FORMING SKILLS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS LEARNING – REALITIES AND POSSIBLE PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract: The article tracks the reasons for a deficiency of interaction with students regarding the formation of behavioral patterns that support their learning and, in general, their optimal functioning in the academic community. There is a place for sharing on the experience from the implementation of a model for academic mentoring in the Faculty of Pedagogy of the Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski" to fill this gap. The relationship between upbringing and training as the main components of pedagogical interaction and lifelong learning is considered. Attention is drawn to the possibility of some kind of upgrading and complementing this model by outlining some concrete steps to support the development and improvement of learning skills through the selection of large volumes of information and the system of its absorption and etc.

Keywords: education, upbringing (value education), training, higher education, student learning skills, academic mentoring, realities, perspectives.

In the process of educational interactions two main components are value education (upbringing) and training. The training, in turn, includes teaching and learning as activities inherent primarily to the teacher and the student respectively. Within the framework of training, the basic unit of exchange is knowledge, information – facts that are primarily scientifically verified. In value education is formed the attitude to the information (knowledge) that is transferred, qualities are formed, respectively skills (including for learning), behavioral patterns are constructed. In this sense, education and training are two interrelated processes that are aided each other (and which, for the sake of science, are distinct, unlike the practice where they flow into each other). This is because the behavioral manifestations of the individual – whether individual or within a group – are decisive for the speed, depth and durability of the knowledge being acquired. The information exchanged in the training process, in turn, supports the acquisition of facts that are valuable for the personal and professional development of the personality. This interaction is particularly important for students who are at the threshold of the professional and generally at the threshold of life realization. This significance also increases due to the serious absence in the Bulgarian educational system of the formation of qualities and skills that support the learning of students.

The reasons for this deficit could be sought in several main directions.

The first is related to the absence of state policy towards a targeted presence of educational interactions in school. In the Bulgarian school, the emphasis is now almost entirely on the learning of knowledge and the neglect of behavioral skills, even those that are directly oriented to life and are very much needed to cope with the day-to-day challenges. This deficit compensates for children through their peers, the internet and other factors that often have a dubious effect. But this is about compensating for deficits in terms of life skills, but the deficit in terms of behaviors related to learning is staying and moving from the field of the school to that of the university. Of course this is a problem that requires a lot of work and time to be corrected. The leading entity must be the state to establish clear standards and rules. At present, however, there is no political will, as is evident in the new law regulating school education. On the other hand, this provides an even wider scope for non-formal education to significantly offset formal education deficits. It also provides an opportunity for initiative and creative-oriented teachers, to get, to provide a value educational form/image of the training.

Secondly, the fact that many different authors are still focusing on lifelong learning (training), and the other main component of lifelong learning – lifelong value education – remains in the background. Of course, the main part of the value educational interactions are realized during the childhood stage, but this does not mean that with the end of childhood comes the end of the value education. It moves to a lower level of intensity, oriented towards the improvement of already formed basic qualities and skill and formation of new – above all complementary personality.

Thirdly, there is a lack of an andragogical approach, in which students are not only educational service users, but also creators. And this, in turn, is related to the still overpowering concept of education, viewed as a subject-

object interaction. And not as a subject-subjective interaction, in which the two subjects involved in the process may at times change their positions, the roles which they perform.

The next reason for the absence in the Bulgarian educational system of the formation of qualities and skills that support the learning of students is the tendency to constantly increase the amount of knowledge, necessary for the optimal inclusion of the individual in the system of social relations. As a result, there is no time to pay attention to the behavioral patterns of which they are determining for each person's expression, in terms of learning. It would not be such a big problem if there was no system to form the skills to process this information. For the majority of students, the main problem is precisely the amount of information that needs to be learned, especially in the beginning – the first course, when in fact almost all fundamental disciplines are being studied. This results in the accumulation of large volumes of information that, for a short period of time (the period of exams), should be absorbed. But often this is unattainable. In this sense, the possibilities for solving this equation are precisely related to the formation of a skill for working and processing the information. Namely:

- **the sifting of the most important information** to be adopted and recorded mainly during the lecture course. This is a key prerequisite for successful learning afterwards. Here success will only be the result of an optimal partnership between a teacher and a student, each of whom should perform concrete actions.

