

AN APPROXIMATION TO A STRATEGY FOR PEDAGOGIC PROFESSIONAL ORIENTATION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS' FORMATION

APROXIMACIÓN A UNA ESTRATEGIA DE ORIENTACIÓN PROFESIONAL PEDAGÓGICA PARA LA FORMACIÓN DE PROFESORES DE LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS

M. Sc. MARÍA DE LA CARIDAD SMITH BATSON¹¹ (cariemay@ult.edu.cu)

Ph. D. ELVIRA ALONSO HERNÁNDEZ²

ABSTRACT:

Teachers' formation is considered a challenge today at world scale and it is met in different ways and from different perspectives, beginning with the process of recruitment, undergoing the complexities of maintaining the recruited personnel in the major during the period of studies, and the final uncertainty of enrolling them to the community of teachers once they graduate. All the above mentioned constitute problems of paramount importance which pedagogy and other education sciences face on the light of the current diverse changing nature of social problems. To assist students keep high motivational rates, become valuable members of the teaching community with appropriate skills, a cultural background on the field and outstanding critical faculties are the demands of academic life and social maturation in the contemporary context. The importance of the present work lies in the inventory of actions to reflect on professional orientation towards language teachers' formation in universities and the challenges brought about by two main sources: the changing nature of university learning and the new technologies embraced by students for communication and learning, taking into consideration the adaptation the university has to undergo in an environment that requires insight, courage and common sense to assist the undergraduates.

Key words: professional orientation, teachers' formation, teaching, learning, professional skills.

RESUMEN:

La formación de profesores es considerada un reto en la actualidad a escala mundial, la misma se estudia desde diferentes perspectivas, comenzando por el proceso de captación, salvando las complejidades de mantener el personal captado en la carrera durante el período de estudios de pregrado y la incertidumbre final de enrolar a los egresados en la comunidad de profesores para el ejercicio de la profesión. Todo lo anteriormente expresado constituye un problema de importancia capital que encara la pedagogía y otras ciencias de la educación a la luz de la cambiante y diversa

naturaleza de los problemas sociales. Ayudar a los estudiantes a mantener altos índices motivacionales, a convertirse en miembros valiables de la comunidad de profesores, con habilidades apropiadas, una cultura de ese contexto y facultades críticas relevantes, son demandas de la vida académica y de la madurez social en el contexto contemporáneo. La importancia del presente trabajo radica en un inventario de acciones necesarias para reflexionar sobre la orientación profesional hacia la formación de profesores de lenguas extranjeras en las universidades y los retos que traen consigo dos fuentes fundamentales: la naturaleza cambiante del aprendizaje en la universidad y el papel de las nuevas tecnologías adoptadas por los estudiantes para la comunicación y el aprendizaje, teniendo en cuenta la adaptación que la universidad tiene que experimentar en un ambiente que requiere introspección y sentido común para ayudar a los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: orientación profesional, formación de profesores, enseñanza, aprendizaje, habilidades profesionales.

Pedagogic professional orientation: an overview

Teachers' formation is considered a challenge today at world scale and it is met in different ways and from various perspectives. The formation of a professional in the field of education needs professional orientation during the undergraduate period for it is fundamental in the constitution of the system of social, psychological, didactic and, political influences, which objective is to prepare the future teachers to form in the students they will work with adequate values that suit the society for which they are being formed.

This process of formation which university students undergo in this period propitiate the appropriation of knowledge and the development of professional abilities that contribute to reassure their love towards teaching and the same time they also reassure their compromise in the formation of the future generations.

For this reason all the disciplines and subjects in the major's curricula must contribute to organize, plan, execute and control this cross curricular contents, which are not regularly designed under any of the contents of the basic curriculum. Professional orientation contents constitute a reflexive perspective in which personal implication holds an important role, as for example: in the reflections about the selection of the major, the study of the model designed for the formation of the professional, the analysis of the social function of the teacher, teacher's roles and tasks; taking as a point of departure documents that set the educative policies in the country and praise the Teacher.

