

THE SELF-IMAGE, ELEMENT OF BEHAVIOURAL AND EMOTIONAL SELF-REGULATION

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Abstract: *During school life, self-image suffers a series of changes due to the increase in age and also experience accumulation, reflecting an individual seal which will not change throughout life. During this period, the individual identifies himself not only with grades that objectify school performance, but also according to the “academic opinion” composed of himself and which he is aware of, in whole or in part. But, as general objective, in this study aims at identifying particularities of self-image and its development in 4th grade students. At the same time, in order to improve students’ self image, their self-control capacity, the reduction of the fear of failure, it is essential to implement strategies regarding a stimulative learning environment, involving all students, feedback on the performance level, recognition of the students’ merits.*

Key words: *self-image, self-knowledge, self-esteem*

I. Concept delimitations

The self-image refers to the place or value an individual attributes to himself in relation to the other members of the community to which he belongs, under the circumstances of an accurate self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is self-knowledge of the person, meaning perception and knowledge from her own activity, from her own behavioural actions, from her relations with others, from successes and failures, from her aspirations compared to those of others, in relation to which the person obtains the awareness of its own value.

In the Dictionary of Psychology (Doron, R., Parot, F., 2007:387) it is shown that “self-image refers to the representation and evaluation the individual makes of himself in various stages of his development and in different situations he finds himself into. As a result, there is not only one self-image, but several. Psychologists and psychoanalysts who have studied the child showed how these representations are constructed through a game of identification with characters from the subject’s entourage or with real or imaginary figures of heroes. Self-images also depend on how the subject is viewed and appreciated by others”.

Trif, L., taking into account Miclea, M. and Lemeni, G., indicates that self-knowledge / self-esteem refers to the process of exploration and structuring of their own characteristics (e.g. skills, emotions, motivations, attitudes, beliefs, mechanisms of defence and adaptation, etc.) which results in the self-image of the person. Self-image

is the essential marker of behavioural and emotional self-regulation. (Trif, L., 2008:117)

The self-image is linked to the genesis of self awareness. In the psychology of development, the study of the genesis of conscience is part of the study of descriptive, self-descriptive or reflective use of language, together with the study of individuation and self-knowledge processes, addressed by social interactions or by the child's reactions to his own image perceived in the mirror, studied by R. Zazzo.

Closely related to the self-image is self-esteem, which is a fundamental dimension to any human being, whether child, adult or elderly, regardless of culture, personality, interests, social status, abilities. Self-esteem refers to how we evaluate ourselves, how good we consider ourselves compared to our expectations or to others. Self-esteem is the evaluative and affective dimension of self-image.

The great dictionary of psychology (2006:1126) states that “we have three sentences: 1. of all the people an individual knows, the most information he has is about himself, 2. the self is the pivot of any social relationship, 3. the concept of self is determined by the concept of person in the culture the person belongs to”.

The concept a person has of self has many sides. There is the objective side, which we call self-image: the evaluative side, called self-esteem; the side that describes how you want to be, which we call the ideal self; the side related to skills and abilities, called awareness of your own efficiency; the side related to the way you identify with social groups, called social identification and the way in which the sense of self was shaped by the cultural context in which you grew up. (Hayes, N., Orrell, S., 2003:213).

II. Self-image formation

Self-image formation is primarily a subjective construction and involves three aspects: the importance of others' opinion in its construction; the elements on which the perception of others is achieved; the extent to which conduct and motivation influence self-image creation.

The formation of self-image goes through the following steps:

- *the construction of self*, of the subjective self image, what we believe is characteristic for us. At this stage the own assessment of self-image takes place (we like / do not like what we believe about ourselves, what we are). It depends on the individual's personality;

- *awareness of others' judgments* which may or may not coincide with the image built by ourselves. These judgments may also influence self-image;

- *reporting own image to the others' judgment*. This appreciation can lead to positive or negative feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. We are influenced by groups in which we live: primary groups (family, classmates, friends) or secondary (pupils from the same school). The two types of groups affect self-image formation differently. They contribute to the socialization of the individual (G.Kelemen, 2011). An important role in the formation of self-image is played by social comparison. (The theory of social comparison: we compare ourselves with people who resemble us.)

