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Unifying Heart and Mind : Discussing the Principles of Day Care Education

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Unifying Heart and Mind: Discussing the Principles of Day Care Education

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Omówienie zasad
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General trends

People who are concerned about the quality of day care have their opinions rooted in psychological tests. The education day care provides, from its facilities to the knowledge of the staff to children's personalities and behaviours, everything depends upon the guidance of psychological theory. Nevertheless, research workers who engage in psychological studies offer contrasting insights as a combining result of applying different research methods and generating different research results. A large number of people who discuss the quality of day care take physiological psychology methods and results into account. Their fundamental belief is that individuals are genetic and environmental products and that their emotions and behaviours are mere responses to external stimuli.¹

¹ S.K. Escalona, "Babies at Double Hazard: Early Development of Infants at Biologic and Social Risk", *Pediatrics* 1982, vol. 70, p. 670–675; A. Cas-

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Articles and Dissertations

Other experts suggest that, although physiological psychology demonstrates a relationship between mental state and external stimulus, the method of self-observation gives us a complete picture of psychology because it not only examines the physical structure of emotional life such as interest, relatedness, and happiness, but it also observes the external behavioural organization such as exertion, attention, and persistence in the face of difficulties.² It is only by the method of self-observation that we can start to explain the phenomenon of mental well-being. We then apply these psychological results to educational contexts.³ It is only by the method of self-observation that we can understand its fundamental belief by which a mindset is indeed not the product of external stimuli, but a power of autonomy.⁴ The sensation of freedom and duty are all embedded in it and when we mistakenly consider the mindset as the result of an external stimulus, day care loses its value because its function is simply to develop and cultivate children's liberal conduct.⁵

Practice of day care and the issues of day care education

The two major lines of research regarding children's state of psychological well-being result in two parallel perceptions of the practices of day care and the reasons behind them. Those who assert the influential power of genetic and environmental effects are bound to think that American children are different from Italian children, and

pi, A. Taylor, T.E. Moffitt, R. Plomin, "Neighborhood Deprivation Affects Children's Mental Health: Environmental Risks, Identified in Genetic Design", *Psychological Science* 2000, vol. 11, pp. 338–342.

² L. Albright, T.E. Malloy, "Self-Observation of Social Behaviour and Meta-perception", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 1999, vol. 77, pp. 726–734; S.M. Johnson, G. White, "Self-Observation as an Agent of Behavioral Change", *Behaviour Therapy* 1971, vol. 2, pp. 488–497.

³ G.-D. Chen, Nurkhamid, Ch.-Y. Wang, S.-H. Yang, P.-Y. Chao, "Self-Observation Model Employing an Instinctive Interface for Classroom Active Learning", *Educational Technology & Society* 2014, vol. 17, pp. 14–26.

⁴ D.M. Ste-Marie, K.A. Vertes, B. Law, A.M. Rymal, "Learner-Controlled Self-Observation is Advantageous for Motor Skill Acquisition", *Frontiers in Psychology* 2013, vol. 3, pp. 1–10.

⁵ A. Sherman, "Allowing Children to be Children: the Message Young Children Receive About School", *Education* 1998, vol. 3, pp. 57–63.

they are different from German, French, and Russian children. They are in need of different experiences and should be cared for in different ways. The same line of thought applies to the idea of children of poor families and rich families.⁶ Thus, the design of curriculum and pedagogical instruction in day care has no other choice than be different. They also state that activities such as singing and playing, communicating and story-telling, and observation and creation have to be limited in the realm of children's experiences and surrounding environments.⁷ Children's experiences and surroundings are different from one another. In this account, it is necessary for each child to demand unique curriculum material and special instructional method. As a result of this argument, issues about educational aim begin to arise. For example, is an educator's ultimate status to situate herself in children's environments and their genetic abilities, or to change their surroundings and conquer their genetic inheritances? Is the function of education to level out social differences among citizens or to diminish them? Is the effect of day care manifest in teaching children common affairs or cultivating novel affairs? Is a child's determination of self-transformation and creation of his or her own environment in conflict with his or her genetics?⁸

Fröbel's philosophy of day care education

On the other hand, those psychologists who follow the theory of Friedrich Fröbel, often known as the founding-father of day care, hold that the universal quality of humankind is manifested in children, and the common experience in childhood should be established and presented to them. The profession of day care is to provide chil-

⁶ E. Hoff-Ginsberg, "Mother-Child Conversation in Different Social Classes and Communicative Settings", *Child Development* 1991, vol. 62, pp. 782–796; J.R. Smith, J. Brooks-Gunn, P. Klebanov, "The Consequences of Living in Poverty for Young Children's Cognitive and Verbal Ability and Early School Achievement", in: *Consequences of Growing up Poor*, eds. G.J. Duncan, J. Brooks-Gunn, New York 1997, pp. 132–189.

