

PEDAGOGY AND EDUCATION

Metacognition in Primary Education –a Journey of Self-awareness in Learning

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Metacognition has become, in contemporary pedagogy, one of the most fertile directions of research and practice, being associated with the development of students' autonomy, with the efficiency of learning strategies and with the formation of a system of knowledge of one's own cognitive process. In primary classes, where the first structures of reflective thinking are outlined, metacognition is not just a theoretical concept, but a formative experience that shapes the way the child relates to school tasks, to his own emotions and to his own limits manifested in learning.

In studies dedicated to this concept, metacognition is described as a set of behaviors that enhance the student's ability to learn, thus maximizing results. At the same time, a metacognitive student is characterized as one who has knowledge and control of the entire cognitive system and the processes that converge from it. In primary education, the process of knowing the cognitive system, more precisely what we call metacognition today, is gradually built, through explicit guidance, modeling and constant reflection.

Metacognition takes place in three complementary directions: „knowledge, regulation and motivation” (Quigley, Muijs, Stringer, 2018). In small grades, metacognitive knowledge is manifested by the child's ability to identify the type of pregnancy, recognize the strategies that help him, and anticipate difficulties. The student discovers elementary ways of asking reflective questions that lead him to develop an awareness of the way he learns: *Have I chosen the right strategy? If I have underlined the keywords, can I understand the lesson more easily?*

Metacognitive regulation occurs when the student monitors their course, corrects their mistakes and evaluates their

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progress. The conscious student "is attentive to what he does, how he does it and how he feels, correcting his mistakes along the way". (Webb, J., 2021)

In primary classes, this adjustment can turn into a daily routine: the child plans his steps, checks if he is on the right track, stops when he feels confused and looks for the right strategy. The teacher becomes a guide who verbalizes his own mental processes, offering an accessible model: "Now I'm thinking about which strategy to choose...", "I notice that I'm in a hurry, I'm going to reread the requirement".

Metacognitive motivation, closely related to self-efficacy, is the dimension that supports the entire process. The child learns to recognize the emotions that accompany him, to normalize them and to transform them into resources. From this perspective, the metacognitive student "understands that it is natural to feel nervous or unmotivated, but by being aware of these states he can continue to be effective" (Webb, 2021). In primary classes, this awareness can be cultivated through short discussions, simple questions – "How do I feel now?", "What helps me to continue?" – and by valuing progress, not just the result.

Metacognition is not an isolated activity, but a framework that accompanies the entire teaching process. Therefore, an occasional "metacognitive activity" is not enough, but a structure is needed to accompany each stage of learning. In primary grades, this structure can start with the activation of previous knowledge, continue with questions that clarify the meaning of the new content, strengthen through guided practice and end with reflection. The child is encouraged to notice what he already knows, what he discovers new, what strategy helps him and what he could change next time.

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References:

- [1] Quigley, A., Muijs, D., & Stringer, E. (2018). *Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning: Guidance Report*. Education Endowment Foundation.
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