

Active Pedagogy or Active Methods? The Case of Active Learning at University

¿Pedagogía activa o métodos activos? El caso del aprendizaje activo en la universidad
Pedagogia ativa ou métodos ativos? O caso da aprendizagem ativa na universidade

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ABSTRACT. In this paper we discuss the active learning approach that has been spread in university classrooms in relation to its pedagogical predecessors, particularly the New European School movement and the American Progressive Education. This relationship allows us to understand the array of teaching-learning methods used today at university under a historical perspective, including differences with its predecessors. Particularly, we will discuss the difference between active methods and the more general concept of active pedagogy, which implies an educational philosophy more radically centered on the students. This enables us to outline possible evolution lines in the practice of active pedagogy at university.

Keywords:

pedagogy, active learning, history of education.

RESUMEN. En este artículo discutimos el enfoque del aprendizaje activo que se ha difundido en las aulas universitarias, relacionándolo con sus antecesores pedagógicos, específicamente el movimiento de la Escuela Nueva Europea y la Educación Progresista Norteamericana. Esta relación nos permite entender en una perspectiva histórica el abanico de métodos de enseñanza-aprendizaje que se están utilizando en la Universidad, incluyendo diferencias con sus antecesores. En particular, discutimos la diferencia entre métodos activos y la noción más general de pedagogía activa, la que implica una filosofía de la educación que se centra de manera más radical en el estudiante. Esto último nos permite esbozar posibles líneas de evolución de la práctica de la pedagogía activa en la Universidad.

Palabras claves:

pedagogía, aprendizaje activo, historia de la educación.

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RESUMO. Neste artigo discutimos a abordagem da aprendizagem ativa que foi difundida nas salas de aulas universitárias relacionando-a com seus antecessores pedagógicos, particularmente o movimento da Escola Nova Europeia e a Educação Progressiva Norte-americana. Esta relação nos permite entender em uma perspectiva histórica a gama de métodos de ensino-aprendizagem utilizados hoje em dia na Universidade, incluindo diferenças com seus antecessores. Em particular, discutimos a diferença entre métodos ativos e a noção mais geral de pedagogia ativa, o que implica em uma filosofia da educação que se concentra de maneira mais radical no estudante. Este último ponto nos permite esboçar possíveis linhas de evolução da prática da pedagogia ativa na Universidade.

Palavras-chaves:

pedagogia, aprendizagem ativa, história da educação.

The discussion of pedagogical methods used by faculty in university classrooms has taken an important role in the last few years. Particularly, the so-called active methods, i.e. those that promote students' activities in class, in contrast to a passive attitude, make up a sort of hegemonic discourse in almost all higher education institutions. This has been proven—as stated below in the text—in research in relation to the fact that students' learning benefits from the use of such methods, so every university instructor should consider this when preparing and carrying out their classes. However, strictly, the use of these methods is not a new idea in the educational setting. A long tradition tells of learning focused on the students' activity. From Rousseau to Dewey, going through pedagogues like Pestalozzi and Froebel, it has been insisted on the importance of the relationship between the student's activity and learning a certain topic. Universities currently seem to be heirs to this long pedagogical tradition although many of the methods promoted today are presented many times as innovations disconnected from this background.

This way, the main hypothesis of this paper is that university active learning precedents can be found in school movements that emphasized student-centeredness and the impact of “doing” in learning, and that a valuable experience in these movements which—in principle—may provide relevant elements to guide the development of active methods in the university setting can also be found.

The historical analysis of the origin of active pedagogy is then essential. With that aim, reference is given to part of the history of this idea, the New European School and Progressive Education in the United States, as well as some of the present-day epigones.

ON ACTIVE LEARNING AT UNIVERSITY

In relation to university pedagogy, Bécharde (2008) characterized the main references by intellectuals in this discipline through the analysis of the most cited bibliographical references in three representative journals. From these references, Bécharde identifies three research programs (in the sense of Lakatos): (a) the program focused on people development, (b) the one centered on the pedagogy of competencies, and (c) the once focused on the pedagogical change (Bécharde, 2008, p. 561). Mainly in the second and third settings, the problem of the teaching-learning processes and that of the innovative pedagogical models have been found. In relation to this, De Ketele (2010) emphasizes the predominance of the discussion on learning activities in the field publications. In other words, the analysis of the impact on the students' processes in different teaching-learning methodologies, where the use of the so-called active methods is included. This emphasis is in line with what has been called a learning-centered paradigm (Barr & Tagg, 1995), so the expression active learning is frequently found.

