

Educational Practices for Diminishing the Dropout Risk of the First-Year College Students from an Agronomic University in Romania. Preliminary Considerations

Mihai STANCIU¹, Carmen-Mihaela CREȚU², Carmen-Olguța BREZULEANU³, Florin LIPȘA⁴, Elena SEGHEDEIN⁵, Mihaela BORZA⁶, Ana-Maria BORTĂ⁷

¹ PhD, Prof., USAMV, Iași, Romania, stanciupcd@yahoo.fr

² PhD, Prof., UAIC, Iași, Romania, carmen.cretu@uaic.ro

³ PhD, Assoc. Prof., USAMV, Iași, Romania, olgutabrez@yahoo.com

⁴ PhD, Assoc. Prof., USAMV, Iași, Romania, flipsa@uaiasi.ro

⁵ PhD, Lect., UAIC, Iași, Romania, seghedine@yahoo.com

⁶ PhD, Lect., UAIC, Iași, Romania, mioarab2001@yahoo.com

⁷ Psih., USAMV, Iași, Romania, calancea.ana@uaiasi.ro

Abstract: Communication drills a strategic direction of the management of the Faculty of Agriculture, within the USAMV Iasi, to support the first-year students that are exposed to the risk of university dropout, belonging, in particular, to the disadvantaged groups. The target group was formed in the university year 2017-2018 out of a number of 150 students, who met the criteria of the project.

Among these, 77 students (48 %) got grades of 7 or below 7 at the Baccalaureate; 77 (51,3 %) belong to monoparental, low income families or with parents who work abroad; 83 (55,3 %) come from the countryside; 10 (6%) are orphans of one parent both parents; 2 (0,13) have been in foster care, orphanages or similar institutions. Moreover, older research (Stanciu & al., 2011) showed that the main problem the first-year students have to face in their effort to fit into the academic work is the lack of skills of efficient learning (almost 78%).

The courses of action for diminishing university dropout were the following: the awareness of the age and individual peculiarities of the students; the emphasis of the teaching-learning-assessment process on the student; the initiation and the running of social-emotional development programmes; the individualized counseling of the students for facing the accommodation problems which may occur ; the familiarization with the efficient learning techniques which may break new grounds toward lifelong learning; the learning of efficient communication techniques; the involvement in volunteering actions.

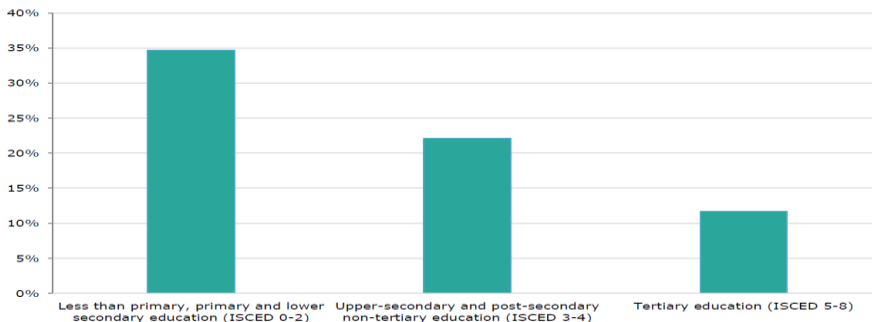
Keywords: *university dropout; individualized counselling; social-emotional development; efficient learning techniques; efficient communication techniques;*

How to cite: Stanciu, M., Cretu, C.-M., Brezuleanu, C.-O., Lipsa, F., Seghedin, E., Borza, M., & Borta, A.-M. (2019). Educational Practices for Diminishing the Dropout Risk of the First-Year College Students from an Agronomic University in Romania. Preliminary Considerations *Revista Romaneasca pentru Educatie Multidimensionala*, 11(1), 204-223. <https://doi.org/10.18662/rrem/107>

The International Commission of Education for the Twenty-first Century “affirms its belief that education has a fundamental role to play in personal and social development. The Commission does not see education as a miracle cure or a magic formula opening the door to a world in which all ideals will be attained, but as one of the principal means available to foster a deeper and more harmonious form of human development and thereby to reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war.” (Delors, eds., 1996, p. 11).

The strategy *Europe 2020* proposes the following EU headline targets: “75 % of the population aged 20-64 should be employed; 3% of the EU's GDP should be invested in R&D; the <20/20/20> climate/energy targets should be met (including an increase to 30% of emissions reduction if the conditions are right); the share of early school leavers should be under 10% and at least 40% of the younger generation should have a tertiary degree; 20 million less people should be at risk of poverty.” (European Commission, 2010).

