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Innovation of media education (new technologies) in improving the quality of early school and preschool education

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Abstract. Contemporary teachers can now derive a benefit from the latest technological developments and they can successfully use modern technology for effective teaching. It is important to create a coherent and rich curriculum for the early years' learning. The modern school cannot avoid the necessity of innovative teaching. Media education favours effective professional orientation of children; awakens their interests in the professional field, which is important considering the problematic field of the didactic subdiscipline of work education; which is pre-vocational education and preparation.

Innowacyjność edukacji medialnej (nowych technologii) w podnoszeniu jakości kształcenia

Słowa kluczowe: nauczyciel, innowacyjność, edukacja medialna, preorientacja, kształcenie, wychowanie przedzawodowe, pedagogika pracy

Streszczenie. Głównym celem artykułu było zwrócenie uwagi na współczesnych nauczycieli, którzy mogą czerpać jak najwięcej korzyści z najnowszych osiągnięć techniki i z powodzeniem wykorzystywać je do efektywnego nauczania. W nauczaniu początkowym ważne jest bowiem tworzenie spójnego i bogatego programu nauczania. Współczesna szkoła nie ucieknie od konieczności innowacyjnego nauczania. Edukacja medialna sprzyja skuteczniejszej preorientacji zawodowej dzieci; rozbudzaniu ich zainteresowań zawodowych – co jest ważne z punktu widzenia obszaru problemowego subdyscypliny pedagogicznej pedagogiki pracy; jakim jest kształcenie i wychowanie przedzawodowe.

Introduction

The system of education – on any level – should be effective, comprehensive, transparent and aimed at achieving a high-quality process of teaching/learning, as well as versatile development of students. What is more, it should be innovative, since its primary subject is a student entering the path of constant development in a reality that is both dynamically changing and often unpredictable. It means that teachers should be aware that they prepare their students to the life in a different socio-economical space from the one in which they are currently undergoing the process of education. The means to do that should be innovative education which prepares learners for effective and responsible functioning in their social, private and professional life. Moreover, it should equip students with an indispensable ability to learn – one which they will be able to use in any real-life situation.

Aims and tasks of innovative education

Innovation in education is necessary these days, for the traditionally conducted process of teaching/learning does not comply with the constantly changing environment of a learner – both the immediate one and the one perceived in a broader context. Such necessity emerges from various ongoing changes in the world, as well as from numerous threats, expectations and needs of individual human beings. Those are some of the reasons why innovation in a modern school should concern not only its didactic function limited to passing knowledge and shaping certain skills but also its broadly defined educational function aimed at establishing specific attitudes and features of the character of the learners, including ethical attitudes and increasing national identity and tolerance. The modern school should assist in finding one's way in a world dominated by media, globalisation and new technologies. It should fulfil the needs of various educational groups and support especially those in a difficult life situation. It should therefore be supportive and therapeutical.

The article aims at discussing the remarkably important subject of the complex use of students' development potential in classes I-III, especially through the use of effective and attractive organisation of the educational process. It is attempted to draw attention to the change that has been in progress within recent years, dealing with the change of attitude of teachers working with children

as early as in the first grade. Those teachers depart from the traditional system based mainly on passing the material and verifying the level of its acquisition. Instead, they apply a much more intelligible system, one which is open and friendly for children, based on activating methods and including the use of modern information technologies. Unfortunately, some teachers still tend to focus on delivering knowledge in a rigid, pre-prepared way, activating both the children and themselves in a very limited way – they simply present the material in a reproductive and schematic way, using merely the textbooks. Such a style of educating is ineffective for all of the participants.

The above-mentioned "modern students" functioning in a "modern" informative society need a fresh educational approach allowing them to properly receive, process and use the information approaching them. That is why innovative education should enable unconstrained use of the abundance of interactive and social tools and techniques used by young people on a natural, everyday basis. A question may emerge: "Should a traditional textbook, a board and chalk be perceived as completely useless – if not unreliable?". The answer, of course, is no. Modern educators can (and should) effectively combine the use of up-to-date informative and communicative techniques with the use of a textbook, a board, chalk and any other traditional didactic means.

