Individuality and Education:
The Effects of a New Education Strategy on Development Individuality

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Abstract: *In this paper a new model of education is discussed. This model is a new proposed education strategy that gives students the freedom to recognize own capabilities and develop their individuality. To move in this direction, schools must evolve from their traditional model of education to a more active, learners-centered approach to learning. According to the author, the knowledge is provided through research and active mode of learning connected to previous knowledge, interests and talents. In addition, there are multi - dimensional relationships between course concepts and community. It is concluded that despite the increased interest in this kind of research, theoretical standing of a new education approach which should foster individuality is surprisingly absent in the literature.*

Key words: *Individuality, education, education strategy*

1. INTRODUCTION

Individuality is a possession of a unique value system and unique traits that are different from all others. An acceptance of individuality means allowing him to express his thoughts freely and differently [1].

The environment for learning has changed rapidly through the applying of new technologies as well as expectations towards professional knowledge in the information age. Thus, 21st-century skills call for flexible and novel abilities in shared working practices [1]. Namely, the needs of current professional knowledge set new challenges for learning and teaching in educational contexts. Meeting these challenges calls for an education strategy that seeks to establish new goals for education and places greater emphasis on individuality.

According to the millennium development goals and the human development paradigm, education and training are considered to be the privileged social environment for enhancing personal specificities and understanding the individuality of other people [2]. Therefore, the new approach to education seeks to establish new goals for education and places greater emphasis on individuality. In line with this, researchers have begun to focus on analyzing the educational goals and how they fit into the human development process, which assumes not only cognitive development, but also the integration and converging and complete development of the multiple dimensions forming human personality and identity [3]. Learning environment should provide conditions for independent learning and support human development process. This implies that education should help students to develop the skills of analysis and critical inquiry with particular emphasis on exploring and evaluating different perspectives. In other words, in any education of quality, students encounter an abundance of intellectual diversity — new knowledge, different perspectives, competing ideas, and alternative claims of truth [4]. Hence, when education is successful, it makes us aware that we have in us the power to change our existing conditions in a creative way. It is the means of making us masters of our fates, not victims of oppressive forces [5].

1.1. Freedom and individuality in education

The most important condition is the freedom. The academic freedom implies not just freedom from constraint but also freedom for faculty and students to work within a scholarly community in order to develop the intellectual and personal qualities required from citizens in a vibrant democracy and participants in a vigorous economy [4].

A good education system gives students the freedom to recognize their capabilities and individual potentials. Hence, creating a classroom atmosphere where thinking,

questioning and imagining is encouraged, is what permits students the freedom to truly learn [6]. In this context, education should foster students to work collaboratively; ask questions and creatively about ideas and issues across a range of disciplines. As creative thinkers, they try to imagine and explore alternatives. Such an approach is required for a solid academic foundation and it enhances students' intelligences, including "soft skills" such as understanding, empathy and communication skills [7]. The use of different learning materials allows students with various principal learning styles to absorb information in the most beneficial way. Learning is fostered by multidimensional interactions between students and teachers. To be able to learn on their own, students need unlimited time to play, explore, become bored, overcome boredom, discover their own interests, and pursue those interests [8]. It helps them develop skills of analysis and critical inquiry with particular emphasis on exploring and evaluating competing claims and different perspectives. By thoughtfully engaging diverse perspectives, education leads to greater personal freedom through greater competence [4]. However, a student's freedom to learn requires the teacher's freedom to teach [6]. In this context, current educational systems need to adopt new methods and strategies that are able to support made educational goals and ensure the freedom of learning and teaching.

