

Alternative to Alternative Schools

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ABSTRACT

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The fundamental research question from which this paper is going to be - is there an alternative to alternative education? Alternative schools are in the pedagogical and didactical understanding of teaching, often far ahead of their time, sometimes too far. They offer something new and different, much better than traditional classes. Starting from the central location of students in the curriculum, up to curriculum development and teaching classroom design, this school offers us another option - an alternative. This paper represents selected alternative schools and the answer to the research question, and it is in differentiation. Differentiated school is the third alternative and the side by side with alternative schools brings something new and special. The methodology derives from the twenty-day observation of the teaching and the overall work of the gender-differentiated school with teacher interviews. In this qualitative research, the work of the male school that works on the principle of gender differentiation was analyzed and the specialties that this school achieved are described. The most important of them is the principle of work in a homogenous environment and a mentoring system that reinforces the underlying idea of better education. The specialties of gender differentiation are presented and its place in other possibilities of differentiation. The whole work presents a comparative analysis of alternative schools and differentiation and a conclusion about the greater success of such models compared to traditional schools.

Introduction

Political and school pluralism exist in the Republic of Croatia from its foundation. The society is being modernized, and thus appear new options in education. Although the new pedagogical concepts appeared in Europe as early as the early 20th century, in our region they came much later. Cultural influences in Croatia developed scepticism toward everything that is not traditional, regardless of the results they achieved and shows. Alternative or private schools haven't yet took real momentum, at least not in Croatia, and are still, in 2017 marginalized and accompanied by a variety of attitudes. The sign "private" is still with us a bad omen, especially when it comes to education. Lack of faith in private school systems is still preventing the development of school pluralism in the full and proper sense. Although modern pedagogical concepts have proven more effective than traditional education, the question "do we need public schools" (Carlgren (1992): according to Matijevic, 2001) is still very far away.

This paper aims to show some of the most widespread alternative pedagogical concepts and provide a detailed example of a selected Croatian private school. The main research question show and other forms of differentiation other than those of gender, to whose domains are looking at the concept of differentiation in general and describe them as a third option,

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alongside alternative schools. These options will offer a counterbalance to what is considered alternative and might be regarded as a third option.

1.1 The urge for modern teaching

Most contemporary authors in the field of pedagogy, didactics and teaching in general, write about the need for thorough and systematic changes in the embodiment of the same. The traditional subject-hour system and bookish learning proved to be obsolete and long since not suits the needs of modern students. Vrcelj (2000) claims that regular classes can not fully meet the needs and interests of the individual, so in the school, the process introduces additional content and forms of work. The problems are most evident precisely in the frontal form of work which is the main characteristic of traditional teaching where it is directed to the average student who does not exist. It develops a need for an individual approach to each as a student with special educational needs. These include its needs and interests.

It is necessary in any case to make progress forward. As modern society is rapidly evolving every day so it is necessary to develop and implement the teaching process. One must choose out of the abundance of everything on offer and what can be learned (Giesecke, 1993). The teacher should identify the needs and opportunities of their students this fact to adjust teaching and accordingly organize, prepare and conduct. Vidulin-Orbanic (2009) points out that in addition to teacher pedagogical education should demonstrate responsibility in terms of social and cultural claims, empathy with the school actors and situations and a clear goal of any of educational steps.

1.2 Alternative schools

An alternative or private school can still be called free, but it is quite questionable. Resulting in the political pluralism that is "cause" and the pedagogical or school pluralism. Pedagogical single-mindedness has to be abandoned and to new (alternative) pedagogy has to come (Matijevic, 2001). The paper deals with some of the better known alternative pedagogical concepts: Montessori, Jena-plan and Waldorf; together with Summerhill that is a special boarding school and had caused many controversies and different opinions of experts. Ivanovic and Torteli Telek (2014) concludes that moder society expects alternative and various roles from (modern) teacher, and "alternative pedagogy requires creative teachers; spontaneity is the essence, which again requires emphasised rationality of individuals" (ibid: 105).

