Imitative Learning: the Teacher as a Role Model

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Abstract

The knowledge required for teaching can be divided into three groups: knowledge needed for practice, knowledge used in practice, and knowledge about practice. Knowledge needed for practice is acquired during academic education. As soon as this process is completed and a person acquires desired knowledge, he/she proceeds to the next step. The stage titled 'knowledge used in practice' promotes professional development of teachers. This process is an integral part of the teacher's profession. During this process, it is crucial to constantly acquire subject-specific knowledge, master skills, develop personal competences, and take part in research activities.

Modern technologies lead to rapid changes in the world in every field. New trends in the development of the world require schools to follow them. Education requires reorganization and adaptation to new changes. Consequently, the role of teachers in the education system is changing. The teacher remains a role model, setting an example for all pupils.

The social role of teachers is crucial when it comes to the development of the pupil's individually and the development of the society as a whole. Parents are the most important role models in the earliest period of childhood development but teachers and peers are becoming increasingly important in the later stages of children's lives.

Pupils' imitation of the teacher's behaviour is one of the most important forms of learning according to the opinion of American psychologist Alberto Bandura. The pupil imitates behavior patterns, social values, attitudes, skills or modifies traditional ways of behavior. Imitative learning has a great potential, greater than other ways of learning. The emotional connection between a pupil and teacher is very important in imitative learning.

There are three variations of imitative learning: identification, imitation, and role learning. Identification is an unconscious mimicking of other people's behavior patterns. Children usually mimic parents, teachers, cartoon characters, accept their attitudes and moral norms, and change their behavioral patterns. Identification implies the adoption of internal characteristics, system of moral values, personality traits.

The teacher as a role model influences the formation of social identity and personality of children. It is well known that pupils are eager to learn only when they like a teacher.

According to G. Tarde, the process of imitation presupposes that certain images are created in the mind of the imitator on the basis of observation.

In order to examine the role of teachers in shaping pupils' behavior, we conducted a survey among elementary school teachers and pupils in Belgrade.

Keywords: knowledge; identification; imitation; role model.

Имитационное обучение: учитель как ролевая модель

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Аннотация

Знания, необходимые для обучения, можно разделить на три группы: знания, необходимые для практики, знания, используемые на практике, и знания о практике. Знания, необходимые для практики, приобретаются во время теоретической подготовки. Как только этот процесс

завершен, и человек получает желаемые знания, он переходит к следующему этапу, который называется «знания, используемые на практике». Данный этап способствует профессиональному развитию учителей. Этот процесс является неотъемлемой частью профессии учителя, во время которого крайне важно постоянно приобретать предметные знания, профессиональные навыки, развивать личные компетенции и принимать участие в исследовательской деятельности.

Современные технологии ведут к быстрым изменениям во всех областях жизнедеятельности человека по всему миру. Новые тенденции мирового развития требуют активного вовлечения школ в этот процесс. Образовательная система нуждается в реорганизации и адаптации к новым изменениям. Роль учителей в системе образования также меняется. При этом учитель остается образцом для подражания для всех учеников.

Социальная роль учителей имеет решающее значение, когда речь идет об индивидуальном развитии ученика и о развитии общества в целом. Родители задают модель поведения на самых ранних этапах развития детей. Учителя и сверстники играют наиболее важную роль на более поздних этапах развития и становления детей.

Одной из самых важных форм обучения согласно мнению американского психолога Альберта Бандуры является подражание учениками поведению учителя. Ученик имитирует модели поведения, социальные ценности, отношения, навыки, а также изменяет традиционные способы поведения. Имитационное обучение обладает большим потенциалом, большим, чем другие способы обучения. Для имитационного обучения очень важна эмоциональная связь между учеником и учителем.

Существует три варианта имитационного обучения: идентификация, подражание и ролевое обучение. Идентификация – это бессознательное подражание образцам поведения других людей. Дети обычно имитируют родителей, учителей, героев мультфильмов, перенимают моральные нормы, адаптируют взгляды и изменяют свои поведенческие модели. Идентификация подразумевает принятие внутренних характеристик, системы моральных ценностей, личностных качеств.

