

Research Article

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Action Approach in Promoting the Development of the Learner's Personality

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Abstract: The article reveals the act of upbringing as a pedagogical tool in pupils' development. Purposeful guidance of development in the pedagogical process is directed towards the formation of a humane personality. The formation of free consciousness, independence and responsibility of the growing personality in the action represents its core. The article presents the procedure structural model of the action. Its essence is the interaction of the objective – the subject, means and product of the action – and the subjective – needs, the aim, knowledge, skills, self-experience and action components. The cooperation model that is important means of enriching the mutual experience among both the peers and the adults is developed on the basis of this model. The action theory analyzed in the article can facilitate a more purposeful organization of the pedagogical process in school and higher education institution. The procedure structural approach of the action can be applied by the academic staff, students, teachers and pupils in different types of the action. The phenomena analyzed in the article and the presented models are based on the pedagogical (H. Gudjons, M. Klarin, A. Špona) and psychological (A. Leontyev, Ľ. Vygotsky, E. Erikson) theories applying the categories of pedagogy and psychology.

Keywords: the aim of upbringing, the structure of the action process, the content of development, pupils' and teachers' collaboration.

Introduction

The 21st century develops as the century of people's equal-in-rights collaboration. Learners demand more categorically to set new focuses in the organization of the pedagogical process of school that would establish human-centred cooperation between the peers and generations. Pupils' demands to change the pedagogical action of the school are determined by their developmental needs, especially the acquisition of self-development management skills. This is defined by the transformations in the society, especially the quality of the collaboration between the employees and employers. The negative demographic situation in the country is connected with the ineffective development of economy, the contradictory long-term socio-economic situation of the affluent and poor population, the shortcomings in the upbringing of children and the youth. The life quality improves slowly in Latvia. All the societal phenomena, especially the negative ones, affect the development of children and the youth more pronouncedly than the development of adults. The negativities in the society make the effective impact of the school on pupils' balanced development more difficult.

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Aim of the article

To show the action and collaboration as pedagogical means for promoting pupils' self-development.

1. The unity of freedom, independence and responsibility in upbringing

The school of human theory is acknowledged as an influential factor in the cultural, economic, social and political development of the society in the 21st century. Nowadays school is not only the educational institution for it 'unequivocally comprises the function of upbringing (the formation of attitudes), the compensation (as the levelling of the social behaviour deficit) and the protective function' (*Gudjons, 2007*). Thus, school can be defined as a diversely structured organization organized by the state, municipalities or private entities for promoting pupils' balanced and creative development in a complex and systematic way within the cooperation amongst the pupils–teachers–parents–social groups.

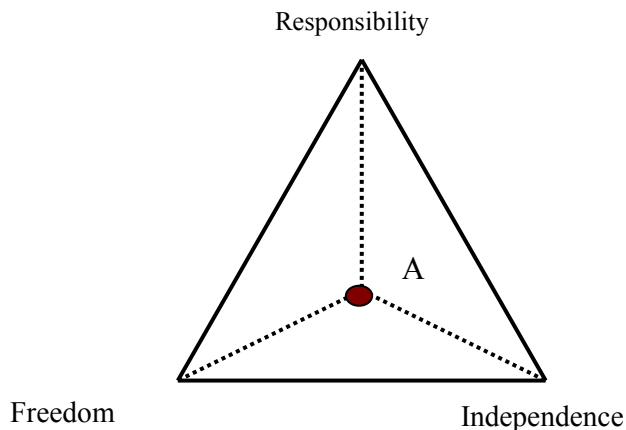


Figure 1. The aim of upbringing: a free, responsible and independent personality that is expressed in action.

Each school is a special and different pedagogically psychological and social system. In each school, each teacher has his/her own style of pedagogical action. The pedagogical process is directed towards the aim of upbringing – a free, independent and responsible person (see Fig. 1).

Freedom in Latvia became the most important value together with the restoration of the national independence. The new system of social relations in the country put forward the objective for every person to express oneself more vividly as the subject of the life activity 'that can and is able to choose, establish and realize one's attitude independently as an autonomous doer. This is expressed in dispositions, interests and the choice of values' (*Karpova, 1994*).