1.2.1 Montessori pedagogy

The founder of the Montessori school (concept) Maria Montessori, an Italian doctor and scientist. Although originally a doctor at a psychiatric clinic, working with feeble-minded children and develops a position that they are social beings and that their teaching and care should to a greater extent than healthy children. Philipps (1999) describes the character and work of Maria Montessori. The author states that the Montessori pedagogy is based on the observation of spontaneous learning of children, encouraging their activity, independence and respect for the child's personality. At the center of the child in its entirety. The child has the inherent possibilities and potentials for their development, and the same should be encouraged. The most important elements of this approach are a suitably prepared environment with special didactic equipment and a special social framework that is realized through trained teachers. It is also impotrant to know that childs activity starts with mentall activities before motorical (Montessori, 2013). There were no carpets with aim to make children more carefull while moveing object to make less noise (Feez, 2010). Matijevic (2001) lists some of the more important didactic aspects of the Montessori approach. Start the classroom which is freely distributed and has a wardrobe full of materials for independent

work. Thus equipped classrooms are called a regulated environment. As an important concept was taken experiential learning where students individual work with materials developed physical and intellectual abilities. Classes are divided on the free part that there is no strictly defined beginning and a common classes where a greater role the teacher directing students. The learning about the world around them has to be based on real materials (Lillard and Jensen, 2003).

This pedagogical approach is certainly a major departure from traditional teaching. In the Republic of Croatia was first mentioned in 1912 in the journal Progress¹ where we talk about methods of teaching reading and writing. Today in Croatia there are several private, mostly pre-school institutions, which work on the Montessori pedagogical principles, for which there is official education. "Montessori Educational Programs International" is an international program for the professional development of educators for Montessori education, and there are also relevant works of literature on this approach. Montessori pedagogy is certainly one of the most famous, successful and internationally recognized concepts of alternative education and is certainly worthy of special attention.

1.2.2 Jena-plan

The founder of the Jena-plan pedagogical concept is the German university professor Peter Petersen and was named after the town of Jena. Matijevic (2001) states that the main emphasis of this concept is on familial lifestyle. The main difference of this approach is to highlight the need to school their organization approaches the mode of education and life in a family, to education and discipline adapt to the development and needs of the child, highlighting the importance of social learning in school and during operation. Teaching orientation to the teacher switches to students. Here is a clearly visible shift away from differentiation by age. Children are formed into groups with different vintages, and about planning learning activities jointly agree with students, teachers and sometimes parents. "only in terms of consultation and mutual trust is possible to create the conditions for true moral and religious education " (ibid: 48).

Monks and Katzko (2005) talk about the working principles of Jena-plan school (pedagogical concept). The authors here speak of the education of gifted students, which means that it is conducted according to the differentiation of talent. Schools should not be closed and isolated institutions more socially open. Here, as with some other alternative school students are not placed in classes according to age but to form groups with three different vintages. There are also separate groups of students who are advanced in any special area called "Instruction groups" and "Table groups" which also used the differentiation and students are grouped according to various criteria. The curriculum on a weekly basis is made under natural circumstances in joint forums that promote communication and socialization. Social learning is an important aspect because it is mostly a concept and designed in a way that students learn together in cooperation.

1.2.3 Waldorfske škole

The founder of Waldorf school is Rudolf Steiner. It was founded in Stuttgart in 1919 and is named after the cigarette factory Waldorf-Astoria, where he creates a school for workers and factories. Steiner is the founder of anthroposophy, eurythmy and Waldorf pedagogy and

Matijevic (2001) says that the didactic aspects of Waldorf are the most different from the classic by the number of hours that are shown in the program, while schools and teachers are

¹ Krajačić, LJ.: Montessori's training method in reading and writing, Napredak, Zagreb, 1992., LIII, str. 214-217; 264-269 : according to Philipps (1999)

fully autonomous in terms of program structure. The curriculum emphasizes the orientation on art and works education, teaching by epochs, learning foreign languages from the beginning of schooling (which has only recently been introduced in Croatian public schools) and the introduction of eurythmy in the curriculum. Teaching trough epochs is a main feature because it moves away from the subject-hour system, and most of the classes are formed according to the activities organized by the teacher. Textbooks are not very much appreciated and are students rarely use. Carstensen (2010) points out cooperation and important part of Waldorf concept and is is specific in every Waldorf school.

The Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA)² non-profit North American Association of Waldorf Schools was founded in 1968 which promotes the vision and core values of the concept of Waldorf pedagogy. It operates in Canada, the United States and Mexico. Its main purpose is to provide support to schools through collaborative regional, scientific development and the development of resources, accreditation, community and advocacy. The work of the Association is based on four core values:

- 1st To encourage and develop the quality and integrity in all that we try and achieve.
- 2nd Promoting forces and resources in each school community.
- 3rd Support and promotion of inspired leadership.
- 4th Work towards a conscious and collaborative human community.

Waldorf pedagogy is an internationally recognized and widespread concept. It is used in the form of alternative schools and shows good quality results. The approach in which the student (individual) in the center certainly contributes to the better individual development of each student.

1.2.4 Summerhill

Summerhill School was founded in 1921 by Alexander Sutherland Neill. The school is boarding, which means that children stay in it all day. Neill (1999) states that at the beginning of the school mostly received unadjusted children, but already in 1930's changed its stance and began to consider his school as therapeutic school for normal children. The main goal was to use "childhood and adolescence to create emotional and completely personal power ... children (will) really be motivated to learn what they need academic" (ibid: 14). The main "tool" for it was his freedom he gave to his disciples, counting on that they will use it for the proper purposes. The students themselves devised rules and laws in the sessions of students, and even had its own court called "tribunal". Also, the author states that there was never conducted a systematic study of the effect of schools on students and the usefulness of its programs. But the author of justifies success with the fact that younger students eagerly attended the classes, while the older ones do not go often to them. The question that this raises is the justification of the concrete meaning of these facts made by the writer as the attendance is a point of every school. Can the school be without (class) instruction? The fact that younger students attend classes, which is optional, can hardly be called an argument in favor of Summerhill because students of every other schools also attend classes. In the second part, relating to older students (10-20 years), where it is stated that students rarely attend classes; hardly coincides with the argument by the author "...Summerhill offers a traditional academic education... " (ibid: 20) since it involves the processing of specific content in the form of teaching units and areas. With non-taught in classes such thing is hardly possible.

Peter Stanford, journalist of Independent³, in his article⁴, had mentioned the school Summerhill as the most controversial England private school. He calls the schools motto

² Available: https://waldorfeducation.org/default.aspx?RelId=622348

³ Internet magazine Independent, available: http://www.independent.co.uk

"School where children have the freedom to be what they are" radical and it is characterized by statements such as School where children do not have to go to class and School without rules. These comments confirm the suspicion that occurs around school Summerhill and its programs related to its effectiveness and academic value. Also, Summerhill school receives all the students who apply without the conditions for enrollment (Wallin, 2014).

1.3 Alternative (private) schools in the Republic of Croatia

The development of private education in Croatia began already in 1991 ba the establishment of the company Pythagoras which was private and had provided educational services. The first private school that was founded in Croatia, Juraj Dobrila, became operational in 1993 in Pula and marked the beginning of the development of the private (alternative) education (education) in the Republic of Croatia.

