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Curriculum Planning as Teacher's Steering Activity by Micro-level Management

Abstract

The contribution addresses the problems of teacher training for curriculum as a process of curriculum planning for pupils in educational situations. The author characterizes curriculum projects according to the length of their duration; she mentions the components of the thematic plan of curriculum, and pays attention to the project of the teaching unit, the structure of the education situation as its basic element.

Key words: *micro-level management, teacher training, teacher's steering activity, curriculum planning.*

Teaching as a system of activities of the teacher and pupils is a purposeful, systematic process that excludes contingencies and sporadic actions both in setting its goal and in the concretization of the content as well as in the process of implementation and evaluation of its results. Systematic supervision – the organization, arrangements making, animation of learning processes of the pupils in educational situations or the “management of learning” can be considered the domain of didactics and the tools to initiate and direct the processes of pupil learning as a basis of the regulation of their own self-development. We understand under it a teacher's concentrated effort to reach the planned results and effects of teaching. Amongst teacher's steering activities there are all teacher's activities that are linked to planning, projecting, organizing, implementation, end evaluation of the teaching as well as the outcomes of his/her erudite decision making in the pedagogical prognoses and in concrete educational situations as well. Every intentional activity of a pupils' learning is linked to the goal and its effectivity is influenced by the

optimal preparation of the conditions and means for its implementation. Teacher training for teaching and the creation of teaching projects is part of his/her planning and projecting activity.

Two levels of teacher training for teaching

If teachers identify themselves as well as their teaching (their teaching activity) with a bearer and a handover of information – of teaching contents, and their priority is to start cope with the teaching content, during preparation for teaching they concentrate their attention especially on their own activities (I am to teach, to explain, to present, to prepare tasks for revisions ...), *they do not take part in the leading of learning processes of their pupils*, they are concentrated on the way how to “hand over the content” and therefore they may not have any basic influence on the effectivity and success of individual pupils in learning processes. In that case the teacher works with the content of the subject but not with the curriculum, which we consider to be an outcome of the transformation of the *content of curriculum for the purposes of teaching and of the learning of pupils*.

Teaching oriented on pupils as a process of *leading the pupils to learn* and the *leading of their development* is conditioned by the creation of such educational situations that are made up by a purposefully oriented chain of teaching tasks enabling the social contact and pupils' own interpretations. Through them the teacher evokes and especially enables the self-learning of the pupil. The pupils' self-learning is initiated mainly from the inside and it requires from the teacher to minimize the space for the pupils' “self-organization of the learning process”, as well as to enable to choose the place of learning, the form of learning, flexible time and methods of learning. This interpretative understanding of teaching, *the dominance of the teacher in the area of condition creation and opening possibilities for pupils' learning*, requires a distraction from the role of the teacher as a “mediator of knowledge” and his/her identification with the role of a “facilitator of learning and a provider of the guided development of the cognitive and extra-cognitive functions of pupils. The teacher's role as a facilitator of pupil's activities and an organizer of discourse is grounded in intentional *planning, projecting, organizing, controlling, leading, evaluating, and innovating, namely in the system of partial activities in steering the processes of pupils' learning at the level of micro-management*.

The teacher who intentionally leads the process of pupils' learning employs the project approach in teaching. The project approach in the preparation for teaching comes out of the two-subject understanding of teaching that requires a clear distinction and role specification of the specific goals and tasks enabling their imple-

mentation for both participants in the educational processes of pupils and teachers. The meaning of teacher's work is to guide and facilitate the development of children, to support them in learning activities, to activate their potentials in the desired way, to facilitate their self-realization, and to support the development of the self-regulative mechanisms.

The goals of educational situations, of learning activities that are implemented through them, are the elementary and dominant element of the training for teaching and all other elements of this process are subservient to them. The teacher intentionally ponders on why he/she goes to teach and how the teaching will progress, how pupils will be learning, and he/she projects concrete activities to enable potentials for an intentional development of all parts of pupil's personality, the system of learning tasks, tools and didactic materials. Based on pupils' specific needs he/she concentrates him/herself on the processual part of learning. Following the end of teaching, based on the analysis he/she evaluates and modifies his/her project according to the obtained results and positive situation.

The project of learning and its types

The project is most generally defined as a "bigger goal". It originated in the Latin word *projicere* what means to plan, to suggest, to resolve. Umlauf (1999, In : Kačínová 2004, p. 26) says that in the pedagogical practice we aim to plan and develop a longer sequence of the project, it has a task character and it often finishes by the creation of products. It is a tool of leadership, implementation and inspection of the learning activities of pupils. It involves entries, processes and predicted outcomes of teaching as well as diagnostic tools for its evaluation. It is a project of a teaching process within which the goal, planning, realization and evaluation of the practical and the factual project idea is under the control of the one who learns. By means of the activation of his/her cognitive, psychomotor as well as emotional part of the personality the learning one is addressed as a whole. Pupils take part in the organization of their learning process.

