



DOI: 10.2478/cpp-2014-0008

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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF WESTERN AND DOMESTIC PRACTICE OF INTERACTIVE METHOD APPLICATION IN TEACHING SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DISCIPLINES AT THE UNIVERSITIES

ABSTRACT

The comparative analysis of western and domestic practice of introducing active and interactive methods of studies in the process of teaching social science disciplines has been carried out. Features, realities, prospects and limitations in application of interactive methods of teaching in the process of implementing social-political science courses at Institutes of higher education have been analyzed in western and domestic pedagogical practice. Comparison of western and domestic pedagogical practice in a greater degree demonstrates the presence of numerous failings in the domestic system of education. These failings demonstrate obvious impossibility to inculcate interactive methods on the basis of western standards. However through these negative aspects it is possible to notice structural lines peculiar to domestic Institutes of higher education. At all negative loading these limitations in domestic educational realities at the nearest consideration have positive influence. Measures on optimization of introducing interactive technologies at domestic Institutes of higher education have been offered. Today interactive methods are «difficult» both for realization by a domestic teacher and for the perception by a modern student. The main point of the research is the refusal from traditional subject-object forms of lessons and transition to common work of a teacher and a student as the main tendency of developing methods of teaching social and political disciplines at the universities.

Key words: *interactive methods of teaching, dialogue, cooperation, social and political disciplines.*

INTRODUCTION

Competence of a teacher is determined not only and so much by a teacher's level of knowledge and expertise in a particular sphere, but by the ability to supply this knowledge to the students, using a variety of teaching methods and methods of control. Today educational process and methods of teaching at universities are applied and directed to Western teaching practice and experience at the period of European integration process.

Modern foreign pedagogical publishing actively promote the application of interactive methods of training, when students do not just passively absorb the proposed material, but also take an active part in the preparation and handling of this material. Although such opinions do not always find positive assessment among the teachers of modern high educational establishments, however, new methods, which are oriented to Western society and their requirements to organization of training sessions, formulate the necessity of introduction of active and interactive technologies into educational process.

Despite the relevance of active and interactive methods of teaching, sometimes these problems are in a greater degree reflected in the works of foreign scientists. In Ukrainian pedagogy there are few works concerning the development of such methods and



substantiation of the necessity of their introduction into the educational process, especially in the context of specific disciplines in high educational institutes.

However, not only the level and specification of the theoretical study of this question should attract attention of researchers, but rather drawbacks and shortcomings of the domestic practice of implementation. As it is known in pedagogical science, theory and methodology primarily arise on the basis of studies of the advanced pedagogical experience. So the question is: when the introduction of interactive technologies in educational process at local high schools is conducted and if it is done at a proper level. This question causes the given scientific exploration.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

To carry out comparative analysis of Western and national implementation practices of interactive technologies for defining the spheres of this process improvement. Since the process of application of interactive technologies for different learning areas can not be universal, analysis is proposed in the application to the teaching of social and political disciplines.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS

There are numerous researches in methodology of teaching social disciplines, – K. Bakhanov, O. Danilevska, G. Freyman, I. Galaktionova, T. Ladychenko, O. Mykhaylychenko, O. Pometun, L. Pylypchatina, T. Remeh, N. Ventseva and others. Theoretical and practical studies in the field of interactive methods of training belong to A. Bakumenko, A. Fasol, A. Gin, V. Guzeev, L. Pirozhenko, O. Pometun and others.

RESULTS

The tendency of refusal from traditional subject-object forms of training sessions and transition to corporative work of a teacher and a student is more familiar to Western pedagogic today. In no case the traditional forms of training sessions are excluded from the educational process, so as there is an optimal combination of lecture or seminar work with other forms of education. The most popular is work in small groups, because under such circumstances, each teacher has much wider possibilities to realize individual teaching style (Бакуменко, 2005).

Firstly, it is important to analyze domestic realities of the educational process, where interactive technologies of learning are applied. So, for example, the level of students' training, as their level of general knowledge can be very different, what is especially felt in the area of teaching political disciplines in the universities directed to other professions (technical, medical, economic, etc.), where the given discipline has the conditional status of "the second rate". Under such circumstances, only the traditional lecture or seminar, which resembles a survey inspection, can give the necessary minimum of knowledge. In such cases the situation is worsening in number of lecture audience, where this number of group can reach 150–180 persons in one group. Of course, it is extremely difficult to speak about interactive methods under such conditions. In addition, it is important to offer the students a proper level of motivation for the successful application of interactive methods. The secondary status of social and political disciplines (for students of other sectors to prepare) will not help in motivating formation.

