The Socio-Emotional Competencies of Students:

A Guide for Teachers

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Introduction

The BOOST Guide for School Staff (Pol. *Kompetencje społeczno-emocjonalne uczniów. Przewodnik dla nauczycieli*) contains materials that can be treated as an inspiration to develop pupils' socio-emotional skills; the book can be used by both teachers and non-teaching staff. It was created for the purposes of the EU project *Building social and emotional skills to BOOST mental health resilience in children and young people in Europe* and funded from the Horizon 2020 scheme, with Poland, Norway and Spain as participants.

The BOOST[1] *approach* is the core component of the project, encompassing a comprehensive way of incorporating socio-emotional learning into the everyday operations of a school. The actions taken within the approach aim to support the mental health and well-being of children, youth and school staff, while also facilitating the organisational growth of schools.

Even though there is no singular definition of socio-emotional learning or SEL, its core component is the development of social and personal skills, such as learning cooperation, empathy, communication, emotional management and critical thinking. During the projects, the most common points of reference were the documents such as OECD[2], UNICEF[3], CASEL[4] and the ideas proposed in the documents of EU LifeComp[5].

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[1] The word "boost" has multiple meanings, i.e., a stimulating factor, encouragement, enrichment, promotion, empowerment and increase. The word "booster" might stand for an amplifier, accelerator, enthusiast or even a rocket engine.

[2] OECD. (2015). *OECD Skills Studies: Skills for Social Progress: The Power of Social and Emotional Skills*. OECD Publishing.

[3] United Nations Children's Fund – UNICEF. (2012). *Global Life Skills Education Evaluation: Draft Final Report*. UNICEF.

[4] CASEL. (2015). *CASEL guide: Effective social and emotional learning programs: Middle and high school edition*. CASEL

[5] Sala, A., Punie, Y., Garkov, V., & Cabrera Giraldez, M. (2020). *LifeComp: The European framework for personal, social and learning to learn key competence*. Publications Office of the European Union. doi:10.2760/302967

The core assumption for the socio-emotional learning process is the idea that the socio-emotional competencies of pupils go beyond helping their education; instead, they support their future, leading to personal and professional success. These competencies can also be formed during school education; socio-emotional learning is not a separate layer of the teaching process but rather an endeavour towards incorporating the formation of these competencies throughout all school activities: during classes, project work and breaks (Jones & Doolittle, 2017).

The BOOST approach was based on existing body of research and the following further actions:

- Literature review (whose goal was to identify the key factors that determine the success of socio-emotional learning programmes at schools);
- A review of the education policies of the partner countries; this made it possible to determine the ways of supporting socio-emotional learning by the state and regional authorities given the scope of curricula, legal regulations and the way in which education was organised in those countries;
- Focus group interviews and individual interviews with teachers, parents and children from public and private facilities as well as with school staff. The goal was to learn about the socio-emotional needs of both pupils and teachers from the three partner countries;
- Meetings with school employees towards monitoring and discussing the modifications necessary to implement the BOOST approach.

The conclusions from these studies made it possible to adapt the BOOST approach to the particular contexts (given the existing needs, cultural differences and political situation) of specific European countries. The BOOST approach is not a regular socio-emotional learning programme (what we call SEL): those involve strict timelines, content, methods, techniques and the training of the staff that would conduct SEL or hiring external experts. Instead, it aims to emphasise the possibility and the importance of taking an individual approach by each school; the aim is to search for and establish priorities that would allow the schools to form socio-emotional competencies through teaching, tutoring and taking preventive action. This is indeed what made it easy to incorporate the BOOST approach into the educational and preventive measures assumed by the Polish schools.

The BOOST approach is based upon the *following principles*:

- Flexibility and autonomy (suited to the needs of particular schools, groups and children);

- Consistency and continuity (intermittent and spontaneous actions are far less effective);
- Holistic approach engaging all school staff towards fostering school culture that facilitates the formation of socio-emotional competencies (during classes, breaks and extracurricular activities);
- Incorporation of the personnel and infrastructural assets present at school;
- Support provided by the school's headmaster.

Flexible adaptation to the work and management culture of each given school is the major advantage of *the BOOST approach*. For that reason, it is important to employ the existing spaces at schools as *zones for reflection*, to be used for planning and discussing actions towards socio-emotional learning at schools. The teaching and non-teaching staff may use formal and informal places and contexts to discuss and exchange ideas and experiences that tackle socio-emotional learning (e.g., teacher's lounges, school breaks, school trips, co-supervision during breaks, school staff meetings and subject teams). Through this reflection, school employees create a foundation of socio-emotional learning that can be used and contributed to by anyone.

Three components are particularly useful for implementing *the BOOST approach* at schools:

1. Five-step approach that facilitates organising and promoting socio-emotional learning at school;
2. Self-education materials that make it easier to learn together;
3. Pre-made toolkit.

The guidebook entitled *The five steps towards organising and promoting social-emotional learning at schools* is available on the project website https://boostapproach.com/en/welcome and presents the five-step process of implementing the BOOST approach (see Figure 1).

The guidebook does also reveal how to individually implement socio-emotional learning at schools; it contains step-by-step guidelines towards a continued, consistent and flexible way of doing so. All this is facilitated by the fact that it is the school staff who sets goals, discusses methods to be used in the process, as well as the solutions and the time required to conduct the necessary actions, all based on the existing needs and resources. The first step is finding a leader. A person with sufficient charisma, leadership skills and authority among school staff. At this stage, it is necessary to convince the governing bodies at the school (if they are not

the leaders) that the project is of paramount importance to school community. It is equally important to involve all school staff: not only teachers, counsellors and psychologists, but also administrative staff, assistants and support staff.

Then, all these individuals determine their strengths and weaknesses, identify the available resources, point to key goals and plan actions for a given year towards developing socio-emotional competencies of both students and staff. It is key to decide on a manner of gathering data regarding the needs of pupils and teachers in this context. It is likely that such information is already being gathered

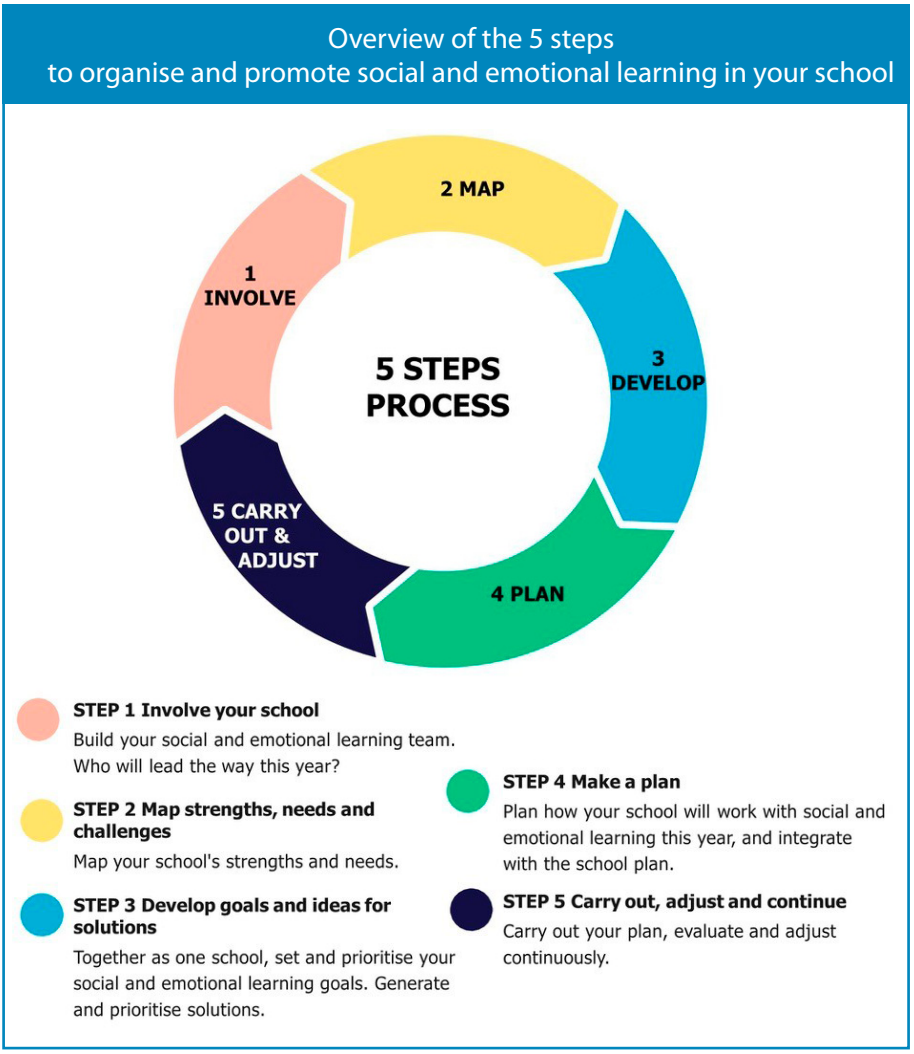

Figure 1. Five steps towards the implementation of BOOST approach

through evaluation taking place at schools (which is, for instance, very commonly done in Poland); it is important to decide what to do with these data in the context of setting goals and planning actions towards developing soft skills. The final step aims to carry out actions towards attaining specific, set goals. At this point, it is important to regularly assess the actions and adapt them based on the existing needs of students and staff. It is best if the end of the schoolyear can be marked by a comprehensive assessment of the actions towards socio-emotional learning, followed by making plans for the upcoming school year (which is accomplished by returning to the first step and establishing the goals and a timeline towards carrying them out).

The published materials can be used as a guidebook that facilitates learning together. Each subsequent chapter can play its role if it inspires one to take effective actions towards developing the socio-emotional skills. The text tackles five key problem areas that can be approached in any order, depending on the needs and interests of the reader. Each subchapter contains questions to ponder and a recommended reading list. The whole text can be useful to anyone seeking and feeling the need of self-improvement.

The first part is connected to the theoretical basis of the *BOOST approach*. It encompasses the core assumptions of humanistic psychology and the work of Carl Ransom Rogers, one of its leading members, an American researcher nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Based on his studies, he created an innovative theory that changed the way in which inter-human relations are perceived in multiple social domains; it was an inspiration to change the way in which humans interact with one another. This change encourages leaving the egocentric approach behind, alongside one's individual perception of the reality and the actions that result from it. Rogers' approach promotes the act of seeing the other human, assuming their perspective and allowing them to co-experience. It is often referred to as *Person-Centered Approach*[6] (or PCA), emphasising that the uniqueness of the other person should be the focal point of one's attention.

The second part focuses on the available resources and mental resilience of the school staff. Since they create the atmosphere and culture at schools, their well-being dictates the effectiveness of education and tutoring that students receive. This part indicates the factors contributing to resilience and the ways of developing it based on, *inter alia*, improving mindfulness. The idea of involving students and teachers into mindfulness training (both at school and in everyday life) broadens the scope of actions that can be taken at school.

[6] Original spelling (Ed.).

The third part covers selected issues of child's development. The causes for developmental differences in children are discussed alongside their impact on the functioning of children at schools; the goal of this part is to make the staff more aware of these issues. The text does also indicate that a child's life can be divided into specific periods that are key for her or his development and learning. Supporting the child in her or his actions and appropriate stimulation of the development of particular skills during specific stages can allow the child to learn certain skills and develop new talents more easily. Importantly, however, not all children develop at the same pace. The adults' being aware of the child's needs is important at every stage of the child's development, as it allows to adjust the content and the work methods to that child's abilities. This knowledge does also allow to bolster the child's potential, providing them with appropriate support and minimising the risk of any negative consequences.

The fourth part presents the basics of the functioning of social groups, the stages of their development, their relations and the social dimension in which a group exists. Much attention is paid to developing positive relations between peers and supporting the less-popular children. The text presents the information on rejection mechanisms and the causes thereof related to the particular characteristics of children, as well as strengthening the position of the pupils by assigning tasks, create openings for various roles to be fulfilled withing a group. The final sections of this part indicate the key components of successful communication between the teacher and pupils, as well as among pupils; this includes commentary on students' jargon.

The final part examines the holistic, comprehensive approach towards the introduction of socio-emotional competencies at schools, indicating what the concept represents, why it is effective and how it should be implemented. This part emphasises that socio-emotional competencies can and should be formed during everyday educational activities that are taking place in line with the curriculum. It also points to the key role of leadership and one's competencies to motivate and inspire individuals both in the teacher-pupil setting and between the members of school staff.

As the *BOOST approach* is being formed and implemented, the need may arise to employ particular techniques and methods of teaching and training of the socio-emotional competencies and the ways of introducing them into school's everyday life. The examples of such tools are available on the website of the project, at https://www.boostproject.eu; however, it is vital that the school builds its own tools (practical exercises and group tasks) that the teachers can share, find inspiration in, discuss and modify so that these can meet the particular needs.

Changing the way in which school staff thinks is the key outcome of the *BOOST approach*. It manifests in increasing the staff members' perceived agency, self-confidence and effectiveness. Teachers' actions based on sheer intuition can be replaced with mindful care for both the well-being of their own and that of their students. Using and adapting the materials contained in the guidebook to the needs of the teachers of particular subjects has the potential to improve the quality of teaching and tutoring for specific groups and schools. Supporting the socio-emotional skills of children during classes promotes the philosophy in which the socio-emotional dimension is a natural component of the teaching process, rather than being a distinctive entity that requires its own, separate space. The creativity of the teachers, as well as their charisma and mutual exchange of experiences contribute towards creating an inspiring learning environment that comprehensively fosters the growth of students and all the members of school staff.

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Person-Centered Approach

Acceptance and Unconditional Positive Regard

What is Acceptance and Unconditional Positive Regard?

According to the person-centered approach, acceptance and unconditional positive regard occur when a teacher is capable of a warm, positive, acceptant attitude toward what is in another person. To Carl Ransom Rogers, it means appreciating the child as a person, prizing her or him regardless of her or his particular behaviour at the moment. It means caring for another human being in a non-possessive way. It involves the willingness to allow a person to experience and express whatever feelings are real for them at the moment. It does not matter if it is hostility or tenderness, rebellion or submissiveness, assurance or self-depreciation (Banaszak & Florkowski, 2014; Florkowski, 2017; Rogers, 1980).

School context

Person-centered approach sensitises us in relations to the use of inconsiderate, harmful judgments and, frequently following it, rejection (Rogers & Stevens, 1994). Such behaviours often lead to irreversible consequences as they cause permanent damage to relationships. We should be aware of such processes because relational subtleties are at the epicentre of the person-centered approach.

Is everyone interpersonally accepting and capable of unconditional positive regard?

Usually, our acceptance and positive regard are conditional. If a specific person or a group displays signs of positive regard we tend to respond in a similar way. We feel obliged to exchange this specific appreciated quality because we do not want to "fall into debts". We try to keep acceptance and unconditional positive regard

well-balanced during interaction. However, in case of absence of acceptance and unconditional positive regard conveyed by the partner or partners of interaction level of our own positive regard often drops down, at times quickly. It can soon switch into disregard.

School context

The biggest challenge for unconditional positive regard is the variety of negative attitudes and actions all human beings are capable of displaying in an interaction. Taking the school environment as an example, some children display more negative attitudes and actions than others. They may, for instance, show disregard towards school staff, disobedience, disorderly behaviour, displays of anger, and episodes of destruction and self-destruction. With such children, it can be very difficult as an adult to maintain and display an attitude of acceptance and unconditional positive regard.

Some of us tend to be judgmental and rejecting. Acceptance or lack of acceptance may be measured via changes in specific physiological markers. One of them is called galvanic skin response. Acceptance leads to increasing galvanic skin response value and rejection causes the opposite reaction. It means that acceptance correlates with relaxation and low distress levels rejection leads to tension and distress.

School context

It is difficult to cope with rejection. Its experience is very hard to handle, especially when we are rejected by a person or a group that is significant to us. For children, the rejection of parents, teachers or peers is very tough.

From the person-centered approach perspective, the low level of anxiety and tension is essential for the interpersonal climate. It is especially relevant with regard to SEL (Social and Emotional Learning). There are multiple reasons for that, one of them is that the ability to collect all bodily sensations and the capability to scan the information in self-awareness is jeopardised by distress. Some of the emotional and cognitive processes are blocked (Banaszak & Florkowski, 2014; Rogers, 1969).

School context

The teacher who wishes to facilitate significant learning has a main task: to open all available channels of communication, both intrapersonal and interpersonal. The increase in child's openness and decrease in child's defensiveness instantly warms up the classroom climate.

The presence of acceptance and unconditional positive regard fluctuate. As human beings, we are fallible and at times unable to keep a steady level of described attitudinal qualities. Even the best parents and friends may experience situations in which acceptance and unconditional positive regard toward their own child or closest friend may wobble and threaten with collapse.

School context

Most likely, you experience such shifts in your relationships with children. Some of them, probably "drive you nuts". They make you feel frustrated, annoyed, insulted, angry or even enraged. Especially these moments put to the test your unconditionality.

An unconditional positive regard is not the same as indiscriminate acquiescence to a child's completely unbridled behaviour. This could be a recipe for raising a monster. The point is to create a relationship in which the child, despite her or his mistakes and stumbles, will feel safe and accepted, because such a nature of the relationship gives a chance to reflectively analyse her or his own behaviour and make desirable, pro-social changes.

Acceptance, unconditional positive regard, self-awareness and mental health

The absence of acceptance and unconditional positive regard is likely to "leak" into a relationship, even if someone tries to hide it behind a mask of liking and a positive attitude. A single word or a short phrase may form a "toxic leak", which will contaminate or poison the relationship. Often the most "toxic leaks" happen via non-verbal communication. They may not even be perceived consciously but they will lead to a drop in relational "temperature", distancing or erosion of the relationship. If we stick to the person-centered concept, it probably should be repeated here again that the "ideal" teacher would not bring relational toxicity into

the relationship with children. Additionally, the assumption that a good teacher has a psychotherapeutic influence is of major importance.

Self-review based on self-awareness

If, in your life, you won only conditional acceptance and conditional positive regard, it may be difficult to offer unconditionality to someone else. Even if you did have the opportunity to be a receiver of acceptance and unconditional positive regard, still, it is not easy to bring this quality into a relationship with another human being. If you screen yourself with the use of self-awareness, you will probably discover that in some relationships you manage to "be this way" but it does not happen in others, or you do observe the swings from unconditionality into conditionality within a single relationship.

Points for Self-Reflection

- Think about situations and people where you find it easy to show acceptance and unconditional positive regard. What is it about these situations and people that make it easy? What characterises you in these situations? What characterises the other person/people in these situations?
- To what extent do you tend to accept and show acceptance towards other people and their individuality?
- To what extent do you accept and show acceptance towards a child in spite of her or his limitations and shortcomings?
- Where, in your opinion, are the limits of your acceptance and unconditional positive regard?
- Have you ever experienced rejection and lack of acceptance and unconditional positive regard towards yourself in a relationship? How did that make you feel? What was it about the other person that made you feel that way?
- Have you ever experienced acceptance and unconditional positive regard towards yourself in a relationship? How did that make you feel? What was it about the other person that made you feel that way?

Congruence

What Is Congruence?

Carl Ransom Rogers, the founder of the person-centered approach, explains that a person is congruent when she or he is genuine and can be open about the feelings and attitudes which are flowing inside her- or himself at any moment in time. We are congruent when we are able to experience these feelings, also in a relationship, and are able to communicate them, albeit in a socially appropriate manner. We are congruent when we are aware of the feelings we are experiencing (they are available to us). Teachers and other school staff are congruent when they are themselves in a person-to-person encounter with a child. In a relationship between two congruent people, both sides in the encounter are able to express their true selves as much as possible, only limited by respect, consideration for the other person and social appropriateness (Banaszak & Florkowski, 2014; Decety & Ickes, 2009; Rogers, 1969, 1975, 1980).

In literature, synonyms used for congruence are authenticity, genuineness, realness and transparency. Though the concept of congruence might not be familiar to everyone, we often sense its presence in other people intuitively. After a conversation with a congruent person, we tend to say: "She appears to be authentic" or "Most of the time he is really himself" (realness) or "when you talk to her, it is almost as if she allows you to see her own thoughts" (transparency).

School context

The concept of congruence challenges the once-popular assumption that teachers are supposed to be disciplinary authority figures obliged to follow strict rules and regulations. Such a "traditional" approach to teaching emphasises the use of a specific, detailed scenario for "playing the role" of a teacher. A congruent teacher, on the other hand, is someone who is authentic and genuine in interaction with the children, and in return, facilitates congruence in them.

To be fully congruent means that your intrapersonal congruence and your interpersonal congruence are in agreement.

What Is Intrapersonal Congruence?

Someone is intrapersonally congruent when there is an accurate match between their feelings and awareness. It can be said that when someone is fully and accurately

aware of what they are experiencing or feeling at this very moment, they are intrapersonally congruent. They are true to themselves. It is difficult to achieve. We often lie to ourselves; we block, deny, repress or project specific feelings or thoughts.

What Is Interpersonal Congruence?

When someone is able to be authentic in a relationship, they are being interpersonally congruent. They are recognised as real, genuine or transparent. You are transparent when you allow another person "to see through you", to see your genuine thoughts and emotions.

If you hide your internal experiences from another person, then you are interpersonally incongruent.

Is Everyone Interpersonally Congruent?

We all have experienced total intra- and interpersonal congruence. The problem is that we do not remember how it was. Why? Because we were fully congruent in our mothers' wombs and during early infancy. A small infant is an example of pure congruence. It is fully submerged in sensations generated by the body and communicates them without inhibition to others.

But then comes upbringing and socialisation. We are taught how to be well-mannered and polite. We have to hide specific behaviours and desires. As a result, we learn to be incongruent. We can meet someone whom we despise but we may shake their hands and exchange polite smiles. We are all taught to be "politicians".

In reality, a person can almost never be fully intra- or interpersonally congruent. If you communicated everything you thought and felt to everyone around you straight away, you would quickly be classified as insane. Full congruence may hurt someone deeply. According to person-centered approach, we should try to use congruence carefully with a sensitive regard for others.

At times, even the most congruent people need to be incongruent. Imagine such a scenario – you have a great day and your mood is elevated. Life is great! But the very same day you have to attend a funeral. You did not know the deceased but you were asked to represent your workplace. Would it be OK to be congruent during a funeral ceremony? If in such a context you displayed signs of joyfulness, excitement and euphoria, you would commit "social suicide". You need to behave like a "social chameleon" to protect yourself from stigmatisation and exclusion. One of the most crucial social skills is to make appropriate decisions about where, when and how to display congruence in changing contexts. We could say that

while intrapersonal congruence is almost always advisable, we have to be sensitive regarding the displays of interpersonal congruence.

School context

You may think that allowing all children to be congruent at all times will create a chaotic school environment, leading to situations you experience as overwhelming. It is not always easy to find the balance between congruous spontaneity and work on academic and pedagogical tasks and their completion.

People differ on both levels (intra- and interpersonal) of congruence. Our personal congruence changes from interaction to interaction, from one social context to another. However, it tends to be in synchronicity with our sense of contentment and well-being.

Most likely, you have had the opportunity to meet relatively real people in your life. You probably perceived them as authentic and spontaneous, and they made you feel at ease, which, in turn, activated your own congruence and spontaneity. Congruence is contagious! (Florkowski, 2017; Rogers, 1969).

School context

The person-centered approach encourages you to avoid hiding behind a particular role or "facade", for instance, the role of a teacher, school principal or school nurse. If you never allow children to know your real self, no significant relationships will develop. If you remain incongruent, you will likely cause incongruence on the children's side as well. If there is incongruence on both sides of the interaction (for instance, adult-child), a constructive and positive encounter between two people is limited or not possible.

What Are the Links Between Congruence and Self-Awareness?

We tend to enjoy encounters with congruent people, and our own congruence is a sign of mental health. As we allow ourselves to be intrapersonally congruent, our self-awareness expands. We learn more and more about ourselves; our "self-science" is deepened. "Self-science," which can also be called insight or introspection, is a crucial factor in self-regulation and interpersonal attunement.

To provide an example, in moments of tension, as we are getting sucked into a conflict or fight, the ability to remain self-aware gives us a chance not to get immersed, or lost in the negative, toxic, and self-perpetuating flow. Using advanced self-awareness,

we can step back from a negative experience, and "hover above it". In this manner, congruence can also lead to lower levels of defensiveness. Usually, our body informs us straight away that we behave defensively. We feel anxious and tense. At times, our hands may sweat and shake, stammering and stuttering may occur, and we may even get paralysed by fear and hide in ourselves. The state of defensiveness is a natural response to an imagined or real threat (no perceived threat = non-defensiveness). The condition of congruent non-defensiveness leads to openness to experience. This is a key competence to master interpersonal communication.

It is worth remembering that congruence and incongruence concern both emotions and cognitions and can be shown by means of words, actions, facial expressions and body language. Intrapersonal congruence can be understood as a synonym for self-awareness, e.g., in the concept of emotional intelligence. Daniel Goleman (Goleman, 1995, 1998; Mayer & Salovey, 1997), defined self-awareness as a sense of ongoing attention to one's internal states. A self-reflective mind observes and investigates experiences of its own emotions and cognitions. The same is true for intrapersonal congruence.

What Can We Compare Congruence To?

In the English language, there is a popular term – "gut feeling". We may say: "My gut feeling was telling me that I should not carry on with this relationship" or "I had a gut feeling that this teacher is cool". Such premonitions in person-centered terminology are referred to as components of emotional intrapersonal congruence. The experience of specific "gut feeling" is at times crucial for making decisions and introducing actions. The real, experienced here-and-now emotions, influence significantly the interpersonal behaviour, even if we are not aware of it. Other times we are consciously aware of what is happening inside ourselves. This self-awareness can lead us to decisions like: "I will leave this relationship, or I will stay in this relationship". Naturally, we do not come to all relevant decisions and actions relying on our "gut feeling". It tends to be a difficult situation when there is a discrepancy between our "gut feeling" and "cold calculation".

Chronically incongruent people are often seen as being hypocritical, dishonest and manipulative. However, at times, incongruence is not observed consciously. This may lead to difficulty in understanding the feelings of incongruent people or getting an impression of who they are. You may just feel that "something is not OK" or that, for unknown reasons, you are not keen on meeting them or you just dislike certain people. There may be multiple reasons for these impressions and feelings, and one of them can be incongruence.

Points for Self-Reflection

- The person-centered concept is at times paradoxical, e.g., it carries the assumption that it is positive to be fully congruent, and thus, to bring the real self into all interactions. But what if the genuine self is "cold" and "ugly" in certain interactions? How is congruence helpful here?
- For most people it is true that they are neither fully congruent nor fully incongruent. Congruence is a matter that belongs to a continuum. You may fit somewhere (more or less) into the centre of the continuum, and in different situations move a bit to the right or to the left. Think about your own shifts on the axis of this continuum. There are many factors behind the shifts. Ask yourself the following questions: Do I generally tend to be congruent or incongruent? What is it about different situations that may determine my level of congruence? In what situations am I the most congruent? Why am I congruent in that/those situation(s)?
- In interactions where you are appropriately congruent, think about what impact your congruence makes on these interactions. If you have behaved congruently, what kind of reactions have you observed in others? Have you ever told your students that you are not prepared for class? If yes, what was their response? Have you ever told children in your school that you have a splitting headache and it is difficult to think "straight"? If yes, what was their reaction? Or do you play the role of someone, who is always very well-prepared and never experiences splitting headaches? How does this role influence your interactions with others? (It is possible that you are always prepared and you never experience headaches. In such a case, you may be a robot!)
- Think about someone you perceive to be a congruent person. What is it about this person that makes you perceive her or him this way? How does her or his congruence affect you and your relationship with this person?
- Think about someone you perceive to be an incongruent person. What is it about this person that makes you perceive her or him this way? How does her or his incongruence affect you and your relationship with this person?

Empathy

What Is Empathy?

Carl Ransom Rogers describes empathy as sensing someone else's personal experience as if it were your own, without ever forgetting the "as if" aspect. Empathising requires flexibility, openness and tolerance. It is not possible to be heavily judgmental and deeply empathic simultaneously. Hence, at the core of empathy, there is the ability to remain non-judgmental. An adult capable of empathy is more likely to be someone children want to talk to, confide in and spend time with.

According to Rogers, as mentioned above, it is impossible to be empathetic and threatening at the same time. We know that children (and adults) who feel threatened go into self-protection mode. This compromises their ability to learn. Thus, an empathic adult facilitates learning in children more than a threatening adult. Another important "side-effect" of empathy is that the most empathetic people are often perceived as "warm", and they have the ability to "warm up" their social surroundings. In other words, an empathic teacher is someone who "warms up" the classroom climate.

School context

There are direct links between empathy and aggression. On the one hand, the presence of empathy has the ability to prevent aggression. On the other hand, where aggression and violence are already present, empathetic responses often serve to reduce them. It is also useful in the prevention and reduction of social prejudices, biases and stereotypes. Thus, this specific quality should be at the core of social and emotional learning. It is impossible for an adult to teach empathy to a child, without being empathetic to her- or himself.