Ключевые слова: знание, идентификация, имитация, ролевая модель.

Introduction

Imitative learning is an important means of socialization. This is a form of education in which learners imitate certain behavior patterns of teachers. There is an emotional connection between a role model teacher and pupils. In the early childhood pupils have the same connection with parents and close relatives. Connection can be built with teachers, peers, a famous person, writer or scientist.

Imitative learning is a quick process, as pupils quickly learn new patterns of behavior or modify their own after observing teachers. This process presupposes that general rules, attitudes, values, and behavior patterns can be learnt. Role model teachers are often unaware that they serve as an example to pupils. Three types of imitative learning found in literature include:

- 1. Learning by imitation
- 2. Learning by identification
- 3. Role learning.

Imitation mechanism presupposes that pupils acquire different behavior patterns. Identification is the adoption of values, personality traits, and attitudes.

The main conditions for imitative learning can be summarized as follows:

- There must be a person whose behavior is perceived as exemplary;
- Learners should have relevant skills in order to imitate someone's behavior;
- Pupils observe and try to remember behavior patterns during the first stage of imitative learning;
 - Pupils should be motivated to learn.

During the early 60's, Albert Bandura began to talk about a new form of learning. Bandura, Ross and Ross (1961) have done several experiments on this subject. One of these studies was conducted in 1961. During this experiment, children observed aggres-

sive patterns of behavior. The goal of the experiment was to determine how much such behavior affects the behavior of children. One group of children showed aggressive behavior towards a plastic doll, the other group behaved in the opposite way, while participants of the third group did not change their behavior. The research has shown that adult behavior affects children. In 1963, this kind of experiment was conducted one more time in order to determine how aggressive behavior on TV or affects people.

Bandura (1965) explains that new forms of behavior can be adopted by imitating examples of aggressive behavior. It was proved that aggression on TV can convey and promote aggressive behavior. The theory of social learning suggests that the intentional and unintentional demonstration of aggressive behavior patterns reinforce the tendency for such behavior.

The behavior patterns of other people serve as a model and very powerful tool that can have an influence on teaching. The teacher as a role model shows certain patterns of behavior. He/she is usually unaware of effect of these patterns on pupils. Teacher's behavior is more influential than what is being presented verbally.

Hypotheses

There are good and bad sides in every field. Rapid changes in the world today affect teaching practices. What kind of a role model can the teacher be in a modern society?

Expectations of teachers and pupils are different. Therefore, it is difficult for them to understand each other. The idea expressed by one professor can help understand the relationship between teachers and students:

When I began to teach, I was dreaming to become a leader of a group of pupils who are eager to learn, explore, and discover. But I was unhappy about my job. I felt like a slave in the classroom. Pupils were lazy and did not want to study. They lied, missed classes, and made little effort to study. The worst thing was that my performance was evaluated in accordance with their exam results (Gordon & Bruch, 1974).

This quote describes the relationship between the teacher and pupils. If the teacher is dissatisfied with pupils, his/her work, working conditions, and salary, his/her dissatisfaction negatively influences children and their academic performance. How many people working in the field of education can agree with this statement?

One of the aims of this paper is to identify the role of teachers in practice and the importance of teacher's responsibilities. Every teacher would like to work with pupils who are eager to learn and have a motivation to learn. However, situation may be different in practice. Novice teachers usually seem to better understand a new generation of pupils. Experienced teachers often claim that children changed a lot in the last years (Gordon & Bruch, 1974). Responsibilities of teachers play an important role in their professional development. Teachers feel responsible for transferring knowledge to students at the beginning of their career. Novice teachers often experience difficulties in the classroom as they do not know how much information students need to learn.

The process of acquiring knowledge is important but it is not the only thing that pupils need to learn at school. Social skills, habits, problem solving abilities, and emotional intelligence are components of personal development. In order to understand the needs of students, 'teachers need to take into account socio-economic, ethnic and family background of students enrolled in extracurricular and out-of-school activities' (Stecher & Maschke, 2013). Understanding the needs of students helps resolve many issues in the classroom. Teachers with negative attitudes towards pupils will not succeed in their profession. Such teachers will always wonder why pupils are not motivated to learn, not interested in classes, and do not put much effort into studying.