According to the Ministry of science and education, ie. "e-Matica" in the Republic of Croatia in the school year 2015/2016 there were 13 private schools, of which 7 were art schools. Krbec (1999) states that the privatization process in Croatia's education follows the economic (social). The privatization process represents change and opens up the possibility of production services in the private sector that for one of the ultimate goals is the improvement of educational services. The establishment and operation of private schools with public limited some formal requirements: "level meeting the educational standards (teaching staff, space, equipment), by including a mandatory part of the curriculum (formal shape curriculum) and insurance (minimum) quality of educational outcomes (educational attainment measurable standard forms of testing and evaluation" (ibid: 271). These forms governed by private education to avoid coming out of minimum educational standards. The use of such provisions certainly prevented the establishment of schools in any improper approaches or self-styled teaching concepts.

The results of the research⁶ (Culig 2005) identifies three dimensions desirability of teaching concepts. In the case of traditional concepts the rejection is less expressed, while in the case of Summerhill's concept there is a lot of non-acceptance. The last dimension makes the combination of attitudes like Waldorf and Montessori's pedagogical concept. Here we can see that respondents tend acceptance of these concepts "but they would not be happy to apply in your backyard" (ibid: 309). From these data, we can conclude that the Croatian public supports modern educational concepts, but still 'suffering of old diseases". They're not willing to accept their application in education regardless of what they approve.

1.4 Differentiated education

Cudina Obradovic and Brajkovic (2009) did not differ significantly differentiated teaching from individualized instruction and define it as teaching which takes into account the individual characteristics of students that the teacher used to best organize time, space and methods. "The purpose of differentiation to maximize and develop the potential of each student " (ibid: 87). The authors believe that differentiation is based on the assumption that each student is special and unique and are distinguished by many characteristics. There should be noted and taken into consideration cultural differences, the student's dialect, wealth/poverty verbal expressiveness, readiness for school, phonemic awareness and

⁴ Article *Summerhill: Inside England's most controversial private school*, available: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/schools/summerhill-inside-englands-most-controversial-private-school-772976.html

⁵ "e-Matica" is a centralized system of the (Croatian) Ministry of Science and Education that serves to enter the most important data on students and employees of primary and secondary schools.

⁶ The research is presented in the paper "Use of factor analysis in questioning the desirability of alternative educational concepts" conducted by Benjamin Culig 2005 on the acceptability of educational templates.

preferences of students. According to what the authors write about the differentiation does not see the need for any other means of differentiation other than those according to individual needs and abilities of each student. Differentiation is not treated as a division, but only as an approach to a teacher to a student.

Tomlinson and Imbeau (2015) detailed describes many aspects and share differentiation. They listed seven different divisions according to the characteristics and needs, according to which should differentiations been done. Content - refers to the knowledge, understanding and skills that we want to teach students. The process - how students understand and make sense of the content. Product - how students demonstrate what they have to get to know, understand and can do after an extended period of learning. Impact - kow students emotions and feelings affect their learning. Readiness - the students immediate vicinity of specific knowledge, understanding and skills. Interest - which affects (encouraged) to attention, curiosity and involvement (engagement) students. The last is learning profile - appetite, research or expression content. Here the authors note four additional divisions - learning style preferences of intelligence, gender and culture. Only here we see mentioned differentiation by students gender. The authors state that there are some forms of learning based on the gender which could be used in the approach to gender preferences. As the authors write for gender diferentiationd that "... it may be advantageous ... " (ibid: 17), can be concluded that they talka about the possible benefits and that this way of differentiation states only as one of the possible divisions within the learning styles, but do not argue it in by full facts, only as possibilities.

According to Davis, Rimm and Siegle (2014) the use of advanced concepts, providing depth content, the accelerated pace of learning, self-directed learning, project-based learning, mentoring, compressing the curriculum, and application centers of interest are some of the differentiation approaches to the authors. Here is the differentiation of more spoken about in the context of creativity. Differentiation according to some individual, specific, previously identified areas certainly can be achieved development of creativity and thus the potential talent of students. Heacox (2006) states that approach made by individual needs of students is the most appropriate. Racki (2016) differents creativity on general content and specific content. In general should develop general creative skills that will most encourage creativity in these students. For specific needs to focus on specific student's skills. Author herein differentiation, grouping and enrichment as positive approaches to develop creativity.