It is important to keep up fluent, dynamic conversations and exchange of ideas among professors of different generations and students of different levels and years to reinforce the experiential component of professional orientation and the analysis of texts related to the profession, to get to the point of planning and modeling exercises, activities, and learning tasks related to the contents of the different methodological disciplines in each academic year that will later be the basis of what they will teach as part of their social role and object.

There is no exact precision in literature for the beginning in the study of this topic, seen as a process, but it is known that since early ages vocational formation has played an important role, becoming more evident and having more incidences in senior education, much more in the work with pre-university students, as the terminal stage and the step before university.

Recruitment to university studies is a decisive period in the life of young people, because it goes through the complexities of social and family influences with its challenges and perspectives, once the student is recruited, an approximation to the educative reality that they will have to face during the insertion in the major and the permanence in it, constitute a challenge to the university staff. During the undergraduate period all the professional orientation and development is displayed, as well as the definitely task to keep the high motivational rates with which the new graduates come out of the university, and in most cases they should reach higher levels.

The particular case of professional pedagogical orientation, in the professionalization of the contents for the teaching-learning process of foreign languages, as in many other cases, is always permeated by the doubt of achieving the enrolment of the newly graduates to the teaching community, maintaining their motivation towards the profession and keeping them in the job. The impact and pertinence of the contents referred to the cross curricular contents for the professional pedagogical orientation administered throughout the undergraduate curriculum should be a priority and of paramount importance during the years of study in the major, it has been proven by life itself that they never lose their validity.

Pedagogical professional orientation in foreign languages teaching education programs: some details for its efficient development

All the above mentioned constitute problems of vital importance to which Pedagogy and other sciences of education face on the light of the diverse and changing nature and demands of social problems. To meet the needs and help students keep high motivational levels, to be committed, and continue being members of the valuable community of practicing teachers, handling appropriate abilities, an identity and a

culture of the profession they practice and the faculty to criticise what they and others do, who have a constant and continuum professional development, are the demands of the contemporary academic life and a sample of social maturity of the graduates in the contemporary context; without a doubt, the tasks and functions of pedagogic professional orientation, and their insertion in the curriculum is in favour of finding the most efficient ways to attain all the above.

An approach to General Pedagogy conducts us to reflect about the categories: man, culture, society and education, in this particular case the reflections for the study, a forward-looking to the formation of the foreign language teacher, with and identity in relation to the profession and extended to the teaching community, has its basis on the link with the family, the school and the community, on the support of the planning of continuous development of the undergraduate, demonstrating his educability for the function he must develop.

Chavez, J. (2005), in the analysis of these categories describes what this social phenomenon entails, assuming the teaching in the practicum, bearing in mind that formation does not take place spontaneously, it is necessary to strengthen it with sense to pave the way for it and the possibilities for it to unfold.

This assertion is in full correspondence with all the above said. On the other hand, to have cultural information about the object of one's future work and faculties to criticize the most relevant aspects regarding it, the solution to problems encountered in the educative practicum of the teaching-learning process of foreign languages must be understood, as demands of contemporary academic life and social maturation at world scale. The functions of education play a predominant role on this matter, due to the fact that education, as a social phenomenon influences and develops not only the biological issue in man's life, but his social factors as well, which is the end of all educative action undertaken and it is directly linked to the political project of the formation of these professionals in the broadest sense of the word.

The university is inserted today in new trends and tendencies from the perspective of undergraduate formation: it is responsible for the formation of committed professionals, also independent, with deep knowledge and delimited abilities for the future profession, with a system of socially valid and accepted values for the profession, with a creative and flexible thinking, which responds to social needs. In the case of teaching and education, in foreign languages professional there is a need of action plans the respond to all the elements listed above, to favour the integral formation of this professional of the education of children, adolescents, young and adults, including the upgrading of the knowledge the need to enrol the task, the abilities and the values to carry on the profession with dignity.

