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FLOW Theory in the Preparation of Vocational Subjects Teachers

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Abstract: The contribution deals with the FLOW theory of Czikszentmihaly. This theory is already well known in the professional psychological public. The FLOW theory is one of the main ways of achieving the so-called optimal highly focused mental state or optimal experience. According to its author, it depends on the ability of having control, at any moment, over what is happening in individual consciousness. It is one of the main determinants of what is simply referred to the term "happy and fulfilled life." The optimal experience is not the gift of being, it is the result of a purposeful, subjective effort of an individual. Life in the family may be the first impulse for identifying the path of the FLOW. The second, equally meaningful impulse should be the school or teachers and their educational activities. In order to successfully influence pupils in this area, the teachers need to focus themselves to FLOW issues. The authors of this article see a positive transfer of FLOW theory especially in realistically defined training and educational goals. The goals of the lesson have to be set to develop and respond to the quality of pupils' thinking logic. At the same time, there must be a significant motivational impulse to the action. And especially „the absorption" of the individual by subjective activity is a meaningful outcome of FLOW within the teaching process. Teaching and learning is a complicated and complex process. The versatility of this process results in the one hand, a wide range of scientific disciplines dealing with these notions (e.g. psychology, pedagogy, philosophy, biology, medicine, sociology, cybernetics, and the like) in the other hand a wide range of definitions, attempting to identify phenomena accompanying this multi-aspect and multi-factor process.

Keywords: Flow theory, Motivation, Educational goals

Introduction

The effort to fulfil own potential, to work on valuable life goals, to be deeply immersed in the thing that one believes in, to be committed to them, and to try to become true - these are the basic ways of the student's personality formation. How does the power of these factors change, what is the highest in their hierarchy? What is the place of the teacher in this process? The above mentioned factors are not products of genetic gear or life at all, they change their quality, while its metamorphoses are the result of considerable effort. Motivation, commitment, effort and perseverance represent not only the subjective power of the student, they are important drivers for the success and quality of students work determined primarily by the teacher's personality or the quality of their interaction. Professional literature considers the setting of external and internal personal goals to be one of the most important and most effective means of achieving optimum well-being in different situational contexts.

How should a teacher organize the lesson so that pupils have the chance to experience the most positive experience in school work? Are there general valid models of teacher's activity whose outcome is the FLOW status of his pupils? To put it simply, what does a teacher have to do to give pupils the greatest pleasure in their own work during lessons?

Results and Discussion

The phenomenology of enjoyment, according to its author, has eight main components. Thus, in reflecting the characteristics of the FLOW components into the reality of the educational process, we can define the following elements:

- 1 A prerequisite for positive survival is the fact that pupils are confronted with tasks or assignments that they have a chance to complete.
- 2 Pupils must be peacefully and meaningfully guided by teacher to adequate concentration
- 3 The task or assignment must be formulated in such a way that transparent cognitive or psychomotor goals are given to pupils
- 4 The teacher must in a two-way interaction, communicate with the pupils so that, at the time of solving the task or assignment, pupils are always provided with immediate feedback.
- 5 Formulation of tasks and assignments must be of interest to pupils so that in the process of their solution pupils have get into a state of non-violent but deep engagement.
- 6 Pupils must have a feeling of control over their actions or their work during lessons.
- 7 The interaction between the teacher and his pupils should be so absorbed that pupils gradually “forget each other”, after the interaction communication, the pupils “return” to their own ego with the feeling of its strengthening or highlighting.
- 8 The last characteristic of FLOW during lessons is the loss of the concept of time, which is only possible during meaningfully guided and quality bidirectional interaction.

In the didactic literature we can compare the effect of FLOW theory with the substitution effect, the main characteristic of which is the achievement of the pupil's success on the basis of previously experienced success - success produces success. The substitution effect is in the literature sometimes also mentioned as Matthew's effect. Its basic motif can be briefly summarized in the statement: "who has, will be added to him". To put it simply, the achievement of success is the driving force for such pupil's activities, which are once again a prerequisite for further success. The result of the combination of the above-mentioned FLOW components is that pupils experience a sense of deep enjoyment that is so enriching that pupils naturally desire its subsequent repetition. They are willing to spend a considerable amount of their own energy to repeat that feeling.