- the lecturer – the significant help he can provide through: verbal highlighting of important points, including by repeating them, including with a different intonation, especially in the context of seminars; A multimedia presentation that outlines the key moments and the moments that need to be emphasized at all; Providing available (as a language and as an opportunity to detect), including additional (optional) literary sources, which are grafted (if possible) with accents (for example, bold); Search for feedback and timely recall within the time of the lecture or later – during live consultations or through communication technologies; Attracting students to various forms of scientific activity, besides audience activities – scientific forums, scientific projects, civic initiatives that would support young people's scientific development and personal growth, etc.;

An important moment in the modern visual era is the visualization of knowledge through schemes, photographs, etc.

- the student should: listen carefully and record the information – it is possible to do it with pens of different colours, highlight the recorded key points of the lecture, mark them with colored (labeled) sheets (if written with one color pen) to facilitate optimal perception and then operationalization of the information; ⊠To formulate questions on the subject at the end of the lecture; To supplement and coordinate the information through the textbook (if any), which could also be highlighted if it is own – highlighting of accents could also be done through various computer programs on a scanned copy of the textbook; After the end of the class, read the lecture and ask himself if everything is clear to him. If the answer is hesitant or negative, he need to clarify what moments are problematic and consult with the lecturer, explore additional reliable sources (also agree with the lecturer).

- there is also a significant contribution to the understanding of the problem with the large amount of information, and there is a lack of systematic efforts in its absorption. This is related to the discipline issue. Of course this is a very specific and different problem for different people, but what can certainly be said Is that constant and consistent efforts are needed to memorize the information already sliced. An model for example of this is: reading (one or more times in a voice and / or mind alone or with other colleagues/peoples) of the subject within a day or two after taking it and trying to tell it without reading the text – reading all the topics, which are taken within the respective discipline for the month – review of the material taken before the semester examination. Contribution for the systematic use of the information are various virtual platforms, such as Moodle, where each activity is bound by a deadline, the violation of which leads to an automatic sanction, including in a series of violations, would not allow the completion of the course. The system of incentives and penalties can also be created by the student himself. Separately there are various awards at university and other levels.

The absence of systemic effort is a serious problem in the education process, which will be further exacerbated if it is not paid enough attention. The main generator of this problem is information and communication technologies and especially the virtual space. In the absence of value educational interactions focused on the problem of absence of concentration, it helps to create the so-called „Click culture". Namely, the purpose of each session on the Internet is almost always distorted – the student starts surfing to check for specific information, but often the roads he travels lead him to communicate with friends on a social network, buying a product from the ads, which accompany every page, and so on. The absence of a permanent and adequate rest and work regime also does not contribute to the establishment of discipline and systemic in the personality.

Of course reaching the aforementioned would not be possible without academic mentoring. It is a tool of interaction that has always existed in one form or another. In recent years the need for and development has grown. This is due to the variety of behavioral patterns provoked by the universal (and at times uncontrollable)

liberalization in society, the increase in the accessibility of people with different forms of disability to university education, the increase of aggressiveness in the society as a whole, which has its own reflexes And in the educational sphere, the earlier sexual maturation and the delay of the social maturation of the person, the mentioned lack of (adequate) value educational interactions in the family and in the school, etc. With this serious system of problems is commited to decide the model of academic mentoring in the Faculty of Pedagogy of the Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski", which started three years ago at the initiative of the Educational-Scientific laboratory „Prof. Dr. Petar Noykov" at the Faculty of Pedagogy. Until then each course in each specialty had a lecturer – a course supervisor, and the students – had a course supervisor (there are also group leaders in the more numerous courses). The main focus of the interactions are administrative issues – problems in validating the semester, need to contact a lecturer to specify a change in the exam date and the like. According to the philosophy of the new model each specialty has a team of lecturers – academic tutors who are engaged as a mediator for solving emerging problems. The academic tutors contact mainly with academic person responsible (group leader) – each course – in part-time and full-time training – broadcasts at least one person who mainly alerts the academic mentors when problems arise. These problems are increasingly related to conflicting situations that arise between students, between students and teachers and etc. In this way, the problem of behavior, which often presents a serious obstacle to self-learning or violates the course of the pedagogical process in an audience, comes out of the foreground. It is precisely because of this the efforts of the participants in the model are directed in this direction. One of the main steps was the introduction of the so-called propetitive week. It has been „at the entrance", since the beginning of the academic year. It is, of course, so-called the weekly period, because it actually stretches over time, but the intensity is the highest in the first week.

