THE ROLE OF ARTISTIC EXPERIENCES IN THE
INDUCTIVE EDUCATIONAL APPROACH
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Promoting the Social Emotional Aspects of Education;
A Multi-faceted Priority, june 2011

“Relational ethics/…/ share common themes: responsibility for other humans,
other species, and the environment; rejection of calculative thinking; making
contextualized judgments rather than conforming to universal codes; and a respect
for otherness.” (Peter, Moss, UK)

“…listening is a difficult but indispensable practice that must be learned. Aesthetic
tension, with its empathy, searching for relations and ‘connecting structures’,
together with its grace, humor, provocations and non-determinism, supports the
process of listening.” (Vea Vecchi, Reggio Emilia, Italy)

Strong emphasis on affective dimension of human morality and moral
education in last decades

• In the field of ethics:
  – Wide interest on the affective dimensions of morality in the history of
    ethical concepts (Aristotle’s virtue ethics, Hume’s notions on the role of
    sympathetic emotions)
  – Ethics of care (Gilligan, Noddings)
  – Ethics of personal encounter (Levinas)

• In the field of approaches on emotional dimension of moral reasoning, moral
  motivation, and moral acting:
  – Psychoanalysis and the discovery of the importance of an inter-psychic
    relations, emphatic guilt, and compassion (Klein, Winnicott, Todd,
    Benjamin)
  – New trends in the developmental psychology (Hoffman’s theory of the
    development of empathy, positive psychology and Golleman’s discovery
    of emotional intelligence)
  – New approaches in the philosophical anthropology of Self and emotions
Personalistic theologies and approaches on world ethic (Buber, Levinas, Küng)

- Important approaches on connection between ethics and esthetics (Wittgenstein)
- New promising educational approaches:
  - pedagogy of listening (Reggio Emilia Approach)
  - relational pedagogy (Bingham, Sidorkin)
  - comprehensive inductive educational approach (Kroflíč)

Basic topics of this presentation

- the idea of approaching identity and moral development through the inductive educational approach
- the importance of education through the arts, especially in the view of theoretical notion on “aesthetics as ethics of postmodernity”
- presentation of some empirical findings during implementation of art as an important part of comprehensive inductive model of pro-social and moral development in the kindergarten Vodmat, Slovenia

More information about our developmental approach you will find in a small part of the exhibition of some children’s artistic work that were produced during the developmental project Cultural enrichment of the youngest children, and in the workshop, made by my colleges in the project, Darja Štirn Koren, Petra Štirn Janota, and Anita Jug (from 1, 30 to 3 o’clock in the room 012).

From Martin Hoffman’s model of inductive discipline...

- The inductive approach to disciplining children was first described by Martin Hoffman (2000) in the late 1960s as he was conducting research on the main strategies of disciplining children within the context of the family.
- Based on his work on the development of empathy as the primary source of children’s prosocial behaviour, he viewed his model of discipline as more appropriate than the authoritative-assertive model generally accepted as the most appropriate one by the then theory.
Basic structure of inductive discipline practice

• first we express disapproval of the child’s misconduct (what is a characteristic of any discipline practice),
• then we bring attention to the distress of the person who was hurt by wrongdoer and making it visible to him/her (“look, how you made this person feel”);
• the inductive discipline practice expose the role of wrongdoer’s act in causing victim’s distress, and therefore evokes her/his emphatic guilt;
• the distress caused by empathic guilt felt by the child who misbehaved generally results in children wanting to fix their wrongdoings and thus alleviate their emotional distress.

• The main difference between authoritative-assertive and inductive model of discipline:
  – the reaction to a child misbehaving would in the case of the authoritative-assertive style typically include judging the child’s actions, invoking a preconcerted norm or rule right from the start (“you know we have a rule not to do this”),
  – while inductive discipline recommends bringing attention to the distress of the person who was hurt by him/her and making it visible to the wrongdoer (“look, how you made this person feel”) 

• Because this kind of attitude activates emotional distress of the wrongdoer and therefore facilitates her/his pro-social emotions (empathic guilt) and moral judgment, it leads a wrongdoer to the possibility to repair the unfairness (concept of restorative justice);
• Additional warning: the role of educator is not to propose the way of repairing consequences of the unfair act – she/he has to wait for the response of wrongdoer! (like in the concept of peer mediation)
• If the wrongdoer doesn’t react and she/he is not ready to repair the damage due to her/his egocentrism, we can still count on the “moral pressure” of peers in the social group.

