum (broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated), differentiation has been a key issue in considering the process of curriculum change and planning. The variety of methods through which curriculum

is differentiated in schools as they came out within our visits to different British schools made obvious that a whole policy is built around teacher's attitude and action in this respect. The Warnock Report (DES, 1978) emphasized the necessity that various curriculum goals to be conceived in terms of particular needs of individual pupils. "the purpose of education for all the children is the same: the goals are the same. But the help that individual children need in progressing towards them will be different". (Chapter 1, Paragraph 1.4.)

If in Romania the necessity of differentiation is recognised in the documents we mentioned above, what lacks is a detailed support document for the successful application of this requirement. Therefore, many teachers carry on quite much differentiated work but this is not necessarily productive as is applied with no consequence and the range of types of differentiation is quite reduced. For example, often used is the differentiation by task-different worksheets of adjusted difficulty for respective levels of children's capacity, and differentiation by outcomes, where the worksheet holds questions which become progressively difficult.

In U.K. the question regarding the necessity of differentiation does not confine to the stage of demanding it. Code of Practice (2.10, point2) requires schools' policies to describe "arrangements for providing access to the curriculum for pupils with SEN to a balanced and broadly based curriculum, including the National Curriculum". Starting from this, the advice (but not the requirement) is for schools to consider the development of practical guide lines that will be useful for each practitioner. The Handbook for Inspection of Schools makes teachers aware of the OFSTED requirements regarding differentiation. Analysing the OFSTED reports for some secondary schools we visited in UK., the reference is made to the following main forms of differentiation, for which school needs to develop additional guidance: differentiation by organizational style, by text/resources, by task, by support, by outcomes. Most of the schools we visited have already included in their school policies these guide lines, transforming school policy documents in real support for teachers.

Lessons learned from experiences in Romania and UK

The question that is to be put is what makes a successful use of differentiation? In most cases in Romania the approach to differentiation is still a traditional one. Many teachers feel overwhelmed and frustrated about the amount of work and relative lack of success they have experienced struggling with differentiation. Teachers having classes of 30 plus pupils are not likely to use differentiation very often as they are overburdened with all kinds of responsibilities, many related with the complex curriculum requirements. This is one of the reasons that led us to proposing the model of differentiation through paired task. It has the advantages of one-to-one teaching and does not require an extra cost which many schools in Romania can not afford (like recruiting the support teachers or decreasing the number of pupils per class).

Differentiation in teaching activity should not be just an exercise extra to the everyday practice and for this is needed a whole policy of applying differentiated strategies. Schools should create structures in order to enable teachers to practice various types of differentiation and develop additional guidelines of using it. In our opinion a detailed guide line should:

- Suggest teachers ideas about possibilities and requirements in action of differentiation
- Make teachers's preparation for differentiation easier
- Give unity to teachers work in schools/ one level of education
- Enable teachers to meet OFSTED requirements in differentiation.

At the whole school level it is important for the senior management group to provide the most appropriate management structure in order to observe, analyse and feedback its conclusions to the whole staff, have clear policies in matters as individual differences, staff support and collaboration and grouping of pupils, demonstrate its commitment to curriculum support through a flexible timetable.

The preparation for differentiation must be extended towards the aspects of *teacher training*. The aim is to give the staff a common language in talking about differentiation within an agreed framework for its implementation, and to create or develop competencies such as: classroom management skills, good knowledge about own pupils learning style, the ability of setting clear objectives, flexibility in choosing appropriate teaching strategies, team work abilities, secure comand on subject and curriculum addaptation skills.

Conclusions

Authors like Moss, McNamara and Hart identify some of the deficiencies of differentiation such as encouraging the focus on individual learners and not considering the real context of school learning community, as well as its negative effects upon children's self-esteem, attitudes and identities as learners. It is also said that it can have adverse effects upon teachers and pupils' expectations and upon the learning opportunities. This work tried to respond to these criticism by advancing some arguments which revolve around the idea that : "perceptions of pupils' ability may have as much to do with the way that teaching is organized as any intrinsic pupil characteristic. " (Bines, 1986). It also suggested some ways of making differentiation a tool for curbing these possible damages and improving the achievement of both pupils and teachers. The whole discussion helps us concluding that the techniques adopted in meeting "special educational needs" could also prove equally effective as a continued source and stimulus for improving learning opportunities for all children.

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HOW IS RECEIVED AND ACHIEVED THE REFORM NOW (AT THE BEGINNING OF NEW CHANGES)

VASILE CHIȘ

ABSTRACT. During the period of 1996 and 1997, the debates on education were focused on types of reform appropriate and feasible within the context of Romanian Educational System. The literature at that time outlined three formulas: (1) reform by contagion, from successful cases of reform in several kindergartens, secondary schools, high schools, and universities; (2) the systemic reform of education; (3) the acceleration of changes underway.

The article focuses upon the major innovations occurred in Romanian education last three years, and examines the strong points and weaknesses as well.

The educational reform before the year 2000 involved mainly the components of curriculum and management that represented priorities within the light of the educational policy of the time. The focus of the reform on the punctual domains of the educational system, as those stated above, is founded on numerous National Ministry of Education (NME) and other qualified institutions documents (see: *www.edu.ro*, key words: *reform, management*, period of time: 1997 – 2000).

The analyses about the innovations within the educational system reveal that until 1997 they were of a little relevance. The postponement or the obstruction of educational reform characterized the first five years of the decade. The topics of the reform within education starts to re-gain contour and to re-become a subject of systematical debate not earlier then after 1996 and 1997, fact that is unanimously recognized.

Starting with 1996 numerous pedagogical and non-pedagogical debates were organized regarding the type of the educational reform within the new transition period. The results of these debates can be synthesized in the following alternatives of development, but their validation within the school setting always remains a controversy issue.

- *Extensional reform*, through the generalization of certain successful experiences from the local and zonal level (kindergartens, schools, high schools and universities) to the whole educational system. In this case a model or a prototype of change is assumed, a model that is developed bearing in mind the particular situation or conjuncture, but is invested with quasi-general features. These are pedagogical innovations that remain partly solitary, as unique examples

at the theoretical and practical educational level. Waldorf School, The Step-by-Step System, Montessori System etc. are a few examples of reduced scale changes within the educational system. *The alternative pedagogies* penetrated our educational system too easily, without being sustained by a coherent educational policy at the level of the educational system and by a pertinent evaluation concept.

- *The reform of innovation and of acceleration of started changes.*

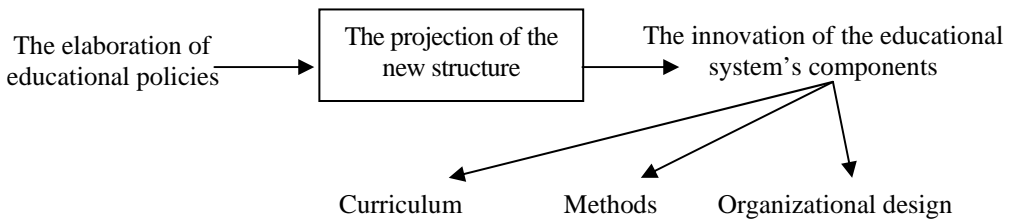
The difficulty in adopting this reform model within our situation consists in the fact that until 1996 we cannot speak about significant changes in education.

- *System reform, (meaning) the structural reform of the educational system.*

The evolution of the educational systems everywhere in the world reveal solid arguments that the way the education looks today is the result of the projection and implementation of the reform, both at a global level and at its components level. A special feature distinguishes between the modern and traditional (comenian) educational systems. Their structure knew a fundamental reform; the hierarchical, vertical structure of educational system has been replaced with a web structured one. (V. Chiş, 1998).

2. *The model of innovation and the applications' variation*

The accumulated experience convince us that the reform follows three strictly determined stages, the accomplishment of one being the premise for the beginning of the next one. In general lines, these stages would involve the following:



The reform process in our country though segmented, but grounded in conception, it is not implemented into practice with enough consistency, here lacking the articulation between the new educational paradigms and the practical approaches.

Examples:

- The new "Framework programmes" destined to pre-university educational system diversifies the curriculum offer: compulsory curriculum (national; local curriculum (at school's disposal/school's decision) and individual curriculum (optional). At school level is quite frequent the tendency to join the local and optional curriculum to the compulsory one, which distorts the concept of reform.

- The current debate held in schools develops sometimes into simple verbal mimesis. At a conceptual level, **curriculum** replaces **the curriculum**, fact that baffles any qualified intervention to operationalize the concept.

- In the process of elaboration of alternative handbooks the academic orientation prevails, the volume of knowledge being stresses in the detriment of its structure and essence. This tendency is clearly expressed in the definition of curricular areas. For example, the curriculum area **Mathematics and sciences** lets one understand that mathematics is considered a super-science, so without being fully instructed within integrals, logarithms, trigonometric functions etc. one cannot be a science man.

- The didactic process comes out with difficulty from the traditional clichés; teaching is often seen as a simple information transmission, lacking the interest and the competencies for the organization of real learning experiences.

- Within the implementation of reform essential links of the innovation process was partially or profoundly ignored. These links involve, in a concise description, a chain of interacting stages:

Research → **Implementation** → **Evaluation** → **Dissemination**

School obstinately preserve the principles of Comenius regarding organization and functioning of the education, gradually isolating itself from the real life requirements which are evidently far more complex today then in the second half of seventeenth century

Example: We assist to an ordinary lesson. The students are at their desks, one behind another as in our grandparents' time. All of them look ahead where is the teacher at his desk, in front of the class. This is what they are required to do: to look ahead. Where do they find to their personal confrontations: to the teacher, in the back of his colleague or far from school's fences? An obvious question arises: what goals do the contemporary school aims to?

Contrast example: The students are everywhere in the classroom. They naturally group together, depending on their study interests and on the pedagogical resources provided by the teacher. The students look to one another, face to face, communicating. All get the chance of a real dialogue.

3. Strategic options

Diagnosis studies on the Romanian educational system predicted partly the strategic options necessary in order to reconstruct the institutional capacity to support the reform. Within this context are to be taken into consideration the following:

- the development of qualified professional centers for research and management of changes in education;
- the development of excellency centers as laboratories of reform expertise;
- the setting up a pilot schools network where the innovations to be validated and spread
- the development of consultancy and professional training market;
- the surveillance of the manner local educational authorities and school units receive and develop into practice the educational policies
- The assessment of the training level of the executive authorities in implementing into practice the educational policies
- Consultancy offer regarding the operationalization of educational policy elements;
- The involvement into the management of the implementation and results evaluation process;
- The drawing up and the spreading of certain national quality standards in education, related with its main elements:
 - the volume and structure dimensions of the curricular areas;
 - the development of the instructive-educational activities in relation with their support documents- plans, programmes, handbooks etc.;
 - the development of the instructive-educational process in the succession of its specific activities: teaching, learning and evaluation;
 - the pedagogical relationships field;
 - the pedagogical design of schools and school system's activities;
 - the initial and continuing teacher training etc.
- The analysis and articulation of the school programmes with the requirements of the workforce and to the social needs of the community;
- The development of internal and international projects on the topic of quality in education;
- The elaboration of performance descriptors in relation with the new Framework Programmes for the pre-university educational system ea.

4. Decisions on the reform

We keep in mind, in summary, that after the year 1997 were considered for debate three stages of the educational reform: (1) *the extensional reform* made through the generalization of certain local experiences; (2) *the reform of innovation and of the acceleration of started changes* and (3) *the system reform* which is the reform of the educational system's structures.

NME publications were appreciating in 1997 that none of the three alternatives of the education system's development do not lead to the reform necessary for the Romanian educational system. In a condensed analysis, the arguments for this statement are:

- The irradiation reform cannot refresh the system on its whole. It is obvious that the local experiences are beneficial, but they don't aim innovations at a systemic level, remaining in the casuistic field.

- The system reform does not change the content in a sufficient manner. The predicted changes are too insignificant in order that from their acceleration to result a real reform (A. Marga, 1998).

The analysis of the recognized models of the contemporary educational systems reform comes into contradiction with the hypothesis of the limits of systemic reform.

The modern educational systems find itself within an advanced reform period today. The transitional reform in education involves the transition from the hierarchical, vertical structure, to the flexible, web structure. The systemic reform builds itself on the coherent educational politics and is a premise of all the other innovations. For example, the vertical organized educational system that follows comenian principles embraces the paradigm of the *student adapted to school*. The system innovations change the terms of the traditional paradigm: *the school adapts itself to the student*. Thus, the systemic reform is a global one and of a pedagogical conception one. From this reform naturally follow all the other innovations. Without the systemic reform, the other approaches, however well projected, can fail into simple cosmetics.

