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REFLECTIONS ABOUT READINESS OF THE PUPILS TO START SCHOOL

Abstract

Many researchers from different countries of the world, are dealing with the problem of readiness of children for school entrance. They have shown that the success and failure in primary cycle, is largely conditional on their unpreparedness and appropriate immaturity for the start of school. On the other hand, many parents are before the dilemma of when is the best time to register the child in school in particular, if the child should be registered before or after the time prescribed by law. This study has as objective the changes in students' first class of elementary education, registered ahead of time, in time and after time. Given the complexity and complicated character of the concerned problem, the study focuses on public and private schools of district of Shkodra with a sample of 800 students and a stretch in rural and urban areas.

Keywords: immaturity, readiness, pupil,school, unpreparedness

1. Introduction

Preparation of children for starting school is a very important social problem. Research and practice have shown that age criteria, determined by legislation, although it is a prerequisite and an important factor for the success of students, however, can not be taken as the sole criteria for determining the readiness and maturity of the child to start the school, because not only the degree of chronological maturity and their willingness, but also by physical, emotional, social and especially intellectual it depends very much on their success in school.

Parents are often in a dilemma when it is the best time to enroll the child in school particularly, whether the child should be enrolled before or after the time set by law. We learn by school practices that in first grade, children who have not attained the development are often enrolled, although they are 7 years old, as we have children who have reached the calendaring age, but they have not reached that development. Likewise, *"all children who have the same calendar age, does not mean they are equally prepared in physical, psychological, emotional and social terms for a normal start in the first grade of primary school*." (Simic, 1955)

The majority of parents think that preschool preparation, knowledge and physical development of children, ensure their maturity, so they enroll them in school, though they often have no right. In pedagogical literature we find more or less different opinions at what age is best for students to be enrolled in first grade.

Based on more materials and information related to educational systems of different countries of the world, in terms of age for enrolling children in school, revolves around the age of 5-8 years old. In England, as defined for starting age of compulsory education is taken 5 - year old. In the USA (Nikolic, 1984) Germany, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Italy and even in Albania, as optimal age for enrolling children in the first grade of primary school is determined the age of 6 years.

Regarding the problem of child registration in the first grade of primary school and their subsequent success, unfortunately we have to say that, in Albania, there is insufficient data regarding the problem of readiness or maturity of the child to start the school. In this matter professors Bedri Dedja and Kolë Tahiri are the ones who dealt with lowering the age calendar for children from 7 to 6 years, which was sanctioned by legal provisions of enrollment in the first grade of primary school from age 6 year.

2. Factors that determine the maturity of the child for starting school

Readiness or maturity of the child, to start school is one of the most important prerequisites for success in school, while *"the success of students achieved in the school, is a proof that this student has been prepared or matured on time to start*

primary school". Child's success in school, especially at the beginning of schooling, in a large scale, depend on his preparation or maturity for school, and the school's own work which is required to use prepartion of the child in the best way. It is a view accepted, according to which, that exists an optimal period at the child, namely a critical period for learning, which should be used in order of education and development of children to be more successful.

Therefore, it is important to determine the critical time, namely the optimal time for successful learning of child, *"... if this time is not used, the child will always be damaged and will not be able to learn the skill, as he would have learned and exercised at the optimal time."* (Furlan, 1964). For optimal readiness of the calendar age and that of the development of children to school, the criteria is not yet determined to be considered fully valid even with this problem, particularly in the last 20-30 years pedagogues, psychologists, doctors pediatrician etc., are studying in various countries of Europe and the world. In a handbook for preschoolers written by K. Tahiri, among other things he states that: *" the willingness, particularly the maturity of the child to start the school, has to do with a certain level of physical, physiological and psychological development; with that level of needs requirements, drivers of internal goals, which enable the activation with success of the child in educational and learning work."* (Tahiri, 1988).

3. What are the components or determinants that make a maturity and readiness of children for starting school?

For this various authors have different opinions. Lote Sh. Dancinger highlights three factors that determine a maturity of the child's readiness for the start of school, such as:

Personal readiness - which means training the child to be able to fight down as much as possible to overcome and prevail the instincts urge, in order to fit more easily in social situations;

Readiness and functional maturity - which means the orientation of the child by the idea and realistic understanding of various natural and social phenomena and

Physical readiness - which means the degree of development of the child, enabling to show consistency and ability to adapt at the school work, without damaging his health and growth.