…to Comprehensive Inductive Educational Approach

• In order to develop a comprehensive paradigm of inductive approach in
education, we need a clear definition of the role of the adult in educational situations and other theoretical elements, like the answer to the question about:

- the essential elements of moral responsibility (what we aim for in education),
- the rudiments of ethical sensibility and motivation for prosocial action (anthropological basis for prosocial behaviour and morality as a starting point for encouraging moral development),
- what the best environment for the development of the prosocial and moral orientation of a child may be,
- which methodical elements to employ. Naturally, the comprehensive paradigm of the inductive approach in education includes a broader array of different educational activities and goes beyond mere intervention in conflicts.

**The basic goal of moral education**

- The most drastic shift in the conceptualization of moral responsibility in postmodern times was caused by Levinas and his provocative claim that morale does not signify a subject’s view on following social rules and ethical principles, but rather a respectful attitude towards other human beings, our environment and shaping of a meaningful existence.
- As ethically responsible human beings we must hence direct our actions in consideration of the consequences they might have for our fellow human beings or the environment instead of the question of concordance of our action or the motive behind it with a certain social norm or an ethical imperative.

**Anthropological basis of prosocial and moral attitude**

- The psychological dimension enabling the development of such a moral stance is:
  - the ability to recognize other people's emotional responses and
  - feeling discomfort when our actions have hurt another human being.
- Numerous theoreticians have recently recognized the anthropological basis of compassion, indignation and empathic guilt seen by ethics as having a direct prosocial dimension, which develops even before socio-cognitive abilities
prerequisite for appropriate ethical judgement.

**Educational environment**

- two important findings relevant to our discussion:
  - children’s primary prosocial traits begin to develop in their relationships with significant others, adults and peers, i.e. relations characterized by the presence of love and friendship, already in earliest childhood
  - kindergarten teachers have a key role in shaping inclusive environments in the education process and should accept the view of the child as capable of actively participating in that process, while in the case of teachers’ assumptions that children are selfish and socially inept teachers step into a patronizing role, while children remain passive

**Wider set of educational activities**

- a unique approach to discipline
- encouraging relationships based on respect towards others (methodology involving three levels of developing ethical responsibility)
- encouraging prosocial activity (mutual help)
- encouraging group cooperation
- minimizing fear of difference
- abating stereotypical judgements/prejudice
- mediation as a way of conflict resolution
- among the activities that were especially effective *education through artistic experience* should be pointed out

**The basic structure of inductive model for encouraging prosocial and moral development**

- Children are capable of relations of love and friendship already in their first years of life (even if ethical consciousness demands complex cognitive capacities); therefore pedagogy supporting these relationships enables the child to develop *relational response-ability* and *normative agency* for prosocial activities in a most authentic way.
• The next important focus is to develop the sense of respect towards concrete persons or activities because personally engaged relations may be harmful as well, in case they lead to empathic over-arousal, empathic bias, pity and paternalism.

• The last step of moral education is to become aware of ethical principles and humanistic demands, especially concerning human rights and ecological values, and to learn how to use them as a basis for democratic negotiation in cases of interpersonal conflicts.

