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The Development of Personality by Capitalizing Multiple Intelligences

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Abstract

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Based on pupil-centred education paradigm, this survey provides a diagnostic related to understanding the purpose of each action performed in the process of the competences training. The investigation highlights certain types of behaviour that are based on motivation, more than performance. Knowing the children's profile of intelligence allows the observation of how to develop the following eight skills: linguistic, logical - mathematical, corporal - kinaesthetic, the spatial, naturalistic, intra-personal and inter-personal (H. Gardner, 1983) offering new perspectives in the curricular development in primary and preschool learning, such as building an effective learning style.

Using the interactive and the pupil-centred educational strategies in the didactic activity in primary and preschool learning offers pupils and children the possibility of developing a style of learning by using some techniques of intellectual work specific for their age level. In terms of training and personality development of pupils, the question arises to what extent the teachers manage to form in pupils all the components related to their personality, respecting the uniqueness and dominant aspects of each specific personality in training.

Starting from these arguments, in the present study, we will try to analyse the way in which using some interactive and/or pupil-centred educational techniques can help to develop a learning style by means of using some techniques of mental work which are proper for the primary and preschool level in the context of knowing the children's profile of intelligence.

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1. Introduction

The contemporary society has imposed the research for new means to optimize the instructive-educational process for small age pupils. So, the primary and the preschool curriculums were conceived from a trans-disciplinary perspective, so as to help the child have a holistic view on what he was learning, and also to allow a full development of his personality. The integrated approach of the curriculum allows the accomplishment of these desiderata by means of differentiated teaching, and also by means of individual and differentiated learning methods. Still, the transition to the new curriculum for the primary school arises some problems both for the teachers, who have to work with even smaller children, but most of all to pupils who are supposed to learn from an earlier age some knowledge and skills, etc. that according to the old curriculum were supposed to be thought in the higher classes. All these influences, used in an inappropriate manner, may generate problems in the development of the personality of pre-schoolers and small pupils. By means of the present paper, we intend to diminish these discrepancies by promoting the pupil-centred educational strategies.

1.1 Theoretical Perspectives

According to the theory of multiple intelligences, Gardner (1983) claims that intelligence is not a born feature determined by the skills of pupils, but it may be developed in optimal conditions by means of education and environment. Starting from Gardner's observation (2006) that in the great majority of educational and cultural systems, a big importance is given only to the verbal and logical-mathematical intelligences, and all the others are being neglected, we desire to challenge both teachers and parents to work with the children so as to allow them the opportunity to learn using means that are in harmony with their unique way of thinking.

The theory of multiple intelligences is part of the pupil-centred education. It is known that at this age, motivation is more important than performance. The diversity of the activities, of the contexts, of the subjects studied through the theory of multiple intelligences allows a differentiation among pupils, of their tendencies and abilities to learn. An essential element in applying the theory of multiple intelligences during class is to know the intelligence profile of each pupil – especially their “strong” and “weak” points – which are essential for establishing the didactic strategies to use in order to differentiate and individualize each pupil. Children will lean towards those that best fit their dominant intelligence(s).

Learning and operating with methods and techniques of intellectual work would certainly lead to the diminish of the hiatus existent between the teachers and the pupils, to the improvement of the results of the learning activity, to the solidity and permanence of the things learnt, because “in our times, teaching others no longer means <<to terrorize>> them with mountains of knowledge or stressful exams at which they only reproduce by heart the sterile information out of which they will forget 70-90% in the first 3-5 days”. The process actually implies that the pupils will be thought how to learn, how to organize the information and the knowledge (in general), how to organize and develop them; in essence, it means to teach them to do something new, to learn and to develop the knowledge methods

and techniques and their intervention, to teach them in a concentrated and essential way the path of knowledge and of human progress” (Mureşan, 1990).

Therefore the teachers should know what a responsible teaching is and how to reach it, mainly because it represents one of the five dimensions of the pupil- centred process. So, taking responsibility for learning can be described as: 1) increasing the pupils’ responsibility towards their own education; 2) increasing the number of situations that will determine the pupils to assume this responsibility; 3) once they will assume this responsibility, the pupils will obtain the result they have always wanted (Blumberg, 2009).

