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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Improving the Criteria for Diagnosing and Assessing Pupils' Moral and Ethical Development Through Digital Stories

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Abstract

This article examines approaches to improving the criteria for diagnosing and assessing primary school pupils' moral and ethical development through digital stories. It proposes assessment criteria aimed at identifying pupils' understanding of moral and ethical values, ability to analyse ethical situations, empathy, social responsibility, and demonstration of positive behaviour in everyday activities. Particular attention is given to the pedagogical potential of assessing pupils' knowledge, emotional attitudes, moral reasoning, and behaviour in an integrated manner. The article also presents diagnostic tools and assessment levels that can be applied in primary school "Education" lessons.

KEYWORDS

Digital storytelling, moral and ethical development, diagnosis, assessment criteria, primary education, Education subject, moral values, empathy, reflection, pedagogical monitoring.

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary education, identifying, analysing, and supporting pupils' moral and ethical development is an important pedagogical task alongside the development of their knowledge and skills. Moral values such as honesty, kindness, justice, respect, responsibility, friendship, and humanism begin to take shape during the primary school years.

The use of digital stories in "Education" lessons enables pupils to understand moral concepts through life situations, characters, and sequences of events. However, the effectiveness of digital storytelling cannot be determined solely by how interesting a lesson appears. To establish how digital stories contribute to pupils' moral and ethical development, it is necessary to develop purposeful diagnostic procedures and scientifically grounded assessment criteria.

Assessing moral and ethical development should not be limited to determining whether pupils know the meanings of moral concepts. Their attitudes towards particular situations, ability to make independent decisions, capacity to justify their opinions, and demonstration of relevant values in everyday behaviour should also be considered.

RESEARCH AIM AND METHODS

The aim of this article is to develop pedagogical approaches to improving the diagnostic procedures and assessment criteria used to evaluate primary school pupils' moral and ethical development through digital stories.

The article employs the analysis of pedagogical and methodological literature, comparison, generalisation, systematisation of assessment criteria, and the development of a model of diagnostic tasks.

The proposed criteria constitute a pedagogical and methodological framework. Their reliability and effectiveness

should be examined separately through practical classroom research and experimental studies.

Pedagogical Characteristics of Diagnosing Moral and Ethical Development Through Digital Stories

A digital story is an educational resource that communicates an event or idea through a combination of text, images, audio, music, animation, and video. Its moral content is conveyed through characters' actions, the problems they encounter, and the decisions they make.

Diagnosis through digital stories should go beyond determining whether pupils can retell the story. The main focus should be on how they interpret events, evaluate characters' behaviour, suggest solutions to moral problems, and justify their opinions.

The following pedagogical principles should guide the diagnostic process:

Age appropriateness: Tasks should correspond to the developmental characteristics and comprehension levels of pupils in Grades 2–4.

Systematic assessment: Development should be examined through different situations and over time rather than through a single task.

Comprehensiveness: Knowledge, emotional attitudes, moral reasoning, and behavioural indicators should be analysed together.

Objectivity: Assessment should be based on clearly defined criteria and observable indicators.

Developmental orientation: Diagnosis should identify pupils' learning needs and support their progress rather than punish or negatively compare them.

Criteria for Assessing Moral and Ethical Development

Four interrelated criteria are proposed for assessing primary school pupils' moral and ethical development through digital stories.

Assessment criterion	Main indicators	Example of a diagnostic task
Cognitive criterion	Understanding honesty, justice, kindness, respect, and responsibility; distinguishing appropriate from inappropriate behaviour	Explain the behaviour of a character in the story
Emotional and value-based criterion	Recognising others' feelings, demonstrating empathy, and expressing positive attitudes towards human values	Answer the question: "How did the character feel?"
Moral and reflective criterion	Identifying ethical problems, comparing decisions, justifying choices, and anticipating the consequences of actions	Suggest an alternative ending and explain the reason for the choice
Behavioural criterion	Demonstrating honesty, helpfulness, cooperation, responsibility, and respect in everyday situations	Observe pupils during group tasks and naturally occurring classroom situations

These criteria complement one another. For example, a pupil's ability to explain the meaning of honesty does not automatically mean that the pupil will behave honestly in every situation. Therefore, knowledge-based assessment should be combined with situational tasks and observations of behaviour.

Diagnostic Tools and Their Implementation

A combination of diagnostic tools can provide a more comprehensive understanding of pupils' moral and ethical development.

