Fostering Self-Regulated Learning Through School Newspaper

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School newspapers have a long educational tradition. However, the scientific literature on this activity is relatively scarce. The objective of this research is to check if there is a positive relationship between self-regulation and participation in school newspaper projects. Three groups of students will be studied who come to the same school, the IIS Einaudi of Rome (Italy). The first group will produce a web newspaper. The second a traditional newspaper. The third will be a control group. The adopted methodology will be mixed: qualitative and quantitative. The design of the qualitative analysis will be based on a case study through open interviews to students and teachers and through the direct observation of writing meetings. For the quantitative analysis the design will be quasi-experimental and it will be used a version of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MLSQ) validated for Italian high school students. Regarding the results, it is expected that the group of the web newspaper will be the one that best manages to self-regulate their learning.

Keywords: SRL, self-regulated learning, school newspapers

INTRODUCTION

There are examples of school newspapers that date back to the last century, however, there are many schools in Spain and Europe that continue to offer this activity to their students.

In fact, the scientific literature that has addressed school newspapers has always highlighted the educational excellence of this practice regarding the development of language skills, social competences due to group dynamics, the benefits in the manipulative skills of children or the computer skills of teenagers, etc. However, objective approaches based on the measurement of specific progress in these areas seem to be relatively scarce: the existing texts refer to printing techniques, models of use of the press at school, summaries of experiences, or proposals for working with the use of the school newspaper in the curriculum (Teruel Salmerón, 2015). This thesis aims to research school newspapers from the point of view of self-regulated learning by testing whether there is a positive relationship between self-regulation and participation in school newspaper projects.

BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH PROBLEM

While there is a scarce literature on school newspapers and self-regulated learning, there are relevant studies on self-regulated learning and essay writing or group assignments (Monique Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2005; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1998).

The concept of self-regulated learning appeared on the scientific scene in 1986, during the annual congress of the American Educational Research Association with the publication of *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, which tried to integrate under a single label research on some processes such as learning strategies, metacognitive monitoring, perception of self-esteem, volitional strategies and self-control. The authors who participated in that symposium became the great classics of the scientific literature on self-regulated learning. These are: Monique Boekaerts, Lyn Corno, Steve Graham, Karen Harris, Mary McCaslin, Barbara McCombs, Judit Meece, Richard Newman, Scott Paris, Paul Pintrich, Dale Shunk and Barry Zimmerman.

One of the congress outcomes was an inclusive definition of self-regulated learning, thought of as the degree to which students are active from a metacognitive, motivational and behavioral point of view (Zimmerman, 2008).

Nowadays, self-regulated learning continues to be a relevant concept of scientific-academic interest. In fact, since 2013 there are more than 2200 articles related to this construct published and listed in the ERIC educational research database. In addition, since that date, the Spanish Teseo has published almost ten theses about this subject.

In the program of the European Congress of Educational Research ECER 2018, which took place in Bolzano, there were more than 50 papers mentioning self-regulated learning.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

School newspapers could be defined as an *authentic task*, i.e., a complex, open-ended assignment designed for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real-world challenges (Gulikers, Bastiaens, & Kirschner, 2004; Hiebert, 1994; Mims, 1991; Wiggins, 1989, 1990).

In *Nurturing self-regulated learners through authentic assessments* (Yong, 2016), it is stated that authentic tasks facilitate the acquisition of self-regulatory capacity in relation to conventional tasks. In fact, in authentic tasks, students perform complex activities that require autonomy, and are characterized by having an open structure in an open environment, requiring teamwork to be addressed. In this sense, as in a recurring cycle, on the one hand, the authentic task provides students with a broad, complex and open contextual framework in which to exercise self-regulation of their own learning; on the other hand, self-regulated learning provides students with the ability to understand contextual feedback and learn new skills.

In fact, self-regulated learning was defined by Pintrich as:

> An active process and construct through which students set goals for their learning and attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behavior directed and constrained by their goals and by the contextual characteristics of their environment (Pintrich, 2000, p.453).