Considering the conceptual heterogeneity of this idea, the report by the Association for the Study of Higher Education (Bonwell & Eison, 1991) already pointed out that this term (active learning) has never been defined clearly in the literature. However, there would be certain characteristics associated with the use of strategies to promote it in class, namely: (a) students do more than just listen, (b) the transmission of information is less emphasized and more space is provided for the development of students' skills, (c) students get involved in a superior order thinking process (analysis, synthesis, evaluation, according to Bloom), (d) students get involved in activities (e.g. reading, writing or debates), and (e) emphasis is given to students' attitudes and values. Thus, from these characteristics, authors propose a working definition: active learning would be learning "which involves students in doing and in reflecting about what they are doing" (Bonwell & Eison, 1990, p. 19).

Some Background on Active Learning The development of the idea of active learning at school is a fascinating story. We must consider that this is not a homogeneous phenomenon (Ohayon, Ottavi & Savoye, 2004; Resweber, 1986), but rather a current with many trends, depending upon countries and pedagogues involved. Initially, there was the New European School movement (New School) and its version in the United States, Progressive Education. The relation between the American and European movement is a mutual influence process, as has been emphasized by some researchers (Luzuriaga, 1944; Oelkers, 2006).

Luzuriaga (1944) proposes the distinction of four main periods in the development of these ideas. The first is characterized by the creation of the first New Schools in Europe and America (1889-1900), where Abbotsholme School (1889) and Badales School (1893) in England and Dr. Lietz Field Country Boarding Schools (1898) in Germany, Des Roches School (1899) by E. Demolins in France and the Chicago University Elementary School (1896), created by John Dewey, are found. This period would be composed of concrete initiatives rather than theoretical speculations.

The second period corresponds to the theoretical formulation of new pedagogical ideas (1900-1907), for

example, through Dewey's writings in the United States and Georg Kerschensteiner's in Germany. The third period corresponds to the creation and publications of the first active methods (1907-1918): the Montessori method in Rome, Decroly in Brussels, Dalton Plan, Kilpatrick's project method, etc. The fourth period is characterized by the dissemination, consolidation and validation of ideas and methods of the new education (since 1918): the creation of the *Progressive Education Association* (1919) in the United States and of the *Ligue internationale pour l'éducation nouvelle* (1921) in Calais (Luzuriaga, 1944).

One could speak of the historical background of New Education based on some pedagogical movements developed during the Renaissance, particularly associated with the humanist movement. A more critical and free education opposes then the dogmatic and authoritarian Medieval education, which faces the transmission of theological and scholastic truths to philosophical and scientific research. The names of Vitorino da Feltre, Erasmus, Vives, Rabelais and Montaigne are examples of this awareness, which announced a new education.

For Adolphe Ferrière, transmitter of these ideas, what is essential in this pedagogical movement is the importance of spontaneity and the child's creative expression (Ferrière, 2004). For this it is necessary to consider all its dimensions: intellectual, affective and volitional: "Reason is not everything. Along with intelligence and intuition comes man, feeling; will, life under its multiple aspects" (Ferrière, 2004, p. 52). For example, in one of its articles in the *Illustrated Journal of Paris*, Ferrière, in a new schools report in Germany, Switzerland, England and France, points out the following main characteristics: (a) the importance of physical education, (b) the education of reason, and (c) moral education (Ferrière, 1911). This discourse on the comprehensive child development is not new: the history of pedagogical ideas shows pioneers such as Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel. In fact, Ferrière recognizes them as precedents but—this is important—classifies them as "intuitive geniuses" (Ferrière, 1911, p. 620; 2004, p.37). For him the difference between these pedagogues' contributions and that of New Education is the scientific foundation, where the ideas

of the child's psychological development provide a foundation to the activity:

"... Active school is above all, in general, the application of the laws of psychology to the education of children. Sociology, on its part, and on the other, genetic psychology, which studies the development of beings, are mother sciences of this applied science or art which is education" (Ferrière, 2004, p.231).