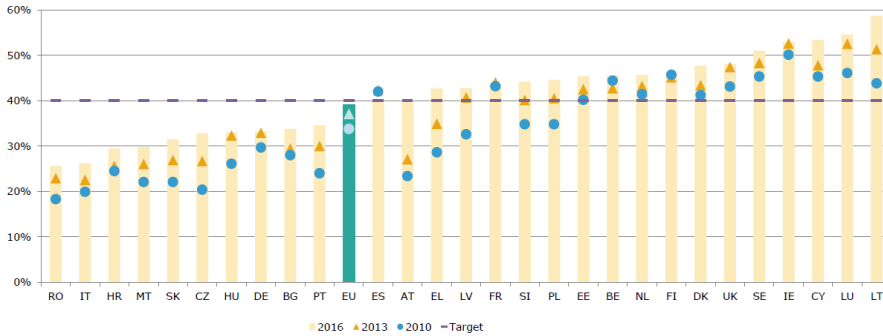
Table 1. At-risk-of-poverty rate and social exclusion in EU by educational attainment level, 2015



Source: Eurostat, EU SILC. Online data code: [ilc_peps04]. Last update: 19-07-2018

Studies show that a low level of education will increase the risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Table 2. Tertiary educational attainment 2010, 2013, 2016 and EU target level



Source: Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey, online data code [edat_lfse_03]

The success of the European project depends on the EU's capacity to build a better future for European citizens. This is a key message of the Commission's *White Paper on the Future of Europe*. Europe's higher education systems face challenges, including: a mismatch between the skills Europe needs and the skills it has; persistent and growing social divisions; an innovation gap; the different components of higher education systems do not always work together seamlessly (European Commission, 2017).

The students' low level of interest in connecting to the academic world and learning is a widespread phenomenon in Romania, which can be found in all universities, as well in the pre-university system, which requires to pay attention to the causes of the spreading of this phenomenon and to take measures in order to anticipate and eliminate the negative effects that may originate from it. The principle of prevention is taken into account, so that the negative consequences of the de-professionalization in the social-economic environment could be diminished to the minimum level by avoiding and decreasing the school dropout. Therefore, it is essential that we identify beforehand the causes of the manifestation of the above-mentioned phenomenon and we establish strong cooperation relations with the students, so that they know and understand the possible effects that this phenomenon might trigger on that person itself, in the medium-term and long-term.

Our work circumscribes to the theoretical and practical efforts made at an international level for the rapid and efficient integration of 1st year students in the academic environment. We bear in mind the essence of the Bologna process, the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, which impose the raise in the ratio of higher education graduates within the adult

population (up to 40%). We also bear in mind the shaping of some educational endeavours focused on skills training (Guy Le Boterf, 2015; Gérard Scallon, 2007; Philippe Perrenoud, 2002 in Dolz, J., & Ollagnier, E. (Éds.); Marianne Poumay, Jacques Tardif & François Georges, 2017; Philippe Jonnaert, Moussadak Ettayebi & Rosette Defise, 2009), on the students' real needs and interests, on promoting some active-participatory teaching strategies (Nicole Rege Colet, Marc Romainville, sous la direction, 2006; Eric Mazur, 1997; Ariane Dumont, Denis Berthiaume, sous la direction, 2016), as well as on the emphasis on formative assessment (continuous) (Gérard Scallon, 2007).

1. Material and method

1.1. Research-action context

The University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Iași has won a ROSE project financed by the World Bank (Chances of Success for the first-year agronomist students – acronym AGROSTUDIS) (2017-2020), whose general aim is to support first year students from the Faculty of Agriculture of The University Of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Iași, who are exposed to the risk of dropout, belonging mainly to the disadvantaged groups. Our research-action program was implemented in USAMV since in November 2017 and will end in July 2020.

1.2. Research-action objectives related to the project quality indicators

The specific aims are the following: SA 1: The motivation and the access of the agronomist students to a high-quality education, which may diminish the dropout in the first year of the bachelor studies; SA 2. The increase of passing rates at the end of the first year of high education; SA 3: The development of interacting ability between the professor and the students, the increase of self-esteem and self-confidence, the development of a positive attitude towards the attributions and roles related to their student life; SA 4. Modern endowment for the places where the activities with the target group take place; SA 5. The development of the cultural and volunteering perspectives and the improvement of the university results through the involvement in pleasant and habit-forming spare time activities.

1.3. Main hypothesis

According to the main hypothesis of the project, if the students from the target group will benefit from individualized and social-emotional

counseling activities, as well as a program of empowerment with efficient learning techniques and modern communication methods in a specially designed learning environment, their integration in the student activity will be faster and there will be greater chances to prevent university dropout.

1.4. Participants

The target group was formed in the university year 2017-2018 out of a number of 150 students, who met the eligibility criteria of the project.

1.5. Methodology and procedure

The project has two main stages: identification of the target population according to the required criteria of eligibility; elaboration and implementation of an integrated psychological, social and educational program.