The German psychologist Korel Werner determined the child's readiness to learn by taking into account the four groups of factors, such as: health and physical development, emotional stability, intellectual development, as well as previous knowledge. Another psychologist Thompson, takes into account these components for children's readiness to learn and work, as the sharpness of the senses, the development of observation, development of notions for learning, intelligence, and

emotional stability, social and physical development. Different authors have different opinions among which are:

- *Physical and health development.*
- *Intellectual development.*
- *Social development.*
- *Emotional development.*
- *Knowledge gained before.*
- *Speaking development.*

4. Research methodology

To realize the study are used theoretical analysis methods, problems of age enrollment on first class of primary school, statistical methods, method of conversation, method of data comparing, describing methods etc.

Population and sample

This problem will only be studied in the city of Shkodra. This is because it is impossible to use pedagogical documentation of all schools of Albania. The sample has 800 students, a generation enrolled in first grade in elementary school at the city of Shkodra, data which is taken from registers and we consider that represents the population in question.

The topic of this research in theoretical plan is achieved due to the literature review. Based on tasks, purpose and research is paved the way of the study. After consulting the literature began the stage of collecting data necessary for the students, from the book of registers and their presentation in separate tables. In these tables are foreseen all the sections that were required, in order to release the data for subjects, such as: the date, month and year of birth, age and registration in the first class, the data for the start of children in school, the amount of years, months and days, on the occasion of their registration in first grade of primary school, record of success at the end of first grade. All these data were received by representatives of urban and rural areas, analyzed by gender, even by the age of their registration: in children that are enrolled in school prematurely, in children who are registered on time and in children who are registered on late time, in the first grade of primary school.

From urban areas, data on students were taken from the registries of the three main schools of the city as "Ndre Mjeda", "Ismail Qemali" and "Branko Kadia" while in the rural area with a representatives of 400 students the data were taken from school villages: Mjedë, Bushat, Dobraç, Bardhaj, Oblikë, Vrakë, Shtoj i Ri dhe Shtoj i Vjetër.

All these data are placed in the table, by taking the data not only by gender but also by age of their registration, the students registered in advance (5 years and 6 months - 6 years and 6 months), in students enrolled on time (6 years and 6 months - 7 years and 6 months), and registered on late time students (over 7 years and 6 months). The data were derived from Amze, in order to ascertain students enrolled prematurely (male - female), on time (male - female) and late time (male - female). In the first grade elementary a simple math was used, namely through indicators of age and experience, descending date, month and year of birth, from their age of starting school (01.09.2014).

Research hypotheses

We consider these hypotheses to study this pedagogical problem:
There is a condition between age enrollment in the first grade of primary school and their success in the first grade.
Calendar age can not be the sole criterion of child enrollment in school, because the mental age and calendarian one is not developed equally and it is not run in parallel to all children.
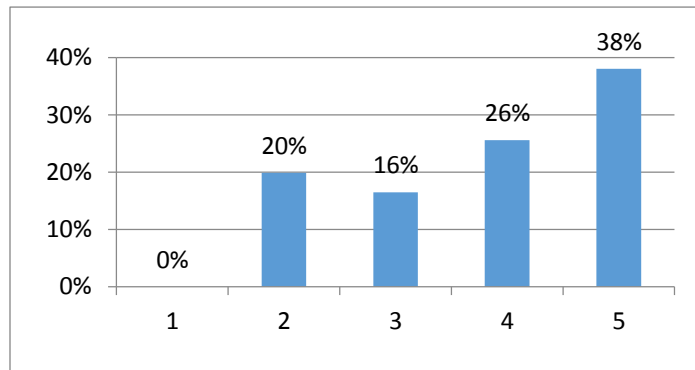
4. **Results and discussions.**

Results of students enrolled prematurely in school.

