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I.P.R.  
Istituto di Psicoterapia Relazionale



Relational  
and Emotional  
Competences  
at School

## REC methodology guidelines



LaFabbrica



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## Introduction

The Institute of Relational Psychotherapy of Naples (from here onward also I.P.R.), leading the European project “R.E.C. at school” (Relational and Emotional Competences at school), has always dealt with training and research topics both in clinical and in social field.

The European project started from the Modello di Articolazione Intersistemica (from here onward also M.A.I.) used by the I.P.R., drawing an innovative methodological approach to teacher training, with the aim of enriching this methodology through a productive exchange with the European partners (Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Norway).

Since 1990 the I.P.R. has led researches concerning the teacher training and the educational relationship, always focusing on the care of the teacher’s Self (both the personal Self and the professional one) and on the relationship between teacher and pupil.

In this field they have often noticed that the need to encourage pupils to learning meets teachers’ resistance to look for differentiated educational forms adapting them to pupils’ personality characteristics.

However the psycho-pedagogical research recognizes the need for teachers to create a relationship with their pupils, using feelings as a gateway to them.

Feelings in fact represent real relational bridges that connect teacher and pupil and on which teacher can convey the specific contents of the subject s/he wants to teach.

Whatever we want really to teach, whether it is literature, chemistry, mathematics, physics and so on, if we want to reach a pupil and *mark him/her inside*, we must pass our contents on these relational bridges that connect teacher and pupil in a game which stimulates both of them to creativity and search of personal solutions (Baldascini, *Vita da Adolescenti*, ed. Angeli, Milano 1993; Sternberg, *Stili di pensiero nell’apprendimento e nella soluzione dei problemi*, ed. Erickon, Trento 1997).

New didactics has long explained that it is indispensable to diversify teaching methods in order to improve all pupils, even those, who, at first glance, seem not to be very skilled.

Since ever, the ambition is that of making world citizens grow up and there’s no doubt that this should be the vocation of teachers. In this day and age, teaching at school represents a real challenge because school is called not only to teach, but above all to educate pupils. If, on one side, instruction implies teachers transferring contents to pupils, on the other one, to educate means exactly to take care of pupils’ feelings, something that teachers can do only if they themselves are trained to emotional and relational competences. The education of young people to feelings, what once was an almost exclusive task of families, nowadays needs the support of other important social agencies, in particular of the school at its different grades.

Nature has endowed human beings only with impulses and emotions, while *feelings must be learned culturally* through those relationships with meaningful persons, as teachers are for their pupils. Only an education to feelings can give young people the possibility not to depend exclusively from nature and to fully understand what is good and what is bad. In this way it would be possible to avoid many acts of violence, whether against oneself or against the others: a boy would understand, for example, the difference between courting a girl and raping her, or between arguing vigorously and acting violently. Feelings represent the warp on which the weft of contents we want to pass stands out and for this reason they must be kept in consideration when we communicate. Obviously, the comprehension of the emotional dimension does not ease only the communicational flow, which is useful for the student learning, in fact it is an opportunity also for the teachers to keep contact with those emotional experiences that enrich their inner world. These are the main reasons that encouraged the I.P.R. to address a good part of its strength to the study of the educational relationship and to share as much as possible the outcomes of its research. According to what the National and European guidelines in education and training request, the R.E.C. project target is to train and develop the so called “Soft skills”, which are those cross capabilities (emotional, relational and so on) increasingly required to today’s teachers. As I have already said, the project idea consisted in trying to realize a training on relational and emotional competences for teachers of all school grades, using our M.A.I. model enriched by the integrations of other models potentially used by the European partners.

Our challenge was to reach these results through a methodological approach that, as an innovative element, put the focus on the educational relationship considered as the target to observe for the comprehension of both intra and interpersonal world of the teacher and of the pupil.

In this text, edited by the professor Andreja Istenic Starcic, all the partners of the project, which were the I.P.R. - Institute of Relational Psychotherapy of Naples (Italy), University of Primorska (Slovenia), "Parthenope" University of Naples (Italy), Lenden skole og ressurscenter (Norway), Regional Department of Education - Pazardzhik (Bulgaria) and Bacau County School Inspectorate (Romania), presented the outcomes reached in two years of intense work with groups of teachers selected ad hoc in European schools of different grades.

As it can be deduced from this text, during the final phase, it was possible to gather the outcomes of the whole training process. Of course there are differences and similarities in the work made by the different groups, even if, ultimately, most of the results were satisfying. In short, most of the teachers showed to be, after the training, in a better contact with their own emotional world, stating that there were important consequences on the quality of their relationships and of the teaching approach in class.

The training worked as a “gym of being” for teachers and, beyond their statements, as it appears from the proposed questionnaires, working on the personal Self had positive effects on the professional one.

Many were those teachers who noticed more wellness in class thanks to the emotional climate they were able to create, after the training.

Many teachers expressed the need of a longer training and the need of including a training such as R.E.C. in the obligatory education for all teachers.

Some of them stated explicitly that they reached a deeper self knowledge, a greater empathic capability in all their relationships (with pupils, class, colleagues and pupils’ families) and new methodological instruments necessary to construct a developmental educational relationship.

I am grateful for all the work made and I want to conclude this short introduction thanking the European team for its professionalism and the self-denial it put in carrying this research project on. The success gained by all European partners, as the enthusiasm of the teachers who attended the groups of training shows, makes us hope that similar projects, trusting in a school that will be more and more sensible to young people, our future, can be realized soon.

*Luigi Baldascini*

## **Relationships at School. The Modello di Articolazione Intersistemica (M.A.I.) in Teacher Training.**

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### **Short Abstract**

*The aim of Relational and Emotional Competences at School project (R.E.C: 2017-1-IT02-KA201-036763) is to consider the importance of these “soft skills” in teacher training.*

*The theoretical framework of reference is the Luigi Baldascini’s Modello di Articolazione Intersistemica (M.A.I.), a model that is able to take into account the intra and interpersonal complexity present within the school macro-system.*

*Our action-research involved 275 teachers, who attended R.E.C. training, belonging to all school grades in Campania region (centre and province) (Female = 257; Male = 18) of the mean age of 51 years ( $M = 51.26$   $Sd = 6.45$ ) and indirectly their 1680 students (Female = 1092; Male = 588) of the mean age of 15 years ( $M = 15.06$ ;  $Sd = 2.21$ ).*

*Finally, in the research process, a “No R.E.C. teachers” control group was set up, consisting of 253 teachers, 33 males and 220 females, average aged 49 years ( $M = 49.66$   $Sd = 8.14$ ). The “No R.E.C. teachers” control group is made up of teachers who did not attend the R.E.C. training course.*

*Several R.E.C. questionnaires were administered in different phases of the training to register the influence of this intervention on the acquirement/ improvement of the above skills.*

*They are an innovative tool designed to analyze specific emotional and relational dimensions underlying the identified model.*

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<sup>1</sup> The authors conceived the present output together, but its single parts were produced as follows:

Luigi Baldascini: 3. Methodology and Activities

Letizia Servillo: 1. Foreword; 2. Objectives; 4. Subjects

Angela Montieri: 5. Tools: Questionnaires; 6. Procedura; 7. Conclusions and development prospect

## 1. FOREWORD

*«Oh, such a pathetic memory, those classes in which I was not there! How I felt them fluctuate, my pupils, in those days, easily astray while I tried to collect my strength. That feeling I was losing my class... I'm not here, they are not here anymore, we have given up. Anyway the time goes by. I play the role of the teaching one, they that of the listening ones [...] But I'm not here, damn it, today I'm not here, I'm somewhere else. What I'm saying doesn't take flesh, they don't give a shit of what they hear. No questions, no answers. I shy back behind the classical lecture...» (D. Pennac, *School Blues*).*

Relational and emotional competences in the school field have been the subject of a heated dispute for the last 20 years, inasmuch as they have been identified as meaningful interpersonal variables that are positively connected with the dynamics of teaching and learning processes (Bainbridge, Houser 2000).

Many studies (Norton, 1977; Andersen, 1979; Sorensen, 1989; Christophel, 1990; Wanzer & Frymier, 1999; Durlack et al., 2011) demonstrate that such competences can have effects, defined as “*teachers' effects*” (Chetty Friedman, & Rockoff, 2014; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010), on students' scholastic outcomes (Sabol and Pianta, 2012).

Such an influence could be especially due to creating a sense of belonging to the class group and a positive class climate (Allen, Kern, Vella-Brodrick, Hattie, & Waters, 2016; Krane, Karlsson, Ness & Binder, 2016).

It seems therefore that teacher training requires to acquire/ improve/ strengthen these “*soft skills*”, and it would be useful to introduce them already in the starting phase of teacher practice, (Hattie e Anderman, 2013, Wubbels et al. 2016), not only for special education teachers, but also for ordinary subject teachers.

However, too often, the inner world of the students, their motivation to study, their school drop-out are the only target of social interest, and we do not consider that this is only one of the possible observation points on the student-teacher-school-family relationships. We should indeed pay attention to teachers too – key figures in the school context – to their inner world, their stories, their emotions, their disillusionments and experiences. We cannot separate learning and teaching process from the affective and emotional sphere (Varisco, 2000).

The didactic relationship should be considered the core of the whole educational system, because it often reveals a strong evocative power. In fact it can awake in both its actors such emotional experiences that could interfere with the student's learning process (Baldascini, 1993).

A teacher training which takes into account the involvement of the teachers' emotional world in the didactic process should allow teachers to deepen their knowledge of Self, which is necessary for the development of teacher/student relationship.

According to Vitale it is indispensable to give teachers voice and social value, to help them in feeling more self confident and to trust more their own students (C. Vitale, 2014).

The new didactics has been clarifying for a long time that enhancing all students, including those who, at a first impression, can appear less talented, is indispensable. Of course, motivating all students to *knowledge*, both clever and less clever ones, cannot concern exclusively proficiency, annoying the past student generations, there is a need of "creating relationships" and of listening to in an empathic way. Only supporting students in their complexity as persons, we can be sure that we will contribute to their growth, which takes place exclusively when the cognitive sides and emotional ones of their personality are in harmony. Psychopedagogical research admits that learning needs a *relational bridge* to be built between teacher and student, a bridge on which one can pass the specific contents of the discipline s/he wants to teach. These researches demonstrate that, beyond the personal students' talents, learning cannot disregard the didactic relationship. Whatever one wants truly to teach, either literature or chemistry or mathematics or physics or any other subject, if s/he wants to reach the other and *mark him/her inside*, s/he must pass through a relational bridge, a feeling that connects student and teacher in a game in which both are prompted to creativity and to the search of personal solutions. (Baldascini, 1993, Sternberg, 1997).

A competent on relational and emotional levels teacher must be able of helping the student to differentiate her/himself from her/his group and for this reason the teacher must pay attention to possible divisions inside the group, must avoid that rigid subgroups arise in it, which could provoke sometimes even extreme conflicts and competitions. So, the teacher will try to lead pupils to cooperation to allow the birth of a real working group that can be considered as such only in an atmosphere of trust. The trust in fact allows each pupil to practice her/his own thinking in a differentiated way because the *we-mentality* remains as a container able to receive everyone's differences: only in this way the single pupils' personal Ego can freely express feelings and thoughts in a loyal and authentic dialogue that contribute to the arise of world citizens.

Considered the importance of these relational dynamics inside the school context, we conceived and developed the **R.E.C.** (Relational and Emotional Competences at school) project, whose fulfilment is financed by Erasmus Plus Program – Strategic Partnerships at school (**Project Code: 2017-1-IT02-KA201-036763**).

On a pilot basis, it intends to realize a new methodological approach addressed to teacher training, with the aim of improving the quality of school system, taking into a greater account

emotional and relational dynamics – *Relational and Emotional Competences (R.E.C.)* – which live up and mediate teaching and learning processes.

This project wants to offer teachers the instruments to achieve and develop their transversal competences (emotional, relational, etc.), so called “soft skills”, in order to make them upgrade the necessary self-knowledge and improve their own ability to motivate students to learning. This does not mean only to transmit the “know-how”, but also the “know-how to be with”, namely the “knowing to be” and the “knowing to be with” the others in a mutual interaction, putting on the line the most significant aspects of one’s own emotional and personal sphere. The aim is *to be a good school*, rather than *to make a good school*, giving the institution and its inhabitants back the capacity to cooperate and create a good society. For this purpose, *the only possible way is to humanize school, to make it develop and live* (C. Vitale, a teacher who took part to a Workshop on the topic: Discovering the emotional discovery, being a school instead of making school, Grundtvig Program, 2014).

It is clear that relation, communication and emotions are the key for a *training into the training* and for learning in general (Salzberger-Wittenberg et al., 1993). It comes out the importance of thinking and planning a positive learning environment in order to recover the communication, supporting in this way the dedication and the passion for the difficult job of teaching. In other words a motivated and highly qualified teaching staff is considered to be essential to guarantee the students a good education and to activate a more general change in the whole school environment.

Many authors highlight the importance of introducing in a continuous and stable way relational and emotional competences as subjects of teacher training. Here is what Mariani e Schillari write, for example (2011):

*Finally we realize that we are in front of a category of workers who are in big difficulties, even though this is not of any comfort for teachers. As all those professions that involve a big display, from the relational point of view, in fact, teaching is an emotionally tiring profession, because it implies that teachers everyday “fish” in themselves those competences, motivations and emotions which can be useful to establish the best contacts with the pupils. Then we must consider the pupils: unique, each with her/his own characteristics, sensitivity and peculiar problems. Traditional problems (liveliness, prevarication, inattention, indiscipline), but also new, unknown problems, which is difficult to avoid and even more difficult to face (bullying, aggressiveness, nihilism, arrogance). And now, to make it worse, there are families too: they are often harsh, disdainful towards teachers, always ready to defend vigorously their children, beyond any measure. How exhausting teaching! What to do? Is it part of teaching competences to front this kind of*

*situations? To teach does not mean only to increase information: pupils and children have their personal story, characterized by curiosity, desire and joy as well as by fears, difficulties and awkwardness expressed in several ways.*

Such in-formed teachers will inevitably transmit their students these skills, in a transversal way, entering into relationship with them. So, they can become a very relational and behavioural example, which is able to influence positively both the relationship the students have with school environment, and learning of basic and transversal competences.

Of course, according to such a training, it is essential to make room in oneself in order to be authentically ready to listen to the other in an active and empathic way: the reason is that one cannot work on her/his own professional Self without taking into account her/his own personal Self and vice versa; in a complex twine of emotional, relational, cognitive and motor aspects which, once harmonized, can promote and support the evolutionary development of oneself and of the other whom one enters into relation with, including the weight of responsibility that these aspects can bear on an educational and formative relationship.

*A good teacher works professionally on these two registers, moreover s/he uses the ability to manage relationships (at all levels) not only as a mean to promote the “learning of contents, but as a place/ tool to be learned itself” (Blandino, Granieri, 1995). However these competences cannot be mechanically explained, they must be experienced, internalized, “embodied”, because this is the only way to be able to “in-mark” (meant as marking inside, which is the etymological meaning of Italian ‘in-segnare’) one’s own pupils how to observe, to listen, to feel the others and oneself, to communicate, to think (before acting), to be patient, to keep in touch with their own feelings, to tolerate frustrations, to be tolerant with themselves, to hold anxiety, to cooperate, to reason from causes, to learn from experience, to change, to take their own responsibility in work and towards the others (ibid.).*

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

This action-research sets the following objectives:

- To develop an innovative methodological approach to train both beginning and already working teachers, from the Modello di Articolazione Intersistemica (M.A.I.) enhanced with the mutual exchange between the European partners (Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Norway) involved in R.E.C. at school Project;

- To support the motivation to care teachers’ professional and personal Self, as factors that can protect teachers from work-related stress and burnout, like many researches on this topic

demonstrate (Di Pietro, Rampazzo, 1997; Lodolo D'Oria et al., 2002; Pedditzi, 2005; Giusti, Di Fazio, 2008)

- To offer involved teachers a material and virtual (e-learning) space where they can think and share the difficulties characterizing their profession with Italian and foreign colleagues, to develop adequate problem solving strategies;

- To create a space where teachers can be supported in managing conflicts whether with the students or the families or, above all, the colleagues. In this regard, some Maslach's surveys highlight how essential is the role the complicated relationships with colleagues and principals play in the arise of burnout cases (Maslach, Leiter, 2000). Psychosocial factors in the working field can provoke two kinds of processes: the first one, a positive process, i.e. the professional fulfilment, which is preceded by protective factors as the support of colleagues and, on the other side, the second negative one, i.e. the worker depersonalization, characterized by negative factors as conflict (Demerouti, Bakekr, Nachreiner, Schaufeli, 2001). It is generally known that exchange and support of colleagues is a source of nourishment: if they are activated in form of self-help groups, this kind of working groups constitute an efficient mean of support to teachers. Ilaria Monticone (2018) underlines, in fact, that: *real burnout is not caused by the quantity and the complexity of the things that one must do, rather than by the lack of an adequate space where one can discuss and debate, giving sense and meaning to problematic experiences; the lack of an adequate outlet that can produce an emotional disease.*

- To identify a "kit of good practices", also thanks to the use of technology, sharing within Europe to verify, in socially and culturally different realities, the goodness of the proposed action. A kit meant to enrich the essential tool box, which stakes not only cognitive/ technical skills, but also and above all, teachers' emotional and relational competences.

### **3. METHODOLOGY AND ACTIVITIES**

#### **3.1 Methodology: Using the Modello di Articolazione Intersistemica for training**

The methodology we used, including the *circle time* technique, aims to propose teachers activities directed to the emotional learning, to shared and constant reflections between teachers/ colleagues. This methodology has enhanced a path that accompanied and exhorted in each participant the consciousness of her/his *being professional* skill in a complex system such as school. A path directed to help a harmonic way of acting, feeling and thinking both at an intra and an interpersonal level.

The theoretical framework at the basis of our teacher training is the Luigi Baldascini's **Modello di Articolazione Intersistemica** (M.A.I.).

The M.A.I. contemplates the existence of three intrapsychic systems: *the motor-instinctive system, the emotional system and the cognitive system*. Each one of them is characterized by its own *functional autonomy*. On a functional level each of the intrapsychic systems is isomorphic with a specific interpersonal system of the following three: *the peer system, the family system and the adult system*. The concept of isomorphy, under von Bertalanffy's General system theory (1968), recalls the idea of a functional analogy between different systems, according to which the motor-instinctive system matches isomorphically the system of peers, the emotional system matches isomorphically the family system and the cognitive system matches isomorphically the system of significant adults. (Baldascini, 1993, 2002).

