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PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH INDIVIDUALISED APPROACH TO LEARNING

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The article focuses on the learners' personality traits that evolve throughout their lives. Changes in personality are typically accompanied by individual differences, implying that people differ in the development patterns as they move through adulthood. Usually when we talk about someone's personality, we mean the features that make that person different from the other people, perhaps even unique. This aspect of personality is called individual differences.

The defining characteristics of a person is that of being not only a product of natural biological evolution, but primarily of a social and cultural shaping of the personality. There are many internal and external factors that influence the personality traits, but it is the differentiated and individualised approaches to learning that facilitate improvement and development of talents and potentials, enhancing a better quality of life, achievement of dreams and aspirations.

Key-words: *personality development, individual differences, heredity vs. environment, differentiated instruction, educational influence, family impact, socialization process*

The educational ideal is the development of a harmonious and creative personality, capable of adapting to changes and fulfilling the roles that society offers them. The truth recognized by all is that every child is unique, they have personality, their own pace of growth and development and a unique family backround.

Following the development of the child's personality, we inevitably ask ourselves the question: „Why is each learner unique in their own way and, at the same time, similar to other children of their age? What makes them unique and, at the same time, similar to the others? Since they can have the same educational opportunities for acquiring knowledge and skills in the family, at kindergarten, at school, what are the processes and factors that lead to similarity and uniqueness at the same time?

G. Bontila makes the following remark, trying to answer such questions, stating that since all learners were in identical conditions to assimilate the concepts contained

in the material that was taught, it is easy to assume that the differences in the degree or level of acquisitions are due to differences in individual structure [2, p. 59].

Ian Amos Comenius answered this question in his work „Didactica Magna" in the 17th century, stating that it is impossible to find such a reduced mind which education cannot help.

Personality development is a long process which is influenced by various internal and external factors. At the same time, the internal and external factors are in a close correlation, being difficult to establish which of them has the most important role in the formation of the human personality. Obviously, each of them becomes paramount for the individual growth depending on the stage of development. The important thing is that they interact and complement each other.

Heredity plays an important role in personality formation. The term *heredity* comes from the Latin word „heres" – heir and it is "the process by which characteristics are given from a parent to their child through the genes" [15].

From a hereditary point of view, each individual is unique, different from the others. Over time, a lot of research has been done on the importance of heredity on personality formation and the educational phenomenon. Thus, the most relevant results regarding the educational phenomenon can be mentioned as follows:"genetically, a complex of predispositions or potentialities are transmitted and not the traits of the ancestors. In contrast to the morphological and biochemical characteristics, the heredity of mental attributes is the result of a polygenetic determination. The psychic diversity of human subjects is not the exclusive result of hereditary factors, but of environmental factors. Hereditary determinants can be expressed at different periods of development or can remain in a latent state throughout the individual's life in the absence of activating factors" [10, p. 84]. Some aspects of mental life are strongly hereditary determinants (temperament, skills, emotionality), and others are less influenced by heredity (character, will, attitudes). Unlike animal heredity, human heredity transmits the least load of instinctive behaviors.

The environment represents the totality of elements and phenomena outside the individual with which they interact directly or indirectly during their existence. The pedagogical literature identifies two components of the environment: the physical and the social ones. The physical environment includes the biological and climatic conditions in which the individual lives. Physical factors act on the individual, and the individual reacts through their own specific activities and attitudes.

All cultural, economic and political conditions find their place and role in the social environment. The environment triggers the development of psychic abilities. The individual also influences the environment in which they live. It is education that directly connects heredity and environment, creating favorable conditions and situations in which the individual's genetic potential is exploited.

Each child has individual traits. Therefore, we cannot form a perfect personality without individualizing the learner's traits. The objective of education is to find that personal *I,* characteristic only of the given person that needs to be developed in order to help him/her become a strong personality. As a consequence, the learners' training must

be viewed not only strictly from the point of view of economic needs, but also from the broad perspective of the personality development of each person individually.

Over time, there have been several pedagogical and educational trends that support the determining role of the factors influencing personality development. Some have supported the idea that social and educational factors are the ones that influence the individual. Personalities from the 17th-18th centuries belong to this trend. Thus, J. A. Comenius claims that every man is born capable of acquiring the knowledge of things and „a man must be educated in order to become a man [5, p. 65].

