

ACTION RESEARCH AS STRATEGY FOR LEARNING OF GIFTED AND TALENTED PUPILS

Resume: The paper presents the experience of the author about the usage of the action research as learning methods of gifted and talented pupils. Focus is on the theoretical elaboration of the giftedness and talent, the assumptions of gifted and talented pupil as researcher/ action researcher and the proposed practical aspect of the realization the action researches by the gifted and talented pupil as learning method.

During the elaboration of the first part, it is stressed that the perception of giftedness and talent is very divergent, and it goes from the attitudes about their total overlapping in the meaning and the essence, to that one in which gifted and talented are separated and different categories of pupil. We propose to the researcher and the teacher not to take care about those perceptions, but to try to find original and unique aspect of dealing with the gifted and talented, in function of satisfying their needs.

When we express our experience in promotion of the idea of pupils as action researchers, i.e gifted and talented pupils as action researchers, we stress the convenience of the characteristics of the action researcher to the level and type of giftedness and talent of the pupil. The idea is to idealize the connection and relationship between the abilities of gifted and talented and the theoretical and practical settings of action researches.

Thus, the ability of gifted and talented pupil for better and improved identification of the problems, their interpretative and critical perception, ability to create possible hypotheses and solutions and preparation to test, check and validate that decision through action, convince us in the purpose of promotion of the idea of action research as appropriate strategy for teaching and learning of gifted and talented pupils.

At the end of the paper are given the proposed directions for thinking about this idea and is opened the dialogue among teachers, researchers, institutions and policymakers for establishment of new, research based teaching and learning strategy.

Keywords: gifted pupil, talented pupil, pupil as researcher, gifted and talented as action researchers, method of learning and teaching.

Introduction

The work with talented and gifted seeks originality in the perception of the gifted and talented, originality in planning the work with the gifted and talented, originality in realization and also evaluation of the gifted and talented. Especially important segment in that work is establishment of creative and original solutions in diagnosing giftedness and talent, finding specific ways of work with them in

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accordance with their talent, and design of specific methodology for following of their achievement, progress and success.

Through this speech we are trying to go further in using of the action researches as one of the creative and original ways of the didactical-methodological aspect of teaching gifted and talented.

About giftedness and talent

If we want to start with the creation and designing of the educational work with the gifted and talented pupil we should create specific perception of the basic literature and authorities in those areas. So, at the beginning I will present the selected "views" of some of my colleagues about the giftedness and talent.

For Moira Thomson "...gifted pupils are those who require greater breadth and depth of learning activities and extended opportunities across the curriculum in order to develop their abilities."² In the *Encyclopedia of Giftedness, Creativity, and Talent* are given the perceptions of the terms gifted and talent in a way of description of different perspectives. So, the term giftedness is explained as: "The various definitions of giftedness range from the general (e.g., extraordinary intellectual ability or high IQ score) to the specific (e.g., precocity in specific disciplines such as mathematics), but nearly all definitions include reference to distinction or extraordinary accomplishment in the field."³ In the same Encyclopedia is said that: "For some, *talent* refers to artistic, creative, intellectual, or athletic excellence whereas *giftedness* in this conception is defined as the overall ability of the person. Talent then would develop in areas of specific aptitude that are valued and rewarded by society and where significant practice occurred to develop high-levels of specific performances. Others see talent as the outcome of developed natural abilities regardless of the talent domain. Talent has been proposed as a more useful and less offensive concept than giftedness."⁴ In the Marland Definition is said that: "Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who, by virtue of outstanding abilities, are capable of high performance. These are children who require differential educational programs and/or services beyond those provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and the society."⁵

We have mentioned the previous perceptions about the giftedness and talent not to follow them in my paper, but to show that we are ready to create our own perception. That is the first step in conducting of creative, original and authentic perception of the talent and giftedness. We perceive gifted and talented as individuals affected by the intrinsic and extrinsic factors which lead original and

