ROLE OF DIVERSITY IN TEACHING MARKETING

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Abstract

In a contemporary context, education is regarded as an innovative concept that has a powerful impact on educating the young generation. Selectively passing over knowledge in an adequate framework allows an optimum development of educational actions that have a specific goal. The role of education in the society's development and in the development of each individual increases significantly as the impact of technological progress on the educational process requires an organization of the educative activity in accordance with these significant changes in society. From the past and up to now, the education system has undergone important stages in the transformation and improvement of the educational activity. The modernization of the education system aims to achieve an optimal balance between the contemporary society's demands and the quality of the educational activity. The objectives of this study are the following: highlighting the context of higher education in Romania, presenting the importance of teaching marketing in an applied way, the analysis of the effectiveness of implementing modern teaching techniques, the analysis of the impact of diversity in teaching marketing discipline, highlighting the role of the teacher in teaching and learning activities. Teaching strategies and interactive teaching methods are direct ways of action that stimulate the activity of teaching-learning. By using modern strategies and means of education, the teacher makes task achievement more efficient, thus facilitating the transmission of knowledge taught.

Keywords: *innovation, interactive teaching strategies, diversity, marketing, higher education*

1. Introduction

Education contributes to the development of each individual having a purpose oriented towards training and educating individuals to adequately adapt to the demands of the labor process but also to everyday reality. For a proper functioning of the education system a connection of all education and training activities to a social, economic, political, geographic, demographic and cultural level is required in each country. In a knowledge-based society, the continuous improvement of the education process represents a priority axis in the current European context.

This study aims to emphasize the importance of practicing a modern teaching style practiced by teachers by using various techniques and modern methods of teaching. The objectives of this study are: emphasizing the main changes that occurred in time in the Romanian system of higher education, the analysis of the implementation of modern teaching techniques in the educational-training process, the analysis of the role that the diversity of techniques and modern teaching methods contribute to teaching marketing in an applied way, highlighting the role that the teacher has in using interactive and modern methods of teaching in the educational-training process.

This study presents the main modern teaching methods and techniques used by teachers in teaching marketing in an applied way. These are the following: 1. case study; 2. writing essays; 3. personal reflection; 4.Brainstorming method; 5. Jigsaw puzzle. A brief description of these elements is made, emphasizing the role that diversity plays in teaching marketing and the positive effects generated by applying modern techniques on students who in this way succeeded in developing their creativity, practical skills and competitive spirit.

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A review of literature is made in order to highlight the importance of using modern, effective and interactive teaching techniques by teachers in the educational-training process.

In Romania, the implementation of effective learning strategies and setting up a radical reform in education could be the key of an efficient education process. In knowledge society the teacher's role is to encourage and stimulate students' creativity, to develop their skills by using modern teaching strategies. A good teacher, in order to obtain the results expected and in order to maintain an interactive teaching environment, needs to harmoniously combine all forms of learning, i.e. formal, non-formal and informal learning. Traditional pedagogy was dominated by formal learning; while modern pedagogy harmoniously entwined formal, non-formal and informal learning (learning is also accomplished outside universities through the students' participation in specialized trainings held in companies which operate in fields that are in accordance with the students' specialization). Nowadays, students participate in interactive classes, gliding from the process of memorizing to that of developing critical thinking and personal expression. By using interactive teaching strategies, an effective teacher prepares his/her students for the dynamic challenges in society.

2. The context of higher education

From the past and up to present the higher education system has continued to grow and attract more and more students. After 1989, there was a steady effort regarding the development of higher education in Romania, the following steps being taken: "the development of the institutional network and the number of students; the appearance of private higher education, the efforts to achieve decentralization (…)"[1].

In the '90s, aside from full-time higher education institutions that held courses for 4, 5, 6 years there were also colleges (short-term higher education institutions), and also distance learning[2].

