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The New Learning Environment Meets the General Needs of the Students Teacher for a Day

Alina Teurculet[a]*****, PhD Candidate, University of Bucharest, Bd. M. Kogalniceanu 36 – 46, 500170, Bucharest, Romania

Abstract

The issues of teaching styles represent a constant concern of contemporary pedagogy. The analysis of the determinants of educational styles is aimed at identifying effective style in relation to each educational context according to Fiedler's contingency model. There are some opinions that effective educational style could be described by the interaction of two dimensions: control or independence and emotionality (Potolea et al., 1989; Iucu, 2008). A previous study conducted in 1939 by Lippitt showed that in the democratic classroom atmosphere, the teacher, as a formal leader, helped to make a central position in the group stratification accessible to all members, and a friendly spirit of work recognition existed between the members - items on co-operation, praise, constructive suggestions, and objective criticism. A dominating type of verbal expression appeared to be the only path left open by which members could strive toward status in autocratic classroom atmosphere (Lippitt, 1939). Previous studies highlighted the impact of culture within they occur on communication skills (Serbanescu, 2009). In these circumstances, we intend to conduct a study, at the level of primary education classes, in order to investigate the relation between the leadership style of the teacher and students achievements. Previous studies recorded better results regarding intrinsic motivation and group cohesion (Soar, 1972). We also intend to investigate the influence of democratic atmosphere on school results in terms of students' emotional potential.

Keywords: Democratic classroom atmosphere; Formal and informal structures in group dynamics; Group cohesion; Results in terms of students' emotional potential;

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* ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: **Alina Teurculet**, PhD Candidate, University of Bucharest, Bd. M. Kogalniceanu 36 – 46, 500170, Bucharest, Romania

 E-mail address: alina_turculet@yahoo.com / Tel.: +40734944761

1. Introduction

Postmodern educational paradigm involves rebuilding educational relationships in classroom. Student-centred learning requires a reconfiguration of hierarchies and roles, and a rethinking of learning environment. Interactions in the learning environment represent the path to effectiveness, and investment in building educational relationships ensures reliable outcomes (Aked, Steuer, Lawlor, Spratt, 2009; Goleman, 2004; Gardner & Hatch, 1989). Current needs of children should be respected and teaching strategies according to postmodern child psychology should be developed. This would allow students' responsibility and their transformation into experienced actors of own learning process, respecting their individual development schedules (Brazelton, 1992; Gardner, 2005; Dewey, 1977; Hamburg, 1992). The key concept of the 21st century pedagogy is cooperation resulting from emotional abilities in interaction with relational skills. Key elements for the development of emotional intelligence also arise from interaction. The seven key elements of emotional intelligence are: reliability – child' trust that will succeed in what he is trying; curiosity - the idea of discovering new things is positive and leads to pleasure; intent - the desire to have some impact and act with perseverance; self-control - the ability to regulate and coordinate their actions; reporting - ability to engage with others; communication – the capacity is related to the sense of trust in others and to be involved in the various activities with others; cooperation – the ability to balance their own needs with those of others (Brazelton, 1992). Spontaneous pleasure, effectiveness, concentration, absence of emotional parasites or constraints generates a strong sense of motivation, and cortical effectiveness generates optimal performance (Goleman, 2001). Some authors believe certain acquisitions can be more effective if the child has his initial passion channelled, becoming a primary source of progress (Gardner, 2012). Positive emotions guide effective effort (Goleman, 2001). Other authors emphasize that the traditional skills of programme categories school as distinct from the social and emotional, but that this dichotomy is obsolete, since the corresponding neural scaffolding active control is based both on academic skills, and those socio-emotional (Goleman, 2014). The school year 2012-2013 marked the shift in the structure and organization of school education in Romania. Introducing preparatory class brings together an entire curricular cycle in the compulsory education. Personality development is a study discipline and recognizes the importance of emotional literacy in compliance with general human development schedule. Personality development aims, in addition to emotional or relational skills training such as self-knowledge or empathy, and stimulating curiosity, channelling age-specific interests, empowerment and cooperation, respect for individuality and promoting interaction for shaping the pleasure of learning and motivation, as a prerequisite for future self-regulated learning. Educational relation determines stratification, social organization of the class being a source of inequality. Derived from the psychological need of knowledge, inter-relationships are central image of partners on themselves and about each other. Inter-relationships comply models of interpersonal communication in the classroom, particular aspects of negotiation in the process of interpersonal communication and nonverbal aspects of communication (Iucu, 2008). The two types of structures, formal structure, with its official and binding character and informal structure, with its unofficial and non-binding character, are closely linked. Generally, informal structures appear upon formal structure, either to supplement or to flex them. Various experimental studies have revealed the dependence of group cohesion on the presence or absence of the type of verbal interaction between group members (Bolvard, 1956), the structure of the group (Kelley, 1951), the type of relationship that exists between group members and cooperation or competition, cooperation based groups being more cohesive than those based on competition (Deutsch, 1960).