The project for teaching, with various timing, should be in harmony with the general understanding of a well-structured plan and also with the structure of the educational situation. Every well-composed and checkable teaching project includes, similarly to any programme-, the answers to the same questions that the **teacher must answer** in them:

FOR WHAT PURPOSE? – GOALS – INTENTIONS

FOR WHOM? – CHARACTERISTICS AND NEEDS OF PUPILS – PSYCHOSTRUCTURE

WHAT? – CONTENT – TEACHING CONTENTS

HOW LONG? – TIME FACTOR

HOW? – METHODS AND MEANS, DIDACTIC PROCEDURES

AT WHICH ORGANIZATION? – LEARNING ORGANIZATION – SOCIOSTRUCTURE

WHAT EFFECTS? – CHECKING AND EVALUATION

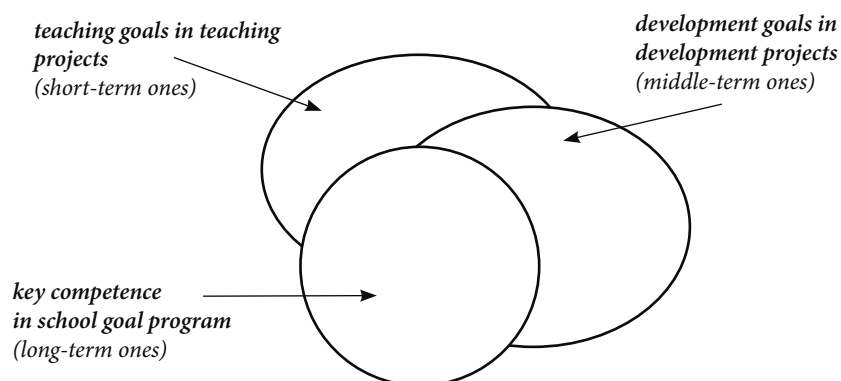
WITH THE HELP OF WHAT? – DIDACTIC MATERIAL, TEACHING TOOLS.

From the time point of view, at the level of micro-management of the class the teacher can create and implement:

- *short-term teaching projects* that relate to the active guided learning of pupils and concrete teaching goals, (a concrete teaching lesson, double-lesson, a block, a day)
- *middle-term teaching projects* that relate to the guided development of the pupils' cognitive and non-cognitive functions and development goals (they are linked to the thematic unit, theme, goal quality in the pupil development),
- *long-term teaching projects* that relate to the guided achievement of the expected pupil key competence as long-term goals of a certain school stage (one or more years) (cf. Sihelský, 2002, p.7).

On their basis the teacher intentionally work with the system of goals at all levels of the guidance securing the continuation of particular goals and the direction of their concretization in the line of the general goals of education towards partial operationalized goals at the level of teaching requirements for concrete teaching activities. Within mutual relations of teaching guidance through projects for the reaching of educational goals, there should be time-realizational consequences and goal contexts between the guided pupil learning in the project of concrete teaching units up to key competence in the educative programme of the schools.

Picture 1. Connecting and overlapping of goal types in the process of projecting



A short-term teaching project – a thematic plan of the curriculum

Short-term teaching projects that relate to the guided development are usually prepared at the beginning of the school year, outlining:

- *a time-thematic plan for particular subject*, in relation to the class and the specifics of particular pupils. It is a general teaching plan for concrete subjects, which involves time data about the handling with thematic units of the curriculum. It comes out of the general plan of the school and from the teaching curriculum;
- *a thematic plan of the curriculum in particular subjects*; the teacher formulates in it the final idea about teaching. During its formation it is grounded on the teaching curriculum, textbooks to be used, worksheets, while taking into account the characteristics of the class and the needs of pupils, changed teaching contents, their structure according to local school conditions. During this guiding activity cooperation of teachers within the methodological association with the use of the experience of interested teachers is often engaged;
- *monthly, weekly work plans, teaching agreements and pupils' projects* as special means supporting the self-regulation of the pupil.

Today's teaching programmes for subjects are oriented towards the goal, and therefore they require a new model of projecting such ones as those coming out of the content dominance.

The thematic plan of the curriculum in a concrete subject should involve:

- *thematic units, names of teaching themes*, (suggestions for the number of hours),
- *pupils' supposed knowledge and skills*, which the curriculum relates to and helps the pupils, *ways of getting the pre-concepts*,
- *teaching goals* worked out and lined up in the succession, hierarchized according to the areas of pupil psychic development,
- *a suggestion of an adequate curriculum for the suggested goals*, notion map of the curriculum (it helps to create the structure of supporting facts, notions, generalizations),
- *a suggestion of particular teaching units*, appropriate teaching activities, teaching procedures (inductive, deductive, social approach to teaching), didactic tools and means,
- *adequate suggestions for the organization of teaching activities*,
- *criteria of success in mastering the curriculum, methods and tools of checking and evaluation*.