What Is Affective Empathy?

Affective empathy means being emotionally synchronised with another person, i.e., our "gut feelings" reflect the feelings of another person, or we can say that we "share" their feelings. An empathetic person is someone capable of sensing emotions and emotional changes happening in another person. Affective empathy usually happens automatically and unconsciously (Banaszak & Florkowski, 2014; Goleman, 1995; Rogers, 1975, 1980).

School context

Only adults capable of empathy are able to form relationships with children reaching beyond formal, "cold", impersonal transfer of information and knowledge. An empathetic adult is more likely to be liked by children, and seeing the children through an empathic lens promotes the adult liking them as well. The empathetic exchange facilitates mutual positive, prosocial responses. Children tend to imitate the interactional style of adults who are significant to them. If the reactions of adults, at least from time to time or in relevant circumstances (such as in the classroom), are empathic and appear such, this empathic tendency is likely to spread to those around, for instance, the children in a classroom.

What Is Cognitive Empathy?

Cognitive empathy is a more conscious drive to achieve an in-depth understanding of another person. This kind of understanding means reaching beyond the superficiality of chit-chat. It gives us an opportunity to grasp the way someone else sees and experiences the world. It is a chance to get to know their real motivations, values, expectations and hopes (Banaszak & Florkowski, 2014; Goleman, 1995; Rogers, 1975, 1980).

School context

There is a relatively simple conversational technique, which helps to develop cognitive empathy. Say you are listening to a child telling you something. At the end of the child's narration, you verify with the child that you have understood the story correctly. The way to do this is to paraphrase what the child has just told you, i.e., repeating it in your own words, and confirming with the child that this was indeed what she or he meant. Using this technique will enable you a better and deeper understanding of the child.

What Is Empathic Concern?

Empathic concern is the "active" (also called behavioural) component of empathy. It means caring about another person. It is a specific behaviour, which is rooted in affective or cognitive empathy or both of them. It means an attempt to embrace a person with appropriate supportive actions (Goleman, 1998; Rogers, 1980).

School context

It is not enough to be in a truly empathetic state of mind, it is also necessary to make another person experience or perceive your empathy towards them. This can be done through feedback, either through words or actions. For instance, as an adult, you can confirm a child's feelings and guide the child in how she or he can handle her or his feelings. You may, e.g., have encountered a child who feels anxious about presenting in front of the class. In this situation, it is important to accept their fear and help them to find strategies to conquer the feeling.

Therefore, listening with affective empathy and understanding with cognitive empathy can lead to empathetic concern.

Is Everyone Empathetic?

It is probably a good moment to give an example of a counterpoint to "empathic warmth". Possibly one of the best ones could be "authoritarian coldness". One of the key features of authoritarians is a deficit of empathy, which results in the lack of "empathic warmth". It is not an accident that authoritarian personas are received by others as "cold".

If you wish to "switch on" the empathising/warming up process during the encounter with another human being – according to Carl Ransom Rogers – you are encouraged to make an effort to do two things.

- Firstly, try to listen and watch the other person sensitively and intensely. It will create an opportunity for the identification of the feelings and perspectives of another person.
- Secondly, try to communicate empathic understanding to another person alive. The empathiser is encouraged to convey a message: "I do understand your point of view and the feelings you are experiencing now".

School context

The person-centered approach encourages teachers to be "warm". Hopefully, at least the majority of us, are able to activate and release personal "warmth". It is worth adding that the presence of all person-centered approach key components leads to the general "warming of classroom climate". As opposed to planet Earth's global warming, local "classroom climate warming" brings positive consequences. This type of warming leads to interpersonal "ice-breaking", or rather "ice-melting", but there is no risk of a "great deluge".

Self-Reflection

From a person-centered point of view, the most relevant evaluation for us, as individuals, is self-reflection. Self-reflection is not possible without self-awareness. We need to be aware of various aspects of ourselves so that we can proceed to review them from our own perspective. First, we have to allow ourselves to experience joy or sadness, accept the presence of these feelings, be fully aware of them and then we may weigh them and decide what to do with them and how to convert feelings into actions.

School context

With the use of self-reflection, you may try to review yourself in the context of empathy. You may use retrospection and try to asses some of your interactions with other people, and more specifically, your interactions with children in your school. You may try to recall exact situations and your accompanying thoughts, emotions and actions. You may try to think, where you would place yourself on the continuum with low empathy on one end and high empathy on the other end.

Points for Self-Reflection

- How do you feel and react when someone shows empathy towards you?
- How do you feel when you show empathy towards someone else?
- How do others react when you show empathy towards them?
- What impact does empathy have on an interaction?
- Think about a positive interaction you have had with a child. What was it about this interaction that made it positive? What role did empathy play in this interaction?
- Think about an interaction with a child where you have found it difficult to be empathetic and show empathy. What was it about the interaction, about yourself and the child that made it difficult? How can you practice becoming more empathetic in interactions like this? What hinders your empathy? What facilitates your empathy?

Addendum

The Role of Judgments in a School Environment

Judgement can be understood as an evaluation of what happens in a given situation, combined with our moral reaction to the circumstances. You can use your judgement as a basis to decide which action to take in a particular situation. It is important to remember, however, that our judgments and actions are not always in agreement, we can act against our better or worse judgements. Sometimes it can be useful to consider whether our initial judgements are correct. What happens if you take a step back and try to be non-judgmental? Does that open new possibilities? The person-centered approach encourages us to treat judgments carefully, promoting non-judgmental attitudes, because judgments can potentially be seen as threatening, and can thus evoke defensiveness (Banaszak & Florkowski, 2014; Florkowski, 2017; Rogers, 1969, 1975, 1980).

School context

In any school environment, judgments, evaluations and re-evaluations are constantly present. For the majority of us, it is difficult to imagine the absence of these critical, evaluative procedures. Nevertheless, due to the insensitive use of judgmental statements as well as non-verbal judgements, you may find that some children, especially the most sensitive ones, withdraw and hide like "snails in their shells". When this withdrawal happens, it may be difficult to make them feel comfortable, non-defensive, and keen to move "out of the shell" again. And coming out of their shells is essential for their learning and growth.

Most of us are, at least at times, unaware of our own judgmental statements, and some are unaware of judgmental attitudes. If we are not conscious of our own judgments, we can easily "drop" critical comments, without being aware of how they may affect others in a hurtful or annoying way. One judgmental statement can have the potential to be remembered for years, and may irreversibly taint the relationship in a negative way.

It is possible for judgments to be perceived as non-damaging and non-threatening. For instance, some people may say something very critical about us and, despite their criticism, we listen carefully and openly, and attempt to learn and evolve from the criticism. In most cases, the reason behind this is the quality of the relationship. If the rapport between people is good, we are more open to judgments/criticism from another person and tend not to react defensively, but rather

take the criticism seriously and as an opportunity for learning and growth. However, if judgments are made by someone we are unfamiliar with, whom we dislike or there is mutual antipathy or disrespect, judgments will most likely be perceived as highly threatening, often leading to their negation and rejection. Such rejection may not be assertively voiced but it may significantly replenish the undercurrents of the relationship. Therefore, you must be very careful and aware when you use judgments towards children and tailor judgment and critical evaluation individually to each child.

Why Should We Use Directiveness and Imposition with Caution?

As mentioned above, school staff have a social role which almost automatically puts them in a superior position in relation to students. Teachers commonly have a plan for the school day, a particular class or task, and they give directives to students in order to implement the plan. Directiveness is usually strongly correlated with control. A person giving directives expects compliance. Following someone else's directives implies submission while giving directives implies superiority. Some social roles almost automatically put someone in a superior position, such as the role of a teacher or other school staff. Sometimes it is necessary to give directives. However, from the perspective of the person-centered approach, learning and imposition of control often do not go well together, and therefore you, as school staff, should use imposition and directiveness with awareness and caution in your interaction with children.

School context

If you, in your interaction with children, wish to "play" with non-directiveness, you may try to "let go" of your planned agenda and structure every now and then, and allow yourself and the children to drift into any direction, depending on what is happening here and now. For instance, if the children are thrilled because they have just returned from an interesting school trip and they are still "buzzing" about it, you may just join them, share the excitement and leave your planned activities on the side. Pay attention to the impact it has on the children and your relationship with them in the short and long term. You may witness interesting developments and learn new things about the children and the class, their relationships and your relationships with them.

The Importance of a Good Classroom Climate

Whether we are talking about a birthday party, rock concert, project meeting, pilgrimage, flight to Mars or classroom encounter, "the climate" is always essential. If "the climate" is good, we are usually keen to go back, to attend again. We are keen to participate, and participation often happens effortlessly. The interpersonal warmth introduced by a teacher has a crucial influence on the "interactional climate" in a classroom. A positive classroom climate is a key component for a positive attitude of pupils toward the teacher and the learning process. This in turn is a prerequisite for good learning. In general, it can be said that a positive school or classroom climate is directly connected with the presence or absence of components from the person-centered approach which has been presented to you in the different modules on this theme.

School context

The "climate" of a classroom (like the weather) is changeable. All participants contribute to the climate. As their moods and feelings fluctuate, the whole group's mood fluctuates, too. The climate cannot be changed purely by our wishes, but we are all, children as well as adults, responsible for contributing to a positive climate.

Humour and Laughter

Laughter is very contagious. When we hear laughter, we find it almost impossible not to laugh, or at least smile, too. Humour tends to facilitate and spread an upbeat climate in the classroom. However, we should posit that smiles and laughter tend to be contagious only when they are genuine and when signals are generated spontaneously and congruently. False, pretend laughter and pretentious humour can have the opposite effect, and become irritating or even threatening.

School context

Reflect on whether you prefer to approach situations seriously or rather humorously. Naturally, it changes with your mood. It could be said that the more relaxed and non-defensive you are, the more likely you are to find yourself smiling or even laughing. Perhaps you will agree with an observation that even people who, at the beginning of your acquaintance, appeared very serious, with time, as you get to know each other, and the sense of security and trust increases, tend to become more humorous in your presence. If you allow children you interact with to be relaxed and joyful, as a "side effect", you may become more joyful too, and vice versa.

Humour and laughter usually occur spontaneously in groups with a "good climate". Children tend to model adults who play a significant role in their lives. If these adults are witty, have a good sense of humour and are capable of congruent laughter, it will have a positive and potentially contagious impact on the children.

Why Is Rapport Essential to Facilitate Learning?

The best teacher or role model for children is someone who steps into the role of facilitator. Someone whose presence facilitates learning and growth. The facilitator is essential for setting the "mood and climate" of a group or class. The facilitation of significant learning rests upon certain qualities which exist in the personal relationship between the facilitator and the learner. Facilitation can lead to an experience of freedom to learn in the learner. Facilitation, freedom to learn and rapport are co-dependent. Rapport is defined as a friendly relationship where people understand each other well, and where they are emotionally attuned. Rapport is at the root of caring, which in turn is at the root of teaching and learning (Rogers, 1969).

General Tips on How to Become an Expert at Handling Communicational and Relational Issues

We all possess a variety of traits, which have the power to rise the "interpersonal temperature". Let us have a look at just a few of them:

- **Smiles and laughter:** it is difficult not to return a smile of a smiling person, and laughter is very contagious.
- **Appropriate shortening of distances:** invited or sensitively offered touch can have a strong positive influence on interpersonal relationships. However, be aware of unwelcomed shortening of distance, over-familiarity or unwanted and rejected touch, as these can have a negative impact on interpersonal relationships.
- **Do not hide behind a facade, role or character:** school staff are often taught to "play the role" of a teacher or an authority figure, an all-knowing expert. However, as an adult in an interaction with a child, if you activate your humbleness or even expose some weaknesses, you will allow the child to get closer to you, because they will see you as a fellow human, and not as a threatening judge or feared authority figure.

Try to be congruent, and be aware of fake smiles and inappropriate laughter. These can result in instant "temperature drops", causing "chilling" or even "freezing" of interactions.

Points for Self-Reflection

- Think about where your judgments come from. Some of our core judgments may be internalised, which means that they come from another person, for instance, our mother, father or any significant other. Other judgments are more like "acquired tastes". In order to use judgements with caution and perhaps move towards being less judgmental, we need to understand the origin of our judgments.
- Think about how you tend to evaluate and judge others and in what style you present your evaluations. If you tend to be very harsh in treating and judging others, it is worth exploring what impact it has on others. How can you best present your judgments of others to them in a manner that facilitates learning and growth?
- Have you ever experienced being listened to without hearing judgments? How did this make you feel? How did it impact your relationship with the listener?
- To what extent are you aware of your directive tendencies? How can you practice being less directive in your relationship with children in the school? What impact do you think this would have on them and your relationship with them? What impact would it have on you?
- How and to what extent do you use humour and laughter in your interaction with children? How do children use it in their interaction with you or other children? How do humour and laughter impact relationships and learning?

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School Employees as Tutors

Educator's Role in Dialogic Teaching and Learning Processes

Human existence is intrinsically based on dialogue. We are born among others and we become ourselves when we open up to others. Thanks to others, we develop our identities, which are shaped dialogically through interacting with different people who as individuals differ in respect of consciousness (Witkowski, 2000).

In this study, we do not treat dialogue as:

- a method (educational, didactic);
- a technique used to solve a particular case;
- as an organised, artificial situation;
- a directed role system (used to subordinate to the educator).

It cannot be practised strictly by the book (Rutkowiak, 1992). Why is it so?

Because if viewed as yet one more standard method and a learned skill, dialogue may entail a risk of restricting the engagement of both students and educators. Educators/school staff are equipped with tools which are not their creations. The tools which are not the products of their minds, but only means to accomplish a task. Such a perception of dialogue by school staff can reduce the responsibility for how they work. They will tend to look for the reasons for possible failures in the shortcomings of methods and tools, however, not in themselves. Using ready-made tools facilitates the work of the educator, but limits the creativity of her or his own activity (Rutkowiak, 1992).

This is how we understand the concept of dialogue:

- adopting a clear and definite attitude towards the other person;
- a way of being, i.e., the basis of every educational situation, openness to otherness;
- a means to shape our own identity;
- its essence is the process of shaping each other (mutual interaction);

- a natural way of working for overall human development including the social, emotional, and spiritual (and not only intellectual) aspects of life;
- we do not teach dialogue to students, but we are in dialogue with them;
- a principle of upbringing based on a constant exchange of thoughts (Rutkowiak, 1992).

Dialogue is a change-inducing and growth-promoting state of being with another person. It is based on the premise that the human being is endowed with great capabilities to understand herself or himself and bring about constructive changes into her or his behaviour. These capabilities thrive on a *specific* (dialogic) *relation with another*. The relation depends on deep sensitivity and the *non-judgemental understanding of the other person*, care and the genuine exhibition of emotion (Rogers, 1991, p. 6). What is necessary for our being in dialogue is openness to others and oneself, trust and regard. Dialogue engages attention, imagination, memory, and decision-making. It also encourages reflection and thinking.

Dialogue helps to capture and apprehend the diversity of a world that emerges from the information stemming from different sources. Through dialogue, we gear ourselves up for various social relations which make our all-round development possible and reveal our potential. Dialogue facilitates our socio-emotional competencies such as the ability to strike up a conversation and keep it flowing in line with the intended goal; take account of the situation characteristics as it changes; be able to modify our beliefs if persuaded by the arguments of other people (Ledzińska, 2000).

When an individual relates to another, she or he engages emotionally and shows her or his feelings and sentiments. In the course of dialogue, the educator "drops the guard" and shows her or his true self as a human being, her or his interests, passions, the level of knowledge and the understanding of the world.

In order to be an educator it is necessary to have the ability of being in a dialogue, i.e., the ability of being in a dialogue with others as much as with oneself (Kwaśnica, 2003). An encounter (a meeting) is a mutual exploration of inspiring, vital, and thinking-triggering stimuli (Witkowski, 2000).

The role of the educator in dialogic learning (Gołębniak & Zamorska, 2014):

- The educator is a *dialogue participant* rather than one who controls and plays a managerial role. She or he fully engages in a dialogue (with her or his beliefs, biography, and personal experience). The educator/teacher is in a dialogue with her or his pupils and her- or himself, and her or his story. The educator incessantly shapes her- or himself.

- The educator is unique, inimitable, not just one of the school staff. Teaching occurs within unique relations being fostered among individuals, who find themselves in specific situations, with different emotions. It is saturated by common experience and shared language. The teacher does not reconstruct the rules of the school, but "teaches with her or his self".
- The educator is present both "externally" and "internally" in the situation. He or she is required to have a double subjectivity, i.e., a double point of view, *being "inside" and "outside" the educational situation*, e.g., immersed in a debate/a discussion with the pupils, the teacher will in the course of the debate have an insider's view of her- or himself and the pupils. At the same time she or he is the "outsider" who by seeing the whole picture helps each pupil find and distance to the problem and her- or himself. With a vast repertoire of diversified tasks (panel or small group discussions, preparation, task briefing, individual and group feedbacks) and the altering order in which they are assigned to the pupils *each of them will be able to mark her or his presence.*
- The educator *inspires the pupils to enter into and carry on a discussion* but holds no privilege to say the last world. The methods she or he employs are traditional. What matters, however, is the way they are used, e.g., the educator will treat the textbook as one of many sources of knowledge rather than the one and only manual, and joined by the pupils, will seek *inspiration for thinking*. The teacher maps out her or his own thoughts and the thoughts of the pupils, provokes, suspends certainty, and uses the difference of opinions (instead of leading the pupils towards the expected answers). This gives the pupils an opportunity to ask questions, build their argumentation, construe the situation, and articulate their opinions.
- The educator promotes the difference and originality of one's individual interpretation. When we concentrate on similarities, we tend to lose the uniqueness of an individual pupil as well as that of her or his questions, stances, doubts, and intuition. In order to become an author/originator, it is necessary to create a new quality rather than execute a better copy/version of something that has already been accepted and endorsed. Dialogic learning brings the difference out and makes it the subject of examination. The very process of examining and investigating is more important than answering questions.
- The educator opts for improvisation (rather than a prepared agenda with goals and objectives strictly set). Dialogic teaching does not lead us to a fixed point. It is *unpredictable***.** The educator may suppose that the pupil will broaden her

or his view or look for a deeper interpretation when she or he works on solving a problem (such as social, mathematical or physical problems).

- Learning occurs within the border zone at the crossroads of horizons (the horizons of those engaged in the process, of texts or traditions). Dialogic learning and dialogic teaching generate a third space – the IN-BETWEEN where an encounter with the Others is an opportunity to think independently and critically (Gołębniak & Zamorska, 2014, p. 86).

School context

Dialogue participants learn how to think critically, state their opinions with clarity/effectively to transform their investigation of a subject into an inspiring forum for the exchange of thoughts (Ostrowska, 2000, p. 120)

The goals (priority actions) of the educator-dialogue participant are:

- to set a positive climate founded on the group's trust;
- for pupils to be able to anchor in a safe relation with her or him (by exploring new points of view in the course of learning their old subjective visions of the world may get shattered);
- for her or him to have a multi-faceted presence in the group. Due to her or his flexibility (nothing is imposed*), resistance will not occur within the group*;
- to help to clarify goals/intentions/plans (purpose);
- to rely on the goals being achieved by the pupils (on their motivations);
- to ensure that all the sources they want to use are made available to them;
- to respond to what has been expressed by the group in terms of contentment and emotionalised attitudes;
- to remain mindful of the group's emotions, and communicate that she or he shares these emotions;
- for the teacher to opt for a neutral, understanding role to let different emotions be at play if the group generates interactions charged with feelings.

This type of behaviour on the part of the educator is limited by the genuineness of her or his own attitudes. The acceptant understanding of view point benefits the class's dynamics (Rogers, 1965, pp. 389–402).

A teacher who has matured to dialogue is the one whose self-belief is balanced by her or his ability of self-critique. The internal maturity that makes a human being capable of opening to the other human provides a dynamic foundation. "Teaching

– though not instructing/directing or imposing – is not possible unless you are a learner at the same time, completely humbled in front of the magnitude of knowledge" (Czermińska, 1992, p. 269).

Creating the atmosphere of acceptance, understanding and regard provides an environment facilitative of learning (Rogers, 1965, p. 384). The focus is on the learner-centred learning approach rather than teaching. Direct teaching in particular proves ineffective (since the imposed content does not relate with the persons' "self" in any significant way). *We can only facilitate the learning of what another person wants to learn*. Rogers seeks support in the popular wisdom of this proverb: *You can lead the horse to water but you can't make it drink.* (Rogers, 1965, p. 389).

One of the educator's important skills is an ability to "step down" to make the pupils take the initiative and manage themselves. The pupils should use the opportunity to work out their own concepts and arrangements, which gives them a chance of full engagement also at the emotional level.

Questions are an important part of a dialogue. The question in a dialogue is not what is called a pedagogic question with the expected answer known beforehand. The dialogue is *openness to Otherness* and incomprehensiveness (Reut, 1992). They are questions about the dialogic being in the school space, questions about differences, Otherness, and originality (Gołębniak & Zamorska, 2014).

With the use of open questions, the dialogue allows for the individual capacities of its participants (their knowledge and experiences) as well as forming diversified/multifaceted answers. Well-formed questions offer a greater chance of reaching a common point of view.

School context

Suggestions to the educator for how to initiate and keep up a dialogue with a pupil:

- Take notice of any change in the pupil ("You're wearing a new jumper").
- Offer your time and attention ("How are you feeling today? How was the test?").
- Give verbal acknowledgment (paraphrase: "If I correctly understand...").
- Try silence to give the feeling that you are waiting for the child to speak.
- Give communication a chance ("What would you like to begin with? Is there anything you would like to tell me?").
- Watch the student and communicate what you have noticed ("I can see you're not entirely sure").
- Encourage, give the student verbal and non-verbal stimuli to make her or him continue speaking ("Yes..., I understand..., and...").

- Try to identify the reason of the child's emotions ("Are you all right? / What's made you upset? / Why are you behaving like this?").
- Offer help or collaboration ("Let's think together why other children and you don't get along so well about the reasons of those conflicts with the other children?") (Okońska, 2008).

What Are the Functions of Dialogue?

- It teaches communication, mutual understanding.
- It triggers off/provokes questions.
- It teaches partnership and acting together within a group.
- Dialogue creates an opportunity to learn about specific ways of thinking, other people's personalities.
- It stirs intellectual unease.
- It facilitates the building of trustful and friendly teacher-students relations.
- It creates social bonding within a team (Śnieżyński, 2005).

Points for Self-Reflection

- To what extent would you expect ready-to-go solutions (models or patters)? Would you commit to work on and develop your own creative thinking, nurture open-mindedness and give up the existing formulas?
- To what extent are you open to accept that your pupils think in a different/unpredictable manner?

Mental Resilience of Teachers and Other School Staff

Mental resilience plays an important role in functioning of teachers and other school staff engaged in building and maintaining relationships not only with pupils. It is linked directly with teacher's well-being as well as her or his positive impact on others, especially on children in the context of their overall educational progress as well as specifically social and emotional learning. It is also one of the factors contributing to retention of staff and job satisfaction. Not only for illustration

purposes, phenomena of mental resilience may be counterbalanced in this material with vulnerability.

What Does It Mean Mental Resilience and Vulnerability?

Both resilience and vulnerability are complex, fluctuating and multifaceted mental dimensions researched from various perspectives (Gu & Day, 2013, p. 25; Gu, 2013, p. 35; Goldstein & Brooks, 2013, pp. 9–11). Let us have a look at the resilience first: "Resilient teachers have been described as those who have the capacity to thrive in difficult circumstances, are skilled in behaviour management, able to empathise with difficult students, able to restrain negative emotions and focus on the positive, experience a sense of pride and fulfilment and increased commitment to their school and profession" (Mansfield, et al., 2016, p. 4). A teacher and other staff members characterised by high resilience are motivated and equipped with social and emotional competencies. Under demanding circumstances, they know how to mobilise supportive resources, and develop adaptive coping strategies, which will allow to face challenges and overcome obstacles (Mansfield, et al., 2016, p. 8).

Very shortly, resilience can be defined as a dynamic process of positive adaptation despite experiences of significant adversity or trauma (Haddadia & Besharata, 2010, p. 639; Shellman & Hill, 2017, p. 61; Wallhäusser-Franke, et al., 2014). It can be summarised as "(...) a result of normal human adaptational mechanisms" (Berk, et al., 2005, p. 77).

School context

Research results indicate that in teaching profession, resilience usually does not refer to the capacity for handling extremely traumatic situations, but it is rather an ability to cope with difficulties and unavoidable uncertainties of everyday work, which intensity may remain moderate (comparing to extreme circumstances like earthquakes, floods, fires, etc.) (Gu & Day, 2013, p. 39).

A person characterised by resilience is relatively immune to the influence of psychopathology. For instance, resilient individual has the capacity to *handle difficult or even toxic relationships* like mobbing or bullying (Singham, et al., 2017, p. 1113). She or he can activate various "survival" strategies and handle the situation in the way that secures the recovery and return to mental homeostasis. If the situation is not workable, she or he is able to get out of damaging context and activate mental resources, which allows them to find a new job and adopt to different circumstances. All mentioned patterns of adaptive behaviours are linked to the presented mental capacity named resilience.

School context

School should create working environment reinforcing staff member's resilience. There are couple of reinforcement levels. Beginning from the top of school hierarchy, we can say that good principal is usually aware of each staff resilience or vulnerability and should be able to uphold it and provide back-up if necessary. However, it is worth reminding that our own ongoing resilience check is the most significant. Each of us have potentially the best access to all body signals (internal congruence) and this is the base for an accurate, continuing self-evaluation. With regard to the issue, some schools organise trainings, workshops for their staff, which heighten the knowledge, self-awareness and help to design preventive strategies.

Vulnerability can be presented as an antonym of resilience (Cruz Sequeira, et al., 2016, p. 7). Mentally vulnerable person, under pressure, facing significant adversity is likely to shift, relatively easily into maladaptive patterns of behaviour. Challenges are perceived as threats. High vulnerability may be associated with low or swinging self-esteem and self-perception, unstable emotionality and "wobbly" sense of identity. It is coupled with neurotic features such as tendencies toward depressed mood, anxiety, anger, chronic frustration, often reappearing sense of guilt and ongoing maladjustment.

School context

Needless to say, we assume that a teacher or other school staff will be preferably characterised by relatively high resilience. Stimulating growth and learning-facilitating relationships require the ability to handle various pressures, and the ability to respond to classroom demands tensions and conflicts. It requires a set of skills and mental predispositions, including resilience.

Resilient teacher is likely to stay in a job over an extended period of time as she or he has resources to counteract attrition and burnout.

What Contributes to Teacher and Other School Staff's Mental Resilience?

In literature, we can come across lists of factors contributing to the process of maintaining sufficient resilience. They can be divided into such categories as *personal resources, contextual resources* and *strategies*, which may lead to positive *outcomes* (Mansfield, et al., 2016, p. 10).

Personal Resources of Resilience

Motivation may be placed on the top of the list. It is our "inner drive" (Mansfield, et al., 2016, p. 11) for life in general. It is also crucial regarding professional life. Speaking from the perspective of humanistic psychology, motivational energy is a function of meaning. Without a sufficiently deep sense of meaning, human being is definitely not be able to sustain the energy output required to accomplish demanding, complex, long-term tasks (alternatively this output can be a function of external coercions).

If any job is perceived as meaningful, it is very likely that the energy input will be high. With a motivating impact of meaning, a teacher or any other staff will do more than required by an employer to hold the job. Empowered by meaningfulness, an educator will remain engaged and efficient. If a teacher sees meaning in what she or he does, it is likely that she or he will invest energy into building high-quality relationships with pupils. We know that these relationships constitute core of facilitation of social and emotional learning.

It can be said that a sense of purpose, motivation and real learning facilitation efficacy are closely entwined. Looking at other components constituting personal resources resulting in high resilience we should mention *optimism, social and emotional competencies, initiative, sense of vocation, empathy, a system of values and courage* (Mansfield, et al., 2016, p. 10). System of values may be influenced by a personalised "life philosophy". Religion may well play a significant role in this context (Taylor, 2013, p. 11). As shown in the previous sentence, resilience and its resources are very *multifaceted* and *complex issues*.

Style of character can be taken into consideration regarding resilience, as it is a deeply personal, continuous set of features (Wallhäusser-Franke, 2014, p. 1). Our personality "is our closest companion" everywhere and makes an impact on every encounter with humans and non-humans. It is a major component of who we are. It is one of the main factors differentiating us.

In general, it may be mentioned that scientists extracted some categories and patterns of actions, thinking and feeling. They are, to some extent, predictable, because they are repetitive and relatively stable. It is good and bad news at this same time, a "two in one" package. On the one hand, as we know our own or someone's personality, we can make predictions, and we know more or less what to expect, because it is a relatively stable set of features. Unfortunately, the stability of features includes resilience. It is one of the personality traits, which means that it is low or high and it is likely to be a life-long tendency. Our character is shaped mainly by our genetics and early life events, which are beyond our control (Berk, et al., 2005, p. 76).