1.2 The Hypothesis, Objectives and the Research Methodology

By introducing the pupil-oriented educational strategies aiming at forming and developing the techniques of intellectual work for an integrated teaching of the subject part of the primary school and preschool, better results in the theoretical and practical training will be obtained by diminishing the learning problems of the pupils.

Therefore, the research objectives are:

- identifying the learning problems of pupils;
- forming the skills of using the techniques needed in intellectual activities, and especially independent and permanent study;
- applying experimental procedures in a creative manner, in various contexts, so that to become part of the pupil’s learning style, then gradually get transferred into the learning activity at home;
- forming a system of intellectual working abilities corresponding to interactive methods and dominant intelligence, necessary in the future line of work, to be acquired as quickly as possible: the ability to pass quickly from one activity to another, the ability to follow a peer’s argumentation, the skills of active listening, to build skills needed for an active listening, to ask pertinent questions, to extract the gist from a content, to deliver a presentation in front of a peer group, to achieve feed-back, etc.

In the present paper, we have used an experiment intended to randomly choose a single sample called experimental, followed by the analysis on the activity products. The sample was made up of 300 pupils from the pre-university education system. These pupils were of 10-12 years old, having both similar age particularities and similar intellectual and relational abilities.

During the training program, in the didactic and in the extra-school activities, during counselling and personal development sessions, the respondents have researched their dominant intelligence, and have correlated the different types of intelligences to their own personality. We have worked on building up and on developing different types of intelligence, especially the intra- and inter-personal ones. From this point of view, the dominant training categories were made up of focus-groups concentrated on aspects like self-acceptance, interpersonal relationships, the identification and expression of emotions, problem solving, beliefs and abilities.

To identify and measure the development of emotional intelligence we used: 1) Emotional Intelligence Test developed by Daniel Goleman (2008). The test is adapted by Mihaela Rocco (2004, p.

189) for children and consists in the 10 questions that present some situations (scenarios) in which a person can be - filling out the test envisages, on the one hand, to ensure as far as possible the transposition the individual in the respective situation, and on the other hand, choosing one of answer variants of the four possible which represents some concrete ways for reacting to the indicated situations by questions; 2) The scale of social desirability for children (Douglas P. Crowne & David Marlowe, 1960) - a questionnaire that lists a number of experiences that the most children have at a given time. The questionnaire contains 33 statements representing attitudes and personality features. It provides a measure of the tendency to give desirable answers to produce a good impression, high scores indicating a great need for social approval.

It was achieved a lecture on the theme of emotional development of the child, presenting aspects of five important aspects: self-awareness, self-control, motivation, empathy, social skills.

To identify the others learning styles we used an adapted questionnaire after learning style preference questionnaire elaborated by Ricki Linksman (1999).

Among the pupil - centred educational strategies used in the experiment, we can name: the visual organizers, the quadrant method, the didactic game, Philips 6/6, "Let me have the last word", emphasis being laid on group and individual activities so as to lead the audience toward an efficient learning based on building up new learning skills (Dumitru, 2000). The added value to the pupils' performances obtained during the activities was highlighted by pupils' creativity to use the experimental strategies during different integrated activities, specific for the primary and preschool education.

In the formative stage, we have extended the sphere of activities that can contribute to building up the independent work skills, from those of a formal type, up to a non-formal and informal ones, succeeding thus to value the demands of the modern education. The educational strategies practiced during the didactic activities (the formative program) allow pupils to experiment new studying strategies and to assimilate/ understand the content, text or material to be studied, and also to build up and practice some abilities and skills specific for the learning activity and for knowledge transfer, active listening, asking questions, making others listen, fast learning, synthesizing the knowledge and the use of it during the elaboration/writing of some materials, etc. It also creates a positive learning experience for the different aspects specific for different learning styles. Therefore, we change the teaching- learning strategies (the accent being laid on the activities and the involvement of pupils), this being the independent variable of the experiment. By comparing the pupils' final results with the initial ones, we will see an improvement in their school performances by learning the new concepts in a higher degree with at least 30%, they will assimilate new techniques for intellectual work by building up and by practicing new skills and abilities specific to different learning styles, this being in effect the dependent component of the experiment.