Every student has a unique background, so that teachers need to develop relevant competences which would help them motivate students. The practice has shown that teachers set assessment criteria in accordance with academic performance of the most successful pupils. However, it contradicts with the fact that each student is different from other students. It is important to emphasize that students should be rewarded according to their abilities. Every student can easily find out what he/she does not know, so that the goal of the teacher is to motivate pupils.

In addition to transferring knowledge, the teacher influences the formation of the personality of pupils. According to some studies, the first three years at school are significant for the formation of moral behavior of pupils (Dordevic, 1988). The reputation of teachers influences pupils' understanding of a role model. The teacher's personality affects his/her teaching practices, so that it is necessary for teachers to be aware of it. 'Pupils learn best by observing and copying the behavior of adults (parents and teachers)' (p. 38). The characteristics of the teachers and the forms of his/her behavior not only have a great influence on pupils but also teach them to accept the fact that learning is a continuous process. Teachers are perceived as 'parents' by the youngest pupils. In the modern society parents spend less time looking after children. Thus, the role of the teacher is becoming more important. Undermined parental authority has certainly affected pupils. 'Serious difficulties in education and socialization are caused by mass media, television, radio, commercials' (Nikandroy, 2007).

The survey, which was conducted among elementary school teachers and pupils, shows that pupils have an image of an ideal teacher and certain stereotypes about how a good teacher should behave. Of course, the tips and guidelines provided by participants are useful. However, if we look from the perspective that every teacher has a unique personality, it is clear that not all teachers have innate abilities necessary to succeed in their profession. Does it mean that such teachers should choose a different career? Nevertheless, it is very important for pupils to have a role model.

Methodology and findings

In order to understand the role of the teacher in the modern society and analyze the relationship between the student and teacher, 253 pupils of the 7th and 8th grade of elementary school in Belgrade aged from 13 to 15 and 13 teachers were interviewed. State schools in Serbia include a number of departments, and each school has a professional team. This team consists of teachers and psychologists, and their number depends on the needs and size of the school. The role of a school team is to deal with everyday problems which pupils, teachers, and parents may have. The team acts as a mediator in different situations. We should not forget that everyone has a different perspective on problems, so that the competent teacher needs to create a friendly atmosphere in the classroom and build harmonious relationship with students, colleagues, and parents. Besides, teachers need to help students solve problems, better understand studied material, and select appropriate teaching methods. The role of a school team in elementary and secondary schools is remarkable. The surveyed teachers of selected schools act as mediators in conflict situations. Teachers are oppressed by students, colleagues, and parents.

13 Serbian elementary school teachers, that took part in the survey, had to answer three questions: 1. What characteristics do teachers need to possess in order to have a positive impact on students' personal development? 2. What are common mistakes of novice teachers? 3. What advice do you have for teachers?

All responses were descriptive. The respondents were asked to answer questions anonymously. The most popular responses are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Questions	1. What characteristics do teachers need to possess in order to have a positive impact on students' personal development?	2. What are common mistakes of novice teachers?	3. What advice do you have for teachers?
A N S W E R S	The teacher should be: courageous, patient, conscientious, responsible, open, innovative, creative, empathetic, tolerant, right-minded, accurate, consistent, interesting, witty, dedicated, enthusiastic, flexible, courageous, intelligent, cautious, tactical	Beginning teachers demand too much of pupils. It is difficult for them to find effective teaching methods due to lack of experience. They also chose irrelevant patterns of behaviour. They don't have enough knowledge in the field of pedagogy, methodology, and psychology. They don't want to ask for help. They think that they know a lot. They are poorly motivated, insecure. They try to take advantage of their positions, express prejudice against pupils.	Teachers should follow modern trends in education; learn from other people's experience; promote pupils' development; be careful, fair, professional, tolerant; admit their mistakes; respect the pupil's point of view; be innovative, creative, optimistic; love children; love their profession; influence pupils' personal development.

