

## 16. TRADITIONAL AND INNOVATIVE METHODS OF TEACHING FORMS AND MUSICAL ANALYSIS

Gabriela Vlahopol<sup>130</sup>

**Abstract:** *The use of creative teaching methods, whether traditional or modern, represents an unlimited potential to improve the quality of education, but also a way to stimulate interest in the study at both levels of teacher-student partnership. The discipline Forms and musical analysis has several peculiarities concerning the organization of the teaching process, that can raise real problems when accessing and assimilating information. In order to increase accessibility to the informational content implied by the discipline Forms and Musical Analysis, and with the purpose to stimulate interest of its students to acquire it, balance is needed in organizing the teaching tools, combining traditional teaching methods with modern approach strategies, innovative, often taken from fields other than related to music.*

**Keywords:** *methods, teaching, active learning, innovative strategies*

### 1. Introduction

The purpose of the educational process may be defined by two fundamental coordinates: providing a complete and coherent information package and training the student towards the direction of rational thinking, openness to knowledge and self-confidence; solving the two components ensures the progress and the effectiveness in any field. At the same time, the development of creativity and innovation as a direct result of the process of education has a decisive impact on both the student and the teachers.

The diversity of the teaching methods might be placed on an upward path of the student's control and involvement, one of the ends being the lecture, with the minimal participation of the student, and the other end, the individual study, where the teacher's control and participation are minimal. It is worth mentioning that both ends of this continuum have a certain degree of control and participation from both partners involved in the learning process. Thus, in the case of lectures, the student may choose what to write down, ask questions or not or even affect the quality of the discourse, while his individual study is influenced by the teacher's suggestions, the materials and the tasks the teacher assigns.

This study intends a review of the traditional teaching methods used within the discipline *Musical forms and analyses* (course and practical work), as well as the possibility of inserting modern methods and methods referred in literature as *active teaching methods*, a significant potential for easy and complete assimilation of information, but also a factor of cohesion of the group of students, of development of their abilities to manage the quantity of knowledge and the communication skills.

---

<sup>130</sup>Lecturer PhD, "George Enescu" University of Arts from Iași of Romania, email: gabriela\_vlahopol@yahoo.com

## 2. Premises

Increasingly more studies of contemporary pedagogy<sup>131</sup> emphasize the importance of approaching new methods of teaching in higher education, aiming at the separation of the teacher-student frontal communication typology, where the teacher has full control, and the orientation towards an active involvement of the student in learning and the development of his creativity in managing the acquired information. The studies upon the teaching methods in higher education are focused particularly on other areas than art and the few references in this area do not contain applications in the musical field (Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall, 2003).

Within the study discipline *Musical forms and analyses*, the specific of the content limits the exploit of the full arsenal of teaching methods and techniques, whether traditional or modern. Thus, due to the combination between the theoretical content and the practical content, respectively the permanent transfer between new information and their materialization in the musical score and in the associated sound speech, the frontal teaching methods used within the study discipline depart from the strict pattern of lecture found in the most areas and study disciplines in the university education. This oscillation is correlated with a complex brain activity, which involves alternately or simultaneously the cognitive, emotional and volitional area.

On the other hand, the share of the practical, concrete side within the seminars, combined with the analysis of the musical score allows methodological fluctuations between quasi-lecture and group activity in different variants, while making the approach of some methods based on *brainstorming* ineffective, the interpretation variants of the structure of a work being relatively limited (in most cases there is only one variant).

## 3. Traditional methods

The lecture is a creative method involving, though in a differentiated degree, the participation of both the teacher and the student. The main purpose of the lecture within the study discipline *Musical forms and analyses* is the comprehensible transmission of concepts, the student's attention being focused on fundamental concepts, definitions, terms, assumptions, a process that involves a critical analysis of the subject. The lecture should provide a consistent scientific knowledge of the concepts covered, and therefore it must be logical and complete. Moreover, the graphical examples, drawings, musical score and audition have the role of a better understanding of the topic. The lecture within the study discipline *Musical forms and analyses* is commonly used in combination with other teaching methods included in the same category

---

<sup>131</sup> Dr. Damodharan V.S. ACCA, AICWA, Mr. Rengarajan. V AICWA, *Innovative Methods of Teaching*, George Brown, Madeleine Atkins, *Effective Teaching in Higher Education* (Routledge, Taylor&Francis Group, New York and London, 2002), Dr. Shahida Sajjad, *Effective teaching Methods at Higher Education Level* (Department os Special Education, University of Karaki, Pakistan), Belias Dimitrios, Sdrolias Labros, Kakkos Nikolaos, Koutiva Maria, Koustelios Athanisios, *Traditional Teaching Methods vs. Teaching through the Appication of Information and Communication Technologies in the Accounting Field: Quo Vadis?* (European Scientific Journal, October 2013, edition vol.9, No. 28), etc.

of procedures of the traditional teaching tools<sup>132</sup>: conversation, demonstration and exercise, the manual work being replaced by the reference to the musical score.

