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JUSTICE AS A VALUE IN EDUCATION IN THE 1ST GRADE OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Abstract: In this paper we present the value of justice in education. This value has a certain relationship with the development of cognitive and logical abilities of the pupils. Justice supports also the causal thinking in education in the 1st grade of Elementary school.

PEDAGOGICAL STARTING POINTS

According to the Swiss psychologist J. Piaget (1896-1980) it is possible to distinguish four main stages in the cognitive development of children. Normally everybody goes through these stages because each of them is based on the previous development of cognitive abilities even if the length of the phases is different¹. According to Piaget interaction of adulthood and experiences are both necessary.

In the first *sensorimotor stage* (*from birth to the age of 18–24 months*), the child perceives its surroundings from the viewpoint of its own body. Later when the abilities to sense and walk get better, it starts to experiment (to play) with things. The real break through is the understanding of object permanence, when the child realizes that a thing still exists even if it is out of sight.

1 See J. PIAGET (1951), *Play, dreams, and imitation in childhood*, New York: Norton; ID. (1952), *The origins of intelligence in children*, New York: International Universities Press; ID. (1952), *The child's conception of number*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; ID. (1954), *The construction of reality in the child*, New York: Basic Books; ID. (1959³), *The language and thought of the child*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; ID. (1970), *The child's conception of time*, New York: Basic Books; ID. (1970), *The child's conception of movement and speed*, New York: Basic Books; ID. (1972), Intellectual evolution from adolescence to adulthood, in *Human Development*, 15, 1–12; ID. (1976), *The grasp of consciousness: Action and concept in the young child*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

In the second, *the preoperational and symbolic stage (the age of 2–7 years)*, children are able to think about things and events in a symbolic way and to play based on imagination. They are able to think about things and events which are not directly present; they are able to represent them mentally, based on images, sounds, words or other forms. Another important development is the understanding of the time of events.

The next stage, *the concrete operational stage (the age of 7–12 years)*, which is not similar to the age of children discussed in our contribution, means a connection between thinking and a particular theme. In this period many children understand the concept of conservation (with the change of shape also the amount changes), linear causality, and the ability to name outer causes of actions. It is necessary to emphasize that children are not *able to abstract* or think in abstract terms. In this period they start to understand logical principles applied to concrete and specific cases.

The stage of *formal operations (the age of 12 years)* is characterized by the ability of abstract thinking, methodological progress, building of thesis and mutual (round) causality.

Piaget states that in the first and second childhood, during the period of sensorimotor intelligence and the period of pre-operational representations, the child is able to understand only *linear* causality, not a round one, *mutual* causality in other words. Only in the period of adolescence, when children build formal operations, are they able to gain other elements which are necessary for building mutual causality, ergo relations of multiple, round causality. That is why the idea of dividing things into equal parts is not identical with fair dividing, that first grade children are not able to understand. However it is necessary to say that some never reach the development of processes in mutual causality.²

TEACHING MATHEMATICS IN RELATION TO THE VALUE OF FAIRNESS

Mathematics can be understood in many ways. Mostly it is seen as a specific field of study as a complex of logically arranged knowledge.³

Mathematics is assigned by abstract concepts existing only in the thinking of people which fill in characteristics of material items.

We get also another meaning of the concept of mathematics when understanding it as

² See J. PIAGET (2000), *L'epistemologia genetica di Piaget Jean*, Bari-Roma: Laterza; C. LORIEDO - A. PICARDI (2000), *Dalla teoria generale dei sistemi alla teoria dell'attaccamento. Percorsi e modelli della psicoterapia sistemico-relazionale*, Milano: Franco Angeli, 103–117.

³ „Veda o číselných, kvantitatívnych a priestorových vzťahoch.“ In: Ivanová, M., Maniková, Z.: Slovník cudzích slov. SPN, 1983, Bratislava.

an instrument for building human thinking. Then it is a way to develop mental abilities of children. We are speaking about the process of teaching which cannot be based only on abstract concepts but which should begin with concrete experience of the child.

