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THE PEDAGOGICAL INSTRUCTOR, AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN EDUCATION

Yamit MARSIANO[1], Adrian PASCUTA[2]

Abstract

Our times are primarily characterized by rapid changes that create uncertainty, changes that are expressed in a variety of areas, including technology, the labour market, and the family structure. Globally, from the beginning of the 1990s there have been significant reforms in the training of teachers with the goal of improving the quality of the teachers and consequently the quality of the students. This article explores the literature focused on the role and the importance of the pedagogical instructor, a vital entity in the development of a good future teacher, as well as changes in education.

Keywords: pedagogical instructor, student's achievements, pedagogical instructor, student's success, students' preferences, professionalism, feedback, standards for teaching.

Introduction

In the complex reality of current times, education needs to cope, on the one hand, with the lack of certainty that characterizes the period, with the many technological changes, with the revolution of knowledge, and, on the other hand, with the changes in the labour market, and with the diversity of the population of students and teachers, with classes characterized by considerable heterogeneity, with differences between the students, and with other factors. In this reality, the ability of education to be an agent of change and to set value-oriented goals and not only to adjust to the existing reality is important. To succeed in teaching, the teachers are required to display adequate personal and professional skills. (Darling-Hammond, 2006)

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The quality of a teacher's activity

There are a number of ways to raise the quality of a teacher's activity in the classroom. One way, which has long term influence, is of course, the training. In order to raise the degree of professionalism of the teachers, it is necessary to see the teacher's training as a continuous process. The term 'continuum' expresses learning that lasts the entire professional life of the teacher (Shimoni & Avidav-Unger, 2013). Thus, constant learning is created and the connection between the teacher's abilities and the characteristics of his/her training for the position and the professional development that is undergone during the career becomes clear (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). The training of the teachers is based on the assumption that the teaching ability develops in the program of training and during their professional development.

A teacher training, like any other educational process, may shape the 'student teacher', who is educated through the choice of the contents, the emphasis placed in the program on the different areas of knowledge, the values that derive from it, the knowledge of the critical orientation and the characteristics of the lessons. The training is expressed in the education for social awareness, for professional skills, and for a correct perception of the teacher regarding his/ her role in society. Moreover, the training of teachers and educators, like similar professionals, is derived from educational and philosophical perceptions accepted in the educational system and supported by accepted perceptions in some of the Western world and in the academic disciplines. In recent years there have been changes in the accepted educational perceptions, and these have influenced the patterns of training of the educators (Zimran, 1999).

The profile of pedagogical instruction

The pedagogical instruction is defined as an interpersonal interaction, a process, in which a skilled person (the pedagogical instructor) supports a less skilled person (the teaching trainee) to develop the proper behaviour and the professional identity of a good teacher (Yogev & Zozovsky, 2011). Of course, good teachers are also a product of the quality of the programs for such training and professional development (Ball & Forzani, 2009). It is obvious to question what makes a good pedagogical instructor, from the perspective of his students. In a qualitative study, Smith (2005) found that the profile of a good teacher educator consisted of six main features; the answers were as following: (1) "Practice what is preached and relate taught theory to own practice (82.5% of the group); (2) "Give useful feedback" (80%); (3) "Recent classroom experience in teaching children which matches that of the novice teachers' context of teaching" (72.5%); (4) "Practice a meta-cognitive approach to teaching: explains "why" and "how" in relation to own actions while teaching" (65%); (5) "Provide support" (60%); (6) "Manage time and people well" (40%).

According to Becker, Kennedy, & Hundersmarck, (2003), a quality program for the training of teachers needs to include the following elements: (1) A connection

between training and specialization and actual entry into teaching and the processes of professional development; (2) Relations between the training institutions and the learning institutions; (3) Relations between theory and practice; (4) A shift from learning focused on the 'how to do' or 'how to know' to learning focused on 'how to learn'; (5) A process of training that also emphasizes the emotional and social aspects in the teacher's position; (6) Development of a professional identity; (7) Encouragement of formal training of teachers; (8) Reinforcement of the teacher's general education and mastery of a disciplinary domain; (9) Reinforcement of the practical experience in the training for teaching through a stronger connection to the field; (10) Support of the teacher during the professional development and emphasis of the teacher's responsibility for performances; (11) The existence of diverse models in teacher training, according to the school level; (12) A complete curriculum in teacher training with four components: studies of education, studies of a specific discipline, pedagogical-didactic studies, and practical training.

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO, 2011) proposes a set of core teaching standards that delineate what teachers need to know so that all students will achieve educational success and be able to enter the labour market. These standards formulate the common principles and foundations of teaching shared by all subject areas and grade levels.