An important element of Ferrière's ideas is the difference he establishes between active school (i.e. new education) and the so-called active methods. To him, these are aimed at exam contents and not necessarily the child's development.

Calling active methods active school, a disastrous commitment with absurd school law demands, is a serious danger, a trap in which the principle of least effort makes numerous educators fall every day. Active methods are one more procedure among many others to make students internalize a program established beforehand (Ferrière, 2004, p. 49).

It seems that to Ferrière the active school core—education as the accompaniment of the child's creative evolution—should not be confused with the means, as is the case of active methods. Thus, Ferrière criticizes the Dalton Plan and highlights the potential perversion of the Decroly method (centers of interest) if motivation does not really come from children. However, this criticism should be taken carefully because some researchers consider the use of active methods as one of the safest criteria in the implementation of New Education ideas (Hameline, 2006).

After the Second World War, the International League for New Education congresses ended and the movement then disappeared. Nevertheless, their ideas remained in national movements in some countries like France and Belgium (Resweber, 1986, p. 119), the Freinet movement, and other specific schools (Resweber, 1986; Vasquez & Oury, 1967).

The other fundamental point of reference is the Progressive Education in the United States, particularly, John Dewey's work and his renowned concept learning

by doing. However, we should not believe that Dewey was the only one in his time to commit to a school reform movement (Deledalle, 1995), although his immense written production, his work at the University of Chicago's Experimental School—where he worked with his wife—and his innovative ideas make of him the quintessential representative of the progressive movement.

According to Dewey, the importance of the activity is explained by the main role given to experience in the educational theory. As stated by him, biology teaches us that "there where life exists, there is also activity," and this activity must be continuous and adjusted to the environment. This is an adaptive adjustment which cannot be completely passive (Dewey, 2003, p. 91). This biological observation allows Dewey to elaborate a theory of experience as something to "do" that acts on an organism's environment. On the other hand, changes produced by the environment act upon the same organism and its activities. The activity, based on the child's interests, is then viewed as central (Dewey, 1900, p. 38).

Another important character for the spread of the progressive movement was William Kilpatrick (1871-1965). More than a theorist, he was a character who applied Dewey's ideas in a remarkable manner, under the form of "project-based method," implementing a pedagogical device which emphasized the importance of the child's interest (Zilversmit, 1993). In fact, as Del Pozo Andrés (2009b) points out, the new teaching methods that included and harmonized the teaching elements like motivation and socialization were seen as one of the main characteristics of the New Education in the United States. Kilpatrick's project-based method integrated two concepts and applied them.

Even if the Progressive Education ideas were implemented heterogeneously according to pedagogues and their individual situations, Zilversmit (1993) identifies three core characteristics of the movement, in which we see Ferrière's ideas earlier discussed reflected.

(a) Progressives considered that a progressive school followed a child-centered curriculum and not a

subject-centered curriculum. Schools should take advantage of the child's natural will to learn.

- (b) Schools should develop the child in his/her integrity, that is to say, promote his/her emotional, physical and intellectual development. Behind this issue, there is a discussion on the ideal balance between these aspects, above all, in relation to the school program and the importance given to different study subjects.
- (c) Progressives considered that the child should have an active role in determining the contents of his/her learning. This issue evidently hides a wide-ranging discussion on the child's responsibility in relation to this.

After the Second World War, the educational discourse focused on the so-called fundamental learnings (reading, writing) and the ideas of the progressive movement were rejected to a certain extent. Russia's Sputnik success in 1957 showed American society the difference between their and the soviet's educational system (Herold, 1974). Looking for accountability, Dewey's pedagogical ideas received serious criticism (Zilversmith, 1993). In the 60s and 70s, the reemergence of some of these ideas can be observed in the works of Paul Goodman, Jonathan Kozol and Carl Rogers, as well as in the Free Schools movement (Miller, 2002). It can be appreciated how, despite changes in educational policies, it would seem that progressive movement ideas always remained in some circles as an important influence.