In 1997 the option was a *comprehensive educational reform, an unpostponed and present reform*, conceived as a six chapters measures, as follows:

- The curricular reform (educational plan, programmes, handbooks) and the European compatibility achievement for the national curriculum.

- The transition from the reproductive learning to the creative one through *problem solving* and development of scientific research in universities.

- New connections between schools, colleges and universities, on the one hand and the economic, administrative and cultural environment, on the other hand.

- The improvement of infrastructure and the connection to the actual world electronic communication means

- The school and academic management reform through the decentralization and institutional autonomy of the educational units.

- The initiation of advanced ways of international cooperation.

The pedagogical analysis of the six reform domains reveals certain strategies of re-construction of the educational system, necessary and imperative in the 90's. The un-postponed and actual reform is legitimized by the gaps within the insides of the Romanian system (town schools and village schools, the study requirements and the possibilities/needs of students etc.) and between this and the modern education requirements (compatibility, mobility, common projects etc.)

5. *Practical connotations of the reform now*

The curriculum reform does not mean only the elaboration of new educational plans, programs and handbooks (alternative or unique). In keeping with traditional pedagogy, the *educational plans, programs and handbooks* are supports that objectify the educational contents. The curriculum does not substitute the teaching contents. By definition, curriculum is an integrative concept that defines all the learning experienced provided for the students within a concrete study programme designed for a certain profile or educational stage, for a certain school subject or curriculum area, delivered on a period of a semester or in a class hour. Thus, the study programme (the curriculum) articulates within a coherent structure the objectives (performance standards), the contents of school activity, the current activity designs, the educational methods, the study timetable etc. The equivalence put between the curriculum and the educational content proved to be inefficient. A traditional practice was simply transferred to a new concept, without considering its innovating challenges.

Examples:

- The curriculum areas defined within the Framework programmes aim the achievement of the European compatibility for the national curriculum, then the integration of the learning experiences in order to develop certain comprehensive cognitive structures. The central idea is that of the integration of knowledge and applications, of the elimination of fragmentary learning structured in school subject matters.

The questions waiting to be answered are numerous:

- How much and what is necessary and possible a student to learn during a lesson, a certain topic or a study year?
- Which is the optimal curricular structure (volume, complexity, and difficulty) in the area: Language and Communication or Mathematics and Sciences?
- Which is the necessary pedagogical support for certain learning difficulties encountered by the students?

- With the regard to the educational objectives, the new curricular programmes suggestion is: framework objectives, reference objectives. Thus, the accredited within the educational sciences taxonomy of the educational objectives is totally ignored, fact that leads to an undesirable confusion within the didactic projection and evaluation process.

- The field evaluation activities regarding the implementation of the curriculum reform are not systematic, the casuistic approaches and the day by day observations disclosing numerous malfunctions, while at NME level a notable success is registered.

For example, as a result of a general questionnaire regarding the impact of the curricular reform (<http://www.edu.ro/constat/htm>) the following conclusions are given:

- More than 80% of the teachers (from 1500 research subjects) express their agreement about the curriculum reform, though 68% of them "faced the novelty without any previous training". The comments go further: "surprisingly, despite the high degree of novelty, the experienced teachers quasi-unanimously accept the reform".

- The curriculum at school's decision is not distinguished from the optional one ("With regard to the curriculum at school's decision, though only 38,7% of the subjects teach an optional subject matter 77,6% express their desire to teach one in the future").

Further on we will discuss a parallel between the concepts of curriculum in use in the sciences of education and those stated in our reform programme:

Core or national curriculum	—————▶	National curriculum
Local (zonal) curriculum	—————▶	Curriculum at school's decision
Individual (optional) curriculum	—————▶	Optional curriculum

In the pedagogical concept grid, *curriculum at school's decision* is an expression of school's isolation from the community. *Local curriculum* defines the educational local, zonal needs. So, the school's anchorage in the social and economical immediate realities is not possible through programmes at school's decision, but through programmes that are adequate to the social and economical proximal requirements.

It must be stressed that modern school is not egocentric, does not simply impose a curriculum at its own decision because this would be nonsense. Local curriculum is rather at the community's decision, with its economical and social context which schools ought to translate into educational programmes, collaborating with the interested agents. Once the school provided a local curriculum, this becomes compulsory within the programme of that school, but it does not replace the optional or the core curriculum.

In the end, the optional subject matters define the needs and *individual study possibilities, the individual curriculum*. This category of learning experiences is under the family and pupil's option, and not at all under the decision of school or its teachers.

The translation from the reproductive to the creative learning, through problem solving is not to be made through the simple change of learning contents, through the curriculum reform. Within this approach, the innovation is sustained by the didactic methodology.

The taxonomy of the didactic methodology is a large chapter of the educational theory and practice. For an example, we describe the significant stages in its evolution:



Our school mainly practices a frontal teaching, where the expositive methods are fully suitable for the requirements of the programmes that are common and compulsory. The group activities and personalized (individualized) teaching appear with difficulty within the fragmented reform conditions.

The connexion between schools, colleges and universities, on the one hand and the economic, administrative and cultural environment, on the other hand.

The partnership in education is a "strange body" for the traditional school. "Open door school" is still a desideratum in our educational context. The teacher in his classroom and the head teacher in his school consider themselves "sovereigns" and "self-sufficient" at their own working places. Similarly, the local educational authorities. The spontaneous or announced visit of any visitors is obviously making them feel uncomfortable.

The teaching profession has the tradition of the solitary, of the adult and "expert" person that is one between his pupils. The teacher speaks for himself more than with his colleagues. Often, the lesson is more important for himself than for his students. The monologue exceeds the dialogue, the real communication, the debate being easily equaled by teaches' speech.

The school-family relationship often becomes a "volleyball ground", pupil's difficulties being passed from one part to another. Against the modern pedagogy, our school does not take the full control of the educational roles she is invested with.

6. The results of the reform now. The external perception on the education and the projections of the reform

There is no doubt that the curriculum reform has been doubled by a large spectrum of innovations and focuses on the complementary restructuring areas in the interior of the global educational system: new handbooks elaboration, a new structure of the school and academic year; the didactic evaluation and the institutional evaluation; the teacher training; the reorganization of the school network; the extension of vocational schools; the teaching process reorganization as problem solving process; the creation of new interactions between education and social and economical context; the family involvement in the school project

implementation; the improvement of infrastructure and the connection to informational technologies; local investments in the school units; the development of rural educational system etc. Teachers and schools, parents and community already faced the limits of the old educational habits, but the predicted changes still wait for gaining a real contour.

It is still remarkable that the external perception regarding the Romanian educational system developed in the last years, which is a signal of validation through compatibility, of conceptual and strategic credibility.

Examples:

(1) In the studies made by European Union regarding the Romanian educational system in the year 1996 and 1997 was noted:

- the main difficulty encountered by the reform is the low level of the funds allocated by the government for the maintenance and improvement of the educational infrastructure, for the provision of teaching materials and equipment and for the payment of attractive wages.

- other unfavorable elements were identified within the poor institutional capacity of the Ministry of Education to assume the reform and within the poor resistance to change proved at the national and local level.

(2) The reports elaborated by European Union, on the bases of the studies carried on in 1998 and 1999 hold good references on the improvement of the institutional and legislative framework, as well as on the educational system reform that was beginning to gain contour:

- The National Ministry of Education made significant steps towards the institutional and legislative reform; for instance: the National Curriculum Council, the National Evaluation and Examination Office and the National Agency for Teacher Training were created;

- The National Ministry of Education initiated important changes within all the sectors of the educational system. The Romanian educational system provides a remarkable public service and it is involved in a profound changing process that aims the improvement of teaching, learning and evaluation quality.

(3) Similarly, are to be considered the innovations proposed by the *Comprehensive reform* in 1998 and 1999, which unfortunately gained more international than national attention.

- the elaboration and the spreading of the new National Curriculum and of the Framework programmes for all the levels of pre-university system

- the alternative handbooks publishing

- the transition to the semesters structure of the school year

- the reform of the didactic and institutional evaluation, and their foundation on the *performance descriptors, capacity exams* and *national school-leaving examination*.

The decentralization of the educational system and the setting up of the premises for the pedagogical, administrative and financial autonomy within the school network.

If the development of the reform is seen as successful, in a similar optimistic manner is described its perspective on a short and longer term. Within a view that does not disclose *legitimate expectations* the year 2000 would mark the ending of the transitional reform of the Romanian educational system. Unfortunately this evaluation considers the strategies and the paradigms of the reform, the educational policy components, but not the already validated results nor the clear tendencies.

Example:

-The curriculum areas proposed by the new Framework Programmes are interpreted and applied within the acknowledged limits of the subject matter. For instance, within the curriculum areas: Language and Communication and Mathematics and Sciences the teacher must teach the lessons within the canons specific to certain subject- matters (grammar, literature, biology, physics etc.). Which is the pedagogical relevance of the replacement of subject matters with the curriculum areas?

The answer is the following: *the curriculum area defines a teaching and learning interdisciplinary experience, an integrated one*: the notion of mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology, language and philosophy etc. are not gathered into a collage, but in an unitary structure that can be a lesson. This approach defines the curricular area. One first projection within the curriculum reform would be the identification of study projects, themes for the necessary curriculum.

The following reform projection, the firstly one even, in our view, includes a début message for the programme or the project: the changing of mentality. The agents of the educational reform are the teachers, the students, the professionals employed by the educational institutions and units. The support of the reform requires action structure, attitudes and adequate competencies from its agents.

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LES MÉTHODES ACTIVES AUJOURD'HUI

LILIANA CIASCAI

ABSTRACT. The Active Teaching/Learning Method Today. Teachers who combine the skill of making on the spot decision with a reflexive approach, who take some time to review the moment of decision, to examine what influenced it and what the alternative might have been, engage themselves in a process of self-directed learning based on personal experience (Head, Taylor, 1997). For their students they are a realistic example. In schools, effective teachers are those who engage in continual prompts to get children to plan and monitor their own activities (Weinert, 1987).

Le procès didactique connaît une permanente transformation, dûe, d'un part à la forte pression socio - économique à laquelle il est soumis et de l'autre part à la liaison avec la science et avec la technique - les deux en cours d'évolution continue. Ce qu'on poursuit aujourd'hui dans l'éducation c'est la formation et le développement conscient, de l'apprenant des capacités intellectuelles et des structures actionnelles qui lui assurent l'autonomie et le discernement dans un domaine de connaissance.

1. Vers la méthode active

À partir de la définition étymologique "chemin vers", "voie à suivre" et jusqu'à présent sur le concept de méthode "didactique" ont mis l'empreinte les influences et les tendances qui ont marqué la pédagogie aussi. Elles se sont croisées avec les résultats des recherches réalisées dans les domaines de la didactique, des résultats qui ont surpris de nouvelles caractéristiques du concept, en élargissant la sphère et le contenu de la notion (Ionescu, Chiș, 1992). En conséquence, la méthode a été définie comme **modalité d'organisation et de déroulement de l'activité instructive-éducative** (Bruner, 1970), **moyen d'activité interdépendante** des cadres didactiques et des élèves, orientée vers l'accomplissement des objectifs instructifs éducatifs (Babanski, 1979), **instrument d'action** (Oprescu, 1986). Cerghit (1980) analyse la méthode sous l'aspect cybernétique en montrant que celle-ci inclue "des éléments de commande ou de direction de l'activité de l'élève ou des éléments de liaison réactive". Popescu Neveanu (1976) identifie la méthode, successivement, avec un "**système de procédures** par lequel on parvient à un résultat, **une structure d'ordre, un programme** selon lequel se règlent les actions pratiques et celles intellectuelles pour atteindre un but". L'influence ressentie dans la pédagogie de la part de la psychologie cognitive conduit finalement à la définition de la méthode comme "**un ensemble d'opérations mentales et pratiques du binôme éducationnel**" (Ionescu, Chiș, 1992). On souligne ainsi le fait que la méthode suppose une

concordance dans le fonctionnement interactif des mécanismes cognitifs des deux sujets impliqués dans le procès d'enseignement-apprentissage. En même temps, le caractère de l'acte personnel de l'apprentissage est évident. Dans ces conditions devient de plus en plus évident le fait qu'il faut exclure "la possibilité d'une méthode unique, généralement valable pour toutes les situations" (Cerghit, 1980), chaque méthode étant une réponse précise à un projet donné, dans un contexte particulier" (Giry, 1994). Les méthodes d'enseignement ont aussi "un caractère systémique, dans le sens que, sans perdre l'identité spécifique, elles se joignent, se complètent et elles s'influencent réciproquement, dans un ensemble cohérent méthodologique" (Bontaş, 1994). C'est à elles que la majorité des pédagogues attribuent une position privilégiée devant les autres composantes et surtout un "**rôle intégrateur, d'union, de mise en relation de celles-ci**" (Cerghit, 1980, Ionescu et al., 1997).

