

VIEW OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS ON ACTIVATING TEACHING METHODS

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Abstract: New requirements for secondary school graduates call for a new approach to the teaching process. Not only the content and goals of teaching, but also the methods of acquiring knowledge are changing. The traditional way of giving knowledge to students is supplemented by modern, activating teaching methods, which support activity, creativity and skills development of students, help them to enter the real business. The use of teaching methods depends on various factors, which influence teachers in making their own selection. Each method has its positives and negatives. Therefore it is important that the teacher uses multiple teaching methods and combines them together in order to make the result of teaching as effective as possible. In this contribution we analyse the opinions of teachers and students, we have obtained on the basis of survey about using different teaching methods in selected schools.

Key words: teaching methods, classical teaching methods, activating teaching methods

1. THE CORE AND THE MEANING OF ACTIVATING TEACHING METHODS

Social evolution brings new knowledge and information, which become very quickly out-of-date. The necessity of their systematic gathering and acquiring puts greater demands on all of us and the success of this process depends, besides other things, on how people are ready to work with new information and to use it in real life. The basic of this preparation is provided by school education.

In the context of extensive changes in society, globalization and technology development, the requirements for knowledge of graduates are being changed. The educational process does not only represent acquiring new knowledge and skills by the students, but places on them extra requirements, for example: to be able to communicate, to argue, to be able to use information and work with them, to solve problems, to be able to present themselves as well as the results of their teamwork. An important tool that allows the graduates to discover, to motivate, to learn to work in a team, leading to a creative personality and enhancing their readiness for the world of work, is the use of appropriate teaching methods in teaching process.

Modern understanding of teaching method is based on a new perspective on teaching process that reflects the changes in the society. Teaching method must be comprehended in a wider context, not only as a coherent technique or way helping the teacher to meet objectives. It represents a dynamic component that changes relatively fast and adapts to new aims and conditions. It is associated with other elements of the learning process, which interact to each other and form together a unified teaching system. The most important relations are:

- Relationship between teaching method and its objective – this is an active relation. The intended objective corresponds with the adequate teaching method, but also the method depends on what goals we want to achieve.
- Relationship between teaching method and the learning content – this is a very dynamic connection, as well. It is based on the fact that through this teaching method is the subject (teacher, student) connected with the teaching objective. The role of the teacher is to provide students with a learning content using teaching method, so they will be able to master it.
- Relationship between teaching method, teacher and student – teacher's teaching and student's learning, are two interconnected parts of the same goal-directed activity, that are giving a special character to the teaching methods. When selecting a teaching method, the relationship between teacher and student, also called pedagogical interaction, plays an important role. The teacher's participation in selection, orientation and implementation of methods is higher than the participation of students, but on the other

hand, only by their close mutual cooperation can teaching lead to a success.

- Relationship between teaching method and didactic principles – for example: the principle of activity that prefers activating teaching methods, the principle of

consistency and sequence, which requires the system to respect the system of science, does not disturb the scientific and logical organization of subject matter, the principle of linking theory with real use, while the methods used to ensure those principles are attractive because of their activating function, they bring release, simultaneously revive teaching and others.

- Relationship between teaching method and organizational forms of teaching – the relation is so close that it is sometimes made no distinction between them, what is not correct from a logical point of view. For example lesson (as the basic organizational form of teaching) is a wider organizational unit, while teaching methods are only its components.
- Relationship between teaching methods and education level – when choosing teaching method, it is necessary to respect the physiological, psychological and social characteristics of students, their level of knowledge, experience, skills, ability to concentrate and other factors. The result is that for primary, secondary school or higher education, are used different teaching methods.

Every teaching method has its own characteristics that contribute to the organization of educational process and also to the level of acquired knowledge. Most often two groups of teaching methods are compared: the so called classical (traditional) teaching methods and activating (modern) teaching methods. Critics of the classical teaching point at its imperfection, in particular that:

- Teacher is more active than students, he provides them with information and organizes their work,
- Activity of students is restricted, as they do what they are instructed to do and how to do it according to the teacher,
- In teaching dominates verbal learning methods (teacher explains, students master their curriculum mainly by mechanical repetition),
- The individuality of students are less respected,
- The most common source of information for students is teacher and textbook,
- It provides a small opportunity of mutual cooperation for students.