Our intrapsychic world consists of all three systems together (motor-instinctive, emotional and cognitive ones), but in each individual it's the functioning of one of them to prevail among the other ones and this prevalence defines her/his type of personality functioning. On this basis we identify three personality types: *the cognitive type, the emotional type and the motor-instinctive type*; these types represent specific ways of thinking, feeling and acting, that function as a matrix and contribute to ground individuals' identity.<sup>2</sup>

According to Baldascini (Baldascini, 2017), to identify the personality functioning type is a basic skill teachers have to achieve during their training, in order to motivate pupils to study and learning. A good educational relationship is based on the comprehension of the pupil as a person and, for this reason, identifying her/his personality functioning type can represent a very useful aspect, especially if there are evident differences between the pupil's personality type and the teacher's one. The training of a teacher who would like to nourish her/his relational and emotional competences cannot disregard the identification of her/his own personality type. For this reason, the teacher training is oriented to increase teacher self awareness. The work then includes learning by doing, through techniques like simulations, human sculptures and role plays, in order to train teachers to study and to know themselves. An essential practice which will help teacher to divide up her/his attention between her/himself and the other, in such a way that s/he will develop a relational approach characterized by authenticity and constant consciousness. A pupil who does not feel comprehended by a teacher will more unlikely be motivated to study that teacher's subject. On the contrary, when teachers can understand the specific kind of motivation that pushes student toward knowledge, they will be able to provide her/him a good motivation to scholastic pledge.

Of course, being able to identify the personality functioning type of a pupil allows the comprehension of a large amount of individual characteristics, which increases the possibility for teacher/pupil relationship to evolve: *a teacher who won't try to connect the peculiar aspects of a*

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<sup>2</sup> To deepen the topic of personality types and of their isomorphy with interpersonal systems, see L. Baldascini, *Vita da Adolescenti*, Milano 2008 and L. Baldascini, *Legami terapeutici*, Milano 2013.

*student's personality (a behaviour, an emotion, a fantasy, an unease) to the general ones (general personality functioning type) will risk to see only theoretical, perhaps correct, but very probably far from the person's reality, meanings. In the didactic practice, asking oneself which is the inner force that pushes a pupil, which is the way s/he feels, thinks, behaves and connect the things s/he expresses, does and thinks to those general formal aspects, gives the didactic process a new dimension and orients it to evolving outcomes. (Baldascini, 2002, pp. 75-77).*

The personality type identification has no diagnostic purpose, its main goal is not to provide theoretic information, but a work methodology that takes into account the necessity of building an evolving relationship in the specific context of school (Baldascini et. al, 1985). The Intellectual Work 03 "Training and R.E.C", which is planned in the project, was structured exactly on this model.

### **3.2 Training and R.E.C.: phases and methods**

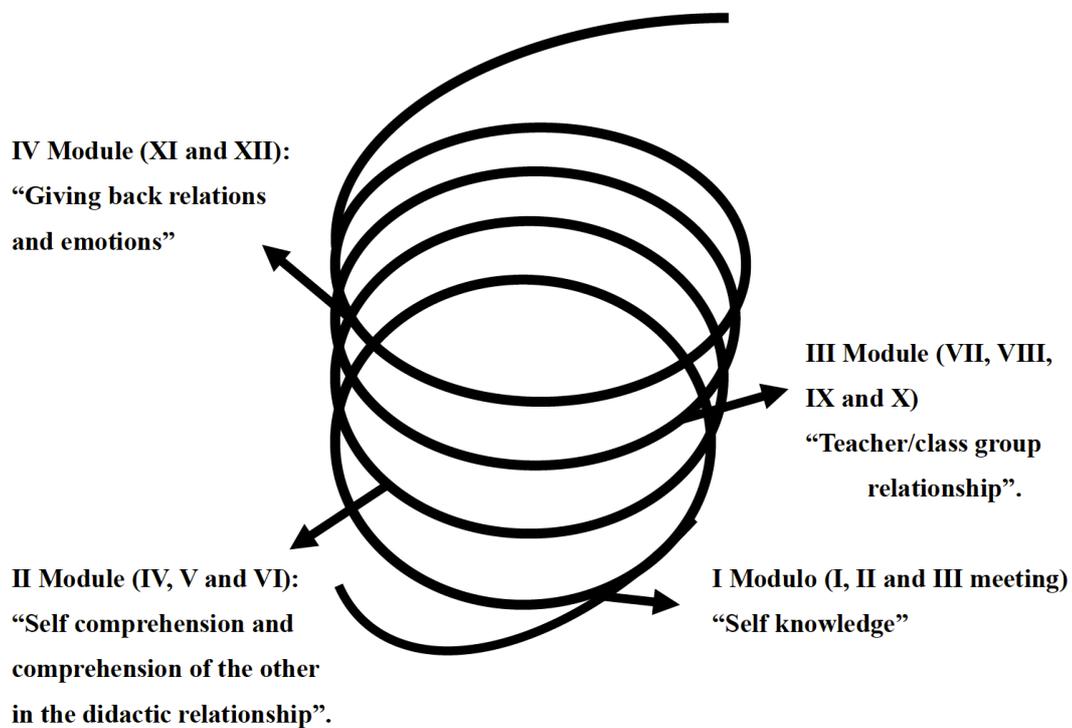
The training path, which we structured for teachers, includes 12 meetings in *circle time*, lasting each three hours, taking place every two week and then 14 online meetings, using the project e-learning platform (total amount: 52 hours of training distributed in 26 meetings).

The meetings in *circle time*, then, were structured dividing them in four modules, following the conception of the spiral.

In fact, we refer to spiral since, as an archetype, in the common image it is the symbol of the evolution, with the expansion to the outside (centrifugal motion) and the involution to the inside (centripetal motion).

At each spiral ring corresponds a specific training module, which is never closed in itself but it is susceptible of constant revisions, considerations, negotiations and actions. Along the spiral we can proceed on an evolutionary path in such a way that allows to co-build shared and acceptable contents and to redefine them.

Each module intends to activate continuous processes of negotiations and considerations: there are moments dedicated to listening and thinking about a specific topic/ input (a movie fragment, a book passage, a picture...) proposed both by the trainer or by the group; this sharing allows the group each time to negotiate altogether the meanings and the signifiers of the proposed contents, in order to create a common jargon, to support both the individual and the group in jumping up on the next level, anyway without never leaving completely the preceding one.



The trainer uses movie, literary and art inputs to deepen the proposed topics and to lead the group to their understanding. Using figurative arts may well encourage “multiple intelligences” (Gardner) (visual-spatial intelligence, musical-rhythmic intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, linguistic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, etc.) through a more successful and involving kind of training thanks to the use of these experiential, imaginary and metaphorical languages. During all the meetings, the trainer gives teachers the floor: s/he puts her/himself in the position of the listener, who welcomes, understands, does not offer solutions or suggestions, but s/he activates the communication, encourages reflections, holding the relational connections, making arise questions and new opportunities of dialogue and discussion. In this way s/he positions her/himself both “inside” and “outside” the group (Rogers, 1970): *participation is sweet, not intrusive. The operator keeps her/his expertise awake: her/his role most of times restricts itself to mediate, s/he guarantees respect and the circulation and confidentiality of the speeches* (Sellenet, 2004). Doing so, *the professional’s look is subject to a double slipping: it becomes from technical to relational* (ibid.).

“Work group is a contribution for each participant to make emerge many aspects, that s/he generally ascribes to others but that, on the contrary, s/he can recognize as her/ his own. In this way, the group works, on one side, as a prism that breaks up the inner variety of each component and, on the other side, as a mirror that gives back, often amplifying it, what the individual projects on other people. One who assumes this broken up variety from the group, helps considerably the discovery of her/his own identity. It is essentially based on the recognizing of one’s intrapsychic variety, reflected on the group interpersonal variety”. (Baldascini, 1994).

#### 4. Subjects

The action-research took place at several Neapolitan schools, both in the city and in the suburbs, belonging to different grades (kindergartens, primaries, I and II level of secondary schools).

It involved 275 teachers, 257 women and 18 men, average age around 51 years ( $M = 51.26$ ;  $Sd = 6.45$ ) and indirectly their 1680 students, 1092 girls and 588 boys, average age 15 years ( $M = 15.06$ ;  $Sd = 2.21$ ).

More specifically, among 275 teachers composing the research sample and having taught for an average age of 21 years ( $M = 21.73$ ;  $Sd = 9.12$ ): 31 teach at kindergarten, 92 at primary school, 52 at I level of secondary school and 100 at II level of secondary school; 241 of them are ordinary subject teachers and 34 are special education teachers; 70 have got a high school diploma, 107 have got a degree, 6 have got a master degree and 92 claim they have another kind of certification (teaching qualification).

Finally, in the research process, it has been set up a control group, the “No R.E.C. teachers”, made up of 253 teachers, 33 men and 220 women, average age 49 years ( $M = 49.66$ ;  $Sd = 8.14$ ) with a mean teaching experience of approximately 19 years ( $M = 19.56$ ;  $Sd = 8.14$ ). The control group “No R.E.C. teachers” is composed of teachers who did not take part to training course R.E.C..

More specifically, among 253 “No R.E.C. teachers”: 22 teach at kindergarten, 70 at primary school, 67 at middle school and 94 at high school; 223 of them are ordinary subject teachers, 29 are special education teachers and 1 participates in the administrative staff; 37 have got a high school diploma, 149 have got a degree, 3 have got a master degree and 64 claim they have another kind of certification (teaching qualification).

#### 5. TOOLS: QUESTIONNAIRES

Because of the innovative character of this research and of the covered topics during the teacher training, we used numerous assessment tools. Comparing and exchanging good practices with the project partners, in fact, a **Schoolkit (output 01)** was created: i.e. the collection of questionnaires administered during the training to carry out an initial, an intermediate and a final assessment of some areas concerning the teacher-students relationship, analyzing not only the teachers' point of view but also their pupils' one.

Namely, it has agreed to use four types of questionnaires as assessment tools for certain dimensions of emotional and relational aspects inside the class group (teachers/ pupils).

### **5.1 The Relational and Emotional Competences Questionnaire (RECQ) for teachers**

It is the questionnaire that we selected and administered both to the sample of participating in R.E.C. training teachers, in three (initial, intermediate and final) training phases, and to the control group (composed of those teachers who did not attend the course) to which it has been administered only twice (at the starting and final training phases). This questionnaire has been derived from SECTRS (Social-Emotional Competences Teacher Rating Scale), adapted and reorganized, taking into account the cultural differences of the involved countries in the research and considering the several needs of the research itself. The questionnaire (RECQ) is composed, indeed, of 4 scales which consist each of 6 items.

The first scale explores Self awareness and Self management and it concerns the capacity of recognizing, assessing and managing one's own emotions and behaviour in school everyday life and in view of a target to reach. Besides it assesses the capacity of knowing oneself, one's needs, interests, values, motivations and the capacity of managing stress and frustrations in class.

The second and the third scales, both focused on interpersonal relationships (Relational skills), are the teacher-pupil-group class relationship scale and the interpersonal relationships with adults scale, they assess the cooperative capacity and the ability of building positive and meaningful relationships with students and adults (school staff and families).

The fourth scale concerns the concept of social awareness which is defined as the capacity of being empathic, sensitive to individual differences and of taking other's point of view.

Furthermore, we supposed that each of these four scales corresponds to an aspect of Baldascini's Modello di Articolazione Intersistemica (M.A.I.): respectively, the first to the harmony of the three intrapsychic systems (emotional, cognitive and instinctive); the second and the third to the way relationships function in the three interpersonal systems (family, peers and adults); the fourth to the capacity of creating relational bridges through empathy and active listening to.

### **5.2 Observational grids "well-being in class group" only for R.E.C. teachers with pupils aged between 3 and 10 years**

The tool - *Observational grids "well-being in class group" only for R.E.C. teachers with pupils from 3 to 10 years old* – has been derived from the "Well-being in class group questionnaire" (Polito, 2000), composed of 100 items, of which we selected and adapted to our research needs only 17. We established to administer this tool three times during R.E.C. training (at initial, intermediate and final training phases). Teachers were anyway asked for using these grids as occasions for thinking about and observing their class groups.

### **5.3 The Relational and Emotional Competences Questionnaire (RECQ) for students**

This is the questionnaire we administered to students of those teachers who attended the training course; the students are aged between 11 and 19 years.

This tool derives from SECQ - The Social-Emotional Competences Questionnaire - (Zhou & Ee, 2012) which has been adapted and reorganized taking into account the innovative character of the research and the covered topics in the training.

The questionnaire (RECQ) for students is composed, indeed, of three scales, each of which consists of 6 items.

The first scale explores self awareness and self management; the second is focused on interpersonal relationships (Relational skills), the so called teacher-pupil-group class relationship scale and the third scale concerns the concept of social awareness, defined as the capacity of being empathic and of listening to actively.

Teachers administered their students the questionnaire twice (at starting and final training phase), in order to launch a reflection in class on the emotional and relational competences topic, starting exactly from the discussion about the proposed assessment tool.

### **5.4 The Training Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire for teachers (in the last meeting of training)**

The Training Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire for teachers has been administered at the training final phase to all teachers who attended the training course. It is composed of 9 items and it is meant to explore the coherence of R.E.C. training contents with the announced aims, the initial expectations and the professional interests; moreover it assesses the feasibility of covered topics in work context, in the relationship with pupils, families and colleagues and, lastly, it analyzes the correspondence of educational contents compared to the reported upgrade needs.

Each tool, in order to take into account the social cultural differences, includes a personal data sheet where the teacher or the pupil reported some meaningful data.

Moreover, all used questionnaires in the research are organized on Likert scale, from 1 to 4 points, according to which teachers or students expressed their dis/agreement level (1 = never; 2 = sometimes; 3 = often; 4 = always) about a certain number of statements exploring some dimensions of emotional and relational aspects in class, except for the Training Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire in which teachers expressed their dis/agreement level (1 = never; 2 = sometimes; 3 = often; 4 = always) about a numbers of statements exploring the coherence of R.E.C. training contents.

## 6 PROCEDURE

The analysis procedure of data we used in the case of RECQ for teachers and RECQ for students is the scale method (scalding). It consists of several procedures set to evaluate complex and not directly observable concepts, such as some dimensions of emotional and relational aspects, present in class and concerning both teachers and students, can be considered.

On the contrary, for what concerns the observation grids and the customer satisfaction questionnaires, two containing indexes tools, the analysis of data was realized taking into account the single items, meant as indexes of wellness and of the class climate – in the case of the first tool – and the single items meant as types of indexes indicating the training customer satisfaction – in the case of the second tool.

### 6.1 PROCEDURE: ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF THE RELATIONAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCES QUESTIONNAIRE (RECQ) FOR TEACHERS

*Tab. 1 – Cronbach Alpha value of RECQ*

|                         | <b>All</b> | <b>Initial</b> | <b>Intermediate</b> | <b>Final</b> |
|-------------------------|------------|----------------|---------------------|--------------|
| <b>N</b>                | 1315       | 528            | 265                 | 522          |
| <b>Cronbach's Alpha</b> | 0.909      | 0.908          | 0.878               | 0.919        |

The Relational and Emotional Competences Questionnaire (RECQ) for teachers presents a good Cronbach Alpha value, 0.909 (Tab. 1), we had to eliminate only one item (item 2) because it displayed low reliability in all three administrations.

*Tab. 2 – Comparison among results of RECQ for teachers administered in three different times (T1, T2, T3)*

| <b>R.E.C. teachers</b> | <b>Initial questionnaire</b> | <b>Intermediate questionnaire</b> | <b>Final questionnaire</b> |
|------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>N</b>               | 275                          | 265                               | 265                        |
| <b>Mean</b>            | 75.2                         | 76.07                             | 76.62                      |
| <b>Std. Deviation</b>  | 7.46                         | 7.36                              | 8.51                       |

The mean questionnaire score has a ranging between a maximum of 96 (answers 4 to all items) and a minimum of 24 (answers 1 to all items). The Tab. 2 shows an average score for the different administration times which has a ranging between 75.2 of the first administration time and

76.62 of the last one. This value indicates that teachers, during their training, acquired a light improvement in relational and emotional competences, also considering the short time period.

*Tab. 3 – Distribution of mean scores of RECQ for teachers per scale according to the result of initial administration (T1)*

| <b>Scale</b>   | <b>Mean T1</b> |
|--|----------------|
| Scale of Self awareness/ Self management (harmony of intrapsychic systems) | 3.22           |
| Scale of teacher-pupil-class group relationship (interpersonal systems)    | 3.19           |
| Scale of interpersonal relationships with adults (colleagues, families)    | 3.25           |
| Scale of social awareness (active and empathic listening)                  | 3.21           |

As the initial administration (T1) Tab. 3 shows, teachers who attended R.E.C. course get respectively a mean score of: 3.22 concerning the Scale of Self awareness/ Self management (harmony of intrapsychic systems); 3.19 concerning the Scale of teacher-pupil-class group relationship (interpersonal systems); 3.25 concerning the Scale of interpersonal relationships with adults (colleagues, families) and 3.21 concerning the Scale of social awareness (active and empathic listening).

From a comparison of the 4 scales according to the initial administration of the questionnaire, the scale with the maximum score is the scale of the interpersonal relationship with the adult system, but we must notice that, in specific items, teachers met difficulties in having functional interactions above all with their colleagues (as for instance the highest mean scores of M T1 show – 3.53 in both item 9 – “I feel so cheap to my colleagues” – and item 3 – “It is very difficult for me to build positive relationships with my colleagues” –).

*Tab. 4 – Distribution of mean scores of RECQ for teachers per scale according to the result of final administration (T3)*

| <b>Scale</b>   | <b>Mean T3</b> |
|--|----------------|
| Scale of Self awareness/ Self management (harmony of intrapsychic systems) | 3.54           |
| Scale of teacher-pupil-class group relationship (interpersonal systems)    | 3.27           |
| Scale of interpersonal relationships with adults (colleagues, families)    | 3.28           |
| Scale of social awareness (active and empathic listening)                  | 3.32           |

As the final administration (T3) Tab. 4 shows, teachers who attended R.E.C. course get respectively a mean score of: 3.54 concerning the Scale of Self awareness/ Self management (harmony of intrapsychic systems); 3.27 concerning the Scale of teacher-pupil-class group relationship (interpersonal systems); 3.28 concerning the Scale of interpersonal relationships with adults (colleagues, families) and 3.32 concerning the Scale of social awareness (active and empathic listening).

Comparing the 4 scales, it is clear as, on the contrary of the initial administration of questionnaire, in the final one the scale with the maximum score is the Scale of Self awareness/ Self management.

*Tab. 5 – Distribution of mean scores of RECQ for teachers comparison between initial administration (T1) and final administration (T3)*

| <b>Scale</b>   | <b>Mean T1</b> | <b>Mean T3</b> |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| Scale of Self awareness/ Self management (harmony of intrapsychic systems) | 3.22           | 3.54           |
| Scale of teacher-pupil-class group relationship (interpersonal systems)    | 3.19           | 3.27           |
| Scale of interpersonal relationships with adults (colleagues, families)    | 3.25           | 3.28           |
| Scale of social awareness (active and empathic listening)                  | 3.21           | 3.32           |

The Tab. 5 shows that teachers who attended the training course had a positive, even if light, change between the beginning and the end of the training in regards to the emotional and relational aspects explored with the questionnaire (RECQ).

Namely, the comparison between the initial and the final questionnaire administration shows that the Scale of Self awareness/ Self management gained the highest score of all scales. At the end of the training, teachers participating to R.E.C. results more able to manage their own emotional world and stress.