The enduring patterns may be individually arranged and form a personality profile. The situation resembles a tonal music structure. On the one hand, there are eight tones and five half tones only. It looks like music should be limited and predictable but we know it is not true as the tones and halftones may be arranged in an endless combination of chords, rhythms and timbres. The same richness applies to personality profiles. According to a popular personality theory, there are only five "tones" taken into consideration, and they are called "The Big Five" or "Big five personality traits" (Friborg, et al., 2005, p. 30; Lazaridou & Beka, 2014, p. 3). Let us remind them very shortly and comment briefly on them in the context of resilience.

1. Openness to experience. Some of us tend to be inventive and curious, while others are rather consistent and cautious. "This trait includes such characteristics as imagination and insight, having a broad range of interests, aesthetic sensibility, innovativeness, ingenuity, creativity, courage and a desire for knowledge and new experiences" (Lazaridou & Beka, 2014, p. 3).

Like every paradigm, this one is also a simplification. In "real life", there is a variety of contextual changes that may result in shifts from *openness to experience* to cautious "sticking" to what is known, predictable and generates a sense of safety. It can be said that being inventive, curious and open to new experiences, which are welcomed with courage and insightfulness, it is a factor contributing positively to resilience. Innovativeness and ingenuity help to adopt and handle challenging situations.

2. Conscientiousness. Some of us are rather efficient and well-organised, while others tend to be easy-going and careless. People scoring high on *conscientiousness* are often appreciated for their accountability, dedication, diligence, thoughtfulness and good impulse control. They tend to pay attention to details and be persistently goal-directed (Lazaridou & Beka, 2014, p. 3). Needless to say, this factor matches well with resilience. However, as always, it is not so simple, because those of us who are excessively conscientious and are unable to shift into an easy-going and careless pattern of behaving, may end up being overloaded and stressed. We need carelessness at times. Carelessness, relaxation and recreation are interconnected and needed if we want to be able to "recharge our life batteries" and nourish resilience. A sense of responsibility, endless accountability, and never-stopping diligence may lead to workaholism and emotional tension. Being easy-going can be a precious interpersonal style, contributing positively to the working climate of the team. Search for golden mean seems the best – not always reachable – option.

3. Extraversion. Some of as are rather outgoing and energetic, and others tend to be solitary and reserved. It matches the concept of *extraversion* and *introversion. Extraversion* "(…) includes such characteristics as excitability, sociability,

talkativeness, assertiveness, high amounts of emotional expressiveness, stubbornness, energy and ambition" (Lazaridou & Beka, 2014, p. 3). Extraverts tend to be "party animals" inasmuch they step into social interactions easily (even with strangers). They may become groups leaders and have the capacity to stay in the centre of attention, but it is not always a desirable and most appropriate way of behaving. At certain point, individuals and groups tend to get tired of a person who is constantly in the mental mode of attention and sensation seeking. Such personalities may paralyse constructive team processes, some groups may not be aware of that, some may try to marginalise or get rid of such a person.

At the same time, sociability helps to enter and maintain relationships with others. It is often indicated in literature that resilience is relational. An ability to form relationships can be a matter of social survival as for the majority of humans support of others is a necessity.

4. Agreeableness. Some of as are rather friendly and compassionate, whereas others tend to be cold and unkind. *Agreeableness,* as a personality trait "(…) includes attributes such as friendliness, interpersonal sensitivity, cooperation, altruism, understanding, trust, trustworthiness, compassion, submissiveness, concern, kindness, altruism, affection and other pro-social behaviours" (Lazaridou & Beka, 2014, p. 3). It is rather clear that this trait is very closely linked to relational resilience and socio-emotional competencies. However, if we try to point out that practically every feature may turn out to be an advantage or disadvantage, depending on the context, it is worth mentioning that in some situations disagreement and getting out of submissiveness and kindness may be a winning strategy. Domination and intimidation seem to be in opposition to *agreeableness*.

5. Neuroticism. Some of us tend to be sensitive. Sensitivity may be correlated with nervousness/anxiousness. Some of us appear rather secure and confident. *Neuroticism "*(...) includes emotional instability, anxiety, moodiness, irritability, sadness, nervousness, selfishness, depression, anxiety and poor, unstable mood" (Lazaridou & Beka, 2014, p. 3). In general, high resilience correlates with low *neuroticism.* However, it is not as simple as it seems. Neurotics, as mentioned above, may be sensitive, or even hyper-sensitive, and sensitivity is perceived as a pro-social feature. On the other hand, some strongly manipulative individuals appear confident or overconfident. Overconfidence may coexist with grandiosity and deficits of empathic sensitivity.

It can be summarised that there is scientific evidence showing that "the resilient personality profile being characterised by a high score on all the Big Five factors" (with the exception of neuroticism) (Friborg, et al., 2005, p. 30).

Contextual Resources of Resilience

Relationships are one of the most important contextual resources necessary for building and sustaining resilience. Relevant are relationships *within* and *outside* the working context (Mansfield, et al., 2016, p. 11).

Relational resilience thrives on constellation of relationships (Gu, 2013, p. 11). Beginning on a teacher's connection (or disconnection) with a leader/principal, through the character of peers relations, ending on a teacher and pupils bonding (or its lack). All these interrelations form a school culture. Specific school culture may be tainted rather by trust or mistrust, cooperation or competition, autonomy or autocracy. There may be tendencies to reward staff with recognition or harass with depreciation, never-ending demands, mobbing and threats of firing from job. School culture and its emotional climate are closely entwined. Needless to say, relational qualities, school culture and climate are capable of empowering or disempowering mental resilience of all school staff members.

School context

As it was mentioned, one of the dimensions of relational resilience are the relationships between a teacher and pupils. On one hand, teacher's resilience plays an important role in terms of the capacity for forming relationships. On the other hand, meaningful relationships with students, filled with sense of connectedness are very rewarding for a teacher and they have a massive impact on her or his resilience.

Mentoring, Couching and Psychotherapy

Mentoring, couching and psychotherapy are similar in many ways. Multiple overlaps exist between them, and they can be seen as complimentary. "Coaching and mentoring are learning relationships which help people to take charge of their own development, to realise their potential and to achieve results which they value" (Connor & Pokora, 2007, p. 6). The cited statement applies to psychotherapy, too. It is not the main purpose of this material to go through an in-depth analysis of differences between these specific relational engagements. We will just signal basic issues in the context of resilience.

Mentorship can be mentioned as a specific form of relationship with a potentially potent positive impact on resilience (Taylor, 2013, p, 21). Typically, senior staff can play the role of mentor and junior staff becomes mentee. The mentor provides resources, offers guidance, encourages mentee's ideas and work, provides useful

critiques and feedback. The mentor acknowledges contributions of the mentee (Connor & Pokora, 2007, p. 67). "(...) Those who are mentored accrue substantial benefits such as higher promotion rates, greater career satisfaction, and higher overall compensation than those who have not been mentored" (Allen, et al., 2005, p. 155). As it has been stated in the citation, the mentor may effectively boost the resilience and lead to desirable changes in an overall adaptation of the mentee. Mentorship may be initiated informally or formally. The quality of the relationship established between the participating individuals is essential. Good mentorship may in many ways be similar to psychotherapeutic relationship. What is also essential is comfort, openness based on trust and empathic understanding (Rogers, et al., 2020, pp. 154–159).

Coaching tends to have a set duration, structure and regular schedule compared with mentoring. "The agenda is focused on achieving specific, immediate goals" (Rogers, et al., 2020, p. 13).

The *relationships outside workplace* are also significant sources of emotional support boosting resilience. The supportive network stretched beyond school includes partners, family, friends, colleagues, etc. It is extended to sport and recreational clubs, associations, where we spent our free time enjoying the activities refreshing our minds and recharging "life powering batteries".

The outside workplace resilience-boosting relationships may include *psychotherapy*. One of the few characteristics differentiating mentoring, couching and psychotherapy is that the last one mentioned may or may not focus on work context (it can shift focus from session to session). Psychotherapy is not limited to the work context. Psychotherapist is not entangled with client's work setting. In psychotherapeutic process any aspect of person's life can be explored, beginning with the affirmation or rejection of God, and ending with highly specific sexual preferences or aversions. Psychotherapeutic engagement may be limited to a single session or evolve into a long-term (or life-long) relationship. Psychotherapy is worth considering for a variety of reasons. It may be a useful path of self-exploration widening self-awareness. It is a unique interpersonal space, allowing expressions of thoughts and feelings which are forbidden on other social forums. In the process of working well psychotherapy, we have an opportunity to play with levels of congruence (realness, genuineness), which are not permitted sometimes even in intimate lifelong dyads. Self-exploration accompanied by an empathic, accepting amplifying inner search presence of another human being may widen our horizons of self-understanding. It may also lead to changes in interpersonal style, self-perception and emotional patterns. It might be useful in moments of crisis when our resilience reminds us of a weakened immunological system, which requires boosting interventions. For some of us, a therapeutic relationship is

the only opportunity for being listened to empathically. It may perhaps be a unique experience, as in everyday life we are seldom in a situation where someone listens to us exclusively, extensively, empathically and non-judgmentally. It may well change future communication style with others, including pupils (Gu & Day, 2013, p. 25).

School context

In summary, it may be said that contextual resilience (key features of resilient organisations) rests on seven "C's": Community, Competence, Connections, Commitment, Communication, Coordination and Consideration (Gu & Day, 2013, p. 40; Taylor, 2013, p. 3).

Strategies Supporting Resilience

There are various strategies fuelling resilience and leading to positive adaptation outcomes. Each of us tends to master her or his own set of strategies depending on our personality, life experience and changing contexts. In literature review we can find information which strategies are most popular.

Problem solving skills are close to the top of the list. Equally relevant is the search for balance between work and other domains of life (Mansfield, et al., 2016, p. 10). Competitiveness and work overload are present in various professional fields. Educational institutions are also affected by this trend. Year by year, it is more difficult to find a healthy balance between work and leisure. Bureaucracy, curricular pressures, constantly extending working hours, evaluations and rising demands coupled with growing control, loss of autonomy and other multiple adverse factors result in loss of healthy equilibrium (Gu & Day, 2013, p. 22). If the teachers are unable to take care of themselves, they will likely end up mentally drained and abandoned. It is crucial for the teachers and other staff members to be self-aware and keep in check risk factors. It is a necessity to monitor the work – leisure balance all the time. Paradoxically, person-centered teacher must be enough self-centred to take care of himself and nurture personal resilience.

School context

The teaching profession is in many ways specific. One of the distinguishing features is partial flexibility of work hours (flex-time) and places where the work is done (flex-place). Teachers do a lot of work at home or in other chosen places including parks and coffee shops. It is a blessing and a curse at the same time. On one hand, work from home may be seen as luxurious

and autonomous, on the other hand, this work style leads to a lack of clear boundaries between work and home, between professional and private. This work style may easily lead to being at work all day and every day. A bedroom, a balcony or a salon at home can be converted into offices. The problem is that the enmeshment of work-leisure, professional-private, and a lack of clear boundaries may not be healthy (Taylor, 2013, p. 2).

It is not easy to find an appropriate balance, "sweet spot" between flex-time, flex-place, appreciated autonomy and a lack of boundaries edging on enmeshment. It is worth reminding that teachers value their professional autonomy (Taylor, 2013, p. 21), which, at the same time, is often taken away from them by management tainted with over-control.

Another resilience-related strategies worth mentioning are: *good communication and emotional regulation, help-seeking, effective time management, goal-setting and humour.*

Last but not least, we would like to indicate significance of *indoor* and *outdoor recreation* in pursue of a healthy balance. Especially the outdoor activities are worth reminding as the majority of teaching and learning happens indoor, so moving outdoor appears spontaneously as an attempt to counterbalance the burden of routine. "Documented benefits of recreation, and in particular outdoor recreation, are numerous and include physiological benefits (e.g., improved cardiovascular fitness) as well as an array of mental health benefits, such as reduction of stress and incidence of depressive symptoms, enhanced subjective well-being, and increased peer/social support" (Shellman & Hill, 2017, p. 60). Our body is not designed to be placed in the front of computers for all days, engaged in watching pixels and clicking. It supposed to rest not only after cerebration but after physical effort, too. Motionless and stressful lifestyle drains the energy and speeds up aging. It does not matter if it is cycling, Nordic walking, swimming, jogging or gardening – it is worth doing if you feel like it. Even if you do not feel this way spontaneously, it is worth trying to "push yourself" away from the motionless, tiring routines into something different like... going outdoors.

If we are able to use all available resources mindfully (Meiklejohn, et al., 2012), beginning with the personal, and ending with the contextual and strategic, our chances to sustain resilience are rising. It is worth the effort as resilience is strongly correlated with such qualities like well-being, job enjoyment, enthusiasm and satisfaction.

Points for Self-Reflection

- What do you think about the phenomena of resilience?
- Where do you place yourself on continuum: resilience – vulnerability? What are the main factors changing your position on this continuum?
- Did you experience situations in your life when your resilience dropped down and you felt very vulnerable?
- What factors are boosting your personal resources of resilience?
- How do you manage your personal resilience check? What type of thoughts, feelings and behaviours make you think that you may run short of personal resilience?
- How do you connect your own style of character with resilience and vulnerability?
- How do you perceive your workplace regarding contextual resilience?
- What do you think about the concept of organismic valuing process?
- What do you think about the concept of relational resilience?
- What are your personal strategies empowering resilience?
- How do you perceive mentorship?
- What do you think about psychotherapy?
- What do you think about outdoor activities?

Mindfulness in School Context

In this module, you will find the information about the mindfulness practices. Mindfulness can be used for teacher/school staff's own development, especially for building psychosocial resilience and as a tool for working with students in school environments.

What *Mindfulness* Is?

One of the most common definition of *mindfulness* came from Kabat-Zinn who says that it is "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present

moment, and nonjudgmentally" (1994, p. 4). Other authors also proposed a similar conceptual framework which generally refers to receptivity and full engagement in the present moment (Black, 2011). The Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group states that mindfulness means paying attention to what is happening in the present moment in the mind, body and external environment, with an attitude of curiosity and kindness (Hyland, 2016). To understand more clearly the idea of mindfulness, it can be contrasted with states of mindlessness. We experience mindlessness when being in the "here and now" is disturbed. It happens when our attention and awareness are scattered due to distractions rooted in past memories or future plans and preoccupations. All these mental processes cause "drifting away" from the focus on the present moment. Mindfulness can be measured in a variety of ways – as a dispositional characteristic (a relatively long-lasting trait), an outcome (a state of awareness resulting from mindfulness training), and as a practice (mindfulness meditation practice itself) (Black, 2011).

Kabat-Zinn was the first who proposed Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction course (MBSR) to patients in late 1970s. It was helpful in managing the pain and stress of their medical conditions. The course proposed a range of techniques and practices like sitting meditation, body-scanning and mindful movement exercises. Then, other adaptations for different health conditions or settings have been developed. One of the most recognised is Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT). *Mindfulness* (attentive presence and mental attentiveness) is described as a set of techniques aiming at the support of mental health. They are based on universal concepts, used in psychoprophylaxis and psychotherapy (Dębska & Jacennik, 2016). The assumptions underlying the discussed techniques are as follows:

1. Man can direct his attention at will;
2. Conscious directing of attention enables an expected change;
3. Evaluation and lack of acceptance prevent change;
4. Focus on the current moment is connected with a feeling of gratitude;
5. Conscious directing of attention facilitates the understanding of cause and effect;
6. Self-understanding increases the understanding of others (Dębska & Jacennik, 2016).

What Does Mindfulness Practice Look Like?

The goal of mindfulness training is, among others, a better understanding of yourself and your bodily responses to external and internal stimuli. It aims at an increased awareness of the sensations flowing through body such as your own emotions as well as a skilful observation of links between your own emotions, thoughts and physiological reactions of the body. Mindfulness training usually consists of the following: focus on the breath and physical sensations which appear in the body, observation of your own emotions and reactions in contact with other people as well as slow physical exercise.

A typical mindfulness session involves sitting on the floor in an upright position. If you wish, you may close your eyes (or keep them open with eyesight resting comfortably in front of you) and put your hands on laps or knees. Your attention can focus gently on various bodily sensations, like the pressure created by sitting or airflow in the nostrils. Your thoughts may continue to ramble from one sensation to another. Try to encourage your mind to stay engaged in the process but observe it at the same time. The difference between an attention training and a mindfulness session is that your mind follows the curiosity and nurtures acceptance and compassion. Such mindfulness session may be held for a few moments (as a break from daily activities) or you may secure some half an hour in the morning or in the evening for it, depending on your preference (Hyland, 2016). The mindfulness practice for adults differs from the one for children, because it is usually difficult for young people to stay still and focused for any extended period of time.

What Effects Can We Expect from Mindfulness Practice?

Scientific research shows (Luken & Sammons, 2016; Elreda et al. 2019; Schussler et al. 2019, Hwang et al. 2017, Bakosh et al. 2018; Klingbeil & Renshaw 2018; Puswiartika et al. 2018; Dębska, Jacennik 2016; Hyland 2016) that Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBI) have the following positive health outcomes resulting in:

- reduced self-reported measures of perceived stress, anger, rumination, and physiological symptoms;
- reduced reactivity to emotional stimuli;
- improvements in attention and cognitive capacities;
- improvements in positive outlook, empathy, sense of cohesion, self-compassion and overall quality of life;
- improvements in attention and emotion regulation skills;

- increased likelihood to respond compassionately to someone in need, and enjoy more satisfying personal relationships;
- taking more environmentally-responsible decisions;
- positive effect on treatment in anxiety disorders, depression, addiction to psychoactive substances, eating disorders, skin diseases, chronic fatigue and burnout syndrome, and cancer.

The effectiveness of such interventions has been shown in various environments. School setting is one of them. Meta-analysis of research programmes implemented in schools (Emerson et.al, 2017) indicate that they can be even more effective than other mental health interventions. Their effects are stronger in more disordered/problematic cases. These programmes are particularly effective in the area of stress-resilience and cognitive functioning. They lead to an observable increase in pro-social behaviours, including socio-emotional competencies as well as improved coping skills and higher optimism.

How Can I Incorporate Mindfulness Practice into My Life?

Mindfulness means an awareness of the present experience and its acceptance. Mindfulness practice enables fuller and stronger living through all available emotions. Practicing it can lead to synchronicity with others. It can result in a stronger perception of bonds with others. There are many ways for practicing mindfulness. Simple walk or doing daily work in a state of awareness of our experiences can be an example (focus on breathing, body reactions with the acceptance and suspended judgment). There are various applications, which make the beginning of practicing easier and may come in handy, e.g., Smiling Mind (for free), Headspace, INTU (in Polish).

Below you will find a few simple introductory exercises. However, the practice is the most effective when one attends a course or explores the available literature or on-line courses.

Observation of the emotions in the body (Siegel, 2011).

For a few minutes, close your eyes and concentrate on your breathing. Then try to identify the emotions appearing within yourself. How do they manifest themselves? How do you feel them? Do you feel them in your throat, chest or stomach? Stay with your emotions, focus on them and keep breathing. Pay attention to any distractions. By using the ability to live through both, pleasant and unpleasant bodily

sensations (developed during meditation), we learn to explore all emotions arising in the body. The negative emotions become easier to endure, and we increase our ability to be with them.

The beginning of mindfulness meditation practice (Ameli, 2017).

Try to practice breathing meditation once/twice a day for 20-30 minutes. Select comfortable place and time:

- Maintain a good posture. Sit down, in an upright position on the pillow or floor with crossed legs. Let your arms and chest relax. Rest your hands on the knees.
- Pay attention to sensations (tension, pain, relaxation) appearing in various parts of the body (feet, head, face).
- Relax as much as possible, get rid of judgments and expectations.
- Focus your attention on inhalation and exhalation. Do not change anything, just follow the natural flow. The breathing rhythm can change during the exercise – be observant of it.
- Stay focused on the breathing process with benevolent curiosity and sensitivity. Do not criticise your wondering mind, observe your thoughts. Accept them openly and gratefully.
- The practice requires commitment, engagement and repetition.

Informal schedule of mindfulness practice (Siegel, 2011).

It is a good idea to find such daily activities, which are suitable for mindfulness exercises and commit yourself to a daily practice. Think about your typical day and choose at least one activity suitable for attention/concentration exercises (e.g., showering, teeth brushing, dish washing, walking up the stairs, driving a car, drinking tea, having breakfast or dinner.) Use it to practice mindfulness and focus on the sensations.

Make an agreement with yourself that you will always practice mindfulness in certain situations:

1. .....
2. .....
3. .....

How Can Mindfulness Be Incorporated into School Life?

The experiences and recommendations from the English-speaking countries indicate that the school is the right place to implement the mindfulness technique. The first programmes were implemented, inter alia in the United States (since 2000) and on a large scale in the Great Britain (since 2007) (e.g., programmes: .b or Paw.b – https://mindfulnessinschools.org).

The basis for the effectiveness of these activities is the teacher's own training and practice. Most programmes assume this type of scenario. It is important because it does not only improve the health and quality of life of students, but also increases the resilience resources of teachers themselves. It counteracts many mental health problems. Mindfulness trainings carried out in schools are usually of preventive character, however, they can be therapeutic as well.

Training programmes last for six weeks at the minimum and can (or even should) be continued over an extended period of time. One session usually takes from 10 minutes to an hour. In addition to teaching of mindfulness techniques and their practicing them, students have an opportunity to gain knowledge about psychosocial health and the functioning of the nervous system. They learn how to use this knowledge for the purposes of preventing and coping with difficult situations. Inspiration for such exercises can be found in the large literature addressed to parents and teachers (e.g., Eline Snel *Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids (and Their Parents)*; Susan Kaiser Greenland *Mindful Games: Sharing Mindfulness and Meditation with Chrildren, Teens, and Families*, Thich Nhat Hanh, Katherine Weare *Happy Teachers Change the World. A Guide for Cultivating Mindfulness in Education*).

School context

Below we present some simple mindfulness exercises for children.

Listen to the sound (Czyżycka, n.d.)
To do this, a sound-making device is needed (e.g., gong, triangle, teaspoon, glass of water). As the gong is stroked, the children's task is to listen in silence and focus on the vibration and spread of the sound as long as they can hear it. Whoever no longer hears it, raises his hand and can (optionally) remain silent for another minute and carefully listen to the other sounds that appear around. Then everyone talks about the sounds they noticed during this exercise.

Tensing – Relaxing
Children are asked to lie down on the floor (or sit on a chair). Their task is to tense specific muscles as much as they can and then relax them. Preferably,

the teacher will suggest the order and pace of these actions. It can begin with feet and then move toward the head. For instance, the child may be instructed to tense their feet hard and then relax them. Due to these exercises they can be taught, what it means to focus on here and now as well as how to recognise the tensions arising in the body.

Heartbeat (Czyżycka, n.d.)
Children are asked to engage in a physical activity like dancing or jumping. Then they are instructed to sit down, put one hand on the heart, close their eyes and try to feel the heartbeat, pace and depth of breath as well as other sensations appearing in the body.

Points for Self-Reflection

- Could you identify any moments in your life routine, which can be used for mindfulness practise?
- Could you find any school life/classroom life moments, when you can practise mindfulness?
- Why do you think these practises are important for your personal or professional development?

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Child Development

In this theme, we will consider what factors influence the development of children's social and emotional competence, and how school staff can support this development. Humans are continuously changing and developing throughout their lives: cognitively, physically, linguistically as well as emotionally and socially. Development in these areas is interlinked and occurs approximately during the same periods of time in people's lives. It also occurs in a certain order, based on the achievements and experiences from previous stages but at an individual pace, and more rapidly during childhood. School staff must be sensitive to these dynamic changes in a child's development and be able to adapt conditions, requirements and tasks to the child's current needs. Ensuring that children feel safe, enables them to explore new environments, establish new relationships, and understand different situations.

Individual Differences in Children's Development

What Is Development?

Development is defined as changes in an individual that occurs between birth and death. Research on development considers these changes as progressive and systematic. This view arises from the need to statistically categorise an individual's development against an average for that stage of development. However, this view does not take into consideration the individual nature of development, which is varied and not always progressive.

Changes can occur in all areas of a child's development: cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and linguistic. These areas of development are interlinked. For instance, a child's speech development can be affected by hearing difficulties or being talked too rarely by other people.

Changes can occur in all areas of a child's development: cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and language.

Temporary mood swings and other transient changes in our appearance, thoughts or behaviours are not considered to be developmental changes because they do not lead to permanent transformations. Nevertheless, they are very important for adults working in schools. Such temporary changes indicate the necessity for an individual approach to children and taking their current needs into account.

Which Processes Influence Child Development?

Most developmental changes are the product of both *maturation* and *learning*. Maturation in humans refers to a person's physiological development and is highly dependent on genetic makeup. Maturation can affect psychological changes such as the ability of an increased concentration or increased understanding of other people's thoughts or feelings (Schaffer, 2003). On the other hand, learning is affected by experiences which can result in permanent changes in feelings, thoughts and behaviours. We are also changing in response to our environment – particularly to the actions and reactions of the people around us. We often learn to feel, think and behave from our observations and interactions with important people in our lives, as well as from events that we experience.

School context

A child needs both maturation and learning to achieve proficiency in a skill. A certain level of physical maturation is necessary before a grade-school child can become reasonably proficient at throwing a ball into a basket. But instruction and many hours of practice are essential if this child is ever to approximate the skills of a professional basketball player.

The Influence of Experience on Human Development

A learning process which can explain differences in the development of emotional competence is attachment, which is instinctive in babies, who seek proximity from their caregivers (Schaffer, 2003).

Attachment develops until the age of three. Children who are unable to form an emotional attachment during the first six months of their lives show distress, cry more, are fearful, do not respond to people and withdraw from social contact. If

this neglect continues, children may find it difficult to form strong relationships later in life (Bowbly, 1969).

However, children can recover from unfavourable emotional experiences and learn to relate to people and form relationships. This has been observed in children who have been deprived of a loving caregiver in their first six months of life. Even though these children showed symptoms of emotional neglect, e.g., not being able to cry or respond to people, they learned to relate to others when provided with loving environments. Still, these children do not completely recover from their early experiences (Schaffer, 2003).

As attachment research indicates, the way children understand the feelings of those with whom they have close relationships with, has a great importance not only for those relationships but for their social functioning later on.

School context

Due to individual differences, children of the same age may need different help in their emotional development. For instance, some students will need to learn how to control their emotional state, others may need to understand how to express a variety of feelings in constructive ways, while others may need to understand the wide range of human emotions and recognise these states in other people.

What Are the Common Pathways of Development?

Humans go through developmental stages at approximately the same time periods in their lives. These changes occur in a certain order, successively and they build on previous stages. However, they take place at different rates. In some children certain developmental stages are achieved earlier, and in others they are achieved later. Even children raised in the same home develop differently and display different behaviours, abilities and interests.

Piaget, a Swiss psychologist and philosopher, created a breakthrough theory on child development. His focus was on cognitive development, i.e., how children develop their ability to think. He describes the four stages of cognitive development which children undergo to be able to think abstractly and solve problems (Phillips, 1969).

Sensorimotor Stage

In this stage, from birth to two years, children combine their sensory and motor (physical) abilities to explore the world around them. Though their understanding

of the "self" and "others" is not developed, they learn to produce images and have thoughts about events, people, and objects, and they come to realise that these have an existence even when not present in front of them.

Preoperational Stage

From two to seven years of age, children gradually put together new information with older information. They learn to use symbols for objects or people in their play, language, and drawings. However, they interpret everything from their own perspective.

Concrete Operational Stage

Between the ages of seven to 12 years, children gain an understanding of the relation between objects, people and events in their everyday life. They become capable of understanding people's motives based on their behaviour and surrounding events.

Formal Operational Stage

From 12 years of age, adolescents enjoy thinking hypothetically, and thus can be quite idealistic. They can consider different solutions to problems and deduce a correct solution (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010).

It may take many years for children to move to this last stage of development. Some do not reach this stage before they are 15 years old. Other children may exhibit the last two stages in their way of thinking for many years. However, children's cognitive development can be encouraged through educational activities. Vygotsky, a known Russian psychologist, who contributed greatly to the field of education, suggests that in order for teaching to be effective it is necessary to anticipate children's development and teach in such a way as to activate the next level of development.

In order for teaching to be effective it is necessary to anticipate children's development and teach in such a way as to activate the next level of development.

School context

For children to succeed in learning mathematics, they must be able to count and reason efficiently on the operational stage. An effective method to support the development of children in this area is to introduce them to the rules of game development, e.g., racing board games, and create games together, and most importantly, play each of them (Gruszczyk-Kolczyńska & Zielińska, 2009).

Stages of Psychosocial Development

Eric Erikson is well known for his theory of psychosocial development. Though based on Freud's psychosexual theory, he expanded this theory to include all stages of life and shifted the focus from the sexual nature of people to that of social context.

Erikson believed that anything that grows starts with the same basic units which change at a specific time in their development. Human development is complete when a person can function as a whole.

Erikson stated that there are *eight psychosocial stages or crises of development*. During each stage, a person experiences a "crisis" or a conflict, whose resolution can be either positive or negative and then becomes part of a person's personality. If positive, it results in a psychosocial strength, if negative, it can interfere with further development.

