



THE PRINCIPLE OF HUMANITY AND TOLERANCE IN MODERN THEORY OF UPBRINGING: AN EDUCATIONAL MODEL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE PERSONALITY THROUGH A CREATIVE PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

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Abstract: This study presents the results of implementing an educational model grounded in the principle of humanity and tolerance, aimed at fostering the development of socially responsible attitudes in primary school pupils through a creative pedagogical approach. The research was conducted with pupils from the 3rd and 4th grades, divided into experimental and control groups. The practical component was carried out with the active participation of art therapist Petya Darakova in a non-formal educational setting that encouraged free creative expression and meaningful dialogue. The programme comprised four pedagogical modules: drawing and personal visual expression, creating story templates, storytelling and dramatisation, and collective interpretation through the creation of a picture with stones. The main goal was to cultivate attitudes of respect for diversity, empathy, and cooperation among the pupils. Analysis of the results indicated a clearly observable positive shift in empathy, tolerance, and social responsibility among the pupils who participated in the programme, while the control group maintained comparable levels of these attitudes throughout. The conclusions drawn from the study confirm that the proposed model is an effective tool for developing value-based attitudes of humanity and tolerance through experiential learning and art-based activities. It provides a practical contribution to contemporary inclusive education strategies by promoting interpersonal understanding and a culture of peaceful coexistence among primary school pupils.

Keywords: humanity, tolerance, creative pedagogical approach, experiential learning, social responsibility, art-based education, inclusive education.

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INTRODUCTION

The principle of humanity and tolerance occupies an increasingly important position in contemporary educational theory, given the growing challenges associated with globalisation and cultural diversity. Upbringing is no longer regarded merely as a process of transmitting knowledge but as a complex system encompassing socialisation, value orientation, and the ethical formation of the individual. According to UNESCO, "education for sustainable development requires cultivating empathy, respect for diversity, and a shared sense of responsibility" [1]. This implies that education cannot be confined to technical training or the development of cognitive skills alone but must involve fostering attitudes and capacities for peaceful and responsible co-existence. Within the scope of modern pedagogical theory, the principle of humanity is defined as a commitment to recognising the dignity, rights, and freedoms of every individual, irrespective of their social, cultural, or personal background. Such a commitment presupposes openness towards others and a readiness for meaningful interaction. James Banks underscores this notion,

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observing that "tolerance is not passive acceptance but active engagement with diversity through dialogue and critical thinking" [2]. In this sense, tolerance is revealed as a process of dialogue and critical reflection that transcends simplistic definitions and creates opportunities for genuine cultural exchange. Thus, the contemporary process of upbringing is conceived as a dynamic field in which skills for interpersonal understanding, cooperation, and a value orientation towards respect for diversity are deliberately cultivated. The current academic discourse emphasises the integral nature of upbringing, which must bring together the cognitive, emotional, and social development of the individual. According to Gert Biesta, contemporary education is not confined to the transmission of knowledge but is directed towards the formation of humanity and critical engagement with the world. This necessitates the development of pedagogical models that build upon traditional forms of teaching while prioritising the formation of a socially responsible personality [3]. As Blaga Dimova notes, "the understanding, awareness, and advancement of society in

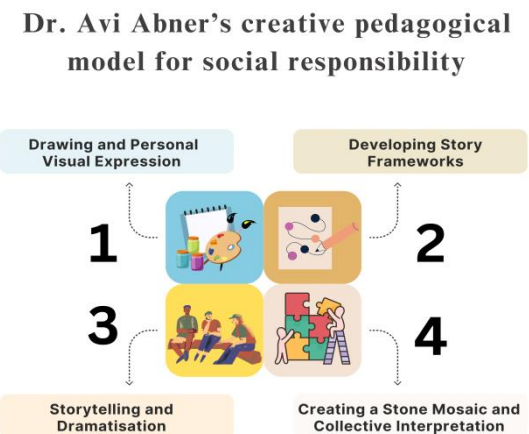
relation to the concept of sustainable development require the formation of an informed civil society that can clearly and reasonably assess the consequences and responsibilities of its own actions upon the lives of future generations" [4]. Her perspective further strengthens the argument that contemporary education must integrate civic, moral, and ecological dimensions in order to foster responsibility and sustainability as core educational values. At the same time, Elliot Eisner argues that the arts in education cultivate critical thinking, interpretative abilities, and empathy, thereby supporting social and emotional learning [5]. Within this context, art-based approaches establish themselves as effective means of enacting the principle of humanity and tolerance, as they enable experiential reflection on values and foster the development of empathy.