² Thomson M., (2006). *Supporting Gifted and Talented Pupils in the Secondary School*, Paul Chapman Publishing, a SAGE Publications Company, p. 4

³ Kerr B. (Ed.), (2009). *Encyclopedia of Giftedness, Creativity, and Talent Vol. 1/2*, London: SAGE Publications, p. 386–387

⁴ Kerr B. (Ed.), (2009). *Encyclopedia of Giftedness, Creativity, and Talent Vol. 1/2*, London: SAGE Publications, p. 863

⁵ Tunnicliffe C., (2010). *Teaching Able, Gifted and Talented Children Strategies, Activities and Resources Clive*, London: SAGE Publications, p. 17

creative steps for self-development and development of the educational processes. The mentioned will satisfy the needs of able and talented pupil stated by Teare B., which includes: "...space to make individual contributions from open-ended situations; the opportunity to take risks in an organized way with the facility to fail without threat; contact with like-minded people, either peers or adults; a fair proportion of teachers' time but deployed differently than for other pupils; a good balance of working with urgency and pace, and time to reflect; question-and-answer sessions that play to the higher-order thinking skills; only as much instruction as is needed, thus allowing the able to interpret what is required for themselves; opportunities to develop work further; an environment in which alternative methods and alternative answers are encouraged; work set in such a way that creativity and imagination are involved extensively; schemes of work that recognize appropriate starting points and subsequent steps rather than 'blanket' instructions for everybody; an appreciation that ability is not always matched by social and emotional development; a variety of teaching styles to accommodate the individual learning needs of different pupils."⁶

One of the examples for having space for dealing with the knowledge is given by Mason L during the explanation about the computer work of students. According to Mason "To deal with the popular messages of science, for example, and debatable issues they will encounter in their everyday lives, students need to be able to recognize whether arguments are supported by evidence, the quality and quantity of that evidence, as well as the pragmatic meaning of messages (reports or texts), that is, the intentions (Norris and Phillips, 1994). It is even more important these days for students to be able to critically evaluate information and information sources ..."⁷

About gifted and talented pupil as researcher/ action researcher

In elaboration of this part we will start with the view of Kincheloe L.J. and Steinberg R. S. on pupil research. The authors said that: "As student researchers pursue such a reflective relationship to their everyday experiences, they gain the ability to explore the hidden forces that have shaped their lives."⁸ That insight is also stressed by the Cheminai R.: "Pupils can effect change in their own school or college by making sure that the teachers who make the decisions know exactly what pupils think and what they want, as a result of pupil-led action research."⁹

⁶ Teare, B., (2005). *Effective Resources for Able & Talented Children*, London: Continuum International Publishing Group, p. 8–9.

⁷ Mason, L., Beliefs about knowledge and revision of knowledge: on the importance of epistemic beliefs for intentional conceptual change in elementary and middle school students, In: Bendixen D. L. and Feucht C.F. (Ed.), (2010). *Personal Epistemology in the Classroom*, Cambridge University Press, p. 283.

⁸ Kincheloe, L.J. and Steinberg, R. S. (2002). Students as Researchers: Critical Visions, Emancipatory Insights In: Shirley R. Steinberg and Joe L. Kincheloe (Ed.). *Students as Researchers: Creating Classrooms that Matter*, London: Taylor & Francis e-Library, p.3.

⁹ Cheminai, R., (2012). *Children and Young People as Action Researchers: A practical guide to supporting pupil voice in schools*, Open University Press, p. 4.