Table 1. Stages of psychosocial development according to Erikson

Development stage	Basic conflict	Virtue
infancy	(basic) trust / mistrust	hope
toddlerhood	autonomy / shame (and doubt)	will
preschool	initiative / guilt	purpose
childhood	industry / inferiority	competence
adolescence	identity / (role) confusion	fidelity
young adulthood	intimacy / isolation	love
middle adulthood	generativity / stagnation	care
late adulthood	integrity / despair	wisdom

Source: McLeod, 2018

School context

At the beginning of their school education, it is important to check how children function in task-related situations during play and in social contacts. Particular attention should be paid to whether children can do the following:

- stay focussed long enough to perceive messages and commands (verbal and non-verbal);
- display willingness to communicate with an adult in such a way that the adult understands what they want to say, especially regarding messages not dealing with their own personal needs;
- understand the importance of focusing their attention on a task, even if the task is not related to their personal needs.

Creating situations that support development in these areas will help children benefit from ADULT–CHILD or ADULT–CHILDREN GROUP relationships (Gruszczyk-Kolczyńska & Zielińska, 2009).

According to Erikson, in elementary school, children are in the fourth stage of psychosocial development. This is the stage where children are learning the basic skills needed in society. At this stage, children are trying to resolve the conflict between what Erikson called "Industry" and "Inferiority". It means that children either learn to develop skills needed in society and thus obtain a sense of enjoyment and pride in their work or do not succeed in mastering skills and are plagued by feelings of inadequacy and inferiority.

School context

Such activities as creating and painting pictures or baking favourite cookies with the help of an adult are important sources of satisfaction for children. They develop a sense of competence and faith in their own abilities. It is also important for children to be praised by adults and peers.

What Are Critical Periods?

Some periods in the life of a child are more crucial for development and learning than others. During these periods, specific experiences affect the development of the child more than they do at other times. If children have favourable experiences, their development will be fostered. If, in these periods, experiences are unfavourable, their development is hindered.

> ***Some periods in the life of a child that are crucial for development and learning than others. (…) If children have favourable experiences, their development will be fostered.***

These periods in life are referred to as *critical or sensitive periods*. For instance, children begin to speak only when they are able to control the movements of the tongue, lips and vocal cords, i.e., they are biologically ready to do so. However, children also need to hear language and get opportunities to use it in order to be able to speak. If children do not get opportunities to communicate, then they will not be able to speak in spite of being biologically ready. This does not mean that these children will never be able to learn language skills, only that their ability is decreased (Mukunda, 92). It is certainly easier to learn a language at an early age, but it is also possible to learn languages later in life, although with more effort.

Due to caregivers neglect, shortage of food, lack of medical care, or injury during these critical periods, children without cognitive or physical problems at birth may not be able to reach certain developmental milestones expected. Though difficult, with extra attention, care and resources, children can attain these milestones later on.

The timeframe for each critical period of development can vary. Adults can greatly affect these times by being aware of children's needs and providing them accordingly with learning opportunities. When a learning environment is not properly planned for these vulnerable periods, an adult can be the cause of frustration and naughtiness in children. Children can then experience an internal struggle, torn between satisfying their own developmental needs and doing what an adult tells them to do (Montessori, 1996, p. 40).

School context

Educational material divided into two or three levels of difficulty helps to individualise tasks and content for individual students.

Why Is It Important to Distinguish Chronological Age from Developmental Age?

Chronological age defines the physical years since birth, while developmental age defines the age at which a child is actually functioning in terms of behaviours and

skills. To provide an example, a child who is chronologically four years of age, may have language skills of a three-year-old. These developmental age characteristics are helpful guidelines for schools to develop teaching plans and assessment guides. However, there are individual differences in the rate of development and a child may not reach a certain milestone or stage of development when expected, while others will reach that stage earlier than others. For instance, some children may recognise the names of colours at the age of three while others do this at the age of five.

School context

When you plan an activity in school, you can keep certain points in mind:

- Each child is a unique individual with genetic and environmental forces guiding her or his development.
- Each child possesses an individual temperament that characterises mood, adaptability, sensitivity and intensity of reactions. In addition, each child's temperament affects their persistence and attention span.
- Each child responds in a way that is characteristic of their individual disposition.
- Some children lag behind in some areas and are ahead in others. One should not expect uniformity in skills achievement from a group of students.
- Not all students benefit from a particular method of instruction or a uniform and rigid curriculum.

Points for Self-Reflection

- What stage of development can you anticipate in the children you are in contact with? Do you see these stages in them?
- How can you support children going through their critical periods?
- How can you take into account your students' individual differences to support them in their learning process? To provide an example, in their ability to express themselves, show initiative, use negotiation skills, work individually or in group, and so on.
- In your work with children, how can you take into account individual differences between them? How can you adjust your pedagogical style to stimulate all children?

Recognition of Children's Need

Children's Development and Their Needs

In the early stages of development, children are not able to meet their own needs and they require support from adults. With time, children learn to satisfy their own needs independently. It is a lengthy process that requires work on the part of children, parents and other caretakers and adults, including school staff.

> ***Through the observations of others, and especially role models, a child learns to fulfil their needs in a socially acceptable way, and in accordance with their culture.***

Through the observations of others, and especially role models, a child learns to fulfil their needs in a socially acceptable way, and in accordance with their culture. School plays an important role in this realm. Like a family, school is a place where children communicate and have their needs responded to. School staff needs to be sensitive to dynamic changes in a child's development and able to adapt the conditions, requirements and tasks to a child's current needs (Brzezińska, et al., 2008). Monitoring the needs of school-age children, and supporting their readiness to meet these needs on their own is dependent on setting certain short-, medium- and long-term goals:

- short-term: preparing children for reading, writing, establishing relationships or being self-reliant;
- medium-term: building children's competence to learn, organise their own learning, and take responsibility for their own development;
- long-term: preparing children to building and maintaining social bonds and dealing with the complexity and diversity of their surroundings.

> ***School staff needs to be sensitive to dynamic changes in a child's development and able to adapt the conditions, requirements and tasks to a child's current needs.***

Being aware of these goals can help adults identify children's needs; not only the current, immediate needs related to school situations, but also those whose fulfilment will enable the achievement of long-term goals (Brzezińska, et al., 2012).

School context

If school staff is sensitive to children's needs, creates opportunities for students to learn from each other, develops children's interests, and encourages initiative then they prepare them for future social situations. These social situations include making initial contact, socialising, applying negotiation tactics, creating action plans and dealing with stressful situations.

What Are Needs?

A need is a theoretical construct that can be described as a state of lacking something. In such a situation, the individual feels discomfort and tries to change this feeling. Needs can be categorised in terms of universal, common and individual needs:

- universal needs are felt by all people, regardless of their age, time and place of residence;
- common needs are typical of a larger or smaller group of people, e.g., the needs of people in a given development phase, with certain types of learning difficulties or students of the same classroom;
- individual needs are characteristic of a given individual.

A need can be described as a state of lacking something that leads to actions to eliminate this deficiency.

Like many other facets of human psychology, needs have also been systemised and many theories have been developed and structured around some common aspects of needs: physiological, emotional, social and cognitive. These commonalities emphasise that needs are also part of human development, and it is, therefore, important to satisfy them to function properly both physically and psychosocially.

Maslow, a leading psychologist in this field, presented the structure of needs in a hierarchical system – from the basic ones to more advanced. Satisfying basic needs allows individuals to focus on other higher-level needs, like safety, social and psychological needs (Maslow, 2017).

Not all theories are hierarchically structured. For instance, one more recent self-determination theory (SDT) identifies three basic psychological needs: autonomy (having some choice and freedom), competence (being good at what we do), and relatedness (having connections with other people) (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

These three basic needs are important throughout life and there is no prioritisation as to how important they are. SDT also assumes that there is no strict

hierarchical order between basic psychological needs and other basic needs (such as the need for security and material prosperity). Even in unsafe situations and cases of extreme poverty and hunger, people continue to need autonomy, competence and solidarity for proper functioning and well-being.

At each stage of human development, needs manifest themselves differently and there are numerous ways of satisfying them. All needs are interrelated and failure to satisfy one can affect the degree of satisfaction of another.

School context

Each child is different. They manifest their needs in different ways and have various ways to fulfil them. Therefore, while one child explores the world through play, others read books or browse websites. They are all striving to meet their cognitive needs.

What Are the Needs of School-Age Children?

The following are common needs identified in theories regarding school children:

- physiological needs – every human being regardless of their age can feel thirsty or lack sleep, therefore, they will strive to meet these needs first, and thus postpone others;
- emotional and social needs include such needs as bonding, security and acceptance, which are satisfied mainly though contact with other people;
- cognitive needs – children, just like adults, can satisfy these needs by learning new things and being exposed to stimuli from their environment;
- needs for own learning experiences that are related to initiative, autonomy and competence (Beger & Fidera, 2014).

Physiological Needs

In order to fully develop cognitive curiosity, explore the world, learn and perform school tasks, children's basic physiological needs must be met.

Children need an age-appropriate diet, regular meals and physical activity, especially outdoor activities. They also need the right amount of sleep and rest. This is important for their physical and mental functioning.

Sensory stimuli are also important. The appearance of the classroom in which children work, the arrangement of tables and chairs, and the intensity of sounds from inside and outside the classroom are very important to a child's sense of comfort.

In order to fully develop cognitive curiosity, explore the world, learn and perform school tasks, children's basic physiological needs must be met.

School context

One way schools can help children meet their physiological needs, is by organising meals for those who need it.

Schools can also create places where children can meet their need for movement as well as rest and relaxation. It is worth involving students in such projects both at the design and implementation stages.

Emotional and Social Needs

Children feel safe with the world around them if they feel acceptance and support from adults and if they have the possibility to talk and get answers to various questions.

Satisfying the need for safety enables children to explore their environment, establish new relationships and understand new situations they face. Like parents, teachers and other school staff are responsible for building students' sense of security as individuals and as a group. During joint activities, it is very important for the school staff to reinforce positive relationship patterns, be available when conflicts arise and help solve possible problems.

Satisfying the need for safety enables children to explore their environment, establish new relationships and understand new situations they face.

School context

To feel safe, children need clear and predictable rules for functioning in the classroom and at school as well as understandable rules of communication and cooperation. Rules like "Be nice to others" are too general. Children should be involved in the creation of these principles. We can ask students the following questions: How do you want to be treated by other children? How do you think your classmates want to be treated by you? By doing so, children learn to recognise the needs of others and create rules that can serve everyone's needs.

Children's social environment expands and transforms as they develop. This allows them to acquire new competencies and satisfy social needs in their contact with parents, teachers and peers. In primary school, parents are still an important

part of a child's life, but this bond loosens and its character changes with time (Filipczuk, 1980). Children encounter new authority figures and make friends. As children aspire for independence, disputes with parents can often arise.

At this stage, children shape their views and acquire knowledge and ideas from other people. Therefore, it is important for people influencing children not only to have practical and academic expertise, but also competence in building relationships, dealing with emotions, using arguments persuasively and implementing negotiating techniques effectively. Due to the very nature of their roles in schools, school staff have authority, and as such are aptly placed to influence children in a positive way. It is important for school staff to be positive role models and use their authority in a positive manner (Brzezińska, et al., 2008).

It is important for people influencing children to not only have practical and academic expertise, but also competence in building relationships, dealing with emotions, using arguments persuasively and using implementing techniques effectively.

Children also need to a sense of belonging. Working together within a school community builds social relations and bonds between students and can promote a sense of achievement in students. The quality of these relationships and the position within a group has a great impact on a child's future development.

School context

A group task is a way of fulfilling bonding needs with peers. Children also learn to function in a group, follow the rules, notice the needs of others, and take into account the views of others. Children should be able to cooperate not only with peers within their own class, but also with children of different ages.

Cognitive Needs

At every stage of development, human beings have a need to broaden their horizons, understand better their surroundings, experience newness, and increase self-awareness. Education plays an important role in meeting these needs. Everyone learns in a different way, that is why each person has specific individual educational needs. Children require teaching styles adapted to their *level of development*, *learning style* and *individual characteristics*. Their educational needs can vary and include the following:

- content selection;
- learning processes and how school staff organised them;
- learning methods and educational aids;
- support and motivation to learn (Appelt & Wojciechowska, 2014).

Children require teaching styles adapted to their level of development, learning style and individual characteristics.

Children can also explore the world outside their school. Therefore, they should know what sources provide knowledge and be able to discern their quality, as well as how they can protect themselves against unfiltered information overflow.

Playing is one of the ways children use to explore the world. It is a content-rich exploration, organised and often undertaken in a group. A playing child not only acquires new knowledge, but also develops thinking, social-emotional competencies, skills and abilities. The most common types of games include role-playing, movement and construction/building.

Promoting a child's creativity is another way of meeting cognitive needs. The diversity and changeability of the world allow children to encounter previously unknown experiences, whose effect is to encourage cognitive curiosity and prompt children to reanalyse their understanding of the world. Drawing, modelling, cutting, singing and dancing allow a child to observe, organise the world, and reflect on it.

School context

Children will be able to meet their cognitive needs if we create space for them to gain experience by facing various challenges.

To provide an example, if learning about birds, children can learn to recognise some species of birds and observe them through binoculars, they can also observe birds arriving at a feeder that they built. However, this requires planning. They need to think about what kind of a feeder they will build and what requirements it must meet. The feeder allows them to see whether it is used by birds, the types of birds that fly in and what they like to eat. These observations will allow children to understand the full scope of their knowledge and whether it is real and comprehensive. Their observations could be recorded in a special notebook they have designed themselves, which can be used as a reference later. This will allow them to check the usability of their notebook in practice.

They could also create a newspaper together in which they publish drawings and texts about birds. Maybe an exhibition? The reactions of other children and school staff can also be a learning experience. These challenges

will help children create standards for assessing their work and their own competence. They will also have the opportunity to find out whether the information and skills they have acquired are useful to them.

Need for Own Learning Experiences

The need for their own learning experiences comes from children's aspiration for independence and the desire to decide for themselves. Children try to achieve this goal by performing tasks and actions and to expand the field of their own interests. School tasks enable children to play different roles and test themselves in various situations. By undertaking activities children are focussed on success (understood as a successful performance of the action), resulting in the feeling of effectiveness. However, a difficult task will not be undertaken if children cannot count on the help of the people around them. The assessment and attention of school staff, parents and peers are critical to a child's confidence in approaching in initiating an activity.

The need for own learning experiences comes from children's aspiration for independence and the desire to decide for themselves.

The initiative shown by a child can sometimes lead to mistakes. Thanks to them, children learn that their actions have an impact on other people and their own mood. They also have a chance to see whether they fulfil their own needs. In this way, children foster beliefs about themselves as agents of their actions, and their sense of competence. A developed sense of independence and competence will be a valuable resource in adolescence, when a temporary breakdown in self-confidence may appear.

School context

At school, children can meet their needs for own experiences by participating in various school initiatives such as school clubs, theatre and music bands. You can provide children with space to work and play such as walls on which they can create a notice board, or simply draw and paint.

How Can School Staff Recognise the Needs of Children They Are in Contact with?

Methods of recognising children's needs may be more or less formalised (Kaleta-Witusiak, et al., 2013).

Observation is the most elementary way to learn about the needs of children. It allows us to obtain information about children under normal conditions. Observation of a child can be carried out in various school situations, during lessons and breaks. The observer should be able to impartially monitor, notice and record subtle differences and changes in a student's behaviour (Brzezińska, 2015).

Observations can be supported by an analysis of a child's work, both mandatory and elective. *Such an analysis* is an indirect method of getting to know a child and recognising their needs. This allows the school staff to find out about the educational progress and a child's strengths and weaknesses. The school staff can focus on the following when analysing drawings and academic work:

- manual skills, accuracy, special abilities;
- imagination, creative thinking skills;
- experiences, needs, and relationships with other people.

Information can also be obtained through *conversations*. A conversation may be informal or directed to specific topics. The better the relationship between those communicating, i.e., the lower the level of tension/defensiveness, the more openly various issues can be communicated (including needs). It is also important to analyse not only what is said, but also the child's behaviour (Hunziker, 2018). It is also worth talking to parents or guardians.

In learning about a child's needs, it could be helpful to *review information* which is available about the child, including pedagogical or psychological services assessment, if available. We should also compare our thoughts about a child with the opinions of other people involved in taking care of that child.

School context

Short (about 10-minute-long) but regular conversations with a child about her or his well-being, needs and plans develop self-reflection and strengthen the child's ability to self-direct. In order for conversations to fulfil their intention, a child must feel safe and know that they can speak freely without being judged (acceptance and positive regard).

Points for Self-Reflection

- In what ways can you learn about the needs of the children you work with? What methods do you use?
- What kind of activities do you think help children obtain the sense of security they need to explore their environment, establish relationships and understand new situations?
- What have you observed about the children you interact with regarding their physiological needs? Which children seem sleepy? Which are hungry? Which are restless? Do you see any patterns? Is there something you can do?
- How can you allow children to take the initiative during class or other times during the school day? How do you support their independence?
- How can you help children meet their cognitive needs?

Zone of Proximal Development

What Is the Zone of Proximal Development?

According to Vygotsky there is an optimal age for all learning, therefore, some skills cannot be acquired efficiently before or after this optimal period of time. He also believed that standardised tests are an inadequate measure of a child's readiness for further learning. These provide a good measure of a child's current level of knowledge but overlook their potential to successfully learn new material (Vygotsky, 1978).

Two students at the same developmental age might receive the same score in a test measuring their current knowledge on a subject but could achieve different scores in a test measuring their problem-solving abilities (both with or without the help of an adult). If one child can achieve more than the other, when provided with help, this indicates that he or she has an additional, untapped potential that could be developed. Therefore, what is the most important for a person guiding a child is not what the child knows, but the dynamics of her or his development. To explain this concept, Vigotsky used the analogy of the natural process or dynamics of fruit ripening. With the ripening functions within Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which concept will be described in more detail in a while, some learning functions capacity is in an embryonic state, they are "buds", others

are at the flowering stage, while others are fully developed and have given fruit. An educator can determine the stages at which particular functions are in a child, especially which functions are "buds" and need good conditions to grow (Vygotsky, 1978; Zamorska, 2012).

The Zone of Proximal Development is defined by Vygotsky as: "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Simply put, it is the zone or distance between what a child can do on her or his own and what she and he can do with help.

Simply put, the Zone of Proximal Development is the zone or distance between what a child can do on her or his own and what she or he can do with help.

Why Should Learning to Take Place in the Zone of Proximal Development?

Learning in the ZPD engages all levels of a child's mental processes: behaviour, thinking process and feelings (Wells, 1999). If learning takes place in the zone of proximal development, only a small amount of assistance will be required. If too much assistance is provided, a child may only be learning to imitate the adult's behaviour rather than mastering the knowledge or skills independently.

How to Determine the Zone of Proximal Development?

When determining the zone of proximal development, it is essential to have good knowledge of how children typically develop at different ages. It is also important to know the methods for determining proficiency in specific skills.

First, one needs to define *the zone of current development*. This refers to a child's current knowledge, skills and experience. To determine it, one needs to provide answers to the following questions:

- What types of tasks can a child handle?
- What can a child do alone? (Zamorska, 2012).

Learning in the zone of current development allows the expansion of children's cognitive and executive skills accumulated in their current cognitive schemas.

These schemas are, in Piaget's understanding, the basic building block of an intelligent behaviour – a way of organising knowledge (McLeod, 2023ba). In other words, it allows children to use their current way of thinking to develop the skills they use to carry out tasks. This way, children increase their knowledge about the world and improve their skills. Some children need more opportunities to practice their skills whereas others need less. You can give students a short quiz or have a discussion where students are asked questions about a given topic. This way you will find out what they already know.

School context

If a child has a delay in learning, e.g., math, tests of knowledge and skills for a given age/class will not determine her or his zone of current development. To determine the child's actual level of knowledge and skills, we can use the "backtracking method". The child successively solves tests for lower and lower classes until they receive a positive grade.

Then, we try to answer the following questions:

- In what type of tasks are current problem-solving abilities no longer enough to find a solution?
- What kind of tasks (which a child cannot do independently) can a child solve with the help of an adult or in collaboration with a more capable peer? (Zamorska, 2012).

Having students discuss their thinking processes is one way to find out the current skills of a child (and thus determine their Zone of Proximal Development). As students are working on a task, an educator can talk with them about the reasons why they make certain decisions, what they think they should do next, and what they are unsure about. The zone of proximal development can be viewed as a moving target – when the child gains new skills and abilities, the zone moves forward. Adults can help children with progressive learning processes by providing them with tasks that they cannot easily do on their own, and by giving them tips that will help them complete those tasks.

The zone of proximal development can be viewed as a moving target – when the child gains new skills and abilities, the zone moves forward.

If a task is too difficult for a child or if negative factors such as fear or anxiety come into play, the zone is diminished, and less learning progress can be achieved. Illnesses, previous struggles or fatigue may cause a temporary decline in a child's current abilities (Gruszczyk-Kolczyńska, 1994). That is why it is important to pay attention to how children feel on a given day/moment. Are their physiological needs met? Do they have a sense of security?

School context

Raising the level of a task can help in determining a child's zone of proximal development. For instance, an adult creates a task for a child, and the child solves it. Then the child creates a similar task for the adult. The adult tries to solve it. Then the adult formulates another, slightly more difficult one for the child, and the child tries to solve it again, and so it goes on.

This process of giving and solving tasks, allows an adult to know what a child can do on their own, what they need support with and what their limits are (Gruszczyk-Kolczyńska, 1994).

What Components Support the Learning Process in the Zone?

There are three important components that assist children in moving through the zones of proximal development:

1. The guidance of someone with more knowledge and skills than those of the child (a more knowledgeable person, also known as more knowledgeable other (MKO));
2. Social interaction with a skilful tutor who allows the child to observe and practice their skills;
3. Scaffolding provided by an educator or a more competent peer (McLeod, 2023d).

These three components will be explained in more detail in the sections below.

The More Knowledgeable Other

The MKO refers to someone who has a better understanding or ability than that of a certain child, with respect to a particular task (McLeod, 2023c). According to Vygotsky these more knowledgeable people introduce children to the necessary tools and skills of their culture such as language, writing or counting. The MKO is not necessarily an adult. In some cases, a person with more knowledge or

experience may be a child (sometimes older or younger). For instance, who knows more about the latest trends or smartphone applications – a peer or a parent? A student becomes more competent in a field with the help of a partner. By using problem-solving techniques in collaboration with a partner, she or he internalises them, uses them and rises to a new level of independent mastery. Group work are good opportunities to use students as the "more knowledgeable other" for their peers. This will benefit both sides. In addition to utilising cooperation skills, allowing peers to help each other will strengthen all students' sense of competence and move all students' zone of proximal development.

According to some opinions, the MKO does not have to be a real, living person. Technological advancement makes it possible to resort to electronic and virtual tutors. They can be used in educational settings for facilitation and guidance. The key consideration is that MKO must have more knowledge about the topic or skill being learned than the student does (McLeod, 2023c).

The more knowledgeable other (MKO) refers to someone who has a better understanding or ability than that of a certain child, with respect to a particular task.

Social Interactions with a Skilful Tutor

A child develops psychologically by being together and collaborating with more experienced peers and educators. Every more advanced mental process like deliberately paying attention, concept formation (understanding a concept) and logical memory (remembering the meaning) stems from relationships between individuals (Vygotsky, 1971, 1978). A tutor provides verbal instructions and models behaviour. A child then tries to understand the instructions or behaviour, absorbs the information, and uses it to guide or adjust their own actions.

It is through social interactions that zones of proximal development are created (Vygotsky, 1971, 1978; Ellis & Barkhuzien, 2005). That is why instruction should be provided mindfully. It should build upon a student's existing knowledge but also support and enable development at the same time.

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School context

To activate a child's development potential, adults must engage in working with the child. She or he can do it through the following actions:

- Looking for answers to the questions: How does the student understand this task? What does she or he want to do?
- Allowing the student to be self-reliant and learn independently by using various strategies, e.g., pointing out only to certain concepts or key words which would help students solve a task, or dividing tasks into smaller parts (Schaffer, 2003). It is important for an adult be sensitive to the student's initiative and help to carry it out, even if the student's idea is not in accordance with the adult's original plan.
- Providing support to the student by, e.g., helping her or him to control emotions or maintain attention on the task.

Scaffolding

Though not introduced by Vygotsky, the concept of scaffolding is closely related to the ZPD. Scaffolding was introduced by David Wood, Jerome S. Bruner and Gail Ross (1976), who defined scaffolding as a process that enables an individual to solve a task or achieve a goal which would not have been possible for them without assistance.

When using scaffolding, an adult supports children to organise and accomplish various activities. This help decreases in scope over time, so that children can take on more responsibility. This works like the scaffolding around a building, which is positioned only to the height of the wall being built and withdrawn when it becomes unnecessary. Scaffolding can be used in a number of areas, across a variety of ages and applied in a way adjusted to different children. Sometimes the context of learning can require more than one scaffolding strategy.

In scaffolding, an educator should refer to a student's previous knowledge, i.e., build some kind of an "intellectual bridge", which connects the skills and knowledge that the student already has with the skills and knowledge that she or he will strive for in the learning process. Not establishing connections between new and old knowledge excludes the possibility of activating existing knowledge of students. It is also not conducive to the involvement of students in the learning process because it clearly separates the previous experience of children from the newly acquired knowledge.

When using scaffolding, an adult supports children to organise and accomplish various activities.

School context

When using scaffolding, let the students work initially by themselves. When they begin struggling with a task, ask what they have done and what they think they should do next. Ask open questions whenever possible. These kinds of questions will encourage students to find a solution themselves. Then you can start offering specific advice on what to do next. However, keep asking questions. That will help the students increase their understanding of the task.

What Is the Point of Using Scaffolding in Schoolwork?

In scaffolding, the support is only provided until a child can achieve a certain skill without assistance. Initially, the person providing support assumes most of the responsibility for guiding the child but gradually this responsibility is transferred to the child. Thanks to this approach children learn to use the skills necessary for independent problem-solving in the future.

Scaffolding provides a supportive learning environment. It also provides an incentive for students to take a more active role in their own learning. If applied to a group, scaffolding allows students to ask questions freely, provide feedback and support their peers in learning new material. In this way, students share the responsibility of teaching and learning.

School context

One of the important reasons why a student cannot solve a task correctly is not the task itself, but the instructions. Often, the reason for the difficulty is the number of commands issued simultaneously.

The command "Read text and complete a mind map" suggests that there are two different, unrelated activities to perform. If it is one task, then the command should be more precise to avoid misunderstandings. It can be, "Read the text and then complete the mind map", which suggests that both activities are related. However, a more precise command will be, "Complete the mind map based on the text you read".

The younger the child, the more school staff must pay attention not to give too many instructions at once and using simple language.

Points for Self-Reflection

- How do you determine the ZPD of children whom you are in contact with? What tasks and activities do you use for this purpose?

- How do you provide each child with sufficient time and opportunity to internalise (assimilate) knowledge and improve their skills in the zone of current development?
- Since the zone of proximal development is different for everyone and varies based on the circumstances, how do you update your knowledge about children's capabilities? When or how often do you think this should be done?
- In what situations and tasks could you use scaffolding? What are the ways which help you find out (build a bridge) what children "know" to help them get to what they "don't know yet"?
- In what situations do you use group scaffolding? How can we stimulate students working in groups to be each other's MKO?
- What skills enables children to be good tutors?

Influence of Parents/Primary Caregivers on the Social and Emotional Development of Children

Why Is the Relationship Between an Infant and an Adult Important?

From the very first moment of a child's life, a relationship is formed between the child and an adult. This relationship is very complicated and multidimensional. One of these dimensions called attachment, has drawn significant attention, thanks to John Bowbly, a British physician and psychoanalyst and Mary Ainsworth an American-Canadian developmental psychologist, and their theory of attachment. This theory has become important for understanding the determinants and mechanisms of human development. It has also been an inspiration for many researchers who have improved it, modified it, and studied the attachment in later periods of life, e.g., in adult-adult relationships (Ainsworth, 1979; Sperling, & Berman, 1994). The most important tenet (central argument) of the attachment theory is that an infant needs to forge a bond with at least one of the parents to successfully develop socially and emotionally and to learn how to regulate feelings.

According to Bowlby a child initially forms only one attachment and the attachment figure acts as a secure base for exploring the world. This figure can be a mother but also anyone who plays the role of a primary caregiver (Ainsworth,

1979). The attachment relationship acts as a model for all future social relationships, and that is why disrupting it can have severe consequences (Bowlby, 1969). Understanding the quality of a child's relationship with adults in early childhood helps to better understand some of the later social, emotional and psychological problems of children.

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What Are the Main Concepts of Attachment Theory?

The main concepts of attachment theory include the related terms *attachment*, *attachment behaviour* and *attachment system* or *attachment behavioural system* (Marchwicki, 2006).