1.5 Gender differentiation

The separation (differentiation) schools to men and women nowadays cause frequent controversy and stereotypes. Surely one can find and bring a lot of arguments pro and con this type of differentiation. Some of the most common pros are the shift away from gender stereotypes; typical spheres of interest for male and female students and the assumption that they are not disturbed with "school sympathys". Some of cones are reduced development of social skills of the real world,lack of stimulating atmosphere that creates better behaviour and greater diligencof girls. EASSE⁷ is a European organization that advocates gender-separated schools, and its membership has 152⁸ schools. There are also other organizations that also advocate a gender differentiated education (AGSA, ALCED, *Diferenciada*, GSA, IBSC, NCGS). These data suggest that certainly there are many benefits of gender differentiation that can be seen from the number of schools, but also the many organizations which advocate

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⁷ EASE (European association single-sex association), available: http://www.easse.org/

⁸ Available: http://www.easse.org/en/content/12/about+easse/

it. The research⁹, reports The Telegraph from 2014, said the results of the study conducted on a sample of 400 schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the study is based on the success of the results of the A-level exams. Among the top 50 schools in success is even 31 schools with gender differentiation (20 female and 11 male). Due to the fact that in these countries the share of gender-differentiated school only 2%, which makes such a school one in every 50 mixed. Thus, for ranking the top 50 schools should be only one gender-differentiated, yet it has 31. This is, in any case, an indicator of the success of such an education form.

2. Methods

2.1 Participants

The survey was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2016/2017 in a clean first classroom that has 14 students and combined 2/3 grade with 10 students in a private men's Primary School "Lotrščak" in Zagreb.

2.2 Assessment and procedure

The study lasted four weeks, which is affected by demonstration classes 20 teaching days. Classes were tracked observing and documenting observed by the observer and not recorded technical aids, and the advantage of this method is "the possibility of directing attention to the finer nuances of events as well as the safety of unforeseen technical difficulties " (Muzic, 2004: 83). Teaching and entire school work have been observed as a whole.

2.3. Objectives

The aim of this qualitative research to describe the specifics in the work of private (alternative) Elementary school "Lotrščak" in Zagreb. See the difference in the performance of the teaching process and organizational structure in relation to public schools. Furthermore, the aim was to observe the particularities of gender differentiation and mentoring.

2.4. Hypothesis

The first hypothesis of the research is that in the teaching process, there are major differences, which are reflected in the curriculum, the performance of the teaching and school organization. Another hypothesis for the study was that the gender differentiation and mentoring system gives results in terms of better performance of pupils in the development of knowledge, skills and abilities.

3. Results

Primary School "Lotrščak" is a private Catholic male school, initiated by the RINO Institute and the Catholic Church. 2016/2017 is the first school year of this school and some things are still being organized and supplemented, but the teaching runs smoothly and everything works normally. There are 2 classrooms in the school: pure 1st grade with 14 students and combined 2nd/3rd class with 4 students in 2nd grade and 6 students in 3rd grade There are 3 teachers in the school, one of whom holds an extended stay. 5th hour every day except Tuesday is a writing assignment from that day with the help of the teacher and the teacher who is on extended stay.

In the "Lotrščak" primary school, the classes last from 9:00 am to 13:20 pm. The stay is organized all day long, parents can bring students from 6:30 am when one of the teachers is

in charge. From 7:30am to 8:30am students have access to the sports hall where one of the teachers organizes morning sports. At 8:30 am breakfast begins with students in the dining room together with school staff. On Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, the first hour is Physical education starting at 9:00 am,all together since the school has only 24 students and is led by both teachers at the same time. In the hours of Physical education they are mostly playing football because they do not have the aids and the equipment needed for the much other, and the hall is in fact a soccer field with artificial grass. At the beginning of the 2nd class and at 12 o'clock, class prayer is given by all the students together with the teacher. After classes, students have lunch and organized extracurricular activities that last until 4:30 pm and stay in school until 5:00 pm.