New view at the position of student in teaching represents a turn in pedagogical thinking that led to the creation of activating teaching methods. These methods are involved in the elimination of stereotypes in the educational process and they contribute to a creative approach of teachers and students. The importance of activity during the teaching lies in the fact, that it develops students' skills, their independence, initiative and creativity. To be able to talk about activating teaching, it is necessary to apply such methodological approaches, which enable students to acquire new knowledge, develop skills and certain mental functions, such as activity, independence, thinking, creativity, social skills, such as empathy, ability to work together to express themselves and listen to others and so on.

People often ask why it is important to carry out teaching in an active way. The answer is simple. The best students learn by practice. If the student is responsible to learn something well and remember it, it will help him if he hears, sees, asks for things that he does not understand, discusses this issue with others and in the main is engaged in any kind of business or activity. One of the options how to carry out activating teaching is to bring activating teaching methods into it. These methods are based on social learning theory. We can say that active learning is learning:

- participative, where the student does not receive information passively but creatively and proactively participates in the learning process,
- cooperative, which takes place in interaction and collaboration with other participants of the learning process,
- experiential, based on experiences and practice and characterized by direct contact with matters, people and nature,
- creative, comes out from divergent thinking, requiring a combination of rational and intuitive thinking and creative problem solving.

In this way, students acquire knowledge not only in more interesting form, but also in a form that ensures the durability of their knowledge, develops logical thinking and the students are able to incorporate new knowledge into the system of already acquired knowledge and so to create their own system. Particular effects activating teaching methods are reflected positively in various areas such as:

- static monologue methods are changed to dynamic form, which will increase students' interest in discussed issue, understand it better through applied knowledge and experience;
- application of higher train of thought processes is required from students, for example: evaluation, problem solving, analysis, synthesis, creative thinking,
- students perceive learning as an activity carried out by themselves,
- level of internal motivation increases positively,
- cognitive processes are being developed (perception, imagination, memory and thinking),
- social aspects of student's personality are being developed (e.g. empathy, accept other people's opinions),
- communication and presentation skills of students are being developed, ability to argue and defend their opinions,
- relationship between teachers and students is being changed, students have more room for self-fulfilment and development of their individuality,
- it is a work style where students participate in what is happening in the group,
- their positive approach increases when they examine the new, acquire new habits in the process of learning and work style.

Despite innovative character and positives, activating teaching methods have their limits. Their implementation may occur in individual subjects as negative, as well. One could think of teacher for example a lack of experience, unwillingness and disinterest of new methods of psychological barriers, difficulty of preparation, difficulties in the assessment and others.

Students may express refusal to work under the new methods, reluctance to actively participate and express themselves in a team, attempt to take advantage of others in their favour, etc. Even the school management may present a lack of interest in innovation, because it can cause problems with material, technical and organizational learning, teachers may request to divide the class into smaller groups, thereby increasing their working time and school needs more money for their wages and so on.

2. RESULTS OF A SURVEY ON USE OF TEACHING TECHNIQUES

Every teaching method has its positive and negative aspects. When it comes to their usage personality of the teacher plays a crucial role. He should be able to choose the best from the classic and activating teaching methods, find the correct way of their interconnection, so the result of their use will be as efficient as possible. The selection should apply various criteria, in particular:

- regularities of the teaching process (e.g. logical, psychological, educational),
- teaching goals and tasks,
- content, which mediates the subject,
- level of physical and mental development of students, their readiness to handle the requirements,

- peculiarities of a class, a group of students,
- external conditions for working, for example technical equipment of the school,
- teacher's personality, his professional and methodical level, experiences etc.