2. DEVELOPING EDUCATION STRATEGY BASED ON FREEDOM OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

This new education strategy, which encourages interaction between teachers and learners needs different learning styles. Primarily this means fostering creativity, which requires an active mode of learning, and consequently a new teaching format, where the teacher is a coach. Creative teachers are willing to change and welcome new experiences; they aren't afraid to go off the main track or step into the unknown [9]. Namely, the teachers are key figures to implement change, but they need support to understand and accept creativity in their practices. Creative teaching may be defined in two ways: firstly, teaching creatively and secondly, teaching for creativity [10]. Teaching creatively might be described as teachers using approaches to make learning more interesting, engaging, exciting and effective. Teachers have to attract their interest and attention in a new way, and as a result the

development of creative approaches is called for [9]. Also the teachers must make an effort to better understand their students. On the other side, learners are empowered to take ownership of their own learning processes. These aspects point towards a learner-centered pedagogy, where personalization and individualization of learning have a growing role, and where the pupils have a say in the fashioning of tasks [11], [12]. In addition, one number of researchers agree that in creativity, there are always some new, significant and appropriate ideas, understanding, information, approach or solution to a problem that emerges from an individual person, group or community [11], [13]. Given the advantages of creativity for society and individuals, one would expect to see a wide spread of creative practices in education [14]. The creative practices in education should help learners to work on building their knowledge by defining things that are especially important to them, and in that process strengthen their sense of self and individuality. It also involves developing students' personal qualities, including a strong sense of responsibility to self and others [4]. In other words, the new education model should be based on individual`s growth and be able to foster the individuality, flexibility and personality enabling development and showing a clear path toward the following [1]:

- ➢ promoting achievement;
- ➢ tackling barriers to inclusion;
- ➢ creating a learning and teaching environment that is sensitive to individual needs
- ➢ original and creative thinking,
- ➢ intelligent decision-making,
- ➢ fostering young people's learning experiences through multi dimensional relationships between course concepts and community
- ➢ supporting individuals to take ownership of their own learning processes
- ➢ improving student`s relationships with teachers, where the teacher is a coach
- ➢ acquisition of knowledge for resolution of problems,
- ➢ flexible adaptation to new situations,
- ➢ effective cooperation with others,
- ➢ learner centered pedagogy, which is focused on individual learners, their experiences, perspectives, back-grounds, talents, interests, capacities and needs with a focus on leaning. In this context, new education strategies should encourage interaction between teachers and learners

This approach to education strategy means an active mode of learning and it influences innovative personality development that creates something unique, turning it into entrepreneurial activity (figure 1).

2.1 The effects of a new education strategy on development individuality

It is our attitude that the effects of a new education strategy, which focuses on an individual and the development of his/her individuality, can be viewed from a number of aspects, such as:

a) Cognitive aspect;
b) Behavioral aspect;
c) Integrated cognitive and behavioral aspects.

Fostering cognitive abilities in an individual helps develop their intellectual potentials. This can be achieved through varied modern forms of studying, such as:

- Video games;
- Computer simulations of real practical situations that require from the student to solve a problem or make intelligent decisions;
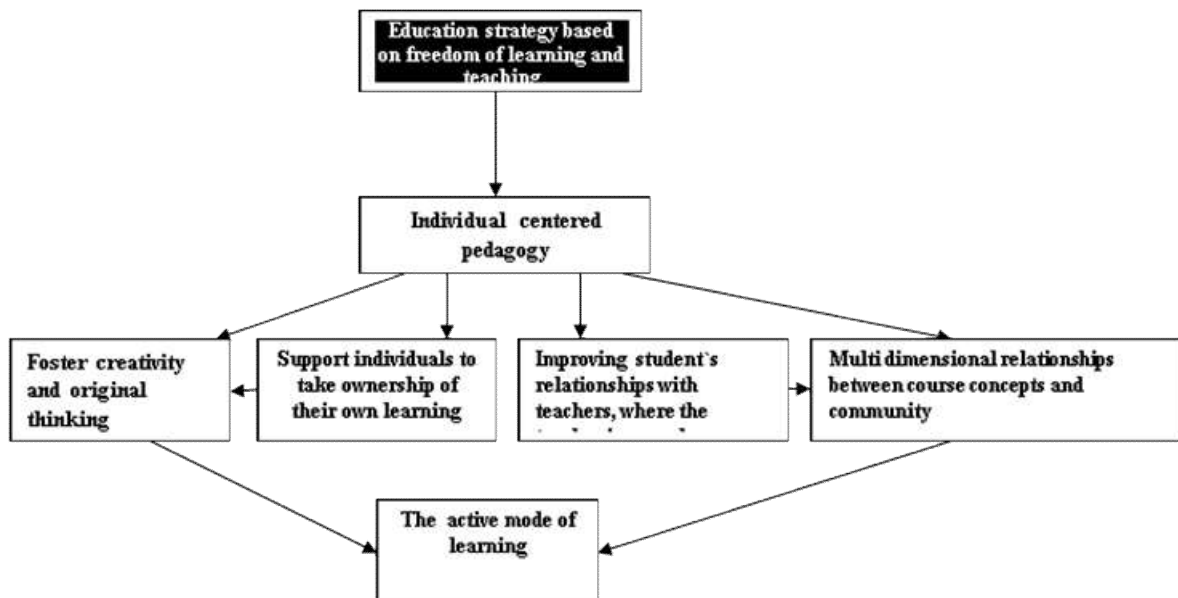