Recently, in the Ukrainian society there is general discussion on the question if there actually is a real need for compulsory learning of a number of social and humanitarian disciplines at higher schools. Among such disciplines there are Cultural Science, Sociology, Political science, Philosophy, Religious Studies, History of Ukraine etc (Галактіонова, 2007). In general the Order № 642 "About organization of Humanities studied at a free



choice of the student” of the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science, dated 9th of July 2009, according to which the majority of social and political disciplines are not required for the study, has become an additional reason for disputes in the academic environment and in society (Міністерство освіти і науки України, 2009). So, for example, political science is not a compulsory discipline for students of medical and veterinary- and- medical direction of all specializations and forms of education, starting from a set 2009 (Галактіюнова, 2007).

Such a decision is due again to the process of European integration, the adoption of the Bologna Declaration and the introduction of credit-modular system of education. Yes, indeed, in Western practice, most of such disciplines are to be selective in their status, but in the practice Western universities realize the possibility to choose one or another direction.

In domestic practice, this choice is usually implemented by Graduating Department and it is the subject of inter-universities speculations regarding the teachers’ schedules, which are permanent problems for the last three or four years. In addition, the self-sacrificing of Ukrainian students is also to be desired. After all, if the possibility of such a choice was really provided to the students, they were guided in it: the discipline is much simpler, the teacher is not demanded, a form of control will not affect the scholarship, and so on and so forth.

And it mostly makes the application of interactive methods of training impossible, as the nature of the motivation of students, regarding the General social and political disciplines, are unsatisfactory on one hand, and on the other hand, the administration of the national high schools in the greater degree is only limited by the requirements to apply similar technology in educational process, however, it does not hurry to create real organizational conditions.

As it is known, the work load imposed on a teacher in the system of national higher education is growing annually, forms of work become harder, requirements will be increased, and the level of life and earnings of national lecturers in higher education institutions are gradually decreasing against the background of these complications.

These problems exist and cannot be eliminated at the same time. However, gradual attempts to introduce interactive methods in teaching of political disciplines are still there and it is vitally important, given the purpose of these training sessions. Interactive methods are used because the student is fully engaged into the learning process, is used, that allows not only to deepen knowledge, but it also allows to accept learning as meaningful activities that will allow to form a civic position and own valid opinion on the political situation and the events (Пометун, 2009).

In addition, it is worth noting that having national conditions, interactive methods, primarily, relate to practice or seminars and lecture remains outside of these methods.

The next aspect of the comparison is a definite place of interactive technologies in educational process. So, foreign authors (K. Bonuell, G. Ason and others), for example, pay attention to the fact that the interactive training should be continuous. They offer the schemes for which active learning simply move from more simple forms to more complex ones than it provides a parallel application. In domestic practice interactive methods are more likely to be decoration, «spice» to the «main dish», traditional occupation, rather than systemic work planning. It distorts the essence of their application, making the principle of educational activity a temporary entertainment, and, accordingly, can not affect the effect of the implementation.

Such interactive methods as role and business games, discussions etc. are applied in political science teaching for a long time. They require thorough preparation, but also enough space and time (most of them can be completed within the standard training lesson –



80 minutes). However, from a purely organizational point of view, in most of the national high school the schedule of classes is formed completely out of touch with the peculiarities in teaching of those or other disciplines, and, accordingly, to organize the place and time to implement more or less large-scale interactive methods should be separated, that, of course, is done periodically. Thus, in comparison with the Western practice a regular school teacher can afford to implement only a very small scale methodology.

As an example, promising under these conditions, the domestic practice of teaching political disciplines can be called the method that offers Professor of history P.J. Frederik (United States, Indiana, College "Vabash") (Бакуменко, 2005).

In his view, the lecture provides students with the involvement of a powerful work of understanding a particular topic. Their ideas and statements are written on the board at the moment of their expression. For example, at the beginning of classes the question is formulated: "What do you know about the parliamentary system?" And students are invited to think together. The plan of the lecture is recorded on the board in the form of a number of specific facts, opinions and prejudices. In this lecture more or less educated students can actively participate. Significant positive effect is that all students will be able to check the fidelity of their beliefs by coordinating influence of the teacher. Fixing of information on a board improves perception of information through visual perception. Within this class the students are not engaged in mechanical recording and creatively generating and evaluating ideas. However, if students do not have any idea about the topic of the lecture, the effect may be minimal, so this class should be prepared not only by teachers but by all participants in a whole.