In the first grade of primary school, as it is known, there are students enrolled at the age of approximately 6, 7 and 8 years old. These differences of age, for adults are not very important, as for students of this age are very important
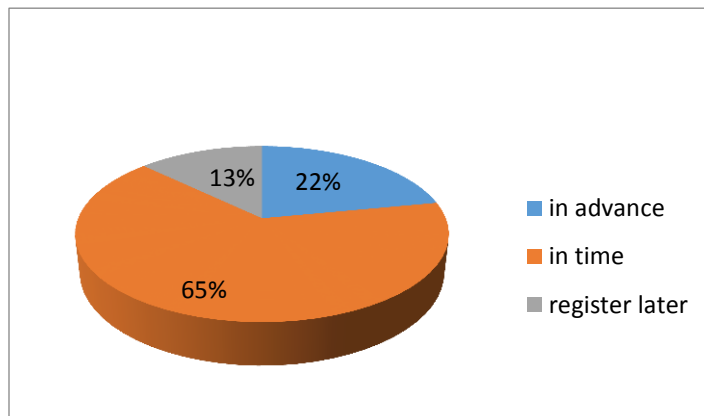
From the sample that we used, of 800 first-grade students, 176, or 22 %, registered in advance, 521, or 65 %, registered in time and 103 or 13 %, registered later. Regarding enrollment ratio of students in classes the sample data give us this picture: The sample of 800 students was formed by students of 32 first grade classes of elementary school. If we consider the fact that every first class of primary school has an average of 25 students, the result shows that, on average, each class champion had 5 students registered ahead of time, 16 students registered on time and 3 students on late time.

Students enrolled prematurely are two times less than students enrolled on time and 5 times less students who enrolled on late time. So, most of the students in a class, are pupils registered on time. To understand better and more easily those reports, we are showing the diagram below:

Graph. 1. The percentage of students registering earlier, on time and later

Students registered on time are the bases and leaders of the entire educational work in the classroom. Work and school obligations are not very difficult and serious for them, as it is for students enrolled before time and late time. Students registered on time are general registetration and without considering individual abilities and characteristics. The school is obliged to accept, educate and teach.

Graph. 2: Final results of I grade students registered prematurely.

Meanwhile, students enrolled in the first class before time, are usually students chosen and accepted because they are or have been really capable of learning and other school obligations. Those who are enrolled on late time, for various reasons must be accepted, regardless of their possibilities and physical and psychological abilities. Here we present some data on the results of students enrolled prematurely:

FIRST CLASS (scores of students enrolled prematurely)			
Grades	Number of students	Amount X	%
Weak **1**	0	0	0%
Enough **2**	35	70	20%
Good **3**	29	87	16%
Very good **4**	45	180	26%
Excellent **5**	67	335	38%
Total	**176**	**672**	**100%**

Table No. 1: The final results of the first grade students enrolled prematurely

Students registered in prematurely in the first grade of primary school, had the following results: 176 enrolled students earlier have these results: 38% are excellent, 26% very well, 20% are sufficiently evaluated (35 students or 20%) and 16% with good evaluation. The average mark is 3.81.

Results of students enrolled on time in school.

Grade I of elementary school is supposed to be prepared and formed by 6 years old students, (article 12 of the Normative Provisions for University Education System).

Since students were not born on the same day, but have different days, months and years, it is determined on provision that children who turn 6 years old have to enroll in school. Those who register before that age are considered as registered prematurely while those students registered after that age are considered as enrolled on late time.

By law, all children have the equal right for education. The school is obliged to accept them, regardless of their age differences. For this reason, in all grades of elementary school, we have students enrolled not only on time, but also those who are enrolled prematurely and those on late time. The number of students enrolled on time in every class is larger than those enrolled prematurely and on late time. Thus from 800 students of class I, 176 students or 23% of them are enrolled
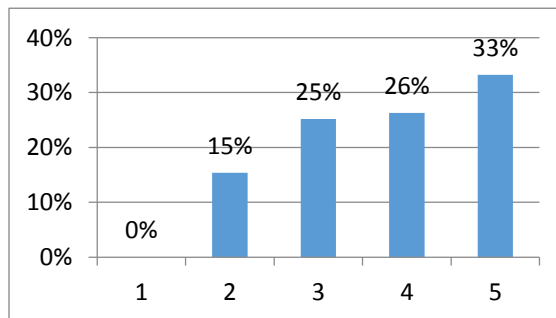
prematurely; 521 students or 65% of them enrolled on time; 123 students or 13% of them are enrolled on late time. In 32 classes I, on average, each class has 5 or 22%.