## **6.2 PROCEDURE: ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF RELATIONAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCES QUESTIONNAIRE (RECQ) FOR TEACHERS, CONTROL GROUP (NO R.E.C. TEACHERS)**

*Tab. 6 – Total scores No R.E.C. teachers, comparison of results between two administration times (T1, T2)*

| <b>No R.E.C. teachers</b> | <b>Initial questionnaire</b> | <b>Final questionnaire</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>N</b>                  | 253                          | 257                        |
| <b>Mean</b>               | 72,45                        | 73,15                      |
| <b>Std. Deviation</b>     | 10,09                        | 9,74                       |

*Tab. 7 – Mean scores per scale (RECQ) administered to No R.E.C. teachers, comparison of results between two administration times (T1, T2)*

| <b>Scale</b>   | <b>Mean T1</b> | <b>Mean T2</b> |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| Scale of Self awareness/ Self management (harmony of intrapsychic systems) | 3.51           | 3.47           |
| Scale of teacher-pupil-class group relationship (interpersonal systems)    | 3.08           | 3.10           |
| Scale of interpersonal relationships with adults (colleagues, families)    | 3.14           | 3.15           |
| Scale of social awareness (active and empathic listening)                  | 3.08           | 3.07           |

As Tab. 7 shows, in the initial administration of the RECQ, the 253 teachers, who did not attend the training, got respectively a mean score of: 3.51 as regards the Scale of Self awareness/ Self management (harmony of intrapsychic systems); 3.08 regarding the Scale of teacher-pupil-class group relationship (interpersonal systems); 3.14 as regards the Scale of interpersonal relationships with adults (colleagues, families) and again 3.08 regarding the Scale of social awareness (active and empathic listening).

Comparing the 4 scales, it is clear that, in this first questionnaire administration, the scale where they achieved the maximum score is the Self awareness/ Self management scale.

Concerning the second questionnaire administration, on the contrary, not attending R.E.C. training teachers achieved respectively a mean score of: 3.47 as regards the Scale of Self awareness/ Self management (harmony of intrapsychic systems); 3.10 regarding the Scale of teacher-pupil-class group relationship (interpersonal systems); 3.15 as regards the Scale of interpersonal relationships with adults (colleagues, families) and finally 3.07 regarding the Scale of social awareness (active and empathic listening).

Comparing the 4 scales, it is clear that, in this second questionnaire administration too, the scale where they achieved the maximum score is the Self awareness/ Self management scale.

The comparison between the questionnaire administrations in two different times shows that teachers who did not attend R.E.C. course had no significant change for what concerns the explored emotional and relational aspects and that in both administrations the maximum score was achieved in the Self awareness/ Self management scale.

*Tab. 8 – Comparison between the scores of the RECQ administered to R.E.C. teachers and the RECQ administered to No R.E.C. teachers (control group) according to the two administration times*

|                           | <b>Initial questionnaire</b> | <b>Initial questionnaire</b> | <b>Final questionnaire</b> | <b>Final questionnaire</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>No R.E.C. teachers</b> | <b>R.E.C. teachers</b>       | <b>No R.E.C. teachers</b>    | <b>R.E.C. teachers</b>     | <b>No R.E.C. teachers</b>  |
| <b>N</b>                  | 275                          | 253                          | 265                        | 257                        |
| <b>Mean</b>               | 75.2                         | 72.45                        | 76.62                      | 73.15                      |
| <b>Std. Deviation</b>     | 7.46                         | 10.09                        | 8.51                       | 9.74                       |

*Tab. 9 – Comparison between the mean scores of the different scales in RECQ administered to R.E.C. teachers and the RECQ administered to No R.E.C. teachers (control group) according to the two administration times*

| <b>Scala</b>   | <b>Media Initial questionnaire REC teachers</b> | <b>Media Initial questionnaire No REC teachers</b> | <b>Media Final questionnaire REC teachers</b> | <b>Media Final questionnaire No REC teachers</b> |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| Scale of Self awareness/ Self management (harmony of intrapsychic systems) | 3.22  | 3.51   | 3.54  | 3.47   |
| Scale of teacher-pupil-class group relationship (interpersonal systems)    | 3.19  | 3.08   | 3.27  | 3.10   |
| Scale of interpersonal relationships with adults (colleagues, families)    | 3.25  | 3.14   | 3.28  | 3.15   |
| Scale of social awareness  | 3.21  | 3.08   | 3.32  | 3.07   |

The Tab. 9 describing the comparison between the mean scores achieved by attending R.E.C. training teachers in all scales of the RECQ and the mean scores achieved by not attending R.E.C. training teachers (control group) in all scales of the RECQ, even though the differences between the two groups are not so significant, we can state that teachers who did not attend the course achieved a stable mean score in both scales of Interpersonal relationships and of Social awareness, whereas a very light change takes place for the scale of Self awareness/ Self management, remaining anyway the scale with the highest score of all four ones. On the contrary, as regards teachers who attended R.E.C. course, we can state a light positive change between the initial and the final RECQ administration, concerning the explored emotional and relational aspects in all four scales, particularly in the Self awareness/ Self management one, which achieves the highest score in the final questionnaire administration, while in the initial questionnaire administration the highest score belonged to the scale of Interpersonal relationships with adults.

In both cases of R.E.C. teachers group and No R.E.C. teachers group the scale of Self awareness/ Self management achieves the highest score, but only in the case of R.E.C. teachers group we can observe a light change between the initial and the final questionnaire administration.

### **6.3 PROCEDURE: ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF THE OBSERVATIONAL GRIDS “WELL-BEING CLASS GROUP” ONLY FOR R.E.C. TEACHERS WITH PUPILS AGED BETWEEN 3 AND 10 YEARS**

On 275 teachers involved in the research, 113 teachers, all women, average age around 51 years ( $M = 51.77$ ;  $Sd = 6.45$ ) and with an average teaching experience of 23 years ( $M = 23.73$ ;  $Sd = 8.25$ ) have pupils aged between 3 and 10 years. These teachers were administered the grids to observe “wellbeing in class group” too.

In particular the 113 teachers of this subsample are divided in the following way: 100 are ordinary subject teachers and 13 are special education teachers; 63 have got a high school diploma, 30 have got a degree, 2 have got a master degree and 18 claim to have another kind of certification (teaching qualification or PhD).

*Tab. 10 – Comparison between mean scores per item in initial and final administration of the Observation grid “well-being in class group” only for R.E.C. teachers with pupils aged between 3 and 10 years*

| Observing my class group I notice that my pupils..... |  | Initial      |             | Final        |             |
|---|--|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
|   |  | M            | SD          | M            | SD          |
| Item 1  | ... are enthusiastic when they go to school                        | 3.46         | .627        | 3.51         | .502        |
| Item 2  | ... show interest in the activities carried out in the classroom   | 3.23         | .500        | 3.34         | .515        |
| Item 3  | ... at recess, demonstrate to have fun together                    | 3.59         | .607        | 3.64         | .502        |
| Item 4  | ... are inclined to group work                                     | 3.41         | .607        | 3.55         | .538        |
| Item 5  | ... are able to collaborate in class with their classmates         | 3.12         | .530        | 3.30         | .575        |
| Item 6  | ... defend each other against an injustice                         | 2.78         | .608        | 2.91         | .618        |
| Item 7  | ... help each other  | 2.94         | .539        | 3.11         | .564        |
| Item 8  | ... after an argument, they finally are able to reach a compromise | 2.66         | .592        | 2.77         | .615        |
| Item 9  | ... are able to help their classmates in need                      | 3.04         | .618        | 3.15         | .654        |
| Item 10   | ... are able to respect their classmates' ideas                    | 2.63         | .503        | 2.83         | .584        |
| Item 11   | ... are able to respect their classmates' feelings                 | 2.81         | .460        | 2.96         | .599        |
| Item 12   | ... are able to do constructive proposals when conflicts emerge    | 2.56         | .611        | 2.67         | .602        |
| Item 13   | ... share their own things   | 3.00         | .641        | 3.09         | .709        |
| Item 14   | ... cooperate with others for the common good                      | 2.87         | .605        | 2.99         | .640        |
| Item 15   | ... express their own feelings openly, without hurting others      | 2.60         | .606        | 2.86         | .664        |
| Item 16   | ... are able to recognize their own emotions                       | 2.77         | .627        | 2.88         | .652        |
| Item 17   | ... are able to recognize their classmates' emotions               | 2.69         | .599        | 2.79         | .637        |
|   | <b>Total score</b>   | <b>47.52</b> | <b>5.80</b> | <b>49.53</b> | <b>6.57</b> |

Analyzing the observation grid “well-being in class group” it emerges that items with respectively the maximum mean score and the minimum mean score are the same ones in both the initial and the final administration. Namely, they are item 3 “Observing my class group, I notice that at recess my pupils demonstrate to have fun together” (M T1 = 3.59; M T3 = 3.64) and item 12 “Observing my class group, I notice that my pupils are able to do constructive proposals when conflicts emerge” (M T1 = 2.56 ; M T3 = 2.67).

Comparing the total mean scores of the initial grid administration with the total mean scores of the final one, some highly significant differences become evident, it emerges that teachers, in the end of the training, observed an increase of well-being in class group (initial total mean score = 47.52 and final total mean score = 49.53).

Namely, teachers have noticed that, in the end of R.E.C. course they attended, pupils inclined more to group work (item 4 M T1 = 3.41 M T3 = 3.55); were more able to collaborate with their

classmates (item 5 M T1 = 3.12 MT3 = 3.30); helped more each other (item 7 M T1 = 2.94 MT3 = 3.11) and expressed their own feelings more openly, without hurting others (item 15 M T1 = 2.60 M T3 = 2.86); were more able to respect their classmates' ideas (item 10 M T1 = 2.63 M T3 = 2.83) and others' feelings (item 11 M T1 = 2.81 MT3 = 2.96).

#### **6.4 PROCEDURE: ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF THE RELATIONAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCES QUESTIONNAIRE (RECQ) FOR STUDENTS**

The data analysis of the Relational and Emotional Competences Questionnaire (RECQ) for students, administered to 1680 students (1092 girls and 588 boys), aged between 11 and 19 years, was realized considering the total amount of the mean scores of each of the three scales in two different administration times (T1 and T2).

The Relational and Emotional Competences Questionnaire (RECQ) for students presents a fair Cronbach Alpha value which is 0.712.

*Tab. 11 – Mean scores per scale according to the first questionnaire administration (T1)*

| <b>Scale</b>   | <b>Mean T1</b> |
|--|----------------|
| Scale of Self awareness/ Self management (harmony of intrapsychic systems)         | 2.60           |
| Scale of teacher-pupil-class group relationship (harmony of interpersonal systems) | 2.85           |
| Scale of social awareness (active and empathic listening)                          | 2.45           |

As Tab. 11, collecting the results of the first time questionnaire administration, shows students achieve a mean score of 2.60 in the Scale of Self awareness/ Self management (harmony of intrapsychic systems); a mean score of 2.85 as regards to the Scale of teacher-pupil-class group relationship (harmony of interpersonal systems) and a mean score of 2.45 in the Scale of social awareness (active and empathic listening). From which is clear that the Scale of teacher-pupil-class group relationship (harmony of interpersonal systems) has the highest score.

*Tab. 12 – Mean scores per scale according to the second questionnaire administration (T2)*

| <b>Scale</b>   | <b>Mean T2</b> |
|--|----------------|
| Scale of Self awareness/ Self management (harmony of intrapsychic systems)         | 2.60           |
| Scale of teacher-pupil-class group relationship (harmony of interpersonal systems) | 2.89           |
| Scale of social awareness (active and empathic listening)                          | 2.50           |

As Tab. 12, collecting the results of the second time questionnaire administration, shows students achieve a mean score of 2.60 in the Scale of Self awareness/ Self management (harmony of intrapsychic systems); a mean score of 2.89 as regards to the Scale of teacher-pupil-class group relationship (harmony of interpersonal systems) and a mean score of 2.50 in the Scale of social awareness (active and empathic listening). From which is clear that the Scale of Interpersonal relationships has the highest score.

*Tab. 13 – Comparison between mean scores in the initial (T1) questionnaire administration and in the final (T2) one*

| Scale  | Mean T1 | Mean T2 |
|--|---------|---------|
| Scale of Self awareness/ Self management (harmony of intrapsychic systems)         | 2.60    | 2.60    |
| Scale of teacher-pupil-class group relationship (harmony of interpersonal systems) | 2.85    | 2.89    |
| Scale of social awareness (active and empathic listening)                          | 2.45    | 2.50    |

The Tab. 13 shows that there is a little positive change concerning emotional and relational aspects explored with the RECQ in those students whose teachers attended the training course.

Namely, comparing the initial questionnaire administration results with those of the final one, it emerges that the scale with the most positive results is the Scale of social awareness. In the end of the training, students whose teachers attended R.E.C. course, are a little more empathic and able of active listening to (as the mean of total scores for the item 18 “I understand why my classmates act the way they do” shows – T1 = 2.48 and T2 = 2.56) and moreover, students claim that they can better manage critic situation which happen in class; in the final administration they state to be more interested in the emotions that circulate in class (for instance item 2: “I pay attention to the emotional climate in the class group” M T1 = 2.62 and M T2 = 2.73).

#### **6.5 PROCEDURE: ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF TRAINING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS (IN THE LAST MEETING OF TRAINING)**

Overall, teachers who attended R.E.C. course are very satisfied, as it emerges from the mean scores of each item composing the Training customer satisfaction questionnaire administered in the end of the training. In fact, teachers were asked to express their dis/ agreement degree – on a Likert scale from 1 to 4 (1 = not at all; 2 = somewhat; 3 = enough; 4 = very) – about a number of

statements exploring the congruence between R.E.C. training contents and teachers' initial expectations or the set goals and the applicability of covered topics in the educational and training practice. The mean scores, the highest 3.71 and the lowest 3.19, suggests a high degree of satisfaction.

Namely teachers claim they are very satisfied with the training in general, with the covered topics (item 9  $M = 3.71$ ;  $Sd = .494$ ) and with the congruence of the topics to the declared training goals (item 1  $M = 3.71$ ;  $Sd = .457$ ) sustaining that attending the course brought them a professional and personal enrichment (item 5  $M = 3.71$ ;  $Sd = .513$ ). Moreover they affirm it would be useful to include R.E.C. training in the compulsory training for all teachers (item 6  $M = 3.70$ ;  $Sd = .515$ ), the covered topics have been congruent with their initial expectations (item 2  $M = 3.62$ ;  $Sd = .526$ ), with their educational interests (item 3  $M = 3.62$   $Sd = .548$ ) and very useful for interacting with pupils, families and colleagues in the work context (item 4  $M = 3.62$ ;  $Sd = .534$ ). Teachers are also satisfied with the organization aspects, with used materials (item 8  $M = 3.55$ ;  $Sd = .551$ ) and eventually they believe time has been sufficient to deepen the proposed topics (item 7  $M = 3.19$ ;  $Sd = .613$ ).

## **7 CONCLUSIONS AND DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS**

As regards to the reliability and the validity of questionnaires, they resulted satisfying and this make us believe they can be used, in the future, as dynamic and flexible tools suitable to evaluate relational and emotional dimensions at school.

Exactly because of the possibility the tools offer to analyze emotional and relational dynamics in the class group we believe they can have a number of application consequences in several school contexts. Even though we must underline that questionnaires request to be further examined to verify their reliability and validity in particular in their specific scales.

Satisfying results emerged also regarding the quality and the effectiveness of the training proposed to teachers. Thanks to this training that takes into account emotional and relational concepts, in fact, teachers showed a better contact with their own emotional world, with an important consequence for the quality of relationships and of their teaching manners. Moreover this training brought positive, even if minimal, effects on pupils aged between 11 and 19 years and even more evident effects of well-being in class on pupils aged between 3 and 10 years. We can connect this fact with the greater or smaller achievement of the R.E.C. training by the teachers. Namely, we have to take into account the school grade where teachers work, because in kindergarten and at primary school, teachers working in the same class are just a few and, sometimes, all those ones belonging to the same class attended the R.E.C. course, while at the secondary school, both the first

and the second level, in the same class work several teachers and usually not all of them attended the R.E.C. course.

So in a future prospect, to evaluate better this effect, it would be important to involve a greater number of teachers working in the same class in the training, in order to check this variable.

Furthermore, questionnaires show how working on the personal Self brings effects on the professional Self, teachers underlined an improvement of well-being in class, above all thanks to an improvement of emotional climate in class, of what they are of course an interactive part. The training worked well as a “gym of being” for teachers who claim they are very satisfied, they feel enriched very much both from a professional and a personal point of view. They express however the need to include R.E.C training in compulsory training for all teachers and also to extend training times. Moreover they would like to attend a second edition of R.E.C. training to deepen the complex and structured M.A.I. program as regards to relational and emotional competences.

Given our research results, we could suppose a continuation of this work on the education at school for longer periods. It would be desirable a long or even lifelong training, because working on one’s own personal and professional Self is a lifelong work, that all teachers should do. We mean a training that aspires to a real evolutionary process for teachers, through the strengthening and the possibility to overcome the goals of providing awareness and achievement of basic emotional and relational competences, goals that we consider already reached enough with the R.E.C. project. Moreover it would be interesting to try in activating a school system change extending the R.E.C. training also to the other systems belonging to school context, which are in a complex reciprocal interaction (administrative staff, pupils and family in addition to teacher system.)

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# **The role of emotions and relationships in teaching: Transforming professional practice through reflective training**

by Antonia Cunti and Alessandra Priore<sup>1</sup>

## **Abstract**

The chapter is developed in two parts. The first aims to frame the teachers training conducted within the project Erasmus Plus R.E.C. in a theoretical-methodological framework supported by international studies. The second focuses on the training path, discusses the results achieved and identifies future perspectives.

The topic of emotions and relationships at school in recent years is acquiring a growing space in pedagogical literature (Baldacci , 2008; Riva , 2015). Their centrality for the purposes of successful teaching and learning is ascertained by several studies of different disciplinary fields (Damasio, 2000; 2007). From the point of view of teacher behavior, the emotional dimension is no longer linked to character aspects but to specific competences that all teachers should possess. First of all, it is fundamental to know how to recognize one's own and others' emotions and to be able to manage them within the educational and didactic relationship. Teaching is a profession of high emotional intensity and, therefore, it is essential to train teachers to become aware of the emotional exchanges that take place within the classroom and to be able to direct them towards conditions of well-being for the students and for themselves (Hargreaves, 1998; 2000). In the training realized were used reflexive methodologies (Schön, 1983; 1987) that can be included in the theoretical approach of the Transformative Learning (Mezirow, 1991). The aim of the training is not to acquire knowledge but to achieve a change in perspective. International studies show that teachers tend to pay attention to the emotional aspects and the relationship, especially when they are in difficult situations in following the ordinary course of the didactic path (Larrivee, 2008; 2010). Above all negative emotions and relational difficulties are taken into consideration when they represent an obstacle to achieving the objectives; the leap to be accomplished, instead, consists in seeing them as a constitutive component of educational and didactic processes and also fundamental tools able to feed students a positive approach towards study and towards themselves as cultural individual able to continue learning (Cunti, 2014). To generate this change in the way teachers think and act, it is essential to start from their professional practices and investigate the cognitive and emotional aspects that have accompanied them and the behaviors through which they expressed themselves (Cunti, Priore, 2015). About this, the circularity practice / theory / practice allows us to rethink the interpretations that have suggested certain behaviors and, therefore, to make hypotheses of new practices, probably more effective, to be verified in the context.

