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TEMPERAMENT AND STUDENT PREFERENCES ASSESSMENT
- A WALDORF PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This paper is an ascertain and observational research regarding the influence of the dominant temperamental type of students in the Waldorf educational alternative on their educational subjects preferences, the essential parts of a lesson and the class management strategies. A main feature of the Waldorf educational alternative is the differentiated teaching, taking into account the students' temperaments. Thus, the structure of the core course is structured in the way of meeting the needs of all students, including their temperaments. Temperament influences a person's behaviour, strength, will, activity, vitality, affection, emotion, echo, the resonance events, interest in certain foods, colours, music, sounds, so his / her character. In the present study we have taken into consideration the four classical temperamental types (melancholic, sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric) and we analysed the students' preferences only in the school context. We underlined the dominant temperamental types of the students engaged in the research and we assessed the pupils' opinion regarding the educational subjects / the moments of the lesson / core course. We also correlated all these data. The conclusions of the paper emphasize the importance of these psycho-pedagogical ways of working in the Waldorf educational alternative with the class of students, based on knowing the dominant temperament of the pupil, structuring the basic course so that it corresponds to the individual temperamental characteristics of all pupils.

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1. Introduction

The temperament of human beings has been a preoccupation for researchers since Antiquity. Its identification provided solutions for doctors to heal their patients. It is also used in education, especially in Waldorf pedagogy, for the purpose of differentiated education. Steiner's pedagogical model can also be a source of inspiration for other education systems to achieve personalized, differentiated student education.

2. Problem Statement

The temperament of human beings has been a preoccupation for researchers since Antiquity. Its identification provided solutions for doctors to heal their patients. It is also used in education, especially in Waldorf pedagogy, for the purpose of differentiated education. Steiner's pedagogical model can also be a source of inspiration for other education systems to achieve personalized, differentiated student education.

Temperament, the "nature" of man, has generated interest even since Antiquity in many different humanistic domains, such as: medicine, pedagogy, philosophy, theology, literature. Since then, many correlations have been attempted between temperament and: the physiological processes, the functioning of the central nervous system, the innate spiritual abilities and educability, the fruit of other life's endeavours, with physical appearance, especially with the shape of the head. It has been noted that the temperaments influence the behaviour of a person, the strength / will / activity, the vitality, the affections / the emotivity, the echo / resonance of the events on it, the interest for certain foods: sour, sweet, salty, bitter (Vasilescu, 2014), colours, music, "sounds: c, f, j - choleric; r, b, d, g - sanguine; m, n - phlegmatic; p, t - melancholic" (Vasilescu, 2014), fields of study, professions, and therefore its character.

The number of temperamental typologies varied over time also according to the vision of the learner, as follows:

- initially, four: melancholic, phlegmatic, sanguine and choleric, depending on the four "humours" that influenced them: black gall, lymph, blood, yellow gall.. These four temperamental types were later tinted by Pavlov (in the weak type, the strong-balanced-inert type, the strong-balanced-mobile type, the strong-unbalanced-excitabile type), Jung and Eysenck (extrovert-instable-choleric, phlegmatic, introverted-unstable-melancholic);

- then six: "the intelligent, zealous and graceful; the intelligent, the assiduous but soft; those perspicacious, eager to know, but ferocious and inflexible; the obedient and eager to learn, but heavy and obtuse; the obtuse, lazy and indolent; the fools, the distracted, mean by nature and the irrecoverable" (Comenius, 1970, p. 50).

- still six: "the baby with a big head; the baby with a small head; the terrestrial child; the cosmic child; the child rich in imagination; the child poor in imagination" (Glöckler, Langhammer, & Wiechert, 2006).

- then eight: passionate (emotional-active-secondary); choleric (emotional-active-primary); sentimental (emotional-non-active-secondary); nervous (emotional-non-active-primary); phlegmatic (non-emotional-active-secondary); Sanguine (non-emotional-active-primary); apathetic (non-emotional-nonactive-secondary); amorphous (non-emotional-non-active-primary). To primary people the events do not have echo, but to the secondary the echo is very strong even after a long time.

- then twelve: the Christian esotericism and E. Bach. At the latter, the temperamental typologies are named after the names of flowers, the twelve healers (Bach, 2011) that make up its homonymous floral therapeutic system.

3. Research Questions

The present paper aims to capture the relationship between temperaments and students' preferences for certain study subjects and the essential parts of a lesson or core course (in the Waldorf educational alternative).

