

Self-esteem and emotional intelligence from the perspective of class of students

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Abstract: The students with positive self-esteem: take responsibility; behave independently; are proud of their achievements; achieve new tasks without difficulty; express both positive and negative emotions; offer help and support to others. The students with low self-esteem: are unhappy with the way they are; avoid to achieve or get involved in new tasks; feel unloved and without any value; blame others for their unfulfillments; pretend to be emotionally indifferent; cannot tolerate a medium level of frustration; are easily influenced; do not take responsibility; seem rebellious, uncaring. (A. Baban, 2001:73)

Keywords: self-esteem, self-appreciation, personal development, learning centered on the student, emotional intelligence of the class of students.

The opinion on one's self is vital for the psychological balance. In the situation when it is positive, it allows the individual to act efficiently, to feel good in his world, to face the difficulties of existence. But when it is negative it causes sufferance and displeasures which come to disturb everyday life. Self-esteem refers to the way we evaluate ourselves, how “good” we consider ourselves in comparison with our own expectations or with other individuals that are significant for us. (F. Lelord, C. Andre, 1999) In reality, self-esteem relies on three components: self-love, self-image and self-trust.

Self-love is considered to be the most important element. To esteem oneself implies to evaluate oneself, but to love oneself doesn't presuppose any conditions: we love ourselves in spite of our flaws and

limitations. The deficiencies of self esteem which are routed at this level are the hardest to overcome; we find them in what psychologists call “personality disorders”.

Self-image – this evaluation, motivated or not, which we make of our own qualities and flaws – is the second pillar of self-esteem. The image that we have of ourselves we owe to our family environment and experiences we go through. It refers to the aggregate perceptions regarding abilities attitudes and personal behaviour. In other words, self image supposes the awareness of “*who I am*” and of “*what I can do*”.

A person’s acceptance of his own power and of the areas where improvements can be made is based on beliefs and suppositions related to aptitudes, limitations, looks, emotional resources, one’s place in the world, the perception of potential and the feeling of one’s importance.

Self-image develops during life out of the experiences the individual has with others and out of actions that he achieves and which he participates in. Childhood experiences have an essential part in developing self image. Thus, success and failure in childhood, as well as the child’s ways to react to these define the image that the child has of himself. The attitudes of parents, teachers, classmates, brothers and sisters, friends, relatives contribute to the creation of the child’s or the individual’s self image.

Self-trust is the third component of self-esteem, and they are often mistaken for one another. As opposed to self-love and especially, self-image, self-trust is not difficult to identify, it is sufficient to notice how the person behaves in new and unpredicted situations. Self-trust supposes trust in one’s own abilities to act adequately in important situations. (F. Lelord, C. Andre, 1999)

The three components of self-esteem maintain interdependence relationships: self-love (to respect yourself no matter what happens to you) determines a positive image of self (to believe in your own abilities), which in turn influences favorably self-trust (to act without excessive fear of failure).

Positive self-esteem is the feeling of self-appreciation and trust in one’s own forces. Individuals with low self-esteem feel worthless and have frequent negative emotional feelings, most of the caused by negative experiences. The task of teachers is to identify these characteristics of low self-esteem and develop the individual’s ability to change the negative attitudes towards himself. A failure doesn’t have to

be perceived as a symptom of non-value, but as a situation that needs to be solved.

Modern educational system, centered on the student, has as its philosophy the theory of humanistic psychology, and its applied principles are: each student is unique and has his own individuality; each student wishes to feel respected; doesn't request similar attitudes and behaviours from all students; respects individual differences; encourages diversity; expresses openly trust in the ability for positive change; does not refrain from positive appreciations of students' behaviours; underlines the role of self-esteem as premise in personal development.

Different treatment of students is a way to improve self-esteem through: the creation of as many opportunities for success as possible, situations in which the child identifies his strong points; the creation of situations in which the student expresses in a group his qualities or strong points; the creation of situations in which the student has the opportunity to help others; the expression of reasonable expectations compared with the psychic particularities of the student; the strengthening of each positive behavior and effort; the offering of possibilities and options to the students every time it is possible.

The students with positive self-esteem: take responsibility; behave independently; are proud of their achievements; achieve new tasks without difficulty; express both positive and negative emotions; offer help and support to others.

The students with low self-esteem: are unhappy with the way they are; avoid to achieve or get involved in new tasks; feel unloved and without any value; blame others for their unfulfillments; pretend to be emotionally indifferent; cannot tolerate a medium level of frustration; are easily influenced; do not take responsibility; seem rebellious, uncaring. (A. Baban, 2001:73)

Self-esteem must not be confused with the *feeling of self-sufficiency*, which assumes completely different forms and appears as a negative aspect of personality. Over-appreciation makes the student irritable, arrogant, self-satisfied, and tempted to always consider critical observations unfounded.