**Key words:** emotion, teacher-student relationship, emotional and relational competencies

## **1. Criticality and perspectives of teachers' education**

This contribution has two aims. The first consists of framing the teacher-training activity conducted as part of the Erasmus+ R.E.C. Project within a theoretical-methodological framework, which is supported by international studies and research. The second involves providing an account of the

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<sup>1</sup> Though conceived by the authors together, this chapter is to be attributed as follows: paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 to Antonia Cunti; paragraphs 4 and 5 to Alessandra Priore.

training process carried out, discussing the results achieved and considering possible developments, in a manner that is consistent with the pedagogical perspective described.

The topic of emotions and relationships at school has taken up an increasing amount of space in pedagogical literature in recent years (Baldacci, 2008; Riva, 2015; Salzberger-Wittemberg, Osborne & Williams, 2004). This is because, on one hand, problematic behaviours are spreading among children and teenagers and, on the other hand, educators and teachers find it difficult to tackle such behaviours. School, which is a right and a duty for everyone, mirrors the social unrest that is linked to a growing emotional indifference towards others, a future crisis that affects both young people and adults and the minor importance attributed to education and the value of reason (Bauman, 2000; 2011; Galimberti, 2007; Morin, 2014/2015). Catchment do not necessarily require knowledge, or to have their self-esteem or esteem reinforced, but instead are helped in constructing a personal and work-based project in which everyone can recognise and nurture their individual uniqueness, their own resources and their expectations. School work, then, is method-based rather than content-based, because it should ensure that everyone becomes capable of continuing to learn throughout their lives, possessing both cognitive skills and an inner drive, that is, the disposition and motivation to learn. What type of teaching is needed to teach someone how to learn, which has now been recognised as one of the key skills of our generation at the European level? We can identify some fundamental characteristics of the kind of teaching that allows people to successfully learn in this respect. 1) Teaching must be plural, in the sense that using different didactic situations allows students to experiment with different ways to learn and to become competent in them. In addition to face-to-face lectures, these plural forms include workgroups, individual studies, laboratories, internships, etc. and should be composed in a functional manner that matches the learning objectives, the training process that one intends to perform and the verification of this process, by alternating between the various forms of learning and teaching. The teacher, then, is primarily there to record and the didactics are *artificium* (Comenio, 1657/1993), not in the sense of fiction but rather a progressive creative process. If we limited this, or tend to favour a transmissive model of teaching, repetition is encouraged rather than reflection and elaboration. This favours the individual and not the group, ignores social forms of learning, gives no value to discussion and comparison and neglects what the individuals can do in collaboration with others, rather than what they can do alone (Resnick, 1987; 1989; Resnick, Levine & Teasley, 1991). A primarily face-to-face teaching set-up, with one person teaching many, encourages competition more than cooperation and does not give any value to the resources that each can provide to help others to learn and reciprocal growth to occur. Learning to learn in different contexts and settings involves acquiring a variety of skills that expand a person's ability to learn. 2) Teaching must allow significant space for research and, as a result, to learning that starts with problems. These cause doubts and leads to understanding and attempting to come up with solutions. Considering knowledge as perspectives opens up a line of critical thinking that relates ideas to epistemological concepts, to historical-evolutionary aspects and to pragmatic consequences; if there are no valid positions in absolute terms, and these must be validated and eventually accepted until they have been debunked, these do not, in principle, then lead to incorrect conceptions. The perspective is to teach people to favour comparison and discussion of one's own ideas, as well as the ideas of others, according to an approach that both clarifies and relativizes. This is also very important on an affective level, because it encourages the centrality of the person learning, making them feel like an active part of the learning process. Only a teaching process that also embraces research trains the subject to be independent, to know how to make decisions and to know how to think for oneself.

In addition to encouraging critical senses and the examination of perspectives, doing research also values the interpretation of the students, which can also be discussed, of course, from a cultural and scientific point of view. 3) Focusing on the quality of relationships. A school is a place where people learn in conjunction with others, with the support and guidance of teachers. Far from being an obstacle to learning, peers represent a vital component, since learning is a social process, situated in a place that is full of cultural artefacts and distributed among them (Salomon, 1993). Therefore, we always learn in a primarily relational situation, which is the basis for the quality of learning. In terms of the relationship between students and teachers, what are the components that need to be supported in order to achieve a relationship that allows both the capacity and desire to learn to flourish, both at school and outside of it? The professional identity of the teacher has historically been based on disciplinary knowledge, which today is considered to be the fundamental element that facilitates this role and this function. The contents to be taught and learned represent an anchoring point, in a historical situation in which the education and training of young people in cultural institutions have become a complex and difficult challenge. The social expectations around the teacher figure, therefore, include ensuring that the students achieve more than simply successive educational objectives. In addition to this, there is the presence of affective education, which is a crucial dimension in the preparation of students to become conscientious citizens, who are able to contribute, in conjunction with others, to communal well-being. These two requirements are often seen as irreconcilable, as though moving towards the student (affective education) contradicts the strictness and discipline that study requires (cognitive education). In many cases, the problem is that we still continue to separate what can be attributed to emotion from what is instead attributed to reason. A significant turning point, which has been undertaken by many researchers, involves reconstructing the complexity of the learning process and the relationship between the teacher and the learner (Sroufe, 1995).

Cultural learning and training occupy a specific place in personal and social identity. What one knows how to do, what one knows and being appreciated as pupils and students also has major social significance; the positive response to this kind of expectation allows people to feel accepted and to play a role within their community (Dallari, 2000). Doing well in school and being seen as a good student confirms social expectations, which means that, in spite of the widespread lack of motivation towards study and disaffection in schools, the goal of educational success is generally shared and failure to achieve it is a source of frustration. In addition to being a natural and biological phenomenon, learning is also spontaneous, in the sense that it is founded on the drive to discover and research that characterises our species. We tend to learn what we like, and the enjoyability of learning should be supported and nurtured so that students develop a positive attitude towards culture and their own education. In fact, each of us develops a type of cultural ego during the development phase (Cunti, 2014), which refers to the way we see ourselves as individuals capable of learning throughout life and the attitude that we develop towards culture and knowledge. This dimension represents the priority for school education and teachers are required to create a positive space so that students consider themselves capable of continuing to learn successfully, supported by a suitable desire and motivation. The cognitive component, then, cannot be disconnected from the emotional aspect. Learning new things requires a leap into unknown territory, knowing how to handle the risk of failure as well as doubts and uncertainties. During the developmental phase, the concept of the self and esteem for one's abilities are linked more than ever to relationships with important people. These people offer an image not only of how the subject is learning at that moment but, more importantly,

of what they could become, their faith in their ability to mature and to become something more. This is what Keats (Keats, 1817) and Bion (1970) called “negative capacity”, which allows us to handle expectations without feeling lost. One of the main tasks of teachers is supporting and reinforcing the acquisition of this negative capacity.

## **2. Emotions in learning and teaching**

The central importance of emotions in successful teaching and learning has been confirmed by various studies and research projects across a variety of disciplinary fields (Damasio, 2000; 2007). From the point of view of the teacher’s behaviour, the emotional dimension is no longer linked to aspects of their character, but rather to specific skills that all teachers should have. Above all, it is fundamental to know how to recognise one’s own emotions, as well as those of others, and to understand how to manage them with the educational and didactic relationship. Teaching is a profession that comes with a high level of emotional intensity and it is, therefore, essential to train teachers to be aware of the emotional exchanges that occur in classrooms and how to direct them to ensure the well-being of students and themselves (Hargreaves, 1998). Knowing how to interact with students and the class group, how to understand their own emotions and the emotions of others and using this to encourage the students’ cultural and personal growth and more translates into a set of skills, which then becomes the subject of education and continued refinement.

Generally speaking, how are emotions approached in education and how is the exchange between teachers and students initiated?

Emotions are seen as reactions – both positive and negative – and are primarily a way of interpreting and experiencing external stimuli. On rarer occasions, they may be strictly linked to the feeling students have about staying in school; this can be amended. They are not considered to be very contextual and are linked to a way of living that is fundamentally removed from the school experience.

Teachers’ emotions and the influence they can have on their classroom behaviour and teaching practices are rarely analysed (Crawford, 2011; Schutz & Pekrun, 2007).

Teaching has been defined as an emotional endeavour (Sutton, Mudrey-Camino & Knight, 2009). This highlights the possibility of leveraging socio-emotional aspects, firstly by reflecting on them and integrating them into a hypothetical approach that the teacher can experiment with. This is done using co-participation and emotional support methods that can be adjusted to be increasingly effective. To this end, teachers’ primary goal may be achieving a meeting of the mind, in the sense of considering other people’s emotions, managing their own and comparing them with those of the students.

If this does not occur, this could encourage the growth of frustrations, disapproval and deviant behaviours. Other authors note the importance of “the reciprocal relationship between teachers’ emotions, teaching practices and teaching goals” (Frenzel, Götz & Pekrun 2008, p. 198; Sutton, 2004; Witcher, Onwuegbuzie & Minor, 2001), wherein students’ successful experiences of being supported with their problems during the learning process represent a resource for the positive emotional well-being of teachers (Hargreaves, 1998).

Given that it is impossible, and not particularly useful, to consider the emotions of the two parties separately for our study, it is important to note the emotions that teachers attribute to themselves; many researchers (Butler, 1994; Graham & Weiner, 1986; Rustemeyer, 1984) highlight that these refer to the emotional reactions that teachers experience towards pleasant/unpleasant situations in their classes or towards students’ responses to the forms of education employed. If students show that

they do not appreciate the regular process established by the teacher, and are placed outside of it, the teacher can inform them of the obstacles that may impede them, help them to find coping mechanisms and encourage them to compare with their classmates, etc. It has been noted that teachers who aim to achieve optimal learning often neglect the role of emotions, which remain largely unexamined, suppressed and minimised (Fitzsimmons & Lanphar, 2011; Smith, Davidson, Cameron & Bondi, 2009). Teachers are typically afraid of entering the emotional arena, believing that this is too personal. For many of them, school is essentially about “rationality” and emotions are simply not part of the prevailing school system (Halstead, 2005). In summary, a frequently used approach involves encouraging students to ignore emotions and concentrate on activities (Williams-Johnson et al., 2008).

The important thing to note for educational purposes is the cognitive aspect of emotions; analysing this can offer indications for methods of managing one’s own emotions and the emotions of others. All emotions are linked to a belief, particularly those that persist and translate into a relatively stable feeling that sustains our existence (Baldacci, 2008; Nussbaum, 2004). Beliefs concern social representations and conceptions of ourselves; these have been learned in what we might call an “in-depth” manner, that is, through predominantly family-based conditioning that informs us about ourselves, others, reality and our relationship with these elements. From the point of view of the way in which emotions are interpreted, teachers have points of reference that relate to the socially prescribed methods on how to deal with students. All of these aspects form the background from which emotions emerge. The limitations of the teacher-student relationship are subsequently negotiated during classroom transactions and tend to reflect the way in which teachers approach students’ emotions in class, starting from cultural and social norms (Williams-Johnson et al., 2008). The clearest and most extreme reactions generally refer to the most intransigent positions; more rigid and unflinching ways of seeing things and an unwillingness to accept an interpretive space more readily provoke clear reactions – both in agreement and disagreement. This is different from more contextual and flexible perspectives, which require a more in-depth sense of understanding. Examining the merits of other people’s motivations pauses immediate response and reactive behaviours and allows people to shift from reacting to acting in the first person, all without forgetting that teachers are viewed by students as significant “interpreters of reality”. (Eccles et al., 1993).

In this sense, it is pointed out that teachers should avoid expressing emotions that are too strong or too weak (Greenleaf, 2002; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002; Zembylas, 2003; 2005). Teachers’ negative emotions contribute to the negative emotions of students and diminish the likelihood of students using cognitive strategies to express more detailed and elaborate information (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002); emotions generally shape cognition (Mesquita, Frijda & Scherer, 1997) and, as a result, this can have a significant impact on motivation (Pekrun, Goetz, Titz & Perry, 2002), beliefs and efficiency goals (Kaplan, Gheen & Midgley, 2002).

These reflections underscore the importance of reason as a skill, where the ability to recognise and experience one’s emotions with a greater sense of awareness, as well as to observe and understand the emotions of others and, most importantly, direct them towards an improved sense of well-being, requires the development of hypothetical and situational thinking.

The attitude towards probabilistic logic is another part of the approach to complex learning. Three basic dimensions of quality education have been proposed (Klieme, Pauli & Reusser, 2009): cognitive activation, supportive environment and appropriate class management (p. 13). Activating people’s minds encourages the cognitive and meta-cognitive process, which are closely linked to the emotional

dimensions of learning. Among the various teaching patterns (styles, methods) that are able to significantly influence the emotional and motivational aspects of learning, Hugener et al. (2009) pinpoint discovery, which, by promoting the independence of the student, limits negative emotions and any sense of removal from the context; learning is not just an experience based on well-being, but “a psycho-social-emotional bond” that is able to help students discover new reflective and practical skills (Gläser-Zikuda, Stuchlíková & Janík, 2013). The research data, therefore, show that students will only want to be independent if they believe they are capable of learning successfully. The aim of educational systems, therefore, is primarily methodological, based not only on the ability to tackle critical episodes and contain negative emotions for the sake of survival, but rather to intervene in a “flourishing” manner, in the sense of being able to implement processes that modify emotions, changing beliefs that allow people to experience positive emotions (Schutz, 2014).

A common error in the school environment is reporting students’, parents’ and teachers’ feeling and relationships about the school rather than the quality of teaching and learning. This is due to the wealth of projects in Italy in recent decades that have tried to express students’ emotions, with the idea of redirecting negative emotions and nourishing positive emotions. The aim of these was to more easily encourage behaviour that was appropriate to the educational aims. The illusion that the positive environment found in extracurricular education could be transferred to ordinary education rests on the lack of awareness regarding the situational nature of learning, and the value that students, teachers and communities assign to classroom education, that is, subjects, questions, homework and grades. This is the type of education that people are evaluated on and which helps to define roles and self-image, such as being a good student or teacher or not.

In ordinary education, teachers’ strong attraction to techniques still prevails, in the sense that disciplinary tools, most often the textbook, are extensively used in professional settings. In some ways, this could be considered as an antidote to the danger of “getting lost”, in the sense of one’s identity as a teacher becoming unclear. This role, today more than ever, seems to be under particular fire. It is in these contexts, where the human variable seems less controllable and more susceptible to unforeseen changes that impact the former, that references to data and techniques seem to be particularly reassuring, while also contributing greatly to the definition of one’s identity. The contents of these disciplines, and the pedagogical-didactic skills, offer a set of knowledge and a collection of technical tools that are given far more importance than the relational components, the knowledge of oneself and others and the awareness of the organisational and cultural nature of the system (Geerink, Masschelein & Simons, 2010; Gonçalves, Azevedo & Alves, 2013).

It is for this reason that the contents of teachers’ knowledge, alongside with the communication techniques that they are familiar with – which may have already been experienced by students – may represent protection against risky or hollow situations, as well as the path to being recognised and appreciated on a social level. Negative capacity, therefore, seems to also impact teaching in at least two different ways: not only does it constitute an accompaniment to the lack of experience by those who are learning, as we have already seen, but it also serves as a reference for how much teachers and professionals are willing to risk, how much they are willing to put into educational and didactic relationships and how they are willing to open up brand-new paths.

### **3. Reflexivity in teacher training**

Continuing from this, another question is posed: what is the relationship between the personal and professional dimensions of the teacher? The idea that teaching will reveal a way of living, as well as

thinking and relating to people, is obviously not new; the belief that pedagogy could probably continue to take advantage of this instead pertains to the potential evolutionary nature of the relationship between teachers and students. The question that is posed is under what conditions can the relationship be evolutionary for both parties and if the relationships becoming a source of non-superficial changes may be the result of specific learning and transformational processes (Mezirow, 1991/2003; Mezirow & Taylor, 2009). Part of the research into teacher training in recent decades has been focused on this area; these centre on the fact that researchers and experts accompany teachers through reflexive processes that begin with professional practices. Among these, it is important to highlight the contextual situations, including institutional situations, relationship dynamics and the teachers' thoughts, emotions and behaviours in the communicative setting, in accordance with a systematic perspective that favours the link between everything that occurs. An essential point of departure is a shift in perspective, one in which the teacher is not limited to introducing their disciplinary training into the relationship, with the aim of conditioning their students' learning, but in which they personally become part of the uninterrupted communication and get involved like everyone else; the willingness of everyone, in particular, teachers, to do this defines the fluidity of the system, the transformative value of said relationships and the transformative value of the subjects who play central roles in them. Learning to experience contexts, particularly working contexts, in an "ecological" manner means knowing how to trace events, behaviours and situations back to processes rather than individual causes, thus avoiding blaming forms. These, referred to both teachers and students, often represent a dead-end, especially when they engage in personal dimensions that can very rarely be changed. This is what happens whenever we try to explain behaviour with emotions ("I reacted badly because I was angry"), as this fails to reflect the emotional, cognitive and motor complexity of our relationships on one hand, and, on the other, the dynamic and unpredictable way in which we process situations.

Exercising skills at a sustained level requires that the level of skill acquired in specialist subject matters does not lead to rote repetition of working practices that have become familiar. Instead, it should allow teachers to establish a subjective space for "thoughtfulness", which represents a space for reflection and creativity and for configuring original, possibly brand-new, practices (Mortari, 2009; 2011; Schön, 1983).

As we initially noted, a relatively clear image emerges of two types of issues that teachers feel particularly passionate about: the first concerns needs of a social nature, that are necessary for performing their job and working successfully to create the ideal conditions in which students can achieve performance goals; the second concerns the need to listen to students, to establish a positive relationship with them and to meet their needs. This is, in the eyes of Baldacci, a type of "double limitation", which can only be escaped using a "logical and creative leap" (Baldacci 2008, p. 8). In this respect, the most difficult challenge to understand and overcome is probably combing the effectiveness of doing with the knowledge of how to sustain relationships, and, before that, taking a reflexive stance, analysing oneself as a teacher within a professional setting, including the concept of being present and acting in a professional manner. This means being able to do something, not as an extension of a methodological or technical commitment, but as a construction of methods that are suited to the environment, relational and communicative accompaniment methods and methods for intentionally modifying dynamics.

Teachers have a widespread feeling of powerlessness and the sense of being torn between "educational standards, relating to teaching and continued professional development, which, in many

countries, encourages teachers to become reflexive professionals and, at the same time, the growing pressure to be responsible for students' performance, which imposes performance standards that increase the likelihood of teachers using teaching strategies that prioritise efficiency" (Larrivee, 2010, p. 138).