Attachment is a condition in which an individual feels a strong tendency to seek closeness to a particular person, called the figure of attachment, especially in stressful, difficult or threatening situations. Attachment is not dependent on whether the person to whom the child is attached is present or not. Nor is it dependent on whether the child is seeking help and protection at that moment. For instance, children are attached to their mothers even when they play calmly and do not need consolation, care or help from them. Besides primary caregivers, children also become attached to other people, creating a certain hierarchy of attachment. In this hierarchy, a parent occupies a central and irreplaceable place.

Attachment behaviours are all types of behaviours that children undertake in a situation of stress, difficulty or distress. They want to be close to a figure of attachment in order to find comfort and be provided with protection from that person. Children use different strategies to seek safety, comfort, proximity, and predictability, such as crying, calling out to their mothers, hugging, and sitting on their mothers' laps. These behaviours are triggered when children experience what they perceive as distress, danger or loneliness and stop when they feel the comfort or protection they sought.

Attachment behavioural system is what determines the relationship a person has with an attachment figure. It governs behavioural choices and actions related to attachment. An important concept in this system is known as internal working models, i.e., a mental model a child develops based on their early interactions with a caregiver. Once formed, the internal working models act as a guide for

a child's behaviour in all close relationships in the future. They affect a child's feelings about themselves and others, and they help to understand the kind of behaviour children can expect from their environment and how to behave towards others. As a result, there are marked differences in the working models of children whose closeness-seeking attempts in infancy were consistently accepted and those whose proximity-seeking was blocked or inconsistently accepted.

Internal working models are developed based on early interactions with a caregiver. These are mental frameworks that a child develops to help them understand what they can expect from their environment based on their own behaviour.

Children become attached to more than one person (initially and predominantly to a parent, and later to other people close to them). So, it is assumed that children develop separate internal working models for different attachment figures. It is also believed that these are unified into a single overarching model during adolescence (Marchwicki, 2006). These models emphasise the fact that attachment is a lifelong phenomenon and it is not merely confined to the earliest years of life (Marchwicki, 2004).

Three criteria can help identify attachment figures outside the child-parent relationship:

- provision of physical and emotional care;
- a consistent presence in one's life;
- an emotional investment in an individual (Kennedy & Kennedy 2004).

How Is a Child's Attachment to Parents Formed?

Attachment is well-established by the age of three. It is founded on the relationship with primary caregivers/parents and develops in four subsequent phases as described below (Bowlby, 1969):

During *the first phase, or pre-attachment phase* (from birth to about 8-12 weeks of age) babies and their caregivers react to and elicit response from each other in an instinctive manner. A baby can mirror a smiling adult and, in this way, ensures that parents stay close by.

During *the second phase*, a child begins to initiate social and caring interactions with parents. It is a period during which the foundations for various attachment strategies (strategies for establishing relationships with other people) are laid, which in turn affect later social and emotional functioning or behaviour.

During *the third phase* (which begins between six and nine months of age), a child strengthens the attachment to parents and actively maintains closeness to them. They use communication skills they have acquired so far and form new attachment behaviours. A child follows the parents around, shows clear joy when they return and treat them as "safe bases" for the exploration of their environment. In a situation of danger, anxiety or lack of comfort, a child turns to these figures and presents adherence behaviour (hugging, hiding behind a caregiver, holding her or his hand, etc.). This phase is a critical period for consolidating attachment to main caregivers.

During the fourth phase of attachment development, which begins around the third year of life, a child can see parents as separate people, guided by their own goals and motives. These motives become more and more understandable for a child. Both parents and child can change their behaviour by taking into account the goals and plans of the other (Czub, 2003).

Though attachment experiences in earlier phases are the most stable and, therefore, harder to change, they are by no means impossible to change. Interpersonal contacts later in life can affect early internal working models (Schaffer, 2003).

Interpersonal contacts later in life can affect early internal working models.

What Are the Basic Patterns of Attachment?

Different patterns of attachment can develop as a result of parental responsiveness, i.e., their availability (both physically and mentally), sensitivity to their child's signals and consistency in behaviour. This responsiveness determines the quality of communication between parents and their children (Bowlby, 1988).

Secure attachment occurs when a child can rely on the availability and adequate response of an attachment figure to their needs. Such confidence gives the child the opportunity to boldly explore their external environment, by freely relying on and seeking help and protection from their parent when needed. In this case, the attachment figure is stable and predictable in their reactions. This creates a "safe base" or safe context for the development of the child's self-regulatory and social abilities. When a parent does not adequately respond to the needs and signals of a child, an *insecure attachment* is formed and can result in ambivalent, avoidant or disorganised attachment.

Ambivalent attachment arises because of a parent's inconsistency in responding and meeting a child's needs. These parents can be available and helpful one

moment, and then ignore their child the next. As a result, children focus their energy and attention on their search for closeness and cannot decide whether they want to be close to their parent or not. This inconsistency can disturb a child's emotional development and cause maladaptive behaviour. Children with ambivalent attachments often give up exploring their environment, which can be disruptive to their motor and cognitive development.

Avoidant attachment is characterised by a lack of trust on the part of a child for the parent. This can occur if children try to seek closeness and consolation from their parent but are unable to receive them. These children learn to expect rejection and avoid seeking help. Therefore, they avoid close contact with their parent, they exhibit defensive behaviour and seem self-sufficient. However, this disrupts children's emotional development. They may avoid establishing relationships with peers and adults, and may exhibit intense aggressive behaviour to avoid allowing anyone close to them.

Disorganised attachment is most often a result of inconsistency in the behaviour of a parent, who treats their child in an unpredictable way, e.g., cares for them, yet shows inconsistent emotional support. It can also be the result of serious physical and emotional abuse occurring within a family. They learn that someone they love, is also someone they fear. Children with this type of attachment do not present any constant or coherent attachment pattern. Stereotypic movements (hand waving, body rocking, etc.), stiffness and sometimes behaviour indicating fear of their parents can appear in their interactions with their parents. These children are characterised by having difficulties in adopting a coherent strategy for solving problems, unpredictability of behaviour and frequent mood changes (Czub, 2003).

Children's relationship and attachment to parents and school staff can influence the way they adjust and perform in school. Children bring their difficulties, frustrations, and uncertainties from home into school. A child's mental model of parental sensitivity, availability and responsiveness informs expectations of relationships with peers and adults outside the family, including school staff.

A child's mental model of parental sensitivity, availability and responsiveness informs expectations of relationships with peers and adults outside the family, including school staff.

Children may use their teacher as a "secure base" for exploring and learning (Krstić, 2015). Research shows that interactions with teachers differ between securely and insecurely attached children. Insecurely attached children need more emotional support, are more dependent and need more attention, good or bad,

than their securely attached peers. Secure children accept the necessary support from their teachers and seek help only when they need it (Ubha & Cahill, 2014).

Insecurely attached children need more emotional support, are more dependent and need more attention, good or bad, than their securely attached peers.

School context

School staff may not know all the reasons for children's positive or negative behaviour but can help children feel safe in their school environment. By collecting information from conversations with children and their parents, they can help in the following:

- meeting the child's physiological needs (e.g., physical activity, special needs like allergies, adapting class environment and learning);
- providing the child with an adequate protection against danger (e.g., a constant adult presence in problematic school settings like cafeteria, break or transition, contact with social services);
- satisfying their emotional needs (e.g., acceptance, conversations, helping children make contact with others);
- supporting the child's cognitive potential and development (e.g., providing child with challenging tasks, tutoring);
- enabling a child to regulate their emotions and control behaviour by giving directions and setting borders (e.g., playing games that focus on self-regulation skills, conversations, support).

What Other Factors Influence the Child's Attachment Model?

In addition to the quality of parental care, research also highlights other factors responsible for individual differences in attachment. These factors may affect the child's attachment model indirectly, by influencing the quality of the child-caregiver interaction. However, they do not have a determining impact.

One of these factors is a child's temperament. Children who are more emotionally reactive and more susceptible to stress can be a challenge to a parent's sensitivity and accessibility. This can lead to a decrease in the quality of childcare and a disturbance in the development of attachment bonds. However, it cannot be ruled out that a sufficiently sensitive and accessible parent can effectively face the challenge of caring for a quick-tempered child and provide them with quality care that will develop a secure attachment style (Marchwicki, 2004).

The quality of attachment can also be affected by more distant factors, such as the mental health of a mother and father, the quality of the relationship between parents, or the degree of support for a parent by persons other than their partner (e.g., friends, family members or various institutions) (Marchwicki, 2004).

School context

If you usually think a child "behaves badly" when observing a student's aggressive behaviour – stop and try to change your way of thinking. Paraphrase your thoughts in the following way: "she or he has a problem with something, can't express it correctly and needs my attention".

Do not tell a child to stop, calm down, or that she or he is rude, in response to her or his unacceptable behaviour. Instead, come close to the child, look at him or lean down, and say "I see you screaming, what's going on?". Listen to the child. However, if the problem is complicated, promise that you will talk to them after class and keep your word.

How Does an Attachment Influence a Child's Emotional Development?

In attachment theory, Bowlby points out that during the process of forming, maintaining, and renewing attachment relationships, many intense emotions arise that reflect the state of an individual's emotional bond.

Research suggests that the quality of infant care heavily influences an individual's emotional self-regulation (the ability to manage and control emotional behaviour and impulses) later in life (Sroufe, 1995; Sroufe, et al., 2000). Established attachment patterns help to form expectations regarding the role other people can play when an individual has emotional needs. They also influence an individual's attitude towards the role emotions play in dealing with various challenges, solving tasks or in relation to others and, therefore, affect the expression of emotions and ability to control them.

Research suggests that the quality of infant care, heavily influences an individual's emotional self-regulation (ability to manage and control emotional behaviour and impulses) later in life.

The ability to self-regulate emotions develops in several phases. Each of the phases is important for a child's further development. A child acts on the basis of increasing cognitive capabilities and previous experiences. If past experiences allow a child to develop trust in their relationship with a caregiver, the child will

attain emotional balance, and will be able to tolerate more insecurity associated with exploration and separation (Czub, 2004).

School context

A child should have freedom in managing their own behaviour. However, school staff can pay attention to situations in which a child begins to lose control of impulses and help them express, control or adjust emotions as needed. In this manner, children will acquire the ability to regulate emotions on their own and in accordance with their social norms.

How Teachers Can Influence the Child's Attachment Style?

The attachment theory not only explains the importance of early relationships but also provides an understanding on the role of non-familial relationships in providing a child with support and a sense of security (Nowotnik, 2014). When a child starts formal education, teachers and other school staff become important persons in their life. An educator can equip students not only with ordinary school skills, but also further shape and strengthen a child's self-control and self-regulation skills. Due to day to day contact, school staff can also become attachment figures if they are available and willing to help and protect a child when they need it. Any person, in a relationship with a child, who shows a consistent presence in that child's life, provides physical care and emotional support can become a figure of attachment in this child's life. Like parent-child relationships, teacher-child relationships appear to serve a regulatory function in regard to children's social and emotional development (Krstić, 2015).

Like parent-child relationships, teacher-child relationships appear to serve a regulatory function in regard to children's social and emotional development.

The quality of a relationship between a student and their teacher or other school staff is influenced not only by the child's attachment experience, but also by the adult's attachment experience. Internal working models are also an active factor influencing school staff's behaviour in their interaction with children. It is reflected in their specific behaviour patterns towards students, in the style of communicating with them as well as in their feelings and expectations towards them. This might make it difficult for them to be a "safe base" for students.

School staff's own internal working models influence their interactions with children.

The attachment behavioural systems of a teacher or other school staff and a student are interlaced. Depending on their own attachment pattern, school staff may prefer students with a certain pattern. A teacher or other school staff with an ambivalent attachment pattern may prefer students with a safe or ambivalent attachment (due to the relative ease of their contact) and devote less attention to students with an avoidant attachment. In turn, a teacher or other school staff with an avoidant attachment pattern may not want to engage in a student's personal life and may show an attitude of indifference, severity, or rejection. In contrast, a teacher or other school staff with a safe attachment pattern seems to have a predisposition to recognise students' needs and their potential. This predisposition enables them to correctly prepare challenges for children and create necessary scaffolding for the development of their skills (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004).

School context

Knowledge of one's own attachment patterns allows school staff to better understand their relationships with students and try to improve them. No one can change the experiences of an early childhood but people can change their internal work models through self-reflection, i.e., thought about one's character, actions, and motives.

Points for Self-Reflection

- In your experience, what are examples of emotional signals students send? What can help you understand the signals correctly? How can one respond to them appropriately? What kind of techniques can you use in daily practice to help children express and control their own emotions?
- In your experience as an educator, what characterises children who experience relationships as reliable and safe? What characterises children who feel insecure in their relationships with others? What challenges do you meet in both types of encounters (could be due to you or the child or both)?
- School staff may not know all the reasons for children's positive or negative behaviour but can help children feel safe in their school environment. How can school staff work with children to make them feel secure? What kind of support can a school environment provide that will strengthen children's sense of security while at school?
- Reflect for yourself. How early childhood experiences might influence

your relationships with children in school? Reflect more generally on how people's different attachment patterns might influence their relationships with children. How can an adult avoid reinforcing negative behaviour patterns in their interactions with children?

Enabling Children's Potential

What Is Potential?

The concept of potential combines various phenomena that are important for human life and development. We often refer to this concept in thinking and empirical research but we understand it very intuitively (Brzezińska, 2005; Smykowski, 2012). In psychology, the meaning of potential is limited to a mere hypothesis about what a person may become in the future rather than the knowledge about them. In other words, if we say that someone has potential, what we mean is that that they have the necessary skills or features for being successful or doing a particular thing, but we do not know whether this will happen. Potential may be revealed when the need and the appropriate circumstances arise (Grantham-McGregor, et al. 2007).

If we say that someone has potential, what we mean is that that they have the necessary skills or features for being successful.

In today's rapidly changing environment (Smykowski, 2016), it is difficult to identify which skills or features that will make a child succeed in the future, i.e., in 10 or 20 years. People must get more and more prepared for unpredictable, new situations in their lives which has implications for potential-enabling processes (upbringing and teaching). These processes have lost their benchmark which, until recently, have been based on an average expected future life and environment for an adult (Hartmann, 1958).

It seems beneficial to invest in updating potentials (physical, cognitive, social or emotional) which have proven useful to previous generations, and continue to be of use to the present generations and, therefore, can be useful in the future (Erikson, 1997).

How Is the Child's Potential Built?

Building a child's potential begins at birth and develops into a lifelong process. Children starting school are in the fourth of the eight stages of Erikson's psychosocial

development. According to Erikson, at each of the stages, specific life tasks or crises must be resolved. The successful resolution of a crisis prepares the individual for the next stage of social and emotional development. As one enters a new stage of life, maturation, learning and experiences of the previous phase(s) are incorporated into the next ones.

In a favourable social environment, children who go through the subsequent stages of development gain many strengths:

- trust in the world, oneself and other people and, therefore, the feeling of self-efficacy and confidence that other people will support them in achieving their goals; thanks to this, they feel confident in new and difficult situations (basic trust, sense of security);
- self-esteem, awareness of own needs, self-confidence and thus the ability to make choices, be self-reliant and have self-control (autonomy and free will);
- readiness to take action, and the initiative to have own interests.

Starting school, children enter the next stage of development, which should foster their belief in the effectiveness of own actions, resulting from the sense of success and recognition in the eyes of the others (competence). Not all children go through all developmental stages successfully. But crises in earlier stages can be, to a certain extent, successfully resolved later.

School context

School staff can build children's potential each day in different situations:

- They can encourage a child to complete her or his task, reinforce the child's belief that she or he will succeed in handling the task, and occasionally, in the case of complex tasks, tell the child what the next steps should be;
- They can praise a child for their effort, emphasise the sense of completed activities, show other people the effects of the child's effort, and tell the child how proud she or he has made the teacher by being able to do so much.

Due to such strategies, the child will be happy with completed tasks and will not avoid a challenge. This boosts and increases their **sense of confidence**.

What Are the Influencing Factors Which Enable a Child's Potential?

These are primarily the *child's personal resources*, i.e., their knowledge and skills, interests and abilities. The capitalisation on these resources – both the existing ones

and those just emerging – will depend on the following: (a) the resources of the *physical environment* where the child and their family live as well as the physical environment of their class and school; and (b) the *social resources* of the child, their family, class and school. However, the most important factor is (c) the *significant person* (or persons) who plays the role of mediator in the relationship between "child – social environment – physical environment". The extent to which a child's individual resources (potential) develop will depend on the available physical and social resources as well as the quality of the child's interaction with mediating persons (Brzezińska, 2015).

The extent to which a child's potential develops will depend on the available physical and social resources as well as the quality of the child's interaction with mediating persons.

These factors are explained in more detail below.

Child's Personal Resources

Identifying a child's personal resources consists in collecting information about how a child changes physically, and what cognitive, emotional, linguistic and communication changes occur in their social environment as well as within the realms of their talents, interests, special skills, and activities.

Every child has a potential and a chance to achieve satisfactory results at school (and beyond). Many children's abilities are not directly related to school knowledge and skills, so they can easily be overlooked. However, these abilities can be a factor stimulating the development of a child. They may also prove useful in their future (Hüther & Hauser, 2014).

To identify the resources of a child, it is necessary to regularly monitor the changes in all the spheres of their development. This will provide an insight into their capabilities and help determine what the child can already do and what still appears distant and too complicated for them.

School staff observe each child only for a few hours a day and in strictly defined circumstances. In order to collect as much information as possible regarding individual students, school staff should draw on other resources such as parents or guardians, other teachers, and the children themselves.

Howard Gardner's Theory of Intelligence and How It Changed the Way We Perceive It

Howard Gardner, a professor of cognition and education at Harvard University, proposed a new view of intelligence (1983). He defines intelligence as a "bio-psychological potential to process information to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture" (Gardner, 1999). By perceiving intelligence as a potential, Gardner indicates its *emergent and responsive nature*, thereby differentiating his theory from traditional ones in which human intelligence is fixed and innate. Whether a potential will be activated, depends largely on the culture in which a child grows up and the opportunities available in that culture. The role of personal decisions made by children, their families, and others is also important. Gardner's definition of intelligence is also unique in that it considers the creation of products such as sculptures and computers to be as important an expression of intelligence as abstract problem-solving.

In his Theory of Multiple Intelligences, Gardner expands the concept of intelligence to include different areas such as music, spatial relations, and interpersonal knowledge in addition to the traditional areas of mathematical and linguistic abilities. Initially, Gardner identified eight types of intelligence but this list keeps expanding. The multiple intelligences are used concurrently and typically complement each other as individuals develop their skills or solve problems.

School context

Children will succeed in dance if or when they develop certain intelligences such as: musical intelligence to understand the rhythm and musical variations; interpersonal intelligence to understand how they can inspire or emotionally move their audiences through movements; bodily kinaesthetic intelligence to provide them with agility and coordination to complete movements effectively.

Each child has their own unique set of intellectual strengths and weaknesses. This determines how easy (or difficult) it is for a student to learn information when it is presented in a particular manner. According to Gardner, any topic (concept or issue) can be presented in several independent ways tailored to the child's individual cognitive preferences in terms of perception, experience, understanding and creation. He describes them as follows:

- narrational way – presenting an issue by means of a narrative, telling a story about a given concept;

- logical-quantitative method – supplying data and using deductive reasoning; examining numbers; scrutinising a narrative plot in terms of its logic and structure, and its cause-and-effect relationships;
- foundational way – a philosophical, terminological and etymological analysis of the basic issues of the discussed field; the big questions about life, death, and our place in the world;
- aesthetic way – using sensory aids/exploring sensory impressions and imagery; emphasising sensory features or surface (i.e., the colour, line, composition of a painting), activate aesthetic sensitivities;
- experiential way – enabling the child to actively come into contact with materials, act, develop and engage in projects and experiments (Czaja-Chudyba, 2005).

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These five ways of approaching a problem or, as Gardner calls them, entry points, can be treated as guidelines for teachers and school staff. They enable children's potential.

School context

For example, when learning about ancient Egypt, children can carry out different tasks:

- They can read about the life in ancient Egypt, write a story about how their lives would be like if they were able to travel back in time to ancient Egypt and live there for one day (narrational way);
- They can examine questions: How many pyramids are there in Egypt? Which cities are they in? How many pyramids are there in each city? What is the shape of the pyramid? How and why were they built? Then they could make a brochure to present this information using graphs or pictures (logical/quantitative way);
- They can pick one of the Egyptian gods and find out what she or he looked like, explore why this god was important and how she or he supposedly helped people. Then they can draw or write a script for an advertisement that might be used to advertise this god (foundational way);
- They can look at some paintings from an Egyptian tomb, explore the differences between how they painted people and how we paint them

today, draw a person they think is beautiful and then draw a person ancient Egyptians might have found beautiful. They could then explore how ideas of beauty are the same or different from ancient Egypt (aesthetic way);

- They can look at photos of ancient "artifacts" in Google search (a water clock, eye shadow paint, hieroglyphic writing, the game of Mehen ("snake game"), etc.) and then make a list of everything they can tell about the person who used these artifacts. They can then choose some artifacts that represent their life and explain why they say something about themselves (experiential way).

Based on *Ancient Egypt* by Erin Miller (n.d.).

It is worth remembering that Gardner (1995) notes that intelligence is not identical with learning style. If a person is said to have their own learning style, it means that they have a preference for how they like to approach learning, whereas multiple intelligences focus on their abilities.

What Influence Does "Growth Mindset" Have on Enabling a Child's Potential?

There are two ways in which children understand their abilities and intelligence and create paths for learning. Some children believe that they have a certain amount of ability and they cannot do much to change it (fixed mindset). Other children believe they can develop their abilities through hard work, good strategies, and instruction from others (growth mindset). Research shows that these two mindsets direct students to different goals (learning vs. confirming their ability), different views of effort (productive vs. weakening), and different responses to failure (mastery-oriented vs. helplessness) (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2017). These mindsets are reflected in development of students' potential. A growth mindset predicts better achievement, particularly for students facing challenges.

A growth mindset increases the chance of achievement, particularly for students facing challenges.

Ways in Which Adults Foster Growth Mindsets in Children

Adults' Way of Praising Children. Children who are praised not for their intelligence but for the process that has led them to success ("You must have worked

hard on these problems") see their intelligence as something they could develop and, therefore, stay focused on learning. But research shows that what matters, is the connection between the process (e.g., effort or strategies) and the outcome. Praising an ineffective effort may imply that we accept the child's inability to learn and award her or him with a consolation prize instead of praising the actual effort (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2017).

Adults' Responses to Children's Failure. Adults who believe that children's failure is something motivating or demotivating and respond by endorsing either belief are, in fact, reinforcing children's own mindsets. Adults who see each failure as a motivation for further work, focus on the process of learning and invite children to draw from the experience or process and to rectify their errors. This is how an adult can influence children's growth mindset.

Adults' Beliefs about the Role of a Struggle and Failure in a Learning Process. By recognising a struggle as a normal and positive element of the learning process, adults help children understand how their own intelligence and abilities can grow.

School context

There is a difference between informing students that they have not achieved a goal and that they have not achieved it yet. Using the word "yet" in critical feedback signals the teacher's endorsement of a growth mindset. Students will feel greater encouragement and motivation.

Focusing on Children's Learning Process. It is important to ask children to explain their thinking process regardless of whether they have arrived at the "right" answer or not. With feedback, adults can deepen a child's understanding of a topic. By evaluating and praising the process of learning and giving feedback, we create a culture of growth for children.

By evaluating and praising the process of learning and giving feedback, we create a culture of growth for children.

Resources of the Physical Environment

The physical environment during child development also affects a child's potential. The physical environment comprises their home and places in public spaces where the child spends time alone or with other people. It also includes their school and classroom. It is important that this environment should be diverse, accessible, safe

and *enable various types of activities*. It is worth paying attention to whether the child's physical environment is organised so that it can be a place for playing, exploration, learning new skills and mastering those already acquired, but also creating opportunities to fulfil various tasks for other people.

The physical environment should not only offer a plethora of activities (connected with learning, rest and recreation, fun, responsibilities, individual and group activities) but also give children *various opportunities to join in organising them*. Being actively involved in the transformation and arrangement of space, develops a child's sense of agency, they learn about responsibility and prediction the consequences of their actions.

Resources of the Social Environment

A child's social environment includes her or his contacts with adults – parents, teachers, school staff, grandparents and other relatives, as well as other children (siblings, peers and friends). The social environment during child's development provides an opportunity for the child to make new contacts and take on various social roles. Each new role means new types of activities, possibilities and competencies.

A child's role in a family depends on how she or he communicates with other family members, behaves during family quarrels, fulfils her or his household duties and responds to comments from parents. In school, a child's role is primarily about compliance with student responsibilities and behaviour in accordance with the school code. In the role of a peer or a classmate, what is the most characteristic of this age is the growing desire to belong to a group and adhere to the rules developed together with others.

The social environment at home, school and outside should create opportunities and support children in shaping skills to manage their own time and physical space and create diverse learning strategies. It should introduce children to new challenges regarding these skills.

Role of Significant Persons

In order to enable a child's potential, there is a need for a person to act as a mediating agent between the child and the world around them. First, when a child undertakes new tasks, the mediator must, as often as possible, refer to the child's previous experiences and use them in building new resources in all spheres of their development. The younger the child, the more active the adult must be in this area.

Second, the mediator should suggest several courses of action. Third, the mediator should prepare the child to undertake future tasks or meet new environmental challenges and ensure that it is in balance with their current needs and abilities, especially emotional and cognitive abilities. As mediators, school staff should also take into account the aspirations and plans of the child's parents.

In order to enable a child's potential, there is a need for a person to act as a mediating agent between the child and the world around them.

Through the help of a mediator, children can become aware of the degree to which they have developed the following:

- a sense of security and autonomy in harmony with each other;
- readiness to take actions, especially in new and unusual situations;
- the ability to make use of the acquired knowledge and skills with ease;
- the ability to act and cope with failures effectively (Brzezińska & Rękosiewicz, 2015)

The awareness of one's own resources, i.e., one's own strengths and limitations at further stages of the development process allows a child to adapt to both an environment that remains relatively stable and one that is subject to frequent, sometimes unpredictable, changes (Brzezińska, 2015).

What can parents' do to enable a child's potential? Family and school are the two most important environments that influence children's development. That is why it is important for parents and school staff to be allies and partners. Partnership is formed where mutual trust, respect, clear communication and common motivation underpin cooperation.

Family and school are the two most important environments that influence children's development. That is why it is important for parents and school staff to be allies and partners.

School staff sometimes judge a parent's commitment based on how often and in which way they contact the school. Most parents care for their children's development and future, but they do not always express it perfectly. As individuals, parents gradually learn their role as parents, which means that a child does not always have optimal conditions for growth. This situation continues throughout a child's development as parents learn to fulfil their role in new ways at each new stage (Smykowski, n.d.). That is why parents are often not sure whether they properly

perform their role. School staff can help parents better understand how to enable the potential of children by using, e.g., the experiences of Margy Whalley (2007) and the team at the Pen Green Center.

Margy Whalley and her team suggested several effective pedagogical strategies based on the observations of interactions between parents and children:

1. An adult should watch and listen to what children are doing before intervening.
2. An adult should know about children's family experiences and be able to link what they have done previously to what they are doing now.
3. An adult should show children they are interested by their facial expression, by being physically close to them, by mirroring children's facial expressions and verbal intonation, and, therefore, by empathising with children's expression and emotions.
4. An adult should encourage a child to make choices and decisions and to take appropriate risks.
5. An adult should encourage a child to go beyond the their own (the adult's) knowledge base and be open to learning new things alongside the child.
6. An adult should be aware of the impact of her or his own attitudes and beliefs and how these might affect the child's learning.
7. An adult should learn and play alongside the child and be committed to her or his own learning and encourage the child's curiosity.
8. An adult should check the child's understanding and give her or him time to respond or to ask questions.
9. An adult should offer language to support the child's actions and provide new information to the child.
10. An adult should acknowledge both the child's feelings and her or his competence and capability.

School context

In practice, it is not always easy to know when an intervention is helpful or when it controls or disempowers a child. But a child who is always offered assistance cannot develop a sense of competence in their tasks.

There are great benefits to the cooperation between parents and school staff:

- Parents increase their knowledge and understanding of their children.
- School staff increase their knowledge and understanding of children's learning opportunities at home and, therefore, are able to provide continuity and new experiences for the child within the school.
- Children experience richer learning opportunities from significant adults in their lives.
- Children gain a sense of continuity and being cared for, in a trusting and secure environment in which they can learn and grow (Whalley, 2007).

Points for Self-Reflection

- What competencies should we pay special attention to in order to enable children to succeed in the future?
- How do you monitor the resources of children you have contact with? What types of methods do you use?
- What are the actions you undertake in working with children to enable their potential?
- What other activities can you use for this purpose?
- What strategies do you use to develop children's growth mindset?
- How can you help parents enable the potential of their children?

Children's Emotional Competence

What Are Emotions and What Role Do They Play?