During the first stage, the target population was identified based on socio-economic status data obtained through the students' enrollment documents provided by the University under the confidentiality agreements. Also, a survey based on an open-ended questionnaire and personality tests were administered to the selected student's pool in order to identify the main drop-out risks for each individual participant.

Based on the first stage results the project educationist's team elaborated the intervention counseling and educational program, aiming the personal development, effective learning, transversal skills, entrepreneurial skills, and communication technics. This program also included study visits specially organized to meet the project objectives.

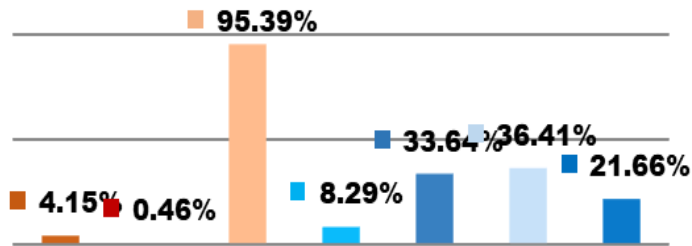
2. Results and discussion

2.1. Survey results

The data collected through applying and processing surveys and following the insertion into the database revealed the following aspects related to the issues typical of the social survey carried out among the students from the target group.

Almost all the students from the benchmark group of the survey are between 18 and 24 years old (97.7%) and only 2,3% are over 25. Most of them come from the countryside (67.74%), which is linked to the profile and the specialization they chose, and which may have a positive significance in the context in which the students will be guided and led to the valorization of the results related to the completion of the bachelor studies in their origin environment.

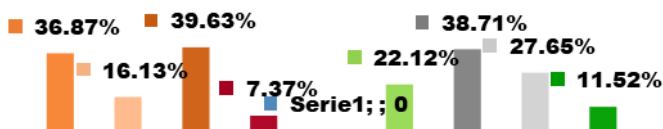
Table 3. The last educational level completed and the school record at the Baccalaureate (the average mark)



As for the studies completed by the students from the benchmark group of the social survey, most of the first year students are high school graduates (more than 95%). However, 4.15% of the students are getting their second major, that is they have already completed a bachelor's degree. Almost 2/3 of them had Baccalaureate average marks which ranged between 7 and 9 (33.64% got average marks ranging from 8 to 9, and 36.41% average marks ranging from 7 to 8), which shows a superior capacity of learning and a qualitative consistency of the knowledge gained in high school. The percentage of the students who had average marks above 9 is rather small (8.29%), but about a quarter of the students from the benchmark group (21.66%) obtained marks ranging from 6 to 7.

Among the students from the benchmark group, those who come from the countryside (nearly 55,3%) are very vulnerable, alongside the students subjected to vulnerabilities due to the low income of their families (51,3%). The other categories of vulnerabilities are not strongly represented for the benchmark group: disabilities (0.47%), foster care background (0.13%). However, 6,0 % of the students are orphans, which implies that more attention should be paid to the emotional-affective manifestations that may occur as a consequence.

Table 4. The reasons for the university dropout and what could motivate them



Therefore, most of the undergraduates point out that the “wrong choice” is a reason for a possible university dropout, an aspect linked to the time factor from the past, that is the lack of vocational counseling and the lack of orientation towards the future in accordance with their personal and professional aims, the time factor in the future respectively, that is the lack of trust in the perspectives offered by the labor market in terms of the faculty and specialization chosen by the undergraduates. The financial problems are another category of reasons for a possible school dropout mentioned by the undergraduates, in a proportion of 36.87%. Accommodation is another problem mentioned by 16.13% of the undergraduates, and this aspect could be certainly remedied through the actions of the “Agrostudis” project, through the common effort of networking and building a trustworthy environment between the undergraduates and the cornerstones in the academic world.

Most of the student’s state that they need financial aid (38.71%) in order to give up the idea of dropout and to be motivated not to dropout their studies, an aspect which is linked to their insertion into the vulnerability group “belonging to low-income families”. More than a quarter of the students (27.65%) think that some qualification courses may be helpful, an aspect which can be coordinated by the faculty they are enrolled in. The percentage of students who think that counseling might help them is very significant (22.12%), an aspect which can be regarded by the reference faculty.

The experimental step be characterized as a research-action one, which was meant to help create educational situations favorable to the integration of the first-year students into the academic world. The investigation methods were the following: the social survey, personality tests, observation sheets filled in by the first-year students with integration problems, specialized and individualized counseling, the implementation of a social-emotional development programme, enabling them efficient learning techniques and modern communication methods.

2.2. Personality diagnosis

Making personality tests for the students enrolled in the Agriculture Faculty within the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Iași, who face the dropout risk in the first study year of bachelor cycle. It is important to know the psychological particular features of the first-year students and it is a necessary premise for their rapid and efficient integration into the university life in order to carry out individualized counseling programs. According to that, the students should be provided

with support in order to obtain positive results at exams and in their personal development, which should lead to their progress and lower the dropout at the end of the first study year of bachelor cycle.