The development of group dynamics based on Kurt Lewin's works in the 40s is also relevant to understand Progressive Education. Carl Roger's influence, the father of humanist psychology, was also present since the 60s. Notions such as person-centered education, which promotes the individual's complete development, i.e. not only the intellectual but the affective aspect, reminds us of the Active School discourse. In the same way, the idea of the learner's activity and commitment is essential, understanding that the only learning that really influences the individual's behavior is the one that the individual discovers by himself and which he owns (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). We see a continuation of Dewey's ideas on activity through Roger's psychological view and the return to the educational

field: in fact, Rogers took classes with Kilpatrick in the Teachers College, from which Dewey's influence upon him can be inferred.

The Origin of the Discourse on Active Learning at University.

It is difficult to trace back the precise moment of the application of active methods in higher education. Most likely, there have always been exceptional university instructors who have used such pedagogical strategies in class, even intuitively and with no ex profeso approach to a pedagogical movement. However, if one intends to trace back the discourse precedents, one finds them first in the United States, very likely associated with the influence of the Progressive Education movement, particularly Dewey's writings. This way, it may be interesting to remark the presence of some experimental initiatives at university, even at the start of the 20th century, which have tried to use the ideas of Progressive Education (Reynolds, 1997; Townsend, Jackson, & Wiese, 1992).

Effectively, research on the pedagogical methods in higher education in the United States dates back to the 20s. For example, Frank Costin (1972) makes a research review on the issue about the efficacy of lectures in relation to other teaching methods, such as class discussion (the first research dates back to 1925), the use of student-centered projects (the first research dates back to 1950), and individual reading and self-instruction (the first research dates back to 1928).

However, these research studies do not let us infer a consistent superiority of active methods over lectures (Costin, 1972). McKeachie (1990) has also shown that research on higher education in relation to the use of more active methods dates back to the 20s in the case of the comparison between lectures and discussions. Likewise, he traces the influence of Lewin's group psychology and Roger's non-directive approach on active methods. With regards to groups, research is evidenced in the 30s and 40s (McKeachie, 1990). Thus, the question of the possibility of using active methods in higher education is not new and has been associated with—at least in the United States—the efficacy of teaching (McKeachie, Pintrich, Lin & Smith, 1987) and an empirical research methodology. The existence of this research generates then the favorable conditions for an official discourse on the use of these methods.

In the United States, it would seem that the generalized discourse on the importance of active methods dates back to the 80s and officially appears with the *Involvement in Learning report: Realizing the Potential of American Higher Education*, presented to the Secretary of Education. This document was requested from a multidisciplinary group of experts with the aim to establish excellence conditions for American higher education in order to improve it (National Institute of Education, 1984).

The second recommendation of the document establishes that university instructors “should use more active teaching methods and ask students to become more responsible for their own learning” (National Institute of Education, 1984, p. 33). In the same way, the third recommendation emphasizes the use of technological tools, particularly, computers. This document is important because it marks the educational policy in regards to the pedagogical methods promoted in higher education. In this same direction, we think the paper published by Chickering and Gamson in 1987 is fundamental. There they propose seven principles for the good practice of higher education, which—according to the authors—were based on research performed since the 30s. Among these principles, the clear importance of promoting students’ active learning (Chickering & Gamson, 1987) can be found.

In 1991, Bonwell and Eison published the report *Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom*, presented to the Association for the Study of Higher Education. In this document, the various active learning methods are discussed. The authors also emphasize the importance of the efforts made by university faculty in their implementation. Simultaneously, they point out the need to lay the scientific foundations through current quantitative and qualitative research studies (Bonwell & Eison, 1991, vii).

In Europe, the events of the students’ revolt in 1968 triggered the implementation of university models where the active methods acquired major importance. The cases of the universities of Roskilde and Aalborg in Denmark and of the University of Paris 8 - Vincennes in France are examples of spaces where teachers were able to experiment with a multidisciplinary curriculum

and with active methods. In the University of Paris 8, pedagogical devices tried to do away with lectures and the authoritarian pedagogical relation and “imagine a new type of dynamics where the instructor is not the only reference and students want to be in charge of their education” (Blondeau & Couëdel, 2002).