Comme une conclusion nous nous contentons de citer l'opinion d'un célèbre pédagogue: "toute méthode pédagogique résulte de la rencontre de plusieurs facteurs et de ce point de vue, l'éducation restera toujours un art: l'art d'adapter à une situation précise, les indications générales données par les livres de méthodologie" (Mialaret, 1981).

La méthode activ(-participative). En montrant que les principes qui se trouvent à la base des méthodes actives de l'enseignement ont commencé à s'affirmer peu après 1900, Popescu et Roman (1980) passent en revue les caractéristiques des méthodes actives à travers le temps. Les deux auteurs cités analysent les méthodes fondementées sur les mécanismes individuels de la pensée (la méthode Montessori, la méthode Delcroly, la méthode Freinet, le plan Dalton, la méthode des projets proposée par J. Dewey etc.), les méthodes axées sur les mécanismes d'adaptation à la vie sociale (la méthode de la coopération, la méthode de l'autonomie du groupe, le plan Jena) en s'arrêtant avec plus d'attention sur la position manifestée envers les méthodes actives par J. Piaget et S. Bruner mais sans oublier B. F. Skinner, M. A. Bloch et G. Mialaret et quelques pédagogues roumains. Ils analysent la possible relation entre l'instruction (P. J. Galperin, W. Okon, R. Gagne) et les méthodes actives. En ce qui concerne le contenu du concept "méthode active - participative", il est à remarquer la contribution de Cerghit (1980). L'ouvrage cité souligne la nécessité d'une délimitation du point de vue classique, qui superpose les méthodes actives aux méthodes d'action, en montrant en même temps qu'il s'impose une reconsidération du concept: "des méthodes actives sont celles qui font appel à la capacité de l'élève de penser et d'agir, d'imaginer et de créer en même temps". En insistant sur le fait que les méthodes actives sont des méthodes qui "favorisent le développement d'un constructivisme opératoire", plus précisément elles favorisent simultanément, autant l'élaboration de nouvelles connaissances (des structures cognitives) par des efforts propres, et aussi la construction des opérations mentales correspondantes que nous voulons former". Cerghit ouvre une nouvelle perspective sur les méthodes actives: **les méthodes actives sont des méthodes participatives par excellence, des méthodes qui exigent de l'engagement effectif, propre, du dévouement personnel de l'action**".

À travers le temps on a ajouté au concept de méthode active certaines précisions générées par les changements de paradigme connues par la pédagogie.

Aujourd'hui nous considérons le caractère actif de la **méthode dépendant du contexte d'application**. Nous disons qu'**une méthode a un caractère actif** si elle est employée par l'élève dans les conditions suivantes:

- l'élève connaît la méthode (les manières de raisonnement, ses étapes, les modalités de décision et d'action dans chaque étape);
- pour projeter, contrôler et régler correctement ses actions au cours de l'utilisation de la méthode l'élève a une représentation sur la tâche presque identique à celle du professeur;
- l'élève apprend en situations d'apprentissage interactives - en comparant ses idées et ses actions à celles des autres (la méthode active ne suppose pas obligatoirement le travail indépendant, par contre ses valences participatives sont augmentées par le travail en groupe accompagné par de débats ou de confrontation d'idées);
- l'élève apprend par réflexion (à ses idées et actions et aussi à celles de ses pairs).

Les valences de la méthode active (engage la personne, développe l'indépendance et la responsabilité de l'élève etc.) surpassent sur leur principal désavantage: la consommation de temps et le fait que, tient à remarquer Vial (1982), certains élèves acceptent difficilement cette responsabilité augmentée, que l'emploi des méthodes actives leur confère.

2. Les méthodes actives et les opérations mentales

Les pédagogies nouvelles s'inscrivent dans une démarche d'éducation métacognitive et supposent un nouveau contrat pédagogique. Dans ce type de formation il s'agit de permettre aux apprenants de disposer de compétences exploitables dans toute situation d'apprentissage, en développant ainsi l'autonomie éducative. Il ne s'agit donc, de transmettre des compétences précises, correspondant à une finalité particulière.

Pour Piaget, l'intelligence est le résultat de l'interaction entre l'individu et l'environnement. Chaque sujet, par le jeu du processus assimilation-accommodation traite mentalement les informations qui lui viennent de l'environnement. Le résultat de ce traitement mental est que les opérations mentales permettant l'élaboration de réponses (la construction de l'intelligence) et aussi les réponses aux stimuli (le savoir du sujet). Par l'interaction entre le sujet et l'environnement il est possible d'apprendre à penser ou d'apprendre à apprendre. Pour cela il est nécessaire d'identifier les opérations mentales qui interviennent dans l'appropriation de connaissances, puis de construire des situations didactiques facilitant la mise en oeuvre de ces opérations mentales par le sujet. Ce qu'il faut apprendre ce ne sont pas des faits, mais comment découvrir certains faits, comment rassembler, classer, analyser des informations.

Dans l'application de la méthode, on distingue des opérations mentales de base utilisables dans toutes les phases de la méthode, et des opérations spécifiques à chacune des phases du processus:

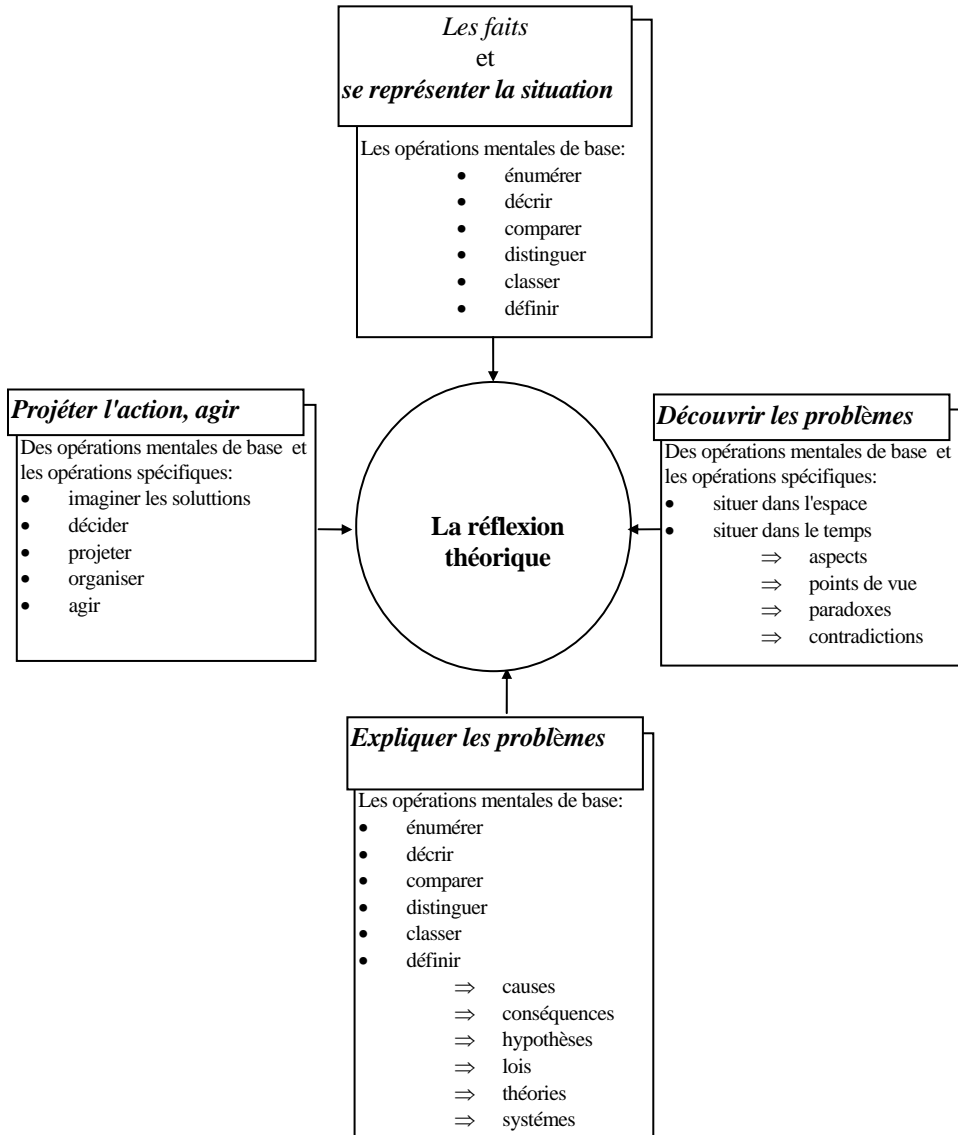


Fig.1. Des opérations mentales de base et des opérations spécifiques

3. L'utilisation d'une méthode active ne doit pas être mécanique mais vécue

En pratique, la méthode est intégrée dans une stratégie didactique. Les documents UNESCO (1976) définissent la stratégie didactique comme "**une modalité d'organisation chronologique de l'ensemble de méthodes et de moyens choisis pour atteindre certains objectifs**". Parent et Neron, cités par Neacșu (1990), considèrent la stratégie didactique

"une manière d'aborder l'apprentissage et l'enseignement, de combinaison et d'organisation optimale des méthodes et des moyens trouvés à la disposition et des formes des groupe d'élèves, dans le but d'atteindre les objectifs suivis". Ionescu (1987) précise le concept, en détaillant son contenu: la stratégie réside donc dans **"un ensemble de formes, de méthodes, de moyens techniques et les principes de leur utilisation, à l'aide desquels on véhicule des contenus en vue d'atteindre les objectifs"**. Conformément aux définitions données la stratégie didactique représente un **"concept surordonnée et intégrateur"** (Neacșu, 1990).

L'intégration des méthodes dans une stratégie suppose, d'après Parent et Neron (1981), apud. Preda (1985), deux phases:

- une phase d'analyse quand on procède à la sélection des méthodes, des moyens d'instruction et les formes d'organisation de l'activité. On fait cette sélection en fonction du niveau taxonomique de formuler opérationnellement l'objectif fondamental de la leçon, le type d'apprentissage et (implicitement) les principes didactiques qui seront mis en pratique. On tient aussi compte du contenu scientifique qui doit être étudié, de la psycho-sociologie des groupes scolaires, de la nature des moyens de l'enseignement, de l'expérience et de la compétence didactique du professeur, nous dit. Cucuș (1996).
- une phase de synthèse dans laquelle on procède "en tenant compte des interrelations entre les principes didactiques, les méthodes de l'enseignement et les formes d'organisation de l'activité didactique" (Ionescu, 1997), à l'intégration de tous les éléments ci-dessus énumérés dans un projet applicable et efficient.

Nous considérons efficiente une activité didactique projetée en partant d'une évaluation correcte des ressources (humaines et matérielles), qui impliquent les élèves dans la réalisation d'une tâche comprise et acceptée par ceux-ci et dans laquelle l'intensité et la durée de l'effort sollicité soient rapportées autant à l'âge et au potentiel biopsychique (Căliman, 1990) et aussi à la courbe de l'effort (Ionescu, Chiș, 1987).

Les stratégies nonprescrites (activisantes, participatives) sont celles par lesquelles on procède à la construction des connaissances par les élèves. Ce processus peut se produire:

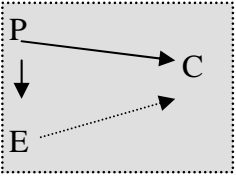
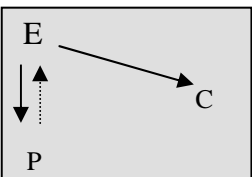
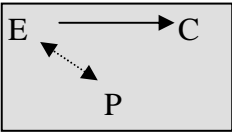
- dans les conditions dans lesquelles le problème (la tâche) proposé aux élèves comporte soit une solution précise, soit une certaine méthode de solution. Dans ce cas nous parlons de stratégies de reconstruction de la connaissance dans le domaine. Celles-ci peuvent être axées sur l'expérimentation, la modélisation (la construction du modèle), la problématisation;

- dans la situation dans laquelle les élèves procèdent à la construction de la solution, cette construction se réalisant dans une manière propre, par l'essai et l'erreur. Nous parlons, dans ce cas, de stratégies heuristiques ou créatives.

Les situations d'apprentissage qui supposent l'utilisation des méthodes actives sont:

Tableau 1.

Des situations d'apprentissage

La situation d'apprentissage	La description de la situation didactique (la relation de l'élève avec la connaissance et le professeur)	Le modèle de la situation
L'apprentissage médié par le professeur	L'élève apprend séquentiellement, mais en réalisant un tâche dont le but il comprend. Il contribue à la construction des règles d'action. Il ne connaît pas quand même l'architecture d'ensemble de la démarche qu'il entreprend.	
Le professeur a le rôle de modérateur	L'élève apprend par tâtonnement. Il construit seul sa connaissance. Le professeur oriente la démarche de l'élève (par des suggestions, des explications, des verifications, des confrontations, donc en intervenant surtout dans les moments de structurations des connaissances).	
L'élève apprend indépendamment (il est autonome)	L'élève apprend par tâtonnement, hors des objectifs préétablis. Il se construit les règles d'action, en évaluant sans cesse ses actions. Il contrôle la démarche du dépassement de l'obstacle cognitif et le réglage de l'activité. Le rôle du professeur est de fournir des matériaux et de répondre à certaines sollicitations.	