Such innovation in early school education can be successfully implemented in the process of teaching/learning with the help of such devices as laptops, computers, interactive boards, MP3 players, digital cameras etc. It is confirmed by many passionate teachers and innovators who believe that early school education should be the same as the education of older children but better managed. It is not surprising then – as noticed by Agnieszka Leszcz-Krysiak – that it is the stage of education that determines any further education of a child. It requires creating a space which the child would experience, as well as providing diverse physical activities which would stimulate intellectual abilities. It is a gentle transition from family and preschool education into a school system education, which in the case of integrated education in classes I-III establishes a valid base for further learning. A preschool and early school teacher is therefore expected to present a creative and original approach to a child, aimed at their development. Those educators should take into consideration the children's needs and interests as well as the disposition and abilities of those <digital natives>. By doing so, teachers emphasise the importance of not turning children, who attend school with joy, happiness, a smile on their faces and a need to explore, into ones stressed by the lack of possibility to succeed, the everlasting rivalry

or the constant risk of being judged. (Pedagogika Szkolna i Wczesnoszkolna, nr 1/2017, p. 67–68)

Education – especially in its early stage – should integrate as many different fields of science as possible in order to create a consolidated image of the world. Pedagogical innovation is any fresh methodological, curricular or organisational solution aimed at improving the quality of schooling. Any innovation is considered a change, but not every change is an innovation. It certainly presents a challenge for teachers.

The priority idea of early education is not the amount of material acquired by a child, but its quality, value or the possibility to use in everyday life. Classes are diversified with various methods and didactic aids in order to motivate children to work. Since they are naturally intuitive and brilliant observers, confronted by innovative methods of teaching they acquire knowledge relatively quickly.

One should not forget that the personality and character of a young human being is primarily shaped during the early-education stage of life. That is why it is crucial for the teaching staff to choose the correct educational material, and then present it in such a way, that the proper activating methods combined with traditional methods would be most effective. Combining the methods is of significant importance due to the fact that well blended they complement one another, mix and provide the desired effect. While preparing to conduct innovative classes for children in classes I-III, teachers should consider various factors, mainly the educational space, which should allow the children to act in a natural, unrestricted way. However, not all schools can provide such conditions – small classrooms, limited space, narrow corridors, and in some cases even a lack of sports facilities such as a football pitch or a gym.

The most popular activating methods picked by the teachers are didactic and integrating games, drama, brainstorming and discussions.

Early school teachers from Primary School number 6 in Koszalin took a survey prepared by the author of this article, in which they admitted that for them innovation at school means mainly:

- modern classroom equipment (interactive whiteboards, magnetic boards, computers, tablets, video/DVD equipment) – 55%;
- modern equipment in the whole school (modern workshops adapted to the needs of youngest pupils) – 49%;
- custom approach to teaching – 36%;
- use of modern technologies (online connection to other educational facilities, virtual museum walks, up-to-date software) – 31%;

independent approach to the curriculum without using textbooks – 19%;
improving skills and qualifications of the teachers themselves – 14%.

Contemporary teachers associate innovation in education mainly with cutting-edge technologies. However, for the teachers of classes I-III in the Primary School nr 6 in Koszalin, digitalisation does not equal innovation. A school will not become more modern just because it can afford a number of interactive whiteboards. It should not be forgotten that pupils in classes I-III are small children, who should wisely learn how to use modern technologies. A child's daily space of life is naturally changing all the time and new factors appear – ones that shape a child's feelings and experiences. Some of such factors are modern technologies. Teachers are aware of the fact that due to rapid technological progress, hi-tech equipment is present in the houses and lives of even the youngest students. Apart from being used for entertainment and trade, such technologies can be used in education, too. The presence of modern equipment at schools is very important, but it is the idea of how to use it which is crucial. Innovation in teaching can take various forms such as musical or motor expression, artistic or literary activity, games, plays, field trips, educational projects, observations, experiments, problem-solving. New technologies in early school education should not replace crayons, pencils or traditional textbooks, but should complement them. Smart use of information and communication technologies can be priceless, especially in the case of students who have problems with learning. The roads to individual innovative ideas naturally depend entirely on the teachers and schools, and they may be distinct.

As it is noticed by Marzena Kowaluk-Romanek, the roles and places of modern technologies in education (also in early school education) are determined by their functions: cognitive-instructive, emotional-motivational or active-interactive. Multimedia have become a basic source of acquiring knowledge about the surrounding world without the need to travel or experiment. They have created the possibility to possess knowledge from various fields and experience a whole range of feelings and emotions. It is a fact that a small child gets to know the word much better not only when they are engaged in a cognitive way, but especially when they are engaged emotionally. Those emotions, in turn, allow activating motivational processes. As a result, the young student conducts his or her explorations in an interactive way (Kowaluk-Romanek, New technologies in supporting the development of children and youths with specific learning disabilities, [in:] "Edukacja-Technika-Informatyka, nr 5/2014, p. 79).

