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Correlation between Teaching Styles and Approaches to Learning of the Pupils of the Final Year of Primary School

Extended summary

The aim of this paper is to explore, based on the common perception of a teacher as an important factor in education, the impact of teaching styles on the eighth-grade primary pupils' choice of approaches to learning. The goal of the research described in the paper was to determine whether there is a correlation between teaching styles and pupils' approaches to learning. Directly linked to the research goal was our hypothesis that there is a correlation between teaching styles and pupils' approaches to learning. Two methods were used in the research: theoretical analysis method and the method of empirical, non-experimental research. Two instruments were used in the research as well. The instrument for examining teaching styles was developed specifically for this research, while the other instrument, used for examining pupils' approaches to learning, was taken over from other authors. The instrument in question was the Revised Two – Factor Study Process Questionnaire – R-SPQ- 2R (Biggs et al., 2001). This questionnaire was translated from English for the purposes of the research and adapted to be suitable for the pupils' age and easily used in our language. The selection of the classification of teaching styles was based on the theoretical concept proposed by Adrian Underhill, American researcher. Underhill distinguishes three types of teachers according to their teaching styles: the explainer, the involver and the enabler. The research sample consisted of 840 eighth-graders. Pupils were asked to assess on a five-point scale the level of representation of the abovementioned teaching styles among their teachers (5 – all teachers, 1 – none). Item analysis was used for testing the reliability of the instrument. The reliability quotients of the instrument used for measuring teaching styles were as follows: 0.72 for the 'explainer' style, 0.71 for the 'involver' style, and 0.89 for the 'enabler' teaching style. Factor analysis was used for testing the

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validity of the teaching style measuring instrument. Based on the factor structure, the starting hypothesis was confirmed to a great extent, namely, three key factors constituting the items in the teaching style measuring instrument and referring to the enabler, explainer and involver styles were identified. According to the results of the correlation analysis, there is a significant correlation between the three teaching styles and pupils' learning approaches. A positive correlation was identified between the three teaching styles and a deep approach to learning, while a negative correlation was identified between 'the explainer' teaching style and the surface approach to learning. The correlation between the 'enabler' style and the deep approach to learning was (0.732), the correlation between the 'explainer' style and the deep approach was (0.173), while the correlation between the 'involver' style and the deep approach was (0.526). The correlation between the 'enabler' style and the surface approach to learning was (0.606), the correlation between the 'explainer' style and the surface approach was (-0.260), whereas the correlation between the 'involver' style and the surface learning approach was (0.544). The obtained results indicate that pupils are able to distinguish several teaching styles used by teachers to encourage their pupils and select learning approaches that pupils find desirable. Pupils' selection of the styles that they perceive as crucial for selecting the most adequate learning approaches provided us with the results indicating that there is a correlation between teaching styles and pupils' approaches to learning. It is indicative that the biggest correlation was identified between the 'enabler' teaching style and pupils' learning approaches, followed by the correlation between the 'involver' teaching style and pupils' learning approaches, whereas the smallest correlation exists between the 'explainer' teaching style and pupils' approaches to learning. According to the obtained results, the conclusion is that teachers' preferred teaching styles have a great impact on their pupils' approach to learning. Teachers who encourage their pupils to learn and acknowledge their opinions develop pupils' intrinsic motivation and interest in learning, as well as their dedication to work. They give various instructions and incentives to their pupils and provide support and encouragement when their pupils have to give answers to questions. Such learning approach implies pupils' readiness to work hard in order to understand the content of teaching. The results indicating a correlation between the 'enabler' teaching style and the surface learning approach are quite unusual and require a proper answer. One of the reasons may be that teachers, though they do include their pupils in the teaching process, focus mostly on ex cathedra teaching, which gives them control during the entire lesson. In this situation, pupils tend to focus on meeting the set requirements and learning the content of the lesson, without paying attention to understanding the content. A more in-depth insight into the correlation between this model of teaching styles and pupils' learning approaches requires further research. The obtained results indicate that by making an adequate choice of the learning approach, teachers can have an important role in reducing surface learning and encouraging deep learning as a desirable learning approach. It is very important for the school practice that the 'enabler' teaching style is encouraged and developed because it has proved to be a desirable teaching style in the classroom.

Keywords: teaching style, deep learning approach, surface learning approach.

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