The experience of a child builds a very complicated structure of experiences in their mental processes which leave memory prints based on emotional excitement. These prints build structures based on hierarchy, comparison and evaluation, which helps the child to solve life situations and to build and point a strategy for the future. Beside own experiences the practice is added by pieces of knowledge which are given to us through communication, mostly on the basis of emotional excitements.

First experiences of children happen in the area of social relationships and make social causality out of it. These build the basis for the ability of children to build the casual thinking in natural science. See article Family and Mathematics⁴.

One of the important concepts in the area of social causality is the concept of justice. In spite of the characteristics of the natural science subjects which can be measured, ergo quantified ergo expressed by numbers (we say that these characteristics are quantities), the characteristics in the area of social relations cannot be measured; ergo they can only be evaluated. The quantifying of social characteristics can be only subjective, it is difficult nearly impossible to find objective measures.

The quantifying of justice was used for decades and people will try to use it in the decades to come as well. It is a social phenomenon whose amount is given by subjective points of view. The society can build certain norms according to which the degree of justice is interpreted.

Justice is not a textbook concept which a pupil has to learn; but on the scale of emotional experience causality can be used not only in the social sphere but also in the sphere of natural science.

The experience of justice often becomes an example for building other characteristics which build the basic moral pieces of the experience. They are strong if they are not only pieces of knowledge; they are built on strong emotional experiences on the mental level of a child. Unfortunately it often happens negatively.

This building belonged to firstly the family and its buildings and corrections happen in school and its instructional-educational system. However, here come the discrepancies. These usually come out of the idea that if knowledge is measurable on the basis of measures of natural science, characteristics and social relations based on the educational

4 Kuruc, J. : Rodina a matematika. In: Slovensko, Poľsko, svet. Rodina - vybrané aspekty z humanitných a prírodných vied. PF KU, Ružomberok, 2009. ISBN 978-80-8084-449-3.

part are not measurable. That way a part which is not important for the growing up of a child, is gaining prominence.

In practical pedagogy the results of pupils are demanded on the basis of a certain quantity and its measures; the means are subordinated to this. The fastest but also silly is the way of memorizing and memory records. After all what first grade pupils have to learn is mathematics, and not to use stupid calculator. That way the results of pupils' and graduates' abilities are judged by criteria like mechanical memory, memorizing, and the ability to subordinate.

JUDGING OF JUSTICE

The meaning of this concept is used unambiguously in mathematics. In the task to divide the unit in fair parts, the pupils understand that every part will have the same size. This meaning of justice is taken from the area of emotions and emotional causal thinking to the area of natural science causal thinking and it helps to emphasize it enormously.

Joseph has some cake and Ann has some cake. Who has more?

If pupils get this task in this abstract form, the answers will be abstract too. The most frequent answer will be that Joseph has got more. The reason is that the pupils, who do not have enough experience and imagination in fractions, will be surprised by the experience that three is more than two and that $\frac{1}{3}$ is more than $\frac{1}{2}$.

If after a more concrete formulation the pupils mark one third in a square map as part of the cake from three squares and one half as part of the cake from two squares, then their answer may be that $\frac{1}{2} = \frac{1}{3}$. The pupils' argument will be that we cannot compare parts of the cake which are not even.

The meaning of justice finds new dimensions here. The meaning lies on the fact that we apply the concept of meaning of justice to natural science causality. The accuracy of this result cannot be measured. It gets harder when building other less noticeable characteristics. We get important results only under certain principal conditions.

The first is the mutual relation between teacher and pupil that should not be based on opinion strategy.

The second is the condition to eliminate the high degree of authoritativeness, strictness, fear, super-ordination and power fights.

The third condition is the determination of goal definiteness.

These conditions are being violated in schools nowadays.

Justice in teaching cannot be abstract as in mathematics itself, for it presents a social relation and within it can characteristics and justice be understood only in causality of a certain model, concrete or universal. Because of this characteristic the relationship between teacher and pupil or parent and child can be badly corrupted, if the subject is

not able to distinguish and to give proper reasons or explain the causes and results of justice.

