
**PROACTIVE ENVIRONMENT IN THE UNIVERSITY PEDAGOGIC EDUCATION
(THEORETICAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION SERVICES)**

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Abstract: This paper discusses the opportunities for improving the quality of education in the higher education institution in the specifics of pedagogical specialists training. As a term that carries the cultural values, "the quality" is constantly evolving and negotiating. This dynamic in identifying "quality services" is the basis for the permanent updating of education policies, strategies, and technologies in each institution providing education services. In its content sequence, the Quality Framework for Higher Education Services highlights the current needs of improving modern education and identifies the proactive learning environment as an innovative strategy for pedagogical efficiency in the academic training of pedagogical professionals. The methodological conditions and the corresponding structural components of pedagogical interaction, based on the principles of the social constructivist approach, are substantiated on this basis. The methodological platform for the validation of the proactive educational environment as adequate to the contemporary social requirements are the theories of L.S. Vygotsky, K. Lewin, V. Frankl and S. Covey. In the Slavic scientific idea, and especially the Russian psychologist L.S. Vygotsky represents the standpoint on "the creative intelligence", which could only be possible as a cognitive and emotional origin of human consciousness unity. The main thesis of constructivism is that a man is constructed in the social environment (L.S. Vygotsky). Knowledge originates and is formed by social interactions (sharing, comparison, debating) among subjects in the learning process. Through this dialogue, the social learning environment enables a person to specify their own meanings and help others to specify their own. In this way, mutual knowledge formation is achieved. This is a direct reflection of L.S. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, which emphasizes the mentor's leadership and allows the learner to consistently master more complex levels of knowledge and understanding, thus gaining independent competence. The context (contextualism) becomes an integral part of the learning process: cultural and historical. Ensuring the conditions for quality education is directly related to the application of the competence approach. This approach emphasizes the ultimate learning outcomes and the acquisition of knowledge and skills that are reciprocal by the content of the respective education level and are of high relevance in real life, in other words personally oriented to the needs of the trainees. At the same time, the competence approach has two-way meaning and scope, as it refers both to the teacher/trainer as a professional subject and to the child/student / as an active subject of the educational activity. A more significant feature of the competence approach display is the systematic comprehension and upgrading of intellectual, communicative, reflexive and moral norms that allow the individual to direct his activity in a broad social, economic and cultural sense. This very specific concept conceptualizes the idea of a priority transformation of the educational environment in the higher school - as an environment that is at the output of the educational system and is committed to producing competent specialists for each professional area, including future teachers. Knowing the potential of the personality and stimulating its manifestation at all code levels are the most important factors for the proactive educational environment development.

Different research in the field points out that the variants of the social constructivist approach, its application and its effectiveness in terms of the quality of higher education in the training of pedagogical specialists have been insufficiently analyzed. The current theoretical framework for the educational services quality focuses on the optimizing effect of the proactive educational environment, merging in a functional unity the following three aspects: (1) conceptual aspect (What is the point?), (2) personal aspect (What will be developed?), and (3) an active aspect (how will it be formed?).

Keywords: quality of education, proactive environment, social constructivist approach, active learning, professional-pedagogical competence.

INTRODUCTION

The higher institution an educational on where a pedagogical specialists` training takes place is required to use its potential in the best way to accelerate modernization and internationalization in all levels of the education system. In

recent years, the education system is striving to be in unison with the challenges of the modern age. Modernization in education is aimed at:

- on the one hand – improving the learning environment in the educational institutions through enhanced implementation of information and communication technologies;

- on the other hand – achieving (1) functional and (2) multi-dimensional literacy of learners, defined as:

- (1) ability to use knowledge and skills from key cognitive domains to solve problematic situations;

- (2) an ability that is the basis for participation in the digital society and making informed choices on issues in a high-tech environment.

Ensuring conditions for quality education is directly related to the application of the competence approach, which:

- emphasis on the end results of training and the acquisition of knowledge and skills that are reciprocal in the content of the relevant educational level and are of high relevance in the real life, in other words personally oriented towards the needs of the trainees;

- has two-way meaning and scope, since it refers both to the teacher/trainer as a professional subject and to the child/student/student as an active subject of the educational activity.

A more significant feature of the competence approach display is the systematic comprehension and upgrading of intellectual, communicative, reflexive and moral norms that allow the individual to direct his activity in a broad social, economic and cultural sense.

This very specific concept conceptualizes the idea of a priority transformation of the educational environment in the higher school - as an environment that is at the output of the educational system and is committed to producing competent specialists for each professional area, including future teachers.

RESOURCES OF THE TRADITION AND OBJECTIVISM OF SOCIAL FACTORS IN THE EDUCATION

It has been determined that the traditional university models and educational policies "are less and less consistent with the role the globalizing world places on education" [2]. The main focus is the question of the attractiveness and career development of university lecturers. The weak interest in the academic career is related to the lack of opportunities for systematic professional qualification and for the enhancement of pedagogical competence. This also has a negative impact on the quality of teaching at a university and implies that "the need for permanent updating is imperative" [7].

