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A Curricular Perspective on Teaching and Learning Process

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Even if, from etymological point of view, curriculum has a long history (coming from Latin and meaning run), in education it start to be used only since second half of 16th Century and in Romanian pedagogical terminology since 90. In general context, curriculum includes an ensemble of teaching / learning experiences that school can provide to its pupils and they are able to acquire them in a formal way. The curricular perspective means that didactic process is focused on educational objectives, all other components (informational content, didactic strategies, forms of class organization and so on) being subordinated to them. In the present paper, we will try to present our own vision about structure of educational curriculum and the way how Romanian teachers are able to apply such theory in their daily didactic activities. So, the specific objectives of our research was to identify the modalities in which teachers are able to change their traditional perspective focused on content that they must teach toward competences that they should developed to their pupils. The sample of research was composed from 183 pupils who are studying in inferior secondary education from Bihor County, Romania and who was invited to express their opinion regarding the way in which their professor teach. The research methodology consist in a questionnaire composed from 2closed ended items. The results of our empirical research prove that professors put a strong accent on informational content taught by interactive didactic methods, even if they seem to neglect the modern technical devices.

The problem

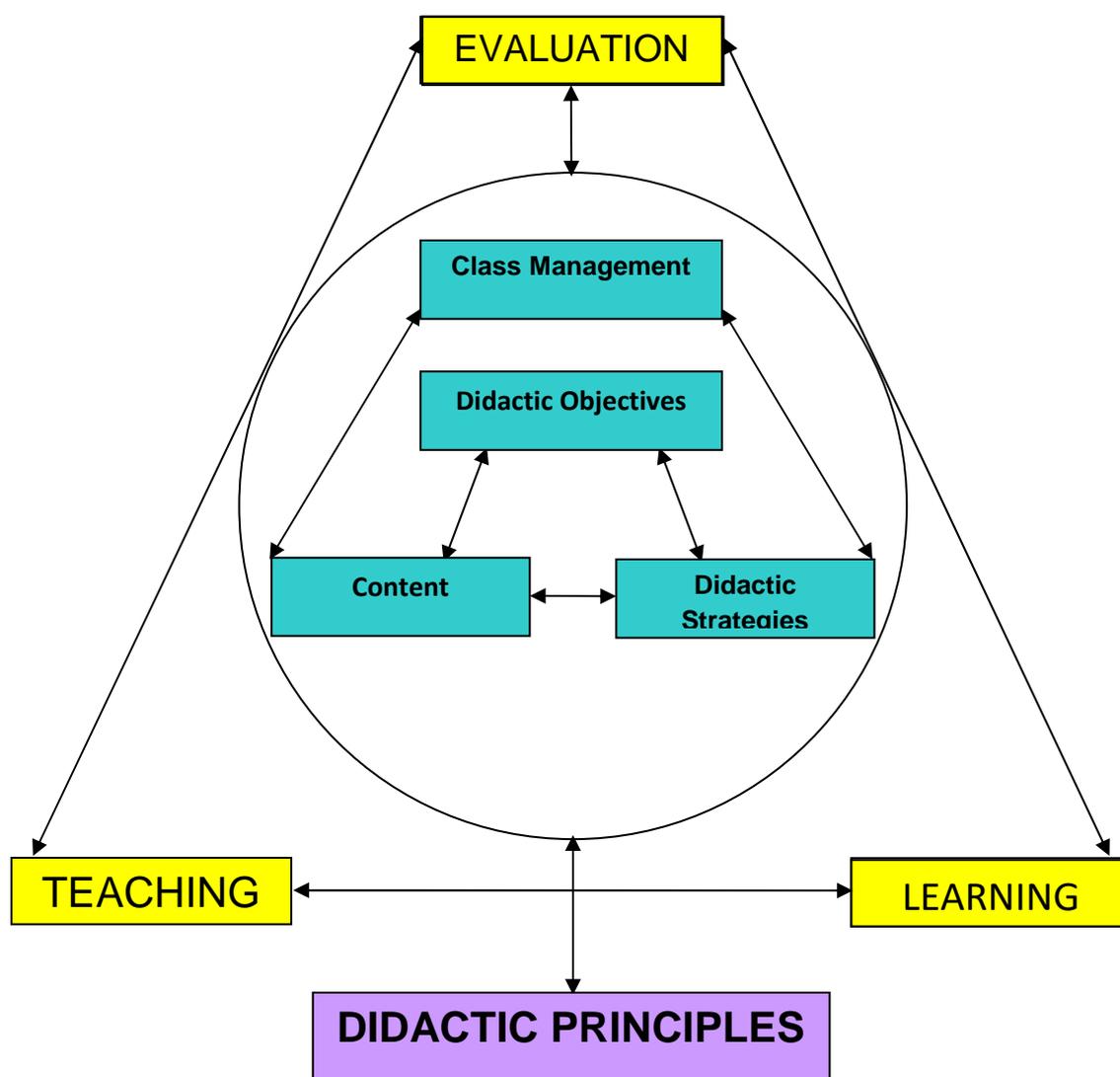
One of the main concept that has been promoted by the educational reform is the curriculum. Although the term is historically old (etymologically derived from Latin and it means race, run), in the recent pedagogical literature (ninth century), while in Romania it came only in the second half of the 90s (but leaves the impression that it does it in a somewhat aggressive way). We do not insist on the multiple meanings

