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TEACHING ON-LINE

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Abstract: The paper aproaches the problematic of on-line teaching learning activity due to the emergence of this issue in the specific conditions generated by the 2020 pandemia. It is an issue that will keep open the discussion and generate further studies but it may also contribute to unforseenimprovement measures unforseen and may be postponed in past circumstances.

Key words: on-line teaching, educational environment

The idea of using the computer and the IT resources in the teaching-learning-evaluation process has, in the current context of the pandemic, an increasing importance. The isolation of students and teachers has led to a sudden change in the educational strategy, shifting the focus from the classical, traditional modalities of the didactic act, to that at the distance. The adaptation was made out of necessity, but the efficiency of such a pedagogical approach involves quite a lot of variables, some of them independent of the will of those involved. With the decision to suspend school courses, the decision makers in education came with the measure of continuing the teaching process through IT means. The measure itself was received differently by teachers and this was due to impediments of different forms. First, many teachers, from the pre-university educational system, are not familiar, at an acceptable level, with everything that concerns the use of a computer or applications. Then another difficulty relates to the level of technological equipment. There are both students, but also teachers who either do not have a computer or tablet or do not have internet access. This problem is mainly encountered in the rural area, where, according to the estimates of the central authorities, about 40% of the school pupils do not have access to the Internet or a computer. Last but not least, a problem of professional ethics refers to those disciplines that involve frontal activities with students or practical activities. Therefore, the possibility of conducting online teaching activities is reduced. Leaving aside these strictly contextual

aspects, moving the teaching act into the online environment represented for a good part of the students, but also for the teachers, a welcome change, especially since, not once, the students cried out the need to modernize the teaching act.

In the literature, there are separate chapters that deal with this topic, of the use of the computer. But the approaches are more theoretical, targeting certain principles and theoretical aspects. Here is what we can read from a pedagogy treatise in the chapter "Computer Assisted Training": *"The computers in the educational world are interconnected in the networks, in order to disseminate and receive information from the internal (school), local (city, region) and worldwide (via the Internet) community. The Internet is the world-wide network of computers that provide several services: e-mail (e-mail), collection of web pages (www) and possibilities to search web pages using browsers (Internet Explorer, Netscape), call list (academic or educational discussions) etc."* [1] The theoretical presentation does not stop here, it continues to present at general level different aspects regarding the use of the computer. We must recognize that such a presentation can only be theoretical and general, that it aims to establish general principles that should be the basis of a didactic approach, whether it is realized through the computer. The accepted conclusion is as follows: *"Computational technology can therefore be made available to educators and learners for distance learning. A distance education system involves: the use of the computer network for communication and the development of an electronic course. In this system, offered by a multitude of universities and international educational institutions, the distance learner and tutors are in contact through the mail, the e-mail, the web pages on the Internet, the discussion list (chats), the exchange of whiteboard and video conferencing. "*[2]

With the development of computer systems, there have been numerous computer solutions dedicated to the school, so that teachers and students can choose between several variants. Even the Ministry of National Education has made available to teachers a dedicated digital.educred.ro platform that contains several computer software and platforms that can support teachers and students.

Beyond the multitude of computer solutions available to teachers, one aspect to consider is their quality. Therefore, the evaluation of an educational software must be made

[1] Elisabeta Voiculescu, coordonator, *Psihopedagogie*, Editura Aeternitas, Alba-Iulia, 2006, p. 431
[2] *Ibidem*, p. 431

taking into account four categories of criteria, according to Elisabeth Voiculescu, in Psycho-pedagogy:

a) regarding the technical means necessary for the rolling;

b) regarding the presentation of the content;

c) regarding the pedagogical quality of the software;

d) regarding the personality and attitude of the students. .[3]