Reflected in the context of higher education, the competence approach addresses the conflicting contradiction between the sustained but absorbed in other contexts, institutional models of professional behavior by university lecturers and the need for adequate pedagogical reflection for effective academic interaction. This growing tendency of "blurring the boundaries" between professional training, long-time student experience and dynamically changing educational needs reflects the difficulties faced by a modern university lecturer in the context of pedagogical practice as an organizational and professional situation.

What is new in the situation is that the teacher has to improve his / her professional-pedagogical competences simultaneously with the students and in this sense, no particular distance is registered in his / her position as a trainee and trainer.

Something more:

- on an individual level – conscious or unconscious - the outlined trend reflects what depleted the professional motivation of teachers, expressed in formalizing, distancing, dehumanizing and neglecting the essential function of the educator and fading the vision for the development of education;

- at the institutional level – the identified trend and the analyzed negatives of its enhancement are a strong sign of a crisis in the higher education.

These deficiencies appear to be anxiously strong demotivators for university lecturers and, in the context of the analyzed problems, destabilize the university. It is reported that "the university does not fully exhaust the potential of its development" [10]. The underestimation of the seriousness of this fact hides the risk of gradually decreasing functions of the higher education institution as a key institution and registers a true danger of this to become the first unstable unit that is a part of the "domino effect" in our education.

The proof in this direction is outlined in the Strategy for Development of Higher Education in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2014 – 2020¹⁵ main reasons for quality decreasing of education in some higher schools and professional fields. Highlighted are the following conclusions:

¹⁵ State Gazette №18/10.03.2015.

- there are the abated teaching methods from innovative trends in practice and the development of students' abilities as successful subjects in a competitive environment;
- curricula and programs are often inconsistent with the needs of the labor market and pedagogical practice;
- the higher education institutions permanent status of accreditation further overload the human resources creates constrained bureaucracy, and makes difficult the normal learning process;
- insufficient use of academic mobility opportunities, which limits the exchange of international innovative practices and prevents higher education institutions from using effective learning approaches;
- an inadequacy between the expected and the real-world competencies - there is a lack of adequate practical knowledge as well as deficiencies of formed basic skills and habits.

The indisputable cause-and-effect conditionality between motivation and activity reveals the particular importance that the problem under consideration acquires in the field of higher pedagogical education, because in this education "the application of some methods actually performs a corrective effect" [1]. For the unmotivated university lecturer, it is impossible to develop the skills for proactively presenting the educational content to the audience of students – the future educators. This teaching rigidity is identified as an obstacle in the context of quality education.

This underlines the need for "rethinking traditional and sustainable support and, in addition, targeting ever-increasing innovation trends to modernize the overall philosophy of building, operating and managing our education system" [8]. One of the fields in need of positive change is the organization of the educational environment: to be effective, to provoke, support and encourage the individual development of the learner and to apply attractive forms of training.

THE PROACTIVE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE HIGHER PEDAGOGICAL EDUCATION DEBATE

The today`s education is undergoing the paradigm change that is a minor model of the changes in our society in terms of individual and social behaviors and relationships. The debates are held on the axis:

- 1) education centered on the content/subject towards education centered on the learner/client/user;
- 2) education according to which knowledge and expertise are "here", and consumers are "there" towards an approach where the expertise of educational specialists is only a small part of the community expertise and consumers are both " here and there ".

Knowing the potential of the personality and stimulating its expression at all code levels are the most important factor for developing a proactive learning environment.

A proactive learning environment is a process-oriented approach that requires the identification of resources (human, technical and technological) primarily intended for:

- promoting the development of effective thinking, action, relationships to achieve effective real achievements (Marc Prensky [5]);
- providing skills for complex problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, managing, coordinating with others, emotional intelligence, service orientation, cognitive flexibility, negotiation, judgment, and decision making, needed for the professions of the future¹⁶.

The methodological platform for the validation of the proactive educational environment as adequate to the contemporary social requirements are the theories of L.S. Vygotsky, K. Lewin, V. Frankl and S. Covey. In the Slavic scientific idea, and especially the Russian psychologist L.S. Vygotsky represents the standpoint on "the creative intelligence", which could only be possible as a cognitive and emotional origin of human consciousness unity.

The main thesis of constructivism is that a man is constructed in the social environment (L.S. Vygotsky). Knowledge originates and is formed by social interactions (sharing, comparison, debating) among subjects in the learning process. Through this dialogue, the social learning environment enables a person to specify their own meanings and help others to specify their own. In this way, mutual knowledge formation is achieved. This is a direct reflection of L.S. Vygotsky`s socio-cultural theory, which emphasizes the mentor's leadership and allows the learner to consistently master more complex levels of knowledge and understanding, thus gaining independent competence. The context (contextualism) becomes an integral part of the learning process: cultural and historical.

K. Lewin's field theory [4] of active and passive adaptive tendencies in behavioral motivation reveals all conditions that are relevant to determine a behavior (characterizing both the current situation and the condition of the subject)

¹⁶ Report of the World Economic Forum, Davos, Switzerland, 2016.

and describes their dynamic relationships. The term "field" covers the factors of both the external (the environment) and the internal (subjective) situation.