Other versions of P. Frederik's lectures must be accepted as versions of classes with students: problem lecture, lecture, conference and more.

Work in small groups, formal and informal – pairs, fours and more participants – is the most appropriate interactive methods for seminars in social and political sciences in domestic environment. This way of working does not require significant advance preparation of the teacher, but it maintains an intellectual activity of the students throughout the seminars. A good method of results' summarizing and discussing in this group work is a round table or even blitz poll.

Method of group research, which is popular in Western teaching practice, will be perspective and effective for independent work, but it does not get enough attention of teachers of domestic social and political sciences. Students are directly involved in planning the research process, which consists of several stages: 1) a student chooses the theme, which he has been chosen to the group, that works on this topic, and 2) students plan to work together on a task, assign responsibilities, and 3) fulfill researches, 4) they present the work on generalizing conference.

The method of the "Basic Groups" proposed by D. Dzhonson deserves attention in domestic practice. "Basic Groups" are cooperative groups (of 4–5 students) that are created for a long period of time (1–2 semesters) and that keep in touch with each other, and help each other in learning support. Active use of these groups can help to improve attendance, to enrich the learning process of personal elements, to unite audience. When one of their group mate is absent, students of basic groups take materials for them, they try to be sure that everyone has everything necessary for learning process and so on.

However, such popular and promising method in western practice as a Case-Study does not almost gain popularity in the national practice of teaching social and political sciences. This method creates a real problem situation, based on the facts of life. In case of these disciplines that are discussed in this article, there can be specific social and political



problems of past or present, political perspectives, regular elections, both local and presidential or parliamentary.

Thus, it is evident that in comparison with Western teaching practices, the use of interactive methods in domestic universities has significant limitations. These restrictions are due to the present situation, prevailing in the country, at high educational schools and they can not be solved in the short term. The mentioned restrictions lead to the fact that any ordinary teacher of social and political disciplines in standard domestic universities can afford to use only small-scale interactive techniques, whereby they will not replace the previous ones, but rather complement to traditional teaching methods (Піжук, 2009).

It should be noted that, primarily, this is in most regional universities. Certainly, a number of schools with strong funding can not afford other methods, but on a national scale, where most professionals are trained in regional universities, or even regional centers, it is quite possible. This will not change the present situation. The problem somehow has a nationwide character and it can not be offset by some positive cases. These facts, of course, are quite sad.

However, certain positive traits will be noticed. The current average student used to “secure” the reproductive systems of traditional education, which is laid back in high school. The current average student used to “secure” the reproductive systems of traditional education, which is laid back to high school. He is not used to this and he does not want to show creativity in training sessions. He fears errors (and error, by the way, is a natural component of the learning process) and he always tries to find an answer to the question: “What does the teacher want to hear from him?”, “What answer will be accepted as true in this case?” And these questions replace all personal initiative in the comprehensive process of educational material.

Therefore, interactive methods are “hard” not only for the national teacher realization, but also perception of a modern student. Sometimes rejection of such methods occurs on the level of audience. Therefore, full-scale interactive methods may not be present positive component. It may be more appropriate to introduce them gradually, for better acceptance and adaptation.

For example, K. Bonuell and Dzh. Eyson offer a module to minimize risk. They declare that a teacher should reduce the risk for audience that has no experience in active learning through limitation and control of time for performing tasks (short intervals have less risk), careful planning and distributing of activities and providing enough structured tasks which are being performed by students (Бакуменко, 2005).

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, Ukrainian society is experiencing a significant transformation in all spheres of public life today. All social systems are being changed: political, religious, economic, social consciousness, reflecting historical experience, the dynamics of social relations and so on.

A democratic society is impossible without self-identity, who is well aware of his rights, responsibilities, freedom. He can defend them, keep self-esteem and he feels himself to be a powerful participant in social processes. Teaching social and political sciences at the university today is the only form of civic education of the population.

European integration process, the Bologna Declaration and the introduction of credit-module system imposes new restrictions and obligations that national education system sometimes can not implement perfectly. It concerns such methodological issues as the introduction of interactive teaching methods in the educational process in general and in the teaching of social and political sciences in particular.



Comparison of Western and domestic teaching practice demonstrates the presence of numerous deficiencies in the national education system. These shortcomings demonstrate an obvious impossibility of implementing interactive techniques following Western example, but there have already appeared certain structural features for national universities through all the negative aspects. These restrictions in national educational realities have beneficial effects.

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