The training work that has been performed is consistent with reflexive methodologies (Schön, 1983; 1987), which can be included in the Transformative Learning theoretical approach. Depending on the perspective adopted, the goal of training is not to acquire knowledge, but to change their perspective. As we have previously mentioned, if teachers tend to focus on emotional and relational aspects, especially in cases where it is difficult to follow the expected education process (Larrivee, 2008; 2010), and, more importantly, negative emotions and relational difficulties are considered as obstacles to achieving goals, the next step, then, consists in viewing these as important components in the educational and didactic processes, and also fundamental tools to be able to foster in students a positive approach towards study and towards themselves as cultural subjects who are able to learn in a continued manner. In order to create this kind of change in the way teachers think and act, it is essential to start with their professional practices and to investigate them from the perspective of the thoughts and emotions that accompany them and the behaviours they express (Cunti & Priore, 2014). To this end, a special training circle between practice/theory/practice is implemented. This initially linked the practices used with the theory that suggested them and the emotions that accompanied them. Training endeavours, then, consider both self-reflection, which calls into question thoughts, emotions and actions, and analysis of the theoretical aspects these actions are based on, as well as the consequences of the latter from an educational and didactic point of view, as well as on the professional growth of the teacher. Linking practices with the underlying theory allows us to reconsider the interpretations that suggested certain behaviours (even in ways that we are not aware of), to change them if they are believed to be insufficient and, as a result, to hypothesise new practices, which are probably more effective, that can be verified in the field. The goal of the training is primarily to make teachers aware that, behind every action, there are one or more interpretations of the situation in which they find themselves. This interpretation is revealed during training and clarified. It may correspond to a well-known theory that is generally shared by the teachers, or to a latent, unexplained theory that the teacher may not be aware of, or both (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995/1997; Wenger, 1998/2006). The teacher may, in fact, return to behaviours based on well-known and shared perspectives, and then find that examining their motivations reveals other, more hidden thoughts that have been at the core of the actions taken. In this sense, as confirmed in the research in this sector, certain specific tools are revealed to be particularly well-suited to unveiling the unsaid, such as, for example, metaphors, a tool that was, in fact, used in the Erasmus+ R.E.C. training. Secondly, it is important to verify during training whether the action undertaken was consistent with the interpretation and, thirdly, if the action had the desired results compared to expectations. When one examines what drives people to act in a certain manner, our thoughts are naturally mixed with beliefs and feelings. This means that the emotional dimension, which relates to feelings, cannot be ignored, but must be considered as irrevocably linked to the cognitive dimension. Once this revision-based work has been completed, we must try to conceive new didactic processes and new professional practices that are consistent with the levels of understanding and new interpretations that we have uncovered through the training. These should obviously be hypotheses that have a strong possibility of success, but they will have to be tested and subsequently subjected to a new reflexive investigation, returning to the endless circle between theory and practice we mentioned earlier. The goal is to

provide teachers with a reflexive habit that can act as a *fulcrum* for their constant personal and professional development.

#### **4. The training process for teachers. Perspective, methodology and tools**

The theoretical reflection was declined on an operational level in a research and training process, which aimed to provide the system with a consistent set of practices that could support the development of teachers' professional identities in critical reflection and the complexity of their experience. The outlined proposal is based on the methodological choice of focusing the process on research with and about teachers, on one hand, and, on the other hand, in-service training. These are both tools that aim to transform educational and didactic action through the acquisition of reflexive skills (Schön, 1983; 1987). The transformative value, in fact, lies in this ability to circulate and connect the elements and contents of the training with related research data, in order to build contextualised knowledge that is linked to practices and experiences. As a result, the work carried out is configured as a research and training process. The joint presence of these two levels means that the results of what has been observed from teachers have been used in the training activities carried out with them. In this sense, the collected research data can become a useful training tool and content for reflecting on professional practices.

Another methodological concept concerns the role played by group work in the training process; this is conceived as a privileged setting, one in which people can examine their experiences in a critical manner, through reciprocal sharing, conflict and interest – innate aspects of group dynamics – which fosters potentially meaningful learning processes (Mezirow, 1991/2003). The group itself, when understood in these terms, can be defined as a training device, used for the development of transversal skills, through which we can implement a type of learning based on relationships and experiences. If the fundamental aim of the training is to offer a tool kit that can be used to train professionals in reflective practices, asking them to talk, write or reconsider the events experienced within classrooms is certainly not enough to encourage systematic reflection; instead, focus should be placed on the need to uncover and access their latent beliefs and build on them and with them a knowledge that brings together theory and practice, the way one thinks of the profession and how one authentically feels about it (Cunti, 2014).

The main objective of the training course was to lead the participants, 76 teachers working in kindergarten, primary schools and secondary schools in the Campania region, to shed the monolithic professional standards and to adopt hermeneutic and reflexive practices. In this sense, the writer is aware that the change in professional behaviour comes from a different view of the role and the acquisition of the ability to look inside oneself, where the feeling of inadequacy and the fear of not being effective reside. To be consistent with this perspective, the training activity has followed four steps.

The first concerns framing the acquisition of emotional and relational skills and involves the use of the narrative-autobiographical method, through activities that allow people to share professional and personal experiences that recall the emotional, cognitive and active dimensions at the core of effective professional action. In this case, engaging individual externalisation, analysis and reflection processes around this theme aims to discover and refine an initial sensitivity in understanding the dynamics that, in teachers' minds, connect the themes and their experiences, and the stories and meanings that relate to the emotional-relational dimension of their professional experience. To this end, the teachers were asked to recount memories and narrate significant experiences from the past

relating to their relationship with teachers, for the purposes of research and training. The group discussion, which started on the basis of reading and sharing the narrative materials, reveals that the teacher-student relationship requires a certain resonance, which can primarily be reached through an emotional symmetry that allows the teacher to become closer with the student through their own past experiences. As seen in the following narrative excerpts, by recalling their own experiences as students, teachers find an awareness of the negative emotions that characterised their own relationships with teachers. These are most often linked to a feeling of being misunderstood, undervalued, isolated and humiliated in class.

*I remember something that happened when I was in middle school [...] I never knew how to draw, and the art teacher asked us to depict the idea of red with images. It took me a lot of time and effort to do it [...] one of the images that I had of red was Christ on the cross and his blood. When the teacher called me up to her desk to examine my drawing, she saw the image and confronted me: "Doesn't that seem a little simple?" I don't think that I answered, but I remember how humiliated and hurt that question made me feel, a little child as I was. In that moment, I might have hated her.*

*I was about 8 years old and one day my teacher decided that I had to learn how to use my right hand, even though I'm left-handed. I remember I cried a lot. To me, it was like going back in time. I remember feeling misunderstood, hatred for him and a sense of not being accepted by my classmates.*

*I remember in primary school, I was once accused of being violent with one of my classmates. I had absolutely no idea what happened and was totally shocked when my teacher, a nun, showed no doubt that I was guilty. It showed that she did not know me at all.*

*I have particularly bad memories of my History and Philosophy teacher. Instead of alleviating and dispelling my fears, she always attacked me and frequently scolded me, even though I worked hard. For me, she was a model of what a teacher should not be.*

Conversely, the positive emotions recounted by the participants concern engaging and affectionate relationships, prepared and motivating teachers and rewarding school experiences. The common thread that links the accounts of positive school relationships is feeling recognised, loved and understood.

*My teacher is someone that I always remember fondly and who I use as a model. She is a person who helped me grow immensely [...] I remember her amazing ability to get us involved, to make us feel like the key people in every lesson, which she always did with great kindness and affection.*

*I will never forget my relationship with my secondary school Italian teacher. Her knowledge (which seemed encyclopaedic to me at the time) and her enormous sense of*

*humanity made her, in my eyes, a perfect example of a teacher. I still think of her often today and I aspire to be what she represented to me for my students.*

*My secondary school Italian teacher was demanding and strict but, at the same time, he was able to encourage and motivate me. I remember that he even invited me to his home, to help me prepare my topics for my exam presentation.*

*In my fifth year at my scientific secondary school, my Italian teacher was open to every contribution and encouraged freedom of expression, critical analysis and personal contributions. She encouraged us to contextualise our arguments and hated mnemonic learning.*

The narrative exercise described helped the teachers to develop an increased sense of closeness to their students, based on their recognition of similar experiences and events connected to their school lives. In fact, the ability to emotionally embrace others and create empathetic relationships is primarily achieved by feeling that we are similar and attributing something of our own to others. The training experience intended to promote, therefore, a shift from the personal level to the interpersonal and empathetic level (Bellingreri, 2013).

The second training step aims to reinforce the dimensions explored in the first session from a theoretical point of view and to subsequently encourage new forms of learning and operating. The step intended to encourage them to move from recounting their practices to question them in order to understand their validity, thus calling into question their personal and professional knowledge (experience). Based on these assumptions, identifying concrete critical points relating to the management of emotional aspects within the class group is proposed as something that fosters reflection. This makes the fluid aspects that subconsciously direct the relationship between the professional and their professional actions less elusive and easier to control (simplifying the period and the concept). The activity described employs instruments that primarily deal with group comparisons and discussions and the simulation of school events that may reflect real instances of emotional management in classrooms. This requires the participants to play both the teacher and student roles, that is, circle time, role-playing.

The third step focuses on representations of the professional role and the implicit ideas of learning, teaching and education/training, etc., which affect knowledge, know-how and professional expertise. The goal is to acquire a greater understanding of the tacit perspectives that guide the personal ways in which people interpret the professional role. Focusing on representations and implicit beliefs in the processes of sense and meaning, which are, by nature, at the base of the professional experience, requires the use of reflexive tools and devices. These reveal what plays on our imagination and our perception of experiences through indirect narratives. We refer to alternative forms of artistic-expressive representation, such as metaphor (Black & Halliwell, 2000; Martínez, 2016; Saban, Koçbeker & Saban 2006; Sakui & Gaies, 2003), which, as shown in the most recent studies on teacher training, seem to have enormous potential to not only verbalise practices, but also to improve our understanding of how personal theories and views can impact teaching decisions. These tools are forms of imaginative narration – for example metaphors and drawings – promoting the association game that exists between what *is*, what *is not* and what *is similar* (Ricoeur, 1975). Thanks to the inherent figurative, imaginative, dynamic and creative dimensions of these tools, it is possible to

create a free, subjective, dynamic and vibrant view of the professional world, which opens a path to alternative forms of knowledge (Franza, 1988; Laneve, 1981; 1994). The decision to propose non-linear forms of subjective representation as a means of revelation, signification and constructing new awareness can be linked to the opportunity they offer for creating new *insight* into the professions, roles and practices associated with them and connecting the cognitive dimension with the emotional dimension, through a conceptualisation process. To this end, the teachers were asked, during the course of their training, to express their professional role and their relationship with students through metaphor, narration or drawing. Some of the metaphors collected follow.

*The rain that nourishes the earth and its elements. Without rain, the plants do not grow; in fact, they wither and die. So too do children without the nourishment of knowledge and education – they do not become adults and citizens of the world.*

*I think of the image of a river, with its water nourishing and enriching the earth, giving it, and all of its elements, the strength to survive. Children are nourished by our experiences, our feelings, our emotions and our words. Everything is directed at nourishing the person that we see in the child.*

*An oak tree with lots of knots. I identify myself with a tree. I chose an oak tree because I think it is solid and balanced, but, most importantly, because of the shelter it offers.*

*The thread of a kite. Being something that allows others to fly towards freedom and, when you are ready to go, you let it go.*

*Climbing a mountain. I feel my relationship with the kids is like a mountain climber, who tirelessly carries the class, so we arrive at the summit.*

The professional representations that emerged during the teachers' training constitute material that has activated a reflexive work based on constructing and deconstructing meanings; this aims to expand the professional awareness of oneself. In this specific case, the way in which teachers represent their role is linked to a system of beliefs – and, sometimes, stereotypes – that have a major impact on educational practices and which needs to be uncovered and reconsidered from a cognitive point of view, starting with the emotional dimension recalled by images/metaphors. The process of reflecting on the identified metaphors was carried out in 3 phases: re-establishing the type of metaphors that emerged and the meanings/motivations attributed to them, reflection on personal and professional experiences linked to the metaphors and, finally, creation of new interpretations and hypotheses for professional practices (Cunti, 2018).

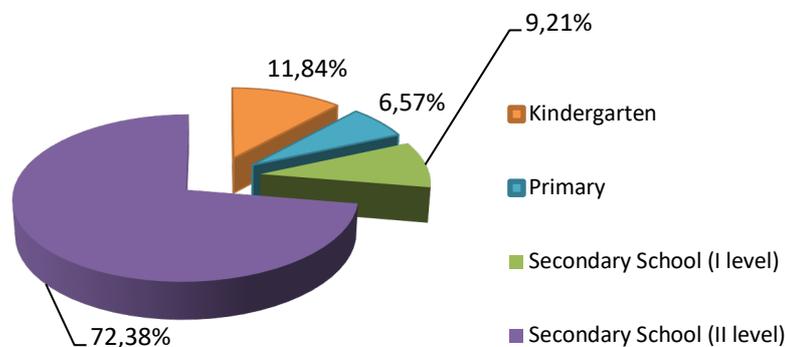
Finally, the last step focuses on the construction and sharing of new professional practices. This considers the critical issues that emerged in previous sessions and attempts to interpret them based on the insights from the group work. It aims to define potential intervention methods for issues that recall problematic situations, such as bullying, widespread demotivation at school and poor school-family relationships. In this case, we used the Case Method (Barnes, Christensen & Hansen, 1994; Levin, 1995; Sato & Rogers, 2010). This is employed to support the training group in reflecting collectively on actual questions and entering into processes of negotiation regarding meanings and

solution-based perspectives on the issues presented. The training activity aimed to encourage forms of learning placed and distributed among the participants, also considering that teachers are often required to respond to school issues in a collaborative and collegial manner.

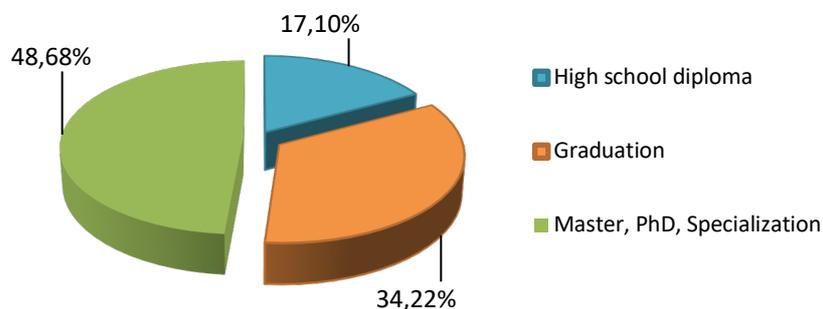
#### 4. Empirical research. Sample, tools, analysis and results.

The training process was monitored through the use of quantitative tools, questionnaires and observation grids, which allowed us to evaluate the changes in the teachers' interpretations and, subsequently, practices, with a particular focus on emotions and relationships.

The research sample comprises 76 teachers, 8 male and 68 females, with an average age of 53.7 and 24.6 years of service. In terms of school placements, 11.84% work in kindergarten, 6.57% in primary schools, 9.21% in lower secondary schools and 72.36% in upper secondary schools (Graph 1); in terms of educational qualifications, 17.1% have a diploma, 34.21% have a degree and 48.68% have a postgraduate diploma (teacher's licence, Master's degree, research doctorate) (Graph 2).



Graph 1 Percentage distribution of school service placements in the sample of teachers



Graph 2 Percentage distribution of educational qualifications in the sample of teachers

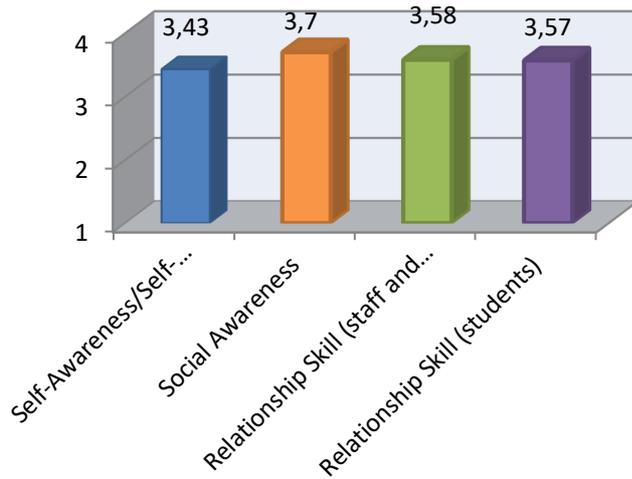
In order to investigate the research dimensions, a questionnaire was used. This was taken from SECTRS (Social-Emotional Competence Teacher Rating Scale) (Tom, 2012) and was adapted and

revised on an *ad hoc* basis, in accordance with the cultural differences and research needs. The questionnaire that was administered was called *Relational and Emotional Competencies Questionnaire* (RECQ)<sup>2</sup> and comprises 4 scales, each with 6 items. The first scale investigates *Self-Awareness and Self-Management* and refers to the ability to recognise and evaluate one's own emotions, interests and values and understand how they are used in the school context, as well as one's ability to manage emotions and behaviours, especially when tackling critical situations when there is a goal to be achieved; the second scale refers to the *Social Awareness* construct, which is defined as the ability to understand other people's perspectives and be empathetic and sensitive to others; the third and fourth scales are both focused on *Relationship Skills* and evaluate people's capacity to cooperate and form positive and meaningful relationships with other adults (school staff and families) and students. The questionnaire consists of 24 items, with people required to express the frequency with which the situations presented occur using a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *never*; 2 = *sometimes*; 3 = *often*; 4 = *always*). In order to investigate whether a change in perspective occurred for teachers during the training course, the questionnaire was administered twice: once at the beginning of the training course (T1) and once at the end (T2). The hypothesised change in terms of how the teachers represent themselves and position themselves towards emotional and relational aspects during the pre-training and post-training phase is linked to the goal of the training course outlined. This aimed to promote a new sense of awareness, reveal tacit knowledge and redefine professional actions through a reflexive itinerary.

The quantitative data obtained by administering the RECQ was subjected to frequency analysis and descriptive statistics. The T1 results show that teachers obtain high average scores on every scale in the questionnaire (Social awareness: M = 3.7; s.d.= 0.69; Interpersonal relationships with families and staff: M= 3.5; s.d.= 0.68; Interpersonal relationships with students: M= 3.5; s.d.= 0.60; Self-awareness/self-management: M=3.4; s.d.= 0.77) (Graph 1). The data collected in the pre-training phase highlight that teachers who participated in the research feel empathy towards their students and are sensitive to their individual differences, state that they have created positive relationships with colleagues, families and students, and, finally, are aware of their emotions and behaviour, as well as how to manage them.

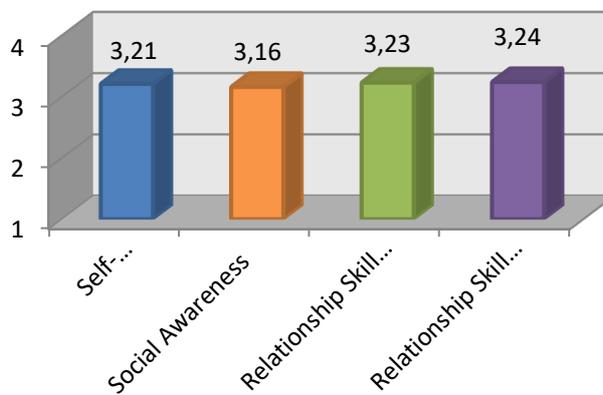
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<sup>2</sup> Cronbach's alpha coefficient = 0,859.

