

CARPE DIEM! IN ONE-TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

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Abstract: Adults try to seize the day (Carpe diem!) to gain a certain profit or pleasure. The manifestation of these achievements is conditioned by time and environment in which they live. In the postmodern times, the environment is pervaded by productivity and consumerism as the side effects of the capitalist social organization. Since we cannot live outside of our time and society, the question arises regarding the extent of the impact these social orientations have on individuals, in this case on primary education students. The authors conducted a research to find out whether primary education students are already showing indications of future social preferences (production and consumption). The survey sample consisted of Roma children (N = 32) undergoing primary education. They were asked how they would seize the day (Carpe Diem), i.e. what they would like to do during the day. The authors' assumed that they would get a wide range of answers, such as socializing and playing with peers, watching cartoons, playing games, and even socializing with their parents. After a qualitative data analysis, it was noted that the mentioned population of Roma children points to the poverty of their ambitions in organizing their day. The authors conclude that the lack of contemporary communication due to poverty provides students with a healthy, happy childhood spent in playing and socializing in a modest, natural environment.

Keywords: value orientation of the young, education, childhood, natural environment, Roma students.

Introduction

We are born, we live and die in time and we strive to keep pace with it. We realize our achievements in time and for the time which we live in. Only (the misunderstood) individuals go ahead or lag behind their time, for which they pay a certain price. The time we live in is marked by the change of the universalist paradigm in the particular and pragmatic one featuring the categories of usefulness and applicability in practice. This application, as Paić points out, is also implemented in the education system. On the contrary, our leisure time is determined by marketing, entertainment, and spectacle (Paić, 2015). One should by all means be aware of the implications of consumerism regarding children's psychological and physical

health. Children become a new, active consumer group in which advertising creates a new illusory worldview and artificial needs, without warning them of the existence of its negative aspect (Dadić, 2015). Even the governmental education agencies observe that it is illusory to expect from schools to serve as an umbrella effective enough against the media storm which sends different messages, such as those that encourage consumerism (OZOR, 2011).

Since we are the children of our time, our expectations are marked by certain prejudice, which we pass on to our children. We expect them to also differentiate their work time (school) and free time. Free time is again filled with some “useful” content: homework assignments, training, and socializing with peers. In the encounter with Roma children, as well as with children outside the Western circle and mentality, one remains amazed at the poverty of their requirements, needs, and ambitions. It is said that they are satisfied with little things. It is an opportunity to understand to what extent a man belonging to the western cultural circle is immersed in the production-consumer circle, crucified between two categories: useful or “scratch.” The Roma child is only a natural child without the traces of the liberal consumerist-productivistic mentality.

How does the Western world react to the appearance of a natural man (child)? Through different mechanisms it tries to integrate a natural man. To integrate them means to teach them the Western habits according to the principle of utility. Integration indicators are the monitoring results which are being included in tables at the level of Croatia or the European Union. From these tables, the degree of contamination with the Western style of life and thinking is determined. For example, recommendations, such as the one from the Roma Early Childhood Inclusion research (RECI +, 2015), require inclusion of Roma children in early childhood educational programs to prevent their unfavourable position when starting elementary education, primarily to overcome the language barrier. Is not that just an expression of the organization which wants to drag everybody into a vortex of production and consumption, the system for which a woman presents a work force, who can also be a mother in her free time. Is that not a pitfall of all attempts at the demographic renewal?

Following the authors Zloković and Vrcelj, it is necessary to ask oneself whether the attempt for integration stems also from the conviction that parents are unable to pass on socially acceptable educational and moral values. Therefore, high hopes are directed at school, which could provide universal values and harmonize the particular values that students bring from their families. Problems arises when we try to create an educationally neutral school directed towards the formation of a knowledge society without proclaimed

fundamental values, therefore children find themselves in a value vacuum (Zloković & Vrcelj, 2010).