If the first criterion is met today by most students, the second one is the way in which the application allows you to structure the information. For example, one of the applications often used at the moment is googleclassroom. It is designed in such a way as to facilitate the communication with the students in an efficient way and, moreover, to provide an interface as close as possible to the real model of a classical lesson. The application has many functions that allow the teacher to attach files of all types: word, exell, powerpoint, audio, etc. Thus, the information can be transmitted much easier, the teacher even has the opportunity to make a video to give to the students. Another aspect of the application concerns the part of exercises that the students have to perform. The advantage of this application is that the student can ask the teacher for explanations, so he can improve his knowledge and can be verified. The part dedicated to the themes also offers more variants of exercises, items, to check at the end and the score achieved. The student receives feedback, and the teacher has the opportunity to return the student's topic. The application can be customized, as the name suggests, by student classes, lessons, and access is made individually by sending a code. The pedagogical quality of the software is good because it offers a structured model similar to classical lessons. Further, the quality of the teaching materials is up to each teacher. The last criterion, the one related to the personality and the attitude of the students, is also debatable. This aspect is more about the quality of the environment from which the students come. Every teacher wants to have as motivated students as possible, who have parents who are involved in the education of their own children, who provide them with financial and moral support, who support them in the homework. But not all students come from such families, and not all schools are top rated. Usually, in neighborhood schools, students come from different family backgrounds, there are both motivated and less motivated students. The way they relate to online lessons differs. Personally, I had students who did their homework on time, others were late or others at all, motivating the lack of access to the internet or a computer. I also found that many students are

[3] *Ibidem*, p. 432

not familiar with the use of these software, that they are having difficulty creating an e-mail address, although almost all of them have accounts on most all social networking sites. Therefore, the attitude of the students is divided. Despite these aspects, the students were receptive to the online lessons, which they considered more attractive. Depending on the specific discipline, there are educational resources that provide teachers with animations, experiments, interactive presentations, all contributing to both the assimilation of information and to the degree of attractiveness.

Other educational software (https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/education/products/teams, www.edmodo.com, https://www.easyclass.com/, https://moodle.org/) offer similar support, all being structured in a way that facilitates the exchange of information. Also, a resource often used in sending teaching materials is e-mail itself. The teaching materials transmitted in this way require from the students an effort to go through them, to assimilate the information provided, to disseminate them and to apply them later.

However, computer-assisted training also has impediments. Design, material production, dissemination activities are all time consuming. The hours spent by the teachers in front of the computer have increased considerably, compared to the classic version. In addition, what is missing from both teachers and students is the emotional, empathic component. The interaction between the student and the teacher is limited to the transmission of messages, the possibility of a constructive dialogue, of teaching-learning methods that were based precisely on the spontaneous information exchange, on the teacher-student dialogue disappears. From this perspective, conducting online lessons means social isolation (certainly necessary in the context of the pandemic), but which, in the long term, can generate behavioral, mental or emotional disorders.

The advantages and disadvantages of computer-assisted training have been the subject of numerous studies. In 1990, Gage and Berliner performed a comparative study on a group of students who went through a computer exercise program. Thus, students obtained, on average, a score (on a scale of 1 to 100) with 11% higher, compared to those who did not use the computer; the degree of retention of the learned notions has also increased; the learning time was reduced by 32%, and the attitude of the students towards the school also increased.

In the *Pedagogy Manual*[4], the authors list a number of advantages, but also disadvantages of using the computer, regardless of the type of training chosen (e-mail, video support, teleconferencing, etc.). The advantages are:

- temporary independence;
- geographical independence;
- modularity;
- immediate feedback;
- standardization of courses;
- easy to use;
- possibility to update online courses;
- the possibility of interaction between students;

The disadvantages include:

- lack of teacher;
- there is no possibility of immediate control;
- the need for a computer and internet connection;
- the possibility of computer viruses;
- dependence on the appropriate technical support.

However, computer-assisted training is an increasingly present reality, an alternative that teachers and students will have to use as often as possible. In order to broaden this training system, the Romanian school needs to adapt the legislative framework, substantial investments for the purchase of computers and computer software, especially for students in rural areas and, last but not least, the training of teachers in using computer and computer software. As IT resources are constantly changing, periodic adaptation to new technologies and new software or educational platforms is needed.

In conclusion, computer-assisted training can be an alternative to the classical teaching-learning-assessment modalities, especially since the students are attracted by the novelty of the lessons approach, as compared to the classical methods. Adaptation to new technologies, the use of gadgets in the teaching process must be a priority. However, this process must be prepared and rigorously supported, so that all students have access to a computer connected to the Internet, and the adjacent educational resources must also be ensured. Beyond this aspect, the teaching approach should not focus solely on this method of

[4] Ioan Jinga, Elena Istrate, *Manual de pedagogie*, Editura All, Bucureşti, 2006, p. 436

teaching. The classical methods have proven over time the pedagogical value, they contribute to the formation of students not only through the acquisition of new knowledge, but also through the formation of communicative, affective, relational, emotional skills, which the computer cannot offer.

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