Given the context of the application of these tests and the utility of the results (the initiation of student social-emotional development programmes, adjusted to the identified personality categories), respectively the necessity of the spatial and temporal adaptation of the content of the tests and the context of the project as well, we chose to apply the “Bontilă” and “Eysenck” personality tests.

G. Bontila personality test contains 76 questions, which the subject of the text has to answer “yes” or “no”, according to the way they match the subject’s personality. The test can be applied either collectively or individually. Only the “no” answers are significant and will be taken into account for the items: 14, 18, 24, 31, 32, 43, 45, 47, 48, 55, 57, 61, 62, and the “yes” answers for all the other items.

The number of significant items for each of the eight features according to table 5 is showed below:

Table 5. The number of significant items for each of the eight features

1. *Simple emotivity* (questions 1, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 19, 20, 21, 34, 40);
2. *Psychasthenic, obsessions* (questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 25, 26, 32, 33, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42,53);
3. *Schizoid tendencies* (questions 27, 35, 43, 44, 46, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 54);
4. *Paranoid tendencies* (questions 35, 43, 44, 45, 47, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65);
5. *Depressive and hypochondriacal tendencies* (questions 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 46);
6. *Impulsive and epileptoid tendencies* (questions 31, 37,65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70);
7. *Unstable tendencies (lpsychic lability)* (questions 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 35, 36);
8. *Antisocial tendencies (egocentrical tendencies)* (questions 20, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76).

After the analysis of the results, the proper number of significant items pointed out by the subject (Table 6) is written down for each feature. This number is multiplied by the coefficient established for each rubric, and the number obtained can range from 0 to 360. The bigger the number, the more significant the respective feature.

Table 6. The proper number of significant items pointed out by the subject

<i>Table 2</i> <i>Rubrics</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Total Coefficient</i>
<i>items</i>		
I	28	
II	24	
III	30	
IV	20	
V	26	
VI	36	
VII	52	
VII	52	

According to the experimental data (G. Bontilă, 1971), all the values that exceed 120 reveal pathological tendencies. In such cases, it is recommended to carry out a much thorough investigation, using projective techniques of studying personality, as well as a psychiatrically examination.

The preliminary results of the scores obtained after the psychological testing of personality

Show the following:

- The test has been applied to all the students who participated in the activity (100%);
- Most of the respondents have been females (about 65%);
- No pathological tendencies have been noticed which would imply more thorough examinations or other types of psychological evaluation of the students from the target group (100% of the participants fall into the normal personality tendencies);
- The personality tendency typology in accordance with the “Bontila” personality types reveal the following type of classification of the respondents within the 8 personality tendencies: simple emotivity-36%; psychasthenic-obsessivity-7,0%; schizoid tendencies -4,0%; depressive and hypochondriacal tendencies -17,0%; impulsive and epileptoid tendencies -19,0%; psychic lability-instability tendencies -3,0%; antisocial-egocentric tendencies 1-14,0%; paranoid tendencies -0,0%.

Given the fact that only one personality test could not clearly emphasize that a personality definitely falls into a certain personality tendency, the Eysenck personality test has also been applied on the same participants, with the purpose of enhancing the results obtained after the

basic psychological testing of personality. This way, we can confirm that a certain orientation and personality tendency falls into a personalized category, but with different manifestations, according to the theoretical and conceptual approach. For the Eysenck testing, we can notice predominant aspects similar to the Bontila personality test for: emotivity, impulsivity, neuroticism, emotional lability or instability. The majority of the youth (more than 60%) are the ambivert, with hypersensitivity tendencies and psychic balance difficulties.

3. Counseling and personal development program

Elaborating and implementing an individualized program of social and emotional development by the Counseling Center and Orienting in Career within the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Iași. In the category of young adults, the students represent a disadvantaged category having in view their social and emotional development since there is a predominant emphasis on their vocational training. The main mission of the Romanian school as a traditional institution is to educate the young generation and is “focused around the cognitive learning as an essential way to support and promote the individual development” (Ignat, 2011), by neglecting the social and emotional aspects.

The social and emotional development represents an integration of the theories upon the social intelligence (Lazarus, 1991; Rimé, 2009), upon the emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2001) and upon the development of the competencies applied in the education. By corroborating these three concepts, Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL, Great Britain) proposes a new concept: “the development of the social and emotional competences” that can be applied to students. “The emotional health is dramatically the positive predictive factor not only for the best academic achievements and school results but also for the productive experiences that bring along satisfactions, the integration on the labor market, the development of a career, a successful marriage, good relationships with the others and a satisfying physical condition. Our entire human being is “an avalanche of emotions.” (Călineci & Păcurari, 2009)

Volunteering has an important place and role in the logic of implementing the AGROSTUDIS project, insisting on the socio-emotional dimensions of agronomic students' training in the first year, outlining the prerequisites of their rapid integration into the university environment, leading to increasing the self-esteem, reducing the ration of abandonment at the end of the year I.