⁷ K.R. White, "The Relation between Socioeconomic Status and Academic Achievement", *Psychological Bulletin* 1982, vol. 91, pp. 461–481.

⁸ S.M. Nelson, P.L. Guerra, "Educator Beliefs and Cultural Knowledge: Implications for School Improvement Efforts", *Educational Administration Quarterly* 2014, vol. 50, pp. 67–95.

dren with common childhood experience through certain channels. This common experience is necessary for people of all nationalities, ethnicities and social statuses. Meanwhile, it is sufficient to enhance the quality of the common good. These tasks illustrate the complete affair of education and it is the day care's novel role to establish the relationship between individual life and communal life.⁹

The effects of genes and environments cannot be overlooked. Those who engage in Child Studies cannot yield true and important research findings without investigating these two variables as they are the standpoints of the analysis.¹⁰ Individuals are motivated to gain knowledge and to fulfill life goals. Unless the reasons for their conduct are connected with ethical concerns, the outcome of the pursuit is not going to be successful. In other words, a person can only recognize his or her personal life from the lives of humankind.¹¹ In this light, educational concern is about creating personal lives and taking advantage of humankind's prosperity. If genes and environments serve as the border for education and restraint for experience and knowledge, we are making ourselves complicit in the crime of breaking the hope and promise for progress and development. In addition to the insight that human mental life is the result of quality of genes and effects of environment, there are other explanations. In this light, the role for day care is to allow children to experience the interacting systems around them and help them engage in possible creations. Children will seek to make improvements in their environments and live in a sublime realm of heart and mind. They will attend in order to enrich their life purpose, and develop the standard of performance to realize the purpose, such as to change the immortality of the poor and the ignorance and greed of the rich, so that the rich and the poor can all walk on the road of the communal life of humankind. These ideas represent the fundamental belief of Fröbel's school of thought.¹²

⁹ P. Jackson, "Fröbel Education Re-assessed: British and German Experience, 1850–1940", *Early Child Development and Care* 1999, vol. 149, pp. 11–25.

¹⁰ J.T. McBride, "Genes, Environment, Child Care, and Asthma", *The Journal of Pediatrics* 2009, vol. 155, pp. 771–772.

¹¹ V. Pacini-Ketchabaw, "Postcolonial Entanglements: Unruling Stories", *Child and Youth Services* 2012, vol. 33, pp. 303–316.

¹² K. Brehony, "Transforming Theories of Childhood and Early Childhood Education: Child Study and the Empirical Assault on Fröbelian Rationalism", *Paedagogica Historica* 2009, vol. 45, pp. 585–604.

Aim of Day Care Education

All types of discussions have taken place regarding the nature and effects of day care's intellectual education and moral education.¹³ Critics argue that the current approach in day care is the reason behind children's corrupted morality and superficial intelligence. The current principles of day care are underpinned by mere recreation, and its methods are limited to skilful direction. Although these criticisms are the remarks of those who do not understand the principles and methods of day care, day care has no choice but to take responsibility for the misconception.

Large numbers of discussions have been made about the various types of practices in day care. Some claim that people have rights for freedom and development.¹⁴ This idea has become prominent in the contemporary world and has had a considerable impact upon societal states and relations with education being one of them. As a result, discourses of self-control and duty have gradually begun to disappear in day care and the state of non-government is emerging. Child Studies scholars all claim that children's acts should follow their desires and impulses and when one desired act is prohibited, other ones under the guidance of desires and impulses can be used as a replacement. Thus, learning has become the short-lived interest of children and the momentary pleasure of teachers. They almost forget that children usually have a number of maladaptive interests which are opposed to the adaptive interest for their settings. This type of perception is the result of a misunderstanding of Fröbel's ideal of the child's divine essence.¹⁵ Child Studies scholars have no choice but to take responsibility for the misconception.

¹³ A. Chatzipanteli, V. Grammatikopoulos, A. Gregoriadis, "Development and Evaluation of Metacognition in Early Childhood Education", *Early Child Development and Care* 2014, vol. 184, pp. 1223–1232; A. Alkon, M. Ramler, K. MacLennan, "Evaluation of Mental Health Consultation in Child Care Centers", *Early Childhood Education* 2003, vol. 31, pp. 91–99.