given to the curriculum, but we will observe that, in a restrictive way, the term refers at the educational content with school documents where it is reflected, while that, in a large sense, the concept refers to the ensemble of all learning experiences that student acquired in a more or less stringent organized way (see Bocoş, 2002; Bradea, 2015). Moreover, according to Cucuș (2006:182), the school curriculum involves a complex interrelationship between the following:

- ◆ Specific objectives for a certain area (educational level, profile, specialization, discipline, education);
- ◆ Educational content or information necessary to fulfill the established objectives;
- ◆ Performance conditions (methods, resources, activities etc.), design and organization of education and training situations;
- ◆ Evaluating school performance.

According with pedagogical literature, we see that our traditional teaching emphasis the content (and hence the information dimension), while that, in the case of the curricular model the accent is focused on the objectives (and therefore on the formative dimension). Essentially, any teaching activity must comply with a number of principles that are designed to create the prerequisites for its proper functioning. Then the educational objectives (and, in particular, the operational ones) should be designed carefully by teachers, because according to them the didactic contents and teaching strategies will be selected, a certain form of organization of instructive activity will be chosen, so on and so forth. The wrongful designing of an element of the set can compromise the entire development of the teaching process. In contrary, achieving a harmony between all these components and integrating student in an optimal position in relation to them creates a phenomenon called by *Mariana Marinescu* (2014) the curricula effect which can be likened to the pyramid effect. This is the best way that the student can get benefits from the formative valence of the educational process and, generally, the way to from the entire curriculum reforms that experts are trying to implement. The school curricular model can be see in following picture (Blândul, 2014).

Picture 1. Toward a Possible Model of School Curriculum



Analyzing the previous Picture, we notice that the note defining of school curriculum is the whole design focusing on achievement of educational goals. Indeed, didactic principles are general rules or thesis that theoretical underlying and offering a functional sense for entire teaching process. At the heart of educational process are didactic objectives, function on which teacher will select those informational content and manage those teaching strategies or ways of organizing classroom to achieve its predetermined goals. Finally, teaching, learning and assessment will be done in an integrated manner, ensuring consistent functionality of the entire educational process. Thus, curricular approach in education proves its superiority over the traditional, helping to increase students' school performance and a higher development of their personality (Popa, 2010).

The objectives

For the reasons stated in the previous paragraphs, it can be seen that the school curriculum is very important for the work of teachers, offering an integrating and flexible vision on the whole educational process. Based on these findings, the aim of this study was the identification of attitudes of teachers who teach in inferior secondary education from Bihor County, Romania upon utility of curricular approach in everyday teaching process. Specifically, the specific objectives of the research were (1) establishing the level in which the Romanian education is focused on objectives and skills training to students, (2) the use of teaching strategies in interactive teaching / learning and (3) analyzing the way in which are evaluated the students academic performances. We believe that educational objectives, information content and didactic strategies for teaching / learning / assessment are the main pillars of the structured school curriculum, which is why the entire research is focus on these components.

The sample

The sample of our research was composed from 183 pupils who learned in the inferior secondary learning system in 4 schools from the Bihor County, Romania. Theoretical High-School Onisifor Ghibu Oradea, Theoretical High-School Aurel Lazar Oradea, Gymnasium School No. 16, Oradea and Gymnasium School Nicolae Popoviciu Beius. The pupils chronological ages were between 11 and 14 years old, 65.4% girls and 24.6% boys.