In this regard, J. Locke states that: „nine-tenths of the people we know are what they are, useful or harmful, through the effect of education. Education is what determines the difference between people" [12, p. 39]. At the opposite side are those who minimize the role of education and consider heredity as the main and determining factor. This includes the followers of biological theories, who claim that heredity is what predetermines the psychic development of the individual, in other words, they claim that there is heredity of a biological nature and another one of a psychological nature. The followers of these theories are: C. Lombroso, who elaborated the theory of the „born criminal"; L. Szondi, who issued the theory of „impulses", according to which all psychic manifestations are of an impulsive nature; S. Freud, who claims that in the manifestation of personality the main role is occupied by the inherited instincts, which manifest themselves in childhood. Regardless of the theories supported over time, the primacy of the role of one factor over the other two has not been proved yet.

Education never acts alone, only in correlation with the other factors, and development results from the interaction of the factors mentioned above. Development appears in two forms: it can be the basis, the foundation for education, but, at the same time, it can be an effect, a product, obtained as a result of the intervention of education. The human being is the only one that is subjected to education and is permanently under the action of personality development factors.

Learners' families are highly individualized these days. There are families with a very high standard of living, but also families where the person lacks many basic necessities. The teacher must differentiate, individualize each family separately. At the moment when the conversation takes place with the whole class, the teacher must take into account that concrete learners are in the class with their individual achievements and shortcomings. Individualizing the contact with each family can contribute to strengthening the group of learners, making them good friends that help each other at any time.

The family is the closest and most suitable environment for the intellectual, affective and volitional development of the personality. The family environment influences the formation and expression of personality through the composition of the family (parents, children, relatives), relations of understanding and harmony between its members, interests, coexistence, values promoted in the family.

The family establishes the child's morality, determines their ideals, spiritual values, forms their attitude towards work, promotes such important vital qualities as love for people, receptivity and affection, skill and the desire to be tolerant.

Factors influencing the child in the family can be conventionally structured into three categories:

1. the social microenvironment of the family, in which the children come into contact with social values and roles, and learn about the complex and contradictory nature of the contemporary world;
2. inter- and extra-familial activity, especially everyday work, being an essential way of human social integration and getting to know the future activity of life;
3. the parents' educational activity.

It is crucial to ensure the parents' responsibility for the children's education, their training to achieve this work of utmost importance. It is up to the teachers to have individual discussions with family members who do not fulfill their obligations towards their child.

Here the parents' associations could be co-opted, whose basis can become both the educational institutions and the local public administration. New forms of family interaction with preschool institutions, schools, social, cultural, medical institutions, legal bodies, etc. are to be applied.

One of the objectives of updating the educational function of the family is to include parents in the educational activity of the educational institution. This process is effective if parents are involved with the help of their children, when all educational actors participate in the achievement of common objectives.

Each person is born and develops in such a way that they acquire some psychophysical, especially psychic, special, particular characteristics that make up the individuality. Contemporary pedagogy admits both the existence of individual psychological peculiarities that obviously distinguish some people from others, as well as the existence of individual peculiarities relatively common to some groups of people. From this perspective the differentiated treatment of learners emerged in relation to their age and individual characteristics.

School is the main link in the formation of each child's personality that is required to treat each child individually in order to find their place in the group of learners. This is where the differentiation and individualization of each student really works so that they become personalities in the future.

Most of the time the child is in the family. However, school is the place where the learner acquires knowledge and skills. In a way, school is somewhat „obliged" to ensure adequate conditions to enable each learner to carry out their own optimal development" [3, p. 34]. This optimistic vision of accessibility presupposes trust and respect for the learner's individuality.

The entire educational activity is directed towards the formation of the learner's personality in accordance with the social requirements of the time, the main goal being social integration. If the content and forms of this activity did not take into account the psychological reality of the child, then it would jeopardize the achievement of the proposed goal, each child's fulfillment as an individuality.

Every child has an innate educational potential that just needs to be discovered and made active. This is the holy mission of school, of the educators, because as Comenius said: „It is doubtful if there is a mirror so dirty that it does not reflect images in some

way; it is doubtful if there is a blackboard so clumsy that we cannot still write something on it. But if it happens that the mirror is full of dust or stains, before using it we have to wipe it, and a board that is too rough has to be leveled" [11, p. 87].