Professional pedagogic orientation in the undergraduate curriculum of the foreign language teacher should be conceived to help the students attain the professional competencies they need, to teach them how to reflect on their own process of learning, about their future social needs, their future profession, about coping with students and students' individual differences and with those having learning difficulties or any other risk presented in the classroom, in sum, this cross curricular content must be the impulse and the fuel which promote future work, all these constitute part of the changing nature of learning in the university today.

The social establishment of the profession is another element to consider in the orientation of the group of students in respect to society expectations, to explore the preparation the group is attaining to actively be inserted in the social life as teachers must be intended, expressed in the accomplishment of their duties, as well as the attaining of a culture and an identity expressed in moral values and political preparation as a class.

Among the commonest actions undertaken by the staff as part of the professional pedagogical orientation one can find:

- Giving talks and having chats with the students of the major about the profession, in order to keep them up-dated, interested and motivated.
- To make the characteristics of the major popular in the different programs and syllabuses of the curriculum, the syllabus for the training periods, at the time they play their guiding role.
- To spread the model and the features of the major: this action is of great importance, because during the exchange of ideas with the students the features and the objectives of the model are discussed, as well as the interests undergraduates must undertake, the different disciplines and subjects included in the curriculum, how each one of them contribute to the students formation and to the successful conclusion of the study period for their professional formation, the reputation it contributes to gain, the literature they have at their disposal to favour learning, the means and the sources of information they can use to learn, among other issues of interest.
- Meeting with students from different educational levels previous to the university, for those majoring to reassure those intensions which made them select the profession object of study.

All these actions will have the function of orienting new knowledge and reorienting the existing ones for undergraduates and it is used as a fundamental method, such is the case of the expository method on the part of teachers and students, where persuasion through procedures of verbal influence predominate to offer knowledge, recognize or

stimulate, create awareness, comprehend, reflect on a topic, to assess weaknesses and strengths, norms, regulations and values. Persuasive procedures make possible, to a higher extent, to obtain knowledge, as well as recognition, comprehension and reflection on behalf of the topic.

Among other strategic actions to contribute to pedagogic professional orientation in the formation of foreign languages teachers, one can find: talks, conferences and lectures on ethics of the teaching profession, which include solid convincing arguments, which expose causes and effects, consequences, manifestations, facts, sound up-to-date information, which is real and objective. It is convenient to keep in mind that every action undertaken must have a logical structure, where examples and demonstration, support the expositions with the use of audio-visual methods, and oral or written evidence, these are invaluable actions, which convince and invite to think in the possibility to become teachers, especially when arguments are based on real possibilities of the context. All these must take place in the appropriate place and time, the speaker must be someone eloquent, the stories must be distinguishable by the emotional feelings they transmit. What one was, what he or she is, and what the future teacher will become, must mark a distinction as part of the topic in the knowledge of the undergraduates.

Narrations constitute vivid descriptions, eloquent, authentic facts, happenings, events full of content and relevant for those who narrate and for the listeners who await orientation, they have a strong emotive content and the effect they cause is of a strong impression, in most cases raising awareness in the students towards the profession and an identity with it. They make reference to concepts and moral norms, arousing interests for those events and stimulating the formation of moral values and ideals towards the teaching profession.

Moreover, dialogues constitute an individual conversation or in small groups, about the theme of interest, which also raises questions, reflections, doubts and inquiries that students like to solve or be clear about, mostly at the moment the conversation is taking. It must be oriented and prepared beforehand with precision and the needed requirements to be certain and adjusted to the topic of pedagogic professional orientation, certain in the preparation of the personnel in charge of education or other people invited, with the assumption of possible questions the students and teachers might ask, disposition of time, an adequate place, propitiating confidence and intimacy to favour to get deep in the topic, taking into consideration the diversity of the group, it must promote reflection, take into consideration diversity and must promote disposition for action and decision making in the solution of problems encountered in the teaching practice, at least in must favour the decision taking of the recruited students in practice through the vivid experiences they hear to or talk about.