Belief in own Strength

A prerequisite for positive survival is the fact that pupils will be confronted with tasks or assignments that they have a chance to complete. Belief in pupils' own strength is reflected in teacher-pupil interaction into the didactic principle of adequacy. Adequacy means for the teacher to be demanding enough for the pupils, but demanding only to the extent that the task or assignment is achievable for the pupils. In the heterogeneity of pupils in the classroom, adequacy from the teacher requires not only a considerable dose of empathy, but also excellent pedagogical skills. In the dichotomy of feasibility versus inability to identify such boundary in which every pupil is found - excellent, average, but also lagging behind. It is clear from the above that the teacher has to prepare for the lesson a whole range of tasks, graded according to difficulty. Only then the teacher has the chance to address all pupils with assignments. Because if pupils receive tasks, assignments or questions that are resolved over their strengths or vice versa, the solution is trivial or quite simple, not requiring any energy, pupils gradually lose interest in such tasks. And to work without interest, without the spark of the inner motive, means for the pupils to issue unnecessary energy, the result of which is neutral or negative in terms of subjective enrichment. In the reality of the educational process, the applying of appropriateness is extremely difficult, requiring from the teacher to have a full range of pedagogical and didactic competences, enhanced by knowledge of psychology of pupils' personalities. Respecting the adequacy of the teacher towards pupils' means at every moment of the educational process to have a sense of balancing the challenges, it is finding a way of balance between students' abilities and their activities and activities during the lesson.

Adequate Level of Concentration

Pupils need to be non-violent, but meaningful guided by teacher to adequate concentration. If the appropriateness is right set, when "all the relevant skills of a person are needed to deal with a situation, then his attention it completely absorbed by that activity." There is no psychic energy left to process information other than the one that brings the action. The whole attention is focused on the relevant incentives" (p. 80). Appropriateness is thus one of the essential stimuli of full concentration. If the concentration can be

characterized by the spontaneity or absence of searching for meaningfulness, then another important element of an adequate degree of concentration is the motivation of the pupils. If a pupil doubts the meaningfulness of what is happening at the lesson, if his consciousness raises doubts such as "what for will I need this curriculum", "what is the meaning of what I am doing now", the teacher can never expect not only FLOW but also the adequate, meaningful or concentrated activity. The strength of motivation lies in the fact that the pupil is convinced of the necessity of his activities and of being active.

Transparency of Objectives

Each task or assignment within the educational process must be formulated so that the cognitive or psychomotor goals will be transparent for pupils.. The importance of using such an active verb through which is clearly defined the activity of pupils, without the possibility of various subjective explanations is shown and underlined. The uniqueness of the verb ensures that the subject of the activity is precisely clear to the pupil. Manger's technique of setting out cognitive or psychomotor goals, in addition to the power of uniqueness of the verb, also emphasizes the need to clearly define pupil performance standards and pupil performance conditions.

These three elements complement each other in such a way that at each moment they allow the pupil to perceive the image of the quality and meaningfulness of his activity. In accordance with Seneca's statement "No wind is favourable to a boat that does not know to which port it is sailing", the transparency of the goal, together with the conditions and standards of performance, is the reason why full involvement in FLOW survival can be achieved.

Feedbacks

In a bidirectional interaction, the teacher must communicate with the pupils so that, at the time of solving the task or assignment, the pupils always have immediate feedback. Fulfilment of this condition of quality of teacher-pupil interaction is closely related to the previous condition. The form of feedback differs in the different activities and activities of the pupils during educational process, but the phenomenon of the criteria "good or bad" or „correct or incorrect" is a guideline for pupils without whom the deep immersion in activity cannot be experienced. The author of the FLOW theory says that the kind of feedback is not essential. The rationale for feedback lies in the message to the pupil whether he or she succeeds in achieving the goal. This message symbolizes success for pupils, which not only significantly enhances the structure of the ego, but also helps to create order in consciousness. Through this order, feedback is very actively involved in the quality of systematic long-term memory, whereby the FLOW theory strongly underlines the legitimacy of the feedback law in the learning process.