DISCUSSION

In pedagogical theory, creative approaches are understood as value-oriented strategies that create conditions for the development of critical thinking, for the analysis of social norms, and for the cultivation of an imagination directed towards a more humane and just society. According to Craft, Jeffrey and Leibling, such practices enable the classroom to be transformed into a space of dialogue, collaboration, and social engagement [6]. Art-based pedagogical activities also foster a culture of mutual respect essential for inclusive education. Contemporary educational systems are witnessing a growing interest in integrating artistic practices with educational aims, particularly within intercultural contexts. As UNESCO highlights, one of the conditions for sustainable development is education for global citizenship, which includes skills for intercultural understanding, peace, and respect for human rights. In this sense, art-based approaches can serve as a means of overcoming cultural barriers and stereotypes through shared creative work and collective interpretation of meaning [1]. Burnard and Hennessy note that reflective practices in arts education are inherently dialogic in nature, encouraging collective interpretation and shared meaning-making. Such approaches promote critical engagement and collaboration among learners, reinforcing democratic values and supporting the aims of inclusive education. They suggest that the role of the educator evolves towards that of a facilitator of dialogue and a partner in educational interaction, fostering students' autonomy and building relationships founded on mutual respect and tolerance [7]. At the foundation of Dr. Avi Abner's authorial educational model lies the principle of humanity and tolerance, which is not limited to a general pedagogical value but defines the content and direction of educational activity. The model aims to support the formation of a socially responsible personality through approaches that encourage respect for every individual, recognition of difference, the development of empathy, and the cultivation of solidarity. Such an orientation is especially important in the Bulgarian educational context, where the diversity of student groups and the goals of inclusive education pose new demands on pedagogical practice. A defining characteristic of this model is experiential learning, which integrates active engagement, creative exploration and sustained reflection. Artistic activities offer students the chance to investigate social questions such as inequality, discrimination and peace through direct involvement that deepens understanding and encourages interpretative insight. This perspective highlights the need for educational strategies that move beyond the mere transmission of knowledge, focusing instead on developing students' capacity for ethical judgement, empathy, and social

responsibility. When learning is structured within meaningful and engaging contexts, educators can encourage the exploration of complex social issues in ways that connect with learners' personal experiences. Creative and reflective practices also provide opportunities for students to examine and reconsider their own assumptions, fostering openness and dialogue across differences. Contemporary research emphasises the importance of deliberately cultivating creative thinking and innovation as foundations for flexibility, problem-solving skills, and deep critical engagement [8]; [9], reinforcing the value of a holistic educational approach that prepares learners to navigate and act responsibly within a diverse and interconnected world.

Figure 1. Creative pedagogical model for social responsibility



Source: Conceptual model developed by Dr. Avi Abner. All rights reserved.

In the first stage, children are given the task of drawing images that represent themselves, their families, or their cultural environment. The central idea is to create an opportunity for personal expression and self-discovery through art. The pedagogical aim is to encourage openness and sharing, turning differences into a starting point for dialogue. The teacher invites the children to explain their chosen colours and forms, thereby fostering an atmosphere of respect for individuality and cultural diversity. This stage lays the foundation for mutual understanding and acceptance. The second stage aims to develop collective imagination and collaborative skills. Children work in groups to design the structure of a story, creating a template that includes characters, setting, and a central problem. The teacher encourages each child to contribute their own idea, thereby building skills in listening, negotiation, and respect for differing opinions. Here, tolerance is fostered through experiencing the need to take account of others and to work towards a shared goal. In the third stage, the groups present their stories to the others through storytelling or dramatisation. Pupils take on roles, attempt to express the feelings and motivations of the characters, and come to understand different perspectives. The pedagogical purpose here is to develop empathy, to cultivate the ability to interpret social situations, and to support emotional expression. The teacher moderates a discussion after each presentation, guiding attention to the values embedded in the story and their relevance to real life. The fourth stage is a synthesising creative activity. Children use stones of different colours and shapes to create a collective picture together. Each stone symbolises individuality, different backgrounds, and the unique contribution of each child. The teacher leads a discussion about the symbolism of the colours and shapes, emphasising that

despite their differences, their combination produces a harmonious and beautiful image. This serves as a visual metaphor for the value of unity in diversity and for the meaning of humanity and tolerance in interpersonal relationships. The children created three original stories, designing their own templates and then producing striking mosaics to accompany them. The stories are presented below:

1. **The picture depicting the anchor:** An anchor rested steadily on the seabed, holding the ship firm even in the midst of a storm. Sailors recognised it as a symbol of faith in one another and responsibility towards the crew. Without it, no one could embark confidently on a voyage, for every journey depends on trust and mutual support.
2. **The picture depicting the fisherman and dog on an island:** On a small island, a fisherman sat peacefully with his dog at his side, both gazing towards the horizon. Instead of rushing or competing, the fisherman showed patience and calm, sharing quiet moments that revealed the joy of companionship and respect for all living beings.
3. **The picture depicting the family and the moon:** On a clear night, a family sat together beneath the bright moon. The youngest child asked how to become a good person. The parent replied softly that goodness lies in truly seeing others, respecting them, and offering help - for it is through these acts that responsibility towards all people is born.