The use of new technologies of informatics and communications must be an element of significance and of consideration to be taken into account, due to the fact that the world rests today on electronic support, that is the reason why teachers in formation in particular, as in the case of any professional formation at world scale, are not excepted of assuming them for communication and learning, taking into account that the university has today the necessity to adjust to the requirements of the changing existing environment, virtual in much cases. In this aspect, there is a need of understanding the nature, the needs and of the competences of the people in society of this time, elements that require further encouragement, also common sense to help the students during the undergraduate period.

Pedagogical Professional Orientation in undergraduate formation today: its present situation

Among the major challenges in the scenario of teachers' formation today in the field of foreign languages, one can find the relation theory-practice in the teaching component of the curriculum, so the functions of education: the instructive-educative, formative-developmental and socio-personalizing assumed by Pedagogy are necessary during the process of pedagogic professional orientation, in favour of the educability of the future professionals. Through these functions the cultural heritage of this profession is offered, with actions as the above stated and described, which at the same time make teachers' in formation actors and creators of the process they are inserted to, being part in their participation during the period of familiarization, have part taking part, and forming part in the integration of the process organized for their formation and development. This way, assumptions can be drawn, and it is possible to act in correspondence with the ways of acting and the profile outlined for the process as such and its organization, from a developmental perspective.

In the same line of thinking with world most outstanding ideas of language teaching today, this awareness for the formation of the personnel in charge of foreign languages teaching, and the emphasis given to pedagogic professional orientation, students projection towards Independence play an important role from the perspective of the use and interaction with new technologies, as it has been stated before. This is a point that marks the difference regarding the efficiency of the process of formation, which ends in the formation of abilities for investigation in the teachers in formation, making their preparation easier from an interdisciplinary perspective and conception to solve the professional problems they will encounter in their teaching practice once they graduate.

On the other hand, the daily example of the teaching staff, in respect to the functions teachers develop in classrooms, like instructing, telling the students what must be done; explaining, giving instructions on how to develop the activities, the meaning of new vocabulary; why correction is necessary in the teaching learning process of a foreign language, and correcting them whenever needed; the use of telling stories or events that happen for the sake of learning new structures, vocabulary, communicative function and their many possible exponents, eliciting information from the students, offering different levels of help in correspondence to learners' needs and the class profile, most generally and frequently in correspondence to individual differences, helping them to make an idea concrete, to rethink an idea, to express the meaning of words or structures. These functions, incidentally, can be included for their acquisition on the part of the teachers in formation in the subjects of the curriculum, or as part of the contents of cross curricular programs.

Among the most outstanding teachers' role one can find:

- Knowing the type of learning needs students have in learning a foreign language,
- Meeting those needs, above all, selecting the appropriate material for their use, topics of interest,
- Adjusting the lessons pace to the learners' characteristics
- Adjusting the tasks, activities and the exercises to the learners' characteristics,
- Coping with individual differences and interactive patterns in the classroom, it may be to work with small or larger groups, in couples or trios, that make easier feedback in different ways
- Putting into practice different learning strategies
- Keep a record on students' progress and results in each ability and on learning
- Rendering those results in time or when requested, so that the content of the teacher's work is reliable.

Taking into consideration the professional abilities the foreign language teacher must possess, which result and destination should also be known, persuading the students on the needs of developing learning activities, their objective and contents; it is important to know that one must keep interested on his students learning, they should know what they are expected and what they must attain, as well as when they have completed those expectancies, that is to say, when they have fulfilled their goals, students must come out of the foreign language lesson with tangible results, so for the teacher it must be a premise to make evident the students learning outcomes. These, among other aspects, are the ones which must never be excluded from the content of pedagogical professional orientation today.

