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## Reconsidering the Didactic Practices from the Perspective of the Respect for the Educated Person's Individuality

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### Abstract

The present paper approaches the problem of learning styles in the academic environment and desires for favourite the student-centered education as a program for improving learning among students. A study has been done among students from, the aim of the study being identifying the favourite students' learning styles, with the aim of making a few proposals for matching the teaching strategies to the student's favourite way of learning in this faculty. By knowing the student's learning style the trainers will adapt their discourse and the teaching methods so that they make use of the child's main sensorial system.

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### 1. Introduction

We live in a period in which knowledge becomes old more and more rapidly, information becomes accessible faster and faster through computer networks, the need for learning the entire life increases, and the teaching patterns based on transmitting and storing information lose their functionality. Inside the traditional and rigid learning system and often inefficient, students acquire certain knowledge only because these are to be tested and not because they represent some intrinsic values with educational aims. In the same time, the requirements of society for new teaching models increase, and they tend to develop the students' ability to update their

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knowledge when necessary. Seeing these aspects, the specialists have seen themselves in the stringent need to offer efficient and viable alternatives. The teaching patterns orientated towards the student, focusing on building processes and use of information seems appropriate to meet these new requirements.

## 2. Learning as a building process of knowledge centered on pupil/student

At a human level, learning shows its permanent formative and informative valences. Thus, the term can be understood as an attitude towards knowledge, but also on life, laying stress on human initiative, with the aim of acquiring new abilities for a better adjustment at the level of changes that appear in the environment. At this level, the concept gains a psycho-pedagogical connotation and is part of an activity in which knowledge are acquired, abilities are learned, intellectual abilities are created (Jurcău N., 2000, p.103). Moreover, at men appears this new way of storing and transmitting the experience, the social way. Thus, we can say that learning, through its contents, brings a change in behavior conditioned by an individual experience and which includes a strictly cognitive side containing knowledge, developing cognitive functions, the capacity of understanding and assimilating new norms, and on the other side, a more practical side which refers to learning the acting schemes, to forming abilities and skills, to acquiring some social behavioral models (Bonchiș, E., 2002, p.87).

A diachronically perspective on education and in the same time on the evolution of educational sciences shows the existence of two paradigms of learning:

- The classical paradigm with the stress on teacher and the teaching act in which the pupil/student was a passive receptor of the discourse;
- The contemporary paradigm of learning centered on pupil/student, respectively on the offering of a learning experience, adapted to the pupil's/student's needs;

The new paradigm, of learning centered on pupil/student, determines the teachers to acquire some psycho-pedagogical, scientifically, methodical, managerial and psycho-social competences that will favor the projecting and implementing some strategies of differentiate training. In this sense, perspectives on learning centered on pupil/student have been developed. Bernart and Chis (2003, p.85) identify the following elements on teaching: *setting some standards on teaching, learning and evaluation quality; the transparency of instructive-formative process; projecting the didactic activities starting from the students' learning needs; using in teaching of active and interactive strategies; encouraging learning autonomy, using a wide range of strategies and auto evaluation; reconsidering the teacher's role.*

„Education has as its aim to form some individualities with high intellectual competences, able to adapt his knowledge to varied situations and some passive selectors of prefabricated answers”. (Stan C., 2000, p.64). Effective adaptation to new situations, using the students' knowledge relatively to the factor complex which characterizes an entire contest, is possible by projecting the main dimensions of the instructive-educative process: teaching, learning, evaluation-auto evaluation starting from quality standards. Except from traditional techniques, featured by using frequently transmission as a main form of teaching, reproduction as a main form of learning and evaluation after teaching some massive units, in present it is recognized the idea of conceptual changes, of building self-regulated learning, to the objectives and its evolution, of permanently evaluating pupils/students. Connecting to the process of teaching, to its objectives and evolution, permits, on one side, the teacher to use efficiently the information obtained in this way in projecting the following steps in teaching, and on the other side is helps the pupil's/student's self-evaluation process. In our paper we deal with aspects connected to learning styles from the perspective of this paradigm.

