EDUCATION IN ACTION[1]

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Nowadays, when we hear something about school or education, we often hear a bunch of contradicting opinions. If we wait a second to recall the years passed by, we will surely remember a lot of great ideas. The question is what or who these experiences are connected to. To an adventurous excursion, or to an exciting work in class, or maybe to an unforgettable teacher's personality? Evidentially that the main part of our experiences are based in such experiences, when both the pedagogue and the students take part in finding a new kind of knowledge, where they discover or create something new together.

Learning by experiences

One day we studied one of Kálmán Mikszáth's works, called: Siege of Beszterce. Later we had a very interesting homework to do in connection to this novel. In theory we worked for Pongrácz István as web-designer. Our job was to create a website for the castle of Nedec. Of course, we only had to make this website and its structure on paper, but in the most creative way possible, illustrated with drawings, etc. Everyone enjoyed the work, it gave us lots of fun. We drew all kinds of imaginative and creative websites. It was years ago and since then the former website-constructors have been occupied how to realize learning by experiences in pedagogical training. It is extremely important for university students, who want to be teachers, to take part in as many as possible seminars there they practically can learn how to give an "leve 'an' out" exciting lessons, how to teach creative exercises in order to encourage students taking "to take" part actively in the lessone and not to be a passive bystander. In this essay we would like to present one of the pedagogical seminars at Pannon University.

School development and quality evaluation

Introducing the course. Every participant[2] of the course wanted to become a teacher. They were studying at the Pannon University at the teacher's training college. There were 12 members in the group, a number which is ideal for cooperative learning. The school development and quality evaluation course was a lesson, where the students had the chance to try project work. The students could understand and feel what learn by experiences is like and how different it is, to take part in a session where every minute is precious and where the students are creating the courses. The course was held 90 minutes once a week.

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[1] The fullier text of study will 'will be' published in the Periodical "Teacher Training".

[2] Agg Ildikó, Bálint András, Hoffer Judit, Kovács Diána, Kovács Eszter, Kukucska Nóra, Marosi Eszter, Nagy Tímea, Paksi László, Pillmann Judit, Szalai Edina és Szőllősi László

The school development and quality evaluation course was not one of the 'writing' lessons. The first step was that we determined the aims and collected opinions on the subject. All these were achieved with mind mapping. This method was suitable to approach the expectations of the teacher[3] and the students, to estimate the students' previous /background knowledge, to harmonize objects and to motivate everyone. The requirement of the seminar was to form groups of 4 and to establish schools in project work. The schools had to be presented at the end of the semester. In a brain-storming, we collected a lot of school categories. We made the groups according to interest and own observations[4]. It turned out that everyone could tell his or her opinion and all the groups had to be active participants to make the project work smooth in the future.

We finished the first lesson with the creation of a motivation-window (1. figure). The students collected the data and facts. Afterwards we formulated questions in connection with the topic and surveyed our impressions. Finally we formulated our future ideas.

1. figure[5]

FACTS, DATA	QUESTIONS
FEELING	IDEAS

During the semester we discussed topics, which were important both for the solution of the project work and for the later studies. As a pedagogical groundwork, the students reviewed the principles of the project's pedagogy (Hortobágyi 1991, 2004), its principles, organizational steps, possible advantages and disadvantages.

Planning the project. The planning of the work took place in two different places. On the one hand in class, which was a formal part and on the other hand outside school, which was more informal. The formal planning was helped by the content of the course, because it contained lots of information how to establish a new school. Some of the main topics were the following: the changing of knowledge- conception, the accountability of the school, the bases of study-organization, conceptions of studying, object system of teaching- and studying, the pedagogical program and its legal environment, the local curriculum, the quality valuation, the quality control, the changing of role of teachers, the different types of teachers, the plans on continuative education, the management of the school, etc. The elaboration of the topics had several steps: a short introduction was followed by practical exercises. The groups used motivation windows, brain-storming and mind mapping several times. The students had completed all exercises based on the category of school they had chosen.

There were four teams altogether. The 4 teams found 4 different school types. The stressed elements were different in the four school categories. For example: the natural, the family atmosphere was the most important in the rural primary school. Discipline and theoretical knowledge were the substance of the grammar school. Commerce and marketing were of first

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[3] The course was presented by Vilmos Vass.