Les situations d'apprentissage mentionnées peuvent être facilement rencontrées dans la pratique. La dernière situation fait exception. La pédagogie constructiviste qui avance ce dernière genre de situation d'apprentissage considère que seulement la connaissance construite par chaque individu est opérationnelle et transférable, elle est un réel apprentissage.

Il faut conclure comme Meirieu (1989): **c'est l'élève qui apprend, et lui seul. Il apprend à sa manière, comme n'a jamais appris ni apprendra personne. Il apprend avec son histoire, en partant de ce qu'il sait et de ce qu'il est.**

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OBSERVAREA, PROIECTAREA ȘI EVALUAREA OREI DE LITERATURĂ ROMÂNĂ: DEMERSURI COMPLEMENTARE

ALINA PAMFIL

SUMMARY. *Observation, planning and assessment of the Romanian literature lessons: a complementary approach.* The presentation focuses on the models of observation sheets, planning guides and assessment sheets used during the pre-service teaching of Romanian Literature. The text is separated in three sections. The first aims at detailing the contexts that have informed (a) the re-structuring of the methodology of Teaching Practice and (b) the construction of new models. The second and the third sequences consist of the description (a) of the criteria that underlay these models and (b) the way in which they were structured, applied and proved their effectiveness.

1. Problematică

1. 1. Nereușite și inconsecvențe. În centrul acestei discuții sunt așezate (a) trei demersuri specifice practicii pedagogice: observarea, proiectarea și evaluarea orei de literatură și (b) materialele care le pregătesc și susțin: fișele de observare, ghidul de proiectare a lecției și fișa de evaluare. Reflecția vizează, de asemenea, modul în care aceste instrumente au informat practica studenților și modul în care și-au dovedit eficiența.

Focalizarea discuției asupra problematicii orei de literatură este determinată, în primul rând, de dificultatea realizării performanței în predarea literaturii, dificultate exprimată de marea majoritate a studenților și mentorilor, dificultate explicită în numărul mare de consultații solicitate de studenți pentru pregătirea acestui tip de lecții, dificultate manifestă în numărul de ore "refăcute" de student sau profesor, în urma unor activități nereușite.

Focalizarea discuției asupra problematicii orei de literatură este determinată, în al doilea rând, de diferențele prezente în notarea lecțiilor de literatură, diferențe pe care le-am remarcat pe parcursul îndrumării practicii pedagogice și pe care le-am regăsit, la fel de stridente, la cursurile de formare de mentori; în acest context profesorii participanți au evaluat aceeași lecție cu note de la 5 la 10.

1. 2. Discursuri interpretative și didactice concurente. În cadrul unei analize sumare, problemele observării, proiectării, și evaluării lecțiilor de literatură pot fi explicate, în totalitate, prin natura complexă și ireductibilă a experienței estetice și prin caracterul incomplet al discursului care o obiectivează. O asemenea punere în ecuație a problemei nu face decât să postuleze, încă o dată, un adevăr unanim acceptat - și anume, dificultatea studiului literaturii - și să justifice reducerea evaluării lecției la parametri generici precum "calitatea și substanțialitatea dialogului", "autenticitatea receptării" sau "adecvarea demersului interpretativ".

Dar definirea naturii obiectului de studiu și fixarea punctelor de fugă ale demersului didactic prin descriptori generali sunt gesturi care nu permit conturarea unor soluții imediate la problemele enunțate mai sus; și asta, cu atât mai mult cu cât dificultățile despre care am vorbit nu rezidă doar în natura obiectului, ci și în specificul perioadei pe care o traversăm. În termeni extrem de simpli, specificul duratei actuale poate fi definit prin coprezența unor discursuri interpretative și didactice diverse, adeseori disjuncte.

Discursurile concurente locuiesc, în primul rând, orizontul interpretării textului literar: aici teoriile ce descriu textul și postulează sensul drept entitate ascunsă în text sunt dominate, în ultimul timp, de teoriile ce înscriu textul în orizontul cititorului și postulează sensului drept construct personal, realizat de cititor, în actul lecturii (fenomenologia receptării în varianta școlii de la Konstanz, semiotica receptării, configurată de Umberto Eco și direcția americană *reader-response criticism*). Reflexele acestor perspective se regăsesc și în didactica literaturii, unde demersul tradițional tinde să fie înlocuit cu strategii ce valorizează lectura inocentă și, în consecință, răspunsul afectiv față de text (Scholes, 1885; Langer, 1992; Lebrun, 1993; Jarro, 1994, Pamfil, 2000). Reflexele acestor perspective distincte se regăsesc și în noile manuale, locuite, și ele, de aceleași perspective concurente, ce își dispută adeseori supremația, în aceeași pagină de carte.

Discursurile concurente definesc, în al doilea rând, viziunea asupra lecției, unitate didactică a cărei structură rămâne ascunsă în viziunea tradițională, devenind explicită în cadrul direcțiilor actuale, unde pașii procesului învățării sunt punctați și justificați (Ogle, 1986; Giasson, 1990; Steele și Meredith, 1995).

Dar coprezența discursurilor interpretative și didactice diverse definește nu numai câmpul dezbaterilor teoretice desfășurate în cărți, ci și orizontul experienței studentului practicant; în spațiul lui se confruntă, de cele mai multe ori, amintirea profesorului de literatură și a manualelor pe care le-a parcurs ca elev, cu informațiile pe care le-a asimilat la cursuri și cu demersurile desfășurate de mentor și de manualele actuale.

Coexistență și confruntarea discursurilor interpretative și didactice diferite, consumate pe palierele circumscrise mai sus, justifică, în mare măsură, ezitățile și nereușitele vizibile în proiectarea și realizarea lecțiilor de literatură și inconsecvențele în notarea lor.

2. Soluții posibile

În opinia noastră, soluțiile legate de prezența discursurilor concurente și de deriva pe care o generează se află dincolo de orice pledoarii monocorde sau *parti pris*-uri mascate. Asemenea soluții le vedem conturate prin: (a) demersuri menite să cadreze exact direcțiile interpretative și didactice distincte și prin (b) instrumente de lucru capabile să ofere elemente de analiză critică și de proiectare corectă a traseelor didactice.

Cadrarea direcțiilor interpretative și didactice concurente constituie, în primul rând, substanța unora dintre cursurile și seminariile de didactică și asupra lor nu vom insista în paginile acestui articol. Ceea ce dorim să conturăm aici este o posibilă modalitate de a prelungi conturul cadrelor teoretice, în practica pedagogică, prin crearea unor instrumente de lucru eficiente; eficiență înseamnă, în acest caz, capacitate de a asigura transferul informațiilor asimilate la curs și de a oferi grile de analiză a demersurilor realizate de mentor și schițate de manuale; dar eficiență înseamnă și capacitate de a asigura proiectarea unei lecții substanțiale și bine articulate.

Elaborarea acestor instrumente de lucru a fost informată de două puncte de fugă: (a) primul presupunea reprezentarea explicită, în fișele de lucru pentru studenți, a dominantelor viziunii tradiționale și moderne din didactica textului literar; (b) cel de-al doilea viza configurarea unor fișe de observare, proiectare și evaluare consonante, constituite într-o agendă deschisă și coerentă.

Instrumentele de lucru prezentate aici ne aparțin integral și au fost oferite studenților în orele de deschidere a practicii pedagogice din semestrul I al acestui an universitar. Excepție face fișa de observare globală și fișa de evaluare, structurate după un model propus de Consiliu Britanic mentorilor de limbă engleză. Acest model a fost reconstruit în funcție de specificul orei de literatură și oferit, spre analiză, profesorilor de limbă și literatură română, în cadrul unor cursuri de mentorat, desfășurate în ianuarie, 2000.

2. 1. Grila de analiză a discursului didactic. În fișele de lucru oferite studenților reprezentarea dominantelor viziunii tradiționale și moderne despre configurarea lecției s-a realizat prin întrebări sau descriptori care vizează: (a) caracterul implicit *vs.* explicit al demersului didactic; (b). absența *vs.* prezența, în deschiderea lecției, a unui moment care să anunțe și să justifice traseul ce urmează a fi parcurs și (c) absența *vs.* prezența, în finalul lecției, a unui moment de reflecție, ce reia pașii învățării și îi justifică.

În aceleași fișe de lucru, reprezentarea dominantelor viziunii tradiționale și moderne despre interpretarea textului literar în școală s-a realizat prin întrebări sau descriptori care vizează: (a) non-valorizarea *vs.* valorizarea lecturii inocente; (b) non-diferențierea *vs.* diferențierea lectură inocentă / lectură critică; (c) absența *vs.* prezența demersurilor care explicitează procesul de comprehensiune și interpretare; (d) absența *vs.* prezența interpretărilor plurale.

Dominantele perspectivelor interpretative și didactice enunțate mai sus au fost introduse în fișele de lucru create în vederea monitorizării observării, proiectării și evaluării orelor de literatură; aceste dominate au fost structurate sub forma unui grile de analiză a discursului didactic, grilă ce poate fi citită de student ca un ghid de observare a lecției dar și ca o fișă de control a proiectării sau ca o posibilă grilă de evaluare a orelor susținute de colegii de grupă.

Prezentăm, în continuare, seria întrebărilor ce compun grila de analiză a discursului didactic:

1. A fost lecția integrată într-o structură supraordonată? Care este această structură? Prin ce modalități a fost integrată?
2. Au fost etapele lecției vizibile? Care au fost ele? Cum s-a făcut trecerea de la o etapă la alta? Cât timp a fost alocat fiecărei etape?
3. A fost procesul de comprehensiune și interpretare explicat sau nu?
4. Au fost etapele interpretării evidențiate într-un moment de reflecție sau nu?
5. A avut lecția momente de vârf? Care au fost ele? Cum au fost realizate?
6. A fost evidențiat scopul învățării sau a rămas implicit?
7. A fost valorizată lectura inocentă a textului? În care momente ale lecției? Prin ce metode?
8. A fost valorizată lectura critică a textului? În care momente ale lecției? Prin ce metode?
9. Vedeți alte posibilități de a structura învățarea aceluiași conținuturi? Care sunt ele? Prezentați-le succint.

2. 2. Instrumente de lucru consonante. O altă direcție prin care am urmărit corectarea impasului circumscris la începutul articolului a fost configurarea unor instrumente de lucru consonante, capabile să evidențieze faptul că observarea, proiectarea și evaluarea sunt procese complementare, focalizate de aceleași obiective și structurate în funcție de parametri constanți.

Modul în care au fost concertate cele trei demersuri este vizibil în structura grilelor globale oferite studenților și mentorilor, structură reprezentată în tabelul de mai jos:

OBSERVAREA	PROIECTAREA	EVALUARE
Calități personale și profesionale	——	Calități personale și profesionale
-----	-----	Planul de lecție
Concepția lecției	Concepția lecției	Concepția lecției
Conținutul lecției	Conținutul lecției	Conținutul lecției
Structurarea conținutului	Structurarea conținutului	Structurarea conținutului
Metode de predare	Metode de predare	Metode de predare
Managementul clasei	Managementul clasei	Managementul clasei
Evaluarea învățării	Evaluarea învățării	Evaluarea învățării

Dar, dincolo de genul proxim prin care am corelat cele trei procese, activitățile ce vizează lecția de literatură prezintă și aspecte specifice. Acesta este motivul pentru care observarea, proiectarea și evaluarea vor fi discutate în continuare, în secvențe distincte. Expunerea va urmări îndeaproape majoritatea modalităților prin care propunem abordarea lecției de literatură în practica pedagogică.

3. Observarea

Prima etapă a practicii pedagogice o reprezintă observarea lecțiilor. Acest tip de activitate îl vedem concretizat în: 1. *redactarea unui conspect* (transcriere fidelă a parcursului lecției, realizată în timpul desfășurării ei și completată ulterior

cu aspecte ce nu pot fi deduse din simpla observare; ne referim la modul în care au fost selectate conținuturile, la alegerea cadrelor în care a fost proiectată tema lecției, la fixarea obiectivelor, la bibliografia consultată etc.); 2. *completarea unor fișe de observare* secvențiale (ce urmăresc surprinderea unui singur aspect al lecției) sau globale (ce urmăresc surprinderea tuturor componentelor esențiale ale lecției); 3. *realizarea unui conspect și completarea unei fișe de observare*; 4. *realizarea unui conspect și completarea unei grile de evaluare* (în cazul lecțiilor susținute de colegi).