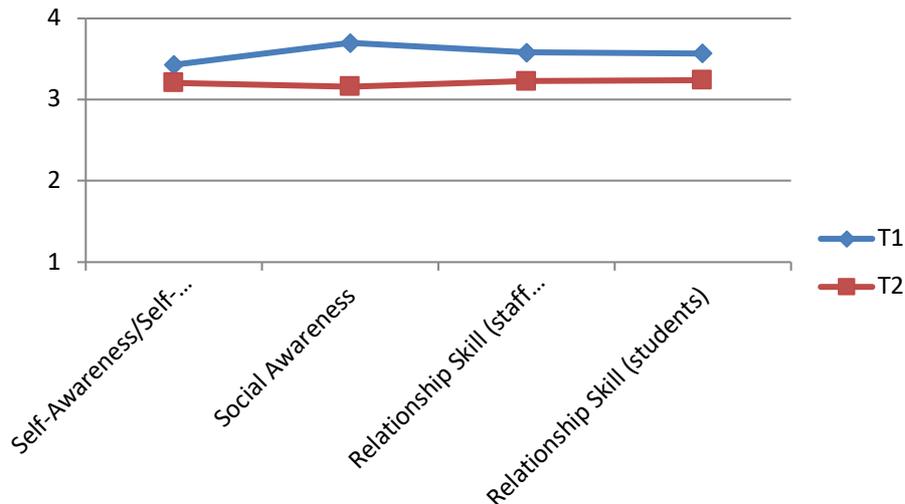


Graph 1 Average scores during T1 (pre-training)

During the post-training phase (T2), the average scores obtained by the teachers in the various scales in the questionnaire are still high (Social awareness:  $M = 3.16$ ;  $s.d. = 0.70$ ; Interpersonal relationships with families and staff:  $M = 3.23$ ;  $s.d. = 0.67$ ; Interpersonal relationships with students:  $M = 3.24$ ;  $s.d. = 0.64$ ; Self-awareness/self-management:  $M = 3.21$ ;  $s.d. = 0.62$ ) (Graph 2), although there is a slight decrease compared to the average scores obtained during T1 (Graph 3).



Graph 2 Average scores during T2 (post-training)



Graph 3 Differences between the average scores during T1 and T2

The analyses conducted show that the difference between the average scores obtained in the pre-training phase, and those obtained in the post-training phase, are not statistically significant and that, as a result, there has been no significant change in the areas investigated.

However, the data is still relevant from an educational point of view, as it highlights teachers' tendency to perceive themselves in a more critical and conscious manner, in light of the course they carried out; this means that, during the training course, particularly the pre-training phase, there was a failure to feel satisfied, which must be replaced by a more complex interpretation of their emotional and relational skills. In other words, the training course offered an opportunity to reflect on oneself and one's personal experience, starting from the use of alternative perspectives and interpretations than those that are already in use. This shows that the training course carried out has provided tools for a more aware interpretation of oneself and one's surroundings. The latter is a crucial aspect for acquiring and improving specific skills. The aim of the training course carried out is highlighted by some excerpts – which are included below – in the logbook compiled by teachers during the training over a period of several months.

*We are learning to listen to others and to give ourselves time to think, act, talk and write.*

*Questioning the way that we only identify with our own point of view as teachers but, above all, as adults.*

*We have focused on the strengths and the critical sides of our being teachers.*

*The emotions and reflexivity we need to manage the critical phases of our being 'teachers' but also 'Individuals'.*

*We create new perspectives compared to already consolidated experiences, often taken for granted.*

*Overcome obstinacy to identify with our convictions and ideological barriers.*

*We are cultivating the human aspect of educational work.*

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the course on a quantitative level, a satisfaction questionnaire was administered during the final training session. It comprised 9 items that aimed to investigate the perceived quality in terms of expectations, content, methods and organisational aspects. Teachers were asked to respond to statements by choosing their level of agreement on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all*; 2 = *a little*; 3 = *somewhat*; 4 = *very much*). As evidenced by the analysis undertaken, the level of satisfaction is high for all of the fields under investigation: contents-objectives congruence (M = 3,68; s.d. = 0.46), topics-expectations congruence (M = 3.71; s.d. = 0.45), topics-training interests congruence (M = 3.63; s.d. = 0.55), usefulness of the topics (M = 3.56; s.d. = 0.57), personal and professional self-development (M = 3.61; s.d. = 0.58); usefulness of training in teachers' education (M = 3.62; s.d. = 0.58), training time-topics congruence (M = 3.30; s.d. = 0.54), satisfaction about training organization (M = 3.62; s.d. = 0.48), satisfaction about topics (M = 3.77; s.d. = 0.42)(Graf. 4).



Graph 4 Level of satisfaction with training

In conclusion, there are two aspects worth highlighting. The first concerns the effectiveness characteristics of the course, which, in our opinion, has been useful for inspiring reflective processes around our teachers' interpretations and professional practices; the second pertains to the need to focus more on the exploration of teachers' ideas and behaviours concerning emotional and relational aspects, with particular reference to actual situations. This solution avoids the risk of revealing shared and socially acceptable methods.

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## **Teacher and student emotions in classroom/ group: Transformation of teachers' emotions into emotional and relational competencies**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Human communication is a complex and difficult process. It is more than speaking words and meaningfully arranged phrases. Communication is a social skill, and as every social skill it learns and can be trained and perfected. One of the most important lesson is the management of irritability, anger, tolerance and patience. The main thing is that "there are no sinful feelings," but there are wrong reactions. Emotionally intelligent people know what professionals are and where they lack knowledge and flair. This type of intelligence implies the ability to recognize how we feel right now, to know the individual emotional states and to name them so that we can manage them successfully.

Emotional competence is a measure of innate, natural intelligence. An emotionally intelligent person - an adult or child, "possesses" the ability to perceive, evaluate and express their emotions; can solve problems, highlight the meaning of the minor; understands the relationship between emotions, thoughts and behaviors: both in themselves and in others; manages its emotions: it manages to turn negative emotions into positive ones and thus stimulates their growth. Emotionally intelligent people are flexible; they have the ability to adapt without disturbing good tone, good behavior, and good communication. They know that the fear of change is paralyzing, so they are looking for the changes and are developing a plan for how they are going to happen. People who do not use their emotional intelligence enough are more likely to use another, less effective way to manage their mood and behavior.

The task of the contemporary teacher has changed to reflect the processes and needs of the contemporary society. He / She has transformed from someone who shares knowledge, to someone who teaches students social, relational and emotional competencies. This new attitude toward pedagogy requires the integration of some basic psycho-sociological models in the pedagogical practice. This approach would help teachers to manage the class as a social group. They would control the dynamics and the cohesion, assert their authority and increase the efficiency of the learning process.

The topic of the teacher-student relationship is extremely interesting and up-to-date in terms of contemporary perceptions for the purposes of education, which are not limited solely to the particularities in the cognitive-intellectual development of pupils, but are aimed at seeking real opportunities for encouraging creativity and the overall development of their personal potential. All students are part of the universe, but each one is an entire universe. Before we get to the minds of the children, we have to win their hearts. The teacher who manages to do this is an example of emotional talent.

Emotion affect, and are intertwined with, many of the cognitive processes of learning and also classroom motivation and social interaction. There are often times within daily classroom life that students and teachers are required to, or feel compelled to, regulate their emotions. There are particular aspects of classroom environment that can enhance emotion regulation strategy development.

Schooling is an emotionally laden process for students, teachers and parents (Shutz, Hong, Cross & Osborne, 2006).

This chapter aims to reveal teacher and student emotions at classroom from the socio-emotional point of view, and outline of the challenging situations from the cultural perspective within the Bulgarian school environment. Moreover, it will be explained the influence of training based on **The Modello di Articolazione Intersistemica (M.A.I)** within the project on Bulgarian teachers. We would like to present some practical methods for building positive learning environment and positive pedagogical approaches for children with emotional and behavior problems.

*Keywords: teacher emotion, teacher-student relationship, emotional and relational competencies*

## **Introduction**

Human communication is a complex and difficult process. It is more than speaking words and meaningfully arranged phrases. Communication is a social skill, and as every social skill it learns and can be trained and perfected. One of the most important lesson is the management of irritability, anger, tolerance and patience. The main thing is that "there are no sinful feelings," but there are wrong reactions. Emotionally intelligent people know what professionals are and where they lack knowledge and flair. This type of intelligence implies the ability to recognize how we feel right now, to know the individual emotional states and to name them so that we can manage them successfully.

Emotional competence is a measure of innate, natural intelligence. An emotionally intelligent person - an adult or child, "possesses" the ability to perceive, evaluate and express their emotions; can solve problems, highlight the meaning of the minor; understands the relationship between emotions, thoughts and behaviors: both in themselves and in others; manages its emotions: it manages to turn negative emotions into positive ones and thus stimulates their growth. Emotionally intelligent people are flexible; they have the ability to adapt without disturbing good tone, good behavior, and good communication. They know that the fear of change is paralyzing, so they are looking for the changes and are developing a plan for how they are going to happen. People who do not use their emotional intelligence enough are more likely to use another, less effective way to manage their mood and behavior.

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Socially and emotionally competent teachers set the tone of the classroom by developing supportive and encouraging relationships with their students, designing lessons that

build on student strengths and abilities, establishing and implementing behavioral guidelines in ways that promote intrinsic motivation, coaching students through conflict situations, encouraging cooperation among students, and acting as a role model for respectful and appropriate communication and exhibitions of prosocial behavior.

### **Teacher emotions in the classroom**

These teacher behaviors are associated with optimal social and emotional classroom climate and desired student outcomes. An optimal classroom climate is characterized by low levels of conflict and disruptive behavior, smooth transitions from one type of activity to another, appropriate expressions of emotion, respectful communication and problem solving, strong interest and focus on task, and supportiveness and responsiveness to individual differences and students' needs (La Paro & Pianta, 2003). All students are part of the universe, but each one is an entire universe. Before teachers get to the minds of the children, they have to win their hearts. The teacher who manages to do this, is an example of emotional talent.

When teachers lack the resources to effectively manage the social and emotional challenges within the particular context of their school and classroom, children show lower levels of on-task behavior and performance (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003). In addition, the classroom climate deteriorates, triggering in the teacher what we refer to as a "burnout cascade." The deteriorating climate is marked by increases in troublesome student behaviors, and teachers become emotionally exhausted as they try to manage them. Under these conditions, teachers may resort to reactive and excessively punitive responses that do not teach self-regulation and may contribute to a self-sustaining cycle of classroom disruption (Osher et al., 2007).

Emotionally exhausted teachers are at risk of becoming cynical and callous and may eventually feel they have little to offer or gain from continuing, and so drop out of the teaching workforce. Others may stay—although unhappily—coping by maintaining a rigid classroom climate enforced by hostile and sometimes harsh measures bitterly working at a suboptimal level of performance until retirement. In either case, burnout takes a serious toll on teachers, students, schools, districts, and communities. Burned-out teachers and the learning environments they create can have harmful effects on students, especially those who are at risk of mental health problems.

Socially and emotionally competent teachers have high self-awareness. They recognize their emotions, emotional patterns, and tendencies and know how to generate and use emotions

such as joy and enthusiasm to motivate learning in themselves and others. They have a realistic understanding of their capabilities and recognize their emotional strengths and weaknesses. Socially and emotionally competent teachers also have high social awareness. They know how their emotional expressions affect their interactions with others. Such teachers also recognize and understand the emotions of others. They are able to build strong and supportive relationships through mutual understanding and cooperation and can effectively negotiate solutions to conflict situations. Socially and emotionally competent teachers are culturally sensitive, understand that others may have different perspectives than they do, and take this into account in relationships with students, parents, and colleagues. Socially and emotionally competent teachers exhibit prosocial values and make responsible decisions based on an assessment of factors including how their decisions may affect themselves and others. They respect others and take responsibility for their decisions and actions. Socially and emotionally competent teachers know how to manage their emotions and their behavior and also how to manage relationships with others. They can manage their behavior even when emotionally aroused by challenging situations. They can regulate their emotions in healthy ways that facilitate positive classroom outcomes without compromising their health. They effectively set limits firmly, yet respectfully. They also are comfortable with a level of ambiguity and uncertainty that comes from letting students figure things out for themselves.

Social and emotional competence (SEC) is associated with well-being. When teachers experience mastery over these social and emotional challenges, teaching becomes more enjoyable, and they feel more efficacious (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004). However, whereas the above teacher characteristics would be considered ideal in any educational setting, little attention has been paid to supporting teachers' SEC. Given the lack of explicit preservice or in-service training aimed at teachers' personal development, the current educational system appears to assume that teachers have the requisite SEC to create a warm and nurturing learning environment, be emotionally responsive to students, form supportive and collaborative relationships with sometimes difficult and demanding parents, professionally relate to administrators and colleagues, effectively manage the growing demands imposed by standardized testing, model exemplary emotion regulation, sensitively coach students through conflict situations with peers, and effectively (yet respectfully) handle the challenging behaviors of disruptive students. Thus, contextual changes including alterations in the articulation of the broader society and school district goals for young people, policies and foci for preservice and in-service training, new models of performance assessment, and other factors might alter the valuing and support for teachers' SEC. Because SEC is context

dependent, an individual may function in a high level in one context but need training and/or experience to adapt to another. When teachers lack the SEC to handle classroom challenges, they experience emotional stress. High levels of emotional stress can have an adverse effect on job performance and may eventually lead to burnout. Among teachers, burnout threatens teacher–student relationships, classroom management, and classroom climate.

Evidence suggests that SEC is related to emotional stress and burnout. In particular, the dimensions of self-awareness and selfmanagement appear to influence a teacher’s ability to cope with the emotional demands of teaching. Society’s expectation that teachers manage the emotional lives of their students as well as teach subject matter may leave many teachers exhausted and burned out (Hargreaves, 1998). Burnout results from a breakdown in coping ability over time and is viewed as having three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and feelings of a lack of personal accomplishment (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1997).

With ever-greater emotional demands placed on teachers with little if any support, it is not surprising that the rate of teacher burnout is increasing and that teachers are leaving the profession at an increasing rate (Ingersoll, 2001; Metlife, 2004; Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005). Emotional stress and poor emotion management consistently rank as the primary reasons teachers become dissatisfied and leave teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). Indeed, compared with many other professions, teachers report some of the highest levels of occupational stress. Consequently, there is growing concern about the adverse effects teacher emotional stress and attrition rates may have on educational quality (Travers, 2001) and on school budgets.

Unlike many other professions, teachers are constantly exposed to emotionally provocative situations and have limited options for self-regulation when a situation provokes a strong emotional reaction. Emotions may influence teachers’ cognitive functioning and motivation, and students’ misbehavior often elicits distracting negative emotions that consequently can have a negative effect on teaching (Emmer, 1994; Emmer & Stough, 2001).

Although there is evidence that a teacher’s warmth and sensitivity contribute to healthy teacher–student relationships and classroom climate (Pianta, La Paro, Payne, Cox, & Bradley, 2002), little research has explored how a teacher’s SEC may be associated with greater positive affect and student and/or classroom outcomes.

There is growing recognition that teachers make a crucial contribution to the social and emotional development of their students (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2006; Murray & Greenberg, 2000; Pianta, Hamre, & Stuhlman, 2003) that has lasting effects on their

lives well into adulthood (Pederson, Fatcher, & Eaton, 1978). Teachers influence their students not only by how and what they teach but also by how they relate, teach and model social and emotional constructs, and manage the classroom. This influence is affected by numerous contextual factors (e.g., school climate, principal, and parent support). Teachers are role models who continuously induce and respond to the emotional reactions of their students. When teachers are warm and supportive, they provide students with a sense of connectedness with the school environment and the sense of security to explore new ideas and take risks—both fundamental to learning (Mitchell-Copeland, Denham, & DeMulder, 1997; Murray & Greenberg, 2000; Watson, 2003). Emotionally challenging events that teachers typically face often involve interactions with students who are not emotionally well regulated, including those caught in anger, anxiety, and sadness. These students, at highest risk of developing behavioral disorders and emotion regulation difficulties, are the very students in greatest need of a supportive relationship with their teacher. A teacher's support and sensitive reactions to their challenging behaviors may have lasting positive effects on the students' social and emotional development, especially in the early grades (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1992).

Teacher reports of stress and emotional negativity are associated with student misbehaviors (Yoon, 2002), and as one might expect, teachers express negative emotions in response to student behaviors on a routine basis (Carson & Templin, 2007; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Pianta et al., 2003; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). This stress is magnified when teachers have more than one or two disruptive students in a classroom: Even teachers who would normally cope quite effectively under less stressful circumstances may become coercive and harsh. Teachers who are overwhelmed by negative emotion express a lack of enthusiasm for cultivating positive relationships with their students and report becoming less involved, less tolerant, and less caring (Blase, 1986). Furthermore, teachers' negative affect may have long-term effects on students.

Inadequate relations with a teacher may lead to dislike and fear of school and over time may lead to feelings of alienation and disengagement. When students feel alienated from school they are at greater risk of developing antisocial behaviors, delinquency, and academic failure (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). In contrast, supportive relationships with teachers can promote feelings of safety and connectedness among students, providing the social support necessary to thrive socially, emotionally, and academically.

Emotion affect, and are intertwined with, many of the cognitive processes of learning and also classroom motivation and social interaction. There are often times within daily classroom life that students and teachers are required to, or feel compelled to, regulate their

emotions. There are particular aspects of classroom environment that can enhance emotion regulation strategy development.

Schooling is an emotionally laden process for students, teachers and parents (Shutz, Hong, Cross & Osborne, 2006).

### **Emotions and learning**

Emotions are intimately involved in virtually every aspect of the teaching and learning process (Schutz & Lanehart, 2002) as they are, according to appraisal theorists (Roseman & Smith, 2001), based on an individual's cognitive interpretations and appraisals of specific situations. In addition, it is now recognised that emotions serve as a powerful vehicle for enhancing or inhibiting learning (Greenleaf, 2002). Research by Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2000) and others has indicated that emotions are not only based on cognitive processes but may also exert a powerful influence on these and motivational processes. Negative emotions can reduce working memory, the memory system used for holding and manipulating information while various mental tasks are carried out (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2000); and, in reverse, tasks that load working memory capacity can clear the mind of negative feelings (Van Dillen & Koole, 2007). Positive emotion can broaden thought-action repertoires (Fredrickson, 2001), suggesting that students and teachers who experience more positive emotions may generate more ideas and strategies. In addition, emotions can have an impact on different cognitive, regulatory and thinking strategies (Pekrun, 1992). Negative emotions lessen the probability that students will use cognitive strategies for deeper, more elaborate processing of information (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2000). Emotions also affect categorising, thinking and problem solving (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Emotion can affect the attentional resources available for engaging in cognitive processes and impact on various motivational processes, with positive emotions found to enhance levels of intrinsic motivation (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2000).

Another aspect that needs to be considered in relation to emotion is the way the brain functions. For example, when a student is under stress, the majority of the brain shuts down and it reverts to survival needs, such as defensiveness and attention-seeking (Weare, 2004). It is crucial that school personnel avoid adding to students' stress and use knowledge of the brain to enhance student learning. One way to do this is to supply students with the basic human needs, such as: the need for belonging, competence and autonomy (Deci, 1980). Another way is to link students' learning experiences with strong positive emotions, thus enhancing their

memory of these experiences (Parrott & Spackmann, 2000) especially for central details (Heuer & Reisberg, 1992). Therefore, using the way the brain operates to shape pedagogy and classroom or school environments can not only improve learning but also reduce the need for student emotion regulation.