A flexible, creatively composed thematic plan of teaching curriculum as a result of the cooperation of teachers is an appropriate tool for projecting of concrete

learning activities of pupils during teaching. That does not tie one down; it facilitates the adaptation to the needs of pupils, to newly arisen situations and requirements. From the beginning of this school year there appears a requirement for every teacher to prepare his/her time-thematic plan for the all subjects that he teaches.

A short-term project – a project of a teaching unit

The project of teaching that is pupil-centred, oriented towards its changes, towards which concrete activities will be implemented, at which level of cognitive strenuousness, in order that they lead to reaching what is to be gained, is oriented towards the work with teaching goals, towards the process of teaching, organization of pupils' learning. In the process of its creation the teacher thinks over wherein is *his role* – how to initiate, motivate, inspire, and support pupils' learning, what it means to facilitate the child to build his/her own picture of the world. He/she considers what educational situations under which context he chooses and imitates in order that the child can fulfill his/her own role – to independently, actively cognize, to implement learning, to diagnose and evaluate his/her own progress.

While creating the teaching project, the teacher plans:

- *his/her goals in his/her own perspective* in harmony with the goal programme. We can speak about two conceptions of the goal formulation for the teacher:
 - *formulations to express activities that have to be done through it* – activation, development, providing for self-expression, presentation..., that express a philosophy of education, point to the subjective character of teacher's work in pupil guidance;
 - *the conception of goals formulation directed to the objects of those activities* – building up a system of values, abilities, knowledge, skills, information that touch various individual areas of pupil development;
 - *teaching goals for pupil perspective*, from the point of view of his/her needs, interests, as operationalized goals with respect to the partial categories of taxonomies (every pupil can choose a section of the passage that he/she likes most, he knows how to divide the text into meaning units...); we speak about subjective goals of teaching that are pupil-personality-centred, and help teachers and pupils understand what they head for and in which place of development they find themselves;
 - *conditions and means* for the implementation of pupils' intentional and unintentional individual goals of concrete activities of.

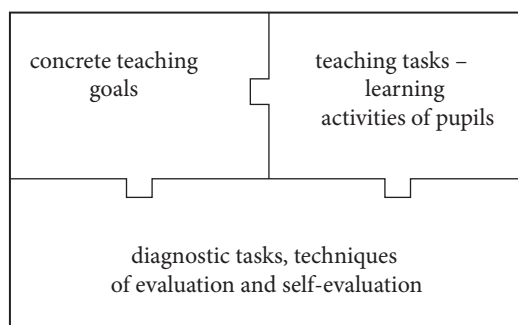
In the process of the project learning unit designing the teacher accepts and incorporates:

- *school documents* (projects and materials from higher levels coming out of his/her reading of teaching curriculum, thematic plans of the subjects and thematic units), he/she follows thematic handbooks comparing them with the needs of his/her pupils and their actual experience;
- *diagnostic indicators in the class*, coming out of the definition of pupils' accessible incoming characteristic needs, from the level of his/her competence, from his/her concept of the curriculum, the level of up-to-now experience, specific needs and interests, based on the analysis of the present situation he/she decides on the differentiation and individualization of teaching;
- *concretization, operationalization and taxonomization when defining the teaching goals* as changes in knowledge, in the development of intellectual abilities, in the development of motivational-desiderable and value-positional characteristics, in the development of sensual-motional abilities;
- based on the didactic transformation of the contents, didactic analysis of the curriculum, he/she prepares appropriate suggestions of *teaching situations*, *he makes psycho-didactic structuring of teaching tasks of the cognitive, socio-affective and sensorial-motoric sphere of teaching* so that they are in harmony with the teaching goals. He/she decides about the basic structure of curriculum, he/she chooses facts, generalizing notions; he/she prepares a set of teaching tasks inevitable for its understanding and the structure itself, restructuring in the process, whose micro-strategies pupils will use or experience. He/she considers which cognitive activities pupils will implemented during their task solutions, which psychic functions they will develop, how many bringing-off tasks are necessary, and how many developing tasks are necessary in order to reach not only the actual zone but also the nearest one in their development.
- *active position of the pupil in the process of teaching*, choosing and preparing optimal teaching situations, adequate methods, the methods and organization of the teaching activities, an optimal process of teaching. He/she prepares collative variables to motivate pupils' interest in teaching, decides about inductive or deductive procedure in teaching, provides for the conditions to presentations of pupil pre-concepts, prepares *social situations, activities as the means of the interactive development of pupil's personality*;
- *checking and evaluation of the success of teaching and learning processes*, he/she submits suggestions for the criteria of success, of diagnostic tasks enabling checking and self-checking; he/she decides which diagnostic methods will be used, how to provide for self-reflection and self-evaluation in the activities.