Figure 1. Developing education strategy based on the freedom of learning and teaching. Source: [14].

- Including students into research and projects and having them do their individual projects;
- Networking students both within and outside the school community so that they could share knowledge and experience;
- Continuous discussions on certain topics, meant to develop critical thinking and personal attitudes, etc.

The behavioral aspects should include the change in students' attitudes toward the manner of studying, as well as toward the subject matter they are expected to master during the learning process. This primarily concerns more freedom in expressing their attitudes, which is the basis for fostering individuality. Besides, students are expected to

be more independent in studying, while the role of the teacher/lecturer is reduced to that of the coach. Namely, teachers will be expected to supervise the students' work and guide them. Thus they will help them become autonomous and self-confident what will ultimately result in the students' greater autonomy and resourcefulness when engaged in the work process.

In our opinion, no impressive results can be achieved in enhancing individuality in the educational process without integrating cognitive and behavioral results. Hence, new learning strategies have to observe both of those aspects. Moreover, it is not only observing the strategies that matters, but also their developing and changing so that they

should be geared to the needs of both the individual and the society as a whole. These changes cannot be one-sided, but should be viewed from the perspective of the student as well as from that of the teacher. Teachers will also be expected to be accomplished promoters of these changes in order that the effect of the new educational strategies is full. First of all, they will have to accept the role of a coach and be able to guide students in the desired direction, i.e., in the direction of enhancing their creativity, originality, and logical reasoning. They should ensure a relaxed learning atmosphere (without stress) good communication, be always available to students (via modern technologies), show respect for every student, and observe cultural, ethnic and gender differences. The teachers should also provide the balance between structure and freedom of expression and determine the triggering or hindering of students' creative output [14]. In order to achieve these goals, the teachers will become more creative and master more modern, multidisciplinary knowledge [1]. This will in turn be achieved through permanent education, but also through learning together and sharing experiences in the student-teacher relation. The approach under consideration here follows a similar philosophy of thinking as in [27] and [28], although the fields are very different, so this could be treated as a case of transdisciplinarization [29].

3. THE IMPACT OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES ON EDUCATION: DOES TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT FREEDOM AND INDIVIDUALITY?

New technologies could support creative learning and innovative teaching and foster individual potential. Computer-based educational techniques have been considered as our best hope for individualization [14]. The different levels of interaction and collaboration characteristics of new technologies facilitate personalization of learning paths [15]. Namely, the development and implementation of student-centric technology will bring a need to shift to student-centered pedagogy and the ownership of learning by learners, a quality that is indispensable for fostering creativity [16]. It can also support personal growth and intellectual maturation. Adding distance courses to existing offerings will increase the number of alternatives that students can choose from. Certainly, students can individualize their own education through their choices [17]. If their alternatives can be expanded then individualization can be increased.

