

## THE DIDACTIC DIMENSION OF THE TEACHING- LEARNING PROCESS WITHIN THE LESSONS AIMED AT ORGANIZING ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

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### **Abstract**

One of the important components considered in this research approach is given by the study on teaching-learning strategies, methods and techniques in the lessons aimed at organizing economic activities. It is understood that such a topic takes into account, on the one hand, a series of aspects related to an economic issue, and on the other hand, issues of a methodological / didactic nature found in the teaching-learning-assessment activity. At the same time, the approach that is intended to be highlighted reflects the practical-theoretical dimension of such a possible approach in class.

Under these conditions, the research approach assumed involves an analysis focused, on the one hand, on the theoretical aspects related to the approached topic, and on the other hand, on the conceptual-theoretical operationalization with practical implications. In other words, there is an interest in valorizing and capitalizing on the contents approached both theoretically and practically. Therefore, it is considered that we will analyze, from a theoretical and pragmatic perspective, the strategies, methods and teaching-learning techniques at the level of economic-themed classes, also revealing the impact it has in the economic-educational dimension.

**Keywords:** didactic approach; economic activity; lessons of economics; didactic issues; the didactics of economic disciplines;

### **Introduction**

The main *purpose* of this paper is, as it follows from its title, to make an analysis from a didactic and economic perspective of how the organization of economic activity in the classroom materializes. In other words, the research aims to appeal to arguments of a scientific nature through which the ideas advanced in it are validated. Moreover, through the proposed *syllabus*, the study is designed on economic coordinates, but also on pedagogical foundations.

Of course, such an approach is profoundly interdisciplinary. Thus, it is considered that its elaboration on an interdisciplinary, but also multidimensional analysis provides scientific and methodological consistency through the hypotheses advanced in this paper, as well as a result

of some examples of good practices found in the literature and practice. Therefore, the preoccupation with this topic is all the more justified as such an analytical approach reflects, on the one hand, a purely theoretical study, and on the other hand, a purely economic study, with interdisciplinary implications.

***The importance of the research topic*** is reflected by the very fact that the approach is one focused upon the conceptual-theoretical aspects put in correlation with the practical ones that underlie the epistemological substantiation of this paper. The process of understanding and explaining the main issues addressed in this paper aims at this very scientific foundation to which we refer. For these reasons, the approached topic is of great interest and becomes relevant for the conceptual-theoretical dimension, but also to the pragmatic dimension.

### **Scientific premises of a didactics of economic disciplines**

The organization of the didactic activity of the economic lessons is one of the important components of the didactic process. Moreover, its necessity derives from the fact that it can contribute to the establishment of a differentiated hierarchy in terms of school results / performance. In this way, such an activity reveals the very certification of the learning contents (especially of the specialized ones) accumulated during each lesson and implicitly, within each learning unit, respectively the way of assimilating them.

As it is a goal-oriented activity, education presupposes the need for an institutionalized process. Thus, beyond its informal aspect, the formative dimension becomes a central component through which the activities within the school have a planned, organized and systematic character. Concepts such as *the purpose of education* or *the aims of education* (which have aroused and still arouse a deep problematological interest (Badea, 2010, 2011) or *an educational ideal* or *educational objectives* acquire pragmatic and axiological legitimacy insofar as the landmarks and requirements of socio-educational (students, teachers, parents, guardians, community representatives, etc.) actors are subordinated to qualitative expectations (professionalism, excellence, etc.).

We find in the literature a multitude of definitions regarding what the purposes of education are in relation to the educational process. Such finality in itself, perceived by some authors as “a dimension of instruction and education and as a component of the strategy of the educational process” (Ionescu, 2000) or as “a form of the educational ideal” (Nicola, 1994), sends in directly or indirectly to assuming certain objectives. Or, compared to the context of the elaboration of this paper, such an approach involves taking into account specific strategies, methods, techniques in teaching topics with economic specificity.

In this sense, following the conceptual-theoretical thread of what such terms represent, we notice that the literature and the specialized practice provide a series of answers, especially from the perspective of a postmodernist education (Stan, 2007) and of new, reforming educational paradigms (Crişan, Mândruţ & Singer, 1991). Of course, the main actors in the class are the students and the teachers. That is why the teacher must show a lot of didactic mastery in order to make the students acquire the content of a topic that is the object of a discipline of this kind. (Teşileanu, 2010).