According to Neacsu I. (2006, p.85) independent academic leaning has the following significations:

- A quantitative and qualitative product of systematic, formal and significant knowledge;

- A structure with mnemonic, probed with refined informational storage and with high chances for creative reproduction;
- A process of acquiring facts, abilities and methods that can be used according to necessities and contexts;
- An activity of creating new sets of significations and senses;
- A superior capacity of understanding, interpretation and profound reinterpretation of perceived reality and processed in ways which vary with the personality of the actor who learns;
- A complex mental, affective and motoric exercise of profound reflex, in alternatives and with multiplicative accents engaged towards the universe of the studied knowledge;
- A process of translating new knowledge, feelings and abilities in cognitive behaviors (facts, concepts, theories, solving problems etc.), emotional-affective attitudes, values, beliefs), psychometrics (skills, patterns, ability models), socio-moral characteristics and spiritual ones;
- A special and preferential matrix for treating/processing/working with learning charges, through which we set in motion the strategies, adapting them to the requirements of a new created environment, called LEARNING STYLE.

### 3. Between theory and practice on identifying learning style of the student / student

The style translates the operational functional quality, the active posture of experience and the personality structure which transforms into “specific modalities of reception and working with information”. The differences in style result from the differentiated capacities in which people action and relation. It is appreciated that styles are modeled on the action model that the teachers requires. *The learning style* – a subcategory of knowledge style and this of the life style, represents a complex of human characteristics correlated and set in time and space, a model (a form) that combines the internal and external operations resulted from behavior, personality, attention, cognition, specific reactivity and orienting preferences/options, all of them expressing the subject’s level of development and being reflected in his specific behavior. The learning styles are differentiated:

- • According to genetic component involved there are four main learning styles: visual, auditory, tactile and kinesthetic. Thus:
- • The visual pupils/students- they learn by seeing printed or graphical materials, looking around them, watching demonstrations; they have a good memory for written texts and drawings.
- • The auditory pupils/students- they learn the best by hearing and conversation, talking, reading or processing thoughts in loud voice, they have a good memory for dialogue, music;
- • The tactile pupils/students- they learn the best by touching objects, sensorial perception of matter, physical and emotional perceptions, they have a good memory for events connected to feelings and physical sensations;
- • The kinesthetic pupils/students- they learn better involving actively in the process of learning by stimulation, role play, experiment, exploration and participating in activities in real life; they have a good memory for actions and movements.

Some pupils/students, in order to learn use one, two, three or even all learning styles. Learning styles represent a combination among natural predispositions and acquired skills. After we use a certain learning style in order to get the information, our brain processes it and stores it in one of the cerebral hemispheres, in the right or in the left one. Although people use both hemispheres, many process and store information mainly in one of the hemispheres, developing a preference for the respective hemisphere.

When pupils/students are taught in a style that does not correspond with the preference for a cerebral hemisphere, it is possible that they need a longer time to learn or even have learning difficulties. The preference for a cerebral hemisphere is not a conscientious option, we grow and evolve using one of the hemispheres. None of the hemispheres is superior to the other. Thus, they just do different actions, important in life thus:

- *The left hemisphere* is responsible for what we call speaking, language, the linguistic aspect of writing; it translates perceptions into words, coding logically and analytically the real world; it prefers details that it deals with methodically, rational, causal; it is characterized for a preference for words, dictionaries (words name, refer to, describe); it amplifies the lower frequencies of the verbal message; it searches for the senses connected to words; it uses sentences, syntaxes for interpreting messages; it has high performances in using grammatical patterns, syntactical rules.
- *The right hemisphere* is the center of non-verbal understanding, having a minimal connection to words; it gives the voice tone and intonation, the personal style; it gives rhythm, musicality, analogies, imagistic aspect (expresses experience in images); it approaches the information intuitively, contextual, relational; it searches for the distant, multiple, ambiguous senses of words; it extracts paralinguistic information, it permits the identification of voice, melody and intonation; it appreciates the acoustic message and less the linguistic function.
- According to *the activated brain hemisphere* predominant in learning one can differentiate two cognitive styles: *the global style* (right domination) and *the analytical/sequential style* (left dominance).
  - *The global style*- learning style used:
    - assembly vision of the text;
    - identifying the main ideas, key-words and the summery which offers the general perspective.
  - *The analytical style*- learning style used:
    - dividing the text into component parts, presented step by step and in logical order;
    - using underlining and fragmenting the text;
    - fixing some ides while reading and remaking the entire structure at the end.