Professional talks in the foreign language area does not differ from the one of professors from other specialities, but the foreign language is base and the foundation for the lesson,

that is why the advantages and disadvantages to use it as much as possible in the classroom must be taken into consideration, and give the opportunity to the student to listen to the language used as they study, for it constitutes an excellent moment for the development of listening as an ability, which is frequently neglected. The student is exposed to language above their levels of production in many cases, though this fact is in detriment of the development of his own speech and language, the solution should be directed to meet their needs. Smith Batson, M. C. (2011)

It has been demonstrated that during the teaching-learning process of a foreign language, the best lessons are those where the time the student talks is maximized. "Loop learning" cannot be disregarded, which is also known as "loop input", the exponent of this methodology is Tessa Woodward, in the 1990's she defended the idea of the use of different types of activities, procedures and techniques, all of them appropriate for the communicative approach implementation in the context of teacher formation, as well as the use and promotion of the ways teachers learnt the language as undergraduates. This is a methodology based on direct experience and example; this aspect can be regarded as significant for the case of the promotion of pedagogical professional orientation curricular and cross curricular contents.

Here is an example of one of the many possible ways to unfold pedagogic professional orientation, in this case in a theoretical-practical lesson for the contents of the subject Foreign Language Teaching Didactics for intermediate level students, not only for the personalized component of teaching, but also for the instrumentation of a learning plan on how to act and what to do in the teaching learning process in Junior High Education level, the future teachers will execute the teaching learning process of English after graduation in any grade they are designed to do so. This subject is in charge of teaching the "what" and the "how" to teach in a foreign language classroom.

Topic: Teaching pronunciation.

Objective in terms of what the students must attain: to become familiar with the teaching of segmental and supra segmental aspects of language and determine the goal for teaching them as discrete elements with their corresponding techniques for correction in the different grades in secondary school, as a way to form proper manners with the technical vocabulary in correspondence with the English lesson today, and to provide pedagogic professional orientation.

Summary:

- ✓ Aspects the teaching of pronunciation involves (accents/ improving learners pronunciation/ spelling)
- ✓ Differences between segmental and supra segmental aspects (the sounds of the English language (phonology)/ stress and rhythm/ intonation).

Among the aspects to be taught to the students teachers to master and develop a professional conscience, culture and identity with their future profession are included the need of learning: phonetic transcription, differences in English speaking accents (American, British Canadian, Caribbean, African English accents, at least to now their differences and relevant features in pronunciation), most common errors for Spanish speakers, the reasons and objectives for correction and the need of improving learners' pronunciation, the links between English pronunciation and spelling and the fair correspondence between sounds and symbols in the English language, the most relevant combination of letters and sound not present in Spanish pronunciation, how learning the name of alphabet letters may help to read and pronounce appropriately, unusual pronunciation of given graphemes, discrimination of minimal pairs, the sound system, silent letters, different sounds for the same grapheme, the name of the different organs of the speech apparatus, techniques for phonetic correction, among other elements.

At the end of the lesson the future teachers must have acquired the rudiments on how to model different tasks and exercises to teach pronunciation for the educational level they will work with, to plan different lessons to teach pronunciation, to discuss the appropriateness of those tasks and activities on the basis of current thinking in the field of foreign language teaching and the context of the classroom. Further practice and systematization through lessons or parts of them, exercises, tasks and activities should be provided, as a complementary part of the initial formation to reinforce their values and qualities as teachers.

To conclude the reflections which have been stated throughout this article, it can be assured that language teacher formation constitutes a necessity for the development of education, Cuba particularly is in need of them, due to the constant interaction kept with people from different countries and different languages in today's world; the need of speaking a foreign language to communicate is faced today with the complexities the formation of their professionals implies. This process starts in recruitment and ends up once the graduates enrol the teaching community in any of the levels of education to teach a foreign language and keep stability in the practice of their profession, for that endeavour, pedagogic professional orientation is paramount.

Teachers' formation entails a scientific-methodological area for development and the solution of problems encountered in the practice of the profession; and supposes the preparation of a professional with higher levels of professionalism, deep knowledge on the profession, and the needed creativity to face the teaching of children, adolescents, young people and adults.

Thus, pedagogic professional orientation must be inserted with an intension in curricular and cross curricular contents and syllabi, the purpose is to reveal the identity and the culture of the foreign language teaching educator while the future professionals are in their training period as undergraduates, on the basis of the current thinking for the foreign language teaching didactics today at world scale.

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