In each of us reside more characters (M. Roco, 2007:26), among which we mention the following: the fundamental character (what we mainly are, the personality essence) the admitted character (what we imagine to be), the dreamed character (what we want to be), the purpose or the model character (what we would like to be, as a model), the exemplary character (what the others or society would like us to be), the reflected character (the way others see us), the apparent character (the way we would like others to perceive us), the secret character (what we hide from the others), the actor character (what we would like to seem in a given situation), the defence character (the character that we take refuge in case of threats)

III. The main issues related to self-image development in young students

During school life, self-image suffers a series of changes due to the increase in age and also experience accumulation, reflecting an individual seal which will not change throughout life. During this period, the individual identifies himself not only with grades that objectify school performance, but also according to the “academic opinion” composed of himself and which he is aware of, in whole or in part. An important feature of this age period is the massive overvaluation of their own possibilities of action, leading first to a certain distancing from the objectified performances (they are not accepted as a true measure of their possibilities), and on the other hand, to the location in the future of “real” confirmations. Promises made to oneself are fulfilled or not during life.

The system of beliefs begins in childhood, with “reproaches” from parents. These reproaches are the first indicators of personal value. As the child grows and develops, he is brought before other mirrors by family members, colleagues and teachers. These reflections of his image form the basis of self image as he matures.

Normally, school and social performance of each student can not all be located at a higher level, especially when school tasks are at a high level of difficulty. Therefore, teachers should create situations where students get to know not only their limits, but also their resources.

IV. Ascertaining study

As **general objective**, this study aims at identifying particularities of self-image and its development in 4th grade students:

In this sense, the **operational objectives** pursued are: identifying self-esteem; self-esteem capacity building; increasing personal assertiveness; developing realistic beliefs about themselves;

Students samples:

We note that there were a number of tools used to select the three subjects, such as: psycho-pedagogical characterization sheet, case study, history, family situation, relationships with others, with parents, siblings, with classmates, the individual sociogram of choices and rejections, relationships with teachers, relationships with friends and relationships with strangers.

A critical role was played by the class teacher who has important information needed in selecting cases. In the following, we shall present the samples of subjects only as identification data in the form of initials, along with their age and gender.

1) Name: D. P. L.	2) Name: N. A. E.	2) Name: S. S. L.
Age: 10	Age: 10	Age: 10
Grade: 4 th	Grade: 4 th	Grade: 4 th
Gender: male	Gender: female	Gender: male

Research instruments used:

a) The LAW S.E.Q. Questionnaire. It is an educational questionnaire that measures the self-esteem of the student. It is not represented as a diagnostic tool, but rather integrated into the screening tests. It is a short questionnaire which includes 16 questions out of which 4 are neutral. The LAW S.E.Q. questionnaire is present in two forms: one for primary and one for secondary school level and it is composed of questions with three possible answers (yes, no, do not know).

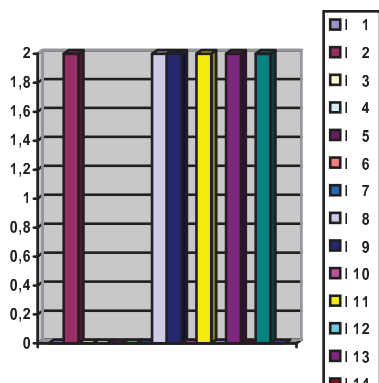
b) The questionnaire for the self-assessment of self-image (Carl Rogers)

The questionnaire provides a list of 32 adjectives, representing both positive personal characteristics (e.g. *humorous, enthusiastic, trustworthy, polite, sincere, strong*, etc.) and negative (e.g. *emotional, fragile, internalized, cynical, jealous, impulsive*, etc.). The subjects have to read the list carefully and put in the column *How I am now*, an "X" next to each adjective, which they consider as being characteristic for them. Then, without looking at the signs put in the first column, they have to reread the list of adjectives and write a "0" in the column *How I would like to be* next to each adjective they would like to be characterised by. **The** terms passed through the grid of adjectives designate values that we submit to the subjects' appreciation. They express the affection-evaluative resonance the words or terms included in the test items have on them. On this basis we can identify individual and group values accepted and shared.

c) The social desirability scale (Douglas P. Crowne and David Marlowe, adapted and experimented in our country by I. Dafinoiu). This scale measures the degree of sincerity and realism of the subjects regarding the assessment of oneself (self-assessment). The scale comprises 33 statements representing attitudes and personality traits. Subjects must respond to each one of them by "true" or "false" as they correspond or not to their own way of being. The answers are related to the standard.

Analysis and interpretation of results:

1) D. P. L. - LAW SEQ questionnaire - 12 points → low self-esteem;



Following the responses listed with 0 points I1, I3, I4, I5, I6, I7, I10, I12, I14, I16, we find discrepancies between desires / aspirations and reality, but reasonable inconsistencies within normal ranges. The student's agreement with himself can improve if he agrees to assume certain responsibilities, facing the difficulties which might arise in their achievement. The absence of the mother in the child's life leads to uncertainty.