Also, in this context, in our opinion, *the strategy* assumed at the didactic level by the teacher has a key role. An example in this regard can be given by referring to a task that students have to solve in class. Thus, based upon a synoptic scheme adapted after Philip Koetler (1997) regarding the illustration of consumer behavior presented in class to students through a modern teaching tool (video projector), they are given the task of laying – from a theoretical point of view – for example, the foundations of an economic unit that carries out its commercial activity on the retail market.

In other words, students find themselves in the situation of imagining an economic unit that carries out its commercial activity on the retail market and that takes into account the way the consumer behaves in such a market. In these conditions, the theoretical approach of this work task (achievement of a project) within a portfolio involves taking into account the purchase decision itself for both the individual consumer (“Who is this?”, “How to relate to the market retail trade?” etc.), as well as for enterprises (the relationship between supply and demand, choosing a supplier, the “statistic” establishment of the potential number of customers, etc.).

Moreover, with the elaboration of this project, students can be asked to take into account that when setting up such a company to take into account the formulation of its mission, as a starting point in developing the action strategy. Thus, there is the possibility that this work task will be outlined by students at home just so that students can have time to develop such an organizational mission (along with objectives, business plan, vision, etc.). In this way, the statement of the mission of the newly established company (as a fundamental component in the organization of an economic unit (Steven, Wheeler, De Wolf, Brodke, 2011), but also as a commercial activity on the retail market), perceived as an important component of the managerial action strategy (Taleghani, Noormohamadi, 2013) can reflect the coordinates on which the strategy itself is based. Therefore, students must be explained (the teacher using *the method of explanation*) that the elaboration, enunciation, design of such an organizational mission must materialize in relation to what is required in the retail market by specific consumers.

In other words, such an approach involves a real knowledge of the reality of the retail market, a situation that needs a series of explanations accompanied by exposures (*the exposure method*) and problematization (*the problematization method*). Of course, such a lesson requires a didactic design assumed over an interval of several hours (at the level of *a learning unit*) in accordance with what is found in the school curriculum, but also with the general / operational objectives of each lesson. The presentation of the contents in an active-problematic manner presupposes that the use of interactive methods includes (in addition to problematization and exposition, as previously mentioned) methods that refer to the idea of *the case study* or the idea of *mutual learning*. Following a logic of active learning, the instructional process can become one meant to contribute to the development of creativity at the group level, but also to obtain a high efficiency both within it and at the level of each student.

The flexibility of thinking (Roşca, 1981) and the ways of teaching learning contents are therefore necessary coordinates, useful in the natural approach of materializing and using interactive teaching strategies. The way of (self) assessment of knowledge, which is an example in this regard, determines the subsequent learning process. The active role of the student thus proves more than necessary in the teaching process. Therefore, the improvement

of the formative process implies a continuity in terms of the teaching-learning process, a state of fact that comes in agreement with a fundamental didactic principle, namely: the principle of continuity and systematization. Such a didactic principle can be very well correlated, in our opinion, with the didactic design algorithm.

Moreover, the algorithm of didactic design in relation to the strategy assumed by the teacher, requires the consideration of the “basic, fundamental form in which the teaching-learning activity takes place” (Surdu, 1995), namely the (didactic) lesson with the typologies and the variants assumed at the level of the teaching-learning-evaluation process. At the same time, it is possible to mention in this context other forms of organization of the instructive-educational process materialized outside the classroom / school space: excursions and visits didactic in nature, practical-applied works, student circles, school competitions.

These “auxiliary” forms of organizing the instructional process prove to be more than useful, necessary during the teaching-learning hours of the topic “Organizing the commercial activity on the retail market”. The value of these “auxiliary” forms lies in the fact that they can ensure in particular the consolidation, fixation and systematization of knowledge by students (by participating in economic entities/organizations, extracurricular visits to some economic agents operating in the retail market). Therefore, at the level of the strategic dimension, the determining method/methods used (especially in the teaching-learning process) has/have a determining role.

### **The didactic methodology and the economics classes**

Beyond the variety and complexity of some didactic typologies specific to the methods used, we can state that most of them prove their effectiveness insofar as the teacher knows how to apply them (Iucu, 2001). Such situations are also found in the teaching activities within the modules of economics. For example, when considering the completion of the module of *Organization of the economic unit*, the teacher must correlate the teaching method with the previously formulated operational objectives through a series of action verbs (to define, identify, compare).