The topic of the desirable characteristics of teachers is relevant to all stages of their development. The surveyed Serbian teachers working in elementary schools had many recommendations for teachers and their qualities. Many participants expressed similar ideas. For instance, as one teacher noted: 'The teacher must be aware of his role in shaping the students' development. He/she should be willing to admit mistakes, be empathetic. Such behaviour will motivate students to study'.

253 pupils of the 7th and 8th grade of elementary school participated in the survey which is aimed to identify their perception of an ideal teacher (Appendix A, B, C). The first question was about whether pupils have a favourite teacher. 78.96% of pupils gave a positive answer. The number of pupils of the 7th grade who answered 'yes' was slightly higher than the number of pupils from the 8th grade. 20.94% of pupils do not have a favourite teacher. In Serbia pupils of this age have 12 compulsory subjects, 3 optional subjects and 1 elective subject. The second question was whether there is a correlation between a favourite teacher and favourite subject. 52.17% of pupils answered that they did not identify teachers with subjects they teach, while 45.84% of participants highlighted the link between their favourite teacher and favourite subject. The number of answers given by the 7th and 8th grade pupils was approximately the same. Concerning the third question, 62.84% of respondents answered affirmatively, 31.22% of pupils answered that they would not ask the teacher to explain something again, and 5.92% of participants did not respond to the question. Students of the 7th grade have more negative responses than the 8th grade peers. When asked if you are scared of a professor, 59.28% of pupils answered that they were not scared, 35.17% of them said they were scared, 3.55% of respondents did not answer this question. More than a third of pupils stated they were scared of the teacher. This topic would be explored in further research. When asked if a teacher serves as a role model, 41.89% of pupils answered affirmatively, 54.94% of respondents answered negatively and 3.16% of participants did not answer this question. The results of this study show that Serbian teachers have powerful influence on pupils' personal development. The research conducted by Professor Jovan Dordevic (1988) also revealed that the personality of teachers plays a major role in the formation of pupils' personality. As for the personality of the teacher, 74% of the answers were related to such characteristics as sensible, moral, noble human being, and only 25% of the answers deal with the content knowledge, methods of teaching and assessment.

Concerning the sixth question, pupils could tick 2 most important qualities of the teacher. The majority of pupils (41.89%) chose 'respect'. In a modern society, pupils believe that teacher need to respect pupils' individual characteristics, take into account their opinions, and be empathetic. The next most important feature according to the survey is unbiased assessment. 36.75% of respondents believe that everyone should be assessed equally. Pupils expect teachers to behave fairly and apply the same assessment criteria to every student. The $7^{\rm th}$ and $8^{\rm th}$ grade is the period when the personality of pupils is formed. It is one of the most important stages of their personal development. The teacher should serve as a positive role model for pupils.

The third most important characteristic based on answers is teachers' competences. 33.20% of pupils selected this answer. Although pupils use modern technologies for learning, the importance of teachers in pupils' life cannot be underestimated. The teacher has many roles in a modern society. He/she is not the only source of knowledge but his expertise is of a great importance for pupils.

The fourth important feature is patience. 29.24% of the respondents believe that patience is an essential characteristic of teachers. The number of pupils of the 7th grade who answered positively was higher than the number of pupils of the 8th grade. The patience of the teacher contributed to a positive school climate. The patience may also help resolve the issues in the classroom. 26.87 % of pupils claimed that teachers were responsible for pupils' learning. The number of positive answers was equal in both grades.

The sixth feature that drew the attention of 22.13% of pupils was tolerance. Other teachers' characteristics can be found in Appendix A, B, C.

Conclusion

Imitative is a form of education in which learners imitate certain behavior patterns of teachers. Behaviour patterns of other people serve as an example and very powerful tool for motivation of pupils. Thus, the teacher should be a role model for pupils. He/she has a strong influence on pupils' personal development. The results of the research helped to shed light on the desirable characteristics of teachers from pupils' perspective. According to the answers given by pupils, the teacher as a role model should be respectful, experienced, patient, tolerant, and unbiased.