It is difficult to define what emotions are, although many attempts have been made by both psychologists and philosophers over the years. As of 1981, as many as 92 different definitions of the term "emotion" could be found in psychological literature (Michalczyk, 2017). There is a lack of agreement among researchers and theorists dealing with this issue about what definition is appropriate. Many also wonder whether the term "emotion" is needed and useful at all. "Ordinary" people, who do not deal with this issue scientifically, also make attempts at defining emotions.

Currently, emotions are thought of as mental states (e.g., fear, love) resulting from an individual's reaction to a given situation. These are internal processes that take place in each individual (Michalczyk, 2017). The external manifestations of these processes are verbal behaviours, facial expressions, gestures as well as body reactions such as facial flushing, increased heartbeat, changes in breathing and sweating.

Basic emotions include surprise, sadness, joy, fear, anger and disgust. These six emotions can be identified even in newborns. They are automatic biological responses and each of them is expressed in a unique way. To provide an example, anger has evolved as a response enabling us to among other things overcome an obstacle or achieve a certain goal. Anger is outwardly expressed in different ways including facial expressions such as lowered brows, pressed lips, and facial flushing (Schaffer, 2003).

However, there are also complex, multifaceted emotions, resulting from a wide spectrum of thinking processes. These include jealousy, shame, guilt, pride, love and hatred. Although many complex emotions have been identified, there is no consensus regarding their exact number (Wirth & Schramm, 2005).

Emotions inform us of a person's subjective experience or understanding of their interactions with people, objects, or events. Therefore, emotions should not be thought of as either good or bad, even though they can be inappropriately expressed due to their intensity and frequency of delivery, duration and inadequate reaction to circumstances.

What Is Emotional Competence?

Emotional competence is an individual's specific skill to cope both with their own emotions and those of other people in various situations. The concept by which individual differences in emotional competence are explained is emotional intelligence popularised by Daniel Goleman (1999). According to him, emotional intelligence can generally be defined as an ability, or their set, to process emotional information, and thus to read emotional meanings and include them in reasoning and problem-solving. These abilities are the basis for the development of emotional competence.

However, there is no unity regarding the terminology, as some authors describing emotional intelligence components often replace the term *abilities* with *skills*. Others use the names of "emotional capacity" and "emotional skills" as well as "emotional intelligence" and "emotional competence" interchangeably or define one term by means of other terms.

An ability to notice one's emotions and appreciate their significance is mentioned most frequently, as thanks to it, emotions are present in our minds and not ignored. Naming them is important in recognising and being aware of feelings. The richer the range of words used to express emotions, the more one is aware of them. Conversely, the more one can differentiate emotions, the easier she or he can understand the subtle differences between them. Poorly developed awareness of one's emotions can lead to difficulties in dealing with other people and adapting to social requirements.

Adults can help children organise their emotional experiences by teaching children to define emotions verbally. This skill is also important from the point of view of regulating emotions. Verbal statements such as "I'm sad" and "I'm jealous" allow you to assess what is happening in your psyche, what is causing these feelings and how to handle them.

School context

Talk to children and encourage them to speak not only about the events or situations they took part in, but also about the emotions that are associated with their experience. You can ask questions like: "How did you feel? You seem nervous, am I correct?". School staff and other adults should also often talk about their own emotions with children. By failing to do so, children might start to believe that emotions are not to be talked about.

Ability to Perceive Other People's Emotions

Accurate perception of other people's emotions is the basis for an adequate response to their behaviour, and a condition for good social relations. Recognising someone else's emotions is based on both verbal and non-verbal messages being transmitted, e.g., gestures, body posture, facial expressions and tone of voice. The recognition of emotions in others is combined with the ability to understand their emotional states and look at a situation from their perspective, i.e., empathy.

School context

Emotional messages contained in words (e.g., "express your gratitude when a friend gives you a gift", "you don't have to be afraid of this dog"): teach children which events should evoke emotions and what types of emotions should be felt, in accordance with the existing cultural norms.

Ability to Express Emotions

This ability allows a person to adequately express their sensations, feelings and emotional needs. Thanks to this, other people can understand them, read their motives or intentions correctly and react accordingly.

There is a relationship between the ability to express emotions, especially verbally, and their perception. Sometimes people hide emotions that they do not accept from others and consciously block the possibility of expressing them. However, these emotions can manifest themselves involuntarily in unexpected situations.

The ability to understand emotions involves certain factors:

- an awareness of different emotions which are expressed physically such as facial expressions, gestures, posture, tone of voice or other more complex behaviours;
- an awareness of factors that can make specific emotions arise, intensify, weaken, combine to form more complex emotions, or undergo changes (e.g., when anger changes into guilt);
- knowledge about the impact emotions have on actions and problem-solving. This knowledge allows us to understand which emotional states are more conducive to the performance of one type of task or another. This impact depends on whether emotions are positive or negative and intensity, which they can both facilitate, hinder or even disorganise action;
- knowledge of social expectations regarding the disclosure of emotions – when and how it can or should be done, and when not. It is not only about knowledge of general rules or principles in force in a given culture or social group, but most of all, about the ability to identify requirements in specific situations;
- knowledge of ways and techniques to control and regulate emotions – to induce, intensify or weaken them in oneself and others.

School context

When talking to children about their individual experiences, it is worth organising the events in the order they appeared (what happened earlier and what happened later). This will help children improve their skills in recognising cause-and-effect relationships. This skill is needed to understand their own emotions and those felt by others.

Ability to Use Emotions in Thinking and Acting

In thinking and acting, it is important to be guided by the information provided by emotions: being aware of what emotions "suggest" and adjusting to the current emotional state. Small children have rudimentary abilities in this respect. In the process of development and upbringing they begin to learn they cannot always do what they want and that they often have to act against their will.

However, children should not lose the ability to listen to and follow their own emotions. It is important that they learn to do it in a more conscious and controlled manner. By including emotions in the thinking processes, it is possible, e.g., to change perspectives, and allow for a more complete picture of a situation and thus be able to overcome ingrained attitudes.

School context

It is not only important to adapt the learning process of each child to their abilities but also to make this process pleasant. What a child learns should be "wrapped" in pleasant emotions. By doing this, they will perceive learning as something positive and will make them more willing to cooperate in the learning process.

Ability to Regulate Emotions

The ability to regulate emotions allows a person to intentionally influence their own emotional states and feelings so that they are conducive to tasks performed, goals pursued and personal development. This includes the ability to mobilise oneself to work on or improve one's mood, i.e., to strengthen positive emotions, soothe, calm down or temporarily control negative emotions.

Regulatory skills also apply to controlling emotional expression in communication and social life. Understanding emotions provides the necessary knowledge to regulate them. Using this knowledge in practice allows for their verification, correction, and further enrichment.

School context

Children should have freedom to self-manage their behaviour. Adults should react when they notice increased agitation in children, since this signals an impending loss of self-control. This way, children can learn to regulate their own emotions and express them adequately, while respecting social norms.

Ability to Influence Other People's Emotional State

This ability uses knowledge about emotions in social interactions. This includes, e.g., the skill to motivate others and put them in a good mood, to arouse their interest and enthusiasm, to give emotional support and comfort, etc. (Matczak & Knopp, 2013).

All the abilities presented above can be found, although under slightly different names, in literature regarding emotional competence (Saarni 1999; Matczak & Knopp, 2013; Marzuki, 2017).

School context

Encourage children to read books or read with them. Choose books in which you can find characters who express their feelings. Children will be able to see the emotions the characters experience; the factors leading to them as well as ways in which the characters deal with those feelings, and how they motivate the characters' actions. Discuss it together.

How Does One Develop Emotional Competence?

The development of emotional competence is influenced by both the environment, which is a source of experiences, beliefs and values, as well as individual features determining the intensity of these experiences and the way they are used. Experiences provide children with situations where they learn to use their emotional skills. No one can learn to drive a car just by reading a textbook or listening to a teacher's instructions. Since experiences requiring contact with people and task completion tend to give rise to strong such emotions as frustration or sense of accomplishment, they are particularly important for children to practice.

Temperament traits influence preferences regarding the types of situations a person engages in and actions they undertake. Social and task-related situations are strongly stimulating, which means that people with different temperaments may also differ in their willingness to participate in them. Cognitive reflection allows individuals to create solutions to problems, assess the effectiveness of these solutions as well as use and practice them in new situations. Only tested and established patterns can be described as competence.

School context

Playing helps children develop the ability to regulate their own emotional sensations as well as control emotions connected to an activity. It is worth encouraging children to play in a way which reflects their real social life. Role-playing allows children to express such difficult emotions as fear, anger, or suffering and helps them develop different ways of experiencing emotions and reacting in situations saturated with them. Another strategy that can be useful in this is acting.

Emotional competence is a developmental process. Specific skills manifest themselves differently at various ages. Close, secure relationships with sensitive adults are a prerequisite for developing the ability to collect and process emotional information. Behavioural patterns displayed by adults in situations causing strong tension are an important factor here. Coping strategies used by caregivers are adopted by children and expressed in their behaviour.

In young children, emotion knowledge is mostly based on observable factors. Emotional expression and regulation are not developed that well and require more support and reinforcement from the social environment. In elementary school, children increase their ability to offer self-reports of emotions, and use words to explain emotion-related situations. Conversations and reflections shared with others related to emotional experiences help children not only to understand their own and other people's emotions but also to distance themselves from those feelings (Dunn, 1999).

As people mature, emotions begin to support thinking and directing attention to what is important. In a situation where a child is asked to describe what another person feels, she or he can put themselves in that person's shoes and feel what they feel, taking into account not only the situational information but also their previous experiences and history. Older children have a greater ability to understand and express complex emotions such as pride, shame, or embarrassment. As children grow, their cognitive development supports the ability to deal with emotions.

School context

The higher the adult's level of emotional competence, the more the relationship with her or him will enrich a child's experience and emotional knowledge. But adults can also learn from children, and by doing so, enrich their own emotional experiences.

What Is the Feeling of Emotional Efficacy?

According to Carolyn Saarni, a famous developmental psychologist, self-efficacy, or one's belief in the ability to succeed in certain tasks, plays a leading role in explaining the development of emotional competence (2011). If children achieve their goals and experience positive feelings associated with accomplishment, they will develop a positive assessment system and a sense of well-being. They will gain knowledge about their psychological traits and abilities (advantages and possibilities) as well as their intellectual, emotional, social and physical skills. During an activity, children have contact with others, and in so doing, learn to interact with them, while taking social norms and principles into account. In this way, children will learn to cope with adversities and will be able to assess the possibilities of solving problematic situations.

Children learn how to deal with negative emotions by regulating their intensity, duration or frequency of occurrence. In this manner, they can handle negative emotions, and treat them as important sources of information. This will give them a sense of strength and control over their lives.

School context

Creating an emotionally secure environment in which children can look for the ways to solve problems by taking risks and committing mistakes makes them more involved in action-taking, more independent and braver.

Points for Self-Reflection

- In what situations in your interactions with children do you speak freely about your emotions? In what other situations do you see a need to be more open with children?
- Notice the emotions you attach to information you convey to children (such as "it's very interesting", "I'm glad we'll learn about it", "I don't like to teach it", "It is boring"). In what areas do you need to self-regulate these emotions, and in what areas should you continue to express the feelings you have?
- In what situations do you give children an opportunity to talk about feelings? How can you allow children to express unpleasant emotions?

- How do you support children in developing their emotional regulation skills?
- How can you use school situations to help children develop their emotional skills?

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Working with a Group

Basics of Group Functioning

Every day a teacher meets different classes and each class is a kind of microcosm of individuals with different personalities, needs, skills, abilities, problems and experiences. It is a challenge for teachers to work with various classes every day. Still, each class functions according to similar, basic principles. In the classroom environment the *goals* are specified, *rules* are created, characteristic *roles* appear, *interactions* take place between children and between children and teachers.

School context

To help children build satisfying relationships with others, and claim their rights assertively, you have to master competencies yourself, e.g., the ability to express your feelings and needs, being empathic and coherent in your reactions and sending messages. Expressing your own feelings and needs, being authentic and consequent in your work gives children space for such behaviour.

Group dynamics can be understood as universal principles of group-functioning. They concern influence distribution, communication patterns, ways different roles are played and factors determining the level of loyalty of group members (Oyster, 2002).

Generally, one could say that group dynamics involves the influence of personality, power, and behaviour on the group process.

What Are the Universal Principles of Group Functioning?

In its functioning, every group facing any task falls within certain regularities. Firstly, it is operating on two levels: task and social. *Task level* is about the challenges ahead of the group members and their way to manage those challenges (*group productivity*). *Social dimension* includes mutual influences, how the group members

feel about each other and their cooperation (*group cohesion*). Both dimensions are strongly intertwined. Secondly, children, while striving towards *common goals*, co-operate, compete, *communicate*, and *accept roles* connected with their involvement in the group structure, follow some of the *rules* (*official or informal* ones, shaping their behaviour, being the criteria of their evaluation), exert pressure (during conflicts, working out one's role in the group, status, etc.), and trust each other. Thus, a group has a major influence on the behaviour of its members.

School context

Knowledge incorporated within the basic rules of group functioning focuses on an individual as a group member, and on the mutual influence of the group and its participants. A class is, most of all, a small task group that strives towards common goals, makes collective decisions when looking for solutions to certain problems or figuring out a task, makes rules shaping and regulating behaviours, exchanges information and makes the division of influences. Of course, its members also belong to other groups, and such affiliation shapes their functioning within the class, along with their individual traits such as sex, ethnicity, personality and sexual orientation.

School context

While working with a class, it is worth remembering that newly emerged groups focus mostly on the task dimension, neglecting the social one, which after all, plays a crucial role in the groups' successes (their effectiveness and success rate). In such a predicament, it is wise to motivate members of a group to get to know each other better, make friends before proceeding to the task execution (various integrating exercises might prove useful here).

Through the participation in a group, children can, potentially, meet their individual needs. Those needs may vary – for one child it may be a need to engage, stay connected to others, affiliation, care and security. For other children it might be about the needs of achievement or rivalry. However, a group is also a potential source of danger; alienation, marginalisation, persecution, harassment, rejection and so on. Every time such dangers occur, they make it impossible for children to fulfil their basic, yet so important, psychological and social needs of an individual. This informal (and very often hidden from the adults) element of social dimension of a group's functioning of a class plays a major role in children's lives[7].

[7] For more, please see the module: *How Can You Recognise Rejected Children*.

How Does the Size of the Group Influence the Class Environment?

The size of the group can have a positive and negative impact on what happens in the classroom. The more children, the more relations between them and the more difficult it is to achieve the cohesion and make decisions. The smaller the class, the greater the intensity of bonds between children. The bigger the group, the longer integration process is necessary.

Class size is a powerful factor that limits empathy. Larger classes involve more whole-group interaction. Students compete with each other for one teacher's attention, creating a less empathic climate (Cooper, 2010).

The smaller the class, the more intense the relations between the children are. What is more, the bigger the homogeneity of the group, the lesser the variety between individuals and their roles and functions.

School context

The terms "small" and "big" for describing a group's size are quite imprecise. The key is not the optimal sizing of a group, but the consideration of the changes that take place in the basic processes of the group (communication; coordination of efforts; group's solidarity; definition of rules regulating mutual relations; decision-making; common work and interactions; availability of statuses, power, resources; erection of replicable behavioural patterns; adjustment to change, and so on) along with the change of the number of its members. Teachers' awareness of the aims set is crucial, as is their knowledge of tasks given, and how the groups' size influences their increase or decrease in involvement in the commonly executed tasks.

What Is the Role of the Rules?

Rules can be defined as accepted patterns of behaviours approved by the group and recognised by it as valid. They are points of reference for group members regulating children's expected competencies, appearance, rights and duties, as well as the way they are carried out.

Norms allow exerting control over the behaviour of group members. They render social connections more efficient, easier to foresee, and become key elements in novel situations (belittle and minimise insecurity, embarrassment, and increase the sense of safety). Children are more prone to follow the norms if they are set by the members of a group.

School context

If you create clear rules for each classroom environment it will be easier to work in it. Children feel safer and know what they can or should do and what is not allowed. Clear rules result in emotional stability and effectiveness of work. Some of the rules of conduct are already written down in the statute. Others are set by children themselves. We should enable our students to make their own rules, work on them together, as a group, and by doing so, ensure their respect towards regulations, and their involvement (more so than when they were given rules to follow by an outsider).

What Does the Student's Status Indicate?

Status describes diverse positions of group members, constituting one of the elements of its formal and informal organisation. The higher the status, the greater the range of influence in the group and the greater freedom of behaviour within.

Each class has a hierarchy based on the status of its members. The status of each student is determined on the basis of various factors. The factors determining the students' status can be mutually excluding or reciprocally enhanced (e.g., a boy studies less, in order to become more attractive to his group members and gain a higher status). Children assess each other mostly by the use of informal criteria such as popularity level, leadership traits, success in learning achievements, or whether the child being assessed is liked or widely accepted by other children, or not.

School context

The status of a child (also the informal one) might be recognised and assessed with the use of designated tests, and during appropriately selected interactive plays (Volpel, 1999, p. 233). There are numerous ways to achieve such a goal, however, the most common one is based on sociometric techniques. It allows for obtaining a clear picture of the informal structure of a group, and concentrate on affections and dislikes of the group members towards each other; their popularity or rejections of certain members.

What Should a Teacher Know about the Stages of Group Development?

Every class as a group goes through stages of development. The stages are always the same but they have different dynamics. They can provide a framework and

context for some commonly held expectations for group members' behaviours and underlying concerns about the group and themselves (Brown, 2018).

Depending on the stage of group development it is better to use group-as-a-whole comments, and general guidelines or comments for individual students. Although working with individual group members in a group is beneficial, adding a comment to the group process as a whole increases the group's awareness of their behaviour and relationships and will be beneficial to members and the progress of the group (Brown, 2018)[8].

School context

If you notice what stage the group is at, you can manage it effectively. It helps you to understand the pupils' behaviour at different levels. Thanks to it you can organise your work adequately to pupils' possibilities at the moment.

Why Should We Take Care of the Quality of Communication in the Group?

Communication is a crucial element of cooperation in class. It is a dynamic process that takes place between individuals through mutual interactions. Communication between students takes place on various levels (interpersonal, in-group, inter-group, mass) using different methods, symbols and forms. Very often students use different language to communicate with teachers (formal), while among themselves they use informal language or even slang. Understanding the language students use, and allowing them to use it is very valuable. When a teacher shows such a skill and engages in it, the group's identity is reinforced. It allows students to relive some of the tension and pressure as well as vent the unpleasant emotions they struggle with in a controlled manner.

School context

It is an important task to show children that communication may fail for different reasons. The problems may be internal (inside us: pupils, teachers and others) or external (outside us). You can help them recognise the source of problems and react accordingly.

[8] For more information, see the module: *Stages of Group Development and Its Influence on Class's Work, Integration of Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) with the School Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Plan.*

It is vital to remember that communication encompasses verbal and non-verbal elements. Is not only the spoken language but a mutual transfer of information, skills, concepts, ideas, feelings through symbols created by words, sounds, images, gestures and touch (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2007). It is necessary for teachers to understand the principles of both levels of communication to be clear and read students behaviour[9].

School context

You should remember that for effective communication is important for verbal and non-verbal levels to be consistent. It concerns both teachers (as well as other school staff) and children. If children see any inconsistency in teacher's (or anyone's) behaviour they are confused and feel that someone is not credible.

What Effect Does the Group Have on Individual Children?

Group influence on children can be both positive and negative. The teacher can observe whether the class gives particular children such benefits as: self-esteem development, experiencing mutual support in discovering talents, developing knowledge and acquiring new skills, experiencing the effectiveness of cooperation as well as talking others' point of view into account.

School context

It is particularly important for you to pay attention to pupils who are not very active, excluded, rejected or criticised by others. Average and less involved students are not easy to notice, and seldom cause problems. That is exactly why it is easy to overlook something very important. The rejected and excluded by the group need extra attention and special support. It is up to a teacher, as well as the rest of school staff, to recognise the cause of such a rejection and make sure to provide professional, and beyond professional support.

Class attractiveness for individual students and its effectiveness in achieving group goals are influenced by the quality of relationships between students as well as the fact whether these relationships are built on common foundations and mutual understanding

[9] For more please see: *Communication in the Class*.

Points for Self-Reflection

- Do you introduce clear rules in each class? Do you involve children in the process of rule creation?
- Do you use sociometric tests? When assessing children's status do you prepare your own tests?
- In what circumstances do you comment on the behaviour of a child in front of their class, and under what conditions do you do that in private?

Stages of Group Development and Its Influence on Class's Work

Groups change over time. These changes are called the stages of development. Each group develops on two levels: task-oriented and social. Interpersonal relations absorb a lot of group members' energy and they influence its productivity.

School context

Children spend a lot of time participating in groups each day. Multiple tasks can be achieved only through coordination and cooperation with others. A group leader, who wants to support pupils and efficiently manage activities, should be able to recognise the group's developmental stages. What is more, this knowledge makes it easier to understand the pupil's behaviour and, consequently, it is possible to organise work appropriately to children's abilities. It is also possible to set short- and long-term goals in a way that assures good, unblocked functioning of the group.

All models of the group's development indicate typical changes in emotions and actions of the group members, in intra-group relations and the group's work on the tasks. Groups, just like children, go through specific, recognisable stages. Groups are unique and each developmental process is unrepeatable. A group leader will find therein components matching the presented paradigm but must be also prepared for encounters with unique situations and levels of development resulting from the size of the group, its composition, time, place and character of tasks, etc.

As the class works on the realisation of tasks, it is dominated by deadlines and patterns of interaction, which leads to the restricted expression of personal needs.

When the interpersonal relations become pivotal, they may trigger rivalry, emphasise conformism, cause the feelings of irritation and helplessness.

School context

During the group development, contradictions appear regarding the conditions shaping relations, trust and coherence versus achievement of high productivity. If the norms do not allow the formulation of psychosocial needs, it leads to experiencing stress and anger by the group members. Each person uses a lot of energy to conceal these feelings. Saving oneself in an emotionally-charged situation may be displayed as, for instance, conflicts disturbing the workflow.

It is relevant for a group leader to follow the rule: DISRUPTIONS ARE IN THE FOREGROUND (Cohn, 1970). The leader should master a mindset corresponding with this rule. Then the curricula, lack of time and other responsibilities will not impose pressure on her or him to ignore the disruptions.

The paradigm mentioned below regards a group that works together over an extended period of time. In such groups, trust and cohesion are the most relevant in the social dimension but it is the productivity that plays a key role in the task dimension (Oyster, 2000). The description of the stages is based on the findings of psychologists, B.W. Tuckman and M.A. Jensen (1977).

What Characterises the Stage of Group Forming?

When a new group emerges:

- norms are not set down, roles are not specified and no one knows what to expect;
- everybody feels anxiety and tension, because everyone has a need for acceptance and belonging, no one is certain whether the group will accept them;
- the level of mutual trust is low, some are suspected of overtaking power, which can be a threat to the self-reliance and independence of others;
- people judge each other and, at the same time, they want to make the best impression on them; there is an overbalance towards positive auto-presentation;
- group members do not know much about each other, therefore, they form judgments mainly on stereotypes.

Social dimension: this stage is dominated by insecurity and the wish to figure out the situation. Most of the energy is used for the difficult process of building

relations. This stage ends with the emergence of sub-groups based on the mutual sense of connection of its participants. It makes them draw nearer. Getting to know each other lowers the tension and increases trust.

Task dimension: anxiety, auto-presentations, mutual judging and stereotypes cause low productivity. Participants try to identify and comprehend goals and define the methods useful for task completion. However, it is difficult to focus on work, hence the group is not ready to achieve the defined objectives.

School context

Norms and roles are not worked out. Everybody is uncertain about how to behave but the presence of a leader increases the sense of security. The leader can facilitate getting to know each other and can moderate the formation of the rules, etc. The rules make pupils feel safe as they pinpoint what should be avoided and what is permitted. Appropriately selected tasks (not too difficult), group sub-division and roles assignment – all activate certain processes and amplify the sense of identification with the group.

What Characterises the Stage of Storming?

This stage is characterised by:

- the expression of emotions, criticism, discussions, corrections of the earlier established rules and confrontations. These behaviours are expressions of a higher level of trust and group cohesion;
- rivalry for roles, status, power and influence in the group;
- an easy polarisation of the group; adopted solutions are often an expression of individual influences and statuses in the group;
- testing the limits, namely, participants checking what they can claim and how far they can go with an expression of negative emotions.

Social dimension: each resolved conflict leads to new relational qualities. Achieved closeness gives certainty that arguments can happen; they do not threaten the relations and are not harmful. The intensity of arguments depends on the group cohesion and mutual trust, which are decisive regarding the nature of communication. The higher the trust and cohesion, the easier the communication and the more natural the expression of conflicting issues and search for solutions.

Task dimension: group work is characterised by clashes around the task distribution. Resistance is an outcome of individual differences between the orientation and the task requirements. Three types of conflicts can show up: false (which quickly turns out to be a simple misunderstanding), contingent (when a real contradiction

is emerging during interaction), increasing (which source is in unresolved and hidden issues that are evolving into disputes paralysing a group). The two first types of conflicts are typical and quickly resolvable. The last one is difficult to recognise and resolve, which is why it may have a destructive impact on the group.

School context

Conflicts should not be avoided or cause apprehension. Pupils should be helped in recognising it and finding a solution. A group that went through the stage of confrontation reaches higher productivity. The work brings better results because the care for the quality of ideas and the system of control are developed. The main area of concern is shifted from social issues to the task completion. It is facilitated by the certainty that group members can handle conflicts constructively.

What Characterises the Stage of Norming?

At this stage group members:

- feel more mutual acceptance and respect;
- communicate more openly and behave much more authentically (because norms are more readable and contacts follow prearranged patterns);
- know their own strengths and weaknesses (individual differences show up), therefore, they are capable of making decisions regarding work division, which are based on previously recognised qualifications, talents and predispositions;
- have control over conflict-solving and trust each other, hence the level of tension is low;
- have a sense of unity and awareness of common goals; members identify themselves with the group and want the group to be successful.

Social dimension: at this stage, the group cohesion develops. The group became attractive for its members and gives them a sense of warmth. Group norms are more supportive of open, personal and expressive behaviours. The group does have a relatively more open structure and low control.

Task dimension: it is a productive period in the life span of a group. It is dominated by the open exchange of information, ideas affecting rules, and the realisation of group's tasks. Even though not everyone devotes the same amount of time and energy to work, no one feels aggrieved. Competitive behaviours are more often sanctioned.

School context

Group leader helps best through supporting group members in rational decision-making during the distribution of tasks in accordance with the individual predispositions.

What Characterises the Stage of Performing?

The group reaches the optimal state when:

- it is marked by maturity and ability to face difficult challenges;
- areas of conflict are recognised and coping strategies are worked out;
- the level of tension is low and the level of trust is high;
- work division is introduced according to competencies, leaders may be changing – the power is handed over to the person who will handle a specific task best.

Social dimension: two scenarios are possible. The first one means the acknowledgment of the social development as completed and focus on the task dimension (technocratic orientation). The second one means recognition of linear development as fiction and seeing it instead as a cyclic process, in which important themes, problems and processes reappear again and again (process orientation).

Task dimension: group energy is mainly channelled into work and the member's activity serves to achieve the defined objectives. The compromised solutions depend on the orientation displayed in the social dimension. Technocratically-oriented groups legitimise the use of all energy for achievement of the defined objectives. Process-oriented groups still refine the division of labour, increase participation through the division of functions and delegation of responsibility for the purpose of quality and originality of performed tasks.

School context

The main task of the group leader is to sustain energy and motivation for work. Challenges and pointing out how each child can benefit through achievements, leadership or influence on group processes is relevant. At this stage, group is capable of taking difficult tasks and demanding goals.

What Characterises the Stage of Group Adjourning?

Each group has its inevitable end. A group can end its activity in a planned or unplanned way. That is why the following issues are extremely important, namely:

- to protect against unhappiness and uneasiness of those who are dependent on the group to a great degree or those who strongly identify with the group;
- to facilitate a sense of satisfaction with achievements; positive emotions are important regarding good outcomes and the memorising of experiences;
- to enable group's tasks completion, and make sure that tasks completion is accentuated and celebrated (e.g., achievements are presented, friends, parents and other relatives are invited).

Social dimension: at this stage the group leader should remind the members about the accomplished tasks, discuss collected experiences and address various feelings with understanding (sadness related to departure, anxiousness regarding future, pride resulting from success, joy generated by pleasant moments) and think over how to terminate the group in the best way.

Task dimension: at this time the group is unable to perform collaborative tasks. They are already achieved (or not, in which case the group should be prepared for the acceptance of failure).

School context

Pupils know when they will depart from the class. Therefore, they can prepare for it and come to terms with parting. A group leader can help them choose the most significant achievements, proceed with a discussion about the significance of group experience, and pay attention to past group occurrences. The group leader should assist the process and make it happen naturally and positively.