The didactic activity, during which we have discovered the pupils' dominant intelligences that were later developed, was the educational tool with the role not only to prepare some common activities specific for them, but also to systematize some knowledge transferred earlier on during some activities. During classes, we thought it was useful to organize and to deploy didactic activities that were proving to be useful for all pupils and to appeal to their intellectual abilities. By developing the dominant intelligence in class, the pupils were prepared to also practice different activities at home, according to

their cognitive-intellectual abilities, activities that can be observed by their family members. For a better knowledge upon the children's intellectual abilities, the teachers have informed the parents of the pupils regarding the means of organizing and of leading some activities or even specific games to help develop multiple intelligences.

One of the teachers' preoccupation was to teach pupils to develop on their own their dominant intelligence, through different games, activities, objects and house hold materials, so as to have a constant active cognitive- intellectual ability.

The sample of students with multiple individual personality profiles, with different concerns, learning styles, different behaviours, emotions and different vulnerabilities, with different emotional states, oriented us to their emotional and social development. We assumed that this development will activate the students learning motivation, will succeed to capture positive attention respecting their preferences, capitalizing their interests, will seek to eliminate fear, inhibitions etc. The basic concern was to develop five key aspects in the personality structure of those who participated in the formative program: confidence, perseverance, organization, understanding and emotional resistance. The development of intra and interpersonal intelligence was achieved through diversification of intergroup and intragroup relations.

1.3 Results and discussions

After analysing the pupils' activity, it was found that most of pupils used at least one technique of visual organization in their presentations of the material on character description, respectively on the presentation of the Romania's life environments and forms of relief: 68% used the concept table, 57% used the Venn diagrams, and 82% used the quadrant method so as to create a synthetic vision of the information shown in the first part of their paper. On what concerns the essays, all pupils used at least 50% of the information systematized in the first part of the material which they have prepared during classes, managing to easily overcome the difficulties of putting together a portfolio.

As a result of getting the pupils responsible and of attributing them some precise tasks, we pin point the building-up of some new abilities, skills, and competences.

The development of the intellectual- cognitive abilities by means of using the theory related to multiple intelligences proves to have numerous informational- formational valences, also translatable in a large spectrum of objectives that become reachable. We have focused on the use of some active methods, the emphasis being laid on the activity used to develop the dominant multiple intelligence, on taking into account the age and the individual specificity, and their stimulus in their own dynamics. During the class activities, we have worked individually, frontally and in groups, thus treating the pupils differently during the activities.

Regarding the level of development of emotional intelligence in the final part of the research we recorded the increased results regarding the knowledge of self-awareness, of their own emotions, regarding the capacity to take decisions, self-control and anger and a good capacity for managing new situations. It noted a high level of acceptance of diversity, the networking, social adaptation. By applying the desirability scale we noticed that some of the subjects of the sample chose answers indicating a balanced behaviour regarding their social adaptation: behaviours that we consider desired

by others and the behaviours which contravene the wishes of others. The most students have achieved a high score, indicating that they are very careful in what they do as not to contradict with what they think the society wants, that they want at any price to please others, to be accepted and integrated social, they are interested by the group to which they belong, by respecting for social rules.

2. Conclusions

By discovering the dominant intelligences and by understanding them from a psychological perspective, the emphasis has fallen on the character features, perceived as means of manifestation of children's personality. In conclusion, by organizing and using of the methods and processes specific to involve pupils in activities meant to develop their dominant intelligences in more varied and entertaining ways, we have managed to increase the efficiency of the instructive- educational activities. The combined use of the methods has led on the one hand, to the building up of new skills of intellectual work (the systematization of the information, the construction of some algorithms needed to solve some tasks related to independent work), and on the other hand, to the development of new operational abilities (analysis, comparison, discrimination), and also to the integration of pupils in the school group and an increase in the degree of socializing by means of emotional and interpersonal intelligence.

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