Concentrations

The formulation of tasks and assignments must be of interest to the pupils so that in the process of solving them the pupils get into a state of non-violent but deep engagement. Only a meaningful engagement gives students the chance to forget about all the other, not always pleasant and positive aspects of life. The more is the teacher able to get excited his pupils about the lesson, the greater is the assumption that pupils automatically exclude irrelevant information from their consciousness. What is more, they exclude and disperse distraction or anxiety. This process of nonviolent exclusion of irrelevant or "painful" parts of the pupils' consciousness helps to create a clean, unloaded mind and thereby visibly improves the quality of survival. Logically, positive experience is thus a way of creating order in consciousness. FLOW survival through the focus of concentration is a determinant that contributes significantly to the exclusion of chaos in consciousness. The process of minimizing chaos, the result of which is not only a pleasant mental state, but also the gradual establishment of order in the pupils' consciousness is called negentropy. The relational plane to entropy (the second law of thermodynamics) as a measure of disorder or chaos is obvious and intentional.

Controls

Students must have a sense of control over their actions or their work during the lesson. Although the feeling of control is often only hypothetical, it gives students the chance to make sure that excellence is achievable. Or to make sure that the possibilities of mistakes or failures are minimized by their own efforts, that the activity of the

pupils moves the possibility of errors as close as possible to zero. The author of the theory of FLOW Csikszentmihályi as a psychologist emphasizes that in this process is important to realize that people are not happy to feel that they have control, but a sense of control in difficult situations. The message for the educational process can be translated into a reference for teachers in order to concentrate much more on the process of education and training than on the results. If pupils are properly guided by their teachers, if the teacher interacts significantly with the process of the teaching, he gives pupils the chance to grasp their freedom to decide on the content of consciousness. This act of freedom is a lifelong, meaningful outfit of the pupils, willing to cope with the ambiguities of life.

Absorption, the loss of self awareness

The interaction between the teacher and his pupils should be so absorbed that pupils gradually “forget about each other”, after the interaction communication, the pupils “return” to their own ego with the feeling of its strengthening or emphasizing. A necessary condition for FLOW students from the side of teacher is to create a stimulating, positive interaction environment. From the pedagogical interaction, students have to feel joy, atmosphere at the lesson must be inspiring for the extraordinary possibilities of activities and enriching in terms of perfecting abilities or skills. Students must have a sense of belonging and a subconscious effort to do their best. The absence of ego in consciousness does not mean that the student gives up control of his mental energy. It is rather a holistic and analytical penetration that does not result in a loss of ego but a loss of consciousness of ego. The subsequent "emergence" of the ego is characterized by its reinforcement and improvement. The ego has features of complexity.

Measure of time

The last FLOW characteristic during lessons is the loss of concept of time. Again, the most important predictor of this FLOW condition is the quality of pedagogical interaction. The loss of the concept of time is only possible with a meaningfully guided and quality bidirectional interaction, where both the teacher and the pupils stop to perceive objectively the external quantifiable time indicators.

The author of FLOW describes two ways of relativisation of time – acceleration and deceleration. Acceleration shortens the objective time interval, the feeling of acceleration is more frequent, deceleration extends multiple times slowing the objective time. The deceleration can be detected by delving into the details of the activity with an emphasis on its excellence, focusing on absolute details. The operationalization of the activity relativizes the time measure, the student may have feeling that he has been doing the whole thing for an hour, but in fact it took only a few minutes. According to the author of FLOW, it is not clear whether the loss of time is only an accompanying phenomenon or it is something that contributes to the positive survival. Despite the confusion, we may conclude that abstracting from time is a pleasant change in today's hectic; the phenomenon of being freed from strict chronological aspects is a joyful enrichment not only for the pupils but also for the teachers.

Conclusion

The conclusion for motivation to apply FLOW in the teaching process is stimulating from both points of view - from "description of the state" and "content elements". The common denominator of these two points of view is the statement that a FLOW student does not do something for himself or for a teacher with the expectation of added value or positive assessment. The FLOW student is rewarded with the activity as such, the actual implementation and progress of the activity is rewarded for the student. This state we call autotelic survival – auto means me and telos means goal. Thus, autotelic survival is such a survival, the main characteristic of which is the performance of an activity not for its consequences (even if they are positive) but for the activity itself. Didactically - to lead the lesson so that the process of the lesson itself is dominant, not knowledge or competence themselves. Qualitative and quantitative changes in s personality of student are the added value of FLOW theory.

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