The results show that 78.60% of pupils have a favourite teacher. 45.84% of participants think that there is a correlation between a favourite teacher and favourite subject. 41.89% of the respondents claim that they perceive a teacher as a role model. Although modern technologies play an important role in pupils' life, the teacher's role cannot be underestimated or replaced by other learning inputs.

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Appendix A

					VII grade	ade									
	Answers	Λ	VII-1	Λ	VII-2	Λ	VII-3	Λ	VII-4	Λ	VII-5	Λ	9-IIA	Tc	Total
Ouestions		24 J	24 pupils	22 1	22 pupils	22 F	22 pupils	21 [21 pupils	22 F	22 pupils	19 F	slidnd 61	130 [130 pupils
,		No.	%	No.	%										
1. Do you have a favorite	Yes	18	75	19	86,36	18	81,81	17	80,95	17	77,27	17	89,47	106	81,53
teacher?	No	6	25	3	13,63	4	18,18	4	19,04	4	18,18	2	10,52	23	17,69
	No answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4,54	0	0	1	0,76
2. Is there any relation betwen	Yes	6	25	9	27,7	13	59,09	10	47,61	17	77,27	7	36,84	59	45,38
your favorite teacher and your	No	18	75	15	68,18	9	40,90	11	52,38	2	60,6	12	63,15	29	51,53
lavorite subjects	No answer	0	0	1	4,54	0	0	0	0	3	13,63	0	0	4	3,07
3. If you do not understand	Yes	8	33,33	15	68,18	14	63,63	17	80,95	7	31,81	11	57,89	72	55,38
something during the class, can	No	16	99,99	2	60,6	7	31,81	3	14,28	13	59,09	9	31,57	47	36,15
you ask your teacher to explain it one more time?	No answer	0	0	2	22,72	1	4,54	1	4,76	2	60,6	2	10,52	11	8,46
4. Are you scared of your	Yes	5	20,83	4	18,18	10	45,45	10	47,61	15	68,18	10	52,63	54	41,53
teacher?	No	18	75	17	77,27	12	54,54	11	52,38	5	22,72	8	42,10	71	54,61
	No answer	1	4,16	1	4,54	0	0	0	0	2	60,6	1	5,26	5	3,84
5. Is your teacher a role model	Yes	16	99,99	18	81,81	9	40,90	4	19,04	9	27,27	5	26,31	58	44,61
for you?	No	8	33,33	3	13,63	12	54,54	16	76,19	14	63,63	13	68,42	99	50,76
	No answer	0	0	1	4,54	1	4,54	1	4,76	2	60'6	1	5,26	9	4,61
6. What are the most important qualities of the teacher?	Unbiased assessment	14	58,33	7	31,81	8	36,36	6	28,57	12	54,54	8	42,10	55	42,30
Not more than two	Tolerance	4	16,66	4	18,18	5	22,72	9	28,57	3	13,63	2	10,52	24	18,46
	Patience	6	25	8	31,81	8	36,36	8	38,09	5	22,72	6	31,57	41	31,55
	Consistency	1	4,16	0	0	0	0	6	28,57	0	0	1	5,26	8	6,18
	Care	5	20,83	5	22,72	5	22,72	3	14,28	2	60,6	5	26,31	25	19,23
	Professionalism	12	50	9	27,27	5	22,72	5	23,80	7	31,81	2	10,52	37	28,46
	Responsibility	5	20,83	6	40,90	9	27,22	3	14,28	4	18,18	7	36,84	34	26,15
	Respect	7	29,16	10	45,45	8	36,36	8	38,09	8	36,36	11	5,89	52	40