The research competences of the pupils are the main component of the structure of gifted and talented pupil. Those competences are not equal for all gifted and talented pupils. Some of them possess specific research competence depends from the level of giftedness and talent, the structure of giftedness and talent and the specific characteristic of expression of giftedness and talent. It can be discussed about the differences of research competences among gifted and talented pupils, too. The highest level of practicing research competences by the gifted and talented pupil is creation and participation of pupil in "pupil action research" activity. Considerably lower usage of the capacities of the gifted and talented happens when those pupil are engaged as action researchers in participative, but "second person" action research, conducted by other researchers. The lowest level of engagement of the capacities of gifted and talented people, very similar as "other" pupils, is the participation of the gifted and talented in action researches as interviewee. The perception of Cheminais R. that action research are activities of "group of pupils" which "...involves investigating or exploring the issue further by undertaking research, to gather evidence in the form of information (data), which is analyzed and interpreted to reach a conclusion and make recommendations, to inform decision-making, in order to bring about the right change or improvement for the benefit of the pupils concerned"¹⁰ are not acceptable for us, especially not when discuss about the action researches by the gifted and talented. The action research by the gifted and talented pupil can be also conducted individually, depending of concerning, attitudes, motivation, interest and all specific circumstances related to the individual.

Based on this assumption, we tried to connect the giftedness and talent with the theoretical bases of the action researches. With this elaboration we also tried to answer the question of Bear J. and Kaufman J.C: "Are teaching for creativity and teaching for skill acquisition and content knowledge fundamentally at odds?"¹¹ On one hand, we perceive the action research as general research method which enables us and pupil in creating new practices. On the other hand, we "think" and "act" about the action research as a teaching method. This means that the action research of gifted and talented pupil can be productive way of creating new authentic, original, unique and appropriate learning practices. Such new practices are results of the received information and primarily follow the principle that "...the providers of information are the owners of that information"¹². That is the reason to say that: "Action research of pupil (ARP) is a concept of defined behavior of pupil in creating understandable perception, acceptable and wanted actions, expected conditions and achieved goals in their own, unique but inappropriate learning environment."¹³

Bearing in mind previous, in the table below we go "beyond" and "above" those perceptions. When we talk about "going further-beyond" in it, we think about

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 4.

¹¹ Bear, J. and Kaufman, J.C., (2012). *Being Creative Inside and Outside the Classroom-How to Boost Your Students' Creativity – And Your Own*, Rotterdam: SENSE Publishers, p.145.

¹² Atweh, B., Christensen, C. and Dornan, L., (2002). Students as action Researchers, In: Atweh B., Kemmis S. and Weeks P., *Action research in practice- Partnerships for Social Justice in Education*, Taylor & Francis, p. 114.

¹³ Iliev, D. Pupils as action researchers – benefits and limitations, World Conference in Educational Science, Istanbul, published on Elsevier, *Procedia –Social and Behavioral Sciences*, p. 4209.

connecting the base and premises of the giftedness and talent of pupil with the abilities necessary to conduct action research.

Table: Using of action researches from gifted and talented pupil in order to research the classroom and curriculum

<i>In order to:</i>	<i>Pupil as action researcher, depend of their talent and giftedness:</i>
Selecting of focus/ problem	Instead of group interest, can start according individual decision.
Participatory / collaborator decisions	Instead of "being included", selecting research partners.
Research paradigms	Instead of positivistic perception of the "knowledge and curriculum", can perceive on interpretative and critical way.
Research designs	Instead of focusing on description, can select, use and combined different research designs.
Research techniques	Instead of using of structured instrument for data gathering, can create and use non-structured and narrative research instruments.
Data collection process	Instead of waiting to be engaged, can take an action and organize it.
Data analyses	Instead of using "basic" methods, usage of triangulation.
Writing report	Instead of schemas, usage of creative, non-structured reports.
Results presenting methods	Instead of using standardized academic method for presentation, using the practical benefit, usage and usefulness of the results.
Using the results	Instead of only "use" of the results, criticize, change and enquire results.
...	...