3. 1. Conspectul. Conspectul permite transcrierea completă a întregului parcurs realizat în lecție și, deci, notarea exactă a activității profesorului / studentului și elevilor. Această modalitate tradițională de concretizare a observării o vedem proprie primelor asistențe, când atenția nu se poate încă fixa asupra unor aspecte specifice.

Dar importanța conspectului nu poate fi redusă la înregistrarea filmului lecției care, o dată realizat, se cere, în opinia noastră, re-formulat din perspectiva unor repere didactice ferme. Această re-formulare se poate face de întreaga grupă, în cadrul analizei lecției și / sau individual, de fiecare student în parte, prin completarea unei fișe de observare globală.

3. 2. Fișa de observare globală. În scopul acestei restructurări, am creat o fișă de observare globală a cărei lectură și completare permite conștientizarea, încă din această primă etapă, a aspectelor fundamentale ale lecției. Marea majoritate a descriptorilor cuprinși aici sunt identici cu cei din fișa de evaluare și sunt vizați explicit de ghidul de proiectare a lecției. Prezența lor explicită în activitățile de observare va permite studentului să își centreze atenția, de la început, asupra acelor aspecte pe care le va urmări în planificare, aspecte în funcție de care va fi și notat.

Prezentăm, în continuare, parametrii prin care vedem cuantificată lecția de literatură, parametrii cuprinși în fișă, specificați prin descriptori și dublați de observațiile și exemplificările studentului:

1. Calități personale și profesionale: atitudine (empatie, căldură, încredere în sine); comportament (relaxat / crispat; autoritar / cooperant); cunoștințe de specialitate; acuratețe conceptuală; capacitate de a motiva elevii pentru învățare.
2. Concepția și conținutul lecției: raport lecție – programă – manual – bibliografie; coerența demersului; densitatea și corectitudinea informației; claritatea explicațiilor; selectarea informației; caracterul explicit al procesului de învățare; folosirea adecvată a materialelor-suport.
3. Structura lecției: prezența explicită a etapelor, articularea și justificarea lor; proporția corectă dintre momentele lecției; prezența punctelor de vârf; ritmarea corectă a pașilor lecției și încadrarea în timp a întregului demers.
4. Metode: adecvare; varietate; diferențiere; caracter activ; organizarea tablei.
5. Managementul clasei: organizarea clasei și activităților; monitorizarea activităților; acordarea de timp de gândire; menținerea disciplinei; reacție adecvată la momentele surpriză.
6. Evaluarea învățării: feed-back-ul dat elevilor; valorizarea răspunsurilor elevilor; alte modalități de evaluare.

Dar observarea și analizarea lecției în funcție parametrii menționați anterior nu dau seamă de calitatea discursului prin care este abordat textul literar și de gradul de autenticitate al dialogului cu clasa.

Acesta este motivul pentru care am considerat necesară crearea unor fișe de observare secvențiale prin completarea cărora studentul să-și poată construi o perspectivă coerentă asupra tipurilor de interacțiune profesor – elev – text.

3. 3. Fișele de observare secvențiale. Fișele de observare secvențială oferă posibilitatea orientării atenției asupra unor aspecte fundamentale ale lecției, fără a permite însă o imagine globală asupra demersului instructiv.

Completarea acestor fișe presupune: 1. *înainte de asistență*: lectura atentă a descriptorilor; 2. *în timpul asistenței*: (a) observarea lecției din perspectiva parametrilor indicați, (b) completarea seriei lor, în situația în care lecția atinge și aspecte nemenționate în fișă și / sau (c) invalidarea unor descriptori, în situația în care sunt considerați nerelevanți și 3. *după asistență*: redactarea unei text ce sintetizează aspectele surprinse, justifică importanța lor în reușita lecției și punctează aspectele considerate esențiale în activitatea didactică.

Fișele de observare secvențială structurate de noi vizează aspecte diverse precum modalitățile de interacțiune, constantele activității profesorului sau etapele demersului didactic. Din seria lor, specifică orei de literatură este fișa concepută în funcție de tipurile de întrebări ce vizează explorarea textului literar și reacția afectivă provocată de identificarea lectorului cu universul re-creat.

Fișa consacrată observării formelor de interacțiune a fost construită în funcție de două criterii de clasificare a întrebărilor.

Primul criteriu este reprezentat de *gradul de complexitate al răspunsului* solicitat prin întrebare și grupează întrebările în întrebări închise și deschise (R. Beach și J. Marchall, 1991).

Întrebările închise sunt cele care nu acceptă decât un singur răspuns corect și verifică modul în care au fost înțelese / învățate conținuturile (exemplu: "Care sunt evenimentele narate?", "Care sunt personajele?", "Care este definiția adverbului?!", "Care sunt predicatul frazei?").

Întrebările deschise (problematizante) sunt cele care pretind interpretarea și acceptă mai multe răspunsuri (exemplu: "Ce semnificație putem atribui probelor la care este supus eroul?", "Care este sensul metaforei «bordei în soare»?", "Ce vi s-a părut dificil în text / lecție?" etc.).

Cel de-al doilea criteriu de clasificare vizează *raportul dintre întrebare și text* și grupează întrebările în întrebări intratextuale, extratextuale și intertextuale (K. Hartman și J. Allison, 1996).

Întrebările intratextuale sunt cele ale căror răspunsuri pot fi găsite în text, prin corelarea informațiilor pe care le oferă. În cadrul lor se înscriu toate întrebările legate de acțiune, personaje, imagini, instanță narativă sau lirică, configurația textelor etc.

Întrebările extratextuale sunt cele prin care elevul este solicitat să coreleze informațiile oferite de text: (a) cu date obținute din alte surse, în cazul textelor non-literare (exemplu: "Ce alte cunoștințe ai despre subiectul textului?") și (b) cu amintiri și reacții subiective, în cazul textelor literare (exemplu: "De ce fapte, amintiri vă amintiți citind textul?", "Cum vă raportați la personaj?" etc.).

Întrebările intertextuale sunt cele prin care elevul este solicitat să coreleze texte diferite (exemplu: "Cunoașteți și alte texte cu aceeași problematică?", "Puteți stabili asemănări între personajul X și alte personaje?" etc.).

Completarea fișelor centrate asupra întrebărilor în ora de limbă și literatură română presupune nu numai transcrierea întrebărilor, ci și notarea ordinii în care au fost formulate.

În linii mari, abordarea problematicii prin întrebare presupune parcurgerea următoarelor trasee: (a) de la întrebări închise, la întrebări deschise; (b) de la întrebări extratextuale, la întrebări intratextuale și, apoi, la întrebări intertextuale.

Forme de interacțiune	Tipuri de întrebări				
	Întrebări închise	Întrebări deschise	Întrebări extratextuale	Întrebări intratextuale	Întrebări intertextuale
Prof.↔ clasă					
Prof.↔ elev					
Prof.↔ clasă					
Elev↔ clasă					

Completarea acestei fișe presupune și formularea unor răspunsuri la următoarele probleme:

1. Care a fost tipul de interacțiune dominant?
2. Care a fost ordinea în care au fost puse întrebările?
3. Au existat momente în care forma de interacțiune realizată vi s-a părut improprie și de ce?
4. Care au fost întrebările pentru care s-a cerut răspuns scris? Comentați gradul de adecvare al cerinței.
5. Cum au fost valorificate răspunsurile scrise?

4. Proiectarea lecției. A doua etapă esențială a practicii pedagogice o constituie proiectarea și susținerea lecțiilor. Proiectarea lecției presupune, nu numai cunoașterea și gestionarea corectă conținuturilor, ci și cadrarea lor atentă.

Acesta este motivul pentru care am structurat un ghid de proiectare, ce conturează și specifică prin întrebări, alături de *ce*-ul conținutului și de *cum*-ul strategiilor de abordare, viziunea supraordonată lecției. Ghidul își propune, în primul rând, să impună, prin ordinea secvențelor sale, un parcurs ce trece de la circumscrierea viziunii globale, la fixarea conținuturilor și la structurarea lor și, apoi, la alegerea tehnicilor de predare-învățare și evaluare. În al doilea rând, ghidarea intenționează să soluționeze problemele care survin frecvent în planificarea și predarea orelor de literatură.

Două ne par a fi aceste probleme recurente. Prima constă în identificarea obiectivelor lecției cu asimilarea unor cunoștințe legate de un anumit text sau, și mai grav, cu asimilarea unui discurs critic despre text: un discurs complicat, pus în prim-planul activității didactice, discurs ce ecranează vanitos textul care l-a făcut posibil. Această tendință de a radia din seria obiectivelor unul din punctele de fugă esențiale - și anume, formarea unor competențe de comprehensiune și interpretare menite să transforme elevul în cititor autonom – are drept consecință proiectarea unor lecții cu structură modulară. Asemenea lecții nu pot da seama decât cel mult de un grup de texte și nicidecum de un model de lectură și interpretare. Asemenea lecții sfârșesc prin a conforma cunoștințele de literatură în arhipelaguri și de a lăsa elevii dezarmați în fața oricărui text nou. Cu intenția de a evita constituirea unor astfel de demersuri carente, am gândit un ghid de proiectare al cărui prim moment conține circumscrierea viziunii supraordonate lecției și, în cadrul ei, fixarea și specificarea competențelor de comprehensiune și interpretare. Așezarea reflecției legate de cadrele generale ale lecției la începutul procesului de proiectare obligă studentul să aleagă strategiile nu numai în funcție de conținuturile vizate, ci și în funcție de competențele ce urmează a fi formate sau consolidate.

A doua problemă specifică proiectării lecțiilor de literatură constă în eludarea experienței de lectură a elevilor și în impunerea unor variante interpretative pe care elevii le percep ca îndepărtate și străine față de propria lor lectură și interpretare. Cu intenția de a induce realizarea unor demersuri interpretative firești din punctul de vedere al elevilor, demersuri aderente la experiența de lor lectură, am creat, în cadrul ghidului de proiectare, o secțiune ce vizează reflecția asupra raportului dintre lectura inocentă și cea critică.

Prezentăm în continuare secvențele ghidului de proiectare, ghid elaborat, așa cum am subliniat de la început, în consonanță cu fișa de observare globală și cu cea de evaluare.

A. Circumscrierea viziunii supraordonate lecției

Dominantă: demersul didactic nu este un lanț de momente insulare, ci un continuum.

Întrebări:

1. Care sunt competențele pe care dorești să le dezvolți?
2. Care sunt cadrele în care integrezi lecția (problema, capitolul, subcapitolul, genul etc.)?
3. Cărei finalități îi subordonezi lecția? Care sunt problemele spre care lecția se deschide?

B. Circumscrierea conținutului lecției și structurarea lui

Dominante:

- structura ideatică a lecției este rezultatul unor opțiuni succesive, informate de programă, manual și bibliografia de specialitate pe de o parte, și de realitățile clasei, pe de altă parte;
- viziunea globală informează operațiile legate de structurarea conținutului;

- structurarea conținutului presupune, de asemenea, fixarea proporțiilor diferitelor momente și stabilirea punctelor de vârf.

Întrebări:

1. În ce constă deschiderea lecției? În ce integrezi lecția? Prin ce o corelezi cu ceea ce a fost studiat înainte?
2. În ce constă lecția propriu-zisă?
3. În ce constă închiderea lecției?
4. Cât timp este alocat fiecărei părți?
5. Care sunt fi punctele de vârf ale lecției?

C. Stabilirea strategiilor prin care se va desfășura lecția

Dominantă: corelația între conținut - metode de predare-învățare

Întrebări:

1. Cum deschizi lecția? Prin ce metode?
2. Cum comunică conținutul propriu-zis? Prin ce metode?
3. Cum realizezi finalul lecției? Prin ce metode?
4. Cum organizezi elevii și activitățile?

Dominantă: corelația lectură inocentă - lectură critică?

1. Cum valorifici lectura inocentă a elevilor?
2. Cum te raportezi la soluțiile interpretative plurale pe care le oferă?

D. Stabilirea metodelor de evaluare a abilităților exersate / cunoștințelor dobândite?

Dominantă: corelația între conținut și metodele de predare-învățare

Întrebări:

1. Cum vei evalua, pe parcursul lecției, abilitățile exersate și cunoștințele dobândite? Prin ce metode?
2. Care va fi tema de casă? În ce mod va fi ea evaluată?