This educational pattern was one of the most widely used technique of teaching over time, representing a fundamental educational strategy in teaching the study discipline *Musical form*. Along with the insertion of the technology in the formation process and the advance of pedagogical and didactic theories, the context of analysis of possible deficiencies of the method appears. In case of lecture, the teacher controls the entire educational process, the notional content is provided to the whole class, and the teacher tends to emphasize the knowledge objectively. In other words, the teacher provides the content of the lesson, and the student listens to the lecture. The manner of learning tends to be passive and the student has a minimum contribution in his own learning process. All these aspects lead to a limitation of the quality of teaching and learning process, as well as to a decrease in the students' interest and in their ability to concentrate: *It has been found in most universities by many teachers and students that the conventional lecture approach in classroom is of limited effectiveness in both teaching and learning. In such a lecture students assume a pure passive role and their concentration fades off after 15-20 minutes* (Damodharan, Rengarajan, p. 3)

A study conducted on a total of 360 students from various departments of the *University of Pula*, Croatia (Educational Sciences, Studies in Italian, Economy and Tourism, as well as a significant number of students in the Music Department) showed that the frontal teaching method is prevalent in higher education, although this traditional teaching form is not appropriate to the current socio-cultural context. *Namely, it requires learning based on listening, watching and reiterating and mostly implies a one-way communication and activities linked to printed media. Such teaching methods do not incite the intellectual and emotional involvement of students in the cognitive process, which is essential to active learning* (Močinič, 2012, p. 101). Here are some of the disadvantages of the frontal method used within the study discipline *Musical forms and analyses*:

- The information comes in one direction (teacher-student)
- The teacher follows his speech for an extended period of time without counting the student's response and their understanding degree
- The handwriting can damage the quality of the message
- The teacher / student interaction is limited
- The emphasis is placed on theory, the musical examples being reduced in number (because they excessively prolong the duration of the lecture)

---

<sup>132</sup> Cf. *Studiu comparativ între metodele tradiționale și moderne utilizate în procesul de predare – învățare* (www.educatori.isjbihor.ro)

#### **4. Possible optimizations of the traditional methods**

- a. The traditional oral exposure may be accompanied by a multimedia visual presentation, made using programs such as Power Point or Prezi, which eliminates the use of blackboard and handwriting, optimizing the visual perception of information and the time dedicated to lecture. Also, the technical support provides a clear, visual and evolving systematization of information, graphical examples from the score (in case of musical syntax and morphology elements, with smaller size), schemes of the clear, organized formal structures, audio and video fragments. A particularly perceptive impact is owned by the real-time correlation of the score with the sound representation via a video projector, a means by which the teacher controls the simultaneous perception of the example by the students and creates the possibility of emphasizing some structural, morphological or stylistic details (melody, rhythm, writing, harmony, etc.) that are difficult to perceive through individual observation.
- b. Encouraging the students to ask questions during the exposure is an important means of diversification and stimulation of the class development, with equal benefits for teacher and student: the teacher may perceive the degree of understanding the concepts, possible errors or issues, sometimes being able to discover new solutions to interpreting a structure; the student has the possibility of clarifying the meanings of concepts, the degree of correlation between terms and may rise concerns of applicability of the theoretical content in the musical score.
- c. The exercises made based on the score and the audio media are traditionally unidirectional: the teacher proposes the example, provides the demonstration and its conclusions. The method of illustration can be diversified by encouraging the students' participation in the deductive process by providing solutions and interpretations of the morphological structure, by indicating the analytical details (rhythm, melody, metrics, motivic processing, etc.) or by deducting some exceptions to formal patterns previously exposed.
- d. Braun and Simpson (2004) (cf. Belias, Sdrolias, Kakkos, Koutiva, Koustelios, 2013, p. 77) have studied the impact of the break in the learning process by applying the study to classes of students belonging to different departments. *The method of break* implies the inclusion of regular breaks of the lecturer during the lecture and the participation of the audience to written or oral activities. The study demonstrated the increase of the students' performance when they are given the possibility to make decisions during the learning process, decisions relating to the activity that they can perform during the break – written or oral. The method can be successfully adapted within the study discipline *Musical forms and analyses* by creating a relaxed musical background and using the break for filling in some feedback sheets or for socialization.
- e. *Mind map* is a simple technique for organizing the information in diagrams instead of sentences, diagrams arranged as a tree with a unique starting point and branches that are divided ones from the others. The diagrams contain words or short sentences connected between them, connexions that are part of the general meaning of the scheme. The evolving process of getting over the musical

morphology and syntax concepts within the study discipline *Musical forms and analyses*, along with processes of their development and variation allows the use of *mind map* technique in order to assimilate and embrace some new terms, commonalities between different formal patterns. Thus, the student leans and remembers by using the entire set of visual and sensory tools that are available to him.