Taking into account what we said above, here are some general questions from which we started this project:

How does temperament influence students' preference for study subjects in general?

How does temperament influence students' preferences for one or more of the basic course?

How do students influence the non-preferences?

What is the class structure from the temperamental point of view?

4. Purpose of the Study

Research hypothesis: It is assumed that students' temperament influences the degree of receptivity to certain subjects and stages of the basic course.

O1: Identification of temperamental types of students;

O2: Identification of pupils' preferences regarding the subjects and the main stages of the basic course;

O3: Making the correlation between pupils' temperamental types and the subjects, as well as the preferred stages of the main course.

5. Research Methods

The research was conducted in an alternative education facility, the Waldorf Theoretical High School, with the help of pupils in the fourth grade, in April 2018.

By interviewing the teacher, we identified the temperamental type of every student.

Students were asked to fill in a questionnaire on their preferences regarding the two mentioned issues.

6. Findings

For each respondent the teacher identified the temperamental type and wrote it on the questionnaire, so O1 was done. The analysis of the data provided by the teacher shows that the group of students is quite heterogeneous, as follows:

Table 01. The class structure from the temperamental point of view

Temperament	Girls	Boys	Total
Sanguine	8	2	10
Choleric	0	1	1
Phlegmatic	8	5	12
Melancholic	2	1	3
Total	18	9	27

At the 1st question regarding the preference for a certain school subject, the answers were as follows

Table 02 :

Table 02. The school subjects preferred by the students

Temperament	The school subject preferred	No. of choices	Importance
Sanguine	Maths	5	28%
	Sport	4	24%
	History	1	6%
	Religion	1	6%
	Practical skills	2	12%
	German	1	6%
	Romanian	2	12%
	Art (Painting)	1	6%
	Total	17	100%
Choleric	Sport	1	100%
	Total	1	100%
Phlegmatic	Practical skills	3	13%
	Sport	3	13%
	Art (Painting)	3	13%
	Native place	1	4,4%
	Maths	2	9%
	History	1	4,4%
	Romanian	7	30%
	Music	1	4,4%
	German	1	4,4%
	English	1	4,4%
	Total	23	100%
Melancholic	Sport	1	25%
	Art (Painting)	1	25%
	Native place	1	25%
	Maths	1	25%
Total	4	100%	

Table no. 02 shows that Maths is on top of the preferred school subject by the Sanguine students (28%), followed by Sport (24%). Starting from these choices it appears that Sanguine students like those school subjects that train their thinking and physical mobility, being attracted to action and novelty.

Phlegmatics prefer Romanian (30%), then Practical skills, Sports and Painting (13%). Considering these choices, we can conclude that Phlegmatics students are attracted to school subjects which require moderate participation (cognitive and volitional), such as Romanian and Painting, but also to those activities opposite to their temper, which involve physical activation: Sports and Practical skills.

Choleric student prefers Sports (100%), a choice that corresponds to his personality structure, he is always active, and Melancholics oscillate between Sports, Painting, Native place and Maths. At the time we conducted the present research, the pupils were studying their Native land, showing that information

and events had a stronger resonance on the Melancholic student, as the Dutch school representatives (Heymans & Wiersman) also observed. Another remarkable fact is that Melancholic students usually have results in several different school subjects, but not because they like that subject, but because they want, most of all, "to be kind" - as one of the students pointed out during our questionnaire.

To the question no. 2 regarding the preferred moments of the main course, the answers were as follows:

Table 03. The preferred moments of the main course

Temperament	Moments of the main course	No. of choices	Importance
Melancholic	C) Poetry of the heart	2	40%
	E) New content	1	20%
	F) Student activization	1	20%
	H) Poem ending an activity	1	20%
	Total	5	100%
Choleric	E) New content	1	100%
	Total	1	100%
Phlegmatic	A) Poem beginning an activity	2	7%
	B) Rhythmic Part	4	15%
	C) Poetry of the heart	4	15%
	E) New content	6	22%
	F) Student activization	4	15%
	G) Story time	2	7%
	H) Final	5	19%
	Total	27	100%
Sanguine	A) Poem beginning an activity	2	7%
	B) Rhythmic Part	3	10%
	C) Poetry of the heart	5	17%
	D) Self-assessment	1	3%
	E) New content	6	21%
	F) Student activization	6	21%
	G) Story time	2	7%
	H) Poem ending an activity	4	14%
	Total	29	100%

From Table 03 we can establish that Melancholic students prefer the moment called "heart poetry" (40%). This choice is in line with their psychic structure, an attraction for poetry, beauty, reverie, higher spheres.