The key element in defining "self-regulated" learning is the use and deployment of personal initiative, perseverance and adaptive skills. Self-regulated learning is possible only in contexts where there is a certain amount of choice (Zimmerman, 2001).

Specifically, we can speak of self-regulated learning:
- whether or not students may choose to participate in an academic work. In this regard, we can speak of intrinsic motivation (when there is no parental or teacher control and the objectives, for example, are self-established) or self-motivated motivation (derived, for example, from a perception of self-efficacy).
- whether they can choose the learning method using either a planned one (learning different learning strategies such as planning, organization or memorization) or an automated one (once a high level of academic excellence is reached, the cognitive functions become automated)
- whether they can choose the results of a performance (self-regulated students are more self-aware of their results and this allows them more self-monitoring, control and self-judgment over the results of their performance)

- whether they can control the physical environment (by deciding where and when to study or by structuring and modifying the study environment) and the social environment (either by deciding who to study with or who to stay away from).

Self-regulated learning is neither a mental ability nor an academic skill, but refers to a self-directed process through which students translate their mental abilities into goal-oriented academic skills.

This approach considers learning as an activity that students do for themselves in a *proactive* way, rather than an event that occurs *reactively* as a result of a teaching experience (Zimmerman, 1989).

To date, there are seven main theories that have been used to analyze the self-regulated learning paradigm: operant, phenomenological, information processing, socio-cognitive, volitional, Vygotskian and constructivist (Zimmerman, 2001). Each theory of self-regulated learning acts as if it were a family from which different models emerge, but all with common characteristics.

However, in the 2000s, Pintrich succeeded in developing a general model of self-regulated learning, the *General Framework of Self-Regulation Learning* (Garcia & Pintrich, 1996; Pintrich & de Groot, 1990; Pintrich, Roeser, & De Groot, 1994; Pintrich, 2000), which is currently the most widely used. According to this model, self-regulated learning is composed of four phases: planning, self-observation, control and reflection. For each of these phases, self-regulatory activities are developed in four distinct areas: cognitive, motivational and affective, behavioral and contextual.

- Self-regulatory activities that take place in the planning phase include: goal establishment and activation of prior and metacognitive knowledge (cognitive area); adoption of goals and efficacy judgments, activation of task value beliefs and activation of personal interest and affect (affective and motivational area); planning of effort and time (behavioral area); and perception of the task and context (contextual area).
- Similarly, self-observation includes: awareness and self-observation of cognition (cognitive area); awareness and self-observation of motivation and affect (affective and motivational area); awareness and self-observation of effort, time use and need for help (behavioral area); and awareness and self-observation of task and context conditions (contextual area).
- Control activities refer to: use of cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies (cognitive area); use of motivational and affect control strategies (affective and motivational area); increase or decrease of effort, persistence and help-seeking (behavioral area) and changes in task requirements and contextual conditions (contextual area).
- Finally, the reflection phase includes: cognitive judgments and attributions (cognitive area); affective reactions (affective and motivational area); choice of behavior (behavioral area) and evaluation of the task and context (contextual area) (Torrano, Montalvo, & Torres, 2018).

A student may go through these four phases as he or she performs a task. However, these phases represent a general sequence that is not linear or hierarchically structured: these phases may occur simultaneously and dynamically, or they may produce several interactions between the different components and processes (Garcia & Pintrich, 1994; Pintrich & de Groot, 1990; Pintrich, 1989).

Self-regulation of learning can be thought of as a competency that is taught, learned and measured. The most recurrent teaching methods are: direct teaching of strategies, modeling, guided and autonomous practice of strategies, self-observation, social support and its removal when the student has reached a certain degree of responsible participation and self-reflection (Torrano et al., 2018).