In her study of teaching/learning of a child using digital aids, Żanetta Kaczmarek reached a conclusion that such a course of action is desirable since it releases beneficial activity and it influences children's attitude towards education in a positive way. The author also believes that "the strength of a computer as an educational medium in the case of early school children comes from the quality of interaction in a relation between a student and his or her computer. That is what makes the strength of mutual influence between mankind and the media". Danuta Morańska's studies on the effectiveness of teaching pupils from classes I-III with the use of netbooks reach similar conclusions – that in the eyes of students, as well as when looking at the final results of the educational process, the use of multimedia techniques on computers is beneficial whenever there is a necessity to use them. (Kaczmarek, *Psycho-pedagogic aspects of computer-enhanced teaching of early school children*, [in:] W. Strykowski, W. Skrzydlewski (red.), *Media i edukacja w dobie integracji*, eMPi, Poznań 2004, p. 204). One should not forget that there is a dominant opinion in Poland and most of the European countries, that "media education" in case of early school students is more harmful than beneficial. However, the supporters of such education claim that it is not only limited to information education at school during IT lessons in classes I-III. It is a result of the fact that during early school education teachers implement integrated education which refers to the experience gathered by a child with their family or in any other environment also through mass media. It is so because the youngest pupils should also be prepared to face tasks from various fields within which mankind functions. That is why the problems dealing with communication, the immediate surroundings, safety and health are strongly stressed. They are the factors that provide a child with a chance to take action, allowing them to fully experience their childhood (Wenta, *Information technology in childhood education*, [in:] "Edukacja humanistyczna, nr 2/2013, p. 21).

Broadly defined early educational media pedagogic includes theory, technology and art affecting a student, for example in the field of achieving, storing and using different materials for transmission and interactive, innovative and artistic behaviour not limited to the use of computer and multimedia instrumentarium. According to Kazimierz Wenta "media education in terms of integrated education should be mainly considered by analysing developmental influences concealed within the pupil as a collection of desired directional and instrumental features emerging in the process of cognitive, moral and aesthetic experiences, as a result of the pupil taking advantage of multiple devices and materials, both

in real and virtual life. The essence of media education initialised by a teacher, a parent or a child themselves in numerous educational and non-educational situations, is mainly concealed in the fields of freedom, curiosity and the possibility of reaching whatever is new and difficult and what can be achieved to test oneself in order to enrich one's personality." (Ibidem p.22)

Innovation in early school education allows the teacher to improve the directional features of a pupil, such as pursuing wisdom, truth, good and beauty without disrupting the relation between the real and the virtual world. Multimedia devices can provide a perfect tool used to shape also some of the instrumental features of a pupil in early school stages, such as memory, perceptiveness, imagination, teamwork or manual skills.

One of the issues tackled by K. Wenta is why it is so difficult to refute the thesis claiming that the world of images (especially the virtual one) poses a threat to spoken word or reading comprehension – especially in the case of early school children. There are many opponents of "the world of image" being introduced in primary school. They strongly believe that there is no substitute for traditional textbooks and that children are not able to properly use paper books, whereas such a habit and a need to read have to emerge in childhood. In their opinion, a pupil who does not understand the language or who possesses limited vocabulary is not able to read on his or her own. Fluent reading allows further education. Children who have problems with learning, often have problems with reading comprehension too. Traditional books, textbooks or notebooks are the symbols of enduring values and they express the intellectual legacy of cultures. On the other hand, the fact that an electronic and a paper book are the same kind of work but in a different shape, is recognised by more and more people. The passion for reading and the ability to improve reading comprehension in young learners may be developed through work with e-books just as successfully, as through traditional textbooks.

Conclusions

All in all, it should be clear that it is impossible for any modern school to avoid the necessity of employing an innovative model of teaching/learning. It should be conducted not only by introducing innovative equipment but mainly by introducing a modern approach towards young pupils' education. It is simply impossible to "protect" children from modern technologies, and instead, such technologies should be wisely included in the process of early school education.

By doing so, numerous advantages may be achieved and among them:

1) innovative teaching tailored for individual needs – dynamic and flexible methods adjusted specifically for each pupil starting education at school – is undoubtedly an important feature and a necessity in contemporary education. Teachers have a chance to choose from a wide variety of available materials to pick the ones needed in particular cases and applicable to certain styles of learning;
2) attractive way of presenting the content – it is of utmost importance in the case of early school children. Thanks to attractive and diversified ways of presenting tasks or exercises, students are more eager to complete them and they remember the results better;
3) activating the pupil thanks to the introduction of educational innovation increases cognitive skills and concentration. It allows one to take control of the pace of learning, developing functions or improving skills;
4) it strengthens self-confidence – supporting technologies offer a chance to experience success and provide a sense of security.

Those are just some of the most important advantages of employing innovations in early school education. Modern technologies, individualised approaches and innovative curricula – all of these used in a sensible, well-considerate and justified way can significantly improve the efficiency of teaching, and encourage the pupils, who begin their educational path, to come to classes more eagerly and more interested.

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