Choleric is attracted by the new content (100%), a favorite moment for both Phlegmatic (22%) and Sanguine (21%). This choice corresponds to the personality structures of Choleric and Sanguine, and in the case of the Phlegmatic students, they are again interested in an activity opposite to their temper, being non-emotional and generally uninterested.

Some Phlegmatic prefer the ending (19%), which is in line with their lack of interest, usually they are just waiting to complete an imposed activity.

Some of the Sanguine prefer those moments when students are actively getting out of the class (21%) and heart poetry (17%) - again choices according to their nature.

It is also noted that only the Sanguine showed preference for self-assessment, but this in a very small proportion (one choice, with a weight of 3% of the total answers).

To question no. 3, regarding the moments which bore them most at school, the students responded as follows:

Table 04. Learning situations that are boring for the students

Temperament	Number & Types of answers
Melancholic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - when I have nothing to do - I don't know - at school everything is boring, but it's the only way we can learn
Choleric	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Religion
Sanguine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - when we read a lesson (*2) - nothing bores me (*2); everything is beautiful and interesting - I don't know - when teacher scolds the bad children and it takes away from our class - when we talk without writing - when my colleagues do not want to sit still during the class and the teacher doesn't scold them - when we are told sometimes to recite poetries
Phlegmatic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - nothing (*3); on the contrary, I am enthusiastic - when the teacher speaks all the time - Music - when the teacher scolds the disobedient children and it takes away from our class - German - that we talk too much; I want to act - when a child does not know and all the class is waiting for his answer - when we repeat the same thing all over again - when we learn the notes, because I already know them - when we have to tell children, who are not paying attention that they have to stop talking or others - when the teacher loses time with those who do not listen - when the teacher has a chat with the kids who bother the classes

It is found that Sanguine and Phlegmatic are most bored by the moment when the instructive-educational approach is disturbed by the undesirable behaviors of classmates. This fact cannot be necessarily corroborated with the temperament, but rather with the chronologically evolutionary level, the students in the fourth grade being in the incipient stage of the performance. This is also reflected in the answer given by a phlegmatic student who is bothered by the fact that some students do not learn and do not know the answer to a question.

The Sanguinis are bored by reading or not - which corresponds to their active temperament.

The Phlegmatic is not bored by anything or it bothers them the others chit-chat - either of colleagues or of the teacher. These preferences and non-preferences are in contrast to their temperamental structure, showing that at this age, the development of the ideal Ego begins, that means that the student begin to show preference and work on the development of those personality traits specific to the opposite temper (Sanguine and Choleric) which "he does not have but which he desires to have" (Iordache & Barbu, 2017, p. 67).

As previously noted, Melancholic shows interest in almost all school subjects, whether nothing bores him or he does not know whether he is bored by something.

7. Conclusion

In this paper, we aimed to capture the correlation between pupils' temperaments and their preferences for certain school subjects or moments of the lesson / basic course. The temperamental types of students were identified, O1 being thus achieved. We also identified, using the questionnaire applied to pupils, the subjects and moments of their preferred core course, as well as the learning situations that bored them, O2 being thus achieved.

From the correlation of the pupils' answers with their temperament, it was revealed that the students' preferences for certain subjects or moments of the basic course are influenced by their temperament, O3 being thus achieved.

Melancholic students show preference for all school subjects in equal proportions, and there is none of them which they could dislike. The preferred moment of the course is "poetry of the heart," and the other three temperaments preferred the teaching of new content.

Phlegmatic prefer both moderate cognitive and volitional activities, such as Romanian and Painting, but also those that develop abilities specific to the opposite temper (Sports, Practical skills). The Phlegmatic are bored mostly by the disturbance of the course by other colleagues.

Choleric like Sports and the Sanguine Mathematics and Sports.

The Sanguine are bored, as the Phlegmatics, by the disturbance of the course by other colleagues, but also by reading a lesson.

In the instructive process of the Waldorf educational alternative, students' temperament has great importance and it is the key of differentiated teaching in this alternative. Thus, both the general personality characteristics specific to a temperament and the particular ones specific to the student are being turned into account.

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