To succeed in life, Goleman considers that every one of us should learn and practice the main dimensions of emotional intelligence:

- The consciousness of our own emotions;
- The control ("management") of emotions;

- Personal motivation (the exploitation, use of emotions productively);
- Empathy – reading of emotions;
- The routing (guidance) of interpersonal relationships. (M. Roco, 2004)

Walter Anderson in “Practical Course of Trust” (2000) offers us practical advice which teaches us how to accept our fears and overcome them. Through this book, the author presents seven steps to personal fulfillment:

- Take responsibility. Accept full responsibility for your behaviour. When you say “I am responsible”, you can build a new life, even a new world.
- Believe in something important. Your life is worth a noble motivation.
- Be tolerant. You will become more agreeable both for yourself and for the ones around you.
- Be brave. To be brave means to act under fear, not free of it. If the challenge is important for you then you really must be nervous.
- Love. Because you must know what joy is.
- Be ambitious. An isolated effort won't solve your problems, won't fulfill your dreams and won't be enough. It is normal and healthy to want to be more than we are.
- Smile. Because no one else can do it for you.

Educating and correcting the ability of students to appreciate themselves constitutes the psycho-pedagogical basis of the students' success in learning.

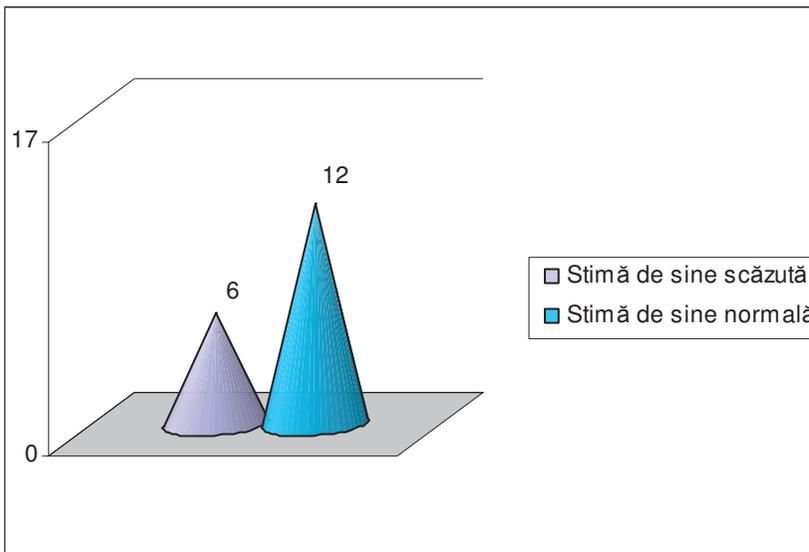
Through differentiated treatment, the teacher can create for each student the necessary premises to occupy a position in the class group which will attract the esteem and appreciation of the others and implicitly develop his self-esteem. The premise we propose is: *if we use methods for the development of emotional intelligence, then we will witness an increase in the students' self-esteem.*

The objectives from which we started in this research are: *the awareness of own emotions; the discovery of positive aspects in any situation; the identification of resemblances and differences between classmates; the expression of needs, desires, personal aspirations, making students responsible; the stimulation of communication and collaboration within the group; the analysis and communication of feelings produced by various life situations; the development of the ability to listen to the others.*

The research was conducted on a sample group formed of forty students with ages between 9 and 10. The subjects who participated in

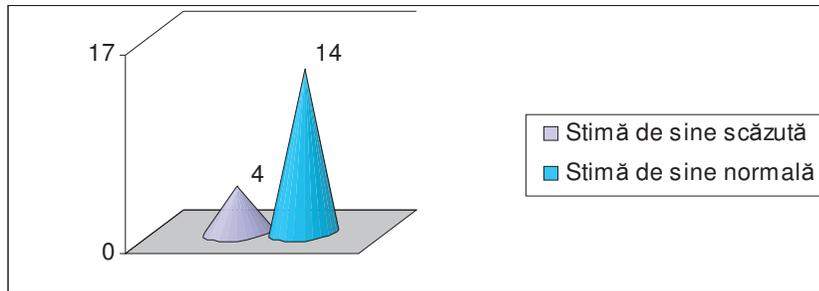
this research were the students from the 3rd grade A, 18 students (control class) and 3rd grade E, 22 students (experimental class).