¹⁴ M. Lindahl, "Children's Right to Democratic Upbringings", *International Journal of Early Childhood* 2005, vol. 37, no. 3, pp. 33–47.

¹⁵ K. Hultqvist, "Changing Rationales for Governing the Child: a Historical Perspective on the Emergence of the Psychological Child in the Context of Preschool-Notes on a Study in Progress", *Childhood* 1997, vol. 4, pp. 405–424.

The true meaning of Fröbel’s philosophy is different. He suggests that to become a special child is not a holistic ideal for a child to realize. A child’s ideal can only be revealed in the whole body of humankind¹⁶ and the aim of education is to realize this goal—and its method can only be determined by its aim. Although children have the possibility for freedom, they are still far from being free. Genuine freedom is not about doing the things we desire, but instead doing the things which we are obliged to do.¹⁷ Thus, Fröbel’s theory of day care emphasizes presenting to children certain ideals and unifying them, making children willing to do things they are obliged to do and thus feel content about themselves. To make children happy about the things they are obliged to do is exactly the task of day care.¹⁸

Because of the reasons mentioned above, those who blame day care for corrupting children’s morality are mistaken. It can be acknowledged that if the method of skilful direction is applied inappropriately, its negative consequences will show. The genuine approach of skilful direction aims at unifying children with good consequences, diminishing their points of contradiction and conflict. The practice in day care that Fröbel advocates is to help children establish their life goals so they will be free from the sensation of contradiction and conflict, then encourage them to accomplish their determined goals.¹⁹ The acts of goal attainment conducted by children do not exclude the necessity of efforts and self-control. Fröbel strictly distinguishes between the difference between the ideal child and the child with practical affairs because he is deeply concerned about the quality of authenticity and integrity within the ideal.²⁰ He claims that children distinguish good from bad and true from false through the

¹⁶ C. Adelman, “Over Two Years, What Did Froebel Say to Pestalozzi?”, *History of Education* 2000, vol. 29, pp. 1103–1114; S. Chung, D.J. Walsh, “Unpacking Child-Centredness: a History of Meanings”, *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 2000, vol. 32, pp. 215–234.

¹⁷ S. Herrington, “The Garden in Fröbel’s Kindergarten: Beyond the Metaphor”, *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes: an International Quarterly* 1998, vol. 18, pp. 326–338.

¹⁸ H.C. Downen, *Froebel and Education through Self-Activity*, New York 1897.

¹⁹ R. Miller, “Educating the True Self: Spiritual Roots of the Holistic World-view”, *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 1991, vol. 31, pp. 53–67.

²⁰ R.A. Davis, “Government Intervention in Child Rearing: Governing Infancy”, *Educational Theory* 2010, vol. 60, pp. 285–298.

consequences of their acts. As a result they gradually invent life principles and their lives are in accordance with those principles.²¹

Curriculum of Day Care Education

Material and Play

Distinctive perspectives split day care practices into two kinds. One maintains Fröbel's curriculum and continually develops his instructions.²² Another one opposes his design and application of play material, known by the name of "Fröbel's Gifts", and give play less important role.²³

All sorts of experiments have been undertaken as far as "creative work" is concerned.²⁴ Teaching children skills of material-making or other home-making techniques such as cooking is indeed not today's initiative. Those things happened long before the Fröbel era and Fröbel must have been aware of them. On the other hand, if these life skills are taught to children on time, the benefits they gain are the same as they learn from other subjects. Day care uses the project method to cultivate children's creative ability in a manner that can be transferable for future use.²⁵ The only issue is whether this type of practice is in line with Fröbel's theory.

Those who oppose the idea of "Gifts" in day care offer two criticisms. First, the use of Gifts in day care has the intention of using specialized material to replace children's general toys. Second, this type of design prohibits children's autonomous power.²⁶ These two claims

²¹ E.R. Murray, *Fröbel as a Pioneer in Modern Psychology*, Baltimore 1914.

²² J.P. Manning, "Rediscovering Froebel: A Call to Re-examine His Life & Gifts", *Early Childhood Education Journal* 2005, vol. 32, pp. 371–376; K.D. Nawrotzki, "Froebel is Dead; Long Live Froebel! The National Froebel Foundation and English Education", *History of Education* 2006, vol. 35, pp. 209–223.

²³ K. Brehony, "Transforming Theories of Childhood and Early Childhood Education", op. cit., pp. 585–604.

²⁴ K.D. Wiggin, N.A. Smith, *Froebel's Gifts*, Boston & New York 1895.