In its attempt to reach the standards of Western Europe, Romania went through important stages in the development of Romanian higher education. Therefore, on June19th, 1999, 29 countries (both from Europe and outside it), including Romania, attended the meeting in Bologna, that ended with the signature of the "Bologna Declaration". The general objectives set out in the "Declaration of Bologna" are the following: "the accreditation of diplomas (...), adopting a system for organizing studies based on two cycles; implementing a credit system (ECTS), promoting the mobility of students and that of academic administrative personnel; promoting the European cooperation in terms of quality development, promoting the European dimension of higher education, especially in terms of curricula development, cooperation between institutions, mobility programs"[3].

In the present context, Romanian higher education system follows these objectives that contribute to the achievement of the expected performance. In Romania, higher education is organized on three levels, namely: Bachelor's degree programme, Master's degree programme and doctoral programme, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) being mandatory, and "starting with the academic year 2005-2006, universities issue to each graduate, free of charge, the Diploma Supplement, both in Romanian and in a foreign language, whose content is in accordance with European standards"[4]. Also, the implementation of National law no. 1/2011 has resulted in significant changes in the Romanian higher education system. Universities participated in an evaluation process that had the fundamental purpose of improving the educative process and identifying the position held by each university in the system of higher education.

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[1] Pachef, R.C. (2008), Evaluarea în învăţământul superior, Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică, R.A., Bucureşti, pp. 78.
[2] Ibidem, pp.79.
[3] Ibidem, pp. 73-74.
[4] Ibidem, pp.80-81.

Universities are classified into three categories: "universities focused on education, universities of training and scientific research and universities of education and artistic creation, and universities of advanced research and education"[5].

According to the National law of education no. 1/2011, 2011 universities must provide students with necessary practice sites, both within and outside universities. Also, higher education institutions accredited according to legislation can organize the graduation exams for bachelor, master, and doctoral programmes.

Regarding this process of transformation and change that took place in the Romanian higher education system, by the implementation and adoption of new measures it can be mentioned that "education in Romania is going through a process of reform. All components of education are subjected to some transformation actions: institutional organization, relational aspects, the contents put forth, the assessing and credit system and styles, and teacher training"[6]. It can also be mentioned that currently, ensuring the quality of the educational process as well as the implementation of measures that takes into account the smooth development of the entire educational process are key elements that contribute to the development of national higher education system. Student-focused education by his/her direct involvement in the education process, and the use of modern interactive teaching strategies are also important elements in this innovative process in terms of quality assurance in higher education. To back up these statements, we may conclude that "quality assurance in education is a very complex process that targets the institutional - administrative side and the educational process itself"[7].

3. The importance of teaching marketing in an applied way

Learning is a complex process that contributes to the formation and development of young generations, who constantly need to adapt to changes in society. The learning process is led by teachers whose role is to plan, conduct and coordinate educational activities and effectively communicate essential information in order to achieve the learning process.

After graduating, future specialists are faced with the reality of everyday life. It is therefore very important that during the years of study, teachers combine the theoretical aspect with the practical one when teaching. Hence, students are motivated, the main purpose being that of stimulating and gaining their attention.

In Romania, there are many universities specialized in economics where marketing is being taught. The practical approach of this subject is essential because "marketing is not an exact subject, like analytical geometry (...) marketing should not be applied according to a fixed scheme in various countries that have different economies, cultures and policies"[8]. The role of the teacher is therefore essential in conducting educational activities consisting in the fact that students acquire basic concepts that operate within this subject.

"Marketing as a topic appeared in the United States in the first part of the 20th century in the teaching of courses having to do with distribution, particularly wholesaling and retailing"[9]. According to Kotler (2006) "marketing is based on several key disciplines such as economics, psychology, sociology, organizational theory, mathematics and decision science"[10]. Marketing will evolve as new changes are recorded in these fields, changes caused by the scientific progress.

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[5] http://www.edu.ro/index.php/articles/15116.