A number of studies prove the relationship between emotional intelligence with children achievements at school. Often children who grow up in unhealthy families and have experienced emotional trauma turn out to be more unsuccessful at school than children feeling carefree, happy and cared for. Undeniable is the fact that when children experience anxiety, fear, frustration, sadness, shame, they lose access to their own memory, to the ability to reason, to cause a causal relationship. Every teacher has met at least once in his or her practice a child who has frantic horror of reading or oral testing. The frightened child, the shy child, is a child who is doing much worse than their peers, and it is also much harder to learn new information.

Negative emotions are a barrier that prevents the learning of knowledge, but also to gain experience. The biggest "enemy" of memory is anxiety. For this reason, in order to fulfill the goals it poses for its students, the teacher has to provide a positive emotional environment for work. When learners are calm, positive, and confident, they meet the challenges with optimism. This also determines the need for the focus of the teacher to move - the center must now be not merely the knowledge-giving but the desire to reach children in support of their personal development and peer group relationships because they are in the basis of creating a relaxed, supportive and safe learning and self-development environment.

The reinforcement of positive emotions occurs in several ways: by stimulating curiosity, nurturing the intellect, supporting talent, and of course by creating learning motivation.

Motivation by definition is a motive, a cause for an action to be taken. In order to proceed with it, the student must have the confidence that he/she is capable of doing so, that he/she is competent enough. The role of the teacher at that situation is really very important. The teacher has to be able to register every new competence and talent and diligence and reward them.

An important factor driving motivation is emotion. It is not by accident that both concepts contain within themselves "motion". Of course, motivation should not be confused with the emotional state, but it is absolutely essential that both should be considered in a mutual relationship and comparison. The positive attitude of the student leads to his greater commitment to what is going on in the classroom and hence to the higher academic achievements.

An exceptional role in creating motivation is the figure of the teacher. This is the person who can extract unsuspected opportunities and competencies from the student. It is therefore

important that learners like it. Very often the student aspires to high scores not because of internal motivation but because of the positive influence of the teacher and the desire not to disappoint the beloved teacher.

High achievements will be attained by the moment the trainers realize the fact that when we want to challenge a person to act, we can focus on his emotions. If the student is attracted emotionally and becomes involved in what is happening, then the excellent results are coming soon.

In psychology, the term "negative motivation" is also known, which can also lead to high students scores. This is the motivation that is incited by the fear of failure or punishment - a remark, a weak assessment. But if it works in children at the beginning, then in the lower and upper secondary school students' negative motivation increasingly weakens its impact. Therefore, positive incentives should be sought to create a sense of confidence among students.

Undoubtedly, a scientific fact is also related to the relationship between emotion and motivation - the physiological basis of motivation is determined by the hypothalamus, which in turn is part of the person's "emotional brain" (the limbic system), controlling emotions, mood, memory, and feeling for self-affirmation among the likes of others.

Emotion is one of the most powerful tools to create learning motivation. It is not only the "key to plugging / shutting down learning" but is also the center of the ability to live. Understanding yourself and others, reducing fear and anxiety, building confidence, and a positive learning environment. All these are factors that have long-term impact on academic achievement. For this reason, high emotional intelligence is of utmost importance. The good news is that it is not a constant figure, it is not congenital, but can be educated - both in children and in adults.

### **Methods for building a positive learning environment**

In order to create a positive learning environment, all participants in the education process need to be involved in its development.

Teachers are those who come into direct day-to-day contact with children and their parents. In order to be active participants in building a positive learning environment, it is necessary teachers to feel satisfied with their job. They also must continue learning and perfecting their knowledge. Teachers need to have empathy and a desire to improve and to be flexible enough to meet the children needs nowadays.

Children are eager for knowledge, they are curious and creative, but an important factor of learning is students' motivation and interest. The primary teacher who is supposed to introduce them into the school environment is very important. He / She helps them to find themselves, because at that age children become self-conscious, and at the same time part of a group - the class.

Parents are also an important part and participants in the learning process; they are critically demanding, but also cooperative and grateful. They are the ones who have to teach their children to respect their teachers, classmates and the institution in which the children receive their education.

In order for the learning environment to be positive, it is essential that all participants must be involved in that triangle construction.

At school, children receive scientific knowledge. They create social contacts; communicate with each other, exercise, sing and paint.

If the child's learning environment does not give him/her the feeling of confident in learning success, this may hinder its development. How hard the children study is a reflection of how much they love to learn. How much they like to learn is a reflection of how successful they are in learning. We love success. Success motivates us. A strong physical child loves boxing, a fast child likes running races, a child who is good at languages, loves spelling games, and so on. When a child thinks she/he is capable of doing something good, she/he is highly motivated to participate in it, she/he wants to practice it often, and the result is that she/he gets even better in it. Setting up the child learning mode is the key of creating a positive learning environment.

In order to be able to derive the best academic children results, they need to be motivated. Key of shaping learning motivation is knowing students' strengths. Especially important is the child individual approach of the teacher, but at the same time the child has to feel the need to be part of the class. This affiliation is extremely important because the child feels safe. It is very appropriate to use class names - similar to kindergartens, class mascots, class songs, and so on.

Children learn well when they are not forced to do it. It is very appropriate to build a positive classroom. It is a good idea for the children's classes to be arranged so that most of the time they have good eye contact with their teacher. It is possible to arrange the classes in a circle or square, a good option is to place the chairs so that the children can be divided into groups.

If at class there are SEN children or children with aggressive behavior, it would be appropriate to build a relaxation and sensory stimulation area where children can relax.

Children have good visual memory and what is in front of their eyes every day will remain in their minds until they are mature.

The classroom should be cozy, quiet, cheerful and inspiration, because students and teachers spend half of their day in it. The learning environment can harmonize stress and workloads in school if the colors and shapes are selected correctly.

A positive environment helps learning, the negative environment leads to neurobiological dysfunctions and hinders development and learning. For example, when the parent commented on the work of their second-graders, the comments may be positive (this allows the child to understand that he is doing well) or negative (can destroy the child's motivation). Often the negative response comes naturally, so parents need to learn to be positive. It is important not only teachers to use a positive assessment, but also parents to be stimulated to do so.

Can the children learn in a negative learning environment? Yes, most of them can, but in a negative environment they can not develop their full potential, nor can they develop and learn as they would in a positive, supportive environment. Signs of the negative environment include negative attentions such as non-compliance, lack of motivation, anger, low self-esteem, lack of development, and the learning of knowledge and skills. Creating a positive and supportive environment can significantly change the children's attitudes towards learning, their perception of themselves, their pace of learning, and the extent to which new knowledge and skills are acquired.

What children take from the learning process is a reflection of what the teacher gives them. If the teacher is not satisfied with the outcome, he/she needs to rethink and change what offers them, and to create a positive learning environment.

Another important criterion for building a positive learning environment is the emotional calm of the students. For this purpose, an important role is played by the class teacher and other teachers involved in the education of children. Children need to feel safe and quiet in the learning environment. Very important is the trust relationship between students and the teacher. They must know that they will be heard and supported. When they are not calm, they will also have bad academic results. It is good to participate in various games through which students learn to control their emotions. Regulating emotions is a component of emotional intelligence and is the way we think constructively about how to deal with our feelings. Emotional regulation leads to better academic achievement. Children who are able to control their emotions are more careful, work harder and achieve better results at school. They are easier to deal with conflict resolution and show lower levels of anxiety.

The process of controlling and dealing with emotions usually happens very naturally when to children are given space to experiment, and the opportunity:

- to be heard when they need it;
- to trust the teacher;
- to think about their feelings and emotions and the ways in which they respond;
- to solve their problems themselves, to be autonomous;
- to observe the different emotions that others experience and how to deal with them;
- to participate actively in different social situations;
- to express their negative feelings without giving them immediate solution to the problem.

When a child is confident that his/her feelings and concerns will be understood and supported, it will be much more relaxed and free to express his/her inner world.

The more teacher ignore his/her feelings, the more urgently and strongly he/she will show – he/she will cry, he/she will behave defiantly. Every student wants to be noticed. He/She wants to know that there is an adult who can rely on and with whom he can create a trusted relationship.

A positive learning environment is achieved by mobilizing all its participants.

### **Methods for coping with problem students**

Definitions of classroom management vary, but usually include actions taken by the teacher to establish order, engage students, or elicit their cooperation. Doyle (1986) summarized it as “The actions and strategies teachers use to solve the problem of order in classrooms”. Jones (1996) emphasized the comprehensive nature of classroom management by identifying five main features:

1. An understanding of current research and theory in classroom management and students’ psychological and learning needs.
2. The creation of positive teacher–student and peer relationships.
3. The use of instructional methods that facilitate optimal learning by responding to the academic needs of individual students and the classroom group.
4. The use of organizational and group management methods that maximize on-task behavior.

5. The ability to use a range of counseling and behavioral methods to assist students who demonstrate persistent or serious behavior problems (p. 507). This broad view of classroom management encompasses both establishing and maintaining order, designing effective instruction, dealing with students as a group, responding to the needs of individual students, and effectively handling the discipline and adjustment of individual students.

Teaching is full of emotion. Personal histories (cf. Carter & Doyle, 1996) of teachers frequently contain emotional content, and professional writing by teachers sometimes focuses specifically on the topic of emotion and its management. Early research on teacher emotions focused on teaching anxiety and, relatedly, teacher concerns (Keavney & Sinclair, 1978). Much of this research addressed causes and correlates of teacher anxiety, such as discipline and time demands. Some links were found between higher anxiety and lower levels of rapport and job satisfaction. Negative emotion associated with teaching is often related to student behavior, especially when this behavior is disruptive and inappropriate. Teachers report student aggression and behavior that interrupts class activities to be the most common stressors, with anger and depression being typical emotional reactions (Blase, 1986). Schonfeld (1992) found that beginning teachers in school environments that contained higher perceived levels of student behaviors such as threats or confrontations, and that included chronic stressors such as unmotivated students or overcrowded classes, experienced more depressive symptoms than beginning teachers in less stressful settings.

According to some psychologists' researches about the most effective classroom management techniques and prevention of problem behaviors, students can identify the following:

1. Teachers' convincing demonstration that they are aware of everything that happens in the classroom. They capture a possible problem with the discipline from the very beginning, thus quickly eliminating unacceptable behavior and keeping the pupils' attention to the lesson. It is extremely important to distinguish between different types of personality and their peculiarities.

2. Ability to cope with multiple situations simultaneously. They teach, understand the students who are distracted, who understand the material, who are bored and, according to these events, apply the most appropriate methods / approaches.

3. Ability to create smooth transitions between classroom activities. These teachers do not strictly adhere to the lesson but take into account the condition of the pupils: whether they are bored with superfluous facts, whether they understand the lesson, whether what they teach is already known.

4. Skill to include all students in classroom activities. There is a common teacher's mistake to interact throughout the class with a particular student. In this way, they allow other children to "self-exclude" from the lesson and indulge in activities that have nothing to do with the material being studied.

5. Demonstration of enthusiasm, especially for younger students. Unfortunately, some teachers show the boredom and annoyance of the uniform day-to-day procedures in the classroom. This behavior can be "copied" by the pupils and they lose interest and motivation to learn about the particular subject. Approach to any activity in the classroom with the necessary commitment from the teachers.

6. Making constructive criticism. Constructive criticisms are clear and precise. They focus on unacceptable behavior, not on the particular student. The angry reactions of the teacher do not lead to better behavior. On the contrary, they make students feel nervous. In constructive criticism, there is no anger, shouts, insults. It is effective not only for the criticized student but also for most classroom students.

In order to choose the right approach to tackling problem behavior, the teacher needs to understand what causes the students to engage in unacceptable behaviors in the classroom.

There are four main reasons why students can demonstrate inappropriate behaviors:

1. **Challenging attention.** Typical examples are: creating noise, breaking the rules in the classroom, asking questions or disturbing others while they work,

2. **Search for power.** These are students who feel inadequate because of their academic abilities or lack of recognition in their social groups. They try to blackmail others, challenge power, and oppose school rules.

3. **Revenge.** Students who do not receive attention and recognition in the classroom can try to compensate for this lack of retaliation (verbal or non-verbal).

4. **Helplessness or inadequacy.** Some students feel incompetent and useless, and this may give them a sense of despair.

It is very important that when students do not follow the rules in the classroom, teachers should direct their attention to the consequences. Using consequences as a behavioral regulator can be as important as setting rules. That is why teachers have to follow the behavior and encourage students who follow the rules in the classroom. At the same time, they must clearly state the consequences if there are conditions to violate these rules. The use of the consequences of abusive behavior should be carried out in a relaxed way and alone with the pupil in order to preserve the dignity of the pupils and to ensure the smooth running of the learning activities.

Applying clear and consistent disciplining measures is one of the main ways in which students can be helped to understand the relationship between behavior and its consequences.

There are different approaches that can be used by teachers to maintain good discipline in the classroom. Generally, they can be divided into two categories: student-centered and teacher-oriented.

In student-centered approaches lies the idea that learners are able to understand and solve their own problems. The basis of discipline is self-control, while teacher effectiveness is based on teacher-student relationships based on trust, goodwill, and true communication. In order for this "real communication" to take place, teachers should be aware of the results of some of their statements with regard to students.

Major obstacles to effective teacher-student communication

1. Orders and management:
2. Warnings, Threats:
3. Moralising, teaching:
4. Advice, suggestions:
5. Learning, giving logical arguments:
6. Judgment, Criticism, Disagreement:
7. Labeling, Stereotypes:
8. Interpretation, analysis, diagnosis:
9. Unfulfilled praise, consent:
10. Soothing, sympathy:
11. Inquiry, study:
12. Withdrawal, sarcasm.

Some of the reasons for inefficient communication between teacher and student are logical. For example, "threats", "criticism" and "sarcasm" have an obvious negative result, while others, such as "praise", "advice", "offering solutions" and "comfort" seem at first sight to be quite acceptable ways of responding. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that counselling students and offering options to solve their problems can be perceived by them as evidence of their lack of faith in their ability to take responsibility and to find an adequate solution themselves. The advising teacher may provoke in student a sense of dependence, lack of autonomy, low self-esteem.

On the other hand, learning and giving logical arguments on rare occasions is successful in changing behaviours. Logic and highlighting of the facts often lead to insult and use of security strategies. Students, like adults, do not like to understand that are wrong.

The prize and the positive evaluation can also have a negative result. Positive assessment, which does not coincide with a student's self-assessment, may cause his anger, as he can interpret it as an attempt to manipulate. In this connection, it is advisable in the communication with students that teachers should not use phrases that send negative messages or inadequate moralizing advice.

But if the teacher avoid ineffective messages, what would be the right approach then? Initially, teachers need to clarify whose the problem is - theirs or the student's. When the problem is the teacher, the messages that usually criticize the student should be avoided, but the messages that refer to the unacceptable behaviour should be used. Those messages show the feelings of the teacher. The purpose of these messages is to provoke a voluntary change in student behaviour by appealing to his conscience and desire to do the right thing.

When the problem is of the student (ie, he is anxious, depressed, with low self-esteem), the following steps should be implemented: "open door" (the teacher offers the student to talk about the problem), "passive listening" (listens to the student in a way that shows him that he can be heard and understood) and "active listening" (encouraging decision making) The teacher should be a good listener, demonstrate acceptance and understanding without giving judgment or advice. It can encourage the student to share his / her options for solving a problem and to help him/her , if necessary, in assessing these options. Such an approach usually has a beneficial effect on the student and helps to overcome the negative aspects of his behaviour.

When the problem is both of the teacher and of the student, the so-called "no-loss method" is recommended. The purpose of this method is to resolve the conflict so that neither the teacher nor the disciple is lost, for example if the teacher notices that hour by hour one of the children of the last rank distracts his classmates, he can warn him that if he does not stop, there will be a punishment.

If the child listens to the teacher and stops – the student is the loser. If he/she did not listen to him/her and continue to demonstrate unacceptable behaviour - the loser is the teacher. In this case, it is best to find a compromise option, i.e to resort to the "no-loss method." For example, the teacher could redirect the student's attention to class work by asking him/her a question he/she knows, the teacher can talk to the student to recall what behaviour is acceptable in the classroom and which is not, clearly emphasizing the desire for the pupil to be more involved in the learning process in the future.

Steps to solve student problems:

1. Find a quiet and convenient place to talk with the student.

2. Encourage the student to talk about the problem. Do not interfere and give him the opportunity to ponder the problem.
3. Show that you are engaged and listen carefully and understand the problem.
4. Encourage the student to identify and clarify important questions. Summarize the ideas and arguments for a better understanding of the problem and making effective decisions.
5. Be positive and demonstrate approval. Encourage rational resolution of the problem.
6. Allow the student to make suggestions on how the problem can be solved.
7. Help the student choose the most appropriate action or plan to solve the problem.

The other main type of approaches are to cope with problem behaviour and discipline is the teacher-oriented approach. According to these approaches, students are treated as incapable of making rational decisions, and they enable the teacher to decide what is best for his or her alumni. The teacher has the right to exercise his / her authority and to require students to adhere to the rules in the classroom, which in practice allows the effective conduct of the training.

Teachers should benefit from three basic rights:

1. The right to create a structure in the classroom that leads to an optimal learning environment;
2. The right to identify and demand appropriate behaviour by students, while promoting positive social and cognitive development.
3. The right to seek help from parents, principals and other stakeholders.

This approach would be extremely effective when is applied by so-called "assertive teachers." These are teachers who clearly, accurately and calmly express their expectations, categorically determine the consequences of non-compliance, and adhere to three main steps that are called:

1. Teach students how to behave by providing clear and specific guidelines for each of the classroom activities;
2. Provide positive support;
3. Refer to a previously developed discipline plan that includes the negative consequences of a student's failure to follow the rules.

However, this approach would have no positive effect either on discipline or on learning if it is applied by teachers who adhere to one of the two ineffective styles: passive and aggressive.

The passive teacher fails to categorize and define the students' problem behaviour in a clear and direct way. He/She either ignores the problem behaviour as such or fails to impose the sanctions initially claimed.

Despite the use of preventive techniques to prevent problematic behaviors in the classroom, there are situations where they can not be avoided. In this case, the unacceptable behavior is present, the order in the classroom is disturbed, and the pupils' attention to the lesson is completely lost. As a result, the teacher faces the need to end unacceptable behavior and restore order.

The hostile (aggressive) teacher appears as a despot. He/She makes orders, uses insults and sarcasm (verbal or non-verbal). This teacher announces extreme penalties that he fails to fully implement. All of this leads to unnecessary opposition and lack of positive results on the development of self-discipline and self-discipline of students.

When resolving conflict situations among participants in the learning process, it is advisable to use peaceful, alternative means such as mediation before resorting to sanctions. It is a positive and inclusive approach - creating creative solutions to pressing problems through the voice of the students themselves and equally involving all participants. Mediation actually contributes to a constructive learning environment of tranquility, motivation for communication, responsibility, tolerance and acceptance of differences. Each school only decides what conflicts can be solved through mediation. Mediators can be both students and teachers, pedagogical counselors and psychologists.

The procedure that the mediator has to observe when performing a mediation session passes through the following three stages:

Stage 1: Preliminary meetings - separately with each of the parties to the conflict.

Stage 2: General meeting to solve the problem.

Stage 3: Preparation of an agreement between the parties.

The main tasks of the mediator are:

- manage the conflict effectively, thereby improving the situation of all the parties involved;
- not to worsen the conflict;
- resolve the conflict if possible.