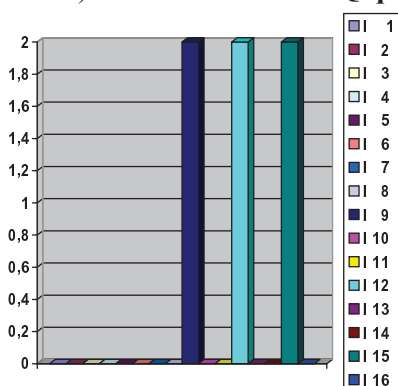
Fig. 1. Graphic description of the results to the LAW SEQ questionnaire

- **Self-assessment questionnaire** → 22 points. It confirms the discrepancies between the current and the ideal Self. "At present" – he attributes himself negative characteristics: emotional, reserved, jealous, stubborn, impulsive, apathetic. As ideal person he mentions positive characteristics: independent, interesting, relaxed, energetic, but also negative: lazy.

- **Social desirability scale** – he obtained a score of 20 points. It is considered high scoring between 20 and 33 points. People in this category are concerned with being perceived as socially desirable. They feel the need to have the approval of others for what they do. A high level of need for social approval is often characteristic of people living a sense of social insecurity, of anxiety, which may affect negatively their interaction with others. Such people are ruled by the desire to do what others expect from them, to behave according to certain social norms, which often causes these people to appear differently from what they are.

The desire to achieve the social desirability ideal generates in people in this situation, energy consumption and sometimes dissatisfaction due to unfulfilment of this goal. This energy could be channelled towards regaining self-confidence or performing a correct reassessment.

2) N. A. E. - **LAW SEQ questionnaire** - 6 points → very low self-esteem;



Analyzing responses to I2, I14, it is inferred that the need for action for the student to overcome the uncomfortable feeling related to the dissolution of friendship, especially since through I10 she affirms her desire for change. It requires the activity to be channelled towards regaining self-confidence, towards a fair review of self.

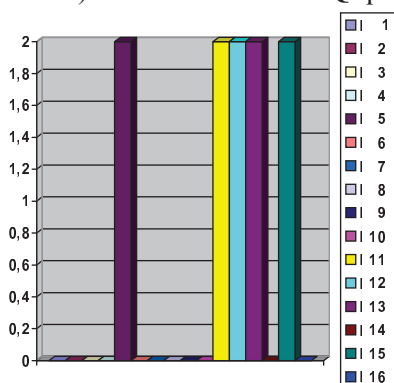
Fig. 2. Graphic description of the results to the LAW SEQ questionnaire

- **Self-assessment questionnaire** → 24 points - suggests a reasonable level of psychological comfort and an insignificant discrepancy between the current

Self and the ideal Self. As ideal person she appreciates the adjective *intelligent* which she does not mark in the “self portrait”.

- **Social desirability scale** – she obtained a score of 15 points. People in the category 9-19 points are characterized by behaviour that shows a relative balance between social desirability and social undesirability. They want to present themselves as being as close as possible to everyday normality.

3) S. S. L. - **LAW SEQ** questionnaire - 10 points → very low self-esteem;



The answer to I16, by which he accepts that other people believe he is telling lies, reveals that he is concerned by the assessments of others. Negative relations with others are expressed by the appreciation that others often break friendship with him and he must find new friends, for the old ones play with someone else (I3, I14). It is necessary to help the student recognize representative personal qualities and negative traits he wants to change in himself.

Fig. 3. Graphic description of the results to the LAW SEQ questionnaire

- **Self-assessment questionnaire** → 32 points - suggests a reasonable level of psychological comfort and an insignificant discrepancy between the “self portrait” and ideal Self. The same adjectives he attributes himself at present are also marked in the box *if he could be an ideal person*, including negative features: emotional, lazy.

- **Social desirability scale** – with a score of 22 points, he is characterised by a high degree of social desirability (social conformity). He is expected to change attitudes and behaviours easier, as required by specific circumstances of life, to get social approval of his acts.

V. Conclusions

The formation of a balanced self-image, of dignity and self-esteem and respect towards the others is done by becoming aware of resources and limitations, different from student to student. Thus we come to the acceptance of natural differences between people, to an increase in tolerance and to the avoidance of global labelling which can have negative effects on their personality.

At the same time, in order to improve students' self image, their self-control capacity, the reduction of the fear of failure, it is essential to implement strategies regarding a stimulative learning environment, involving all students, feedback on the performance level, recognition of the students' merits. Therefore, the attention that the teacher must pay to developing a positive self-image represents an important contribution to school success at this stage and the preparation for subsequent cycles.

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