Education through arts as important element of the Comprehensive Inductive Educational Approach

• Studying various historical ideas, starting with the concept of poesis in the antique times,
• postmodern ideas about the dialogic nature of our selves,
• the criticism of the classic rationalist concepts about the development of the morale and primary responsibility to other people, our community, and nature,
• the conviction held by numerous internationally acclaimed theoreticians speaking in favour of humanist education (Malaguzzi, Rodari, M. Greene, M. Nussbaum and others), that artistic expression and empathic imagination are in fact two key factors of children's prosocial development

• we asked kindergarten teachers and artists to delve into three levels of action directly linked to the development of children's identity:
  – relations towards others,
  – their attitude towards the environment (both natural and cultural) and
  – historical tradition influencing our living space.
• Among artistic practices, we chose to employ approaches to:
  – fine art creativity and installations,
  – music,
  – dance and
  – literary texts and dramatization (including puppets).
Qualitative results of using arts in kindergarten Vodmat, Ljubljana during testing the Comprehensive Inductive Educational Approach

Key concepts of Aristotle aesthetics, on which we can show the pedagogical meaning of art

- Creativity and the experience of beauty as one of the constitutive virtues
- Aesthetic mimesis as a creative practice and as means of accessing the truth of phenomena by employing the epistemological method of induction
- Empathic imagination as a way of entering life stories/experiences of the other as a different human being
- Catharsis as completion of the artistic experience on the subjective level of the viewer

Creativity and the experience of beauty as a source of happiness

- One can admittedly find pleasure in external goods or rightful action, but “things pleasant by nature” are primarily a function of good and noble action. This also includes “actions in conformity with virtue [...] that are pleasant essentially [...]; they are also of course both good and noble” (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*).
- In kindergarten Vodmat we used this element as a principle of creating a good environment/playground according to children’s perception of “pleasant place for their playing activities”
The beauty of artistic installation and impressionist painting

In the kindergarten’s playground hill children and a teacher prepared an installation with red balloons and then they try to paint it according to the principles of impressionist painting.

Aesthetic mimesis as a creative practice

• Creative nature of Aristotelian concept of aesthetic *mimesis*:
  – In his *Poetics*, Aristotle writes about the artistic image transcending its realistic counterpart as it not only describes the past and present state of things, but also includes the portrayal of “the kind of things that people say and think; the kind of things that ought to be the case”

• Therefore mimesis is more than mere imitation – it is the act of creation, immersion into phenomena and the depiction of a certain event, human or object as the artist sees it, at the same time reflecting various contextual factors that have influenced the story portrayed. And it is only when we are able to recognize the main causes and effects of the accounted story that we have worked our way to the truth.

An interesting exploration of the creative nature of artistic mimesis can be found in Rakić’s 1911 doctoral dissertation *Education Through Play and Art*:

• all human activities can be divided into those aiming at repetition and those involving change or transformation, seen by him as two main modes of adaptation to human living environment

• an inherent paradox of education is that it is not primarily based on activities involving change, but rather activities involving repetition and acquiring knowledge, abilities, skills, and habits transferred to the coming generations by adults

• therefore encouraging children’s play and artistic activity is one of the crucial dimensions of education that facilitates children’s transformation
abilities; in Rakić’s view, symbolic play and art are examples of transformation activities despite their mimetic nature

A turtledove – metaphor and the creation of new expressive possibilities

Ethnographic field-note:
Timna: “I cutted a tlee, goes shhhhhh ... the hail does the same. Up the dov does coocka-cless, coocka-cless ...” (shakes the paper tree, makes shhhhhhh sounds and laughs merrily).
Kindergarten teacher: “I don’t understand. Would you like the necklace (in Slovene language words “dove” and “necklace” sound very similar)?”
Little Timna nods, runs to her so called “collagluescope” (a plastic bottle containing her treasures – different materials for play and work) and takes a piece of necklace out of it. She sticks it to the tree and draws wings on each side of it.
Kindergarten teacher: “Oh, it’s the turtle dove singing “coocka-cless” in your tree?”
Timna nods and is very pleased that she finally made herself understood.

Empathic imagination as a way of entering life stories/experiences of the Other as a different human being

• artistic imagination offers us a glimpse into the world of other people by entering imaginary, “as if” worlds created by writers, painters, sculptors, film directors, choreographers and composers
• imagination thus provides art consumers the opportunity of delving into the psyche of literary heroes and the circumstances of their story, liberating them from stereotypical perception as well as facilitating empathy and compassion
• since compassion also involves feeling vulnerable, the reader may feel that a fate similar to that of the (fictional) character could perhaps befall him/her in the future, resulting in their willingness to offer big-hearted support or help, thinking: “Something like this could happen to me as well and this is how I would like to be treated.”