[6] Cucoş, C. (2006), Pedagogie. Ediţia a II-a revăzută şi adăugită, Editura Polirom, Bucureşti, 2006, pp. 434.

[7] Marinescu, M. (2009), Tendinţe şi orientări în didactica modernă, Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică R.A., Bucureşti, pp. 149-150.

[8] Kotler, P., (2006), Conform lui Kotler:cea mai importantă autoritate în marketing îţi răspunde la întrebări, BRANDBUILDERS GRUP, Bucureşti, pp. 3.

[9] Ibidem, pp. 5.

[10] Ibidem, pp. 6.

Nowadays, the advent of new technologies has a strong impact on companies that need to conduct effective marketing activities to achieve their goal, namely making a profit. It is very important to note that "the classic marketing model needs to be future-fitted. Marketing must be deconstructed, redefined and stretched"[11]. In this context, the teaching strategy must be focused on interactive, innovative and practical methods which reflect the dynamic nature of this practical science called marketing. Currently, marketing based on client relationship allows companies to build customer loyalty and to attract new customers.

In this way the important role of market research is highlighted when one wishes to identify customer needs. Marketing researchers often use effective marketing tools in their attempt to respond effectively to the most sophisticated desires of consumers. From a theoretical perspective, presenting the marketing research type is essential in starting the practical part, which, for students represents the grounds for carrying through teaching projects. Teamwork (creating working groups of four to five students) facilitates the development of the sense of competition and allows each team member to get involved in carrying out tasks when the project is initiated. In literature review it is noted that "teamwork is important for the self-detection of capabilities and limitations" and "interactive group strategies develop the ability to work together, to show tolerance towards the participants' point of view and mutual respect"[12]. In other words, teamwork is challenging and it generates creative ideas while generating at the same time tangible results that lead to achieving the desired performance.

Tudorică (2007) believes that "learning is determined by a complex interaction between the existing knowledge of subjects, the social context and the problem that needs to be solved"[13]. Thus, by outlining common working tasks, students are given the opportunity to express their own ideas and to test teamwork skills. In this situation the teacher's role is to promote students' creativity, to address open questions and to encourage them in expressing constructive ideas. An efficient teacher encourages teamwork by using an interactive learning style. Also, teaching marketing in an applied way targets educational activities aimed at acquiring knowledge and practical skills. Active participation and an environment favourable for debates allow the encouragement of the sense of initiative among students who analyze and provide solutions for solving the tasks undertaken.

It is important to note that teaching communication performed between the teacher and his/her students plays an important role in the educational process. The teacher's flexible communication and teaching style gives students the freedom to express their ideas. The positive attitude, accuracy and pedagogical tact are the main factors that contribute to the smooth course of the educational process.

4. Role of diversity in teaching marketing

In literature review, it is mentioned that success in the educational process largely depends on the following characteristics of the teacher: "attitudes towards self, students, peers, and what they teach; knowledge on subject and education theory; skills on planning, organization, and management; on communication, and on motivation"[14].

In teaching marketing, in order to capture the attention of students teachers use various teaching techniques and methods. We can mention therefore: 1. case study; 2. writing essays; 3. personal reflection; 4. Brainstorming method; 5. Jigsaw puzzle.

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[11]Kotler, P., Jain, D., Maesincee, S.(2009), Marketingul în era digitală:o nouă viziune despre profit, creştere şi înnoire, Editura METEOR PRESS, Bucureşti, pp.10.

[12]Oprea, C.L. (2009), Strategii didactice interactive. Repere teoretice şi practice, Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică R.A., Bucureşti, pp.19.

[13]Tudorică, R. (2007), Managementul educaţiei în context european. Ediţia a II-a revizuită, Editura Meronia, Bucureşti,pp.116.

[14] Bacellar, F.C.T., Ikeda, A.A. (2006), "Marketing professors: paths and perspectives", European Business Review, Vol.18, No.3, pp.237.