The problem of optimal selection of teaching methods is essential for the effectiveness of the educational process, because the teaching method is that tool that mediates and ensures achievement of educational goals. Both the choice of methods, as well as its implementation is a complex process that often requires several changes in comparison with the usual style of teaching. Therefore it is important that teachers master the complex theoretical basis and issues associated with teaching methods. They should be familiar with various teaching methods, learn how to properly choose the learning method with regard to educational objectives and required students' competencies, to know their strengths and weaknesses, principles of use and so on.

Within the pedagogical observation we were interested in how teachers in secondary schools are willing to use activating teaching methods, how they apply teaching methods that motivate students to work independently, to think in a logical and critical way and how they encourage creativity. For this purpose, we carried out a survey in selected secondary schools. By the help of questionnaire method we tried to find out the opinions and attitudes of teachers and students on this issue. The survey sample consisted of 100 teachers and 225 students. In the survey, we focused on the following courses of study:

- what role has the goal of teaching when choosing the teaching methods,
- the proportion of classical and activating teaching methods used in teaching,
- how teachers are prepared to use modern teaching methods.

In considering the relationship of teaching methods and teaching goal we assumed that the most important role in decision about the method to use has the chosen goal. Our expectation was not fulfilled. Only 26% of teachers stated goal as a crucial factor. When analysing the results, we concluded that even if the teacher always sets the goal, he may not formulate it directly. Thus many of them do not regard it as a separate factor when choosing teaching methods. Up to 60% of teachers considered teaching content to be a crucial factor. When deciding on teaching method they intend to use, most of them are affected in their decision by the amount of curriculum for a lesson. Most of them (65%) see the large amounts topics in curriculum as a problem and that is why they choose less time consuming teaching methods (classical teaching methods). Other teachers, who consider teaching content to be crucial, are influenced by the character and structure of curriculum when selecting teaching method (20%) or by the processing technique of the curriculum in textbooks (15%). Another factor that decides on used teaching method is the teacher's own teaching style (14%).

Investigating the proportion of classical and activating teaching methods, we assumed that the proportion of classical teaching methods will be higher. Our assumption was confirmed by the fact that 65% of teachers stated that they use only classical teaching methods. Some stated that they use them evenly (25%) and only 10% of them put emphasis on modern, activating teaching methods that develop students' thinking and creativity. Teachers mentioned several teaching methods in order of their importance. In classical teaching method leads the explanation method, which 83% of teachers do regularly use and the conversation method which is used regularly by 80% of teachers. Despite the fact that conversation relates to the interview, this learning method is used regularly only by 22% of teachers, 8% use it on average, 38% sometimes and 32% did not state it at all as one of the used methods. The low proportion of its use is considered as a negative phenomenon, because the conversation is in the majority of problem tasks an essential method, which uses according to teachers' answers up to 55% of teachers

regularly and 23% of teachers on average. 15% of teachers do not use this method at all. From activating teaching methods, the problem tasks are used particularly in connection with brainstorming, didactic games and staging methods. Less used are situational teaching methods, project methods, various modifications of brainstorming and motivational teaching methods.

In the survey, we focused on students, as well. We tried to find out what teaching methods are preferred by them. Up to 58% students stated activating method, 10% classical methods, 25% both methods and 7% of the students could not decide on this question.

When determining the level of knowledge and skills in using modern teaching methods, we concluded that 58% of teachers perceived deficiencies in the didactic course of study, especially in teaching methods. This was especially related to teachers over age 40 (75%). It appeared that many teachers are not familiar with the essence of modern, activating teaching methods. This is also one of the reasons why they focus on traditional proven teaching methods. This problem can be solved by a variety of training courses and seminars focused on teaching methods that can provide teachers not only with theoretical information on the specifics of these methods, but also with practise to their practical implementation to teaching.

In conclusion we can observe that each teaching method is reasonable one. As we mentioned, it has its advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, it depends mainly on the teacher to be able to decide which of them is in particular situation the best and which brings the best results. When choosing the method, there is no general rule. This makes it even harder to decide, but in the case of a positive result is the success more valuable because it proves that we were able to combine several elements of teaching correctly. Only through mutual cooperation can they bring the expected results.

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