The counseling and personal development activity “*We train to interact efficiently in the academic world and to develop our self-esteem*” aims at the development of interacting ability among the students and between the students and the professors, the increase of self-esteem and self-confidence, the development of a positive attitude towards the academic world, in order to be aware of the importance of course attendance and laboratory/seminar attendance and of learning and to improve the school attendance and results.

In this context, personal development counseling techniques have been applied, adjusted to the working environment and to the problems typical for the target group students. The most efficient one proved to be the performant communication model (R. Ludlow) based on:

- *The selection of the priority aims*: the students have been advised to set their aims in the short, medium and long-term;
- *The selection of the interlocutory*: how exactly the communication takes place depending on the partner involved (colleagues, professors, older students, faculty management etc.)
- *The selection of the communication model*: direct, indirect, written, oral etc.
- *The activation of interest in the respective activity*: the explanation of the importance of being aware of the interest in efficient communication;
- *The transmission of the message*: making clear what it is not going to be transmitted; *feed-back-ul* and *evaluation*.

Moreover, it has been underlined the orientation towards taking responsibility, through conceptual clarifications regarding the assumed responsibility, as well as examples of comparative situations of assuming and non-assuming the responsibility. This was based on the principle that “to be a human means to be responsible!” (according to Antoine de Saint-Exupery).

Basically, the counselling activity has been materialized in the orientation towards supporting the students so that they could manage real-life situations, to be brave, to gain the motivation of becoming, to reveal the best of them, to valorize themselves, to discover themselves in their true personality, to pursue a proper professional career and fully aware, etc.

During the meetings and the debates with the target group, it has been noticed that the students want a quick independence on multiple levels : personal, financial, family and social levels. For these reasons, the focus has been on the approach – clarification – of several delicate problems such as absenteeism and school dropout, and the approached direction has been to assume the diplomacy and the communication skills on multiple directions, aspects supported by some inherent qualities such as: modesty,

deep thinking lacking superficiality, honesty, opening towards novelty and people, predictability and tenacity in solving the daily problems.

Some discussions with the target group have focused on the correlation of the psychic-emotional aspects with various forms of absenteeism manifestations: selective, the search of solitude, the desire of belonging to a group, defensive attitude towards the authority of a system, generalized absenteeism – this foreshadows school dropout. According to the debates that took place, the determining factors of school dropout are:

1. individual factors:

- subjective: specific phobias, the difficulty of waking up early, they can't handle the requirements of the curricula, the lack of attractiveness of the courses, reduced skills, laziness

- objective: psychiatric symptoms of anxiety /depression, the use of drugs and/or alcohol, educational underachievement, minimal social skills, frequent somatic problems, conflictual tendencies / frequent inadequate conduct

2. social factors:

- subjective: the family attitude (“school attendance is not essential”, “I didn't study either and I succeeded in life”, ”too much school is not good for you”), the parents were not successful students either, the pressure of their colleagues, undermining the professors' authority

- objective: low family income, limited communication with the academic world.

The psycho-pedagogical models and theories with impact on the optimization of success in learning and career have been used in the experimental approach. First of all, we consider the theory of successful intelligence and the diversification of learning experiences (the "triarchic theory" and the theory of successful intelligence, R. Sternberg, 2009). Of the immediate implications for effective learning, we mention a few: Intellectual performance training should be relevant to the individual, from the socio-cultural point of view; the educational program must be correlated with the actual challenges of the real-life environment of students; the program should provide explicit instructions for managing situations or new tasks in the life of the learners; the program must encourage learners to show the differences in learning styles and strategies; we think, we learn and we create in different ways, because how we learn (but also what we learn) is determined by our specific intelligence.

Also, the program addressed practical educational outcomes from WICS (Sternberg, 2009), Global Success model (Crețu, 2009) and Personal Talent model (Moon, 2003). WISC model assumes that the main

components of exceptional talent in all the activities domains are *Wisdom, Intelligence* and *Creativity Synthesized*. The Global Success model intends to set for a *global evaluation* through quantitative and qualitative methods of the individual talents of whatever level/dimension. Moreover, this model pleads for by differentiated educational approached taken into account inner and external factors of the personal success. The Personal Talent model has two main dimensions: *Personal Talent Knowledge* and *Personal Talent Skills*. It includes inspiring technics of self-knowledge, *personal decision-making skills* and *self-regulation*.