Learning becomes easy when we correlate the presentation of new materials with the favorite personal brain hemisphere. As an example, if a pupil/student processes information in symbols, he will answer positively to teaching through words, language; if he processes information in sensorial images, he will answer positively to teaching through the image of a sensorial experience.

Gardner H. (2006, p.88) stated the idea of the existence of some different and self-controlled intelligences that can lead to diverse ways of knowing, understanding and knowledge. In his opinion, intelligence is not seen as a feature set by standard testing, but the capacity to solve problems and realize products in real life situations. According to his opinion, intelligence is a promise for *bio-psychological potential*. Based on his thorough studies, Gardner differentiates the following types of intelligence: *linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, musical-rhythmic intelligence, spatial intelligence, naturalistic intelligence, kinesthetic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence*. Giving value to the theory of multiple intelligences imposes to the teacher to use a large number of didactic instruments, whose usage will ensure placing in the center of teaching the pupil/student.

Regarding the issue of student-centered learning / student concerned me conduct studies on identifying learning styles of pupils / students.

Our paper had as its aim identifying the favorite learning styles of the students from the 1<sup>st</sup> year in the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport at the University in Pitesti (from the perspective of the psychological dominant processes), with the intention to make some proposals for appropriate techniques in teaching to the favorite learning style of students from this faculty.

The study was held on a number of 100 students; the repartition on sexes of the respective group shows the majority of masculine sex. In order to identify the learning style of the students we used: "*Le Questionnaire sur le styles d'apprentissage par la vision , l'ecoute et le toucher*" (Vermunt, J. D., 1996, pp. 98-102). The questionnaire has 24 items, 8 items for each learning style (auditory, visual, kinesthetic).

After working with the results the following average in using the styles was obtained: the kinesthetic and visual styles are present in almost equal proportions (36,03% for kinesthetic style and 35,69% for visual style). The auditive style is preferred by the less majority (28,28%), but still the proportion of preference for the three learning styles does not have a high variability.

From the results of the study one can see that the students from the 1<sup>st</sup> year in the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport at the University in Pitesti use all learning styles, mainly kinesthetic and visual styles. By better knowing the students' learning style, we can adapt our discourse and teaching methods so that to touch the learners' sensorial system. Thus, to a student with a predominant kinesthetic style one recommends the sensorial perception of the subject, he learns better by becoming involved actively in the process of learning by simulation, role play, experiment, taking part in real life activities. To a student with a more visual learning style one recommends creating mental images, drawings, printed materials and graphics, he likes to go from concrete to abstract, from example to rule.

In the situation in which pupils/students do not have the opportunity to learn by using different auxiliary materials (course books, films, video cassettes for the visual ones, moldings, other materials for those who use touch as a main feature, games played in a wide space for those who use the kinesthetic component), they cannot reach the results they would be able otherwise. The researchers shown the importance of adapting learning styles/methods to the pupils'/students' personality. More, if the didactic method suits the respective pupils'/students' style, the results would be better.

## Conclusions

Individual differences define each one's educability degree. Considerable through their variety and extent, preoccupations to diagnose individual aptitudes, with the aim to increase learning success, to foresee and prevent school failure to some students, represent as many tries to pass over the *differentiated psychology* and *differentiated pedagogy*, under the sign of democratic humanism.

Learning activity, through its nature and the way it is organized will lead to an implication on certain degrees of the teacher as well as the pupil/student. It will lead to an intense pupil/student- pupil/student, pupil/student-teacher and pupil/student- himself interaction. Thus one can realize an active participation, the pupil being interested in his own training, using the channels for acquiring information that are dominant to each individual, that is to his dominant intelligences. This means that the way information is organized and transmitted has to take into consideration the pupils'/students' learning styles and their cerebral preferences.

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