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THE INITIATIVE CHILD AS A PEDAGOGICAL PROBLEM

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Glossary:

Initiative

- the first step in any activity; undertaking; guiding role in pair work or group activities; ability for independent actions; enterprise;
- independent organization and participation of a given individual in social and other activities; choosing a strategy for actions and carrying it out under certain conditions; pushing the limits of what is necessary and standard. It is age-determined and has levels of intensity.

In the process of its biological, psychic and social growth the child in the age before school intensely, dynamically and often chaotically displays qualities, psychic states and activities, which define the attitude and the appreciation of adults and peers toward him. The diversity in the child behavior is a typical age characteristic shaped by the inevitable contradictions between wishes and abilities, between experience and skills of realization, between what is obligatory, necessary and what is accessible, examined as a reality in society. The vast research and publications in the realm of this problem is the reason for not searching for premises or provoking factors for the present research and to turn to a specific part of the whole, which generates the development of the child in the age from 3 to 7 years – i.e. his/her initiative.

The initiative child - does this really have to be defined as a topical problem most of all for the pedagogical practice? What sets it apart from the other children in the children's community? To what extent is the initiative in the preschool age a positive phenomenon and how does this process reflect on the general development of the children? How and to what extent must the child initiative be encouraged for the child to be successful at its activities? All questions with different answers! Their synthesis shapes the thesis: the initiative child is any child having or not a standard potential for action or development, a child with will for self-establishment and self-validation, a child with a real possibility and necessity for interactions in the social environment with the purpose of creating new organization for overcoming problems. One of the most important messages of the initiative child is "I want to be noticed ..."

The contents of the pedagogical problem “initiative child” have different aspects. They all follow from the diversity of personality structures of the child in preschool age and their corresponding technique for interaction. On one hand we have the child, who is constantly undertaking activities, often not in correspondence to the group activities, on the other – the child acquired the structure of rules, organizational skills and abilities for positive social communication and on third – the child with initiative, aggression. For each of these cases the pedagogue has to apply the needed constructive and compensatory strategies.

The common characteristic of the dynamic peculiarity of the initiative with the 3-6 year old child shapes its versatility, meaning – constructive initiative, realized and impulsive initiative, initiative – indicator for problems, initiative as a need for self-preservation and achievement, initiative towards the others, initiative – consequence, incidental and situational initiative, initiative – argument, initiative – leadership, initiative – executiveness and others. Two forms of existence can be defined – actual and latent initiative. The display of children initiative has to lead the pedagogue to creating conditions for its gradual realization, deployment and enrichment in a positive direction.

The initiative of the child in preschool age has its genesis and adequate development. The most important role in this process has the pedagogical activity as an aggregate of organizational components, methods, skills and means of stimulating interaction. It aids children’s initiative to emerge in a certain cognitional or social situation at certain actions and under certain conditions.

Initiative is permanently inherent to the children’s growth. Whether it will surface during the period of childhood or not is a problem of certain individual and same as important objective conditions. It has to be considered whether the child is an active social subject, it searches and discovers, acts with a different degree of familiarity on its own plan, launches simple undertakings, it is able to organize and lead a group /especially with the 5-6 year old children/. Most essential in this process of initiative actions are the so-called “undefined, unclear, unidentified” knowledge of the child / N.N. Podjakov, 1994/ where “a strong internal contradictory” character is observed, functioning as a momentum for child’s development. They provoke and in the same time support the child’s initiative thought its interaction with the more precise and already established knowledge and experience gained by the child, being also a premise for its self-development, self-stimulation of thinking and optimization of the child’s needs.

The initiative of the child in preschool age has to be examined as a process with a different goals and dynamics – it could have a positive or negative effect on a specific situation, upon the development of the child,

on the enrichment of group activities. The positive child initiative often is “formally regulated” it is linked with momentary actions, with tasks from external subjects, imitational and other. Even so it has a special developing effect on the children’s growth. In the same time the initiative child at this age has all kinds of ideas but often finds it hard to realize them because of the lack of experience and means for actions. The child wishes to organize a group of children for joined activities but not always succeeds in that. In this sense sometimes children’s initiative can transform to aggressiveness or other similar phenomenon.

The child’s initiative has to be analyzed from the pedagogue also as a process which includes several stages and is designed to match the child’s ability to plan, to execute connected and consecutive operations, to achieve results from his/her activities. In this sense the actual motivation, the obtained guiding and organizational components of the activity are observed.

Being guided by the child’s main message “I want to be noticed...” the 5-6 year old child displays initiative by: taking part in analysis of simple situations in the community suggesting actions for working them out; shapes and includes in its activities variations of solutions for new, unknown or conflict situations; organizes the children’s group for joint activities, makes suggestions for the choices of problems for discussion, realizes his own strategies and methods in the activities of the group, asks questions, chooses leading position for him in the communication, helps the other children, fulfils successfully the pedagogue’s suggestions without any other instructions and so on. In this way of thoughts it is necessary to keep in mind that the children are capable of mimicking a certain approach for solving a problem, but are not always capable of extracting this approach and applying it to solving other tasks. In this sense often the initiative is “preset” by the adults or the situation itself, but that does not mean that the child does not show the so called “elements of the initiative” – desire and motivation for activity, agreement with him/herself for operationalization of this activity, the necessary external factors and so on. The so-called “imitational initiative” is a common display of children’s initiative. The child copies the adults, his/her peers, actions of his/her heroes, which mostly has a positive value.

It is hard and sometimes impossible to note, stimulate and evaluate every child’s initiative. It requires knowledge and high pedagogical competence for the teacher to realize that “in every child lives a Pascal, who has to be awakened”. Abreast of his own actions in this field, the teacher has to help the child to “self-discover” him/herself, to become “self-aware” and to express himself/herself in the social space.

These conclusions are not new in the scientific searches of psychologists, sociologists and pedagogues. In the pedagogical practice it

is necessary to initiate strategies for deploying and enriching the child's initiative. The initiative child has to find adequate realization in the reality of the group or his own. The necessary conditions, environment and activities can be discovered and at the same time detailed upon the philosophy of different scientific theories. Most important is to take notice that "the unique individual has to have a unique mission in life and society" /Sh. Amonashvily, 1997/. Following this philosophy the initiative child takes actions and steps to fulfill his/her unique mission.

It is logical to say that pointing and laying out the problem is also a small part of its solution. Without having any innovational claims in both cases we keep the understanding of the importance of the problem in the age of preschool childhood and for the need of its deep and profound study hoping to bring into practice strategies which initiate initiative. Because the initiative child, hence the initiative adult is the main subject of today's and tomorrow's social development.