EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN UNIVERSITY SEMINAR

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ABSTRACT. In the present study we intend to identify the manner in which seminars in higher education are performed, and also the methods of teaching used during these seminars. For this purpose, we have applied a semi-structured interview to students of the Faculty of Psychology and Sciences of Education, the department for Primary and Early Years Education, numbering a total of 75 subjects. The interview comprised six questions regarding the methods of teaching used in university. For illustration, we present and analyse the answers received for four of the questions in the interview. The analysis of the answers offered by the students reveals the fact that, at the subject focused upon, interactive and applicative seminars are organised most often.

Keywords: *teaching, learning, strategies of teaching and learning, academic seminar.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG. In dieser vorliegenden Studie wollen wir die Methoden der Bereitstellung und die Lehrmethoden in den Seminaren der Hochschulbildung vorstellen und identifizieren. Dafür haben wir einen semi-strukturierten Interview den Studenten der Psychologie und Erziehungswissenschaft, Institut für Pädagogik der Primär -und Vorschulbildung, in insgesamt 75 Fächern verwendet. Das Interview umfasste sechs Fragen im Bezug auf die verwendeten Lehrmethoden in den Hochschulen. Zur Illustration präsentieren wir die Antworten auf vier der gestellten Fragen im Interview. Die Analyse der Umfrage zeigt, dass die Studenten oft der Disziplin unterliegen, Praktika gemacht haben und an interaktive Seminare teilgenommen haben.

Stichwort: *Lehre, Lernen, Lehr-Lernstrategien, akademischer Seminar*

Theoretical background of the study

Teaching presupposes the organisation of learning experiences which should trigger desirable changes in the behavior of pupils and students. From a pragmatic perspective, teaching means projecting the desired changes, stating

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the nature of these changes (by formulating the objectives that should be followed), determining the content of these changes, organising, leading, and monitoring the changes, evaluating the level at which the changes are realised (Ionescu, M., 2003, p. 90).

The main stages of the efficient teaching process are: recounting an example, a material concretely and/ or verbally: data, information, events; organising and managing activities that make the most of the concrete and verbal material offered; offering support to pupils and students for observing, analysing, comparing, applying, synthesizing; extracting the essential (together with the pupils and the students) and fixing it in notions, concepts, judgments, reasoning; operationalizing the knowledge of pupils and students by devising and solving applicative exercises and problems, theoretical and practical instruction tasks, by organising activities of individual work etc. (Bocoş, D., Jucan, D., 2007).

With regard to the manner in which the student approaches learning during seminars, this can refer to the superficial or the in-depth processing of the content. If the assistant professor can do very much for encouraging the choice of an in-depth processing (through the content, and the style of teaching), the student is the one who must eventually assume a personal strategy/approach towards studying and learning, which will result in a deeper involvement in the content and a monitoring of the progress. Stimulating an in-depth approach, especially during seminars, can also be accomplished through different learning activities to which the student is exposed. The assistant professor stimulates the student so that, within the field of content, the student should acquire learning skills, as well as knowledge of the subject of study. Encouraging him/her to think of what has been taught might coincide with encouraging him/her to think of how to study; thinking can be stimulated through the approach that the student assumes with regard to the newly-built knowledge, and monitored within his/her own cognitive schema. For the organisation of seminars with students where moments of individual study, debates, reflections etc. should prevail, the assistant professor carefully suggests strategies of teaching and learning, and techniques for stimulating the intellectual activity.

Hypotheses of the research

The present research performs an analysis of the situation existent at the level of educational reality, regarding the frequency of the use of teaching methods, employed during seminars in higher levels of education.

Participants and instruments

The research was conducted by applying a semi-structured interview to students of the Faculty of Psychology and Sciences of Education, the department for Primary and Early Years Education, numbering a total of 75 subjects.