Extracurricular activities are selected by students themselves, namely: Spanish language, guitar, computer science, sports, chess and acting. Extracurricular activities are performed by professors who are external associates of the school.

The school has the principle of differentiated education, all students and employees are male. There is also a Ružičnjak women's school, which is organizationally linked, is located at another location only. The students are educated and educated in the Christian spirit with weekly virtues. Each week comes reverend and talks individually with each of the students. Unfortunately, I did not have access to these conversations. The mentoring system takes place in co-operation with parents. "Every student is unique. The mentoring program is the basic tool for personal access to every child and essential for the development of character and personality, as it allows for adaptation to each child. Each student receives a mentor who is specifically trained for that role. With him, the student meets twice a month and, if necessary, more often in a short, structured personal conversation in which the mentor helps the student to fully see his needs and work on himself, thereby developing his / her potential, intellectual and human. Particularly nurturing areas are a character, exercise in virtues, learning goals, spiritual needs, and any problems the learner is currently encountering. Parents can also meet with a mentor at least twice a year to work together for the benefit of direction" the child the same (author translation. http://oslotrscak.hr/default.aspx?id =1194).

4. Discussion

Various authors are considering differentiation by different principles. The most important thing to note is the tendency towards higher quality education, which can be reached using methods that will improve teaching and student access and make them more positive and useful for students. Differentiation provides a wide range of these approaches, but the most difficult task appears her just the same determination. If the student's needs and abilities are not recognized in the right direction, differentiation will not have any positive effects and can act badly by students.

The benefits of alternative education in the Republic of Croatia do not differ from those international. They give parents and students choices for their education, and in most cases mean better educated and prepared teachers. Teachers of private schools, in addition to formal study, attend special education teaching concepts that their school is represented.

As the biggest problem (lack of) private schools is that they are difficult to self-sustain and are often costly because parents of students have to pay fees, which is often quite a sum of money. Also, there are no private schools in all cities and is thus prevented a fairly big part of the population of their attendance. The most common case is that are Croatian students limited to the school located nearest to their residence.

The mentoring system is still in the process of defining and it might be said that everyone is still running, but certainly brings results. Conversations with both parents and students take place once a month, but I did not have access to these discussions. Mentors are school

teachers and each student has a mentor. All students wear uniforms school uniforms consisting of black trousers, a polo shirt with a coat of arms and a black dress with a coat of arms. Employees mostly wear suits. The mentoring system is an excellent step towards an individual approach to each student, but also involves more involvement of parents in the process of education of their children. Such that, no matter what the moment there is no measurable results, pedagogically can not be bad.

5. Conclusion

Every story about alternative schools (concepts) has two sides. A large number of positive points can always be highlighted, but there are always some negative ones. Since different places (cities, states) differ in many ways, both culturally and socially and demographically, it may be said that it is normal that one concept may not be appropriate to everyone. There is a clear need, as many experts say, about changes in traditional teaching. If not by pedagogical standards, it can be said that the traditional concept of teaching is time-barred. As technology develops and changes the lifestyle of a modern man, so it changes in his needs. Alternative approaches are more adapted to the needs of students, and with individual access, they certainly give better results. Student-oriented lessons are the most needed change for a contemporary child.

Differentiated education, organized according to gender or some other aspect, more satisfies the needs of each student individually because it is more focused on it. Gender differentiation shows many advantages and positive impacts on students. Although research studies confirm it as positive, many opinions can be found in much relevant literature. Differentials of the content, process, or interest type provide a deeper approach to the needs of students because they are more focused on specific knowledge, skills, abilities, needs, gifts, styles, ambitions or the like of each student individually. The most successful approach would be to test each student thoroughly and then differentiate them to best meet their needs.

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