

The Role of the University Teacher in Stimulating Student Learning Motivation

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Abstract: *Success and failure, respectively, occur today as a reality with significant implications both in the life of the students and in the Romanian university collectivity. Our study aims to find answers to a few questions: why students or graduates of a university can distinguish themselves through their performance and why others fail in this attempt; to what extent the pedagogical factor, the university teacher, determines these performances within the context of the instructive-educational process, through the efficiency of the teacher's work, the didactic strategies used, the observance of the individual differences, the manner of student assessment etc.*

Key-words: *alternative education; teaching skills; school dropout; teaching strategies*

1. Introduction

The concept of school success denotes the degree of general adaptation of the student to the volume of academic tasks, their success in learning being determined by the requirements of university rules.

Particular attention should be paid to the extent of failure to learn; it is preferable that it does not become generalized to all educational subjects or throughout the study years. School maladjustment, with immediate effect on the personality of the student, may generate a preferential attitude towards certain study disciplines that will gain cognitive interests value. The important but unprivileged subject matter is taught more systematically, depending on the level of development of the sentiment of duty.

Weak students frequently experience feelings of failure, incapacity, mistrust, which lead to uncertainty, a low level of aspiration, and a permanent fear of failure. A constantly negative attitude towards school activity in general, towards a study object or a teacher can lead to school failure. A first step towards overcoming this shortcoming is that educational factors should always intervene on time, pursuing the same goal.

Unfortunately, the multiplication of academic failure cases has become a worrying and serious phenomenon for teachers or students alike, especially when the vast majority of students are also employees; sometimes school failure evolves to school abandonment, a growing phenomenon.

2. Requirements and measures to ensure and obtain school achievements and success

The shift from the equality and quantity paradigm to the competitiveness and quality paradigm produced numerous mutations in the accepted system of social values. The educational system mirrors its conditions and possibilities. The reform of education, in essence, seeks to render the education system more efficient and, implicitly, to reduce the phenomenon of school failure and dropout.

In order to achieve school success, some convincing measures (steps) are to be followed, such as:

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- a. Measures involving changes in the organization of education and university activities:
 - expanding and diversifying the university network (alternative education, private schools/universities);
 - reducing the number of students by group / specialization;
 - increasing language learning, computer science, knowledge required in the context of modern society;
 - extension of academic fields to be taught in international languages;
 - improving the assessment methods;
 - improving the material resources: adapting the material resources to the specifics of the university education process, locations and functional facilities;
 - computerization of the university education system.
- b. Measures regarding the reorganization of learning contents:
 - avoiding excessive memorization;
 - making use of students' creativity;
 - training of intellectual work skills;
 - developing curricula in a differentiated form;
 - respecting the principles of interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity.
- c. Measures concerning the methods and means used in the instructional-educational process:
 - adapting the methods and means used to the specifics of the given group of students and subject matter;
 - avoiding overworking and overloading, especially during exam sessions;
 - increasing the examinations carried out during the semester.
- d. Measures concerning the training and improvement of the teaching staff:
 - the continuous training of the teaching staff for university education;
 - ensuring a good theoretical, practical, psycho-pedagogical training of the teaching staff;
 - the participation of university teachers in refresher courses.

All these factors, which can be intervened upon, influence the student's learning success.

The improvement of the educational process, the competence and the professional prestige of the teaching staff, the size and structure of the group of students, the material resources of the university, the quality of the educational process, the working climate of the faculty, etc. are elements that influence students' evolution and performance (Constanța anexa B.2.1.3., 4-5; Todorescu 2009, 233-234). When "dealing" with school failure it is important to start from preventing this reality to occur. In this respect, some universities have already developed methodologies for the support and recovery of students with poor academic performance (Târgu Mureș 2015, 3-4; Constanța 2014, 2-3; Craiova f.a., 1-2; Cluj-Napoca 2009, 2; Oradea 2014, 3).

3. The university teacher: role and skills

The main educational factor in university education is the teacher. Success in the instructional-educational work depends to a large extent on the teachers, namely on their competence (Constanța anexa B.2.1.3., 3-4; Todorescu 2009, 228-231). Among the skills required for university teachers, we note:

- a. General competencies:
 - communicative competence;
 - continuous learning;
 - empathy;

- creativity;
 - managerial skills (diagnosis, prognosis, design, organization, development, evaluation, decision making, re-evaluation);
 - valorization of contents;
 - research and innovation of the learning methods.
- b. Specialty competencies:
- the ability to assimilate and perform the scientific content, proper to the teaching subjects taught and the methodology related to them;
 - mastering the information and documentation techniques necessary for a teacher;
 - realization of intra- and cross-curricular correlations;
 - updating, processing and mastering the curriculum;
 - establishing the educational and formative valences of university teaching contents.