The creation of the European Higher Education Area has given rise to recommendations in regards to the use of active methods at university (Padilla & Gil, 2008). However, as shown by Del Pozo Andrés (2009a), the original documents of the Bologna Process (started in 1999) do not deal directly with the methods to be promoted in the teaching-learning processes. We had to wait until 2007 to have explicit references in relation to this point, and it seems that it is an issue that only a restricted group of European countries like Spain, Denmark, and Finland consider in their reports (Del Pozo Andrés, 2009a).

ACTIVE METHODS: WHAT IS DONE NOW AT UNIVERSITY

As mentioned before, the Active School movement considers psychology in the educational setting a very significant contribution. In the case of the university, active methods being used are frequently associated with constructivism, psychological and epistemological current of thought that has multiple variables (Huber, 2008), so it is worth referring to it briefly. Theorists like J. Piaget, J. Brunner, L. Vygotsky, J. Dewey and E. von Glaserfeld are considered mandatory points of reference (Cooperstein & Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004; Phillips, 1995). The main premise of this learning theory is that human knowledge is acquired through an active construction process (Adams, 2006; Fox, 2001). According to Piaget, for example, this idea relates to the notion of transformation:

In fact, in order to get to know the objects, the individual acts on them and, consequently, transforms them. Based on the sensory-motor actions, from the most elemental to the most refined intellectual operations which are still actions (gather, order, match, etc.), but internalized and executed in thought, knowledge is constantly linked to actions and operations, i.e. transformations (Piaget, 1968, p.282).

Remembering the importance given by Dewey to the child's action on its environment, "learning by doing" finds its important foundation in Piaget's genetic psychology (Piaget, 1969). This also has a historical component: Piaget was President of the International Education Office, whose founder—Édouard Claparède—was directly linked to New Education, and Adolphe Ferrière his deputy director for a period. In fact, Piaget apparently supported active methods throughout his entire work (Ducret, 2001). In Piaget's words: "No matter the bond among the main innovative pedagogues, children's psychology and its master pedagogical ideas, it is unquestionable that the great modern genetic psychology current is in the source of the new methods" (Piaget, 1969, p. 212). That Piaget is still considered a reference of constructivism applied to higher education and that this historical bond with the New School is not emphasized is truly surprising.

It is important to consider Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which establishes that the construction of knowledge is the product of interaction, interpretation and social understanding (Adams, 2006). Hence, students learn in a social environment (Huber, 2008), where student-teacher and student-student interactions are essential (Adams, 2006). This also applies to verify the students' understanding of certain material (Cooperstein & Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004). The teacher becomes the guarantor of a learning environment where experimentation and dialog are essential and arise around problems or issues which are discussed by students and teachers (Adams, 2006). This element provides a framework for the methods that propose the interaction between students, as for instance in the case of active methods that promote group work, like collaborative learning, team-based learning, etc.

Another important element to emphasize is the place occupied by experience in constructivist theories. David Kolb built his experiential learning theory, quite used in adult education, based on Dewey, Lewin and Piaget's ideas. For Kolb, learning is a process of knowledge creation based on experience (Kolb, 1984; Svinicki & Dixon, 1987).

Several research studies have been made to evaluate the impact of the use of active methodologies on the results of the teaching-learning process at universities (Costin, 1972). Evidently, the heterogeneity of the methods, the specificity of the discipline taught and the contexts in which these methods are applied make such evaluation a delicate issue. However, empirical evidence seems to show that the introduction of active methods in lectures would have a positive impact on the students' learning. Several research compilation works are available. For example, Bligh (1972) points out that evidence shows no remarkable difference between lectures and other methods in the transmission of information. However, this changes positively when students' thinking, change of attitude or development of behavior skills is sought. Additionally, in the engineering field, Prince's compilation (2004) concludes that the introduction of activities during lectures would have a positive impact on the students' learning.

The most recent study that highlights the importance of implementing active methods was published by Freeman et.al. (2014) in the sciences, engineering and mathematics field. The authors meta-analyzed 225 studies in that respect, concluding that the use of these methods increases performance in standardized tests on concept inventories and decreases the percentage of students who fail a course.