• The great value of empathic imagination in today’s world is linked to the empathic recognition of the social position of all those who are different,
outcasts, invisible in the global world full of difference:

“Immersion in the artistically created character or event, sympathizing with the character’s fate, cancellation of ego fantasies about oneself as the centre of the world, contemplating on events we might never experience ourselves, the ability of creating visions of possible worlds in which we are able to surpass our original selfishness and unfairness are all components of imagination and capacities enforcing our ethical consciousness.” (Kroflič 2007)

• Similar way of perception of art in education we can find in a book of the first atelierista in Reggio Emilia kindergartens, V. Vecchi:

»(An aesthetic dimension) is a process of empathy relating the Self to things and things to each other… It is an attitude of care and attention for the things we do, a desire for meaning; it is curiosity and wonder; it is the opposite of indifference and carelessness, of conformity, of absence of participation and feeling… In our understanding of the word, aesthetics is a promoter of relationships, connections, sensibility, liberty and expressiveness, and its closeness to ethics appears natural. In educational terms, I would speak of a need for an inseparable union; the surest of unions for keeping all forms of violence and oppression at a distance, making aesthetic sensibility one of the strongest barriers to physical and cultural violence.« (Vecchi 2010)

*Guardian of the playground*

While preparing a playground in the kindergarten on the principles of good and beautiful environment, children found out that the oldest tree on the playground has died during the necessary pruning, so they chose to transform a dead tree into a sculpture of a guardian of the court, and bind the “dead tree” with alive ones by colored threads.
Catharsis

“Since the one is felt for the undeserved victim of adversity, the other for one like ourselves (pity for the undeserving, fear for one like ourselves)”  
(Aristotle, Poetics)

- Catharsis is one among most known concepts of Aristotle aesthetics which witnesses about artistic experience as transformative, peak experience the crux of aesthetic/tragic catharsis has to do with accustoming oneself to a story and tragic hero, so we could become aware of some secret parts of our soul that are hardly uncovered in everyday activities

- It is through facing the question of how one would feel in a situation similar to the one portrayed in the tragedy, or how one would act in a similar position that, in the words of Jung, we are given the chance of encountering the hidden aspects of the human soul, otherness hiding behind ego perceptions of oneself and a deeper truth of one’s own existence.

Scream – an example of catharsis among the youngest children and an ultimate proof that even pre-school children are capable of deep deep-felt aesthetic experience

Observing various art reproductions, Timna’s (four and a half years) look is captured by Munch’s print The Scream. She grabs a crayon and sketches in an intensely coloured violet scarf around the person’s neck.

Preschool teacher: “What are you doing? Why are you ruining the painting I just wanted to put on the board?”

Timna: “I don’t want you to put this painting on the board. You should put it into my portfolio, where we put things that are mine. This painting is mine!”

Preschool teacher: “And who is wearing the violet scarf?”

Timna: “My mommy.”
Later, during spontaneous play involving magnets, Timna observes how some magnets are drawn together, while others are drawn apart (saying: “These two like each-other and those two don’t”) and starts to describe her home situation (mommy and daddy are getting a divorce and mommy has been in the mental hospital for a month now due to mental instability).

While aesthetic purists would be quick to judge the irresponsible act of a child doodling on an art reproduction, the author of the print would probably show excitement over how a four-and-a-half-years-old girl was able to recognize the underlying feeling of his work of art and associate it with her own real-life circumstances. Even though preschoolers do not yet possess all the abilities needed for artistic expression, the story of Timna unimpeachably testifies to children’s ability of deep-felt aesthetic experience.

Pre-school child as socially capable – reach being

• like in Reggio Emilia approach, the concept of child as rich being (Malaguzzi) is an important pre-condition of the comprehensive inductive educational approach
• with educational activities that stimulate the development of affective dimension of child’s personality, we can even strengthen her/his prosocial and moral capacities
• among activities that enable to achieve this goal, art has a central role!