1. A traditional example used in teaching marketing is the case study. Preparing a case study requires a sustained effort from the teacher's part. He/she needs to formulate questions that encourage free debate among students and the expression of personal opinions.

2. Writing essays is another method of interactive teaching that invites students to personal reflection. On specific topics previously outlined, students are encouraged by the teacher to express their opinion. This method enjoys great success among students because it stimulates creativity and freedom of expression. They combine elements of theory assimilated over years of study while offering practical examples from everyday life.

3. Brainstorming is another teaching method focused on producing ideas that stimulate creativity. It is very important to accept all ideas during the debate, ideas that are to be evaluated at the end of the discussion by all team members; then those ideas that can provide accurate answers for the debated issue are selected.

4. Jigsaw puzzle is an example of interactive group learning method that develops creative thinking and cooperation among students.

Involving students in various educational activities produces positive effects by developing their practical skills, creativity and sense of initiative.

Formulating open questions is another means by which the students' ability to learn is developed. Creating a climate adequate for free expression of students depends, as mentioned above, on the teacher's pedagogical tact. The variety of teaching methods develops students' curiosity who will be able to develop hypotheses, formulate questions and build personal values. Teachers who apply effective and interactive teaching strategies, providing students with diversity and a theoretical and practical component can achieve the desired performance, thus contributing to the development and training of young generation able to face the challenges of the labor process.

The teaching activity gains efficiency during academic seminars because "the debates conducted during seminars give the students the possibility to clarify, improve, fathom, corroborate and perfect their own skills"[15] .

Figure no. 1: Teacher-student relationship and the efficiency of applying modern teaching techniques

YES	NO
- interactive teaching (using examples and involving students in the teaching process)	- lack of interaction with students (using dictation)
- formulating open questions	- avoiding communication
- flexible style of teaching	-authoritarian teaching style
- emphasis on learning	-emphasis on teaching
- ensuring feedback	-lack of cooperation

Source: Authors

It is important to note that each individual is unique and has his/her own experiences and personality traits and the success of the teaching process depends largely on these elements. Therefore, each teacher must adapt to the needs and expectations of the group of students involved in educational activity, motivating them to actively participate and to obtain success through perseverance and tenacity. An effective teacher must react spontaneously, practice a modern and flexible teaching style, be creative and respond clearly to students' wishes who want to participate interactively during the course of teaching.

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[15] Marinescu, M. (2009), Tendințe și orientări în didactica modernă, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică R.A., București, pp. 161.

Oprea (2009) highlights the following principles of interactive teaching strategies, namely: "students build their own meanings and interpretations of training; training purposes are discussed, negotiated, not imposed; methodological alternatives for teaching, learning and assessment are promoted; (…) the evaluation will be less criterial and more reflective, integrating complementary methods of evaluation; learning by detection and problem solving are promoted"[16] .

In the current European context, when new measures that have an overwhelming impact on the entire educational process are adopted, training teachers in accordance with European requirements and trends is a key point in improving the qualitative aspect of education.

The progress of new technologies significantly influences the structure of the teaching process. Thus, implementation of New Information and Communication Technologies in the education system contributes to the development of interactive teaching techniques and methods, and to the increase of quality in higher education, and it also constitutes a challenge for all those involved in this dynamic and complex process. Teachers are forced to adapt their teaching strategies according to the new technological requirements. Thus, the implementation of the eLearning structure in higher education contributes to an interactive approach of the educational process focused on students.

According to Singh, O'Donoghue and Worton (2005) "eLearning is constructed in a variety of contexts, such as distance learning, online learning and networked learning"[17]. In order to keep up with changes in the knowledge-based society, universities must use modern information systems in the teaching process. ELearning platforms imply this process. Marinescu (2009) consider that an efficient eLearning structure must be interactive and must involve students directly, who should provide immediate feedback .Also, in order to gain the attention of students, teaching strategies used by teachers must be carefully chosen and efficiently implemented. It is important to note that assessment in the context of eLearning is a complex process that pursues the following main goals: "connection to a specific learning content considered to be important; internalization of a way to assume learning, capitalizing and materializing new acquisitions by the beneficiary"[18].