In terms of measurement, one of Pintrich's most important findings has been the development of *The Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire* (MSLQ), one of the most widely used self-reports to measure self-regulated learning (Pintrich, Smith, García, & McKeachie, 1991). It is an 81-item questionnaire that reflects the Pintrich *General Framework of Self-Regulation Learning theoretical model* (Garcia & Pintrich, 1994; Pintrich & de Groot, 1990; Pintrich, 1989). Its objective is to measure the different motivational components and the use of learning strategies in a course or in a specific subject. One of this instrument's advantages is that it has been applied and validated at different educational levels, both university and non-university. In our case we will use a version of the MLSQ validated for Italian high

school students by a team of researchers from the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore(Olivari, Bonanomi, Gatti, & Confalonieri, 2015).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS OR HYPOTHESES

The objective of this research is to check if there is a positive relationship between self-regulation and participation in school newspaper projects. From this objective, two working hypotheses are proposed:

H1: There are significant differences in the level of self-regulatory competence as a function of participation or not in previous school newspaper projects.

H2: There are significant differences in the level of self-regulatory competence according to the management type (self-management and co-management) of the newspaper.

METHODOLOGY

The sample under study is based on three groups. The first group is composed of 27 high school students and it is carrying out a European project that foresees the writing of a web newspaper. Participation in the project is voluntary, students who participate have to organize themselves autonomously in a writing process, choose what news to cover and why, choose the working times (e.g. finishing the tasks they have set themselves at home). For these reasons, it is possible to speak of a self-managed newspaper.

The second group, consisting of 20 high school students, conducts a traditional school newspaper. Students can choose whether or not to participate as well as the working times. However, decision making is shared with the teacher. This is why we can speak of a co-managed newspaper.

The third group is a control group of 32 high school students who have never participated in school newspaper projects.

The methodology is mixed: qualitative and quantitative. The design of the qualitative analysis is based on a case study carried out through open interviews with students and teachers and through direct observation of newsroom meetings at both newspapers. Direct observations and interviews will be targeted to find out how decision making occurs (e.g. if there is a peer group that has dominance over another group) how tasks are organized and divided.

For the quantitative analysis the design will be quasi-experimental and it is planned to use an adapted version of the *MLSQ* (Olivari, Bonanomi, Gatti, & Confalonieri, 2015) . A pre-test and a post-test are planned for the three groups under study, after which the results will be analyzed through an inferential statistical analysis.

The quantitative analysis instrument is a version of the *MLSQ* reduced to 25 items, subdivided into 5 groups (self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, learning strategies, test anxiety, self-regulation). It follows a Likert-type scale of 7 values (1 strongly disagree, 7 strongly agree). The instrument is validated for Italian high school students. It has a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.83 (Olivari, Bonanomi, Gatti, & Confalonieri, 2015).

RESULTS ACHIEVED TO DATE

So far, progress has been made in deepening the theoretical framework that has led to the construction of the necessary instrument for the quantitative analysis. In addition, contact has been made with the groups and in September 2019 the tasks under study will begin.

RESEARCH CONTINUITY PERSPECTIVE

As we pointed out at the beginning, there are relatively scarce the studies that measure the educational progress related to school newspapers, however, traditionally, the scientific literature has always highlighted the educational excellence of this practice (Teruel Salmerón, 2015). This study is one of the

first investigations that attempts to analyze the educational effectiveness of school newspaper projects. This is why we have focused on the self-regulation of learning: a self-regulated student is a student who has "learned to learn" during his or her academic career, and this has seemed to us to be the most relevant aspect when analyzing the educational effectiveness of school newspapers.

In fact, this thesis intends to verify if there really is a positive relationship between self-regulated learning and school newspaper projects; that is, our attempt is to verify if school newspaper projects effectively help students to become autonomous and aware about their own learning processes, confirming the educational value that has always been attributed to school newspapers and that, however, has almost never been measured in an objective way.

In continuity with these theses could involve research on the contributions of school newspaper projects in terms of linguistic and digital competence.

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