Important examples of such methods are collaborative/cooperative learning, the project-based method, team-based learning, peer instruction and flipped classroom. Because of space, we will not deal in depth with the description of these methods (it can be found in the references) and we will only give examples of the institutions which have applied them. In fact, there are other methods, but we believe the ones here give a good picture of the application of active pedagogy in the university classroom.

With regards to cooperative learning, its origin can be found in Kurt Lewin's ideas (Sherman, 1991; Sherman, Schmuck, & Schmuck, 2006). Here, a group work dynamics is established in the classroom based on a series of principles: (a) the positive interdependence among the group members, (b) individual accountability

in terms of group work, (c) the interaction among its members, (d) the importance of heterogeneity, and (e) the development of social skills (Sherman et al., 2006, p. 196). There is also the collaborative current, which emphasizes the social construction of knowledge (social constructivism), where individuals' interaction is fundamental (Barkley, Major & Cross, 2014). Despite epistemological differences, at practical level both words seem to be used as equivalents and their techniques have been flexible and adaptable to each situation in common.

Another method used is the so-called project-based method. In this case, the relationship with its equivalent in school settings, arising from Progressive Education, is direct because we can find its origin in an article published by Kilpatrick, Dewey's disciple, in 1918, in the Teachers College Record. In this document he considers the educational value of activities associated to the student's objectives (Kilpatrick, 1929). Nowadays, this method is still being used at elementary and secondary level (Larmer & Mergendoller, 2010). Its application in higher education seems to be associated with the student's protest movement in the 60s, particularly, in the case of Denmark, and specifically, at the universities of Roskilde (founded in 1972) and Aalborg (founded in 1974), created by a community of faculty quite influenced by Dewey and Piaget's ideas (Fayolle & Verzat, 2009). Today, project-based work continues to be a fundamental pedagogical method at this university. It is important to stress the significance of multidisciplinary and the selection of problems in accordance with the interests of the students. These problems frequently concern global issues, which allows a link between theory and practice (Fayolle & Verzat, 2009).

Similarly, problem-based learning (PBL) allows for the design and implementation of a course based on a situation-problem that works as a motivation and concentration source to arouse students' active participation. This is a way to conceive the curriculum around professional practice problems. PBL courses typically start by contextualizing a problem and not by studying the knowledge of different disciplines (Boud & Feletti, 1991). This method was initially applied in

the teaching of medicine, specifically implemented in the School of Health Sciences at the University of McMaster in Canada, in 1969 (Neville, 2009). The group of instructors who proposed this method were inspired by the experience developed in the School of Law at Harvard University in the 20s (Schmidt, 1993). Among other reputed universities because of their pedagogical devices based on this line, Maastricht and Twente in Netherlands, Roskilde and Aalborg in Denmark, Newcastle in Australia and Bremen in Germany (Du, De Graff, & Kolmos, 2009) stand out. However, nowadays there are initiatives inspired in these experiences all over the world and in different fields like medicine, engineering, social work, architecture, law, administration, to name a few.

Another method related to group work is team-based learning (TBL), implemented by Larry Michaelsen, professor of Administration, towards the end of the 70s at Oklahoma University. With this method, students are given the opportunity to practice in class, using basic concepts for the solution of problems (Michaelsen & Sweet, 2008). Even if comparable to cooperative learning, this technique has developed characteristics and a methodology that are unique to it, which makes it be considered a methodology in itself (Michaelsen & Fink, 2008). It has been used in various disciplines: administration, health, engineering, education, etc.

In terms of fostering students' activities, specifically responding to the problem of taking advantage of class time as an opportunity to apply knowledge and interaction more than the merely transfer knowledge, the flipped classroom is worth mentioning. In the context of higher education; Lage, Platt and Treglia's paper (2000) on the experience with this method in teaching economics seems to be one of the pioneers. In their words:

Flipping the classroom means that the situations that used to take place outside the classroom are now developed inside the classroom and vice versa... The use of the world wide web and multimedia computers allows students to see their classes in a computer lab or at home, leaving homework and application activities in group for class (Lage, Platt & Treglia, 2000, p.32).