[4] The participants of the 4 groups selected 4 school categories: rural primary school (Hoffer Judit, Szalai Edina), grammar school (Kovács Eszter, Marosi Eszter), technical school for commerce Nagy Tímea, Kukucska Nóra, Bálint András, Paksi László), school according to alternative pedagogy (Agg Ildikó, Kovács Diána, Pillmann Judit, Szőllősi László)

[5] Interview with Richard Strong and Harvey Silver: Educational Update. 2005. February. www.ascd.org.

importance in the technical schools. The focus in the alternative "Waldorf" school is on: development of personality and evidence-based progression.

The team-members found imaginative names for the school. The name of the rural primary school was "Nagy Bálint" primary school. The centre of this school was in Bakonyvölgy. The "Kaffka Margit" grammar school in Veszprém was specialized in humanic studies. The technical school was founded in Kiskőrös. The school's name was "Petőfi Sándor". The alternative school works according to the "Waldorf" pedagogy. The name of the alternative school was "ESÉLY-S". The centre of the Waldorf school was 'Naturland'.

After naming the students had to formulate goals, principles and methods. In addition the students had to discuss some questions in connection with four school categories: the target group of school, development of personality, community and ability, ready-witted students mix up with slow-witted students, measuring and valuation, keep up relations between parent-teacher-student, quality valuation, number of lessons, complement of teaching staff, qualifications of the teacher, activities in the school and out of school, questions in connection with infrastructure. Every student completed the exercises referring to the own school category. Every group configured the own expectations and scale of values according to the school category. To the effective teamwork the students had to ascertain the responsibility of the different work compartments. The most important part of the work was the presentation.

Presentation. The presentation was one of the important junctions of the project work. The teams contrived very interesting and creative presentations. The demonstration reflected the atmosphere and imagination of the school category. The members of the Waldorf school group own arms. They presented the school with the help of a computer. They built an own school model. The Petőfi Sándor technical school made a very accurate data-base. In this data-base information about lesson and teachers were available. The members of the Kaffka Margit Gymnasium wrote a short play. In this school drama-pedagogy offered. Bakonyvölgy was the additional story. The members of the school presented it with the help of a woodenmodel. The presentation reflected the cozy atmosphere of the rural primary school.

Evaluation. The valuation of the project was effective and interesting. Perhaps this stage proved to be the most difficult. Why? We valued a lot of things again and again, but altogether we didn't express relevant observations because we didn't know accurate valuation criterions. The valuation aspects of the school development and quality evaluation course were grounded very well. Before the presentation the students had a lesson where they discussed the valuation criterions. Together they made a valuation paper (2. illustration). They valued the projects with the help of a valuation paper very accurate. After the presentation each team discussed the experiences within the team. They spoke about the improvement the project. After the inner valuation the participants of the other teams valuated, too. At the end the valuation was complete and comprehensive.

2. figure. The evaluation paper

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1.  Content
    •   Totality            1 2 3 4 5
    •   Profile             1 2 3 4 5
    •   Authenticity          1 2 3 4 5
2. Presentation
    •   Diction             1 2 3 4 5
    •   Architecture          1 2 3 4 5
    •   Graphic             1 2 3 4 5
    •   Interest            1 2 3 4 5
3. Cooperation
    •   Accord              1 2 3 4 5
    •   Unity               1 2 3 4 5
4. Other
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Summary

Usually the students wait for the end of the courses at university, but the participants of the school development and quality evaluation course did not. Nobody waited for the end of the course, neither the teacher nor the students. During the common work the students learnt a lot from each other. The students acquired knowledge which they can use later. During the project work the students learnt how to work in partner groups effectively and they comprehended what is common amenableness. Everybody felt that the work they did was very important. Each member's contribution was very important, and therefore the project work was crowned with success. According to Katalin Hortobágyi the project work means: "*The project work is a pedagogical method which is based on the interest of the students, teachers and students effective, planning activity*" (Hortobágyi 1991, 2004). There wasn't any absence of interests and activities. At the end of the course the students discussed the observations, feelings, reflections. They considered whether they could reach their goals or not. Finally I quote a citation which contains everything which perhaps was most important during the course: "*If you want to build a ship, then it probably isn't the most important thing to gather engineers and carpenters but to keep alive the desire for endlessness*." (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry)

References

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