Group leaders can use the knowledge about developmental stages to better adapt comments addressed to the whole group and better comment on the individual behaviours of each pupil. Although working with individual group members is beneficial for them, adding comments that refer to the whole group as unity increases awareness of one's own behaviour and mutual relations. It is also advantageous for the group's development (Brown, 2018).

Points for Self-Reflection

- In what types of situations do you take into consideration social processes happening in the class?

- How do you recognise the developmental stage of the group that you are working with? What types of pupil's behaviours draw your attention?
- To what degree do you pay attention to the level of difficulty of a group task? Do you evaluate to what extent the task is adequate regarding the group's developmental stage?
- How do you empower social/relational dimension in the various developmental stages of different groups that you are working with?

Relationships and Social Dimension of Class Functioning

The relation is not static. It is a process consisting of many stages. We can distinguish 10 phases of establishing relationships and withdrawing from them (Knapp & Vangelisti, 2000):

1. **Relationship initiation stage:** expression of interest in establishing contact and positive presentation of yourself to make a good impression on others;
2. **Probing stage:** experimentation, searching for a common ground, e.g., interests, values;
3. **Intensification stage:** testing each other to see if the relationship is possible; work on the quality of connection;
4. **Integration:** common rituals develop;
5. **Bonding stage:** announcing the relationship to the world, e.g., friendship;
6. **Differentiating stage:** focus on differences (not similarities), finding the individual identity and personal space again while still being in the relationship;
7. **Circumscribing stage:** reduced interest and participation in the relationship, dynamic communication changes into static one (e.g., instead of discussing the problems both sides tend to withdraw mentally and physically, and spend less time together);
8. **Stagnation stage:** conventional, people's behaviour towards each other becomes a routine, communication fails;

9. **Avoidance stage:** both sides intentionally avoid communication and spending time together, gradually they become emotionally detached, even hostile to each other;
10. **Termination stage:** willingness to be separate, the relationship ends; it can be a subjective decision or it can happen naturally, e.g., somebody moves out or the school year ends (Adler, et al., 2011).

School context

Adults can help children be aware of the constant changes in relationships and patterns according to which the changes occur. This will make it easier for children to be more successful in social interactions.

Relations undergo constant changes. Their evolutionary nature is cyclical and various multiphase interactions take place between partners. Some interactions circle back to the earlier stages (yet remain on the same level). The healthiest, long-term relationships go through several phases of experimentation when the partners try out new patterns of behaviour. Although each phase is characterised by the same features, it is different for each relationship every time it occurs. Relationships are complex and dynamic.

School context

Adults who understand what is happening among children as well as the nature of their own relationship with the class are more likely to make their work more effective and react to what happens in the classroom environment more appropriately.

What Categories of Relationships Can We See in the Classroom?

There are two types of relationships in the class:

- **vertical relationships**: these are formed with someone who has greater knowledge and power than children (parent, teachers). The interactions on which they are based tend to be of a complementary nature (e.g., adult controls – the child submits, the child seeks help – the adult provides it). The main function is to provide children with security and protection and enable them to gain knowledge and acquire skills;

- **horizontal relationships**: they are formed between individuals, who are equal partners, they have egalitarian nature, the interactions on which they are based tend to reciprocal (one child throws a ball – the other catches it), the roles can be reversed. The main function is to acquire skills that can be learned among equals, such as those involving cooperation and competition (Hartup, 1989).

School context

Both types of relations, meaning those with school staff as well as those with peers, are equally important at school. A recent study examining student-teacher relationships throughout elementary school (first through fifth grade) found that teacher-student closeness linked to gains in reading achievement, while teacher-student conflict related to lower levels of reading achievement (McCormick & O'Connor, 2014).

What Do Children Learn from Each Other?

Children learn in each other's company what they would not in the company of adults. Thanks to their colleagues children gain the following competencies:

- leadership qualities;
- conflict resolution skills;
- the ability of sharing (and realisation of its role);
- the uses of conformity;
- coping strategies of how to deal with hostility and bullying (Shaffer, 2010, p. 136).

School context

This sort of education takes place within the peer socialisation and differs from parenting socialisation. Socialisation between peers is equally important to that of adults. It is, thus, of key importance to enable children to learn from each other at school by creating appropriate conditions. Perhaps the crucial task the adults need to carry out, i.e., the school staff, is to allow children to mind their own troubles and handle their businesses in their own way when at school. Of course, as long as those actions follow the rules of generally accepted social conduct.

What Positions Can Be Taken by Children in the Classroom?

Children can be assessed as group members with respect to their standing among peers (popular/unpopular, leader/follower, accepted/rejected). Five sociometric status types have been established, namely, popular, rejected, neglected, controversial and average children according to whether they are high or low on positive and negative peer nominations. Average children fall into the mid-range of peer ratings in that they arouse no strong feelings in others. Controversial children are simply those who are liked by some and not by others.

Sociometry refers to a method measuring the positive and negative relationships between people within a group (e.g., classroom, grade, sports team), in which group members are asked to evaluate each other in terms of various characteristics (Cillessen, 2009). Peer nomination methods have been used to measure children's social status. In research, social status has been operationalised in terms of (social) preference and (perceived) popularity (Parkhurst & Hopmeyer, 1998)

School context

A variety of tests for assessing children's social status are available of which sociometric techniques are the most popular. Sociometric techniques are designed to provide quantitative indicators of individuals' standing within a group. In this way, a picture of the social structure of the group is built up, indicating the popularity or rejection of particular individuals.

How Can You Recognise Popular Children?

Popular children are outgoing, friendly and tend to be natural leaders. They tend to show the highest level of sociability and greater cognitive ability compared with children in other positions.

The characteristic features of such children involve:

- positive, happy disposition;
- physical attractiveness;
- lots of dyadic interactions;
- high levels of cooperative play;
- willingness to share;
- ability to sustain an interaction;
- being perceived as good leaders;
- low level of aggression.

How Can Neglected Children Be Recognised?

Neglected children tend to be inept socially, shy and unassertive. They are not at risk for later adjustment difficulties because, unlike other categories of children, their peer sociometric status is not stable, depending on the particular group of which they happen to be a member at the time. Neglected children tend to be less sociable individuals and possibly somewhat passive but rarely to any pathological extent (Shaffer, 2010, pp. 116–118).

The kinds of behaviours displayed by these types of children include:

- shyness;
- rare examples of aggressiveness, withdrawal in the face of others' aggression;
- slightly antisocial behaviour;
- lack of assertiveness;
- lots of solitary activity;
- avoidance of dyadic interaction, more time with larger groups.

How Can You Recognise Rejected Children?

Rejected children are disliked because they are often disruptive, aggressive and their overtures to others are, therefore, resisted. In the case of rejected children, we can distinguish two subgroups: those who are rejected by their peers because of their aggressive behaviour and those who are rejected because of their tendency to social withdrawal and extreme inhibition. Both kinds must be considered as posing a risk for later disorders: the rejected-aggressive children for externalising problems (such as lack of impulse control, violence, delinquency) and the rejected-withdrawn children for internalising problems (anxiety, loneliness, depression, fearfulness). Such children become easily victimised and will develop into individuals who are socially isolated, with little skills in establishing relationships. Relations forged by those children, with their peers, inform us on mechanisms that will serve them in the future, in terms of connecting with the social world around them.

The characteristic features of such children include:

- many examples of disruptive behaviour;
- argumentative and antisocial conduct;
- being extremely active;
- being talkative;
- frequent attempts at social approaches;
- little cooperative play, unwillingness to share;

- much solitary activity;
- inappropriate behaviour.

The Task and Social Dimension of the Class's Functioning

School is a place where children play not only the roles of students, but also of friends and members of the class and school community[10]. For children to learn in an effective manner they need to feel safe, comfortable and accepted by colleagues and the teacher.

School context

How can you develop a positive relationship with children? You need to create a safe atmosphere, try to accept all children, treat them with respect, listen to them, try to get to know the interests and needs of individual children, and help them reflect on their thinking and learning skills.

In every task group, such as a school class, there are two levels of functioning: task and social. The task dimension is about the relations between students and the work they are set to do (what the challenges are and how they are dealt with). The social level refers to the relations between particular students: the feelings they share and their role within a group (Oyster, 2002). For a group to be coherent, its members ought to feel connected, stay involved and devoted, get on well with each other and enjoy themselves in the group's company. The task level is mainly about productivity, whereas the social one aims at group's cohesion. Both are interdependent.

School context

As a person who works with a group, you should be aware of the two dimensions of class functioning (tasks and social dimension) and how they influence each other. You may observe that the better the relationships between students are, the more successful in completing the tasks they are, and inversely, the more successful they are in completing tasks, the better the relationships between the students are.

The most important *aspects of relations are trust and cohesion***.** Trust is the belief that group members can rely on each other. A lack of trust hinders cooperation, reduces the work contribution of individual children and leads to resistance to the

[10] For more on these roles, please see the module called: *Roles Played by Students in a Class*.

division of tasks. The strength of positive relationships based on trust and friendliness is cohesion which affects productivity. Cohesiveness means that the group members like each other and find pleasure in spending time together (Adams & Galenes, 2008; Oyster, 2002).

Points for Self-Reflection

- How do you develop positive relationship between children?
- Do you pay attention to children who have less contact with their peers?
- Do you use any sociometric techniques?
- What kinds of behaviour allow you to notice children's positions within a group?

Roles Played by Students in a Class

In this module, you will learn about the types of roles played by students and problems caused by enacting roles. We will explain how we can strengthen the student's position in the group by arranging tasks enabling them to play different roles.

What Is a Role?

A *role* is a set of expected behaviours that can be viewed from two perspectives: the first one, called *role perception*, defines behaviours that the subject perceives as the proper ones for the role that they enact, the second one, referring to *role expectations*, is defined as an expected behaviour.

Role perception consists in statements and gestures presented by the person enacting given role (e.g., student, teacher, child or parent) as well as meanings that are assigned by the person to these gestures and statements (what they mean and communicate to the interlocutors of the interaction).

Role expectations are bound to beliefs and images regarding the behaviour of the person who enacts a given role.

Students read and assimilate expectations of their teachers and modify their behaviours accordingly, which can determine educational success better than social class (see: Becker, 1958; Nash, 1976). Those expectations are communicated

via behaviour, quite often not intentionally, influencing the actual conduct of the students. Therefore, students can adjust their school achievements to teachers' expectations (Meighan, 1993). Furthermore, teachers' expectations can also come from stereotypes and false convictions (Garwood, 1976).

School context

You can view school as a theatre, where a play is staged, and the most important parts are being performed by students and teachers. For the behaviours tied to these parts in order to become recurrent and predictable, the interactions between particular parts have to be transparent for both sides. They need to get along and create some sort of psychological alliance. The role perception (an idea of interpretation) of a student and expectations of a teacher towards the student's part have to be convergent (and vice versa), only then can we witness complementary behaviour.

School context

Students do not have an unequivocal imagination of the part they play, because being a student involves performing many roles. The number and variety of functions enacted by the student is bound to number and variety of people (students, teachers, school staff, parents) coming into interaction. These people usually have different expectations. Therefore, the role of a student is characterised by a high level of complexity (Oyster, 2002, p. 30).

What Are the Types of Roles Played by Students?

Let us try to view being a student as a curly bracket that clips a variety of roles played in front of people inside and outside of school. These roles can be characterised differently, depending on the type of a given group and the sort of relation.

Some roles can be given to us because of the features we represent, and very often, we do not have a say in that. Despite that, people expect us to behave in some way, just because we were given those parts. These kinds of roles are named assigned roles. Being a student is enacting such a role. When we reach a certain age, we turn into students, and school becomes our daily routine. We are assigned a role which is based on our gender, race and place in a social structure. At school, expectations are different towards boys and girls, or children from certain social classes.

School context

At school, roles can be achieved (which comes with experimenting and preparing for adulthood), and these parts are enacted through making individual decisions and choices. That role comes with a significant level of control over engagement and form of enacting. Nobody can be forced to be a leader of a class, play a class clown, become a volunteer or be friends with a particular child.

If you view a class as a social group that is defined by two dimensions – a task one and a social one – you can discover more types of roles: task, social and individual ones. Task roles are those that help a group accomplish its goals. In every class there are tasks hindered by the educational system (that are mostly initiated by the teacher) and those which exceed school's policy, given the students have the initiative. A class can be divided into smaller groups which will work on solving a given task. Then some roles can be exposed, e.g., Initiator/Contributor (who pushes others to take up the challenge or solve the task), Information Seeker, Opinion Giver (somebody giving advice), somebody perfecting the concept, Evaluator/Critic, Energiser (providing energy and motivation), Coordinator (who controls participation). Social roles which focus on emotions, feelings and relationships. Thanks to taking up these roles the group has a social life. There are people responsible for watching over the group, so that the group rewards right people for success and effort, supporting the shy ones, watching over the mood, releasing tension with jokes, stopping dictatorship and taking away decisions from less assertive people.

Individual roles are based on an idea of achieving the individual goal without caring for the commonwealth. Usually, these kinds of goals are linked to fulfilling individual needs or personal characteristics (dominating over others, negativism, drawing attention to oneself), but they can also be used for instrumental use of a group (to become the best, using the effort of the whole group). Enacting individual roles may lead to inner conflicts, tension or even disorganisation of the whole group.

School context

Classes/groups which have been formed recently and their members do not have a lot of experience as a group, focus on a task. Before the distribution of the roles and relations, no group can work efficiently and effectively. There is a risk of failure. It is a teacher's task to redirect the focus of the group to social dimension. For that purpose, a simple presentation or an interactive game can be used.

It is much more difficult to counteract taking up individual roles. To stop this type of roles you should make sure that while the task is being accomplished, students are emotionally supported at the same time. Usually, meeting individual needs of students means stopping the negative behaviour.

What Are the Problems Caused by Role Playing?

In every group we belong to, we play different roles. It can cause some difficulties. The most important ones seem to be:

- role overload, when one has too many obligations and cannot fulfil all of the expectations bound to the role they play;

School context

We have a tendency to view different things from "our point of view". Too often it leads to short-sightedness. We are worried that a student will not get enough knowledge and information in our field, while, at the same time, we do not think about other teachers doing the same. As a result, students cannot meet our expectations and obligations. Sometimes particular tasks can be mutually exclusive, because, e.g., we cannot be in two different places at the same time (e.g., attend training and do homework) or it can lead to a conflict. Usually, there are too many tasks, or they are not commensurable with capability and competencies of students.

- role conflict – there are three kinds of divergence: between the individual's role notion and what others expect from that role (conflict within the role), between excluding behaviours caused by enacting different roles (conflict between roles) and between individuals who cannot agree on who should play which role in the group (interpersonal conflict).

School context

Imagine that you have more than two superiors, and each of them expects you to devote at least half of your time to work being done for them. It is a conflict of roles. All teachers can agree on student's obligations, but a role conflict will take place either way when the student will not be able to reconcile their expectations regarding the work devoted to studying the subject (even if the student puts a lot of effort).

How Can We Strengthen the Student's Position in the Group by Organising Tasks Which Enable Playing Different Roles?

The foundation of an individual's position in a group is a contribution to joint success and achievements (Baron, et al., 1992). On the other hand, the engagement of an individual in the group is based on three basic needs: affiliation, influence on the group's decisions and respect. The most important is an affiliation with the group. The isolated, lonely and withdrawn from the group can feel they are not respected (lack of intimacy, friendship and trust). This kind of student will not achieve much in school, and the group will not use their contribution. Energy of that person is used almost entirely to sustain self-image and self-esteem (Vopel, 1999). Psychosocial relations in the group are reflected in a position. They have a great value and define who will learn something, and who will not.

School context

It is very important for the group that the teacher observes if every group member gets the right amount of attention, so that nobody, neither the group nor any of the students, is losing on the interaction. Using specific preventing measures (group observation during work, interactive games, simple sociometric measures masked as games) a teacher must monitor and find those, who are tilting towards taking a role of an outsider.

A very dangerous moment comes when group norms are formed, and the group starts to object to some members. If the group fails in convincing somebody to conform, that person will be treated as an outsider. Paradoxically, those who object, and interfere with the group goals, are in a better position than those who are silent because they stay in a better relationship with the group and are doing more to keep their position in the structure.

Arranging tasks which are forcing students to act in different roles is beneficent in two ways: it helps the group to become a social microcosm (creates conditions to fulfil group or class tasks) and strengthens the position of a student by acquiring social and emotional competencies. A coherent group evolves on its own very rarely. A teacher must invest a lot (especially at the beginning) to reach that goal. The intensification of interactions that are based on group functions, making students ready to engage in these functions on their own and equal treatment for everybody pays off. Students, by taking up different roles, get a chance to experiment, view behaviour from two perspectives (inside and outside), look and find their own place in a group, test their strengths

and develop different social and emotional skills and competencies (e.g., being a leader, solving conflicts, easing tensed situations, reading emotional states of others and fighting for the weak ones).

School context

Teacher should arrange the tasks in a way that enables specific students to take up different roles and use a number of techniques to collect information about the roles performed by specific students, their needs and an attractiveness of the class.

This can be done via interactive games containing sociometric measurements (e.g., dynamic sociogram) or conversations and discussion. If a teacher decides to use discussion as the tool, they need to take into an account that the group will be acquiescing towards conformist and unrealistic answers. Discovering that somebody is an outsider, feels unhappy or even suffers from being in the group cannot go without being pointed out and discussed by the teacher with the group.

Points for Self-Reflection

- Where do your expectations towards the class and particular students come from? In what way do your students find out about them?
- Which roles are the most difficult to spot for you? Which are the easiest to see? In what kind of situations does the knowledge about the roles of students help? What are other ways, regarding your work with the class, which would make it possible to use the knowledge about the roles of your students?
- How often and in what ways do you arrange tasks for your students that encourage them to take up different roles, than those they choose to take on their own? Do you talk to them about experiences that they gain from these situations?
- Can you out yourself in your student's shoes when analysing a situation, having a conversation with the student, from their point of view (e.g., resigning from a preferred point of view or a preferred idea)?

Communication in the Classroom

Effective communication is all about skills. The key communication skills include the ability to communicate clearly, listen attentively, gather the necessary information to understand the message, and last but not least, to ensure that our *verbal* communication is *coherent and consistent with our non-verbal* communication. The message becomes distorted unless the non-verbal and verbal streams flow along harmoniously. Successful communication relies on cohesion and consistency.

School context

In upbringing and educating our children we tend to concentrate on mastering language skills and rather miss out on non-verbal cues. The message is sent on these two levels, however, one of them is not recognised to be as important as the other. Unaware of this situation, the sender of a message appears to overlook the fact that her or his non-verbal behaviours supply a wealth of information to the receiver. It has been proven that the sender's integrity, credibility and attitude are assessed by scrutinising non-verbal cues and signals. We believe what we see rather than what we hear (Oyster, 2002, p. 132; Zimbardo & Ruch, 1994, p. 154).

Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication consists of all behaviours accompanying verbal communication and all behaviours which can be observed when we do not speak: facial expressions, body movements and gesticulation, tone of voice, the distance from the other person, etc. This is how emotions come to the surface, how we demonstrate our desire to dominate, our subservience or respect. All non-verbal behaviours which are meaningful for the communication can be classified as: proxemics, kinesics and paralinguistics.

Proxemics is the study of the use of space by communicators and the impact that their spatial arrangement may have on an encounter. What really matters during human interaction is the *territory*, i.e., the area claimed by an individual or a group as their own. An individual divides the space that surrounds her or him into four zones: *intimate space* (the closest "bubble" of space that may only be accessed by those who have the strongest emotional links with the individual), *personal* (accessed by close friends or trusted acquaintances), *social* (delineated for formal/professional contact or casual encounters), and *public* (to make an individual feel comfortable while dealing with strangers).

School context

Cultural norms determine how big the spatial "bubble" can be, how to mark its boundaries, and what signals should be used to reduce or reinstate the distance. Careful observation is, therefore, key to getting to know your students by identifying close relationships and friendships (physical proximity is a very good indicator; trespassing, in particular, of the intimate space, is seen as unauthorised expansion, a threat or an attack); finding out who likes or dislikes whom, establishing if the class actually forms a group and what kind of relationship has developed between the teacher and the students (formal "purely professional" or friendly when students feel comfortable with the teacher who is likely to become their confidante if they needed to open up emotionally…). A physical distance is a measure of the coldness or warmth of a relationship.

Allotting a territory to a group is a simple way of building the group's cohesion by means of non-verbal factors (Baird & Weinberg, 1981). Hence the importance of the classroom or just a room where students are free to contact each other, develop communication networks, generate group energy and decide on social issues. However, this room or space has to be organised to encourage (rather than impede) interaction.

School context

School halls with even rows of benches make a communication-hostile environment where students face one direction with their backs to one another. Communication is hardy possible there. The layout supports a centralised network concept with the focus on the teacher. The teacher's message implies authority and hierarchy. This classroom plan reflects coercion, imposes decisions, discourages involvement and leaves the student with little choice. The fitout is equally explicit. The space speaks and gives testimony to the hidden agenda (Meighan, 1993).

Kinesics is generally understood and referred to as body language. It is about stances and postures, gestures, touching, eye-contact and facial expressions. The facial expressions of basic emotions are universal and easily recognised by everyone (Ekman, 1992). The general cultural norms control the display of emotions and determine what is done and how to be tactful. This means that we inhibit the expression of some emotions which makes them difficult to be read. The fact that we give specific meanings to different facial expressions does not make things any easier, e.g., smiling can be interpreted as being submissive; making eye contact can be perceived as challenging and not looking the other person in the eye may

suggest lying. Still, lies can be told with a "poker face" and avoiding eye contact may be a sign of shame.

School context

Non-verbal behaviours not only serve as indications of people's attitudes to one another (neutral language can be used quite effectively to hurt and a big smile can be produced along with a crushing opinion) or confirm that they have communicated successfully and arrived at an understanding. Student body language responses offer a wealth of different information to the school staff (and vice versa). However, we will not be able to capitalise on this intelligence unless we know the cultural norms of a signal sender and make allowances for situational contexts. Eye contact is usually considered a sign of positive feedback, but when we reproach and shame a child for behaving badly, she or he breaks off eye contact feeling dominated, humiliated and forced to live through the moment of shame in front of the others. "Lowering the eyes", "staring at the floor" may indicate respect and submissiveness. We use the voiceless language to signal our desire to be noticed and recognised or stay invisible and ignored.

School context

Cultural norms determine who, how and when we are permitted to touch. With touch we enter the intimate zone of the other person. Touch has a soothing and calming effect when we are gripped by fear or experience the state of high agitation. Touch protects against physical injuries. On the other hand, it may trigger fear, disgust or the feeling of being abused. Touch norms and policies regarding children have been dramatically changing in some countries. In the past, children used to have the status of a non-person. As a non-person, a child had no say and adults could involve her or him into something without consent. Today, the subjectivity of a child is properly recognised and children enjoy the rights that come with this status. The norms of conduct which guide adults (school staff included) in their relations with children have to change accordingly.

Paralinguistics deals with speaking style, articulation, tone of voice and intensity of expression (Baird & Weinberg, 1981). We raise our voices and work expression into them if we want to stress what is being said, but also when we want to emphasise our dominance. This is how we influence the interpretation of the uttered words. We manage different parameters of our voices to attract more attention and gain more credibility. The voice conveys emotions. At times of tension, we pitch

our voices to their highest and make them sound very different from what they do when we feel relaxed, confident or happy.

Verbal Communication

With its complex structure and a wealth of vocabulary, language is the main means of expressing human thoughts and emotions (Zimbardo & Ruch, 1977). All communication begins with an idea conceived in one's head. Every message depends on emotions, a set of values, prejudices, experience and knowledge.

School context

Adults and children may find it equally difficult verbalising their thoughts when they experience strong emotions. Infatuation, nervousness, fear or anger do not impact communication in the same way, but they always produce a difficult situation for those engaging in communication. You realise what is going on. You can understand both yourself and the other person. You may apologise for your behaviour, but you cannot reverse the original impression or take back the words of insult and injury or restore the intimacy that has been destroyed.

Once we know what we want to say, we have to formulate a message – to translate our thoughts into a common code shared by the sender and the receiver. The words of the language are the speech code. We also have to decide on the mode of transmission (in person, on the telephone or in writing), i.e., a communication channel.

School context

To understand a message the receiver translates the words that he has heard into thoughts and ideas (preferably in line with the sender's intent). We all know very well that we need to choose words and build sentences in a special way when we speak to a child. Are we always mindful that we have to adjust what we say to the abilities and capabilities of the listener to ensure effective communication? It is rather obvious that the explanation of a problem in biology or physics given to a 10-year-old differs from the one given to a college student. Being highly knowledgeable about something does not seem to prevent us from this kind of mistakes. On the contrary, the more we know, the more we forget what appears self-evident to us is not necessarily obvious to others, with many just craving a good explanation.

School context

The school seems to be a place where the form of expression (a degree of mitigation) matters for it mirrors the nature of the relationship between the sender and the receiver (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Factual communication (simple statements like demands) and positive communication (a friendly attitude towards the receiver, requests or pleading) seem characteristic of staff. How are the students expected to address the staff members in your school? Do the students usually play down the importance of their requests when they ask for something? Do they feel they should signal their needs indirectly (and give the receiver the option of not responding)? Are they under any pressure to give up verbalising their wishes or needs?

Teacher – Student Communication

Two parties engaging in conversation make efforts to both give and obtain information. There are *four levels of verbal communication* to fulfil these objectives (Fujishin, 1997): *surface talk* (casual conversation to acknowledge the other person's presence; no expectation of elaborated statements or extensive information about what people actually feel or think), *reporting facts* (impersonal; information is verifiable although things can be said to elicit certain response from the other person), *giving opinions* (personal opinions which are not stated unless we can open up and trust the receiver), and *sharing feelings* (the most intimate level of communication carrying the risk of being hurt).

School context

The above levels of communication are arranged according to the degree of engagement and exposure to risk one's self-esteem and security on the part of the sender in relation to the receiver. Each level offers a different capacity of building genuine and meaningful relationships among individuals. Each of them permits or prevents gathering information about the other person's private world, feelings, values and other things that matter to her or him. How often do you go beyond the level of surface talk or reporting facts when you talk with your students? Do the students give their opinions openly and share feelings in your presence? How do you react then? Do you address a student(s) directly or resort to indirect communication? Do you realise that a group sometimes has to concentrate on social issues, which means that questions also will be connected with relations? Such questions press individuals to share opinions and emotions and initiate communication at the deepest and most intimate level (Oyster, 2002, p. 120).

Communication Among Students

If a class should become a coherent group, the communication must occur at deeper levels where opinions are expressed freely and the feelings are shared. It is demanded by both dimensions: the task dimension (expressing opinions) and the relational one (sharing emotions). Many problems can be avoided if students are ready to share feelings and opinions (Fujishin, 1997, p. 40).

School context

On many occasions, exchanging opinions or sharing feelings may turn into verbal aggression. It accompanies rivalry in the pursuit of power and position in the group. Sometimes, however, such circumstances give rise to friendships among older boys, which has been proven by observation (Oyster, 2002, p. 123).

Communication networks are regular person-to-person information flow patterns which constitute the group's bloodstream. The group is alive due to the communication activities of its members. As a *formal network* it controls the flow of information between the teacher and the students, but offers no relevant description of the student-to-student exchange leaving them with no option but create *informal networks*. These two types of networks cannot compete with each other and the simultaneous flows of information lead to communication inferences and impaired efficiency. Formal and informal networks can be *centralised* or *decentralised*. Decentralised network favours cooperating, complex problem-solving, group coherence and the satisfaction of the group members. One of the key issues of student-developed networks is the *exclusion* of individuals from the system. It causes isolation and puts a ban on the access to important resources. We are responsible for ensuring that every member of the group has her or his place in the network. And if it is not the case, we must find out the reasons and take steps to include them into the group.

Student Slang

Slang is a particular type of the code that translates or converts thoughts and ideas. It makes a group distinctive and hermetic at the same time. An outsider (the teacher is by principle an outsider to students) cannot easily join in, because she or he does not know the language. This particular idiolect facilitates communication inside the group, but out of it, may cause misunderstanding. Words have many meanings and can be ambiguous because the meaning does not exist outside the context. We

naturally believe that we know the meaning of a word. We can be never certain of being right, because someone may give this word quite another meaning. This is potentially a source of awkward and embarrassing situations or misunderstandings leading to certain consequences.

Points for Self-Reflection

- What are the layouts of the classrooms where you teach? How do you think the layout impacts the relationships inside the class and the communication among the students? How does it influence your communication with students?
- What do you do to facilitate student-to-student communication, encourage the necessary interaction to enable team work? What do you do to make their interaction or communication more difficult?
- What constraints does your school (the building with specific rooms) put on student-to-student interaction and communication or the interaction and communication between you and your students?
- Do spatial organisation concepts impose any particular teaching notions on you? Does it make you premise your approach to teaching and learning on certain core assumptions?
- Do your students come from different social backgrounds or cultures? Have you noticed any differences in non-verbal communication between them (how fast or loud they speak, use of gestures, postures, person-to-person distances)? Have you ever thought about your perception of those differences? Do the differences make you like or dislike a person? Do they influence your judgement of the student's behaviour?
- Can you think of a misunderstanding that resulted from the difference between the meanings assigned to a word(s) by you as opposite to your students? Was the situation amusing or not?
- Do you know the vocabulary used by your students when they are in informal situations? Do you know the meaning of particular words? Do you use them occasionally? If so, when? How do your students respond to that?