Free choice facilitates the formation of free consciousness and a special peculiar way of self-expression in the personality's structure. What is hereditary and inborn does not by itself reveal the individual peculiarity because only the development of the self-experience of the person's life in the particular social environment is important (*Anan'jevs, 1969*). This means that the personality development becomes more explicit in the individualization. The person's development is a continuous and qualitative process. It is connected with the changes in the organism, in which the quantity of growth alternates periodically with qualitative developmental changes. The wholeness of the organism as the interaction of growth and development is affected by upbringing. The content of natural and social development has been developed based on L. Vygotsky's approach (see Fig. 2).

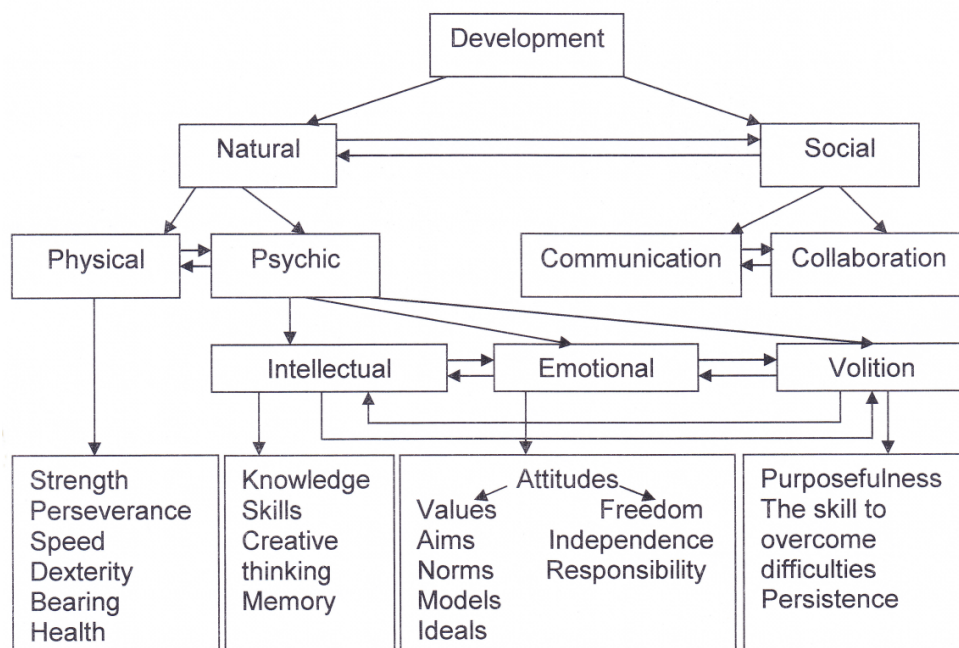


Figure 2. The content of person's development.

The balance of physical, psychic and social components is important in the person's development. The balance of the development is not always realized in the pedagogical process of school. There still exists the detachment between the formation of pupils' knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviour habits in schools. The amount of children's movements in the family, too, is not always proportionate with the time spent with technologies or the cooperation with peers. As a result, the contemporary pupil has broad superficial knowledge but often he/she is unable to refer it to the content of a concrete school subject and the improvement of one's personality. Nowadays the teacher's function is to guide the pupil systematically towards a free choice, independence and responsibility in the learning process.

Freedom in school begins where the pupil and the teacher have a possibility of choosing freely the action. Pupils in many cases mastered this understanding of freedom faster than their teachers. Pedagogical conflicts emerge on the basis of this contradiction because pupils' free action both at school and in the family is often named as impunity.