Starting from the functions of methods in the educational process (the communication function, stimulation function, stimulation function, illustrative-demonstrative function, formative-educational function, ergonomic function, evaluation function), the teacher must do everything possible for the student to understand, to assimilate, to apply the contents / matter with which he or she comes in contact. Certainly, on the one hand, the didactic communication has an important role in all this approach (materialized through the didactic dialogue (Leroy, 1974) particularly effective in the classroom activity), found at the level of the internal didactic strategy, and on the other hand, the didactic transposition has equally an important role to play.

Thus, starting from the idea that the didactic communication is conceptualized horizontally and vertically and that any form of this kind involves an interpersonal interaction characterized by a specific triad - verbal, non-verbal, mixed (Cucoş, 1993) - , it can be specified that the optimization and improvement of teaching-learning lessons depends to a

large extent upon the persuasive-argumentative discourse corroborated with the process of eliminating obstacles. (Bousseau, 1988, 115-160). It is understood that in such a situation, the strategies, methods and techniques of teaching-learning of the topics with economic specificity must also aim at a didactic communication in relation to the didactic environment in which the actual lessons take place.

In this regard, a series of empirical studies conducted on what is a teaching environment (Amade-Esco, Venturini, 2009) revealed that any teaching activity is a chain of subjective opinions, sometimes cognitivist in nature (Frumos, 2008 ), which is in direct relation with what is materialized in the specialized practice. In other words, the aspects related to practice acquire relevance in the teaching-learning process. Or, in the organization of the commercial activity on the retail market by the students, the teaching-learning process is carried out according to the curriculum and in the organizations with economic specificity, especially in the practical method.

For example, for the beginning part of such an approach, within an economic organization, its representative together with the specialized teacher presents the main compartments: offices, workshop services, specific jobs. Once presented, students can have an image of the distinction between the respective compartments, as follows:

- *the office* is set up as a space where a few people (hierarchical weight = 5) solve tasks that require fewer people than a department (hierarchical weight = 8);
- *the plant* represents an operational unit where the production process take place and that the workshop is subordinated to the plant itself, and within it the production activity takes place.

Of course, against the background of an assumed strategy, the teacher can use as a teaching method in this context, *the method of the direct observation* (there is an objective to be studied, there are also specific objectives of the observation process, an observation plan, etc.); this method can be easily correlated with *the method of the indirect demonstration* (in the economic organization or later, in the classroom), which uses (“proving”, “showing”, “indicating”) phenomena, objects, substitutes, technical means, even diagrams and graphics. The teacher who teaches these subjects with economic specificity must be a specialized teacher who can relate to the teaching contents in an interdisciplinary way. For example, when it aims to convey such teaching content on the issue of organizing business activity in the retail market, the teacher must relate to appropriate working methods and techniques.

In this respect, we can discuss a method that can be used successfully in front of the class, namely *the storytelling method* as a form of oral presentation of informational content. Such a method could be used in the classroom especially in the introductory lesson on the topic of organizing business activity on the retail market in a teaching-learning lesson. Thus, from the beginning of the class, the teacher can tell the students that the origin of the phrase “retail” actually comes from the French word “tailleur” which has the meaning of “cut”, “divide” and it is used mainly in the field of tailoring. Subsequently, this phrase had a slightly different meaning and became known as “retail” (in English).

The use of the storytelling method can continue in this context with the presentation of ideas related to retail in antiquity (information will be provided about the existence of shops and

“shopping centers” from the Phoenician, Babylonian, Assyrian, Turkish era (Gharipour, 2012), Egyptian and Greek-Roman era (Bintliff, 2002) etc.), during the medieval period (Cox, Dannehl, 2007) or modern times (Braudel, Reynold, 1992). Then, a short presentation can be made to the students, which includes a strategic analysis in retail in general (market, customers, internal, competition, price, cost-benefit, distribution channels analysis, etc.) and how it evolved in Romania in especially since 1990, both in real and virtual terms (Felea, 2005).