Recognition and Working with Rejected Children

How to understand the term "peer exclusion"? Peer exclusion concerns social relations and is one of the forms of non-acceptance, the opposite of the sense of belonging to a group. It is a part of group or class development and the processes involved in this development. The phenomenon always has negative consequences for the members who are marginalised. It is connected with experiencing negative emotions: sadness, guilt, anxiety, jealousy and loneliness, which results in lowering one's self-esteem and social withdrawal (Deptuła, 2013).

The key effects of peer rejection include the following:

- **internalisation**: children withdraw instead of becoming aggressive and turn more prone to mood disorders;
- **externalisation**: manifested by aggression or violence;
- **psychosocial effects**: rejected children tend to have less friends and withdraw from social interactions and exhibit antisocial behaviour;
- **long-term effects**: these children have problems during adulthood.

Long-term rejection of a child by peers is a symptom of developmental disorders because it is associated with their mental suffering and failure to perform developmental tasks assigned to a given period of development (Obuchowska, 2008, p. 26–27).

Rejection of a child by peers is a dynamic and multidimensional process. It manifests itself in the lack of participation in the mainstream life of the group or class. It may result in breaking peer ties, the loss of sense of life, and social identity development disorders. There is a risk of repetition of such behaviours and transfer adaptation mechanisms to other stages of life (Gaś, 2006; Jaskulska & Poleszak, 2015).

What Are the Elements of the Exclusion Mechanism?

The exclusion mechanism is complex and involves the following elements:

1. Activities excluding class members (indifference to the problems of others, group stereotypes, competition for rights and privileges, limited ability to meet your own needs, and fear of dysfunction);
2. Personal characteristics of excluded children (deficits in psychosocial maturity, dysfunctional, pathological behaviour as well as learning difficulties);

3. Children's reactions to experienced exclusion (sense of injustice, hostility, aggression, passivity, isolation and learned helplessness) (Jaskulska & Poleszak, 2015)

The effects of a child's rejection by peers depend on whether the child is aware of their status and their cognitive response to this situation. The social context is also a very important factor, e.g., having a friend minimises the negative effects of rejection and overt bullying by peers lowers self-esteem and leads to a sense of loneliness.

Rejection assessment and adaptation of the child depend on the child's social goals, fears, and assumptions that the child makes about the causes of the difficult situation, i.e., attribution (whether the child is focused on the problem or emotions) (Deptuła, 2013).

What Are the Categories of Child's Rejection by Peers?

They can be placed on the continuum: from ignoring, through avoidance, to physical rejection and ostracism.

- ignoring, aversion, finishing/interruption/refusal of interaction, rejecting proposals, e.g., invitation to play together;
- limiting/denying access to physical resources (toys, games), places, people and information;
- aggression: physical, verbal (calling names, insulting, mocking);
- domination, commanding, bossing around, contradicting (negating statements);
- moral disapproval, ridicule in the presence of others and blaming (triggering a sense of guilt);
- engaging others: storytelling, complaining to a significant person.

How Are the Reasons for Rejection Related to the Specific Characteristics of Children?

Rejection may be the result of an inappropriate, destructive or antisocial behaviour of the child (e.g., aggressive, shy or withdrawn children). It can also be caused by differences between children (e.g., physical, behavioural, clothing). We distinguish cognitive, emotional and behavioural causes of rejection (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2008).

Cognitive reasons for rejection:

- low level of knowledge about social relations;
- inadequate self-esteem (related to the way of functioning in relationships);
- difficulty in understanding other people's intentions;
- reduced ability to predict the consequences of your own behaviour,
- focusing on the negative elements of interaction with others.

Emotional reasons for rejection:

- difficulty in controlling one's emotions (hyperactivity, impulsiveness, inability to postpone gratification);
- tendency to experience unpleasant emotions (anger, sadness, anxiety, loneliness);
- difficulty in dealing with school failures (immature ways of solving them).

Behavioural reasons:

- low level of social skills;
- opposing tendencies in establishing contacts (from withdrawal to hyperactivity);
- frequent destructive, anti-social, rebellious behaviours;
- tendency to engage in solitary activities, inclination to play alone (Deptuła, 2013).

What Are the Reasons for Rejection in Class?

Rejection is an interactive process, peers affect the behaviour of children by modelling, strengthening, provoking, creating prejudices, controlling the niches or spaces available to rejected children.

- **Modelling**, e.g., a child learns negative behaviours from peers, defending against the humiliation and dominance of aggressive colleagues.
- **Strengthening**, e.g., peers laugh at a child, comment on her or his behaviour. It is in a way beneficial for the rejected child as she or he gains attention of others, in fact, it is rewarding for the rejected child.
- **Creating prejudices,** e.g., negative behaviours are attributed to their internal features, positive ones are considered accidental. What is more, peers remember mainly the negative behaviours of unpopular children, and they forget or downplay their positive, pro-social behaviours. Negative expectations and prejudices of peers against rejected children make them treat them differently from the popular ones. In addition, children who have

been rejected are blamed for negative relationships with peers (Mikami, et al., 2010). An important role in creating prejudices is played by the beliefs of peers regarding the possibility of controlling a particular personality trait or behaviour by the rejected child, e.g., hyperactivity is perceived as a result of not being disciplined enough, overweight as a result of overeating. It leads to the lack of compassion and support for such children.

- **Controlling the niches or spaces available to rejected children** is related to the structure of classroom domination. Not only rejection results in a low position in the power structure but inverse dependence is also possible, the child may be rejected because she or he occupies a low position in the power structure. Children taking the central position in the power structure do not get involved in defending the rejected for the fear of negative consequences, i.e., being rejected. Peers avoid associating with these students for fear of also being labelled and rejected. This leads to increasing social isolation as the rejected children fall developmentally further and further behind their classmates.

School context

Make sure to build such relationships with rejected children that would make them feel safe. Use frequent reinforcement and feedback. Think over the way you address the child individually and the information you give to her or him as well as in front of the class so that you do not strengthen the group's prejudices. You can support aggressive children by creating conditions for them to regulate their emotions.

What Practice Is Recommended for Teachers?

There are numerous strategies which may help teachers mitigate the situation of rejected children such as:

- **Social skills training**, e.g., early social skills training programmes targeted at low-accepted or socially isolated children. The goals of the training include an increase in the frequency of peer interaction, improved status and an increase in peer ratings as well as prosocial behaviour.
- **Problem solving training** at the school system level for school staff such as principals, lunchroom monitors and parents, as well as entire classrooms. One of the aims of the training is finding solutions for how children can apply the learned skills in natural settings.
- **Individual counselling** an unstructured form of counselling, which means

that problems are addressed and dealt with as they arise; talk, play and art therapies are often used.

- **Peer reinforcement**, i.e., teacher can involve classmates to increase social interaction, decrease or even eliminate harassment of the unaccepted children – class is invited to participate in a team effort to understand the mechanisms leading to rejection.
- **Cooperative activities**, e.g., games or non-academic activities with their socially accepted peers. These activities involve achieving a common goal, such as in group challenge or initiative games. Cooperative activities seem to create conditions conductive to peer acceptance.
- **Pair therapy**, two children or adolescents with peer relationship problems meet with a teacher/psychologist who helps them to interact pro-socially as they work or play together. When the pair shows some competence in being able to collaborate, the teacher gradually withdraws.
- **Teacher consultation** can improve the atmosphere in the classroom through cooperative learning and non-academic activities, placing less emphasis on grades and achievements. Teachers can provide tutoring, conduct a group discussion about peer problems.
- **Support groups** led by one or two trained facilitators. It is an opportunity to meet and talk with others who have similar problems, and the feelings of the participants can be normalised and validated. Participants in class, with teachers' guidance, are able to substantially help each other (Margolin, 2001).
- **Family service**, as in case of many children, social difficulties with peers have roots in problematic relationships with parents or family members, teachers and psychologists or school counsellors can provide services such as short term counselling and consultations.
- **Community service** is an alternative to helping a peer. A rejected child is to collaborate with the community resources (cooperation with the community centres, community counselling agencies, summer camps). In these places children can build positive relations with peers.

Points for Self-Reflection

- How can we recognise rejected children?
- How do you try to help rejected children?

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Whole School Approach

To succeed with implementing a change in a school environment, you are dependent on the commitment from the entire school staff and support from parents. In addition, charisma and leadership competence of school staff are important in building relationships in the school community. In this theme, we will introduce the term "Whole school approach" and argue that the engagement of whole school communities is an effective way of working to boost social and emotional learning (SEL). We will also explore models of leadership for promoting work with SEL in schools.

Importance of a Whole School Approach

What Is a Whole School SEL Approach?

A whole school approach targets a whole school community for change. Integrating SEL into a whole school community means implementing SEL into the daily interactions and practices of a school and utilising its collaborative efforts to effect change among all school staff, children and their families (Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Meyers, et al., 2015; Oberle, et al., 2016). A whole school approach requires commitment from all involved and takes into consideration all interactions occurring in a school context. It also enables and utilises partnerships among all school community actors to produce change. This means that everyone that belongs to a school community has the right, possibility and obligation to build school culture. A whole school approach treats a school as a multidimensional and interactive system that can learn and change. Thus, a whole school approach is a systems-based or ecological way of viewing a school (Boyd, 2012).

Some key elements that describe successful whole school approaches include the following:

- They are comprehensive and flexible;
- They are achieved through participation from the school community;

- They are preventive in nature and;
- They are based on a set of principles (Scott, 2005).

The Use of Whole School Approach in Promoting Health

Within Europe and Australia, the development of many preventive whole school approach interventions has been influenced by WHO's settings approach (Weare & Nind, 2011). In this approach, setting means "the place or social context in which people engage in daily activities in which environmental, organisational, and personal factors interact to affect health and wellbeing" (Nutbeam, 1998, p. 362). Healthy settings, a setting-based approach, has its start in the WHO's global strategy of Health for All (World Health Organization, 1981) and in The Ottawa Charter (World Health Organization, 1986), and has been implemented in many health promotion interventions including Health Promoting Schools.

WHO's Health Promoting School (HPS) is a framework (Turunen, et al., 2017), which uses a whole school approach to encourage all school setting members to get involved in health promotion activities. "Action competence" which is the core value of HPS tends to promote "bottom-up" principles like democracy, local ownership and empowerment (Nielsen, et al., 2015; Simovska & McNamara, 2016; Wyn, et al., 2000). HPS links democracy, participation and health through engagement and empowerment of students, as well as active participation of well-prepared teachers (Clift & Jensen, 2005).

This participatory style emphasises user involvement and contrasts the "top-down" approaches (more often seen in many interventions) with prescriptive training and strict requirements for fidelity.

Bottom-up approaches enable frameworks that allow local adaptions from participating schools (Weare, 2010). Furthermore, they build on the same principles as those of health promoting schools where initiatives are based on the needs of schools and school children (Nielsen, et al., 2015).

School context

Participation of students and parents is part of a whole school approach. Schools should use opportunities throughout the school year for co-creative processes in schools and feedback. Since parents have rights as well as responsibilities, parent-teacher meetings and parent information meetings can be used for both receiving and actively using feedback. The first school year meeting with parents can be used to clarify what schools expect from parents and what parents can expect from the school.

Why Is It Important to Use a Whole School Approach in Working with SEL?

Research shows that cooperation between schools, school staff, parents and students, sharing similar goals and activities, determines the effectiveness of whole school approaches in the development of social and emotional competencies in children. This development is possible when children receive consistent information from all settings: school, home, peers, media and social media.

There are four main arguments supporting a whole school approach to social and emotional development (Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Oberle, et al., 2016):

1. Social and emotional skills need to be fostered consistently and with continuity;
2. SEL should be developed in interrelation with academic achievement;
3. Since social and emotional skills are developed within social contexts, whole school contexts are arenas for developing and practicing these skills;
4. All school arenas are interconnected as a system. Therefore, a whole school approach can shape the vision, climate, norms and culture which promote SEL competencies.

A school-wide and multifaceted approach that includes all school staff and students is a promising strategy to systematically infuse the day-to-day practices at school with SEL activities and strategies (Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Meyers, et al., 2015). By incorporating SEL through an overarching school-wide approach, two important aspects of implementation – consistency and continuity – can be achieved. In addition, a multifaceted approach with a range of strategies can target different dimensions of the school system (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Current research also suggests that, rather than having a sole focus, e.g., on anti-bullying, it is important to focus more widely on creating a caring and respectful school climate and promoting positive outcomes such as building students' strategies for managing their social and emotional well-being (Boyd, 2012; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Vreeman & Carroll, 2007; Swearer, et al., 2010).

In conclusion, school-wide SEL is an ambitious and important approach that brings us one step further in successfully accomplishing the mission that many researchers, scholars and practitioners in the field of SEL share: making SEL a fundamental part of every child's education by establishing evidence-based SEL as an essential part of preschool through to high school education (Oberle, et al., 2016).

Points for Self-Reflection

- Which arguments convince you the most to implement a whole school approach to SEL?
- What are the major facilitators to implementing a whole school approach to SEL in your school? How can these be realised best?
- What are the major obstacles to implementing a whole school approach to SEL in your school? How can these be overcome?
- Which school actors are not participating in developing whole school culture? Why do you think this is the case and how can they be included?

School Leadership

Defining Leadership

There is no unified definition of leadership or school leadership. The term "leadership" is widely defined and used in different contexts, but the name is usually associated with business, and politics. However, it is also used when describing effectiveness in education. As with many other concepts, the theory of leadership has changed with time.

The different leadership theories can be summarised in the following manner:

- leadership is a trait;
- leadership is a skill;
- leadership is situation-based;
- leadership is a transaction;
- leadership is a social relationship.

Below are different definitions of leadership, and their respective leadership theories:

- **Trait theories** list and describe a set of personal characteristics related to leadership skills which consistently leads to effective leadership regardless of who leads, either in group composition or organisational structure.
- **Behavioural theories** define which behaviours or actions can lead to effective leadership and claims that if someone learns these set of behaviours she or he can be an effective leader.

- **Situational and contingency theories** define effective leadership as the ability to vary actions according to a given situation. This theory tries to understand under which conditions certain skills, leadership styles and behaviour become effective.
- **Transactional theories** present leadership as transactional in nature, based on a system of reward and punishment. This suggests that employees are unable to motivate themselves and thus need structure, monitoring, and incentives to perform.
- **Transformational theories** focus on the relationships established between leaders and those they lead. Here, leadership consists in inspiring and encouraging subordinates to act and solve problems independently and motivate them without tangible incentives. This theory suggests leaders should try to answer the following questions: What makes us lead others? How can we be effective leaders? (Juul, 2014).

What Is Effective School Leadership?

Good school leadership is mentioned as a core component in most whole school SEL programmes. School leadership should provide support, and fight for initiatives which promote social and emotional well-being. SEL initiatives can help school leaders, school staff, and students build a friendly school climate and culture.

Below are six indicators of effective school leadership (Education Review Office, 2016). Competent leaders take the following actions:

- Collaboratively set goals and targets to promote equity and quality and involve parents and caregivers in this work;
- Establish supportive environments which promote the well-being of students;
- Regularly plan and evaluate teaching practice to ensure that the school is meeting the learning needs of all students;
- Align student learning needs with the professional development of teaching staff;
- Regularly use evidence, evaluation and inquiry to monitor student achievement and improve teaching practice;
- Build strong relationships with other educational and community institutions to increase opportunities for student learning and student success.

Am I a Good Leader for My School?

It is important to ask schools the following question: How is the school providing visible leadership for emotional health and well-being? (Public Health England,

2015). Leadership can be described as both the actions leaders take, and a set of properties or characteristics they should possess. A leaders' actions should assert influence without coercion when creating a set of common goals and motivating behaviour into achieving these goals. In so doing, leaders help define the culture of a group or organisation. Nowadays, leadership does not only include the main leader (principal), but it is defined more broadly to include teachers and other school staff. One aspect of leadership is to model and promote behaviour that ensures social and emotional well-being.

But What Set of Characteristics Should Leaders Possess?

Goleman (2014) has identified certain traits which can be found in effective leaders, and help others work at their best. He also identified traits that can be found in less effective leaders.

Positive traits:

- emotional self-awareness,
- emotional control,
- accountability,
- self-motivation,
- focus on achieving goals,
- optimism,
- adaptability, flexibility and adaptation to changing conditions,
- empathy,
- organisational awareness,
- ability to interact and influence others,
- teaching and leadership skills,
- conflict management/resolution abilities,
- being a source of inspiration,
- teamwork/collaboration.

Negative traits:

- domination,
- cautiousness,
- submission,
- low stress tolerance,
- slow decision-making.

Developing good leadership is probably the first step in strengthening social and emotional health and well-being in schools. This includes modelling behaviour such as active listening, respect, and empathy.

Am I a Good Leader for My Students?

Current research encourages teachers and other school staff to prioritise building positive relationships with their students rather than wielding power over them (Skolimowska & Kud, 2018). This means that school staff as leaders should be interested in their students' lives and treat them equitably and with respect.

Developing Communication Skills

School staff should communicate the intentions behind what they do and the actions they take. This means that students should know that when their behaviour or work is being corrected, it is because school staff care about their development, future success and well-being. It is the school staff's responsibility to communicate their intent and motivate students for a change.

Communication with students should be personal and friendly and avoid formal language (see: Juul, 2014). It is important for school staff to clearly communicate which behavioural and academic expectations they have to their students. One can motivate a desired behaviour by citing social norms, however, it can be more effective to also communicate and show feelings when trying to motivate students, e.g.: "I can see that you have put a lot of effort into this and that makes me so proud!"

The 4-Part Nonviolent Communication Process (NVC) is a tool for communicating with students (Rosenberg, n.d.). This model is a guide on how to express your observations and formulate your requests in an empathic way. It compels us to focus on four areas of communication: observations, feelings, needs and requests. NVC aims to find a way of communication without the use of guilt, humiliation, shame, blame, coercion or threats.

School context

In a school setting, communication is something one does on a daily basis. It can be a challenge to constructively communicate social norms and rules, schoolwork feedback or resolve conflicts. Communicating involves having to put oneself on both sides of an issue. As an example, let us say that Child 1 says something mean to Child 2, who gets hurt and withdraws from play. How do you talk with Child 1 about it and help her or him develop their social skills? One way of expressing yourself could be to say: "I saw that

> Child 2 withdrew and didn't way to play anymore. I kind of get it, because if you said the same to me, I would get hurt. How would it make you feel, if someone said that to you? What will you say, the next time you are in a similar situation?".

Seeing the Potential in Children

Try to see your students not only as the children they are today, but also the potential they have for becoming responsible, resourceful adults. It means that school adults should follow students in this transformation, see their work as part of this process of change, accept it and allow it to happen. Academic knowledge is something students can acquire throughout their lives, but developing social and emotional skills, like standing against peer pressure and cooperating in groups, needs to be done early before it becomes difficult to change.

Engaging in Self-Reflection

Ask yourself who you really are, and how you can become the best possible leader for your students. Not all of us can be ideal leaders for all students, but one should also learn how to lead students one finds difficult. As we know, "students don't learn from those who they don't like". There is no single way to become a leader. An effective way to build your leadership skills is to develop positive adult-student relationships. Some techniques used to accomplish this include communicating positive expectations, using constructive disciplining, showing pride in students and showing that you care. Also, you should know yourself well enough to recognise situations which will produce frustration and stress.

Points for Self-Reflection

- Think about leaders you have had in your life, what characterised those you experienced as good leaders, and those you experienced as bad leaders?
- How do you think children in your school perceive you as a leader? How would you like to be perceived and what can you do to become the leader you want to be? What are the traits you would like to work on?
- When you are giving feedback about a student's work how do you communicate this? How can you use, e.g., NVC to give constructive feedback and take the student's feelings into account?

Integration of Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) with the School Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Plan

During the educational process the school has to equip the student with both "hard and soft competencies". Both of these types are mentioned as an important educational goal in the school curriculum. "Hard" competencies include, among others, professional knowledge in a given field, specialised skills related to preparation for professional work – these are competencies that are becoming obsolete fairly quickly in the present time. According to the saying (sometimes attributed to Albert Camus) "School prepares us for life in a world that does not exist". However, "soft" competencies have a universal character, they prepare us for functioning in society, also in professional situations, but they also concern competent, better self-management, including self-development. It is considered that practicing and developing soft competencies is more challenging and complex than developing hard competencies and it is difficult to learn them from schoolbooks. Intended training of socio-emotional competencies in the school environment usually takes place through various types of interventions and programmes. In this module we want to dispose of the myth that it is only achievable in this form. It is postulated to development of a continuum of approaches, ranging from full-scale programmes to specific evidence-informed strategies and practices that could provide an integrated foundation for SEL development within the context of everyday school practices (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Social-emotional competencies not only prepare students to be able to participate in learning experiences, they also increase students' capacity to learn (Durlak, et al., 2011). Students are more motivated for learning process, more focused, attentive, and more helpful for other students and teachers. It effects in better academic achievement. It is known that competence education has these benefits regardless of the age of the students, the type of school, its location, and the socio-economic level of the students.

One of the common reasons not to be involved in SEL process is the lack of time. For extra classes each day even week it could be hard for implement in some situations. Obviously, teachers and remaining school employees are also generally aware of the impact of many other socialising factors on the development of their students' soft competencies. Usually, we analyse these influences rarely and do not use their full potential. The solution *is integration of SEL with existing curricula* especially *recognising routine situations* on your classes and modifying them according to training and modelling social-emotional skills. We can identify

a number of typical classic lesson moments that usually arise, such as: greeting each other, checking attendance, questioning students, checking homework, creating groups, working in teams, assignments to be done at home, independent work and farewell, etc. Perhaps it is worth considering how I can use it to teach about social-emotional competencies (such as recognising and controlling emotions, listening, maintaining relationships, collaboration and decision-making) in a more purposeful and effective way? Beyond the educational purpose, which ways of organising and implementing them are also effective in the area of students' socio-emotional competencies?

We are familiar with various actions and operating activities of students in the school and its environment to achieve educational goals. However, they must meet certain criteria, such as:

- engage and involve every student;
- have an attractive form and design;
- not be occasional;
- integrate individual areas of education;
- stir up the teachers' emotions so that the students can see the passion in them.

Experts suggest that strategies which activate and involve students are especially suitable to achieve these goals. We can make use of them regardless the specifics of the subject being taught. By using them we increase students' motivation for lessons, interest in the subject and teach social-emotional competencies such as:

- reflecting the different stages of *experiential learning*;
- using of *class discussions and group or pair work*, building supportive *networking*;
- relevant *multi-media resources* (i.e., YouTube clips, Apps, websites, etc.);
- *incorporating take-home activities*;
- increasing the range and *diversity of teaching activities*, i.e., more interactive approaches, including games, group work and videos;
- *problem solving* and *goal-setting* practice element;
- *self-awareness- and insight*-building strategies, e.g., role play or modelling (Barry, et al., 2017; Boustani, et al., 2015)

There are a lot of *moments during classes* suitable for teaching social-emotional skills, e.g., native or foreign language classes or history, it could be recognised connections with many books, poems, films, topics, peoples existing in the curricula for training or emphasising skills like *cooperation, interaction, emotional health,*

carefully listening, ethic/moral dilemmas, diversity, self-esteem and many more (see: Zakrzewski, 2017). The essence is that beyond the educational goal, the teacher will see the possibility and potential for "practicing" or referring to social-emotional competencies, reflecting on them, their self-evaluation in the students or discussed characters. Perhaps it would be worth considering what would have happened if the characters in question had been more empathetic, able to better listen, better understanding of their counterparts, partners, etc.? Only the teacher's imagination is a limitation in this respect. Furthermore, it is also appropriate to ask the students what they would like to ask the character, and what, in their opinion, determined the success or failure not only in the context of the socio-economic situation, but perhaps also in the context of social-emotional competencies? Thanks to it we will be able to look at the same topics differently, from the emotional point of view. It would also allow us and our students to see a different perspective on the issues discussed. Since emotions appear, the effectiveness of such activities will probably increase as well. All active teaching forms practice different social and emotional competencies and become more and more desirable during all classes at school. It is important for the teacher to use them not only to improve the efficiency of equipping the student with the knowledge but also to practice improving social and emotional competencies every day.

School context

Make an attempt to modify the lesson schedule to increase the opportunities to develop social-emotional competencies. The following questions will enable you to verify if you are heading in the right direction (Zakrzewski, 2017):

- Does the lesson involve challenging conversations that might surface a clash in values?
- Are students required to work with a partner or in groups?
- Is the assignment so demanding that students might need to attend to their emotions or demonstrate attention and perseverance?
- Do they need to exhibit self-confidence, e.g., during an oral presentation, set long-term goals, or make ethical choices?

In the report *Teaching the Whole Child* by Yoder (2014) a detailed description of *teaching practices that promote student competencies* are provided. These practices are also linked to current professional teaching frameworks. Ten teaching practices which are used most frequently have been identified. They represent four social and six instructional strategies that can be used in classrooms to support positive learning environments, social-emotional competencies, and academic learning:

Table 2. Teaching practices

Teaching practices	
Social	**Instructional**
Student-Centred Discipline It refers to classroom management which motivates students to behave in the classroom, e.g., students have opportunities to be self-directive and have some say in what happens in the classroom; students and teachers develop shared norms and values in the classroom; teachers should enact proactive classroom-management strategies.	**Cooperative Learning** It refers to a specific instructional task in which teachers have students work together toward a collective goal. It means more than group work; students are actively working with their peers around content in a meaningful way; it requires collective as well as individual accountability to ensure that everyone participates in the learning task.
Teacher Language Teachers should encourage student effort and work, restating what the student did and what she or he needs to do in order to improve; they should encourage students how to monitor and regulate their own behaviour, not just tell them how to behave.	**Classroom Discussions** It refers to conversations students and teachers have around the subjects discussed; teachers ask more open-ended questions and ask students to elaborate on their own and their peers' ways of thinking.
Responsibility and Choice It refers to the degree to which teachers allow students to make responsible decisions about their work in the classroom. Teachers give students controlled and meaningful choices in terms of, e.g., norms and procedures of the classroom as well as how the academic content is learned. It could be also peer tutoring, cross-age tutoring or participating in a service learning or community service programme.	**Self-Reflection and Self-Assessment** They are instructional tasks whereby teachers ask students to actively think about their own work. Students need to learn how to assess more rigorous work against performance standards that have been provided by the teacher or co-created in the classroom; students also need to think about how to improve their work on the basis of their self-assessment.

Social	Instructional
Warmth and Support It refers to the academic and social support that students receive from their teacher and peers. Creating the environment in the classroom where students know that teachers care about them or the structures in the classroom where students feel included and appreciated by peers and teachers.	**Balanced Instruction** It refers to teachers using an appropriate balance between active and direct instruction, as well as the appropriate balance between individual and collaborative learning. However, most SEL programmes promote active forms of instruction in which students interact with the content in multiple ways, including games, play, projects, etc.
	Academic Press and Expectations It refers to a teacher's implementation of meaningful and challenging work, and academic expectations focus on the teacher's belief that all students can and will succeed.
	Competence Building – Modelling, Practicing, Feedback, Coaching It occurs when teachers help develop social-emotional competencies systematically through the typical instructional cycle: goals/objectives of the lesson, introduction to new material/modelling, group and individual practice, and conclusion/reflection.

Source: Adapted from Yoder (2014)

Points for Self-Reflection

- Please recognise everyday teaching moment at your classes, which you can easily use for socio-emotional training.
- Think about your everyday teacher's practices. What kind of active methods do you often use and what socio-emotional competencies do you teach your students during those moments? How would you evaluate the amount of time spend on this – is it enough or you should increase it? How could you do it?

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This book comprises materials that may serve as an inspiration to teachers and non-pedagogical employees who wish to develop socio-emotional skills in pupils. (...) There are various concepts of socio-emotional learning (SEL); however, they all refer to the development of personal and social skills, including learning how to cooperate, be empathetic, communicate, self-regulate (manage one's emotions) and think critically. (...) Socio-emotional competencies of pupils foster their functioning in school and achieving – both personal and professional – success in the future. These competencies may be developed at school.
The socio-emotional learning process is not a separate aspect of the didactic process; it is rather a philosophy of developing these competencies during each activity: lessons, project work, and school breaks.

The guide is prepared in a way that makes it accessible. It is divided into subject sections, (...) and individual modules are not too extensive; each of them ends with a set of questions which encourage a reflection. Particular problems are also completed with examples from school practice. (…)
A significant challenge in training teachers is not providing them with knowledge but working with teachers' personal beliefs. Owing to these beliefs, information is either accepted or not, and the proposed solutions are implemented (or not) into school practices, both didactic and pedagogical. The authors offer questions that are very useful in terms of encouraging reflections on one's own opinions, beliefs, practices and their consequences.

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