Pupil's free choice facilitates the formation of his/her independence and responsibility. The mental development process already for primary pupils, especially adolescents and youth, means the development of oneself paying attention to the development of one's cognition and personality (Klarins, 1998). By self-realizing one's identity, the pupil becomes more independent. Independence is formed in practicing as the component of inner freedom in the unity with responsibility. Pupils' inner world is expressed in performing independently freely chosen, personally meaningful actions in which the independence and responsibility can develop as personal qualities. Thus, pupils' independence and responsibility are formed in the systematic action of cognition and character building or the diverse action of balanced self-guided development. This is promoted by the teacher's creative and free choice of the content and form in collaboration with pupils. It is based on the teacher's responsibility for promoting the pupil's balanced and purposeful development. It is the pedagogical condition for the teacher's and pupil's collaboration aimed at developing productive pedagogical action. The decisive tool for satisfying the pupils' learning needs is the collaboration with both the teachers and the parents. The collaboration helps both the pupils and the adults to improve the mutual self-experience. The content of the teachers' answers to the question – what have I learnt today from my pupils – serves as an indicator for the pedagogical productivity; the productivity of the pupils' learning activity, in its turn, will depend on the answers given to the questions – what have I learn myself, what have I learnt from my teachers and what have I learnt from my parents and my friends.

2. Action as the means of the personality development

The person's action needs incite and guide. Each person has the biological, emotional, voluntary and social needs as the inner or subjective demands for values for his/her life. Since the birth, the child already has the need for investigation or information about his physical, psychic and social position, the need to be in security, to be fed and to be warm. This means that the child needs movements, the need for good feeling and positive self-feeling. This is provided by the child's closest people in the family: the mother, father, brothers, sisters and grandparents.

As the child grows, the needs for communication as the kind of action become broader and more diverse. If there are brothers and sisters in the family then common playing and games satisfy these needs. The child at the age from 3 to 6 years needs the peers' company for a successful physical and mental development. This is ensured by both the child's own creative playing and the activities purposefully organized by adults in the preschool. During the adolescence, the need for cooperation in the peer group becomes one of the most important means of promoting purposeful development. A personally and socially significant set of subject actions describes the person at the particular stage of development. As to the content, the development is united with the socialization process of the personality. The person gets acquainted with, accepts or rejects the system of aims, values, norms and ideals of the action offered by the social group in the socialization process. The person accepting particular or several components of this group turns them into the internal needs and interiorizes them into personally significant values. The socialization process in the personality development is a real acquisition of social norms and values in action. The pupil as a subject reveals himself/herself in work as an independent, responsible doer and realizes his/her attitude to oneself, peers and adults in a shared process of action. It is expressed in the pupil's interest in participating in a purposeful action. Active participation in socialization becomes the practice of acting and strengthens the sense of belonging to the family, class, team and the group of artistic activities.

Action becomes personally meaningful for the pupil in the process of satisfying his/her needs. Learning has lost its importance for the contemporary pupil, and it is proved by the international study performed in 2011 about pupils in Riga and Moscow [3]. We can understand the causes of this phenomenon if we analyze them together with the values dominating in the society. Lately, the main themes of discussions in the society, including the education system, have been money and power. Education as a value has been little touched upon on these discussions. The quality of education is measured by financial indicators, for example, the effectiveness of the school network and money spent for the education of one pupil, and the quantitative indicators, such as the average mark, school ratings and achievement in national examinations, and naming them as the quality of education. The low remuneration of teachers and university staff has been discussed for several years, whilst the quality of the pedagogical process, the formation of the pupil's personality in the learning process, the interiorization of external conditions and the exteriorization of knowledge, skills and abilities have not been discussed at all. It is important for the pupil to share one's ideas, attitude, task or problem solution skills with the peers or younger learners in the learning process. This process consolidates one's own knowledge and skills as well as helps the peers to understand and solve tasks in the learning process.

Ananyev (1969) established the unity of genetics and social environment in the research of human development. The personally meaningful action in which the objective and subjective components of the learning process interact has a decisive role in the pupil's development. The procedure structural model of the pupil's action in which the objective components are the object, pedagogical means (choice, application) and the learning outcome (product) has been developed based on the ideas proposed by the philosopher Kvetnoi (1974), psychologists Leontyev (1972) and Abulhanova - Slavskaya (1977) the pedagogue Bitina (1984). These three objective components of action are present in both the pupils' practical and theoretical (oral) action. If in the oral, wordy action the objective components are abstract, ideal then in practical action they are concrete, material. The objective components are connected with the subjective components in the action process: with attitudes, needs, the aim, interests, knowledge, skills, self-experience and satisfaction or dissatisfaction. It is important that pupils are fully aware of the object of learning in the diverse forms of the teaching/learning process – the lesson, workshop and seminar – the noun, gravitation,