About gifted and talented pupil action research as teaching and learning strategy

The starting point of the action research is "the problem". When speaking about initiative for researching, it is important to mention the view of the problem from Edward de Bono, cited by Teare Barry: "Problem-solving may seem to be a rather specialized part of thinking. But if we change the name to 'dealing with a situation', 'overcoming an obstacle', 'bringing about a desired effect', 'making something happen', then it can be seen that the thinking involved is very much the thinking that is involved in everyday life even though the actual problems may appear exotic (page I I)."¹⁴

Learner-centered teaching and learning can be the basic assumption for realization of the "pupil as researcher" concept. This is a picture of anticyclone oriented direction of the knowledge, which means that pupil inquire, explore and research the current setting, change it and reflect on the teaching process. We have

¹⁴ Teare B., (2006). *Problem-solving and Thinking Skills Resources for Able and Talented Children*, London: Network Continuum Education, p.15.

to know that"...students need to take control of their learning by developing the capacity to self-assess..."¹⁵

The "way of thinking" about the action research as teaching method is according the wave of new-coming didactics and pedagogues which promote the ability of gifted pupil to research their practice. The possible focus of such research is presented in the following tables.

Table Using of action researches from gifted and talented pupil in order to teaching

In order to:	Pupil as action researcher, depend of their talent and giftedness:		
	Learn about (to know):	Think about (to solve)	Act about/on (to change)
Teaching methods	x	x	x
Teaching strategies	x	x	x
Behavior of teacher	x	x	x
Character of the curriculum	x	x	x
Relationship among classroom participants	x	x	x
Using media	x	x	x
...	x	x	x

Table Using of action researches from gifted and talented pupil in order to learning

In order to:	Pupil as action researcher, depend of their talent and giftedness:		
	Learn about (to know):	Think about (to solve)	Act about/on (to change)
Learning methods	x	x	x
Learning strategies	x	x	x
Learning styles	x	x	x
Learning disabilities	x	x	x
Learning preferences	x	x	x
Learning underachievement	x	x	x
Learning motivation	x	x	x
Learning communications	x	x	x
...	x	x	x

According to the data presented in the tables, we can accept and confirm the speech of Chris Smith about the pupil as researcher who is "information producers". According Chris, "Being an information producer requires children to learn to: take greater responsibility for their own learning; work with others as well as on their own; gather information and organize it for analysis; synthesize and draw

¹⁵ Weinbaum A. et al., (2004). *Teaching as Inquiry: Asking Hard Questions to Improve Practice and Student Achievement*, Teachers College Press, p. 16.

conclusions based on evidence gathered; make moral and value judgements about key issues. "¹⁶

All of this information will improve pupil behavior, teacher behavior, the quality and the degree of realization of the curricula, satisfaction of all the beneficiaries, carrier orientation of pupil, the decisions of educational decision-makers, etc.

Conclusion

The values of teaching and learning processes arise from the satisfaction of the beneficiaries of that processes. The action research has a power to produce relevant, valuable and concrete information, but product too, about the everyday pupil activity, the processes of more powerful and clear picture about the usage of action research in the educational processes we have in a situation in which gifted and talented pupil has the opportunity to conduct and realize action research which will improve their ability, premises, and circumstances to learn in their own way. The treasure of giftedness and talent can offer the action research strength to face with the educational problem and to overcome every possible unacceptable situation. This strength can influence the achievement of "other pupil" and create better learning environment. Teacher should support action research activity of gifted and talented, and offer them their participation. This will create more understandable, more predictable and achievable circumstances for realization of the curriculum by following reflexivity, context and situation in which the learning is conducting.

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¹⁶ Smith C., (2005). *Teaching Gifted and Talented Pupils in the Primary School*, London: Paul Chapman Publishing, A SAGE Publications Company, p. 62–63

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Direction for discussion

At the end of this speech, I will ask a few provocative questions which can be the direction for discussion!

For the teachers

Are the teachers prepared to use action research as research method in their classrooms?

Are the teachers prepared to use benefits from the pupil action research in their classrooms?

Are the teachers prepared to use benefits from the gifted and talented pupil action research in their classrooms?

...

For all pupils in the classroom

Are the pupils prepared to use action research during learning?

Are the pupils prepared to use action research during teaching?

Are the pupils aware of the possibility to conduct action research?

Is it possible to believe that pupils can create their learning processes?

...

For gifted and talented pupils