One of the obstacles to the absorption of contemporary lifestyle are the conditions in which Roma children live, the poverty that is present among the Roma population. “Low levels of economic and cultural capital, inadequate/insecure place of residence, lack of amenities and space, and poor nutrition of children are examples of multiple poverty factors in family environments which significantly contribute to the disadvantaged position in education” (RECI +, 2015, 71). Parents pass their way of life and work to their children. Most often, those are illiterate parents who can hardly help their children with school. Vidović emphasizes that children are vulnerable not only to the influence of their parents and families, but also to peers and the environment in which they live. It should also be noted that this environment, contaminated not only materially, but many times morally, emotionally, and valuefully (addictions, criminality, physical abuse). However, respondents in this survey are not *street children*, i.e. the children for whom the street, and not their own family, has become a real home and who are lacking protection, supervision, and advice of responsible adults (Vidović, 2008).

The aforementioned lifestyle modifications, emphasized especially since the second half of the last century, are reflected in nutritional habits and a lower body activity, not just in adults but also in children. Thus, Prskalo points out, children and young people spent their free time in activities which require minimal muscular effort, resulting in increased obesity (Prskalo, 2013). As far as children are concerned, certain research suggests that the program which they absorb in early childhood institutions does not carry a sufficient coefficient of physical activity and that it needs to be expanded with home-based activities (Tomic et al., 2015). Online social networks undoubtedly contribute to this, more pronounced in higher grades of elementary school, which present a form of socialization (Kušić, 2010). We are convinced that the percentage of daily physical activity in school children is also necessary to expand at home. According to results of this research, it is obvious that Roma children supplement their daily amount of necessary activities with an active lifestyle, spending the time in the open following school activities, socializing with peers, and the minimal share of media in extracurricular activities.

Methodology

The aim of this study was to examine Roma primary education students in order to find

out how they would take seize the day, i.e. what they would like to do during the day. The survey was conducted on an adequate sample (N=32) of primary school students, Roma students, by the means of a survey. The interview was voluntary, following parental consent, and the answers were recorded on a voice recorder.

Results

Of 32 respondents, 10 are boys and 22 are girls. When asked “What would you like to do during the day?” students replied with very short answers.

First-grade students’ answers:

- *Draw a ship, toys, cars*
- *Put clothes on, wash my face, I like going to school, playing, make a house with my friend Marijana, wash hands, eat*
- *Play, play with a jumping rope*
- *Play, do homework, ride a bike, study, I like going to school*
- *Draw, play, homework*
- *Play, with friends, do homework, write*
- *If I didn’t go to school, I would do my homework, play with friends, watch Doc McStuffins*
- *Play hide and seek*
- *Play, draw, colour, play with friends, go to school, do homework*

Second-grade students’ answers:

- *Football, fishing*
- *Play, ride a bike, play with friends*
- *Study, play*
- *I go to school, Croatian, nature, English*
- *Play, play with a jumping rope*
- *Play with a doll, take a walk, draw the sun and the sky*
- *If I go to school, I laugh, I learn Croatian, study, write*
- *Play, jump, tidy up*
- *Play, play on a swing*
- *Play, go to school*

Third-grade female student answer:

- *Play, study, help mom with housework*

Fourth-grade students’ answers:

- *Play with my dog, homework*

- *Walk my dog in the woods, drink juice*
- *Study, ride a bike, listen to music on my phone*
- *Nothing... football, TV shows, playing on my phone*
- *Football with guys, go to the field with guys, go to the woods to get firewood with dad, go downtown with dad*
- *Play, do homework, go to a friend, rollerblade, read, if the weather is nice, pick flowers*
- *Babysit my sister, cook, clean the house*
- *Play with friend, teach my brother how to write, watch TV shows*
- *Watch TV shows, do my hair, play*