The opinion strategy of the teacher is based on labeling (clever, stupid, lazy, skilled etc.), creating principles (strictness, carefulness, tolerance etc.) and it is secured by power means. It is not based on the most precise diagnostics. This attitude makes it impossible for a teacher to create a relationship with pupils that they would see as fair. Moreover, the pupil has no possibility to change the etiquette or the tape to develop its own personality. Teachers change the etiquettes only if the pupil changes its strategy in favor of the teacher. The pupil's adjustment does not develop its main ability responsible for the growth of its social or scientific causality. This kind of pupil has weaker abilities for learning mathematics as well as for understanding the world and his own life. The second extreme a pupil can get into is revolt. Even if he wins over the teacher, he does not get anything positive because the goal itself is the destruction.

The meaning of justice in teaching lies first of all in understanding and estimation of a clear goal. In this respect the educational component in school is overestimated. It happens because it is qualitatively and quantitatively well measurable. As a result many causes like the social, didactic etc. and the educational component become less a means than a goal of the whole school system.

It shows that neither the totality regime nor the capitalistic system build or create means for personality development of people to achieve success for all social needs by their abilities.

This role is often taken by groups or organizations which take responsibility for the development of the human race. Justice rises for them up to new dimensions which can be judged. One of the most significant is the relationship between a person and its work. This relation was and unfortunately is still being deformed.

Work was in human history an inevitable condition for society growth. In the Middle Ages the relationship was understood as misery, humiliation, pain, slavery. Evidences for this are the words *rabota*, labor, *matchos*. These Russian, Latin and Greek words mean also something else about work. We cannot speak about justice or fairness.

An important change in understanding of this relation to work was brought about by Christianity. Jesus Christ raised work to another qualitative level. That way he brought justice into a deformed understanding. Till now we can find in textbooks the period after Christ to be the time of darkness; however we cannot find any written source stating that the change of quality in the Middle Ages was an exact result of the increase of quantity of work.

This historical point of view about work should not be used when educating the young generation. To reach a change in a young person's attitude to work and that way be able to integrate him into the society, it is not enough to use the educational component.

Often the instructional part of the process is more important, as it has a personality forming power and helps to create moral and emotional mental abilities.

Justice has many meanings and is therefore important for education of the young generation. This word should become one of the strongest pillars in their experience structure when building their moral values. This can as well be contributed by a closer observation of the mentioned goal in teaching mathematics.

TEACHING THE TERMS FRACTION AND JUSTICE

The term fraction is connected with the term dividing a unit. When teaching fractions it is important to divide the unit in equal parts. One half means dividing the unit in two equal parts. I heard an opinion that dividing into equal parts is not identical with fair dividing. The reason is that if two people do not work equally hard, they should not be granted equally.

The declaration *Gravissimum Educationis*⁵ states that “children and youngsters have the right to be lead to a right moral judgment and to a personal adoption of moral values”. First grade elementary school children therefore have to be taught how to have the feeling of justice. Jesus speaks about the idea that fair division as a division into equal parts, in Matthew in the image Workers in the Vineyard:

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. And after agreeing with the workers for the standard wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When it was about nine o'clock in the morning, he went out again and saw others standing around in the marketplace without work. He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and I will give you whatever is right.’ So they went. When he went out again about noon and three o'clock that afternoon, he did the same thing. And about five o'clock that afternoon he went out and found others standing around, and said to them, ‘Why are you standing here all day without work?’ They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go and work in the vineyard too.’ When it was evening the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the workers and give the pay starting with the last hired until the first.’ When those hired about five o'clock came, each received a full day's pay. And when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more. But each one also received the standard wage. When they received it, they began to complain against the landowner, saying, ‘These last fellows worked one hour, and you have made them equal to us who bore the hardship and burning heat of the day.’ And the landowner replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am not treating you unfairly. Didn't you agree with me to work for the

5 See: <http://www.kbs.sk/?cid=1118411000>

standard wage? Take what is yours and go. I want to give to this last man the same as I gave to you. Am I not permitted to do what I want with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ So the last will be first, and the first last.” (Mt 20, 1- 16)

It is obvious that the workers in the vineyard did not work the same amount but they all got a day’s pay. It is the secret of God’s justice which is saturated by God’s mercy. Similarly it is important when teaching children, for they should not only be fair but also merciful with each other. In personal communication it is important to know how to divide and how to forgive.