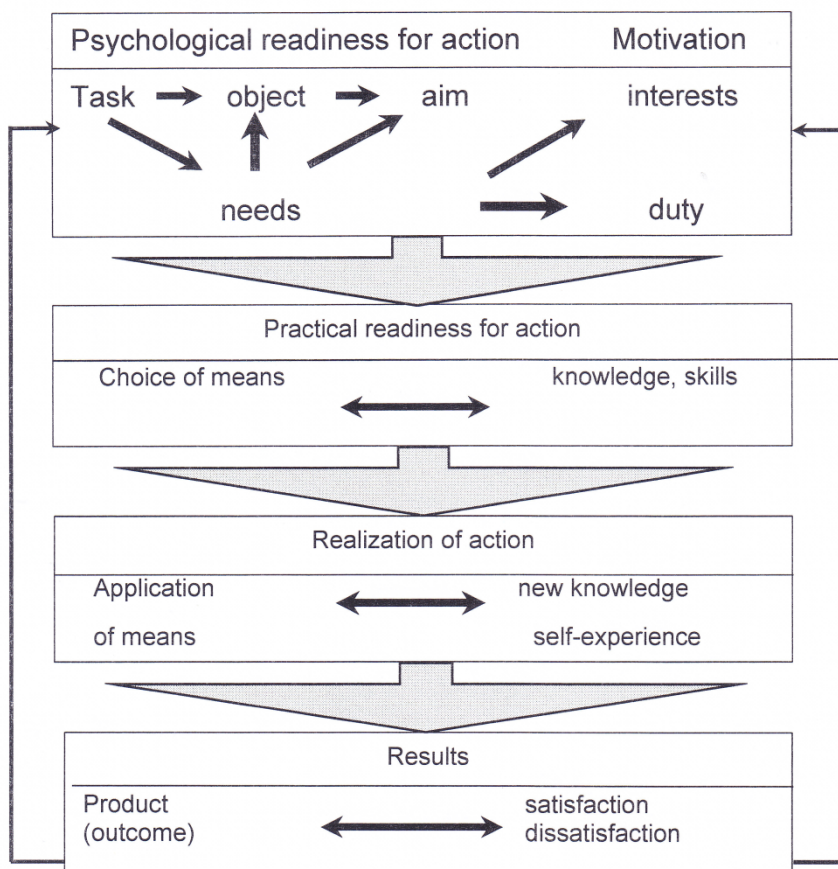


Figure 3. The action model of learning (Špona, 2001)

the chemical characteristics of acids and so on and with the teachers' assistance develop the subjective aim of the lesson as the outcome, result of the learning process. Being aware of the object of the action and understanding of the aim forms the pupil's positive attitude to work in the lesson (see Fig. 3). The object of the action in the lesson and the subjective aim facilitate the pupil's psychological readiness for learning in the lesson. The choice and application of new teaching/learning tools, means are important for achieving the aim. Practical readiness to learn is the selection of means from those offered by the teacher and the ones selected by pupils themselves from the previously acquired knowledge and skills. The teaching/learning means, tools as the objective components of the action interact with the pupils' subjective knowledge and skills. The awareness of pupils' means, tools for the achievement of aims means their practical readiness to apply these means, that is, for the realization of the action. By applying the newly gained learning tools, the pupil acquires new self-experience. The aim of learning is the teacher's and pupil's cooperation in the acquisition of new self-experience. Continuous activation of the cognitive processes, especially thinking, applying the newly gained means of learning is the guarantee for the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, attitudes and new self-experience. To put it in simple words – the pupil is not bored and the aim of learning is reached if the individual cognitive processes are continuously and consciously guided, if the outcomes of thinking – judgments and conclusions are made based on the personal self-experience and are made independently.