## 5. Innovative teaching approaches

The seminars, due to the low number of students, can be treated as a group activity, and implicitly the methods of increasing the efficiency of learning and the degree of implication and satisfaction of the students can be continuously adapted to the specific of the group. In fact, most innovations that can be adopted within the study discipline *Musical forms and analyses* aim primarily the seminars, where the contribution of the students can be increased up to the provision of the maximum degree of control on the development of the training process. The traditional version of the seminar involves a certain degree of participation of the student, but the share of explanations, demonstrations and the motor of launching issues to be solved belong to the teacher. Among the most attractive methods of transforming the seminars in unique opportunities of *active learning*, we are mentioning:

a. *Role playing* is a method by which one or more participants play a certain role in a simulation, which includes details of biography, attitude, personality or principles. Although the applicability of the technique is particularly effective for the social and humanities fields, when it comes about the musical field, it can be used in an adapted form, according to the specific of the study discipline. In the case of the study discipline *Musical forms and analyses*, one of the possible ways of applying the *role play* is the assignment of the role of teacher to a student (or pair of students) together with the trainer's duties and responsibilities: preliminary documentation based on a topic previously suggested, preparation of the lesson in details (video-audio materials, musical scores, oral presentation or Power Point, applications), holding the course, organization and coordination of the practical activities, involving the students in discussions and team work, etc.

b. *Didactic game* is a method successfully applied in the pre-university education, but it can be easily adapted to the seminar activities in the academic area due to the dynamism and relaxed and fun environment it creates. The group can be divided into work teams, which receives as assignment to analyse a musical fragment within a limited period of time, previously set, the achievement of the maximum result being rewarded materially (for example candies or fruits) or docimologically (for example higher score at the partial verification). The duties imposed can cover a wide range, from the simplest (identifying elements of morphology, identifying the form) to the most complex (specifying all the details of the morphosyntactical and formal analysis). The results of each team will be counter either by a control group or the teacher, by

marking them on a scheme exposed frontally, and the team that will designate the right answer (or the highest number of correct answers) receives the reward.

c. The *brainstorming* technique is a structured form of discussion which aims at generating new ideas without the involvement of participants into a value-based analysis of them. It is an effective method in solving the problems, in making decisions, in forming a creative thinking and group cohesion, being focused on the listening skills. Although difficult to approach within the study discipline *Musical forms and analyses*, due to the limited number of options to interpret a formal structure, the *brainstorming* technique can be used in the context of discovering new structures, dramatic functions of a particular section, implications of correlation between different sections of the form, etc. The technique changes positively the dynamic of the seminar and streamlines the learning process on both its components: the teacher can assess the degree of assimilation of information by the students, their way of perceiving the structure, has the possibility of observing the degree of implication of each participant, as well as the efficiency of the teaching methods used in the course. On the other hand, the student has the opportunity to expose ideas into an environment of acceptance and positive assessment and he progressively develops the ability to evaluate a musical structure in a polyvalent manner, from multiple angles (the mental pattern of a generally valid interpretation of a form is removed).

d. *Blackboard* and *Facebook*

A team of researchers (Wells et al., 2008) has studied the effectiveness of virtual learning spaces within the university programs. The most used virtual tool was *Blackboard* (an online area providing virtual learning space), where the views of a group of applicant students were studied. The main purpose of the research was *to assess the usefulness of the platform in terms of delivering lectures, information, additional notes and exercises, as well as forum discussions. The students' opinions about the integration of the virtual learning space in the educational process were positive; the teacher student interaction became stronger, and the learning process was more effective* (Belias Dimitrios et al. 2013, p. 83). Although students appreciated the fact that the method does not require their physical presence in the classroom, they found that this method should not replace the traditional learning, face to face. Moreover, a subsequent study (Belias Dimitrios et al. 2013, p. 83) has demonstrated the fact that the *face to face* learning techniques influence the mental effort of the students and their degree of participation in the course.

Internationally, the Blackboard platform represents a tool increasingly used, demonstrating the openness of researches and teachers for new methods of learning and teaching. *The platform allows the process of self-learning (self-management of the studying rhythm), collaboration (interaction with students and tutors through the forums), accessing different types of applications in the teaching process and monitoring the training pathway, motivating the*

participants and providing methodological and informational content support<sup>133</sup>.