2. Objectives of the study

- Taking into account that in the democratic classroom atmosphere, the teacher, as a formal leader, helped to make a central position in the group stratification accessible to all members, and a friendly spirit of work recognition existed between the members (items on co-operation, praise, constructive suggestions, and objective criticism, the investigating

procedures have in view the following objectives): to identify the emotional development values for children; to establish the half-year averages for students and to analyse verbal interactions of students.

3. Methodology

3.1. Procedure

The research was carried out during the first school semester of school year 2014 – 2015, and it was oriented towards the following main direction: the identification of children's emotional development levels; the identification of students' half-yearly averages and monitoring students' verbal interactions. Data were collected using an emotional intelligence test for children, analysis of school documents, qualitative observation, and case study. The survey based on questionnaires was conducted using self-administered questionnaire technique. Data were collected using tests adapted on Romanian population.

3.2. Participants

The target population of our investigation consisted in the 21 students enrolled in one of the second grade from a school of Brasov. The subjects of our investigation represent a naturally constituted group. Of the 21 students, 12 are boys and 9 girls (M=1,43; SD=0,50). They are aged between 8 and 10 years old: 16 children are 8 years old, 4 are 9 years old, and 1 is 10 years old (M=8,29; SD=0,56).

3.3. Measures

In order to identify the emotional intelligence values of children we used a questionnaire-based survey. The investigation tool used to determine the students' emotional intelligence values consists in a test to determine the emotional intelligence value (EI), the version for children. The test was adapted after a similar instrument of Mihaela Roco and presents ten scripts, each provided with four variants of answer (Roco, 2004), from which the subject picks one. The records were made at the end of the first semester, and each child had the opportunity to go over scripts that were at least resembling, if not identical, to those presented in the test. The test was developed according to the mixed model of emotional intelligence (Roco, 2004). In order to identify the half-yearly averages we analysed the school documents. To record verbal inteactions we used a case study.

4. Results

4.1 Results Regarding Emotional Intelligence Values

The emotional development values of students were identified using the data collected by administering an emotional intelligence test for children. The emotional development values recorded by investigated subjects are between 0 and 100. For a relevant interpretation of these results, it is useful to underline that the significance of the global sense of the emotional development values is the following: less than 100 points - under the average; 100 – 149 points – the average; 150 – 199 – over the average; 200 – exceptional. According to the interpretation of the global significance of the emotional development values, most emotional development values belonging to the investigated subjects are under the average or they are average (M=57,86; SD=28,87). The explanation for the significance of the global sense of emotional development values belongs to the author of the emotional intelligence test for children (Roco, 2004). Frequencies analysis of the scores obtained by the investigated subjects and the percentages recorded are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The emotional intelligence (EI) values for children

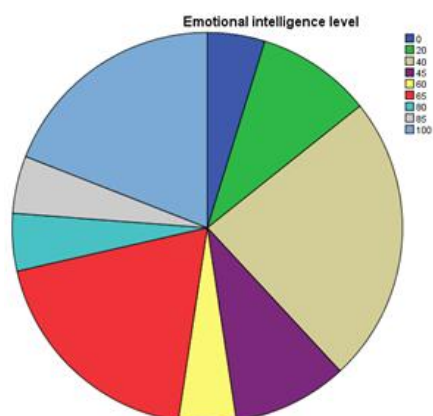| Score for EI	Frequency	Percent (%)
0	1	4.8
20	2	9.5
40	5	23.8
45	2	9.5
60	1	4.8
65	4	19
80	1	4.8
85	1	4.8
100	4	19