Ghidul de proiectare, în măsura în care este urmat îndeaproape, permite evitarea tendințelor negative pe care le-am menționat la începutul acestei secțiuni. Nu putem însă să nu recunoaștem că problematica predării literaturii este mult mai complexă decât o prezintă acest ghid, cu măsurile lui de siguranță relative și incomplete, măsuri care nu asigură nici acuratețea grilelor de lectură, nici adecvarea lor la tipul de text și la nivelul clasei, nici aplicarea flexibilă și creativă a strategiilor didactice. Aceste aspecte se deprind și se rafinează de cele mai multe ori numai în timp, chiar dacă sunt vizate și evaluate încă de la primele lecții predate.

5. Autoevaluarea și evaluarea. Activitatea de proiectare, concretizată într-un plan de lecție și o schiță a tablei, o vedem continuată, după susținerea lecției, printr-o scurtă secvență de autoevaluare. O astfel de secvență presupune formularea unor răspunsuri la următoarele întrebări: Care sunt fost impresiile după lecție? Care sunt aspectele / etapele care au reușit în lecție? De ce aspecte / etape nu sunt mulțumit / mulțumită? Dacă aș relua lecția, ce elemente aș modifica?

Spre deosebire de această succintă autoanaliză, continuată apoi de prezentarea și justificarea proiectării și realizării lecției, fișa de evaluare este mult mai elaborată. Ea conține toți parametrii prezenți în fișa de observare, parametrii însoțiți de aceeași descriptori și cuantificați în 100 puncte, după cum urmează: 1. calitățile personale și profesionale ale propunătorului – 15 p.; 2. concepția și conținutul lecției – 20 p.; 3. structura demersului didactic – 15 p.; 4. metodele de predare, de evaluare și managementul clasei – 30 p. Diferența de 20 de puncte este acordată pentru elaborarea planului de lecție, cadrat prin următorii descriptori: circumscrierea competențelor și cunoștințelor; integrarea lecției într-un sistem de lecții, anticiparea dificultăților; raportul dintre plan și lecția propriu-zisă.

Fiecare fișă de evaluare conține nu numai notarea defalcată a tuturor componentelor lecției, ci și o secțiune de concluzii, în care mentorul punctează aspectele pozitive ale lecției precum și sugestiile pentru activitățile ce vor urma.

6. Concluzii. Problematika predării orelor de literatură a fost abordată, în paginile articolului, din perspectiva dificultăților recurente și a soluțiilor posibile, soluții conturate pe parcursul încercărilor noastre de a restructura acest palier al practicii pedagogice. Reflecția asupra dificultăților a condus, pe de o parte, la crearea unei grile de analiză a discursului hermeneutic și didactic și, pe de altă parte, la configurarea unor instrumente de lucru complementare, instrumente ce și-au dovedit eficiența în decursul acestui semestru; eficiență reală, dar relativă, pe măsura soluțiilor amendabile prin care se încearcă, mereu, rezolvarea problemelor "predării" literaturii în școală.

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NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE FRAME OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM; THE ROLE OF EVALUATION IN THE TEACHING – LEARNING PROCESS AT CHEMISTRY

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REZUMAT. Lucrarea intitulata "Noi directii in domeniul reformei educationale; rolul evaluarii in procesul de predare – invatare la chimie" abordeaza problematica evaluarii procesului de predare – invatare in contextul reformei invatamântului in România; astfel procesul evaluarii este interpretat nu numai din punctul de vedere al evaluarii diferitelor secvente de instruire la disciplina *Chimie*, ci si in ceea ce priveste programele educationale, astfel ca scopul evaluarii este de ajustare a finalitatilor, sensurilor si contextelor invatarii / instruirii. Lucrarea prezinta nivelele la care se produce evaluarea, precum si principiile acesteia, la studierea chimiei in invatamântul preuniversitar.

Este din ce in ce mai evident ca pentru a promova o educatie eficienta va fi necesara elaborarea unui nou model de evaluare, cu referire la programele scolare, precum si la nivelul de pregatire al elevilor in domeniul *Chimiei*.

Chapter I

The notion of evaluation has been around a long time-in fact, the Chinese had a large functional evaluation system in place for their civil servants as long ago as 2000 B.C. Not only does the idea of evaluation have a long history, but it also has varied definitions. Evaluation means different things to different people and takes place in different contexts. Thus, evaluation can be synonymous with tests, descriptions, documentation, or management.

In 1929, Henri Pieron introduced the "docimological" notion that proceeds etymological from Greek "dokime and dokimanzis"-test;"dokimanzo"-examine, "dokimastikos" to be able to examine. (Tomlinson, 1995)

Gilbert de Landsheere introduced the "docimastica" notion-the technique of exams. Many definitions have been developed, but a comprehensive definition is presented by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1981): "Systematic investigation of the worth or merit of an object..." (Naumescu, 1997)

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The Evaluation constitutes a complex process "destined to measure and to estimate the outcome's value of Educational system, the efficiency of means, of conditions and of operations used in unfolded of activity, comparing with the proposed objects, taking decisions for the improvement of the activity in the next levels".

Referring that the Evaluation is connected with the curriculum essence in the learning-teaching process, this paper is based on two directions: the curriculum evaluation and the evaluation in learning-teaching process in chemistry.

Chapter II

2.1 Evaluation: Sense-Making of school programs

The technological orientation to curriculum is one that is concerned with development of means to achieve prespecified butts. Those working from this orientation tend to consider the school as a complex system that can be analyzed into its constituent components.

Evaluation activities may be considered as an end-means interpretation of programs. Here the concerned is focussed on the relation of the means(teaching methods, student activities, materials, resources) to the butts(intended objectives and outcomes). As such, the nature of this relationship between butts and means is the basis for evaluating programs.

In one way or another, evaluation is designed to judge the "worth" of a program. Depending upon the definition of what constitutes a program, the criterion of worth may differ. When defining a program as ends-means relations, an evaluator makes judgements regarding how well the means are contributing to the specified outcomes. For example he may judge a program in terms of certain questions: How efficiently, predictably, and precisely are the program's goals being achieved ?

Within any evaluation task there is a relationship set up between the evaluator and the evaluate. Teachers and students must defined the evaluator's role in some way, as a evaluator must defined his relation to the school personnel. As such, evaluation is always a social activity. (Naumescu,1997)

2.2 Some Tasks of Ends-Means Interpretation

Some of the tasks of ends-means interpretation are illustrated by the following questions:

- 1.To assess the degree of relatedness between means and ends:
 - 1.1 How effective are the means in achieving the ends ?
 - 1.2 How much consistency is there between and among the objectives, content, resources, and strategies of the program ?
 - 1.3 How much certainty(precision) is there in predicting(achieving) the specified outcomes ?

2.To compare this relatedness among programs:

2.1 Which program is the most cost effective and time efficient ?

2.2 Which program produces greater net increases on outcome performance indicators ? These few question highlight the task of evaluation as one which adjusts ends and means.

Evaluation can be viewed as situational interpretation of school programs. (Stoica, 1998)

One of the basic things we observe about man is that he constantly gives meaning to things: he is forced to define the ever-changing situations of which he is a part, to classify the things around him, to shape his perceptions, to interpret his experience, to anticipate the actions of others, and to interrelate the past and present. In other words, meaning is everything to man. Because it underlies all he does, he rarely recognizes the importance and pervasiveness of meaning for human world. Metaphorically, he seldom questions, let alone recognizes, the oxygen around him. He needs an anti-environment to make him aware of oxygen, as when he climbs a mountain or dives into water and recognizes his own shortage of breath. At these points, he realizes how important oxygen is a component of his environment. So it is with the context of meaning which cradles his daily activities. Disturb meaning and man suddenly realizes that he does not experience the world randomly, but as a meaningful whole. His daily experience of it fit together within a meaning situation or context only momentarily does the importance of meaning contexts break through to him. For example,

I am walking along a sandy beach. Suddenly
I am aware of how long the waves and tides
have moved the sand beneath me. For a
moment my life seems so hopelessly short.
Feelings of my temporality seize me as I
realize that I am but a moment in time. My
projects become insignificant as my temporality
takes me headlong. It cannot be stopped or
slowed. Relentlessly it drives. Helpless, I realize
that time cannot be conserved or spent. I just
wait, but I cannot wait in a vacuum. I
must give meaning to my world. Who I am ?
I am here, now. To this time and place I
must give meaning. As I leave the beach,
I once again enter the various situations which
are my environment and which cradle
my existence in meaning.

2.3 Some Assumptions of Situational Interpretation

A premise made about programs is that they are interpreted and defined variously by groups on the basis of conflicting interests and back-ground experiences. Any program may have as many personal meaning and degrees of relevance as there are teachers and students who experience it.

Chapter III

The evaluation of learning-teaching process is a component activity of didactic technology, beside design, achievement and is followed by the regulation(auto regulation) which is interrelates with the evaluation. It is important for us to apply a continue evaluation in learning-teaching process, an evaluation centered on the operational objects.

Methodological system of student's performance's evaluation includes a few kinds of checking, methods and examination's proceedings:

- the currently observation of student's learning behaviour
- the evaluation tests(orally, written, practical)
- the outcome's analysis of different activities . (Cachapuz, 1991)

The oral, written, practical evaluation's tests are the most important, because they are ensuring a continue evaluation and also, the possibility to regulate the whole pedagogical approach. The oral checking methodology imposes some demands as for the student's examination time, their frequency, the question's and answer's enunciation; is really necessary to work frontally in the completion of some incomplete answers. The oral examination doesn't make possible the achievement of a feed-back. (Naumescu, Pirson, 1995)

The checking and written evaluation can be effected with written tests: test-paper and the end of a chapter; quarterly tests-paper; "Short objective tests".

Advantages:

- objectivity through the anonymity of the written tests;
- checking lots of students in a limited time;
- the possibility to compare the obtained outcomes of all the students;
- the feed-back can be realized at or the end of a chapter;

Drawback:

- it doesn't allowed to clear up the errors while the examination takes place;
- it can't be introduced the supplementary questions;

Checking methodology with practical tests receives special valences as part of "Chemistry". (Maskill, Cachapuz,1998)

Bates shows that: "Supposing our objectives are more important than the essence which we are teaching, it's necessary to identify especially those processes and activities which are included in experimentally teaching. This will determine a better evaluation". (De Vecchi, Giordan, 1998)

Cronbach considers that educative evaluation allows student's judging at three levels:

- an administrative level;
- a level of subject's assessment and of the adequate teaching methods (curriculum) level;
- an individual level-which presents the biggest interest in learning-teaching process in chemistry;

In the special literature exists numerous concerns based on experimental evaluation's methodology in chemistry. There is a succession of pedagogical arguments which assert the necessity of students coaching 's evaluation with practical tests. Thus, Kempa asserts: "Is welcome even essential, when we are taking into consideration the goals, the objectives of practical activity in science, to adopt a critical attitude which must reflect realism".

In the first figure are indicated the levels of experimental evaluation. (Giuntini, Zanchetta, 1997)

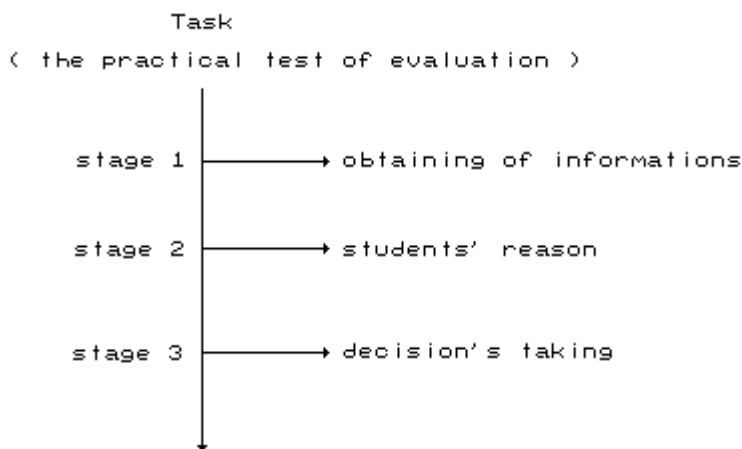


Fig.1: The stages of experimental evaluation

The practical evaluations has to be reproduced in absolutes terms; the operator type of evaluation for T.E.(means -"practical activity") has on base three organizer principles:

P1 - the evaluation must be based on that three levels of T.E. objective's: preoperational, operational and postoperational-having on base the complementary's principle;

P2 - the criteria of evaluation will fit into on poised methodology the proceedings used by the students;

P3 - the evaluation has to be a criterion one-the concordance's principle;

The example presented in figure 2 refers to study of the mass' conservation law. The appearances described in first stage (fig.2) can be evaluated with questions(oral or written) which are given to students before the practical test; the stage 2-operational-with direct observation of students' activity during the practical test; the stage 3-postoperational-through the analysis of documents presented by students at the end of a practical test.