Even in the cursory study, this approach abruptly differs from all theories, reducing behavior to personal dispositions and individual differences in them. Simple connections in the sense of an "irritant-response" association are insufficient to explain the behavior. Significance gains the conclusion that sustainable development is not an impulsive response in thoughts and behavior, determined primarily by changing external circumstances or by primary own incentives, but is the result of proactive behavior in the subject-subjective interaction.

That is why the proactive learning environment provides the conditions for maximum personalization of the learning process by transforming the traditional transmission process of educational communication into an organic and authentic dialogue.

“The proactivity” as a concept was introduced in 1946. The author was Victor Frankl, but it was popularized by Stephen Covey in the 1980s. According to Covey, proactivity is part of human nature, but some people can not use it. Covey is convinced that the basis of proactive behavior is the realization of own values.

Actual is the innovative ideas and practical solutions to change the education systems that Ken Robinson, Lou Aronica, Malala Yousafzai, Tony Wagner, Passy Salberg, and others defend. They are consolidated around the idea that "education does not have its own constant "utopia", it is an expression of the constant pursuit of creating the best conditions of learning for real people living in real communities in the real and changing world" [6].

THEORETICAL-CONCEPTUAL AND PRACTICAL-APPLIED INFORMATION INTEGRITY OF THE PROACTIVE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Proactivity is both initiative and responsibility before the goal (the "thing") becomes a reality.

Hence, the "proactive teacher" model designates the effective leader in the education that introduces innovations to the learning process. They are an expression of:

- enhanced control over knowledge, ideas, and practices that form the given field of knowledge;
- a deep understanding of the traditions and achievements on which this knowledge is built.

At the same time, through its creativity, the proactive teacher develops an environment that engages, provides opportunities, expects achievement, and empowers trainees.

It is precisely because of the skills to accomplish these basic functions the proactive teacher forms the necessary pedagogical reflection of a modern teacher. Proactive teachers “infect” trainees by:

- "inspiration: With their passion, they kindle their interest in the subject and inspire them to achieve the best;
- confidence: a help to acquiring skills and habits to convince them that they will also be able to develop their expertise cognition;
- creativity: they give the opportunity to experiment, explore, ask questions and develop skills and attitudes for original thinking"[6].

The mentioned professional-pedagogical reflexes are feasible in compliance with the basic principle of the proactive educational environment, related to guaranteeing maximum freedom of the students' own choice. The result is a "pedagogical interaction for which the dynamic, the active, the surviving, the actively transforming moment for essential characteristics" [5].

The implementation of a proactive educational environment in higher pedagogical education guarantees an effective professional qualification of future teachers, bringing together the following three projections:

In the conceptual aspect (What is the point?) - Reflects the importance and value of the disciplines (subject areas included in the curriculum of the respective educational-qualification degree) in the context of the emerging role of education to develop humanity.

Personally (What will be developed?) - Reflects the range of key competences that students - future teachers should form in adolescents in their training as a preparation for life. The personal aspect actually sets the role of the proactive lecturer as a reference model in organizing a development-oriented pedagogical interaction (by Ken Robinson [6]) of:

- curiosity - the ability to ask questions and explore how the world works;
- creativity - the ability to create new ideas and to apply them in practice;
- critical thinking - the ability to select and analyze information and ideas through argumentation and assessment;
- communication - the ability to clarify and assure the expression of thoughts and feelings through a variety of media tools and forms;
- collaboration - the ability to constructively cooperate with others;

- commitment - empathy and responsiveness;
- peace of mind - the ability to constantly connect with the inner world of feelings and develop a sense of personal harmony and balance;
- civic participation - the ability to participate constructively in the society and in the processes that make it sustainable.

In the active aspect (How will it be formed?) - reflects the activities, methods, forms, techniques, and components that structure the pedagogical interaction on the basis of cooperative learning: positive interdependence, face to face interaction, individual responsibility, group analysis.

The authentic participation of the subjects in a proactive educational environment organized in the higher pedagogical education presupposes its sustainable multiplication in their future pedagogical realization.

CONCLUSION

The proposed Theoretical quality framework for higher education services brings together innovative solutions in organizing and conducting a learning process, reforming:

- the form of pedagogical communication: from monologic to dialogical;
- the choice of educational technology: from influence to interaction;
- the role of the personal factor: from unification to pluralism, in which the pedagogical autonomy, "ie. the right and the responsibility of the school and the pedagogical subjects to make autonomous decisions on learning activity "[9]
- the model of pedagogical thinking: from a reproduction of truth to self-seeking, transformation, creation of a new creative product, in other words organizing a proactive environment for academic pedagogical interaction.

The here presented and discussed framework for quality educational services highlights the need for teaching that achieves theoretical staging and applied information integrity in university education. For pedagogical professional fields, this need is met through the organization of proactive educational environment.

Its thorough analysis as the application and effectiveness in the preparation of pedagogical specialists is the subject of extensive study work on a research project entitled "Exploring the possibilities of modernizing the higher pedagogical education by developing and testing a model for a proactive learning environment".

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