1. Questions based on moral situations

Pupils are asked questions about situations presented in a digital story. Examples include: "What would you do if you were in the character's position?" and "Why did you choose this course of action?" Such questions help identify pupils' moral reasoning and their ability to justify decisions.

2. Creating an alternative ending

The digital story is paused at a significant moment, and pupils are invited to suggest how the events should continue. Their proposed endings can be analysed to understand how they interpret the problem, make moral choices, and demonstrate creative thinking.

3. Observation checklist

During group work, role-play, and everyday classroom activities, the teacher records pupils' cooperation, willingness to listen to others, readiness to help, and fulfilment of assigned responsibilities. Conclusions should not be drawn from a single incident alone.

4. Reflective tasks

Pupils respond to questions such as "What lesson did I learn from the story?", "Whose behaviour did I approve of?", and "What did this story teach me?" Their responses provide information about their ability to express personal views and understand the moral meaning of the story.

5. Comparing teacher and parent observations

Where appropriate, observations of pupils' behaviour in different environments may be considered together. Parents' opinions should not be treated as the sole or absolute assessment criterion but as supplementary information that can be considered alongside other evidence.

Throughout the diagnostic process, pupils' personal information should be protected. They should not be negatively compared with their classmates, and assessment results should not be used to discriminate against or punish them.

Assessment Levels and Indicators

Based on the proposed criteria, pupils' moral and ethical development can be described at three levels: high, intermediate, and beginning.

Level	Description
High	The pupil explains the meaning of moral values, independently analyses situations, justifies decisions, and consistently demonstrates appropriate behaviour across different situations.
Intermediate	The pupil understands the main moral values but may need guiding questions or support when making decisions or justifying opinions in more complex situations.
Beginning	The pupil requires considerable support to understand ethical situations, identify the consequences of actions, and formulate independent conclusions.

These levels should not be interpreted as fixed judgements about a pupil's personality. They describe the pupil's developmental progress at a particular point in time. A pupil may demonstrate a high level in one criterion and an intermediate level in another. Therefore, each criterion should be recorded separately, and changes over time should be monitored.

If a numerical scoring system is used, clear descriptors should be developed for each indicator. Consistency between assessors should also be examined, and the reliability of the criteria should be established through practical research.

A Model for Improving Diagnosis Through Digital Stories

The diagnostic and assessment process can be organised according to the following sequence:

Initial diagnosis: Identify pupils' existing understanding of moral and ethical values.

Selection of a digital story: Match the story's content to the target value and learning objective.

Completion of situational tasks: Ask pupils to analyse the story, evaluate characters' decisions, and suggest alternative solutions.

Observation of practical activities: Record behavioural indicators during role-play, group work, and everyday classroom activities.

Final diagnosis: Compare initial and subsequent results using the same or comparable assessment criteria.

Pedagogical conclusions: Identify positive changes in pupils' development and areas requiring additional educational support.

This model transforms diagnosis from a one-time assessment

into a systematic process of pedagogical observation, analysis, and developmental support.

DISCUSSION

An important advantage of diagnosing pupils' moral and ethical development through digital stories is that pupils can not only explain an ethical situation theoretically but also engage with it emotionally, analyse it, and connect it with practical activities.

However, a pupil's ability to evaluate a character's behaviour correctly does not guarantee that the pupil will always behave in the same way in everyday life.

For this reason, assessment should combine information from several sources, take pupils' developmental characteristics into account, and monitor progress over time. The quality, content, language, duration, and methodological implementation of a digital story may also influence diagnostic results.

The proposed criteria and diagnostic tools can serve as a methodological basis for systematically examining the moral and ethical development of primary school pupils. Nevertheless, their effectiveness must be verified through appropriate experimental studies, classroom observations, and reliability analyses.

CONCLUSION

Improving the criteria for diagnosing and assessing primary school pupils' moral and ethical development through digital stories can strengthen the educational and developmental potential of the "Education" subject. The integrated application of cognitive, emotional and value-based, moral and reflective, and behavioural criteria is particularly important.

The use of moral-situation questions, alternative-ending tasks, reflective activities, and pedagogical observation makes it possible to examine more thoroughly how pupils understand moral values, justify their decisions, and demonstrate appropriate behaviour.

Thus, digital stories should be regarded not only as tools for moral education but also as methodological resources for identifying pupils' developmental needs, monitoring progress, and improving the educational process.

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