Also, an increasingly number of researchers<sup>134</sup> are studying the usefulness of *Facebook* network in the teaching and learning process. Although Facebook is a social platform, which was not created for educational purposes, it holds a great potential for learning and teaching due to its unique features and its accessibility. Among the advantages of the network in streamlining the educational process stated by the researchers there are: the feedback mechanism of the colleagues, learning in the spirit of collaboration, in an informal environment, improves the efficiency and the constant character of the individual work, possibility of connecting with experts or colleagues in discussions or surveying a subject. Also, the openness the teacher displays when participating in this type of learning leads the student to an increased level of motivation and a comfortable climate in the classroom (Mazer, Murphy & Simonds, 2007).

If the studies in this direction prove the effectiveness of the two virtual spaces in the case of study disciplines with math track (for example, accounting), the applicability of the online learning methods at the level of the study discipline *Musical forms and analyses* is at its beginnings, their potential and usefulness being still under survey and experiment. Along with the real-time access to courses, the methodological support in approaching the analyses of some plays from the individual repertoire or the practical works, the online platform allows learning activities outside the classroom, which contributes to strengthening the knowledge acquired and to increasing the popularity of the study discipline by approaching an original method, accessible to students. An example is the placement, by the teacher, on the online platform of an exercise to decipher the musical structure and opening a settlement discussion within the parameters established initially: establishing the steps of approaching the analysis, of an organized evolution of the discussion (rules of interventions, number of postings per students), time spent on each step, respectively the final result, etc.

## 6. Conclusions

The basic coordinates of the teaching process are the transmission and the reception of the information, embedded in the complex process of education,

---

<sup>133</sup> <http://www.cse.uaic.ro/blackboard.htm> accessed on 23.02.2015

<sup>134</sup> Qiyun Wang, huay Lit Woo, Choon Lang Quek & Yuqin Yang – *Use of Facebook for Teaching and Learning: A Review of the Research*, Cornell, R.S. (2009). *Academic libraries, Facebook and Myspace, and student outreach: a survey of student opinion*. *Libraries and the Academy*, 9(1): 25-36, Li, L. & Pitts, J.P. (2009). *Does It really matter? Using virtual office hours to enhance student-faculty interaction*. *Journal of Information Systems Education*, 20(2), 175-185, Madge, C., Meek, J., & Hooley, T. (2009). *Facebook, social integration and informal learning at university: 'it is more for socialising and tlking to friends about work than for actually doing work'*. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 34(2), 141-155, Selwyn, N. (2009). *Faceworking: exploring students'educationa-related use of Facebook*. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 34(2): 157-174, Mazer, J., Murpfy, R., Simonds, C. (2007). *I'll see you on Facebook: The effects if computer-mediator teacher self-disclosure on student motivation, affective learning, and classroom climate*. *Communication Education*, 56(1), 1-17

which aims not only at the professional training of the student, but also at equipping him with rational thinking and with the ability to manage the acquired knowledge. The teaching methods approached within the study discipline *Musical forms and analyses* were and are dependent to the frontal, unidirectional learning system, their renewal and the introduction of completely new ones being considered an act of boldness and depleted of success. The approach of a new vision in this direction and the flexibility of the teacher in looking for new solutions for training the students can constitute a solution to solving the contradiction between the traditional methods and the social and cultural context where the students' training happens, but also a way to guide the students not only towards information, but towards a way of educating their own learning.

### References

1. Belias Dimitrios, Sdrolias Labros, Kakkos Nikolaos, Koutiva Maria, Koustelios Athanios (2013), *Traditional Teaching Methods vs. Teaching through the Application of Information and Communication Technologies in the Accounting Field: Quo Vadis?* (European Scientific Journal, October 2013, edition vol.9, No. 28)
2. Dr. Damodharan V.S. ACCA, AICWA, Mr. Rengarajan. V AICWA, *Innovative Methods of Teaching*, cf. <http://gspi.am/media/pdf/a669ab1b1ac209948a64070465661b7e.pdf>
3. George Brown, Madeleine Atkins (2002), *Effective Teaching in Higher Education* (Routledge, Taylor&Francis Group, New York and London)
4. Heather Fry, Steve Ketteridge, Stephanie Marshall, (2003) *A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Enhancing Academic Practice* (Third Edition, Routledge, Taylor&Francis Group, New York and London, cap. 20, *Key aspects of teaching and learning in arts, humanities and social sciences* (by Philipp Martin)
5. Dr. Shahida Sajjad, *Effective teaching Methods at Higher Education Level* (Department of Special Education, University of Karachi, Pakistan) cf. <http://class.web.nthu.edu.tw/ezfiles/669/1669/img/1381/1.Effectiveteachingmeth odsathighereducationlevel.pdf>
6. Snježana Nevja Močinič (2012), *Active Teaching Strategies in Higher Education*, *Metodički obzori* 7, 2
7. Qiyun Wang, huay Lit Woo, Choon Lang Quek & Yuqin Yang (2009) *Use of Facebook for Teaching and Learning: A Review of the Research*, Cornell, R.S.