

M16 Leading idea “Relation between parts and whole”

The relation between the parts and the whole is based on establishing existing connections between the aspects of something (an object, an event or a process) and that thing when globally regarded as a whole. The features or characteristics of the whole usually depend on the features and characteristics of its parts. Children normally think this way, and they confer the characteristics of the parts to the whole and vice versa. Thus, if a house is built with small bricks, they usually think the house is also small, or if a house is big, they tend to think that the rooms will also be big. But things are not always like that, and there are not any logical rules that can be applied directly to the relation between the parts and the whole.

Bearing this in mind, understanding what the relations are based on is fundamental to understanding the nature of the relations themselves, because every time we connect something in space or time, a relation comes into being. It is also very important for understanding the ethical and aesthetic aspects of life. We might think that a good life is a life in which most of its parts have been positive, or in which we have developed good habits. However, this is not always so, as a series of actions that can be considered positive when viewed individually may be considered negative if observed as a whole. Let's take the example of an assembly line in a factory that makes bombs (the production of each individual part must be good) or the series of administration procedures that end up leaving someone out of the health system. That would take us to the more profound question of whether it is possible to define a part as good without knowing its relation to the whole.

It is important to work with students on the relations between the parts and the whole in order to help them discover their importance and validity depending on context and the goals we set when discussing the relationship between parts and the whole.



This project has been funded with support from the European Union. The author exclusively is responsible for the publication content. The publication does not reflect the views of the European Commission and the European Commission is not responsible for usage of the data contained therein.

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