The moral education of children cannot be substituted even in the oldest textbooks of pedagogy for 1st Grade elementary schools in Slovakia. Juraj Páleš states in his *Pedagogika Slovenská pre Triviálne školy Spišského biskupstva (1820)* (Slovak Pedagogy for Trivial Schools of the Spiš bishopric) in the paragraph about practicing morals:

“The teacher has to make sure that the pupils attain main life tasks through moral and other important learnings, and that they are encouraged to love, awe God, revere His church, His servants, parents, keeping of God’s rules, as well as clerical and earthly rules, for the protection against bad and to doing good.” Juraj Páleš emphasizes the role of the teacher in the moral teaching of children: *“A good example of a teacher is very important in the moral life, like words he uses to lead children to morality.”* When teaching fractions teachers use the dividing in equal parts which is represented by separate and universal models. When the pupil is using them he realizes what it means to divide a unit fairly. When working in groups he can also use it in

SCHEME 1

practice (dividing a group of sweets, balls, cubes etc.). He that way improves social communication in the class and emotional intelligence. To share things with others, to feel that weaker people are important aspects of the moral education too of a child nowadays in a world which often emphasizes performance and personal success. Justice and moral education of children support their ability to work in a team, which they later learn through teamwork in class, when they divide the tasks between each other equally. For example if the teacher gives a group of three pupils 6 tasks they know that everyone of them has to solve 2 of them. These 2 tasks constitute one third of 6 tasks.

TEACHING A CHILD FAIRNESS AND FORMATION OF THEIR MINDS AS A DEMAND OF JUSTICE

The human race has a specific place in creation: they are an image of God, in their naturalness combining the spiritual and material world, it is created like men and women

and God determined the human in His friendship. ⁶ Out of all visible things, only the humans are able to know and love their Creator. The humans are the only creatures on Earth who God wanted for himself; only they are entitled to take part in God's life through knowledge and love. ⁷ Since the humans are created based on God's image, they have dignity, they are not anyone but someone. They are able to know themselves, to be their own masters, to give freely and to join partnership with others. ⁸ God created everything for humans and they were created to serve God and love him in return. ⁹ All humans are brothers and sisters even if they are different in cultures or nations. The human is a bodily and spiritual creature. The body of a human takes part in dignity of God's image, he is brought to life by his spiritual soul and all the humans are designated to prepare the temple for the Spirit. ¹⁰ Spirit means that humans are oriented to their own supernatural aim ever since they were created. ¹¹

God created humans to His image and made them a friend. ¹² The humans teased by the devil let their faith to the Creator die out in their hearts by misusing their freedom and disobeying God's rules. ¹³ The tragic consequences of the first disobedience by our grandparents Adam and Eve lied in immediate loss of their primary holiness, they were afraid of God, the harmony they lived in thanks to their primary holiness was destroyed, and death entered the history of humanity.¹⁴ God did not leave the humans alone after the Fall and that is why he gave His own Son for our sins and showed that His plan with us is a plan of beneficent love. This love does not exclude anyone.¹⁵ The Resurrection of Christ is the beginning and the source of our future resurrection. ¹⁶ God wants all of us to be saved and to know the truth, Jesus Christ. That's why it is necessary to tell every nation and every person about Jesus Christ, so that the Epiphany will get to the edge of the world. ¹⁷

As for the human needs to know God, His Son Jesus Christ and His Gospel, because only God is the last foundation of all values, only He gives our human existence a final

6 See KKC, čl. 355.

7 See KKC, čl. 356.

8 See KKC, čl. 357.

9 See KKC, čl. 358.

10 See KKC, čl. 361–364.

11 See KKC, čl. 367.

12 See KKC, čl. 396.

13 See KKC, čl. 397.

14 See KKC, čl. 399–400.

15 See KKC, čl. 604–605.

16 See KKC, čl. 655.

17 See KKC, čl. 74.

sense¹⁸ than spreading the Gospel means doing what is fair. Justice is a moral virtue which lies in permanent and strong will to give God and relatives what they deserve. Justice towards God is called “virtue of religiousness.” Justice towards people makes humans

able to respect the rights of everyone and to bring harmony into human relationships which support the average opinion towards people and towards common good.¹⁹