The independent variables we worked with were a series of interactive teaching methods which we used in the experimental group, as well as tests for the evaluation of self-esteem and school knowledge we used in both classes. These quantitative variables were “measured” (recorded) to see whether they verify the hypothesis or not. Also independent variables, but qualitative, that we used were the subjects, the students of the two classes. The dependant variables were the modifications that appeared in the subjects as a response to the independent variables used, meaning the results obtained after the testing. In the initial evaluation (pre-test): by systematic observation and by the completion of sheets regarding self-esteem (*personal star, complete the sentences, self-esteem*). We applied methods of educating emotional intelligence/developing self-esteem. And the final evaluation (post-test) regards modifications of self-esteem/emotional intelligence.



6 – Low self-esteem
12- Normal self-esteem

Figure 1 Self-esteem of the students in 3rd grade A (control class) – Initial evaluation

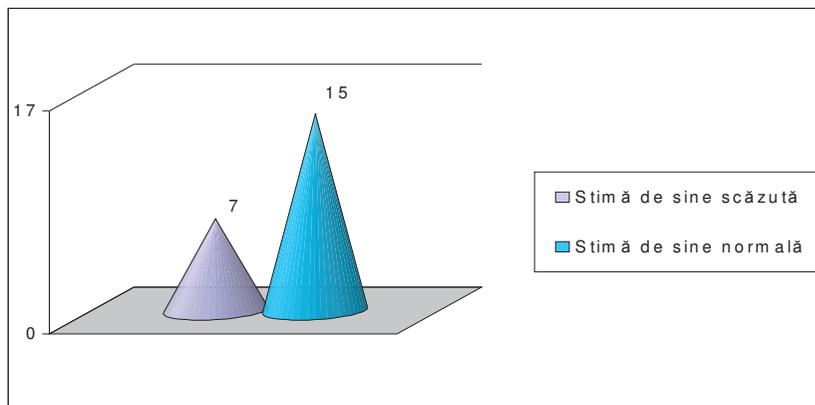


4 – Low self-esteem

14 – Normal self-esteem

Figure 2 Self-esteem of the students in 3rd grade A (control class) – Final evaluation

From the 18 students evaluated in 3rd grade A, control class: 6 had low self-esteem, being quiet, reserved, with a negative image of themselves, participating passively in activities, not collaborating in groups, not accepting criticism, not trusting themselves and the others; these students have not ceased to disapprove and haven't succeeded in finishing some of the tasks. As a result of applying self-esteem evaluation tests in the control group we notice a slight increase in self-esteem, more precisely 2 of the students modified their self-esteem and succeeded in passing from low to normal self-esteem

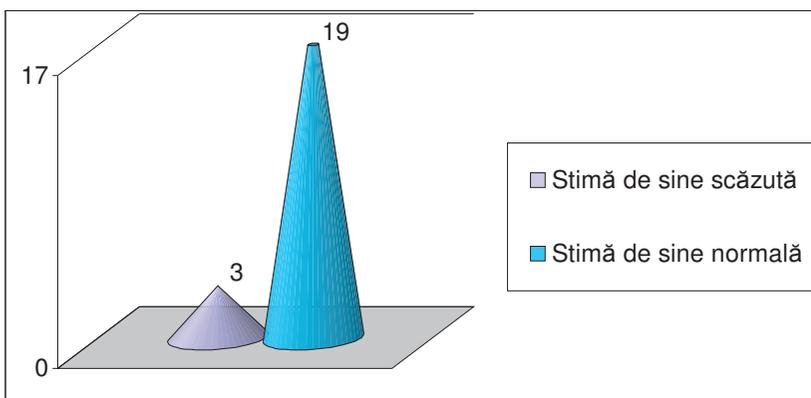


7 – Low self-esteem

15 – Normal self-esteem

Figure 3 Self-esteem of the students in 3rd grade E (experimental class) – Initial evaluation

In 3rd grade E, experimental class, from the 22 students evaluated: 3 had low self-esteem, being less quiet and reserved compared with the beginning of the experiment but still with a negative image of themselves, participating passively in the activities, trying to collaborate within the groups, not accepting criticism, not trusting themselves and trusting the others too little, but still progress was made by the fact that these students stopped disapproving and succeeded in finishing some of the tasks.



3 – Low self-esteem

19 – Normal self-esteem

Figure 4 Self-esteem of the students in 3rd grade E (experimental class) – Final evaluation

The methods and exercises of increasing self-esteem performed with the students in the experimental class have led to a more efficient integration in the group of those with low self-esteem, to the awareness of their own emotions, to a better communication with those around them and to a better way of solving personal difficulties. The students have succeeded in expressing their needs, desires, personal aspirations and understanding that each individual is different and may have a different point of view. Negative attitudes towards self are generated by others' behaviour as well as by each individual's way of thinking about his own person. Cognitive distortions are negative habits of frequently using certain thoughts in erroneously interpreting reality. A positive and realistic self-esteem develops the ability to take responsible decisions and the ability to face the group's pressure.

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