Emotional Competence and Affective Computing as Factors of Formation of Individual and Social Identity

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ABSTRACT

This experience of psycho-emotional education is part of more extensive international researches based on the hypothesis that the “emotional experience”, if inserted in the daily conduct of the school curriculum, especially in the nursery school one, represents an excellent training opportunity, since it fosters the learners’ best perception of the self, thus strengthening their expressive and communicative attitude. On the basis of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) principles and inspired by a previous experience carried out by the Department of Human Science for training, this experimental project has been put into practice by some nursery schools in RC, thus providing very interesting data for the confirmation of the hypothesis. It has been also developed a study on the affective computing and the cognitive computing pursuing a new perspective that exceeds the traditional vision of what is defined as artificial intelligence and analyzes intelligence and aspects of perceptions, often neglected, with a methodological approach considering the emotional processes as important as the cognitive ones.

Keywords: Curriculum, Emotion, Emotional Machines, Field Of Experience, Music, Nursery Schools, Personality, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), Social-Emotional Competence

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is amazing that, until quite recent times to us, psychology greatly neglected to investigate and to emphasize the important function that the emotional component has on learning. Such lack of interest is pretty obvious, for example, in a remarkable protagonist of the developmental psychology, Jean Piaget, whose studies were focused on intellectual development but not on the emotional one (Brockmeier, 2011).

In recent years (Barone, 2009), however, the situation is deeply changed. The psychological research, in fact, is strongly focused on the theme of the emotional roles in the exercise of human acts, to demonstrate the strong relationship of interdependence existing between emotion and behavior. It highlighted, for example, that emotion is to be correlated with a constellation of complex responses that the body produces in response to certain stimuli, from which arise bodily reactions, from a physiological (heart rate acceleration, sweating ...), behavioral (facial expression, body posture...) and cognitive (assessment of the emotigenous stimulus...) point of view. Thus, the emotion not only is increasingly recognized as an essential element of the psychological sphere, but in relation to it the shaping of the psycho-physical well-being of the person, is also considered an insuppressible element for the quality of social identity formation.

Hence, special attention is paid to educational institutions, especially in the early levels of school attendance and in close continuity with the experiences carried out in family, in planning and in carrying out educational actions.

Antonio Iannaccone and Claudio Longobardi, for example, in the text Outlines of School Psychology, analyzing the teacher-pupil relation highlight that one of the fundamental duties of all educational figures entering the field in the educational process is to promote and support students in the complex and delicate task of approaching to personal and social life. This task, resolvable with the use of a significant ability to listen and understand the needs of their learners, promotes the construction of an “emotional nest” where they can live peacefully the different conditions of learning (Iannaccone & Longobardi, 2004).

The real problem is that education is committed, now more than ever, having to deal with a problematic and complex society, whose identification characters are shown in the “knowledge” (Lisbon European Council 2000) and in “globalization”. It is a society that increasingly leads to the use of media and electronic languages, such as emails or chat, placing in second order so much of the verbal language, so as non-verbal one. This one is typical of the languages of corporeality related to mimic and gestures and elements of skills and competences.

To investigate the matter, it can be said that in this society communication and digital information are monopolized and aimed to purely consumerist models of social identification, while having to impose ethical conduct inspired by the principles of democracy and the protection of the person, such as respect, solidarity, cooperation, dialogue. In fact, even in the family context it can be observed a lack of communication among its members. Children in particular are often totally “immersed” in the full fruition of increasingly compelling technology and development attention.

The school takes on the task of promoting the mental well-being of learners acting not only on intellectual development, but also on the emotional and motivational aspects, considered foundational components of personality and able to orient the new generations in the complex system of ethical, social and cultural values.

They are used, according to the results of several recent surveys (Zins et al., 2004; National Institute for Early Education Research, 2005; Dumbleton & Gliman Bennett, 2009; Sel, 2004) which have unanimously shown that socio-emotional skills have a significant impact both on cognitive development and the acquisition of competences. In particular experiences these surveys highlight the need, during the basic formation, of experiences based on themes such as fairness, respect for others, cooperation, ability to resolve conflicts, the ability
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