Appendix B

					VIII grade	rade									
		IV	VIII-1	[\(\)	VIII-2	IN	VIII-3	IV	VIII-4	IV	VIII-5	[A	9-III-0	T	Total
Questions	Answers	21 F	21 pupils	171	17 pupils	18 F	18 pupils	20 p	20 pupils	20 F	20 pupils	27 I	27 pupils	123 1	123 pupils
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1. Do you have a favorite	Yes	16	76,19	10	58,82	16	88,88	17	85	16	80	18	99,99	93	75,60
teacher?	No	5	23,80	7	41,17	2	11,11	3	15	4	20	6	33,33	30	24,39
	No answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2. Is there any relation betwen	Yes	11	52,38	9	35,29	11	61,11	6	45	12	09	8	29,62	57	46,34
your favorite teacher and your	No	10	47,61	11	64,70	7	38,88	10	50	8	40	19	70,37	65	52,84
iavorite subject:	No answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	1	0,81
3. If you do not understand	Yes	13	61,90	11	64,70	14	77,77	13	65	14	02	22	81,48	87	70,73
something during the class, can	No	9	28,57	5	29,41	4	22,22	9	30	9	30	5	18,51	32	26,01
you ask your teacher to explain it one more time?	No answer	2	9,52	1	2,88	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	4	3,25
4. Are you scared of your	Yes	3	14,28	8	47,05	8	44,44	8	40	4	20	4	14,81	35	28,45
teacher?	No	16	76,19	8	47,05	10	55,55	12	09	15	52	23	85,18	84	68,29
	No answer	2	9,52	1	5,88	0	0	0	0	1	5	0	0	4	3,25
5. Is your teacher a role model	Yes	3	14,28	5	29,41	6	50	4	20	6	45	18	99,99	48	39,02
for you?	No	18	85,71	11	64,70	6	50	15	75	11	22	6	33,33	73	59,34
	No answer	0	0	1	5,88	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	2	1,62
6. What are the most important qualities of the teacher?	Unbiased assessment	4	19,04	2	11,76	8	44,44	7	35	7	35	10	37,03	38	30,87
Not more than two	Tolerance	2	9,52	5	29,41	6	50	3	20	9	45	4	14,81	32	26,01
	Patience	9	28,57	5	29,41	8	44,44	2	10	8	40	4	14,81	33	26,82
	Consistency	0	0	1	5,88	1	5,55	0	0	4	20	1	3,70	7	5,69
	Care	4	19,04	2	11,76	3	16,66	3	15	4	20	8	29,62	24	19,51
	Professionalism	10	47,61	4	23,52	6	50	9	30	11	55	7	25,92	47	38,21
	Responsibility	6	42,85	П	5,88	3	16,66	10	50	7	35	4	14,81	34	27,68
	Respect	7	33,33	6	52,94	7	38,88	7	35	10	50	14	51,85	54	43,90

Appendix C

		VII and V	VII and VIII grade				
Oussitson	On Caracian V	VII grade	VII grade 130 pupils	VIII grade	VIII grade 123 pupils	Total 25	Total 253 pupils
Questions	Alisweis	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1. Do you have a favorite teacher?	Yes	106	81,53	93	75,60	199	78,65
	No	23	17,69	30	24,39	53	20,94
	No answer	1	0,76	0	0	1	0,39
2. Is there any relation betwen your favorite	Yes	59	45,38	57	46,34	116	45,84
teacher and your favorite subject?	No	29	51,53	65	52,84	132	52,17
	No answer	4	3,07	1	0,81	1	0,39
3. If you do not understand something	Yes	72	55,38	87	70,73	159	62,84
during the class, can you ask your teacher	No	47	36,15	32	26,01	62	31,22
to expiain it one more time?	No answer	11	8,46	4	3,25	15	5,92
4. Are you scared of your teacher?	Yes	54	41,53	35	28,45	68	35,17
	No	71	54,61	84	68,29	155	59,28
	No answer	5	3,84	4	3,25	6	3,55
5. Is your teacher a role model for you?	Yes	58	44,61	48	39,02	106	41,89
	No	99	50,76	73	59,34	139	54,94
	No answer	9	4,61	2	1,62	8	3,16
6. What are the most important qualities of the teacher? Not more than two	Unbiased assessment	55	42,30	38	30,87	93	36,75
	Tolerance	24	18,46	32	26,01	26	22,13
	Patience	41	31,55	33	26,82	74	29,24
	Consistency	8	6,18	7	5,69	15	5,92
	Care	25	19,23	24	19,51	49	19,36
	Professionalism	37	28,46	47	38,21	84	33,20
	Responsibility	34	26,15	34	27,68	89	26,87
	Respect	52	40	54	43,90	106	41,89