The importance of class time destined to practical work also allows the instructor to give his/her students regular feedback on their work (Warter-Perez & Dong, 2012). Today, many university instructors record videos on the topics of their classes, make them available to their students on the Internet and guide their classes towards application activities that clarify the material they have seen. From the point of view of active pedagogy, this strategy allows involving the students (through a previous on-line activity) in the same way it fosters the generation of an interaction space among students and of the application of knowledge in class.

CONCLUSIONS

Although active methods are a long tradition, today they are seen as part of the response to the breadth and quality of university teaching, understood as the implementation of effective teaching-learning processes. Thus, these methods are part of a structure that tries to emphasize the importance of student-centered learning. This fact puts them in a place which is not exactly the same as that of their predecessors of the New School and the Progressive Movement.

In fact, as Ferrière pointed out, it is necessary to make a difference between the methods and the more ample idea of the New and Progressive Education. As examined, these two are about an educational philosophy that emphasize students' spontaneity and free work, their comprehensive development and—more clearly said in Dewey's progressivism—their development as future citizens in a democratic system. Piaget's words are relevant here, if we transpose them to higher education:

The New School makes reference to real activity, spontaneous work based on personal needs and interests [...] Because, following Dewey and Claparède, mandatory work is an antipsychological anomaly and all fruitful work supposes interest (Piaget, 1969, p.222). Is it possible to understand higher education with these characteristics? In relation to spontaneity and free activity, some of the methods that are being used, like problem or project based learning, provide a space

for students' own motivation. Maybe because of that its implementation is not always easy. Other methods seeking to improve students' results, without specially regarding spontaneity or interest, seem to have rather an instrumental function.

Avoiding Manicheanism, we can state that active methods play a practical role, where the final objective is for students to learn depending on what is established by a set of learning objectives. They are, in the end, techniques that allow university instructors—who usually lack pedagogical training—to develop classes where students increase their learning possibilities. It is evident that in higher education there is specific learning that students must develop and that this articulates and makes sense in relation to a given description of the professional or graduate they want to educate. The question is, however, if we consider this set of techniques an integral part of an educational philosophy that emphasizes spontaneity, motivation and creative freedom on the part of the student as aspects to be developed by university students.

In another area, and in relation to the student's integral education, the soft skills discourse today shows the importance of this idea. It seems that university teaching, being *ad portas* of the students' professional life, has an important responsibility in the education of integral citizens. However, it is not clear that the active methods used are always explicitly linked to these skills.

It is not enough to train good specialists in specific areas, but also to develop skills concerning emotional and interpersonal aspects, which are fundamental upon entering the labor world. From this point of view, we see that active methods in use today at university are an opportunity to develop such aspects. Elements as collaboration and social responsibility appear as characteristics that may be worked on by such methods, in as far as they are conceived as part of a broader educational philosophy. From this point of view, the implementation of these methods at university lead towards the education of citizens in a democratic world, as Dewey dreamed. In this sense, it is important to remember that the New School and

Progressive movement developed before and after the war, where the education of a new human being was seen as the hope of a good future for humanity.

In this sense, and coming back to the idea presented in the introduction of the valuable elements we can take from the experiences of an Active Pedagogy in school settings, we consider it important to think about—according to Ferrière's observation—the transition from active methods to active pedagogy. This latter implies—as described before—what we could call a radically student-centered educational philosophy. This seems to be focused on what we discussed earlier at the beginning of this section: including spontaneity and the students' own motivation and freedom in the teaching-learning process, including the importance of multidisciplinary and integrality of their development. From a certain point of view, this is about freeing universities from school-like education and thus undo the school-like approach it has suffered since its widespread access (Bourgin, 2011). In this way, students become more than just actors, they become co-constructors of their own learning, defining for example learning objectives together with their instructors and orienting their course of studies in line with their interests.

The same stress experienced by progressives at school level is now experienced by university instructors if it is possible to develop active pedagogy in this setting, providing a space in which students' creativity and spontaneity becomes manifest. It is in this future development that these methods can give rise to utopia, going from an instrument-centered logic to another which emphasizes the ideal, which is part of the chain of pedagogical ideas from the past.

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