Its highlights are related to:
- acquaintance
 - the students in the first year with the history and the current development of the university and the Faculty of pedagogy – in the begining through a multimedia presentation;
 - between students: in the course; and the teaching community of the faculty (at the opening ceremony the Dean present each teacher); and the team of academic mentors, including the clarification of their role (in the separation meeting of the specialties after the general celebration); and academics person responsible from second to fifth year (in the days after the opening of the school year);
 - students with academic spaces and the place of audiences and the most important administrative departments concerned with the immediate course of the educational process;
 - the students with the academic etiquette – he has specific manifestations that imply the knowledge and use of the respective „codes". The problem is serious because with a large part of the students there are no basic skills for social communication. In this sense the academic mentors and managers (personal responsibles) inevitably take up the role of re-educators and, respectively, value educators;
 - an important and therefore worthy part of the previous one is the knowledge of the academic hierarchy – not only as formal positions and degrees (respectively affecting the way the university operates) – under what conditions and who should the student be addressed. This is important from the point of view of opportunities and the regulation of possible problem and conflict situations, introducing improvements and more. Of course, it is made clear that initially, it is best before an action is taken on one or another matter, that the academic mentor and/or the person responsible should be consulted in order to follow the hierarchy and competency fields;
- forming skills for reading the lecture, seminar and practice program, especially when the program first introduces exercises and no lectures; Attention is being paid to tracking possible changes in to the program and others;
- an informed choice of an academic personal responsible – this is a very important issue, because of the selected person depends to a large extent on the group functioning. That is why the team of academic tutors usually suggests not to rush by this choice until the students get to know each other. Part of this informed choice is to introduce the students to the responsibilities of the academic personal responsible;
- fixing the communication channels: preparing a list of students' mobile (and/or stationary) phones, naming a name and creating a social networking group with clarity about access to it; Inventing a name and making an e-mail, and more. The co-ordinates of the academic tutors and responsible persons are available – they are published in the section of the Educational-Scientific Laboratory on the page of the Faculty of Pedagogy.
- motivation – a part of the students has a problem with motivation at the start. The reasons are varied: reconciliation of work with learning, problems in the family, problems in the execution of learning tasks, discrepancy between parental and private wishes for studied specialty and others. Problem students are hard to diagnose immediately unless they themselves declare it. In other cases, the problem starts in the course of the

educational process and it is the responsibility of each participant – a teacher or a student to signal the existence of such a problem in time to undertake specific activities, primarily related to professional and personal counseling.

 - provoking independence and creativity. In school in the students dominate the role of passive actors who are being cared for in many directions. It is quite different at the university, where the initiative is in the hands of the students – they are responsible for their own development – whether they will attend the classes regularly or not, whether they will perform their assignment tasks or not. This is why, in the first month after the beginning of the academic year, a task is assigned to the students, which also aims to fulfill the role of team building. For example, in the „Non-formal Education" speciality such a task is the performance „Wake Up Yourself". The idea is for students to be „awakened" as future specialists in the respective field of professional realization. In view of this, they have to figure out how to present themselves. In fact their representation to a great extent is also a kind of diagnosis of their ideas and their expectations towards the specialty. For space is used the stage of the university theater. Awakening and supporting students' autonomy is important for their future as specialists but also as citizens who are able to take initiative and defend professional interests and positions for the benefit of society. In the course of the pedagogical process, autonomy and its main manifestation – initiative – is also important from the point of view of initiating the creation of virtual spaces for learning resources, organization of student scientific forums, exhibitions, charity events, changes in the educational content and many others.

 - raising the level of literacy – this is not an immediate task of the academic mentoring in the Faculty of Pedagogy, because in a good synergy of the circumstances, modern Bulgarian language is studied. But in mass practice, functional illiteracy takes on threatening proportions, and this is a serious barrier to reading and understanding the meaning of terms in science, respectively, reflecting on the ability to learn with understanding.

 - periodic recall of the basics mentioned above, as in the initial period the concentration of information in the completely new and different situation for the students makes it possible to miss these important moments.

Implementation of the academic mentoring model as a whole has been successful. Wishes can always be expressed – for example, regarding the level of sympathy of colleagues outside the team of mentors. Academic mentoring is focused on shaping the optimal behavioral expression of the personality (value education) as a basis and an important background for the learning process. In this sense, the development of a technology for the provision of training (complementing the available and correspondingly providing the pedagogical process as a whole) through the development of specific skills and the development of resources supporting the learning of students is justified. Significant potential in support of this is the project „A synergy model for supporting and developing students learning skills", which is being developed in 2017 by a team of faculty – lecturers and students at the Faculty of Pedagogy. Probably, in the near future, this finished model will find even more significant place in academic life, including by formalizing it as specialized courses covering not a month and one semester even.