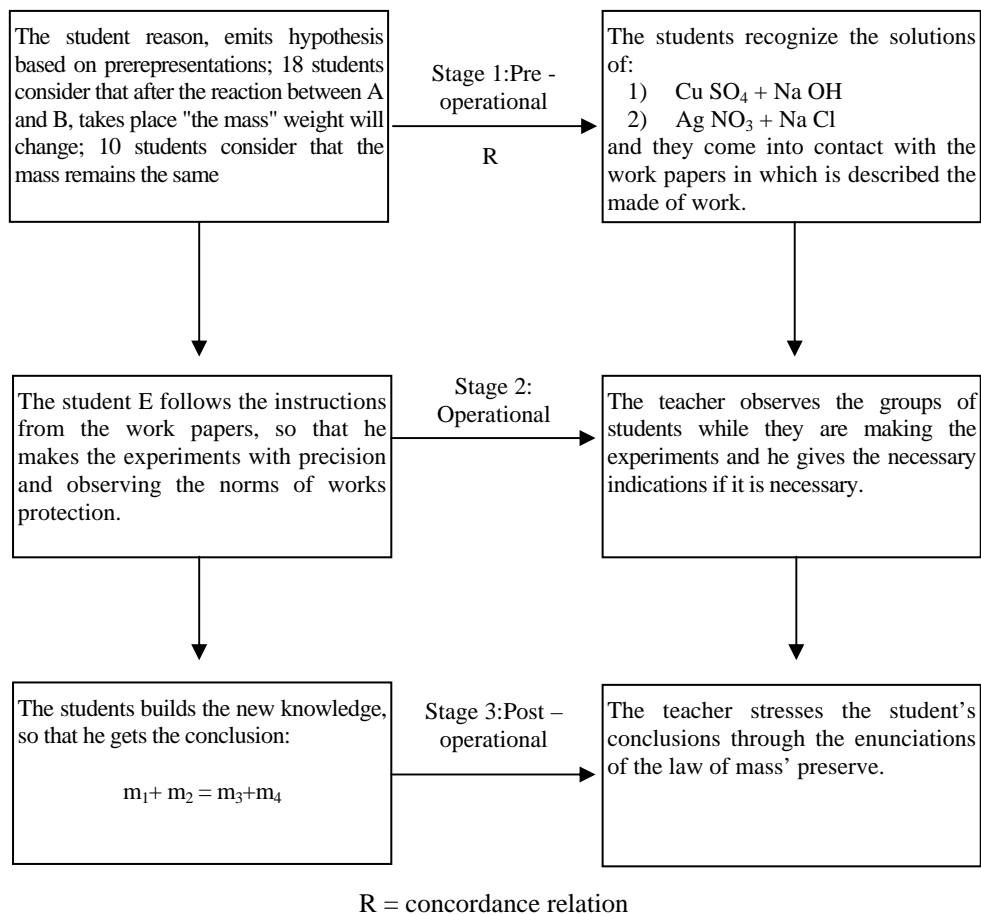


Fig. 2: The representation of the model evolution for demonstrating the LAW OF MASS' PRESERVE

Concerning the proceeding of practical evaluation, it must be planned before, for being useful: (Hagger et all., 1993)

- a) -What do we evaluate ?
- b) -When do we evaluate ?
- c) -Whom do we evaluate ?
- d) -How do we evaluate ?

In the first table are presented the different stages proposed for each one of the three stages of one practical evaluation. (Tomlinson, 1995)

The stages and the hops of
a practical evaluation **TABLE 1**

Stage	Hop
1. Preoperational	1.1. the <u>define</u> of the problem 1.2. the planning of a practical activity
2. Operational	2. the experimental achievement
3. Postoperational	3.1. analysis/outcomes' interpretation 3.2. the evaluation

In the second table are presented the specific features, as concerns the habits and some traits of obtained performances by students (it's applied in the second stage of the practical activity). (Giuntini, Zanchetta, 1997)

Giuntini J.C. from Montpellier University remarks that the evaluation technics are conditioned by the habits which the student has, existing four important qualities: (Giuntini, Zanchetta , 1997)

- 1) - the student to be able to build his own information;
- 2) - the student to be able to autoevaluate correctly himself;
- 3) - the student to display effective his information;
- 4) - the student to demonstrate creativity .

As concerns the appearances of a practical evaluation in pre-and postoperational stage in special literature appears lots of specific features, which can be systematized in the third table.

TABLE 2

Some characteristics traits for the moulder of habit

The efficiency of a habit	Traits of the performance
Methodology	- the correct succession of the tasks which make-up an overall operation
Practical activity	- the efficient resorting(using) of time
Experimental	- the correct manipulating of the apparatus and of the materials
Technicals	- safely execution(norms of work' protection) of an experimental procedure - the taking of some adequate cautions for the ensurance of observations and of correct outcomes
Manuality	- the correct manner of execution of a practical task
Deftness	- the correctly execution of an operation
Tidiness	- a good resorting(using) of available space lab - the judicious make-up of the equipment and of the used material

TABLE 3

Examples of categories of evaluation in the stages 1 and 3 of a practical activity

Evaluation aspect:The Plan and the Design	Mark
- able to present a perceptiv plan for investigation - the plan is clear, concise, complete - able to discuss the plan for experiment	9-10
- a good plan, well presented, but which requires some changes - an approximate and general understanding of the problem	7-9
- good plan, but requires help from the teacher - it doesn't come close by the problem	5-6
- inefficient plan which requires considerables changes	3-4
- a few ideas about the way of talking of the problem	1-2
Evaluation aspect: the conclusion's and generalization's obtaining	Mark
- he obtains conclusions both from the qualitative and quantitative data and he offers explanations He evaluates the proceedings and the outcomes and he suggests alternatives without help	10
- he obtains conclusions both from qualitative data and also from the quantitative data and he gives some explanations. He tries to evaluate the proceedings and outcomes without help.	8
- he obtains some conclusions both from qualitative data and also from quantitative data he gives explanations The trials to evaluate the proceedings and the outcomes are not frequently. He requires circumstantial help.	5
- he obtains an unsignificative conclusions from the scored data. The explanations are succinct. He doesn't understand the evaluation. Generally, he requires help.	3
- he can obtain conclusions with maximum help.	1

Chapter IV

We can consider the evaluation process as a principal activity of didactic technology. The existence of "absolutely" quantitative evaluation in learning-teaching process seems to be an "Utopia", evaluation which refers both teacher's activity and student's activity as part of different instructional sequence.

The teachers' evaluation gets special valences when it's accompanied by auto - evaluation, which is reflected through feed-back's achievement. A good teacher will know exactly how he realized the feed-back and he will know to regulate the whole pedagogic approach with the evaluation tests, centered on the operational goals. So, the activity evaluation(auto - evaluation) of a high school teacher is interrelated with the students activity evaluation. This evaluation process must be more qualitative than quantitative. It is important for student to understand the new concepts during the class, so that he can build himself the new information being guided by teacher.

But, the evaluation of learning-teaching process is interrelated with school programs evaluation, and also with the way in which this curriculum is designed. Thus, we can't agree curriculum for the next years(which will get in force in 1996-1997) as it follows: in 9th form are teaching physic-chemical notions(the law of gases, the liquid state, the atoms' structure) so that the student who formed habits and abilities in writing correctly the equations of chemical reactions during the 7-8th forms has no possibility that in 9th form to strengthen these habits and abilities; in 10th form will be resume notion of anorganic general chemistry, being obvious that the student will forget to equalize the different types of chemical reactions. Obviously, this kind of curriculum can ensure an efficient evaluation, because the curriculum must be adopted to age specific features of students.

The romanian students are more clever than the student of Occident, but they don't have always the possibility to prove this, because an "over loaded" school program establishes the teacher to cover the subject matter in "big steps", in fast, without to give to student the possibility to "filter" the new information through view point of his cognitive abilities. It is wrong to consider that the student is a small "sack" which must be "fill up" with information at each subject. The modern didactic has in view the development of reflection capacity, it has in view the development of student's creativity and not the development of memory's capacity.

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RECENZII - BOOK REVIEWS

Miron Ionescu, Ioan Radu, Dumitru Salade, Coordinators, *Studies of Applied Pedagogy*, Ed. Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2000

The studies gathered in the present volume are joined within the large domain of applied pedagogy. The authors' focus was on relevant pedagogical aspects of the pre-university and university educational reform in Romania, as well as on their specification and operationalization within the present context, considering the current and prospective goals of the Romanian educational system. The theoretical and practical applicative approaches of this book offer new scientific perspectives for both practitioners and theorists.

Professor Dumitru Salade argues in first chapter, "Personal Independence and Educational Objectives" on the value and importance of the formative dimension of the instructive-educational process. The author offers a new conceptual design of the terms: "autonomy", "independence" and "personal liberty", notions that have particular significance for the domain of educational sciences but are rarely examined within the field literature.

In a modern, systemical approach, the author examines the relationship between this terms and other notions that hold a particular status within the pedagogical theory such as: "self-knowledge", "self-education", "self-control", "creativity", "lifelong learning".

The author refers to the opportunity of the practical recommendations, starting from the necessity of helping the pupils to gain the awareness of there own possibilities to shape there personality according to there aspirations. In this respect, a methodology that is "adequate to different stages and situations of youth development" is offered.

Professor Ioan Radu, the author of the second chapter "Metacognitive Strategies within the Pupils' Learning Process" discusses the issue of metacognition within the context

of school learning process. The theoretical description of the concept of "metacognition" is doubled by the analysis of a learning sequence where the link and alternation of the cognitive and metacognitive action plans is relevant. Having as a starting point the organization and articulation of the knowledge present within the pupils' cognitive system, the author makes the demarcation between the cognitive and metacognitive elements of learning process. In the educational plan author's recommendation is that these elements "should be first described within a explicit plan by the teacher in order to be learned and interiorized as personal criteria by the pupil within his independent work".

In chapter III, named "The Pedagogy of University", the author, Professor Miron Ionescu, proposes a foray in the university pedagogy, a pedagogical field that of an increasing interest for the specialists in the educational sciences. The theoretical-methodological and practical approaches lay out the present issues of the higher educational system as well as the manner in which these problems find reflection in the consciousness of university teachers and students. The key concepts: "university pedagogy", and "university education" are analyzed with reference to the actual context and the objectives of the higher education Romanian system.

Chapter IV, "Contemporary Educational System: structure, management and paradigms of the reform" is focused on the analyses of the two main categories of contemporary educational systems: hierarchically organized systems, the systems organized on the principles of centralized management and the systems organized on the web model and on the principles of autonomy. Using arguments drawn from the pedagogical theory and practice, the author, Vasile Chiș, pleads for the managerial, pedagogical and financial decentralization of the contemporary school associated with the development of partnership in education.

Author's argumentation and practical suggestions are built on an objective analyses of the Romanian educational system reform and the difficulties and obstacles met in its content, rhythm and results.

The issue of didactical principles is analyzed by Mușata Bocoș in Chapter V, "From the General Didactic Principles to that Specific to Instruction in Chemistry ". The author offers an analysis of the issue particularized for an applied pedagogical science, the methodology of teaching chemistry. The description of didactic principles - that is, in author's view, fundamental for teaching and learning of chemistry - is given considering the issues of "the new educations" and of the new contents included within the school curriculum.

In Chapter VI, "The Play Dimension of the Educational Phenomena", the author, Cristian Stan draws the attention to the binary system: "education"- "play". The author argues on the complementarity between play and education, describing it from multiple perspectives: biological, social, cultural and educational. The psychological and pedagogical analyses of the play phenomena, offered by this study is relevant for the accomplishment of at least two educational objectives: the emphasize of the educational potential of play and the retrieval of the play dimension of the educational phenomena.

Cătălin Glava the author of Chapter VII, " Design and Management of Pupils' Learning Activity. Didactical priorities" points out a series of difficulties met within the educational practice regarding the didactic activity developed in the classroom, the learning and teaching process and the role of teacher. The focus of this study is on the educational management of learning activity, which includes, in author's view, both learning and classroom management. The approach to the educational process made from the managerial perspective reinforces the systemic paradigm and emphasizes the role of the teacher as organizer, leader and guide of pupils' learning activity.

Chapter VIII, " Psycho-pedagogical Marks in the Development of Classroom Discipline", analyses the issue of inducing the discipline in classroom which is one of the major concerns of teachers and an important professional stress source. The psychological and pedagogical approaches offered by the author are preceded by new definitions given to terms: "discipline" and "to discipline" and by there description within the didactic context. The author, Adina Glava, refers to the main psychological perspectives regarding the human behaviour and draws the attention to the pedagogical solutions offered by them, emphasizing on the fact that there application can not be exclusive, bearing in mind the complexity of the process of inducing the desirable behaviour in the classroom.

In Chapter IX, "Pupils' Individuality and Instruction Situations", the author, Ramona Răduț-Taciu discusses an issue of general didactics, describing the link between pupils' individuality and the characteristics of instructive situation. The author points out the necessity of creating and using individualized didactic strategies meant to give foundation to differentiated educational activity and to certify the unity of educational strategies system.