On the operational level, the teacher:

- ❖ will structure the assimilation of contents by the students so as to develop operative, affective, motivational, volitional and attitudinal structures;
- ❖ will guide the development of techniques of intellectual activity;
- ❖ will form the way of thinking specific to the respective discipline, correlating it with the other disciplines in order to contribute to the formation of a systematic thinking;
- ❖ will structure behaviours which can be related to values;
- ❖ will communicate with the students in a fluent, expressive and coherent manner.

On the creative level, the teacher is called upon:

- ❖ to stimulate the maximum development of the potential of each student by “processing” the contents;
- ❖ to promote a pro-active, participative, anticipative, social and creative learning;
- ❖ to notice when issues arise and solve them;
- ❖ to develop learning contents and strategies.

4. Pedagogical objectives

The specification of concrete pedagogical objectives allows us to verify, both at the student’s level and at the level of the teacher, the degree and the way of accomplishing or not the goals pursued. By setting concrete didactic tasks and objectives, one of the possible sources of school failures can be removed. Embodied in the form of overlooking the pedagogical objectives expressed in general terms, this will negatively affect students’ success.

5. Teaching methods and strategies

In the pedagogical sense, individualisation assumes the student’s greater independence in the learning activity, the elaboration and administration of different tasks depending on the rhythm and the possibilities to comprehend and assimilate the material. For this purpose, among the pedagogical prerequisites of school success, we will look for and develop instructional-educational methods appropriate for the student’s internal factors.

The pedagogical issue lies in finding the path that leads to the true formation of personality, which increases, improves and continuously enhances the student’s competence in the learning activity. Active-participatory learning methods (Ilie and Țîru, 7-9; Todorescu 2009, 228-231) involve a link between the practical and mental activities of the students; students must be engaged in redesigning, rediscovering knowledge, rules; these approaches will develop their productive, creative thinking, intrinsic motivation, their independence and

initiative. An important role in school success is played by the teaching strategies regarding assessment and stimulation (Todorescu 2009, 228-231). They offer the possibility to measure and estimate the results obtained in the learning activity through the use of grades. The improvement of assessment techniques is part of the continuation of an uninterrupted school progress.

6. Technology and didactic information

From a practical point of view, the teacher considers the elements of content (didactic information) and the technology of the educational process. The didactic information is the result of the selection and processing of the scientific information included in the school documents. The content of these documents must be functionally correlated with both the needs of society and the students' possibilities of assimilation. Such a goal is achieved through the formulation of the educational objectives, which comprise the selected informational content from the volume of cultural values accumulated in the field of a given science. The contribution of technology in school success is increasingly being sought. We will consider that all its implications on school success are emphasized by creating training situations that are in line with their rhythm of learning. Respecting individual differences involves creating training situations that allow the existence of different ways in order to reach the same goals (Ilie and Țîru, 9-11).

7. Conclusions

The attractive force of the university does not consist only in its impressive architecture or the value of the auxiliary laboratory equipment, but especially in the nature, level and way of organizing the educational activity. In channelling curiosity and the natural activism of the young person toward the professional work, the pedagogical tact of the teacher is the decisive condition for transforming their curiosity, still general and non-specialized, into cognitive interests, into the need of performance (of achievement), which marks the establishment and crystallization of the intrinsic motivation within the academic activity.

The students' interest in certain categories of activities depends on the level of development of their skills involved in the respective activity. Therefore, the correlation between the student's skills and the requirements of the profession for which they are trained in the university is important, of course without minimizing the role of intelligence in the student's educational success. The concerted action of all factors implied in school success manifests itself differently from one student to another and from one moment to another along their development. Each time these factors combine differently, and through them we are able to make a decision on school adaptation or maladjustment.

We consider that at the level of universities, the establishment of a psycho-pedagogical counselling network would be highly useful and, where such a network already exists, it should aim at:

- introducing and generalizing the knowledge and diagnosis techniques concerning student personality;
- the level of instruction and education;
- the causes of falling behind at school;
- university failure and dropout (where applicable);
- personalized psycho-pedagogical counselling following a consistent application thereof;
- collaboration of the university with other educational factors, social assistance and public health organizations, mass media, etc.

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