Conscious learning is interesting in all age groups, and subjective self-assessment at the end of the lesson about the knowledge and skills that are changed during the learning process and as an outcome of this process is an integral part of the process. In such a way, each objective component of the learning process interacts with the subjective components of the pupil's learning. The interaction in the learning process is the manifestation of consequences of two or more pedagogical components in the unity with a

new quality. 'Learning with joy means a productive and creative cognitive action that is an essential tool for facilitating the self-development' (Špona, 2001).

Such an analysis of the pupil's learning demands putting forward the pupil's self-assessment as the leading way of assessing the learning which is followed by the assessment given by others, including the teacher's assessment. It is the self-assessment in learning that encourages pupils to prognosticate more precisely and participate in the choice of the learning content, form and method so that the result stays in long-term memory and is further applicable. The formation of self-assessment skills is the teaching/learning content competence of today's pupils. This also changes the teacher's function in the pedagogical process – not 'to give knowledge' but to support pupils' independent, purposeful learning as the means of the personality development. Pupils who have acquired the learning steps: 1st step: psychological readiness for learning, correlation of the object and the aim; 2nd step: practical readiness for learning, the choice of means and activation of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary to perform the learning; 3rd step: realization of learning and reciprocal exchange of peer experience and the pupil, teacher experience; 4th step: the outcome, result of learning: self-assessed product, the transformed knowledge, skills, attitudes and the quality of achieving the aim as satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the process and the result.

The quality of the psychological and practical preparation becomes evident in the realization of learning – the understanding about what and how should be done in order to acquire the object of the particular lesson. It is advisable for the pupil to perform all the steps of the action with understanding, without leaving unanswered questions and without clarifying each strategy necessary for performing the action. The best set of modern learning strategies is cooperation.

3. Collaboration as the means of pupils' balanced development.

Collaboration is the work of two or more persons that is directed towards a common aim, coordinated means of achieving the aim and approximated assessment and self-assessment about the achieved results (Špona, 2001).

Collaboration is a form of taking over the mutual peer or generational experience, the possibility for imitating the best examples and the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and attitudes. Collaboration in pupils' development can be viewed as the key pedagogical tool in the upbringing/self-education and pedagogical action. The task of the diverse forms of work used by schools is to help pupils to acquire the guidance of self-development skills. This means that the 21st century has become the age for acknowledging man as the highest value, in which the responsibility of every person for the acquisition of the self-development skills (self-education, self-experience, self-expression, self-assessment, self-regulation, etc.) in the pedagogical process increases. The realization of these ideas needs acting in a group and pair that ensures the cooperation or the interaction of the impact of social and natural development.

The collaboration in modern school amongst the peers is more productive than between generations – teachers and pupils [3]. This can be explained by different collaboration experience between the generations. The collaboration model reveals that it is complicated in the pedagogical practice to implement the approximation of the aim between the generations because a part of teachers does not use the advantages of equal-in-rights collaboration positions with pupils in the pedagogical process. This has been determined by the historically established position of the teacher as the leading provider of knowledge. Nowadays the 'manager-subordinate' position in the teacher and pupils' relations hinders the democratization of the school's work and the formation of equal-in-rights position of pupils and teachers. Pupils master the technologies much faster; they obtain diverse and topical information that is important in the knowledge acquisition process. However, listening to pupils during the lessons, their discussion and evaluation still lacks systemic approach. The cooperation process always guides both the sides towards putting forward common approximated aims and their attainment (see Fig. 4).