These teaching standards attempt to formulate effective teaching and learning in a public educational system, they seek to empower all students to assume control of their learning, to highlight the implementation of knowledge and skills to real world problems, to appreciate the differences that every student brings to the learning experience. The motivation to update the core teaching standards is driven by the new vision regarding the diversity of students and also the belief that every student can attain a high level of achievement and must do so. All learners bring different experiences, capacities, aptitudes, and prior learning but also their own, culture, values, which can be used to advance their learning. Teachers must have a more profound comprehension of their own frameworks of reference (such as gender, language, culture, capabilities, and ways of knowing), the potential biases within these frameworks, and their influence on expectations and relations with learners and their families.

The pedagogical instructor has a variety of roles: first of all, he/she will support the learning process of the trainee, by linking theory with practice, by analyzing various teaching contexts, by providing feedback and being a good practice model (De Jong et al., 1996). Also, the pedagogical instructor will help the trainee develop knowledge and ways to promote independent critical thinking, so that self-improvement is promoted, along with personal development. The pedagogical instructor is also responsible for promoting norms and standards for appropriate performance of the desired instructional tasks, at the class level and at the social-institutional level (Emanuel, 2005). Likewise, the pedagogical instructor should also be involved in research (Zilberstein, 2005) and is a member in a greater community of learners, a member of a team, along with other specialists in education (Hanson & Huston, 1995).

The pedagogical instructor is required to assist the teacher in training along a way which mai entail many questions and dilemmas, to shift from the status of a learning student to the status of a novice teacher, who can assume the responsibility for a classroom and who fits into the school culture (Zilberstein, 2005). The pedagogical instructor is the main factor in the training of teachers, acting as a link between the theory of teaching and the practice of teaching. According to Goian (2013), one of the roles of practical activities in higher education is to prevent potential difficulties of adapting to a job, being desirable that students familiarize themselves with the practical aspects of the profession through internships. The same applies to programs that aim at training teachers, as the practical aspects of the profession should always receive proper attention. Also, the pedagogical instructor should be a model of good practive when it comes to appropiate language in relation with their trainess, so thay they do not enhance potential their social exclusion or create discrimination (Goian, 2010; Tomita & Goian, 2009)

Reichenberg and Wartheim (2002) indicate two factors of knowledge identified as being the most important by the pedagogical instructors: knowledge in pedagogy and knowledge in the teaching skills. According to Rodgers (2002), the pedagogical instruction leads to reflective activity. This activity provides the teachers new insights on their students' learning abilities and enables them to discern between what they taught in the lesson and what the children learned. The role of the pedagogical instructor has shifted from a role that examines the student's mastery of the knowledge to a role that helps the student teacher in developing behaviours and skills that encourage autonomy, which will enable the future teacher to examine the activity and be responsible for further professional development.

The role of instructor

Emanuel (2005) examines the perception of the role and functioning of the instructor from three perspectives: (1) The socio-psychological aspect; (2) The functional-professional aspect; (3) The aspect of assessment, reflection, and feedback.

- The Socio-Psychological Aspect refers to the pedagogical instructor's support regarding the decisions of the trainees to engage in and choose teaching as a profession. The teachers' teachers have the ability to help the trainees examine the value-oriented meaning inherent in their choice of this profession and to understand the constellation of roles and expectations of an occupation that involves such a vital social mission – educating the next generation (Wang & Odell, 2002). Therefore, it is expected from the pedagogical instructor to create a supportive environment and help examine the expectations and types of requirements and pressures in the educational system.

- The Functional Professional Aspect - Emanuel (2005) discussed the meanings and implications of the elements regarding knowledge, skill, and abilities that the pedagogical instructor must cultivate in the students, so that they will accomplish their work in a professional and appropriate manner.
- The Aspect of Assessment, Reflection, and Feedback - refering to the development of functions for evaluation and feedback, as vital elements of teaching-learning.

Conclusion

Emanuel (2005) examines the perception of the role and the functioning of the pedagogical instructor in three ways: (1) The pedagogical instructor as promoting the development of knowledge and skills; (2) The pedagogical instructor as evaluating the progress of the student in the processes of training towards the status of an appropriate teacher; (3) The development of abilities for self-appraisal in the trainee. These functions are reflected as standards of teaching that also influenced how to evaluate the quality of a teacher training program, and should be expressed in all training programs, globally (Wang & Odell, 2002). The real main objective of the training and professional as well as personal development of the teachers is the achievements of the students. The fulfilment of the teacher's abilities as a professional will provide a solution for the needs of the students as individuals and for the needs of the community.

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