The primary cell of everyday life is the family. It is a natural group where men and women are called to give each other love and life. Family is also a group where we can learn moral values since birth, glorifying God and the right use of freedom.²⁰ A child brings certain conditions of creating social contacts into this world; it is returned to social interaction.²¹ Even a newborn gives signals through which he makes contact. “A newborn is not a passive victim of influences from its surroundings; it is an active partner of adults, when in touch with them he is surprisingly able – socially competent.”²² From the point of view of forming the character of a child every stage in his progressive development is important. In the pre-school period when ethic emotions develop, the model of an adult is very important. A pre-school child copies the model of a certain person. In this period it comes to the so called factual forming of personality influenced by building simple ethic norms – good and bad, can be done and cannot be done.²³ In the period of a younger school age²⁴ moral value systems build up.²⁵ Family is still important for a child in future, however in the first school years the authority of the teacher is often bigger than the authority of the parents. Moral feeling and ethical awareness build the foundation for the future forming of the character.

Realizing these facts which are inevitably connected with the development of a child give the answer to why Jesus Christ defended the small and gave them his time while publicly acting. When once his disciples stopped mothers with their children to come to him so that he could put his hands upon them, he said: “*Let the little children come to me and do not try to stop them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.*” (Mt

18 See: JÁN PAVOL II., *Parati semper*; čl. 4.

19 See KKC, čl. 1807.

20 See KKC, čl. 2207.

21 See Drlíková, E. et al.: *Učiteľská psychológia*. Bratislava : Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1992, s. 114.

22 Drlíková, E. et al.: *Učiteľská psychológia*, s. 115.

23 See Drlíková, E. et al.: *Učiteľská psychológia*, s. 124–125.

24 The period of a younger school age lasts over the ages 10–11.

25 See Drlíková, E. et al.: *Učiteľská psychológia*, s. 128.

19, 14) Jesus Christ emphasized the seriousness of the responsibility for children²⁶ also in another citation: “*See that you do not disdain one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.*” (Mt 18, 10)

The responsibility for the little, for children, means their education about justice which is inseparable from the education concerning conscience, a task for the whole life. It leads the child to knowing and keeping of the inner law seen through the moral conscience ever since childhood. A good education leads to virtues, it protects and frees from fear, selfishness and pride. The education of conscience guarantees freedom and brings peace to the heart. When forming conscience God’s word is the light on our path.²⁷ We have to learn it through faith and bring it to life through prayers. The gifts of the Holy Spirit help us, as well as the witnesses and advice of others and the dogma presented by the authority of Church helps us.²⁸ conscience

“The children nowadays are the bridge to the future. If the men of a nation are immature, immoral, self-centered cowards without strong will, such a nation cannot survive. I speak about men who leave their children, cheat on their wives, lie, steal, and live driven by their own lust, hate others and serve only money. This is the way our culture leads our men. It seems that the only antibody is investing in building the character, self-discipline, respect towards authorities, devotion towards truth, faith in the working moral, and faith in unlimited love of Jesus Christ.”²⁹

CONCLUSION

The term justice is getting more valuable in the social development nowadays. This should be shown also in the educational process. The teacher’s job, besides giving professional advice which is dominating in the educational process, is building an instructional impact through developing pupils’ moral values. If we want to be successful in such a process, we have to begin at an early age. One of many aspects of education is education to justice. In our understanding of Christian concepts we characterized the term justice not as an isolated term, but in connection with other values (love, truth, solidarity, empathy and other human values). Through the support of those values we can guide the development of a pupil’s personal adulthood in favor of the increasing quality of democracy in the society.

26 Between the little whom Jesus Christ gave great attention belonged besides children, the weak, ill, and powerless.

27 See KKC, čl. 1784.

28 See KKC, čl. 1785.

29 DOBSON, J.: *Výchova chlapcov*. Bratislava : Porta libri, 2007, s. 57–58.

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