4. Educational intervention program

4.1. *Becoming familiar with efficient learning techniques*

Nowadays, we are witnessing the more and more frequent use of the term *skill* (Stanciu, 2018, p. 153-164). The skill-centered approach appeared in the field of vocational training as a reaction to the taylorist-type organization of work. The taylorism tried to increasingly rationalize the production process in order to ensure a higher efficiency.

Basically, the skilled individual is able to capitalize all the resources (internal and external) which he has got at a certain moment, in order to solve a certain problem, within a specific context, and the problem solving will be creative and innovative.

The Reference Framework sets out eight key competences for Lifelong Learning (Recommendation, 2006): 1) Communication in the mother tongue; 2) Communication in foreign languages; 3) Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; 4) Digital competence; 5) Learning to learn; 6) Social and civic competencies; 7) Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; and 8) Cultural awareness and expression. “Learning to learn” is the ability to pursue and persist in learning, to organize one's own learning, including through effective management of time and information, both individually and in groups (see Seghedin, Masari, 2012).

Report to UNESCO of the International Commission of Education for the Twenty-first Century (Delors, 1996) mentioned that the educational pillars in the new millennium will be related to learning how to know, learning how to be, learning how to act and learning how to live together with your fellow humans.

The first of these is learning to know. Given the rapid changes brought about by scientific progress and the new forms of economic and social activity, the emphasis has to be on combining a sufficiently broad general education with the possibility of in-depth work on a selected number of subjects. Such a general background provides, so to speak, the

passport to lifelong education, in so far as it gives people a taste – but also lays the foundations – for learning throughout life. (Delors, 1996, p. 21)

Some experts include the skill of “learning how to learn” among the seven key-skills of the individual of the 21th century, together with: to cooperate at a distance, digital communication, agility and adaptation, creativity and sense of innovation, a sense of initiative and action, efficient organization (Canonne, 2013).

At the completion of high school or of a superior education level, each graduate should be aware that his education and training never ends during his lifetime, each individual must take his life into his own hands and try to capitalize his own thinking and creativity potential, facing the increasing challenges of the contemporary world.

For the elaboration of the PPT handout (received by the students from the target group), as well as for the elaboration and printing the guide for familiarization with efficient learning techniques, the expert started from the theoretical documentation of the complex issues of efficient school learning in general and of student learning in particular. We started from the Piaget’s studies (which emphasized the stage development of individual’s intelligence and the principle of becoming familiar with the process of learning, which always starts from the concrete to the abstract, manipulating the concrete objects and phenomena) (Piaget, 1969); we added the social dimension of learning (Vâgotsky, 1971; Doise & Mugny, 1998), who argued the importance of learning in small groups, with direct effects on the speed-up of the development of the intellectual structures and on the increase of efficiency in the learning process);

The previous research (Stanciu et al., 2011) proved that the students in the first study year of bachelor degree lack the necessary learning skills. This is the conclusion of a research project coordinated by the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Iași (“Developing the metacognitive competence for the first year students. Teaching the students how to learn”) in partnership with “Ștefan cel Mare” University, Suceava and the University of Bacău, PNII, no. 92106/2008). This project showed that about 80% of the involved students lacked the logical learning skills, a fact that led to the mechanic learning the knowledge (Table 7).

Table 7. Statistical indicators regarding the students’ appreciation of the metacognitive competences

Nr.	Metacognitive competencies	Mean	Sum
1	material structure	3,25	1116
2	systematic notes at courses	3,33	1109

3	Following a learning system	3.09	1059
4	Planning and presenting a group project	3.08	1055
5	Planning and presenting an individual project	2.88	987
6	Planning a learning system	2.88	987
7	Assessing a learning system	2.87	983
8	Planning and presenting a scientific paper	2.38	818

Based on a rigorous theoretical documentation and data obtained through experimental research, the psycho-pedagogical team went on to develop the Handbook course support and to outline the teaching-learning strategies that will be used in carrying out the activities of acquiring the effective learning techniques, by the first-year students.

The thematic structure of the workshop was the following:

1. Planning the individual study;
2. Efficient learning methods and techniques;
3. Preparation for laboratory / seminar;
4. Development and presentation of a scientific paper;
5. Development and presentation of a project (individual / group);
6. Preparing for an exam;
7. Memorizing techniques;
8. Metacognitive competence in learning;
9. The learning style.

4.2. The development of the communication abilities

Developing the communication competences in the academic environment for the first-year students enrolled in the Agriculture Faculty. This action direction aims at developing the communication competencies (speaking and writing) for the first-year students, at solving situations that hinder a good communication, at learning techniques of efficient communication, at improving the communication of the educational partners involved in the training process of the agronomic students in the Agriculture Faculty within the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Iași. By communicating well, the students will be actively involved in the didactic activities as well as in the extra-curricular ones, which will increase their self-esteem.