In Romania an eLearning platform (Advanced e-Learning) has developed. The purpose of this platform is to stimulate competition, but also teamwork. This allows monitoring of the educational process and offers teachers modern methods of teaching and learning[19]. For students, the eLearning structure allows direct access to the contents taught, a significant advantage being the flexibility and interactive nature of the modern educational process.

In a contemporary context when the technical and technological progress leaves their mark on the structure of the education system, training of efficient teachers represents a premise in the development and improvement of the education process. In Romania, two stages aimed at the training process of teachers are known, namely: "initial training - during studies in universities; and constant training - which means improvement during practice"[20].

A good teacher must be a promoter of new, of change and must have a reflective attitude focused on students' needs. The quality of the education provided to young generations of students depends on how teachers implement the new contents, and on their pedagogical tact. Highly trained teachers focus on interactive teaching strategies of cooperation. They are open to cooperation, promote interactivity and motivate their students to actively participate in discussions during lectures and seminars. Therefore, besides the fact that students develop social skills, they acquire autonomy in

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[16] Oprea, C.L. (2009), *Strategii didactice interactive. Repere teoretice şi practice*, Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică R.A., Bucureşti, pp.160.

[17] Singh, G., O'Donoghue, J., Worton, H., (2005), A Study Into The Effects Of eLearning On Higher Education, *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 2(1), pp.14.

[18] Marinescu, M. (2009), *Tendinţe şi orientări în didactica modernă,* Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică R.A., Bucureşti, pp. 161.

[19] Ibidem, pp.83.

[20] Marinescu, M. (2009), *Tendinţe şi orientări în didactica modernă,* Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică R.A., Bucureşti, pp.132.

expressing personal ideas. In this way, the teaching process is no longer regarded by students as a monotonous process that promotes the classic model of teaching, when the teacher dictates the content and they have to take notes. Practicing interactive teaching strategies, teachers turn teaching into an activity that develops students' curiosity by actively involving them in this process that targets the improvement of the quality of the educational process.

Also, learning strategies have an important role in the teaching activity. Specifically, the teacher needs to take initiative and suggest topics for debate in order to encourage students to implement their own learning strategies. Sălăvăstru (2009) believes that "strategies are extremely important in the student's learning activity. When proposing a learning situation, the teacher might find out that his/her students conduct a multitude of behaviours regarding how they select, acquire, organize and integrate new knowledge. These behaviours are designated by the term learning strategies"[21].

The learning strategy represents the actions that an individual performs in order to achieve learning objectives. Students use different learning strategies that contribute to the formation and development of individual study capacities, facilitating a proper filtering of information provided by the teacher.

In literature review the following typology of learning strategies is presented: a). primary strategies that aim at "memorizing, updating and using information"; (…) as well as "identifying key concepts, establishing links between knowledge, creating conceptual networks"; b). support strategies that aim at "planning study time, control of attention focus, self-motivation, control of negative emotions, ensuring a mood proper for study, and so on"[22]. Learning strategies are considered to be self-fitting strategies that aim at planning, monitoring and adjusting learning activities. According to this strategy students plan their information on a specific topic of study, being disciplined and responsible in their learning activity[23]. A good teacher must teach students to learn. Therefore, when teaching learning strategies, he/she must provide clear information and must point out the efficiency of the use of the learning strategy selected. Students should be aware that applying effective learning strategies will help them enhance knowledge. Thus, they will progress more easily; they will set short-term and long-term goals and will also be able to develop hypotheses.

An efficient method that teaches students how to organize their learning activity is SQ3R method (Survey - Question - Read - Recite - Review). SQ3R method is a modern method of learning that has a great success abroad, being present in all university textbooks. According to this method, students go through five major steps, namely[24]:

1. The first step - Survey - refers to a primary filtering of information. Students analyze the course structure on chapters and subchapters; they select key concepts and analyze the schemes in the paper.