New technologies can also improve communication between students and teachers. They allow each student greater diversity for learning, enhance interactivity between individual students and individual teachers, provide a space for personalized, flexible learning beyond the classroom walls and allow students to live locally whilst learning globally - through the use of external resources accessed via the world wide web.
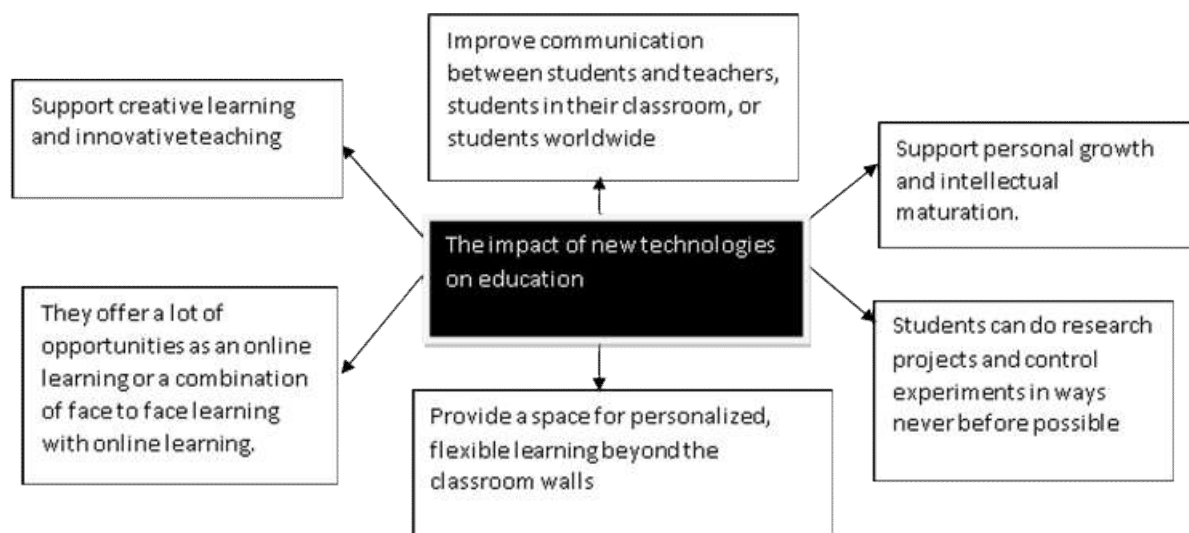

Figure 2.The impact of new technologies on education. Source: Author

A large amount of research compares the modalities of electronic communication with oral speech, especially with a direct, face-to-face communication, despite the fact that electronic communications display a large number of properties similar to the written form of communication. Similarly to the face-to-face communication, electronic communication is interactive. The result is that the behavior in electronic communication takes on the characteristics of both the documents – the written and the informal speech [18]. Regardless of the advantage in terms of the speed of exchange of information electronically and to larger distances, electronic communication revealed some additional misconceptions, e.g., the tasks will not be solved faster if set electronically.

Appropriation of technological platforms requires new approaches for learning style. They offer a lot of opportunities as online learning or a combination of face to face with online learning. In addition, we can soon expect that the students will be learning with software that is developed for their kind of intelligence and learning style [18]. Various online applications could be used to empower teachers to become innovative in their teaching, as well as students to develop their creative skills and learn creatively. According to recent research [19], the introduction of virtual environments into the higher education has a potential to bring a positive change in the learning experience. Namely, the online learning environment is quite different from a traditional classroom. In other words, online courses require participants to take on new and different teaching/ learning behaviors. Recent research has compared online learning to face-to-face learning [20], explored the effectiveness of online tools such as discussion boards and chat rooms [21], addressed evaluating effective online instruction [22]; [23], and assessed the value of online courses in specific fields of study [24]. Draves [25] provides a list of reasons why he believes the Internet enhances learning, including such advantages as the ability to learn at a peak time of the day and at one's own speed, accessibility to more information, an ability to track personal progress, and the capability to test personal learning efforts. In addition, the e-learning students were in an environment where professors respond to their needs on demand [26] (Radovic Markovic 2007). Namely, teaching and learning takes on a more collaborative feel in an e-learning environment.

We can conclude that with new technology, the process of learning in the classroom can become significantly richer as students have access to new and different types of information and can combine face to face learning with e-learning. This combination provides them a lot of opportunities. Students can do research projects and control experiments in ways never before possible. It provides them freedom to communicate their results and conclusions in a variety of media to their teacher, students in their classroom, or students worldwide.

4. CONCLUSION

Education throughout the world faces challenges such as economic, technological, social, and personal. Individuality development through education process depends on the kind of training people receive. This requires a fundamental rethinking of educational systems, both formal and informal. The learning is fostered by multidimensional interactions between students and teachers. While learners should be at the centre of educational processes, teachers play critical roles as guides or learning.

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