The structures of the themes:

1. Exercises for participants' presentation
 - a) Presentation in pairs;
 - b) Presentation type blazon;

c) Using the brainstorming method, the participants will be asked to write on a sheet: What stresses me most at college? What could I do? Moment status (One word).

d) The mutual gift (imaginary)
e) The Trendy Emission Technique
2. Human communication - general presentation
3. Principles and common methods for communication on written and oral exams

4. Effective communication techniques (brainstorming, debate), Phillips, Synectic, panel debate, critical thinking techniques.

5. Improving the horizontal and vertical communication of the educational partners involved in the training of agronomic engineers at the Agricultural University of the USAMV Iasi.

Synthesis of the meeting / one or two students.

Outputs in three items: (all participants in writing)

a. What was the most important moment of the workshop
b. What do you think needs further clarification
c. Which techniques (of those exercised) you think you can use right away

Improving the communication (horizontally and vertically) of the educational partners involved in the training of agronomic engineers at the Agricultural University of Iasi is one of the milestones achieved by the objectives actually proposed for the first-year students.

This activity aimed to develop communication skills (oral and written) in the students of the first-year, starting with established theoretical models that are correlated with the adult learning activity. However, the focus was on practicing as many methods and techniques of assertive communication, effective in transmitting a message both to the co-elderly and to persons with another professional status. Another objective that was achieved through the workshop activities was to unlock inefficient communication or induced conflict situations. To this end, students have practiced active listening and feedback techniques, precisely to succeed in initiating effective dialogues in the proposed role games; thus, the participants had opportunities to develop their capacity to prevent shortcomings of the communication horizontally or vertically.

Through this sub-activity, the students of the first year, who are part of the target group, have carried out various concrete activities, both individually and in small groups, in order to practice until they achieve abilities and effective communication skills horizontally (with the other

students), but also vertically (with teachers, parents, non-teaching and auxiliary staff).

The guiding principle we had as trainers was to conduct interactive, secure communication activities just to capitalize on the level of effective practice of as many effective communication methods and techniques as possible.

At the level of the topic of methods for communication on written and oral examinations, there were established bridges between the Effective Learning workshops and these communication meetings, for example on the subject about written communication, there have been proposed academic ways of capitalizing on the SINELG technique correlating with the topic - Developing the skills of understanding a text and communication in specific language, of the logical-scientific ones.

The two groups of students were encouraged to attend the handout courses and the specialized bibliography, enriching their specialized vocabulary and thus exercising accessible communication skills/understanding skills, expressing skills and correct communication ones, all through discovery, interactive and supportive learning activities.

In view of the great set of effective communication techniques, a few were selected for practicing with the participating students: motivating communication techniques, feedback techniques, brainstorming in various ways, academic debate (pros and cons) followed by the Value Line, etc.; of the users group techniques, we only mention: Phillips 6-6, Synectic, Panel Debate and Fishbowl, techniques specific to critical thinking.

By effectively communicating, students engage more actively in didactic activities, as well as in extracurricular activities, they will know themselves better and will achieve an increase in self-esteem, which naturally leads to a decrease in university absenteeism, growth promotion and to reduce the dropout rate.

After interpreting the data collected through the questionnaire during the final workshop sessions, we can conclude that the students actively participated in the exercises of communication skills proposed by the counselors, even willing to be present at more than two workshops.

4.3. "The ABC of the entrepreneur education"

"The ABC of the entrepreneur education" which will be attended by all the first-year students enrolled in the Agriculture Faculty and by which they will have meetings with successful farmers (the best graduates of the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Iași) and with experts to access European funds. Between 21st and 25th May 2018, study

visits were conducted at agricultural experimental stations, agricultural farms and agricultural companies active in the ROSE project with 47 students from the Faculty of Agriculture in Iasi, year I. During these visits, the students also had meetings with successful farmers in Moldova. Visiting different farms and private companies, the students of the first year had the opportunity to know the realities of the Moldavian region, to listen to the advice of the farmers, some meetings being true motivational speeches.

Conclusions

Instead of other conclusions for our studies developed on these first year of the ROSE project, we want to present the PRIORITIES FOR ACTION (on a renewed EU agenda for higher education, Brussels, 30.5.2017)

1. Tackling future skills mismatches and promoting excellence in skills development;

a) Well-designed higher education programmes and curricula, centered on students' learning needs, are crucial for effective skills development.

b) Higher education should also allow students to acquire skills and experiences through activities based around real-world problems, include work-based learning and, where possible, offer international mobility.

c) Cooperation with employers can allow HEIs to increase the relevance of their curricula and deliver them effectively and increase opportunities for students to access high-quality work-based learning.

2. Building inclusive and connected higher education systems:

3. Ensuring higher education institutions contribute to innovation;

Many higher education institutions are developing new solutions to economic, social and environmental problems.