The content and extent of the teaching unit project evaluation is made by the goals of the project. The effectivity of the suggested teaching project is dependent on keeping the principle of congruence, of the harmony between *teaching goals of a lesson, teaching activities and employed procedures of diagnostics and evaluation of the obtained results.*

Congruence is grounded in the fact, that *the choice of teaching activities* must converge with the desired *teaching goals* and projected *diagnostic tasks* provide for the means by which it is possible to *evaluate* the knowledge and skills that pupils were to get.

Picture 2 Congruence principle (cf.: Pasch 1998, p.192)



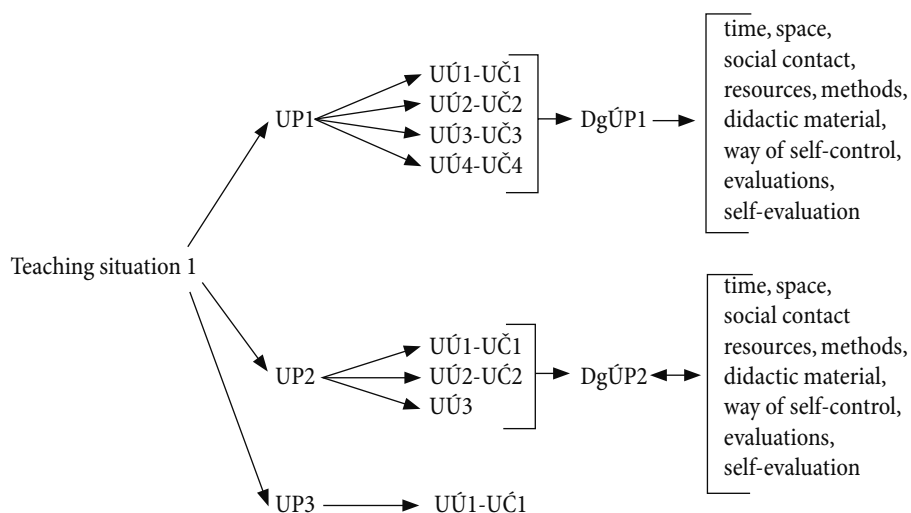
The harmony of these three components can be provided for by the teacher so that:

- *he/she modifies teaching tasks* as impulses for learning activities *converging at the level of teaching*, that is set in the goals;
- *he/she chooses teaching tasks*, the pupils' activities according to whether the goal is in the active, psycho-motoric or cognitive domain;
- *he/she decides on inductive, deductive, social approach to teaching*, various forms of teaching and learning in order to help all children be success when coping with curriculum as well as in their personality development;
- *he/she intentionally emphasizes and repeats the teaching goals to pupils*, the goals that they are to reach through their activities;
- *he/she continuously informs pupils about the skills they have to prove* in a supervisory test, which is awaiting them at the close of a thematic unit.

The structure of a teaching project

The basic structure of a teaching unit project comes out of the understanding of teaching as pupils' situational learning, out of projecting and creating the system of educational situations that evoke pupils' interest in learning and at the same time they initiate their cognitive activity. The teaching situation is made up by a system of teaching tasks that create conditions to reach the teaching goals – teaching requirements. The teacher simultaneously reckons that some activities will emerge as a result of spontaneous situations that appear through pupils' impulses.

Picture 3. Structure scheme of an educational situation in a project



UP- teaching requirements, UÚ- teaching tasks, UČ- teaching activities, DgÚ- diagnostic tasks

Within one teaching hour there are usually several pedagogical situations. Each of them is outlined by the teacher so that the pupils *emotionally cope* with the problem and activities that they will carry out within the situation. Pupils are given a chance to express their *previous experiences and knowledge* that concern a given problem as well as their possible expectations in relation to the theme. Then they solve the problem through learning activities within which they suggest and check *the procedures of solution* and they are able to process new information. Following the finalization of activities, pupils present the results of their work and get feedback not only from the teacher but also from their classmates. The teacher provides for

the *reflection of experiences*, that the pupils acquired through the solution of the set of teaching tasks. Every new pedagogical situation is designed so that it comes out of pupils' already gained experience which makes space to *deepen the acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes*.

The structure of a project, it may have this form:

Years: Class: Subject: Teacher:				
Thematic unit:		Curriculum:		Goal:
Teaching tools:				
Time	Pedagogical situation	Teaching requirements	Set of teaching tasks	Continuance (teacher's activity, teaching activities, methods and forms of work)

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