Figure 2. Operational Process



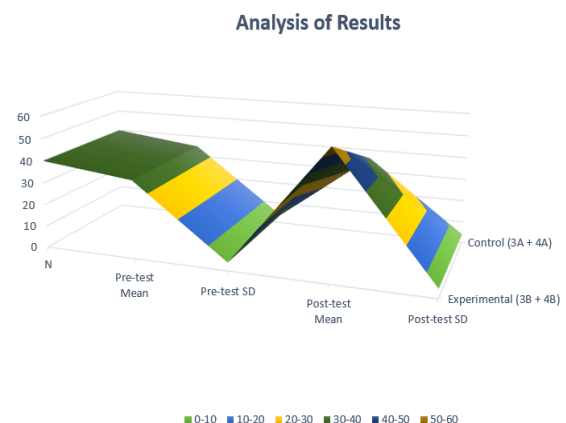
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FINDINGS

To assess the influence of the educational model grounded in the principle of humanity and tolerance, designed to encourage socially responsible attitudes through creative pedagogical work, a study was conducted with pupils from Years 3 and 4 in two school classes. The research involved an experimental group (3B and 4B) and a control group (3A and 4A), each consisting of 20 pupils. The work took place in a real school environment, where learning unfolded in an atmosphere of creativity, dialogue and trust. The programme developed through four interconnected learning modules: drawing and personal visual expression, creating story templates, storytelling and dramatisation, and a collective picture made with stones. Each module opened a space for imagination, empathy and reflection on human values. The pupils were guided to recognise emotions, to listen to one another and to express

understanding through shared creative activity. The sessions were carried out with the participation of art therapist Petya Darakova, whose experience helped the pupils to connect artistic work with genuine feeling and to transform their impressions into expressive images and narratives. The main purpose of the study was to help children develop respect for diversity, empathy and cooperation in their everyday interactions. At the beginning, both groups displayed almost identical levels of empathy and tolerance (Experimental group: $M = 35.2$, $SD = 3.7$; Control group: $M = 34.9$, $SD = 3.9$). After the completion of the creative programme, the experimental group achieved a significant increase in its mean scores ($M = 56.8$, $SD = 4.1$), while the control group showed only a slight rise ($M = 36.1$, $SD = 4.0$). The difference between the two groups was statistically confirmed ($t(39) = 9.21$, $p < 0.001$), showing that the change was meaningful and directly related to the shared learning experience. Beyond the numbers, the children in the experimental classes became more attentive to one another, more willing to help, and more open in communication. Their drawings and stories revealed warmth, sincerity and an emerging ability to understand different points of view. The results demonstrate that when learning takes place in an atmosphere of trust and creativity, grounded in humanity and tolerance, pupils naturally develop empathy, emotional understanding and a sense of responsibility toward others. Such experiences show that true education is not confined to knowledge alone, but to the shared discovery of what it means to be human.

Figure 3. Observed Outcomes



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CONCLUSION

The presented authorial educational model, grounded in the principle of humanity and tolerance and implemented through a creative pedagogical approach, demonstrates significant potential for fostering socially responsible attitudes among primary school pupils. The findings of the conducted study reveal a clear increase in empathy, respect for diversity, and social responsibility among pupils who participated in the programme. This confirms the importance of experiential learning and creative pedagogy as means of developing value-based orientations, which are especially necessary in today's multicultural and globalised society ([1]; [10]). The model is built on the active involvement of children in dialogic, interactive, and art-based activities that provide opportunities for personal interpretation of social themes and sharing of individual perspectives. This pedagogical framework, besides encouraging cognitive development, also promotes pupils'

emotional and social competence [3]; [11]. Such an approach development of global citizenship, fostering skills for peaceful coexistence and respect for human rights. Furthermore, the inclusion of art practices and symbolic interpretation within the educational process offers valuable opportunities for experiential exploration of complex social issues, thereby building critical thinking and a culture of dialogue [12]. These strategies support the vision of education as a space for cultivating democratic values and social engagement, as emphasised by numerous contemporary researchers and international organisations [1]; [10]. In this sense, the proposed model represents a practical and adaptable tool for contemporary inclusive education, supporting the development of a sustainable culture of humanity, tolerance, and solidarity among primary school students.

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