Discussion

When asked “What would you want to do during the day?” students were surprised, which was manifested in their expressions and silence immediately after being asked the question. In the first instance, the interviewer feels that this silence is the result of “choosing” among a multitude of possible answers. However, very short and similar answers in most students reveal improper pronunciation of Croatian words in oral communication and a modest “variety” of children’s games. Due to the specificity of the environment in which they grow up, they fulfil their daily play needs by playing with a jumping rope, hopscotch, football, ball games, or riding a bicycle. Of physical activities, they mentioned football, rollerblading, fishing, playing ball, and walking. Since they were interviewed in the premises where an extended school attendance takes place (school activities) and in the presence of their teacher, the vast majority said they wanted to learn, read, and write to give a good impression. But these answers should be analysed from the perspective of a “pleasant environment,” since even though they are doing their school assignments, they are still talking, drawing, singing, and playing board games... which is not the case in most of their homes. Only two students expressed the wish to spend the day on cell phones (listening to music and playing games). Both students have a cell phone, but their basic function is to use additional (free) applications which can be used outside the reach of a mobile or Internet network (listening to music, playing games) (Lapat and Topolovčan, 2011). Third and fourth grade students mention housekeeping and helping their mom, which testifies of their roles in the house. At this age, girls practice life skills (“babysit my sister, cook, clean the house;” “babysit my sister, cook, clean the house;” “play with my little sister, feed her, make coffee”) to be able to take over the role of a housewife and mother in the near future. In their community, there is a division into male and female jobs, and the response of a fourth-grade

student: “Football with guys, go to the field with guys, go to the woods to get firewood with dad, go downtown with dad” clearly speaks of boys’ socializing habits with other boys, and girls’ socializing habits with other girls. The role of adults from whom they learn life skills is of great importance for younger generations. Going into the field with the guys means communion in the work that the family will benefit from (bring food for the family), while the security in carrying out more responsible and dangerous tasks outside their community (demolishing trees, sawing, and delivery of firewood, going to town to collect secondary raw material, collecting items in the days of massive waste removal in local places...) can be done by an adult male, and in this case this is the father. It is no wonder that children do not want to spend days in front of computers and tablets because their families do not own them, but having a TV enables them to watch the shows watched also by their parents – because children mimic their parents, whether they were aware of that or not. Such everyday life puts them in an uneven, tough position compared to their peers’ conditions in which the majority of the population lives, but also gives them an advantage of playing in nature, in the fresh air. A child in nature possesses a wide range of dynamic learning and creating contexts because the environment is an interesting educational phenomenon (Kiš-Novak, 2004). This is also confirmed by the response of a girl who would use *Carpe diem* to pick up flowers with the help of which she would (probably) embellish her family home. Roma children’s stay in nature is an introduction and/or continuation of educational ecological activities through school in nature, related to protection, sustainable development, and lifelong learning for the environment, with emphasis on the importance of biodiversity as a key to the health of the planet as a whole (Kiš-Novak, 2004).

Conclusion

Due to the specificity of the environments in which they grow up and the survey being conducted in the premises of the extended school attendance (school activities), following the presence of their teacher, the vast majority of children expressed that they wanted to learn, read, and write to give a good impression in front of their teacher. But these answers should be analysed from the perspective of a “pleasant environment” because this is not the environment characteristic of most of their homes.

In these answers, one clearly discerns the socializing of boys with other boys and of girls with other girls. The role of adults from whom they learn life skills is of great importance for younger generations, but also an advantage because children play in nature. We are born, live and die in time and strive to keep pace with it. Man as a natural or

biological being is also a social being. Such an approach to learning about man as a biological, social, and thinking being with rights and obligations in the community is present in the National Curriculum of Health Education for Elementary School – one teacher education, fourth grade, within the subject of Nature and Society. Children have the same rights as adults. All civilized countries have adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Roma child is only a natural child without the traces of the liberal consumerist-productivistic mentality. After a qualitative data analysis, it was noted that the mentioned population of Roma children points to the poverty of their ambitions in organizing their day. The authors conclude that the lack of modern communication tools due to poverty provides students with a healthy and happy childhood spent in playing and socializing in a humble but natural environment, which results from the response: “Walk, draw sun and the sky, pick flowers.” Spending time in a natural environment has many advantages: strengthening immunity, increasing self-awareness of one’s own abilities and skills, courage and perseverance, communication, raising awareness of the environment, and many other psychological individual and social changes. Similarly, for the majority population of school children, as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, the pedagogical movement of the school in nature was devised as a reaction to the students’ multi-hour stay in classrooms in the increasingly polluted cities. The child is introduced into the world of things and phenomena surrounding it, appropriate to his age and psychophysical possibilities as a biological, social, and thinking being. Such an attitude should lead to a positive attitude toward the environment and encourage a natural curiosity for life.

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