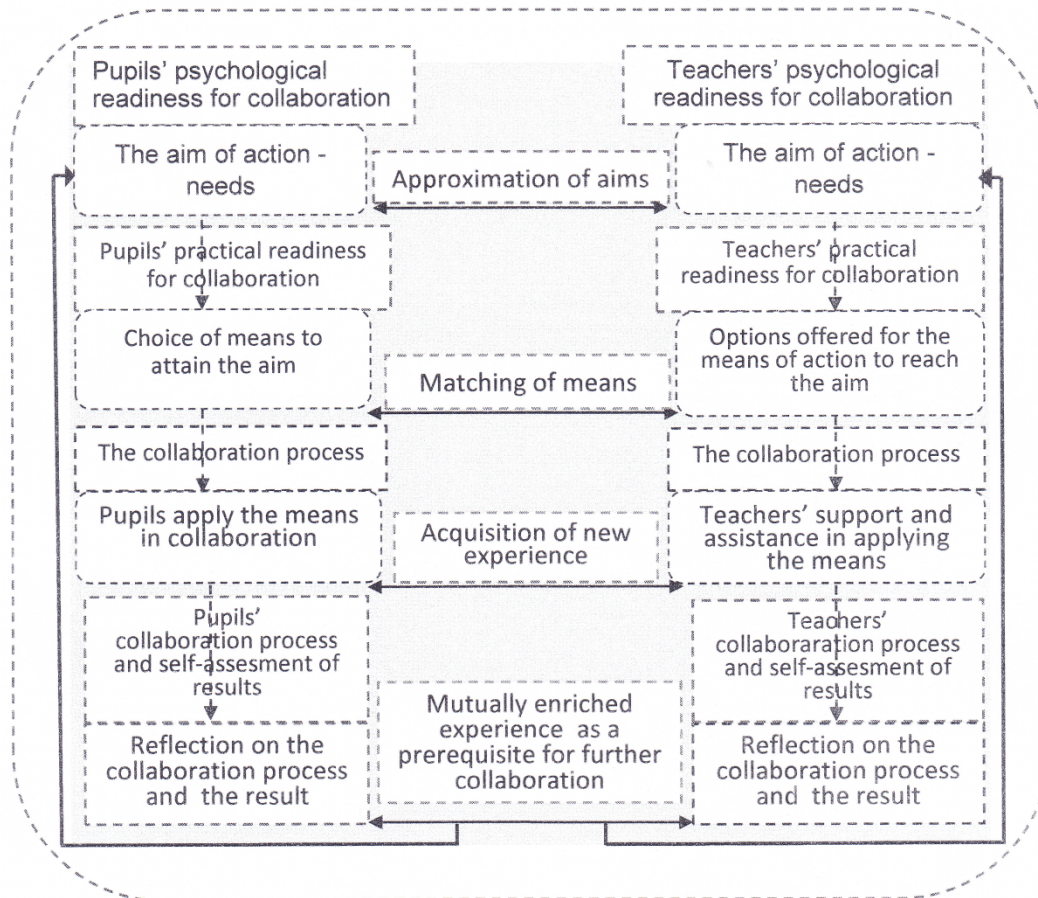


Figure 4. The collaboration model.

The aim set by teachers and pupils is not identical because the function in the teaching/learning process is different. It is important that pupils and teachers agree together about achieving the aim. The approximation of aims that is coordinated in the discussion and answers the question of what has to be achieved as the result of cooperation defines the choice of pedagogical and learning tools, means from the options suggested by the teacher and proposals given by pupils. When pupils and the teacher agree on the application of means in the teaching/learning process then this process is more productive. It is important that both the pupils and the teacher are aware of the significance of their action because only in such conditions the cooperation leads to the desired outcome.

The teacher in the process of implementing the collaboration is an active participant and the enricher of pupils' experience, and at the same time, he/she is learning from the pupils. The mutually enriched experience is the prerequisite for further cooperation for improving the mutual respect, trust and openness between the teacher and pupils.

Conclusion

A topical aim of upbringing/self-upbringing in the 21st century is the pupil's free, independent and responsible personality. According to human development, the action organized in the conditions of free choice, independence and responsibility occurs during the childhood, adolescence and youth. Parents' and teachers' support, the facilitation of purposeful and balanced psychic, physical and social development are important for every pupil. The development is connected with growth. Physical and social changes are

observed in the transformation processes, whilst psychic development changes are not outwardly seen. Balanced intellectual, emotional and volition development has to be purposefully and systematically supported and guided by adults – parents and teachers. Learning at school is directed towards pupils' intellectual development. There is often insufficient purposeful emotional and volition development at school. The main pedagogical means for a balanced development is the action approach; cooperation, in its turn, helps to organize teaching and learning that is based on respect, openness and trust.

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