

ABSTRACT

The dissertation thesis presents the results of a research project which focused on the application of mediated learning experience theory to teaching with respect to cognitive development of pupils. The first chapter introduces cognitive education, which concentrates on the process of learning. It also compares this approach with traditional methods aimed at the content of learning. The following parts of the thesis deal with selected theories postulated by Reuven Feuerstein which are important for understanding the context in which his other theory was developed: the theory of mediated learning experience. This theory is the central theme of the theoretical part of the thesis. Apart from its definition and parameters, the thesis presents specific recommendations for teachers about how to develop cognitive functions of their pupils by applying this theory directly in class. Afterwards, attention is paid to Feuerstein's well-known worldwide intervention program called The Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment. This program is used in the Czech school system, too. The essential part of this chapter introduces a number of studies which focused on the verification of benefits of Feuerstein's approaches to cognitive development in children and adolescents. The last chapter of the theoretical part summarizes the main principles of dynamic assessment which is used in the empirical part of the thesis.

The research project applied quantitative methodology. It was carried out over a one-year period. The study included 187 pupils from ten school classes of elementary schools. In half of the group, Feuerstein's approaches were used. The second half consisted of pupils from ordinary elementary schools. The research survey had two main goals. The first one was to describe how the application of mediated learning experience in teaching affects learning skill development in elementary school pupils. The second goal was to describe differences between pupils whose teachers applied Feuerstein's approaches to teaching and pupils from ordinary elementary schools. To fulfill both goals the data were collected three times a year using a battery of assessment tools (Raven's Coloured Progressive Matrices, Organization of dots test, figure test). Moreover, the first and the third assessment were administered using the dynamic assessment approach and included the pre-test phase, the mediation phase and the post-test phase for all research methods. Significant differences appeared especially at the figure test. According to the results of this test, pupils whose teachers used Feuerstein's approaches improved more during the survey. In comparison to pupils from ordinary elementary schools, these pupils demonstrated for example an increased complex capacity to organize and structure the difficult task or better learning skills during testing. On the other

hand, the results of many other variables did not show any significant differences between both groups of pupils.

The contribution of this dissertation thesis lies in raising awareness of the professionals about the possibilities and meaningfulness of cognitive development in schoolchildren. Another aspect which contributes to this purpose is the application character of the practical recommendations in the theoretical part intended primarily for teachers, psychologists, special educators and other professionals.