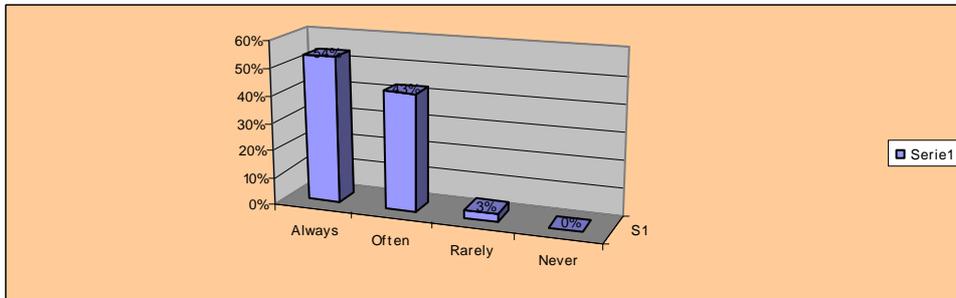
The methodology

The research method was represented by an analysis based on the survey and its instrument was composed from 2 multiple choice items, grouped in the following categories; communication of the educational objectives toward pupils; the quality and relevance of the taught didactic content; pupils involvement in the teaching / learning / evaluation process by using adequate didactic strategies; the level in which the acquired knowledge could be used in practice; teachers psycho-pedagogic and methodical competences. For this research, we took into consideration only those items which refer to the communication of educational objectives, their relevance towards pupils taught informational content, namely the specific of didactic strategies used in the learning process. The mentioned multiple choice items have four answer options always (4 p.), often (3 p.), rarely (2 p.) and never (1 p.). The quantitative interpretation of the results was made by computing the statistic frequency of the obtained answers from the pupils. The implementation period of our research was in November-December 2015.

The results

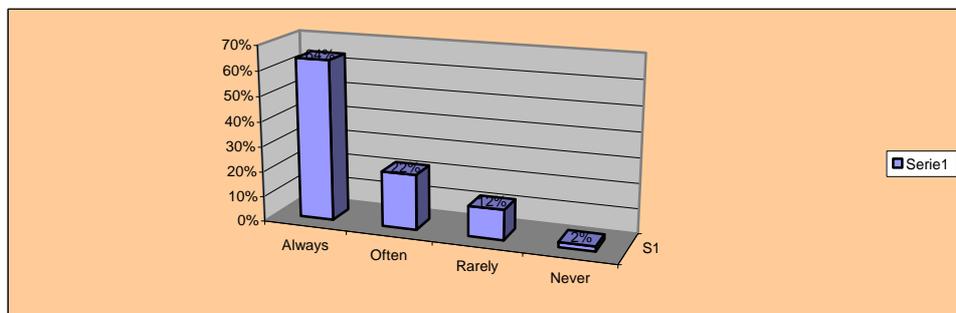
The obtained results are very interesting and represented in the following pictures:

Picture 2. Educational Process Focussed on Teaching Goals

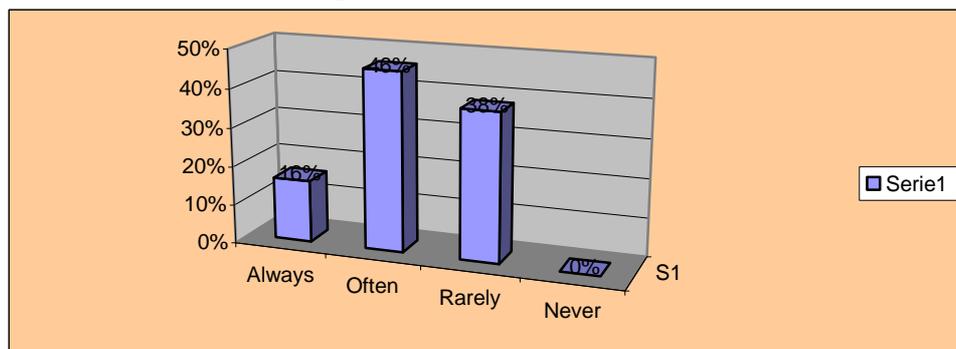


The results presented in Picture 2 shows that 54.8% from pupils think that their teachers focus every time when they teach on achieving clearly defined objectives, while 43.7% consider that this happens most times. Increasing polarization of the answers is obvious and extremely beneficial for students. Thus, teachers are more interested in training their students the skills for life, than to transmit information, probebil very useful, but always exposed at risk of losing their validity in time. However, educational objectives can not be achieved without quality information content taught properly.