The total results of students registered at grade I prematurly was 3.81, whereas students enrolled on time is 3.77. This means that students enrolled on time have only 0.04 % lower scores than students enrolled prematurely. This proximity of results between students registered prematurly and those on time shows that the age is not the only creteria evaluating children maturity.

The results of students enrolled on time			
Grades	Number of students	Amount X	%
Weak 1	0	0	0%
Enough 2	80	160	15%
Good 3	131	393	25%
Very good 4	137	548	26%
Excellent 5	173	865	33%
Total	**521**	**1966**	**100%**

Table No. 2: The results of I grades students in, enrolled on time.

521 students enrolled on time, the total evaluated excellent in the first grade are 173 or 33%; 137 or 26% are evaluated very good; 131 or 25% are evaluated good, 80 or 15% evaluated sufficiently.

Graph. 3: Final results of students grade I registered on time.

Results of students enrolled later in first grade at elementary school.

Pupils enrolled, later in grade I, are considered students who have passed the time of enrollment and who have passed the age set for the start of school. Usually, they are students who are over 7 years old. The causes of their failure to be registered at grade I are different, as intellectual reasons, health, distance of the school, immigration, economic reasons and many others.

Basically, students enrolled later on first grade, should have achieved higher results than other students who are enrolled in school prematurely and on time.

However there is another explanation, for lower results for this category of students registered later, they may have not met the developmental age, they were not prepared adequately in intellectual, social, emotional terms.

Such students are in all grades I at elementary school, though, in some classes less and in some more. In our sample of 800 students of class I, which consists of 32 parallel classes of class I, 103 or 13 % of them are late time students enrolled in the first grade. This group constitutes a very small percentage of first graders. Thus, 32 classes have an average of 3 students registered on late time. These students, at the end of class I have an average grade of 3.65. This is their highest success in all primary schools.

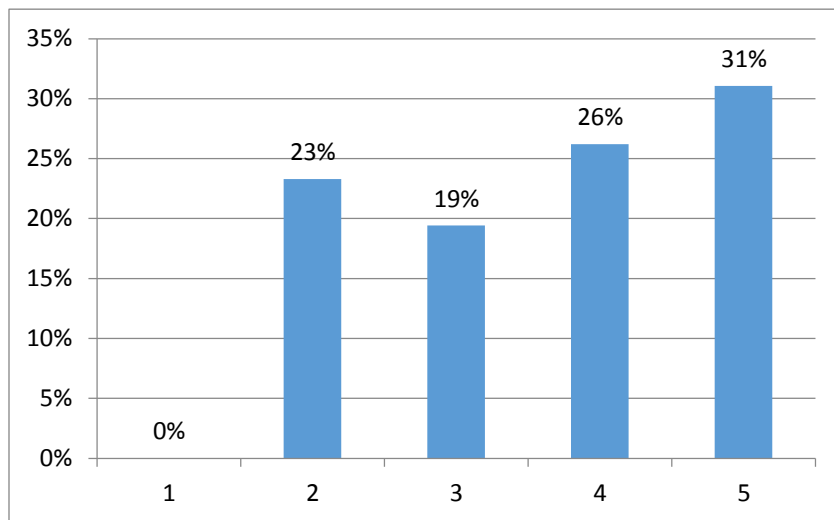| The results of students enrolled on late time in the first class			
Grades	Number of students	Amount X	%
Weak 1	0	0	0%
Enough 2	24	48	23%
Good 3	20	60	19%
Very good 4	27	108	26%
Excellent 5	32	160	31%
Total	**103**	**376**	**100%**

Table No. 3: The results of students enrolled on late time in the first class

Basically, these students who are enrolled on late time in the first class, should have achieved higher result than other students, who are enrolled in school

prematurely and on time, because all these students have exceeded the mandatory age calendar, established by normative provisions, to enroll in the first grade of primary school.

However, lower results for this category of students who are enrolled on late time there is another explanation. These students, upon enrollment, have reached, or have exceeded the age of calendar required by law, but they may not meet the developmental age, which means they were not adequately prepared intellectually, socially and emotionally, etc. Research and educational practice has proved that the calendar age of the students does not always guarantee success, if does not meet the other components.

The low results of these students might have been affected by various factors, such as poor economic conditions, physical and health condition, lack of care, lack of adaption with peer group. 800 students has the sample used for the survey, 103 or 13%, were enrolled later in primary school 103 students enrolled later in school, 32 or 31% are evaluated excellent; 27 or 26% are evaluated very good; 24 or 23% are evaluated sufficiently; 20 or 18%, are evaluated good.