4. Supporting effective and efficient higher education systems.

Acknowledgments

ROSE project financed by the World Bank (*Chances of Success for the first-year agronomist students* – acronym AGROSTUDIS) (2017-2020).

It is important to note that the project guide has required the consent of the 1st year students from USAMV Iași, the Faculty of Agriculture, who were part of the target group.

References

- Bontilă, G. (1971). *Culegere de teste psihologice de nivel și aptitudini*. București : Centrul de documentare și publicații al Ministerului Muncii.
- Călineci, M.-C., Păcurari, O.-Ș., & Stoicescu, D. (2009). *Valori comportamentale și reducerea violenței în școală*. București: Educația 2000+.
- Colet, N.-R., Romainville, M. (sous la direction) (2006). *La pratique enseignante en mutation à l'université*. Bruxelles : De Boeck Université.
- Canonne, S. (30 septembre 2013). *Les 7 compétences clés du travail de demain*. Available at: <https://www.formation-professionnelle.fr/2013/09/30/7-competences-cles-travail-demain/>.
- Crețu, C. (2009). Global success and giftedness. In Balchin T., Hymer B., Matthews, J.D. (eds.). *The Routledge International Companion to Gifted Education. International Handbook*. UK, London: Routledge.
- Delors, J. (ed.) (1996). *Learning: the Treasure Within*. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission of Education for the Twenty-first Century, Paris: UNESCO Publishing.
- Doise, W. & Muguy, G. (1998). *Psihologie socială și dezvoltare cognitivă*. Iași: Ed. Polirom.
- Dumont, A. & Berthiaume, D. (sous la direction) (2016). *La pédagogie inversée. Enseigner autrement dans le supérieur par la classe inversée*. Bruxelles: De Boeck Université.
- European Commission (2010). Europe 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Brussels, 3.3.2010, COM (2010) 2020.
- European Commission (2017). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a renewed EU agenda for higher education. Brussels, 30.5.2017 COM(2017) 247 final).
- Goleman, D. (2001). *Inteligența emoțională*. București: Curtea veche.
- Ignat, A.-A. (2011). Strategii și programe de consiliere pentru dezvoltarea copiilor cu aptitudini înalte: Demersuri investigative. București: EDP.
- Jonnaert, Ph., Ettayebi, M. & Defise, R. (2009). *Curriculum et compétences. Un cadre opérationnel*. Bruxelles: De Boeck Université.
- Lazarus, R. (1991). *Emotion and adaptation*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Le Boterf, G. (2015, septième édition). *Construire les compétences individuelles et collectives*. Paris: Groupe Eyrolles.
- Mazur, E. (1997). *Peer instruction: a user's manual. Series in Educational* . New Jersey : Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River.
- Moon, S. M. (2003). Personal Talent. *Journal of High Ability Studies*, 14(1), 5-23.

- Perrenoud, Ph. (2002) In Dolz, J., & Ollagnier, E. (Éds.). *L'énigme de la compétence en éducation*. Bruxelles: De Boeck Université.
- Piaget, J. (1969). *Psihologia inteligentei*. București: Ed. Științifică.
- Poumay, M., Tardif, J. & Georges, F. (sous la direction de) (2017). *Organiser la formation à partir des compétences*. Bruxelles : De Boeck Université.
- Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competencies for lifelong learning, (2006/962/EC) Official Journal of the European Union, 394, 30.12.2006, <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reco/2006/962/oj> .
- Rimé, B. (2009). *Le partage social des émotions*. Paris : PUF.
- Roegiers, X. (2001). *Une pédagogie de l'intégration. Compétences et intégration des acquis dans l'enseignement*. De Boeck. Bruxelles.
- Rimé, B. (2009). *Le partage social des émotions*. Paris : PUF.
- Scallon, Ge. (2007). *L'évaluation des apprentissages dans une approche par compétences*. 2^e édition (2004), Bruxelles : Éditions de Boeck Université.
- Seghedin, E. , Masari, G.A., (2012). *Teoria și practica instruirii și a evaluării*, Editura Performantica, Iasi.
- Stanciu, M. (2018). *Teoria și metodologia curriculumului. Reconceptualizări*. Iași: Ed. "Ion Ionescu de la Brad".
- Stanciu, M., Dumitriu, C., Clipa, O., Ignat, A. A., Mătă, L. & Brezuleanu, C. O. (2011). Experimental Research on Metacognitive Competence Development at Freshmen Students from Three Romanian Universities. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 29(2011), 1914 – 1923.
- Sternberg, R. J. (2009). Wisdom, intelligence, creativity synthesised: a model of giftedness. In Balchin T., Hymer B., Matthews, J.D. (eds.), *The Routledge International Companion to Gifted Education. International Handbook*. UK, London: Routledge.
- Vâgotsky, L. S. (1971). *Opere psihologice alese*. vol I. București: EDP.