Procedure

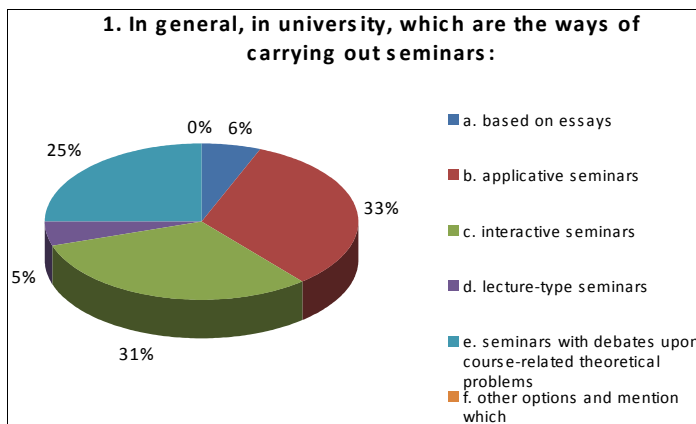The interview comprised six questions regarding the teaching methods used in university.

Aims of the research

In what concerns the informational content followed by the investigation conducted at the level of the students, we mention the fact that it had as main objective revealing the following aspects:
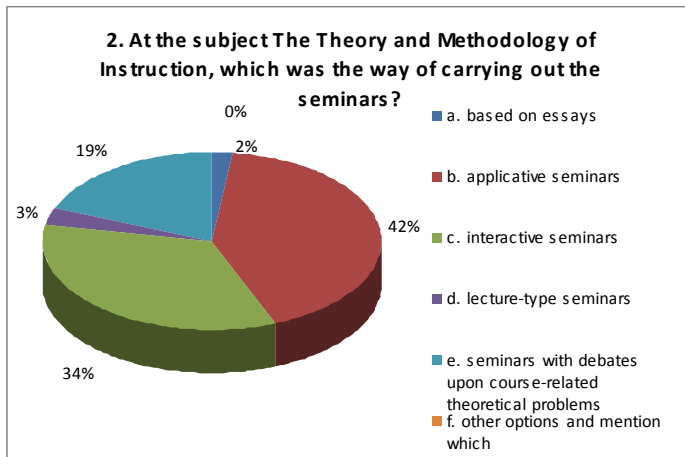
- the frequency of the use of various methods of carrying out seminars;

- the extent to which certain ways of carrying out academic seminars are used at the subject The Theory and Methodology of Instruction;

- the degree of utility, as perceived by the students, of the ways of carrying out the seminar at the subject The Theory and Methodology of Instruction;

- the frequency of the use of different didactic methods in the seminar of The Theory and Methodology of Instruction.
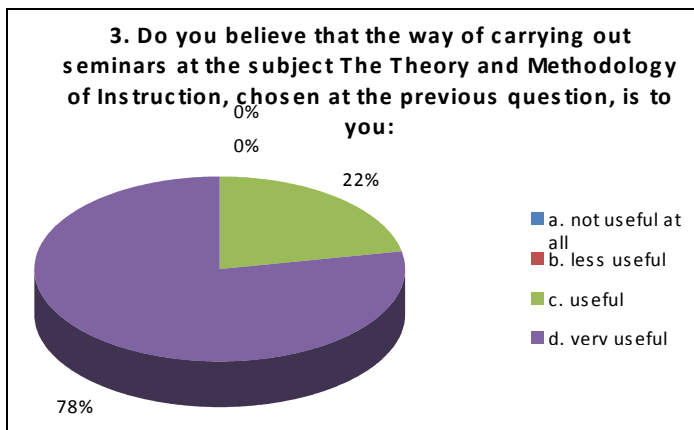
Results of the research

For illustration, we present and analyse the answers received at four of the questions of the interview. It is observed that the most often used seminars in university are the applicative ones, with 33% of the answers, and the interactive seminars, 31% of the answers. Moreover, the option when theoretical problems from the course are debated during the seminar is quite frequently used, with 25% of the answers. We discover that seminars based on essays, an lecture-type seminars, are still used in university (11% of the answers).

