

## ROLEPLAYING GAMES IN THE CLASSROOM OBSERVATION CLASSES\*

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### ABSTRACT

*In this work the main goals of doing classroom observation classes are uncovered. Emphasis is put on the possibility of deepening the reflection practice in teaching with the help of doing didactic games with students even in the initial stage of their practice teaching. Student's attitude toward classroom observation classes and their adjustment to do more active classes are examined. A particular roleplaying game is suggested, which is successfully played by 3<sup>rd</sup>-year students.*

### INTRODUCTION

The preparation of teachers in Bulgaria suggests training, methodical preparation and practical classes in great detail. The mechanism of the practical-methodical in Shumen University is described in great details in [2]. The other concepts are described in [3, 4]. One of the key elements and the start of the practical realization of the students is classroom observation in the different subjects. It consists of observation of classes in real environment at school and watching video classes. These video classes contain classes at school taken by teacher or teacher trainees.

At this moment, most of the students, despite their serious age and completely mature vision, hardly realize what profession they should choose. Usually, after the first classes at school the students are in a shock and remarks like "I will never become a teacher!", "Students are awful!", "Things have changed since we were at school!" and others of this kind, are not rare. With a set purpose to overcome this primary shock and also to increase student's self-confidence during the methodical analysis of the classes, we got to the student's idea of giving

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them the chance to feel like real teachers in a more friendly environment – in front of their colleagues on the course. Traditionally, the 4<sup>th</sup>-year students course have the opportunity to take a class for the first time in front of a team of peers and a few days later they have to take the same class in front of an actual class at school. This option is good and it has been working for years, but the opportunity for 3<sup>rd</sup>-year students to have an actual idea of how they would feel in front of an audience is lost.

### MAIN GOALS IN CLASSROOM OBSERVATION CLASSES:

During the traditional classes, the main goals for the students are:

- To get familiar with ready models for taking a class.
- To get familiar with and to get used to the real environment at school.
- To learn to distinguish the basic didactic tasks in a class.
- To acquire skills to do the concept of a lesson.
- To develop their skills to comment a class, using the appropriate terminology and the corresponding style of expressing.

These goals are achieved and the classes usually provoke students to openly express their opinion on the moments of the class that made an impression to them, to offer their views of the presentation of given material, as well as pointing out some flaws. Some students feel uncomfortable about pointing flaws. A difficulty in the initial stage are the verbal constructions and the complete purposeful realization of a complete analysis of the class. As a rule, students pay attention to specific advantages and disadvantages in a class and they consider as a secondary task to define the main goals, methods and didactic goals. This problem, however, is solved in the course of time and not without the help of purposeful motivation and explaining from the teacher. A strong reflexiveness is observed in student's reasonings, but it is not realized and the benefit is not optimal. In this way, the students' fair activity for some key moments in the class and the need for more open discussion of the classes made us think that the classes can become more interesting if at the beginning of the classes in classroom observation the students have the opportunity to feel like real teachers with the help of a roleplaying game. They can also see the video-type of the roleplayig game with their participation after the dramatization.

### ROLEPLAYING GAME “I AM A TEACHER”

The essence of the game is consistently delivering a specific class, which is done by two students from the group in front of the rest of the students. The roles are distributed in following way:

- **1 student – “teacher” (two teachers in total for each of the two classes).** His or her job is to prepare a lesson using

standardized rules and to deliver it in front of the group. During the planning of the lesson, the student has complete freedom to express his visions and has the opportunity to consult with his/her teacher trainer, if needed.

- **2-3 students – “excellent students”.** Their job is to actively take part in the class by answering the questions that “the teacher” asks, solve and demonstrate the solutions of the tasks “the teacher” gives, etc.
- **1 student – “provocateur”.** His or her job depends on examined subject to ask tricky questions, to cause problems with the equipment (computers) and to require from the teacher to solve the problems.
- **2-3 students – “uninterested”.** Their job is to demonstrate that they are not interested by refusing to solve the given tasks, by talking with each other, by making noise, etc.
- **The rest of the students can improvise with the given roles or just do the given tasks.**

The class takes place in a room equipped with all the things necessary. Two classes with the same subject are delivered, so that the two different approaches can be compared. Also, students from other groups can be present at the event (pending on the desire of the trainee teachers). The classes are video filmed. The order is as follows:

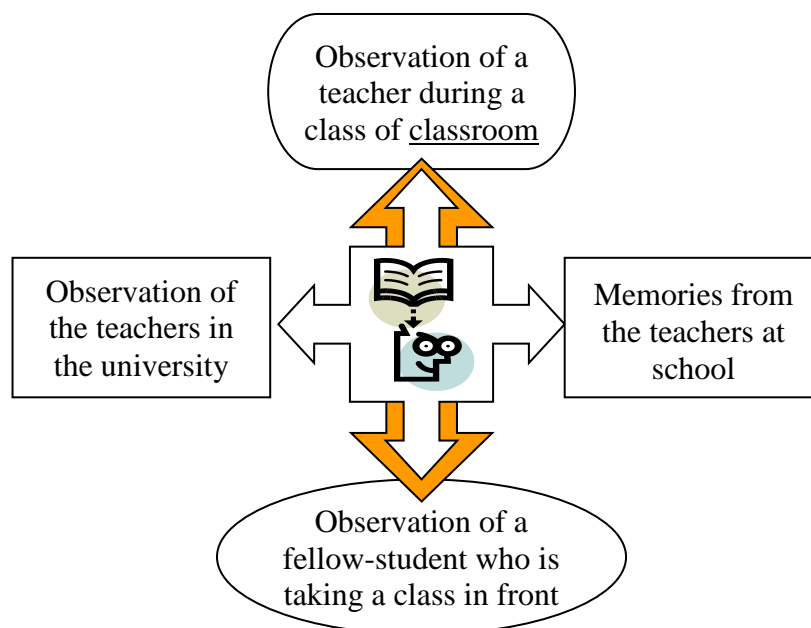
1. The first student delivered his/her lesson.
2. The second student delivered his/her lesson.
3. Comment about his/her own lesson by the first student.
4. Comment about his/her own lesson by the second student.
5. Brief comment by the teacher trainer.
6. Analysis of the delivered lessons by other students in the group.
7. Comparative analysis of both lessons – done by a student from the group or collectively under the guidance of the teacher trainer.
8. Summary of the reached goals in the class – done by the teacher trainer.
9. Observation of the video-lessons by the students.
10. Free comment about this class in an informal form.

As said before, this kind of games greatly activate the class of classroom observation and positively influence the students’ attitude toward the studied matter, students’ self-esteem is increased which allows them to accomplish all the analysis with better confidence, students are placed in conditions closer to the real environment but with considerably less stress and basically it makes it possible for the students to feel the most of the real teacher’s feelings because of the fact that they can in this informal environment talk with their colleague and notice his or her

feelings, understand the difficulties during the preparation of the class and understand exactly what their colleague didn't manage to do according to what he or she had planned.

### EMPATHY DURING THE CLASSROOM OBSERVATION CLASSES:

Feeling in emotional plan what the teachers feeling is an important moment in the education of future teachers. There is research in the area of reflexion in practical-lessons [1]. At this stage of education, students highly value teachers' work and the problems that they have to deal with. That is to say, 3<sup>rd</sup>-year students want to use to the max their opportunities to watch a real educational process, so they can be more confident when they take over the teacher's place at school. This observation and the process of empathy in education turn mainly into the form in Figure 1- Diagram of the main goals for observing the students in their classroom observation education.



**Figure 1 - Diagram of the main goals for observing the students in their classroom observation education**

The main observed group is the one in the video-lessons and the real lessons given by teachers and/or trainee teachers.

An additional observing group is formed by teachers who take different subjects at the university. At this point students, perceive them not only as teachers

with the help of who they have to get knowledge and acquire skills for the specific subject, but also as teaching models.

Another additional group is formed by teachers that have been teaching to the students in their school years. During classroom observation classes, students always remember about them and they compare their methods with the ones they observe and the ones that the university offers.

The last additional group is formed by the trainee teachers from the proposed roleplaying game. This group is new, but observations prove that it is better for students to observe and discuss a person they know because they can discuss the methodological and emotional problems that pop up in the process of education in an informal environment.

### **STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE CLASSROOM OBSERVATION CLASSES (SURVEY RESULTS)**

The main purpose of classroom observation classes according to students is to develop their skills to comment a lesson, using the right terminology and the relevant style of expressing, as well as adapting to the atmosphere at school. Half of the students think that the atmosphere is calm and they feel predisposed to it, while the other half think it is a rush and the main reason for that is simple – they are shy by nature. The opinion on the question “Should would-be teachers change their behavior according to the students when they take a class?” is also cut in half. Almost all students think that the proportion of teacher's and student's work vary depending on the specific of the lesson and the use of non-standard methods. The good thing is almost all students feel free to comment and discuss the lessons, including advantages and disadvantages of the examined lesson. Most of the students can successfully put themselves in the place of a teacher. Also, a high number of them would like to take part in the roleplaying game and most of them would also like to watch it after that.

### **CONCLUSION**

All students think that classroom observation classes are helpful, but few in number. It is also helpful for them to make their own concept of the lesson they are going to watch. The main reason for students' embarrassment is that they do not believe in themselves because they do not have enough experience in this area and also their students' behavior in class could also be a factor. The course in classroom observation is very helpful for the students' future teaching career, but the improvements that should take place in future are increasing the number of classroom observation classes and watching different kinds of lessons in different kinds of schools, which will make the course of classroom observation even more helpful for the students.

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