2. The second step - Question – refers to formulating key questions about the content that needs to be acquired, allowing them to structure the information into chapters.

3. The third step - Read - refers to reading notes and establishing connections between systematic knowledge and the main concepts.

4. The fourth step – Re-read - aims at reproducing the content covered and scoring the responses formulated in the second stage.

5. The fifth step – Review – is the last step and aims at a reproduction of memorized content, a presentation of the schemes and making connections between memorized concepts and knowledge.

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[21] Sălăvăstru, D. (2009), *Psihologia învăţării. Teorii şi aplicaţii educaţionale*, Editura Polirom, Iaşi, pp.167.
[22] Ibidem, pp.169.
[23] Ibidem, pp.174.
[24] Ibidem,, pp.180-181.

Going through all these steps, students manage to establish connections between knowledge acquired and interact better with the content that needs to be learned for that exam preparation. Although it is a method that requires more attention and effort from students, this method proves its effectiveness through a better systematization of study time. Passing the exam for which preparation was made represents a favourable result generated by the effective planning and organization of the time needed to prepare individually, by using the learning method mentioned above.

Students must be self-taught, they must effectively organize study time, and they must control learning activities and set realistic goals. During this process aimed at learning, the teacher's role is that of "mediator of student's knowledge. He/she gets involved in the acquisition and organization of such knowledge according to the properties of the cognitive system, determining the student to be aware of his/her own cognitive resources, examine learning strategies and use the most effective ones"[25].

5. Conclusions

The teacher's role in the educational activity is of utmost importance. Effective teachers are those teachers who manage, through tenacity and perseverance to mobilize students to achieve their goals. Their creativity, perseverance and firmness in decision making develop through their engagement in activities aimed at achieving tasks. The effective communication of teaching objectives as well as effectively ensuring knowledge transfer and feedback are key elements in effectively achieving teaching tasks. Teacher-student interaction should be based on a mutual exchange of ideas, thus encouraging dialogue between the two parties. Diversification of teaching strategies contributes to professional success, the teacher therefore managing to stimulate his/her students' attention. The teacher outlines task for his/her students, he/she being the one who organizes the teaching activity.

The education system contributes through its dynamic and innovative nature to the education of young generation in accordance with the requirements of the knowledge-based society.

Education is an external factor, which acts both directly and indirectly, on human personality. Developing skills specific to a certain field of activity is a prerequisite for education and training of young generations to meet labour market requirements which is in fact, the purpose of the educational activity. In knowledge-based society, the educational objective is to promote innovation and competitiveness which contribute to setting up a proper learning space for the entire life. The role of the education activity is to support the use of interactive teaching strategies based on modern techniques used by teachers to effectively deliver contents specific to the courses taught.

Modern teaching and learning strategies based on interactive learning methods (critical thinking, implementation of theoretical concepts, formulating questions, creating projects and case studies, learning by detection and so on.,) contribute directly to strengthening learning skills, and to the development of creativity and sense of initiative. Promoting efficiency and creativity in the learning process allows students to develop their personality in a harmonious way. They will gain key skills and they will easily adapt to labour market requirements.

The education system contributes through its dynamic and innovative nature to educating the young generation in accordance with the requirements of knowledge-based society.

Nowadays young people are forced to adapt to all changes in the education process and they successfully manage this, being aware that in the future new technologies will have a significant impact on all activities because "the ability to master modern technologies intellectually, socially and politically is one of the major challenges of this century"[26].

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[25] Sălăvăstru, D. (2009), *Psihologia învăţării. Teorii şi aplicaţii educaţionale*, Editura Polirom, Iaşi, pp.185.
[26] Marinescu, M. (2009), *Tendinţe şi orientări în didactica modernă*, Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică R.A., Bucureşti, pp. 78.

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