School is called to organize the *teaching-learning-evaluation process* in such a way as to offer learners their own means of acquiring knowledge and applying it in practice in a constant and creative way. In the specialized literature, the concept of differentiated learning has been approached from multiple perspectives: learning optimization strategy, dynamic process, fundamental instructional category, direction of teacher's competence training. The issue of differentiated instruction is not new, but only the approach to it.

The following requirements must be met in the organization of differentiated and individualized learning in school:

- the learners' initial knowledge;
- the learners' achievement of educational objectives, adapting the methodology to individual peculiarities;
- organizing the differentiated learning in all types of activities and throughout the teaching-learning process;
- avoiding overloading and underloading;
- differentiated training of both children with learning difficulties and those with special needs;
- combining the differentiated and individual activity with the group activity, thus favoring the enhancement of the learning activity, but also the learner's relationship, the formation of the capacity for cooperation and competition.

Differentiated instruction is not a single strategy but rather a framework that teachers can use to implement a variety of strategies, many of which are evidence-based. These evidence-based strategies include:

- employing effective classroom management procedures;
- grouping students for instruction (especially students with significant learning problems);
- assessing readiness;
- teaching to the student's zone of proximal development.

Although differentiated instruction shows that the approach has positive effects on learning. Using the kinds of evidence-based strategies listed above, teachers who differentiate instruction often:

- use a variety of instructional approaches;
- alter assignments to meet the learner's needs;
- assess learners on an ongoing basis to determine their readiness levels;
- use assessment results to adjust instruction as neededl
- provide a variety of options for how students can learn and demonstrate their knowledge;
- strive to make lessons engaging and meaningful;
- employ different grouping formats for instruction (for example whole-class, small groups, independent instruction) and use flexible grouping.

The students and their environment make up a dynamic unit within which the development process is completed, along two directions of evolution:

- socialization process: through which the little being assimilates social-historical experience;
- process of individualization: specific structuring of personality characteristics.

The defining characteristics of a person is that of being not only a product of natural biological evolution, but primarily of a social and cultural shaping of the personality. Outside the culture and social environment, the individual would not become a human being in the full sense of this term, but a „hominid" rather poorly adapted in the struggle for existence. Language, thinking and will are not intrinsic characteristics of the biotype, but a result of the process of social insertion.

In this regard, the experience of the 52 wolf children (isolated cases of human beings lost at an infantile age were adopted by animals and raised together with their cubs), discovered at different ages and degrees of evolution in several countries of the world. Thus, it was found that none of them had specific human traits: walking bipedally, articulated language, logical behavior, affective or volitional evolution. The case of the two little girls, Amala and Kamala, is famous, discovered in a tropical forest in a completely animal state and then raised in an orphanage. Amala did not survive long, and Kamala did not master biped walking and used a limited vocabulary - about 40 words after 7 years of efforts at the age of 17.

In this way, we have strong arguments on the decisive role of learning and socialization in the formation of human personality. At the same time, we must not forget the fact that the socializing action is possible, because the human being is structurally educable from the beginning. The American psychologist N. Kellog, wanting to provide a complementary experiment on wolf children, raised a chimpanzee, Goa, with his 10-month-old son Donald. The two beings were treated as identically as possible for 10 months. Despite this fact, the baby animal became a semi-trained monkey, while Donald – an ordinary child.

As a particular form of development, the mental and physical development of the individual includes both purely quantitative stages of evolution - growth, as well as the qualitative process of maturation, i.e. of the transition, for example, from the infantile to the adult pattern of the personality. It is particularly important that the task of education and training must be the transformation of individuals into personalities, which correspond to the educational ideal of our society.

Differentiating training techniques aim at grading school tasks, according to individual possibilities and each individual pace of development, so that the efficiency is ensured for all. We can underline, in this sense, the particularly important role of the teaching staff in generating a climate of confidence in the individual's possibilities in order to combat the inferiority complex experienced by many of those who cannot achieve high performances and also to combat the attitude to standardize learning and development conditions for individuals capable of performance.

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