

THE HANDBOOK OF EDUCATIONAL METHODOLOGY FOR STUDENTS MAJORING IN TEACHING AND FOR PRACTICING TEACHERS

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“In general the sign
of knowledge or ignorance is
the ability to teach.”
Aristotle

The sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic brought many changes to our lives, and the new situation demanded quick adaptability as a response. The regular face-to-face offline classroom training was abruptly moved into the online world, and teachers and students were suddenly faced with new teaching and learning methods. The digital world itself and its use as a means of education introduce new methodological challenges. Although the Strategy of Digital Education of Hungary was prepared in 2016, only slow and isolated changes have been seen in higher education, the reason being the lack of adequate competencies among tutors and the reality that the majority of institutes require more internal training (Papp-Danka, 2021, p. 15).

As such, Adrienn Papp-Danka's 2021 handbook is supplementary in many aspects to the spectrum of methodological literature in the field of education. The 91-page book, written during the pandemic, superbly reacts to the situation and at the same time offers methodological solutions which can be implemented in face-to-face and online educational settings. The well-edited publication contains 7 chapters and can easily be used by teacher-trainees and teachers. Although the text was published by the Hungarian Dance University along with other coursebooks and broadsheets, it can be used just the same by teachers in public and higher education and by other course leaders.

The appearance of the handbook is representative and attractive, with the colorful bubbles on the cover reflecting the promising and varied contents of the text in accordance with the title. The structure of the book follows the three periods of the teaching and learning process that are outlined in the Preface, and the methodological considerations are also discussed based on these three periods (Papp-Danka, 2021, pp. 10–11).

I would like to emphasize the role of the pictograms used in the book, which provide a clever visual aid to the reader; in this way, the text is in line with the expected educational trends of the 21st century. The figure standing by the ballet bar reflects the methods used in dance classes, while the one sitting at the computer highlights methods suitable in online, theoretical lessons. If neither sign is provided, the author's proposal is to apply the methods in both cases. Hyperlinks and downloadable supplementary materials extend the usefulness

of the book, giving the reader an opportunity to examine relevant topics while reading. The book serves its purpose, building a bridge for the user between the offline and online worlds.

In the first chapter, Papp-Danka describes the situation of educational methodology in higher education in Hungary as well as internationally, highlighting the ways that online tools offer possibilities for teaching and training outside the classroom. In the Preface, the author mentions the Online Educational Center in the Carpathian Basin (Kárpát-medencei Online Oktatási Centrum – K-MOOC) which has adapted to international trends. The Hungarian Dance University joined the initiative with two academic courses in the 2021/22 academic year. The chapter highlights teachers' roles during the pandemic, especially in terms of assisting students who were dislodged from the educational environment that they had become used to.

In the closing part of the chapter, the author fairly criticizes the methodology used by many trainers today. According to Papp-Danka, in higher education the focus is still on the content, and knowledge-sharing is attempted through old, outdated methods which do not support students' needs nor contribute to their development. Methodology has been consolidated rather than changed by the recently appearing e-learning systems. The author quotes the results of a survey regarding online education at the Hungarian Dance University, which clearly shows that despite attempts to use digital methods, only a certain circle of teachers has been able to seize the opportunity and use these new methods.

The second and longest part of the Preface puts forward methodological solutions, introducing 41 different exercises and possibilities which are split into three topics. Each exercise or methodological suggestion contains a short theoretical part using the above-mentioned pictograms, as well as a description and an example. These examples contribute to a practical understanding of the theoretical descriptions, and the author also names some websites which offer a variety of services (among others: making presentations, teller systems, supporting applications for creating infographics and tag clouds, blog engine service, TED and TeacherTube, study material sharing sites, online applications for making flash cards, electronic forms, sites for creating timelines and mind maps, etc.); in certain cases there are sample appendixes. (These appendixes can be found as independent units in chapter 7 and offer help concerning the following methodological solutions: description of study materials, study planning, self-assessment, peer- and teacher assessment, and teamwork assessment).

In my opinion, highlighting the practice of study planning among the methods involved in starting a course is very important. The process structure and timing of the students' tasks are determined by study-planning in the traditional teacher-student relationship. As digital education and home-learning became more and more important in higher education, planning the study process cannot only be regarded as the teacher's task. Papp-Danka emphasizes that this type of study-planning is a neglected area in Hungarian education, and thus new methods are needed such as inspiring students to work independently and fostering self-regulation among students which prepares them to work within the confines of the study systems which they create for themselves in the process of reaching their goals. The author mentions considerations for educational methodology in regard to students with special educational needs in one example, which enriches the overall value of the book (Papp-Danka 2021, p. 27). This example shows that the methods discussed in the text can be easily used with a wide range of students.

However, it is a pity that the author does not provide detailed examples of every methodological suggestion mentioned in the third chapter. In the part entitled "Detailed Demonstration of Selected Educational Methods", there are 11 examples which contain the keywords of

the topic, the pedagogical aims of the method, the competencies it aims to improve, the target learners, the dedicated description of the methodological concept and its demonstration through practical examples, the preparation time required by the teacher, and the application of the method, as well as downloadable support materials. Information regarding the preparations needed for the methods is well supported by the detailed and logically constructed development of certain parts of the subpoints.

Another criticism can be mentioned regarding a certain lack of consistency, as well as the lack of a dynamic construction of the detailed demonstrations of the methods. A coherent description and the mention of all the relevant subpoints connected to each example may have been a better solution.

It is the teacher's responsibility to not only correctly use the given methods but also to choose them appropriately. In regard to this, Papp-Danka provides guidance to the reader in the fourth chapter of her book. The author emphasizes the fact that methods should be considered as a means with which to help teachers work towards their goals in the teaching process. "When we select a method during the organization of teaching we always have to start from the aims, the peculiarities of the study material, and from the characteristics of the group of students." (Papp-Danka, 2021, p. 77)

The handbook concludes with a short summary of the text, followed by a list of the cited literature and the above-mentioned sample appendixes.

In conclusion, we can state that Adrienn Papp-Danka's methodological handbook is a transparent, professionally edited text dedicated to filling the gaps in educational methodology which the teachers of our digital era must respond to. Those involved in education in the 21st century should develop an awareness of the modern, up-to-date opportunities available to them. Hopefully the methodological solutions mentioned in Chapter 2 will be developed in future editions, as the present text lacks detailed information in that regard.

Papp-Danka, A. (2021). *Handbook of Educational Methodology. For students majoring in teaching and for practicing teachers*. Hungarian Dance University.

References

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