1. In general, in university, which are the ways of carrying out seminars:

- a. based on essays — 6%
- b. applicative seminars — 33%
- c. interactive seminars — 31%
- d. lecture-type seminars — 5%
- e. seminars with debates upon course-related theoretical problems — 25%
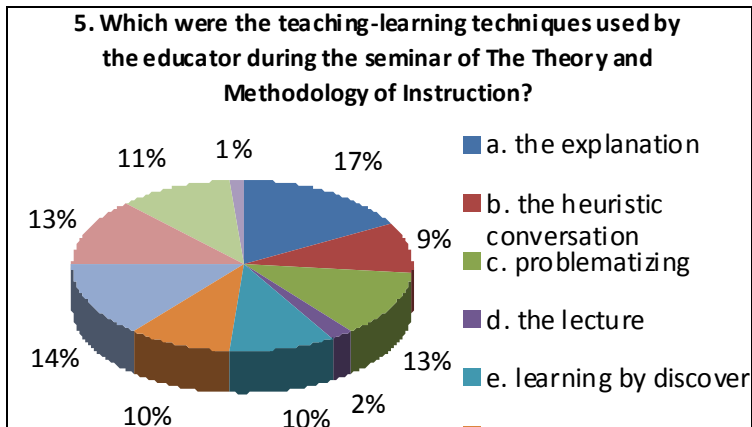- f. other options and mention which — 0%

For the subject The Theory and Methodology of Instruction, applicative seminars have been used, 42% of the answers, and interactive seminars, 34% of the answers. Moreover, during the seminars of this subject, 19% of the answers show that debates about course-related theoretical problems have been preferred. An interesting aspect is the fact that the seminar based on essays and the lecture-type seminar were only used sporadically, as shown by 5% of the answers.

2. At the subject The Theory and Methodology of Instruction, which was the way of carrying out the seminars?
- a. based on essays
- b. applicative seminars
- c. interactive seminars
- d. lecture-type seminars
- e. seminars with debates upon course-related theoretical problems
- f. other options and mention which

We are delighted to discover that the ways of carrying out seminars used at the subject The Theory and Methodology of Instruction, previously valorised (applicative seminars and interactive seminars) are considered by students to be very useful, 78% of the answers, and useful, 22% of the answers.

3. Do you believe that the way of carrying out seminars at the subject The Theory and Methodology of Instruction, chosen at the previous question, is to you:
- a. not useful at all
- b. less useful
- c. useful
- d. very useful

During the seminar of the subject The Theory and Methodology of Instruction, the methods of teaching-learning were: explanation 17% of the answers, learning by discovery, problematizing 13%, heuristic conversation.

5. Which were the teaching-learning techniques used by the educator during the seminar of The Theory and Methodology of Instruction?

- a. the explanation
- b. the heuristic conversation
- c. problematizing
- d. the lecture
- e. learning by discover

17% · 9% · 13% · 2% · 10% · 10% · 14% · 13% · 11% · 1%

Discussions

Further on, we will try to present a few strategies or methods which, in our opinion, have led to more efficient teaching and learning activities of students at the subject The Theory and Methodology of Instruction, and implicitly to improving their school performance. These strategies have also led students to offer the answers given above. Such a strategy was structured by starting from:

a. The analysis of the teaching-learning task by the educator, together with the student. The tasks are comprised of:

- The criterion of success, the student representing to himself the object and the result of learning,
- The structural criterion, the intellectual undertaking for the realisation of the task,
- The procedural criterion, various ways of carrying out the learning task,

b. Establishing the succession of the operations necessary for the realisation of the learning task,

c. The independent performance of the learning tasks by making use of personal cognitive strategies,

d. The permanent monitoring of the performance and of the correctness of the task by the educator and the student,

e. The evaluation, but especially the auto-evaluation of each stage, but also the final evaluation.

Such a division into stages, like the one presented above, represents only an initial approximation. The stages identified, and their manner of articulation within the structure of the process of teaching-learning, are aspects which differ according to the specific of each teaching activity, to the content which is learned, to the particularities of each student etc.

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