²⁵ J. Read, "Free Play with Froebel: Use and Abuse of Progressive Pedagogy in London's Infant Schools, 1870–c.1904", *Paedagogica Historica* 2006, vol. 42, pp. 299–323.

²⁶ E.R. Murray, *Fröbel as a Pioneer in Modern Psychology*, op. cit.

are ambiguous arguments since children spend a limited period of time playing with the Gifts during the day and are free to experiment with other materials for the rest of the day. Based on this reason, the first criticism does not serve as an appropriate argument. The second criticism, which directs the Gifts' prohibiting effect toward children's autonomy, stems from a misunderstanding of the nature of Gifts. If we know that the arrangement of Gifts can be made in multiple ways and their changing formats are suitable for the creation of all sorts of things, we would understand that Gifts do not prohibit children's autonomous power. Instead, they have certain values and the Gifts play an important role as a developmental and supplemental device for fostering autonomy. The experience of playing with the Gifts and manipulating their arrangements allow children to cultivate a habit and observe multiple affairs.²⁷

Others consider Gifts as symbols;²⁸ however, to make Gifts symbols of other objects does not reflect their significance. In other words, it is not Fröbel's intention to have children go beyond the symbols to understand their representations of objects or principles. When children use Gifts to create one thing, they must follow the natural law. Gifts are one of the objects the law regulates. At this time, teachers do not expect children to abstract the law but to let them know that the law they are following is the grand natural law. The practice of these laws at the present is the preparation for the future.

Willpower

The day care's tasking of fostering willpower is greatly associated with the training of intelligence. Children's attention and interests are often discussed issues for Child Studies scholars and some among them argue that play is a career without effort. Children's activities are mechanical and do not go beyond their play, and the only function and value of play is mere recreation. Thus, the principles of day care education should be centred around making children happy. Maturity is an important factor in this regard as

²⁷ Ibidem.

²⁸ K.D. Wiggin, N.A. Smith, *Fröbel's Gifts*, op. cit.

when children are at young age, things they can easily accomplish will make them gain feelings of capacity. They hold that there is only little difference between easy tasks and not doing anything; thus, it is necessary to use an external stimulus as the only aim and method. In this light, the standard of practice of day care is largely dependent upon the tasks that children are interested in. Fröbel does not oppose the method of external stimulus yet to make happiness the sole aim is the result of not knowing the nature of play and the difference between external stimuli and interests. External stimuli represent the consequences of others' acts. In this situation, the actor is embedded externally and one finds oneself in a passive position. Thus, those whose mental life depends on external stimuli often change and become unstable. Courage and autonomy are absent in their acts.²⁹

Interests

Interests are different. When the mental state of autonomy takes charge, or to put it another way, when one's mental life is willingly engaged in types of thinking or physical activity, the happiness one pursues will depend on the degree of one's automatic power. It is only by this type of interest that one can make adults consider work as play and make children think of play as important work. This type of interest can transform the tasks that one undertakes, and tasks that others assign to us into affairs to which one is willing to commit. In this account, one produces happiness towards his or her mental state and physical activities while using hope and courage to conquer all sorts of difficulties. Thus, when day care is playing the role of evoking children's interests, its purpose is to promote autonomy rather than awaken intelligence. The two variables of external stimuli and interests alone do not count as the aim of education but are rather the means to reach it. As far as the function of external stimuli is concerned, they can only be useful for those who are mentally immature or lack self-discipline skills.³⁰

²⁹ H.C. Downen, *Fröbel and Education through Self-Activity*, op. cit.

³⁰ E.R. Murray, *Fröbel as a Pioneer in Modern Psychology*, op. cit.

Attention

There is a consensus that day care children have a short attention span³¹ yet it is a common developmental characteristic among children in general. Intentional attention is the function of higher ordered thinking skills, and demands strong willpower.³² The willpower of four- to six-year-old children is weak and thus needs guidance. Because young children lack self-control and self-discipline skills, they are unable to pay consistent attention to the work assigned to them.³³ Some teachers try to punish children's inattention to draw their attention. This method should be prohibited to avoid the development of certain habits such as a dependent mind and a weak will.³⁴

Pedagogy

Day care should commit to using daily tasks to promote helpful study habits such as detailed observation, precise expression, careful making, orderly behaviours, as well as self-discipline, collaboration and creation. Thus, the methods of this habit formation should be positive ones; and the reason why it is necessary to establish appropriate behaviours and proper thoughts is because the power of attention and self-control changes a prejudiced will and superficial thoughts.³⁵ The purpose of day care's tasks to regulate will and intelligence is not intended to create easy and pleasant activities for children, but to maximize the degree of difficulties according to their development of capacities. At the same time, it should encourage children to commit

³¹ M.M. McClelland, A.C. Acock, A. Piccinin, S.A. Rhea, M.C. Stallings, "Relations Between Preschool Attention Span-Persistence and Age 25 Educational Outcomes", *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 2013, vol. 28, pp. 314–324.