Picture 3. Using of Interactive Teaching / Learning Methods

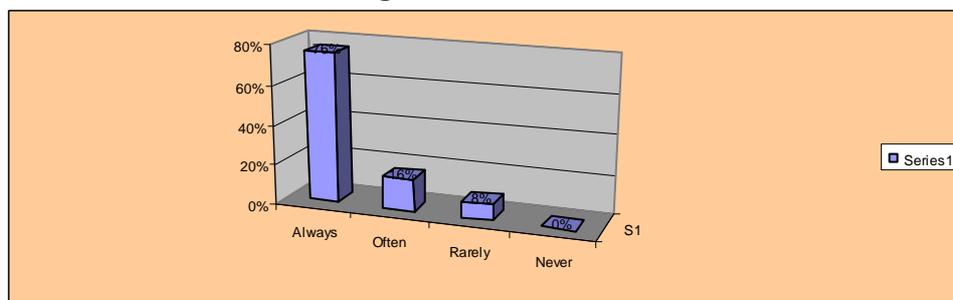


Picture 4. Using of Some Modern Didactic Devices



Even if, regarding the tendency to use of interactive teaching / learning methods is very clear (85% of respondents stating that their teachers use them often or always - Picture 3), the situation becomes more confusing regarding to use of modern teaching devices .Thus, only 16.8% of respondents said that this always happens, while 31.2% say that rarely teachers use technology in education (Picture 4). The discussion about the motivation for such didactic behavior is extremely complex and include, on the one hand, preparing teachers to use teaching equipment and on the other, lower equipping of schools in this sense. Many teachers are reluctant to use new technology in education, preferring instead blackboard and chalk and in few cases teaching electrical or electronic tools. Equally true is the fact that many schools do not have modern teaching laboratories, and where they still exist, are rarely used. Unfortunately, those who lose from these situations are students, deprived of access to information submitted in terms of quality.

Picture 5. Promoting of Formative Didactic Evaluation



The results shown in Picture 5 demonstrates that in projection of 76.3% from students, their teachers widely used in formative evaluation of their school performance. This demonstrates that the assessment of educational progress is strongly emphasizes not only on knowledge acquired by students, but also their usefulness to their practical activity. Moreover, the assessment has not only the final product, but also the process by which it is obtained, which gives a fuller and more authentic than the way in which pupils prepare for its lesson. All these arguments demonstrate that formative assessment is a didactic interactive process involving students as a subjects of their own training, with particular effect on the development of their whole personalities.

Discussion and conclusion

A first aspect that should be discussed relates to the organization and the relationship established among the main components of school curriculum. Based on curricular perspective, entire instructional process should be designed according to educational objectives, according to them will be established educational contents to be taught, ways and instruments that will achieve this and the management of groups / school classes. The

results of our research and empirical observations of the author demonstrates that many teachers design their lessons not always functions of goals that they have to fulfill, but equally true is the fact that some professors teach because they have transmitted a specific content their students. In this circumstances, we believe that redefining the entire educational design is a requirement that must align all educators wishing to obtain performance in education.

Equally important is how teachers achieve their educational objectives, discloses the information content of their students. Our research results show that most teachers use interactive methods when teaching, always searching for new solutions to improve their didactic activity. Unfortunately, the use of new and modern teaching instruments is more precarious, with teachers reluctant to use in the educational process, either out of ignorance or lack appropriate supplies. Often, a successful lesson can be achieved with simple, but effective teaching materials. However, the proper use of sophisticated materials can help students understand more deeply the reality and to form a full vision about world and life. Therefore, we recommend all teachers to use those methods and devices that best fit the established objectives, the content being taught and, most importantly, particularities of students' personality and school group.

Finally, another important aspect concerns the relationship established between teaching, learning and assessment. Thus, focusing on objectives and students' needs, many professors teach using interactive didactic strategies. Such an instructional approach will generate an active-participatory learning from students, who will become subjects of their own training. Moreover, teachers will promote a formative didactic evaluation, in which, alongside traditional and complementary strategies, they will be able to use the interactive ones based on self / peer-assessment. Our research results show that, in the opinion of interviewed students, their teachers approach curricular educational process, being able to harmonious and balanced integrate teaching, learning and evaluation by interactive didactic strategies. In fact, this is the mission of the school curriculum - to ensure a unified approach to the educational process by providing a positive interdependence between all its components and the Romanian school making strides in this direction.

As a conclusion, it can be seen that, in the opinion of interviewed students, their teachers focuses in entire on teaching approach on fulfillment of accurately defined objectives, transmit clear and relevant content to their students, use interactive methods in teaching / learning and promotes a formative didactic evaluation. A seemingly negative point relates to reserves in using of new and modern technical devices. However, teachers from Bihor County, Romania have a positive attitude and seem to be well trained in using modern school curriculum resources, sine qua non condition for quality education and progress of contemporary society.

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