In fact, such a method is the way in which the teacher manages to transmit to students a certain emotional load. The storytelling teacher manages to “conquer” the students through the very way of storytelling corroborated with specific elements of the didactic communication process (intonation, rhythm, speech, etc.). One can emphasize that the acquisition of such definitions, notions becomes fundamental in the didactic activity and not only in this particular activity. For these reasons, the school learning involves activation, determination, planning, different designing (Ausubel, Robinson, 1981).

At the same time, the idea of a resizing of the didactic design can be welcomed at any time at the level of the strategy assumed by the teacher, and this is possible by reference to the context in which the teaching-learning contents are to be transmitted. And when the idea of resizing comes into question, one brings up the idea of a totally different approach to everything that the retail market means through computer operating programs / IT programs. Such an image reflects the need for the teacher in the classroom to work with students also in relation to new methods of learning with modern means (computers, tablets, smart boards) just to try to make students understand how such programs work in a given context. Certainly, at this moment, from the viewpoint of the applicability of the didactic methodology, the teacher refers to the teaching-learning process as the main actor that is part of this dimension of “computerization of education” (Văideanu, 1988; Jeder, 2017), taking into account what specialization might mean.

## Conclusions

We believe that such a topic becomes relevant and acquires axiological consistency also through the fact that the research approach is an interdisciplinary approach. This idea can be supported by the fact that such interdisciplinary implications on this topic are found in the national literature in small numbers, addressing somewhat tangentially aspects related to a correlation between educational methodology (didactic / pedagogical) and economic on the topic that is the object of study of the present paper.

First, as it is in a relationship of subordination to the educational goals, the educational strategies can be differentiated into "educational strategies at the macro level, educational strategies of the system and of the learning process (which are long-term / short-term and medium-term strategies) and educational strategies at micro level, of determined and concrete instructive-educational activities (which are short-term strategies) ”(Bocoş&Jucan, 2008). Such instructive-educational activities are performed at the level of a learning framework that involves a reflective process of self-learning on the part of the subject (Martini, 2007) (in this case, the student in the class).

Second, when talking about the didactic strategy in the organization of economic activities, for example in the case of commercial activity on the retail market, the teacher's attention must be focused as we mentioned earlier in this research on training skills (Dulamă, 2011), on integrated approaches (Ciolan, 2008; Catană & Mândruț, 2011), of inter- and transdisciplinary nature with scientific criteria (Nicolescu, 1999) of learning contents, as well as on *the main*

*types of learning experiences* (methods, didactic procedures, teaching aids, forms of learning organization), on the use and combination of specific learning aids (*the blackboard* as a reference to tradition and *the computer* as a modern means, with its advantages and limitations (Istrate, 1982); certain authors identify in terms of theorizing as an action strategy "the work which using a book and the work using a computer"). On the other hand, the idea of didactic strategy itself refers to an organizational management, reflecting some conceptual synonyms with the idea of method or procedure.

The extrapolation of this term in the area of didactic activities made it possible for it to receive from various authors a multitude of definitions, meanings that converge, however, almost all of them, towards a common denominator, namely that of programming and design. Thus, the term "didactic strategy" defined as "the science or art of combining actions in order to achieve a certain goal" (Mialaret, 1979) or as "a set of decisions aimed at carrying out the instructive-educational process" (Noveanu, 2000) or as "a way to solve and approach concrete training tasks" (Albulescu, 2000; Jeder, 2014), indicates the main coordinates according to which a certain activity should be reported. (Posteucă, 2005).

In this case, the didactic activity is given by teaching the organization of economic processes topic (Jeder, 2008). The strategy, method, technique, all represent fundamental components specific to a didactic approach. This has led the present research to address a number of issues related to these concepts in relation to what the main economic notion. It is obvious that the specialized teacher must correlate all these aspects with the learning styles of the students.

The implications of this research reflect a valid connection with possible directions for further development. The existence of the particularization of the didactic strategies determines the taking of a specific didactic attitude (in which a conceptual and theoretical complementarity is obvious) in front of a re-evaluation and resizing of methodological nature regarding the teaching-learning process in the classroom. (Eși - Posteucă, 2019). As a general conclusion, there is the conviction that this analytical approach that we have carried out is useful insofar as one could identify in the educational activity with economic specificity the need to understand the application of the main concepts, theories, operations specific to the size of the economic market in relation to a terminology specific to the didactic dimension.

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