³² N. Sobe, "Concentration and Civilisation: Producing the Attentive Child in the Age of Enlightenment", *Paedagogica Historica* 2010, vol. 46, pp. 149–160.

³³ E.M. Mahone, H.E. Schneider, "Assessment of Attention in Preschoolers", *Neuropsychology Review* 2012, vol. 22, pp. 361–383.

³⁴ D.W. Murray, D.L. Rabiner, K.K. Hardy, "Teacher Management Practices for First Graders with Attention Problems", *Journal of Attention Disorder* 2011, vol. 15, pp. 638–645.

³⁵ N. Sobe, "Concentration and Civilisation: Producing the Attentive Child in the Age of Enlightenment", op. cit., pp. 149–160.

to effortful work and equip them with a strong mind and determination to carry things through. Autonomy allows children to derive interest, joy, and satisfaction from their work.³⁶

There is one more problem: is day care's task limited to play itself? The answer is "not really". The notion of play cannot be understood in its common sense: the more children's capability increases, the less the quality of play decreases.

Development of intellectual and moral function

Professionals who observe children's play know that they make great effort while playing. As far as play is concerned, children do not think that it is separate from their life careers but instead that it is a career for life. In other words, play to children is the same as work is to adults³⁷. Children commit to play not because it is an easily done task but rather they enjoy it because it is challenging. Because of its difficulties, children are willing to endure hardship and devote considerable time and energy to the activity. Their determined will, hypothesized plans, and infinite interests are almost the same as adults' commitment in realizing a grand career. From play, children obtain enormously useful facts and truth.³⁸ Once we understand the status of day care in education, we start to realize that Fröbel's intention is to make day care a bridge to span the gap between family life and school life, and between play and work. His aim is to make children become more suited to work, and his method is to skilfully direct them towards a field of occupation without the utilization of external stimulus.³⁹ Lacking these practices, day care misses its values.

³⁶ S. Kim, J.K. Nording, J.E. Yoon, L.J. Boldt, G. Kochanska, "Effortful Control in 'Hot' and 'Cool' Tasks Differentially Predicts Children's Behaviour Problems and Academic Performance", *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* 2013, vol. 41, pp. 43–56.

³⁷ R.M. Holmes, L. Romeo, S. Ciraola, M. Grushko, "The Relationship between Creativity, Social Play, and Children's Language Abilities", *Early Child Development and Care* 2015, vol. 185, pp. 1180–1197.

³⁸ B.J. Wilson, "The Role of Attentional Processes in Children's Prosocial Behaviour with Peers. Attention Shifting and Emotion", *Development and Psychopathology* 2003, vol. 15, pp. 313–329.

³⁹ M.S. Baader, "Froebel and the Rise of Educational Theory in the United States", *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 2004, vol. 23, pp. 427–444.

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Streszczenie Summary

Celem tego artykułu jest przedyskutowanie znaczenia edukacji przedszkolnej. Prezentuję przegląd i syntezę zagadnień związanych z naukami pedagogicznymi. W tym moim krótkim omówieniu przedstawiam – odnosząc się do zabawy i charakteru dziecka – Fröblowską filozofię edukacyjną, czyli pewne centralne kwestie podnoszone w ogólnej dyskusji. Moje komentarze koncentrują się na zagadnieniach związanych z celem nauczania (charakter idealnego dziecka), programem nauczania (zabawa rozwijająca uwagę i siłę woli) oraz metodami dydaktycznymi (rozwijanie dobrych nawyków) pedagogiki przedszkolnej. Twierdzę, że badania w zakresie nauk pedagogicznych opierają się na kulturze, którą dzieci powinny żyć, tak w sferze uczuć, jak i w sferze myśli.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the quality of day care education. I provide an overview and synthesis of issues concerning child studies. In response to this review, Fröbel's educational philosophy pertaining to play and the character of the child addresses some of the central themes raised in the general discussion. My comments focus on the issues regarding the aim (the character of a divine child), curriculum (play that cultivates attention and will-power), and instructional methods (developing good habits) of day care education. I argue that child studies research calls for a culture that children should live in a realm of both heart and mind.

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