Figure 1. The emotional intelligence (EI) values for children

4.2. Results Regarding Half-yearly Averages

The half-yearly averages were identified by analysis of school documents. For a comprehensive approach, it is necessary to clarify Romanian grading system. In primary school education ratings are used to describe students' performance. They are four in number: *very good*, *good*, *sufficient*, *insufficient*. First three qualifiers describe performances that allow the promotion of the school year, while insufficient qualifier describes performance that may involve repeating the year in which they were obtained as a yearly average. The annual average is obtained by summing the two semester averages. Academic progression or regression is specified by the last semester averages. Our research was conducted during the first school semester therefore we used only the half-yearly averages. The ratings obtained by investigated students are *very good* – 10 students, *good* – 8 students, and *sufficient* – 3 students (M=1,67; SD=0,73). There are no statistical relation between EI values and averages for investigated subjects. The ratings obtained by the students investigated and the frequencies histograms are presented in Table 2 and Figure 2.

Teurculet, A. (2016). The new learning environment meets the general needs of the students. Teacher for a day. *New Trends and Issues Proceedings on Humanities and Social Sciences.* [Online]. 05, pp 17-23. Available from: www.prosoc.eu

Table 2. The half-yearly averages for students

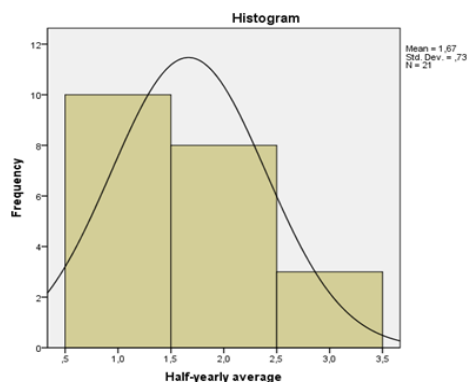| Half-yearly averages	Frequency	Percent (%)
Very good	10	47.6
Good	8	38.1
Sufficient	3	14.3

Figure 2. The half-yearly averages for students

4.3. Results Regarding Students' Verbal Interactions

The results regarding verbal interactions of students highlighted direct forms of addressing in relations with other children and adults. Children's natural tendency to approach is usually expressed in using informal means of addressing instead of official forms. Romanian language has a special way to show reduced social distance: the use of an intermediate between the familiar and the official address, for example using the position "MS" and the first name instead of the last one (Serbanescu, 2009). In current activities, primary school students addressed their teacher using her first name, as they use to address to their colleagues. They easily occupied a leading role, preparing themselves carefully for these activities. Students were deeply engaged in their work and they involved all their colleagues in grouped activities. They constructed their common identity, using almost all the time "we" instead of "I".

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Social adjustment of the individual is to update aspirations and skills, personal goals without breaking the functional links with collective reality or social field where the individual is inserted and which is the foundation of its existence. Factors influencing individual behaviour in groups are, on the one hand, the dynamic facts - objective factors in concrete social situations, social universe fragments with which the individual is interdependent, and on the other hand, dynamic values - subjective factors in self entering intimate human personality tendencies, resulting in the unique manner in which each individual perceives any moment according to his personal history, according by group values internalized by the individual (Zlate, 2004). Interactions between members and between members and constituents of group explained both members' behaviour and those of the group. The interactions take place after some specific rules of the group, including traditions, customs, values, codes. The trend towards conformism is one of the fundamental laws of groups because, as a group to survive, members must comply with its rules. The unification of various psychological manifestations of group causes a consensus among group members, generating similar attitudes and behaviours with positive consequences on individuals both separately and as a whole group. Consequences of

consensus are: social support attitudes and behaviours; broadening the scope of cognitive attitude; increased attraction for members who have the same attitude group solidarity. Interaction between members is one of the prerequisites of increasing group cohesion. Personal adherence is facilitated if the group has a good knowledge of all members between them, so the existence of direct relations between them; if there is a proper group climate based on cooperation and mutual trust; if the group supports the individual to become personally involved in an activity, to assimilate its rules and conduct; if the group has a satisfactory situation in the sociocultural environment. "Teacher for a day" was a project proposed to second grade students. During this session, students willingly decided to teach their colleagues certain topics, using handmade materials, working in teams, inviting guests, asking the others to prepare or bring materials, to complete evaluation forms. Having the leading role made children aware of the teaching responsibility, of the importance of group decision and group oriented solutions. The real outcomes of this process are not revealed by students' half-yearly averages, neither by their emotional development values. The real impact of this project consists in a shared identity of students involved in their learning process according to their belonging and esteem needs. The real impact of this project is students' requirement to repeat the "Teacher for a day" experience.

Acknowledgements

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