"Studies of Applied Pedagogy" hopes that, through the analyzed issues, through conclusions drawn from the theoretical and practical approaches, will offers both, practitioners and theorists within the field of educational sciences elements of interest, feasible and efficient approaching models, criteria of analyses, reflections and personal evaluations. The authors of this book express there hope that elements of the studies presented here will bring a contribution to both the epistemological development of fundamental and applied pedagogical sciences and the implementation of the restructuring reform of the Romanian educational system.

Prof. univ. dr. Voicu Lăscuș

Miron Ionescu, Vasile Chis, *Studies of Pedagogy*, Presa Universitara Clujeana Publishing House, Cluj- Napoca, 2000

The collection of texts named "Studies of Pedagogy" is a homage that former colleagues and students, workers in the psychopedagogical field, are dedicating to Senior Professor Dumitru Salade, who turned 85. The book has two different parts: the first one contains a bibliographical synthesis of the scientific activity developed by Professor Salade, and a group of pedagogical works with varied subjects: the history of pedagogy, the educational systems reforming, the theory of education, the educational psychology, the methodology of sciences.

The book begins with anniversary messages addressed from Alma mater Napocensis, The Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences and the Department of Educational Sciences. The following pages present biographic and bibliographic references. Born in Daia Romana, Alba county, on March 2nd, 1915, professor Salade turns 85 in 2000. He has dedicated 62 years for research in psychopedagogical sciences and for 50 years he has served the University of Cluj. Between 1938- 2000 he published 11 author books, 12 volumes as a collaborator, 124 studies and articles in magazines and specialized books, 154 studies and articles in culture magazines, newspapers and other publications. His valuable activity is an important moment for the evolution of Romanian pedagogy and the University of Cluj.

The second part of the book totals 21 studies, elaborated by 18 authors, individually or in collaboration.

Miron Ionescu signs the studies: "Pedagogy of Cluj after the establishment of the Romanian University- The main tendencies of research and action", "Training and qualifying teachers for the superior education at Babes-Bolyai University". The former refers to the beginning of pedagogy in the University

of Cluj, focussing on professor Onisifor Ghibu and Vladimir Ghidionescu's activity. A relevant synthesis for the evolution of the local scientific activity is the enumeration of the pedagogical research objectives. The second study specifies the education's role from the perspective of the society. The initial training and the continual training of teachers are presented by an analytical approach, ended with the description of the actions done by the Babes- Bolyai University to improve the psychopedagogical and methodological constitutive part of the initial and continual teachers training. The specialized pedagogical practice gains a great value of utility.

Miron Ionescu is also joint author, with Musata Bocos, of the other two studies. "The reform and innovation in education" opposes routine to renewal, analyzing the endogenous and exogenous causes of resistance to change. "The pedagogy of superior education-main concern at the University of Cluj" tackles the problem of the university education. It claims the merit of a good synthesis of the aspects of didactic activity spreading in Cluj.

Vasile Chis observes the phenomenon of reform from a systemic perspective. The text named "Approaches in the Reform of the Educational Contemporary Systems" compares the centralized and the hierarchical systems, considering that the structure and function of the educational systems are proportional with the development of the society where they came into being. Using a recently bibliography that contains references to the Internet sites that belong to the Ministry of National Education, the author succeeds in outlining a new perspective of the phenomenon of reforming the Romanian Educational system.

Ion Radu presents the learning as a part of the education process in the study: "Preludes for Cognitive Theory of Learning". Accepting the idea of the plurality of learning theories, the author chooses the

cognitive one. In a careful observation of the learning sequence, its processuality turns obvious, the final phase being the application of knowledge. Another theme is represented by stereotypy used by teachers in exemplifying which lead to wrong generalizations from the students.

Andrei Dancsuly conveys "The teachers' training from the perspective of the education for the future", explaining the structure of professional training of the educators, focusing on the personality features necessary for the didactic work. Joining his activity with the community life and knowing the immediate reality, the educator can achieve the capacity of deciphering the future.

Vasile Preda deals with a theme belonging to the domain of the psychology of development in his study called "The attachment". The title concept represents a point of interest for psychology. There are two big theories: the first one regards the attachment as an instinctual social relation, while the second defines it as an acquired relation. The author follows the ideas of Bowlby, who synthesizes the two theories explaining the behavioral elements of attachment.

Voicu Lascus presents a history of educational and professional orientation in his "Local contributions in the research and guidance of educational and professional orientation. Short history". Liviu Rusu, Alexandru Rosca, Dumitru Salde, Nicolae Margineanu are some of the researchers of Cluj, whose work is reproduced. The principles of educational and professional orientation, the instruments necessary for the research and practice in this field, the importance of professional monographs are shaped by a diachronical approach.

Cristian Stan bring up the interaction between evaluation and self-evaluation. The text "The determinism of the self-evaluation – evaluation relationship in the didactic process" is illustrated with many graphic representations of the educational process.

The experimental results indicate that school performance at introvert pupils ameliorates when evaluated by appreciation, and the performance of extrovert pupils ameliorates when evaluated by reproach.

Ramona Radut-Taciu mentions some important aspects of group-work. "The didactic group-work activity – advantages, controversies and limits" offers an analysis of the positive and negative traits of that kind of learning approach. Starting with collaboration and cooperation between pupils, continuing with shaping and learning by imitation, the teacher-pupil interactive relating, the author ends her study with statements concerning group management and group-work learning.

Adina Glava insights into modernity: "The multicultural education – dimension of contemporary education". The multiculturalism is an answer to the conflict between diversity and unity, emphasizing the legitimacy of ethnic, group and individual diversity. The school theory and practice are reorganized according to the principle of multiculturalism.

Catalin Glava identifies the post-modern tendencies in moral education. His study "The objectives of moral education in postmodernism", included in the domain of educational theory, depicts five ways through which contemporary society adapts to diversity and fragmentation, characteristic of this period.

Beside the above mentioned authors, others sign studies: Vistian Goia, Ladislau Fodor, Elena Bonchis, Elisabeta Voiculescu, Elisabeta Pentek, Ion Dragotoiu, Musata Bocos and Florea Voiculescu.

The final part of this anthology contains an inventory, of documentary value, of the professors and scientists who contributed to the development and spreading of pedagogy within the University of Cluj. The grouping is eloquently named "The servants of Pedagogy in Cluj, between 1919-2000".

"Studies of pedagogy" honors the valuable and complex activity of the senior professor Dumitru Salade, using the most appropriate prove of the disciples' respect:

taking over, continuing and propagating his pedagogical ideas.

Univ. Prep. Simona Bernat

A remarkable publication within the field of didactics

The pedagogical literature of our country acquired recently an outstanding work named "Creative approaches in teaching and learning". Its author, university professor Miron Ionescu, who was for a long period of time head of Department of Sciences of Education and dean of Faculty of Psychology and Sciences of Education at Babes-Bolyai University, provides a synthesis of the pedagogical directions and theories presented in our field literature as well as in a series of foreign publications (English, French ea.). Owing a reach experience both in teaching and in research field, the author of this volume offers the readers, and especially teachers and students a modern and efficient work instrument that will certainly contribute to the improvement of the educational process of our schools. As the author puts it, "Aiming to approach and operationalize a series of concepts and fundamental pedagogical topics of a maximum epistemological stability such as: didactic objectives, curriculum, educational process, teaching, learning, didactic design, evaluation etc., the study places itself, from the epistemological point of view, within the general didactic field."(Pg. 319).

Starting with the title, continuing with the structure of the volume and ending with the text on the last cover of the book, author's approaches prove to be "creative", providing the reader a series of means for improving the didactical activity and raising its quality to the requirements of a modern school. The critical analyses, thorough argumentation, the frequent exemplification, the

adequate bibliography, the graphic illustration using schemes, tables, diagrams, each of these elements offer the book a special feature, innovative and of a scientific construction.

The titles of the chapters, even, can assure the reader of the author's personal note, of his integrative vision on didactics and foremost, of the large and scientific context within which the didactic process must be analyzed. Here are the titles of the 11 chapters that illustrate the above affirmation: Ch. I – Classic and Modern in Didactics; II – Didactic Taxonomy and its Actual Problems; III – The School Curriculum; IV – The Educational Process, a Dynamic and Complex System; V – The Pedagogy of Creativity; VI – Instruction and Self instruction Strategies; VII – New Orientations and Methods within Teaching and Learning; VIII – Computer Science Applied in Education and Computer Assisted Instruction; IX – Teaching Means and there Integration within the Instructive and Self-instructive Activities; X – Didactic Activity Design Structures between Experience and Creativity; XI – Teachers' and Students' School Achievement Evaluation.

The very reading of these titles points out to the reader new approaches for some of the concepts and aspects recently appeared in the field of didactic process. Thus, the definition of concepts as classic and modern, didactic taxonomy, school curriculum, the pedagogy of creativity, instruction and self-instruction strategies, new tendencies and methods of teaching and learning, computer science applied in education and computer assisted instruction confirm and enhance the statement we made above.

It is worth mentioning that the author of this book, Miron Ionescu confers the present volume a clear logical structure: definitions, applications, both for each chapter and for the entire volume. Moreover, some of the comments reinforce reader's belief in the rightfulness of the arguments and foremost in their feasibility and necessity to be applied into practice. Without making a direct critic of the actual situation within the educational system, the author combats some of the old points of view, techniques and mentalities, drawing the attention to the fact that the implementation of certain changes within the teaching and learning process is a real necessity.

The "creative" character of some of the approaches in teaching and learning is obvious not only in the manner of discussing certain subjects, but mostly in the suggestions and recommendations with an applicative character. Being familiar with the general situation in education, the author does not limit himself to definition and theoretical debate of the issues, but takes his analysis to the end, providing the reader methodological approaches in order to assure its practical efficiency. The author's comment: "The present work does not lack the interrogations, made in order to invite the reader to critical analyses, reflections and personal evaluations" (pg. 320) refers also to the reader's involvement within the elaboration of their own activity strategies.

The number of works that appeal reader's reasoning, inviting the reader to reflections and letting enough room for his own options in using their content is increasing. The educational practice suffered and still suffers because of the gap between the theory and application. Pointed out to different levels, this drawback tends to be gradually overcome. The present volume makes a step forward in this direction. It also offers the reader a series of orientation criteria in formulation his own opinions. Moreover,

certain subjects, generally considered as secondary, find their proper and justified place in this book (e.g.: teaching means, lesson design structures etc.).

The chapter "Evaluation of School Achievement" aims to draw out from the stereotypes that govern the practice and to offer modern assessment means, and foremost, to enlarge the sphere of evaluation to the entire school achievement.

The reader finds in almost every chapter such improvements, completions and innovation, meant to enrich the working technique of every educator. For example, the chapter "New orientations and methods within teaching and learning" discusses the issues of problematization, algorithms and computer assisted instruction as recent acquisitions of modern didactics.

The pointing out of such issues within the debates initiated gives the book a character of a compendium expected by the educational practice.

The qualities that make interesting the work discussed here are numerous. We will list only some of them: logical structure and attentive systematization of the content; the permanent and balanced joining of theory with practice; the redefining and placing to the proper value of the processes of teaching and learning within the development of personality; the preoccupation to operationalize the concepts used; the adequate bibliography at the end of each chapter; the presence of numerous tables, graphics, diagrams and underlines of the text that make its reading and understanding easier; the summary offered in English and French.

Each of the arguments laid out justify us in recommending the reading of "Creative approaches in teaching and learning", written by Professor Miron Ionescu, as our believe is that the reader will fully benefit from it.

Prof. univ. dr. Dumitru Salade

RECENZII

Manifestări științifice ale catedrei de Științele Educației

Manifestări internaționale

Simpozionul internațional "Pregătirea inițială și formarea continuă a cadrelor didactice", Cluj - Napoca, 2- 3 iunie, 2000

Colaborări cu universități din străinătate

- 1) Profesor Universitar Doctor Miron Ionescu - Facultatea de Psihologie și Științele Educației, Universitatea din Birmingham, Marea Britanie;
- 2) Profesor Universitar Doctor Miron Ionescu - Școala Superioară pentru educatoare –Vârșeț, Serbia;
- 3) Conferențiar Universitar Doctor Vasile Chiș - Christeljske Hogeschool Windesheim, Zwolle, Olanda

Participări la manifestări științifice externe

- 1) Conferențiar Universitar Doctor Vasile Chiș - Conferința Universităților Carpatine, masa rotundă, Ungaria, noiembrie, 2000;
- 2) Profesor Universitar Doctor Voicu Lăscuș - "Formarea și inserția pedagogului social în România", Simpozionul internațional de la Bologna, Italia, martie, 2000.