Graph. 4: Final results of I grade students registered later.

Differences and similarities of the success of students enrolled prematurely, on time and late.

To observe the similarities and differences of passing school year of the first grade enrolled early, on time and later, here below we show a summarizing table.

Early				On time				Later			
Grades	No. Students	%	Ranking	Grades	No. Students	%	Ranking	Grades	No. Students	%	Ranking
1	0	0%	0	1	0	0%	0	1	0	0	0
2	35	20%	3	2	80	15%	4	2	24	23%	3
3	29	16%	4	3	131	25%	3	3	20	19%	4
4	45	26%	2	4	137	26%	2	4	27	26%	2
5	67	38%	1	5	173	33%	1	5	32	31%	1
	X =	3.81			X =	3.77			X =	3.65	

Table No. 4: Differences and similarities of the success of students enrolled early, on time and later.

Annual average mark in general for students registered early, on time and later in first grade is 3.74.

These data shows us that the success of students enrolled prematurely, on time and later, in primary school, is very similar among students registered prematurely and on time, and those enrolled later is significantly lower.

In the first grade from all three groups, the first place is occupied by pupils rated excellent, second place is occupied by pupils rated very good and the third place is occupied by pupils assessed enough. Whereas students enrolled prematurely and on time occupied third place with enough assessment, while the fourth are students who have good assessment.

6. Conclusions

Given the results of research to the changes of success of students enrolled for the first time in first grade, early, on time and later we reached on these conclusions:

1. The students enrolled on first grade prematurely reached higher results, proved the arithmetic average, which is 3.81, in contrast to the students enrolled on time (3.77), and of those registered later (3.65).
2. The hypothesis confirmed that there are differences in students success registered early, on time and later. Students registered later have difficulties and weaknesses comparing to students enrolled early and on time.
3. By the given data of the research, there are no problems with students registered early on lower cycle, but with those registered later, where special measures should be taken.
4. Results of the study show that the calendar age can not be the sole criteria of children enrollment in school.

7. Recommendations

- The success of students in the first grade of primary school depends on the degree of preparation and maturity of children to school, which requires their preparation on time. The child has to start school when he is ready for it.
- Participation in preschool institutions to be obligatory (at least preparatory class). This is because the children who attended these institutions have achieved higher scores compared with children who did not attend these institutions.
- To have success in school the child should have a psychological preparation before the start of school, not only from parents but also from pre-school institutions (e.g. visit to a school or a hearing of a class).
- School directors should be more careful in the enrollment of children in first grade. They sometimes enroll children to reach the number to form a class, take the children without fulfilling the criteria for inclusion in the first class.
- Paying attention to child psychological preparation before starting school. Applying tests to the child's readiness to start the first class, as applied in many countries. A collaboration between teachers and psychological services, in a professional manner, should test the degree of preparation or maturity of the children, before they enroll in first grade of primary school. It would be a valuable contribution in this regard.

This study will be completed by other studies which will be extended to other classes of secondary school of high and low cycle. It will give us a more complete picture of the problem to the success of children who start school for the first time, early, on time and later will help us in providing appropriate recommendations to the start of school.

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Sažetak

OSVRT NA SPREMNOST UČENIKA NA POLAZAK U ŠKOLU

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Mnogi se znanstvenici iz različitih dijelova svijeta bave problemom spremnosti djece na polazak u školu. Pokazali su da je uspjeh ili neuspjeh u primarnome obrazovanju uvelike uvjetovan nepripremljenošću i nezrelošću za početak škole. S druge strane, puno se roditelja dvoumi oko vremena kada je najbolje upisati dijete u školu, treba li ga upisati prije ili poslije propisanoga roka. Ovomu je istraživanju cilj sagledati promjene koje se događaju u prvome razredu primarnoga obrazovanja, kod prijevremeno upisanih učenika, učenika upisanih na vrijeme i poslije propisanoga roka. Navedeni problem složen je i kompliciran te je istraživanje usmjereno na državne i privatne škole u okolici Shkodre s uzorkom od 800 učenika te okuplja seoska i gradska područja.

Ključne riječi: nezrelost, spremnost, učenik, škola, nepripremljenost