The mediator should be impartial, neutral, discreet, a good listener, polite, patient, a good communicator, love to help others resolve their conflicts; want to work in a team.

Emotional well-being is one of the most important factors in school success. In other words, happy children learn best in the proper sense of this word. Of course, pressure-cooked pupils may get better results as “right answers” are instilled into them, but long term learning is something quite different. Therefore, the emotional health of people in school needs to be a

top priority. A successful school is one which adults and children are happy and fulfilled. Pupils in this context are likely to succeed and achieve. Emotional well-being leads to self-worth; being cared for provides the foundation for caring for others. Praise leads to an attitude; however negative criticism, especially when unjustified causes can't do complex. The latter is more common than the former. The aim of education is pupil autonomy. The emphasis, as far as behavior goes, is to develop self-control, and self-discipline. Education thus is about emotional understanding, self-determination and motivation to learn.

**The influence of the training based on The Modello di Articolazione Intersistemica (M.A.I) within the project on Bulgarian teachers.**

The REC “new methodological approach” (Relational and Emotional Competences) takes its inspiration by the American theories of Jennings and Greenberg (2009) and their pro-social model (SEC) (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional learning, 2008). This new approach highlights the importance of teachers’ relational and emotional competences (REC) and wellbeing in the development/maintenance of supportive teacher – student relationships, effective classroom management and successful social/emotional learning program implementation. According to this new model, these relational and emotional competences contribute to create a classroom climate that is more conducive to learn and that promotes positive developmental outcomes among students. Furthermore, current research suggesting a relationship between REC and teacher burnout and reviews intervention efforts to support teachers’ REC through stress reduction and mindfulness programs. These competences involve five major emotional, cognitive and behavioural skills: self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, self-management, and relationship management (Zins, Weissberg, Wang & Walberg, 2004)

According to the project, teachers and students’ questionnaire were made to evaluate the influence of M.A.I training on them. Two hundred and twenty (220) teachers filled the questionnaire “Relational and Emotional Competences Questionnaire (RECQ) for teachers (for all teachers)”. Half of them participated in the project and M.A.I trainings and the other 110 teachers do not participate in the project. “The Observational grids “well-being classroom class group” questionnaire was filled only by teachers with pupils from 3 to 10 years old. Also 1339 students between 11-19 years old filled “RECQ for students’ version (from 11 to 19 years old)” questionnaire. At the end of REC training, all 110 teachers filled a questionnaire of satisfaction. The results from my point of view are very interesting.

Relational and Emotional Competences Questionnaires represent five dimensions of REC- self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship management and responsible decision-making. Each item selects for the initial pool of items reflected one of the five areas in the framework:

- Self-awareness – “I understand my mood and feelings”, “I know when I am moody”
- Social awareness – “If someone is sad, angry or happy, I believe I know what they are thinking”, “I understand why people react the way they do”
- Self-management – “I stay calm when things go wrong”, “I can control the way I feel when something bad happens”
- Relationship management – “I always try and comfort my friends when they are sad”, “I try not to criticize my friend when we quarrel”
- Responsible decision – making – “When making decisions, I take into account the consequences of my actions”, “I consider the strengths and weaknesses of the strategy before deciding to use it”

### **Results from “Relational and Emotional Competences Questionnaire (RECQ) for teachers (for all teachers)”**

#### *Participants and procedure*

The Bulgarian version of the questionnaire “**Relational and Emotional Competences Questionnaire (RECQ) for teachers (for all teachers)**” was administrated to 220 teachers from eleven schools in three cities in Bulgaria. The administration of the questionnaire was made 3 times – at the beginning of the project, at the middle of it (after first six M.A.I trainings) and at the end of the training. All 550 surveys were valid for analysis (110 REC teachers made the questionnaire 3 times and 110 Non REC teachers made it twice). Their responses were assessed using a scale ranging from 1 (never) to 4 (often).

The distribution of the interviewed teachers by age, education and position at school is shown on Table 1.

*Table 1*

|                           |   | REC teachers  |              |            | NON REC teachers |            |
|---------------------------|---|---------------|--------------|------------|------------------|------------|
|                           |   | Questionnaire |              |            | Questionnaire    |            |
|                           |   | Initial       | Intermediate | Final      | Initial          | Final      |
| <b>Gender</b>             | Male  | 9             | 9            | 10         | 19               | 91         |
|                           | Female  | 101           | 101          | 100        | 19               | 91         |
| <b>Level of school</b>    | Kindergarten and primary school                     | 21            | 21           | 21         | 14               | 14         |
|                           | Secondary school                                    | 30            | 30           | 30         | 9                | 9          |
|                           | Further educational institution (1 to 12 grade)     | 29            | 29           | 29         | 68               | 68         |
|                           | Higher school (vocational and high language school) | 30            | 30           | 30         | 20               | 20         |
| <b>Position in school</b> | Classroom teacher                                   | 99            | 99           | 99         | 105              | 105        |
|                           | Pupil support professional staff                    | 11            | 11           | 11         | 3                | 3          |
|                           | Other   |               |              |            | 2                | 2          |
| <b>Degree of studies</b>  | Graduation  | 16            | 16           | 16         | 28               | 28         |
|                           | Master  | 94            | 94           | 94         | 82               | 82         |
|                           | <b>Total N</b>                                      | <b>110</b>    | <b>110</b>   | <b>110</b> | <b>110</b>       | <b>110</b> |

The average teachers' age of REC teachers is 45,98 and of NON REC teachers is 46, 83. Approximately 19 years is the average teaching years of both groups.

The data collected from the teachers was analyzed. Teachers' responses were tallied according to their response (for example: never = 1 or often = 4). The items 1,2,3 ,4, 8, 9, 11, 12 were reverse coded; therefore, they were recoded (for example if a teacher's response is 1, it is tallied as a 4).

The maximum possible score is 96 and the minimum is 24. The distribution of the score is shown on Table 2.

| <i>Table 2</i>        | Initial questionnaire |                  | Intermediate questionnaire | Final questionnaire |                  |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
|                       | REC teachers          | NON REC teachers | REC teachers               | REC teachers        | NON REC teachers |
| <b>N</b>              | 110                   | 110              | 110                        | 110                 | 110              |
| <b>Mean</b>           | 76.60                 | 65.56            | 77.37                      | 77.52               | 65.22            |
| <b>Std. Deviation</b> | 6.57                  | 10.01            | 7.49                       | 7.17                | 9.83             |
| <b>Minimum</b>        | 53.00                 | 44.00            | 53.00                      | 53.00               | 44.00            |
| <b>Maximum</b>        | 89.00                 | 86.00            | 92.00                      | 89.00               | 88.00            |

The reliability of the BG version of the questionnaire was analyzed by internal consistency assessed via Cronbach's alpha. For educational studies, the suggested alpha value is at least 0.70 and preferably higher (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003).

The data in Table 3 show that the internal consistency (Cronbach alpha) of the three administration ranges from 0.877 to 0.922. The reliability of the questionnaire is as high as 0.918. These results help us conclude that the internal consistency is satisfactory as a whole.

| <i>Table 3</i>          | All   | Initial | Intermediate | Final |
|-------------------------|-------|---------|--------------|-------|
| <b>N</b>                | 550   | 220     | 110          | 220   |
| <b>Cronbach's Alpha</b> | 0.918 | 0.914   | 0.877        | 0.922 |

\* Item 2 was deleted from scale analysis because it lowered reliability in all three types of questionnaires (Initial, intermediate and final).

## Results

**The data is analyzed by four dimensions self-management, responsible decision, self-awareness and social awareness**

On item 1 (I often get angry in classroom and I do not understand the motive), the REC teachers showed more self-control than Non REC teachers. REC teachers also can build a positive relationship with students better than the teacher can from the other group. Both target groups instinctively act but Non Rec teachers do it often. Both groups spend time at classroom listening to what students feel but from the data is obviously that the REC trainings influenced the teachers and they became a better listeners.

Non REC teachers and REC teachers at 1<sup>st</sup> administration of the questionnaire do not realize the importance of personal feelings on their interaction with students and school staff. After the training, they show that they learned to notice their emotions and the emotions of the people around them and try to control them. It is interesting that REC teachers became more valuable for their colleagues in resolving school problems.

REC teachers at initial administration are with higher social awareness than Non REC teachers. They shared that can create a positive relationship with students and parents. REC teachers easily understand students' feelings and mediate students' conflict. After the REC training they showed higher social awareness.

The teachers that participated in the REC trainings shared that easily manage the class group in critical situation and value individual differences within the classroom. They analyze before acting and consider students' emotional well-being before making decisions. They usually go to school with joy and enthusiasm especially after passed the REC training. On these items, Non REC teachers showed lower scores (sometimes or often).

The analysis showed that REC teachers are more self-confident and self – aware than Non REC teachers. The answers showed that most teachers do not feel valuable for their students and their colleagues especially the teachers at high - schools. They do not feel the support of parents. That makes them not to pay attention to others emotions and prevent making positive relationship with them. But the answers of REC teachers after the training show that it positive changed. Many teachers shared that they have been working at their school for 20 years without knowing anything about their colleagues. All these things prevent making emotional relationship nor with students, nor with other teachers.

**Results from “Observational grids “well-being classroom class group” REC only teachers with pupils from 3 to 10 years old”**

*Participants and procedure*

The Bulgarian version of the questionnaire “**Observational grids “well-being classroom class group” REC only teachers with pupils from 3 to 10 years old**” was administrated to 48 teachers from 7 schools and 1 kindergarten in three cities in Bulgaria. The administration of the questionnaire was made 3 times – at the beginning of the project, at the middle of it (after first six M.A.I trainings) and at the end of the training. All 144 surveys were valid for analysis (48 REC teachers with pupils from 3 to 10 years old made the questionnaire 3 times). Their responses were assessed using a scale ranging from 1 (never) to 4 (often).

The distribution of the interviewed teachers by age, education and position at school is shown on Table 4.

|                           |                                  | Questionnaire |              |           |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------|
|                           |                                  | Initial       | Intermediate | Final     |
| <b>Gender</b>             | Male                             | 1             | 1            | 1         |
|                           | Female                           | 48            | 48           | 48        |
| <b>Position in school</b> | Classroom teacher                | 44            | 44           | 44        |
|                           | Pupil support professional staff | 5             | 5            | 5         |
| <b>Degree of studies</b>  | High school diploma              | 0             | 0            | 0         |
|                           | Graduation                       | 9             | 9            | 9         |
|                           | Other                            | 40            | 40           | 40        |
| <b>Total N</b>            |                                  | <b>49</b>     | <b>49</b>    | <b>49</b> |

The average teachers’ age is 47.12 and approximately 20 years is their average teaching years.

The data collected from the teachers was analyzed. Teachers’ responses were tallied according to their response (for example: never = 1 or often = 4). The maximum possible score is 68 and the minimum is 17. The reliability of the questionnaire is as high as 0.934.

## Results

The data shows that the pupils between 3 and 10 years old have medium emotional competencies. They often are enthusiastic when go to school because usually show interest in the activities carried out in the classroom. The pupils have good emotional self-awareness. The mean score of these questions range from 2.71 to 3.22. They often recognize their feelings, express them, without hurting others and often understand their classmates' feelings.

The results show that these primary teachers introduce their students into the school environment very well. They helped them to find themselves, and at the same time to be part of the class and to feel empathy. The pupils are so small but their teachers shared that often have teamwork collaboration, help each other, respect the feelings of their classmates and even defend each other in the face of injustice. The mean score of these questions ranged from 2.71 to 3.55.

It is interesting to notice that the REC training influenced most the questions of self-awareness and social awareness. The score changed in the diapason of 3.35 to 3.61 where “always” is equal to 4.

### Results from “RECQ FOR STUDENTS’VERSION (from 11 to 19 years old)”

#### *Participants and procedure*

The Bulgarian version of the questionnaire “**RECQ FOR STUDENTS’VERSION (from 11 to 19 years old)**” was administrated to 672 students from nine schools in three cities in Bulgaria. The administration of the questionnaire was made 3 times – at the beginning of the project, at the middle of it (after first six M.A.I trainings) and at the end of the training. From all 2016 surveys were valid 1899 for analysis (633 students whose teachers participate at REC training made the questionnaire 3 times). Their responses were assessed using a scale ranging from 1 (never) to 4 (often).

The distribution of the interviewed students by age and gender is shown on Table 5.

|        |                | Questionnaire |              |            |
|--------|----------------|---------------|--------------|------------|
|        |                | Initial       | Intermediate | Final      |
| Gender | Male           | 280           | 280          | 280        |
|        | Female         | 353           | 353          | 353        |
|        | <b>Total N</b> | <b>633</b>    | <b>633</b>   | <b>633</b> |

The average students' age is 14.04.

The data collected from the students was analyzed. Their responses were tallied according to their response (for example: never = 1 or often = 4). The items 1, 6, 7, 9, 15, 17 were reverse coded; therefore, they were recoded (for example if a student's response is 1, it is tallied as a 4). The maximum possible score is 72 and the minimum is 18.

The reliability of the BG version of the questionnaire was analyzed by internal consistency assessed via Cronbach's alpha. The reliability of the questionnaire is as high as 0.717.

## **Results**

On the question "I often get angry in classroom and I do not understand the motive, the students' Mean score is 1.67. They sometimes instinctively act. Students think that easily can recognize emotional state of their classmates and to create positive relationships with them. These students showed very good social awareness. However, they do not feel as valuable as they want to their friends. It is normal during the teenage age their feelings and emotions. Often they are carried away only with their emotions.

The students at first administration of the questionnaire do not realize the importance of personal feelings on their interaction with their classmates. After their teachers' training finished, they showed that they learned to notice their emotions and the emotions of the people around them. Students shared that often understand their classmates' feelings and mediate their conflict. After the REC training of their teachers, they showed higher social awareness.

The students shared that sometimes value individual differences within the classroom. They sometimes analyze before acting. They are not so enthusiastic to go to school.

The analysis showed that students are not so self-confident and self-aware. The answers showed that most students do not feel valuable for their classmates but often feel empathy.

The comparison of the data of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> administration of the questionnaire show that REC training influenced teachers. The data showed higher scores of the question related to relation management and self-awareness.

### **Results from "Training customer satisfaction for teachers (in the last meeting of training)"**

#### *Participants and procedure*

The Bulgarian version of the questionnaire "Training customer satisfaction for teachers (in the last meeting of training)" was administrated to all 110 teachers that participated in the REC training. The administration of the questionnaire was made at the end of the training. All 110 surveys were valid. Their responses were assessed using a scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very).

The data collected was analyzed. Their responses were tallied according to their response (for example: not at all = 1 or very = 4).

The reliability of the BG version of the questionnaire was analyzed by internal consistency assessed via Cronbach's alpha. The reliability of the questionnaire is as high as 0.877.

## Results

The distribution of the questions is shown at Table 6:

|        |   | <b>M</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|--------|---|----------|-----------|
| Item 1 | The contents of training R.E.C has been congruent compared to the objectives set out.                           | 3.68     | .468      |
| Item 2 | The topics covered has been congruent with the initial expectations   | 3.71     | .457      |
| Item 3 | The topics covered has been congruent with own training interests   | 3.63     | .559      |
| Item 4 | The topics dealt has been useful with in the workplace in the relationship with pupils, families and colleagues | 3.56     | .572      |
| Item 5 | The R.E.C training has enriched myself professionally and personally  | 3.61     | .587      |
| Item 6 | The training R.E.C. has been useful in the compulsory professional training for all teachers                    | 3.62     | .584      |
| Item 7 | The time has been enough to deepen different themes proposed  | 3.30     | .540      |
| Item 8 | I am satisfied of the training (organization, timing, materials)  | 3.62     | .488      |
| Item 9 | I am satisfied of the training (contents relevance)   | 3.77     | .422      |

It is obvious that all teachers are satisfied from the organization and topics of the training. They shared that it was enough useful in the workplace in the relationship with their pupils, families and colleagues. The training enriched them professionally and personally.

## **Conclusion**

Teaching is an emotional practice and empathy is central to the learner's capacity to engage positively with these issues, the facilitation of emotionally rich learning contexts is a key capacity among teachers. Emotional Intelligence skills may be able to be increased in teachers through appropriately structured educational trainings. These skills can be proven at students too via their teachers.

This chapter reveals teacher and student emotions at classroom from the socio-emotional point of view, and outline of the challenging situations from the cultural perspective within the Bulgarian school environment. Moreover, it is shown the large influence of training based on **The Modello di Articolazione Intersistemica (M.A.I)** within the project on Bulgarian teachers and their students. The analyzed data shows that M.A.I is applicable and enriching for Bulgarian teachers.

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## **Social and emotional competences of teachers – a new approach and a new meaning of the challenges brought by the context of school and class**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Beyond the academic knowledge and performances (actually, much more than these), students' social and emotional abilities are responsible for their success and their capacity of dealing with the challenges that life brings upon. Applying the same register of interpreting and perspective of analysis, the teacher's success is somehow related to the theoretical and didactical, pedagogical training, but the measurement of his emotional wealth and professional achievement is, to a large extent, offered by the capacity of efficiently managing the social and emotional challenges within the specific school environment in which he works and the class environment. Therefore, wealth and success on the personal and professional level of the two actors from the educational context are strongly determined by social and emotional factors and require them social and emotional competences, to the same degree.

A great part of the literature in the field has focused so far on teacher's role in developing students' social and emotional competences (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, Collie, Shapka & Perry, 2012) and on the benefits brought, including improvement of school attendance, motivation increase for study, diminishment of early behavioral problems, an easier inclusion of children with special needs, growth of social cohesion, improvement of academic results. A considerable literature supports the importance of relationship quality and teacher-student interaction from the perspective of students' results: academic results as well as social and emotional results (CASEL, 2013, Weissberg et al., 2015).

However, research from the latest decades has emphasized another perspective on the teachers' social and emotional competences: not only as a guarantor of their capacity of developing these competences to their own students, but also as an essential condition for the own well being (De Neve, Devos și Tuytens, 2015). The present day context require teachers more and more a better capacity of dealing with very demanding situations, and these witness some of the highest levels of occupational stress. It is real the fact that teachers are often confronted with critical situations from the emotional point of view, generated by difficult parents, by students that do not prepare themselves for school and sometimes have serious behavioral problems, by bureaucracy, by unfriendly teacher staff. And frequently experimenting negative emotions such as anger, guilt, sadness can reduce teachers' interior motivation and their feeling of self-efficiency and may lead, eventually, to emotional exhaustion and even burnout (Hakanen et al. 2006; Maslach et al. 2001, Mei-Lin Chang, 2009, Dussault and Deaudelin 1999).

This chapter aims to reveal, along with designing a possible “portrait” of the competent teacher from the socio-emotional point of view, an outline of the challenging situations from the emotional perspective within the Romanian school environment, as well as the possible effects of exposing the teacher to these situations when a high level of developing the socio-emotional competences lacks. Moreover, from the teacher training experience developed within the project, we would like to present some practical applications, tools of self-analysis of the behavior in class, a list of the positive and negative emotions experimented by teachers in class, lists of roles assumed by teachers, of the positive pedagogical interventions and the effects upon students.

*Keywords: social and emotional competences, well being, occupational stress,, teacher training*

### **Sub-sections**

- I. Approaches of socio-emotional competences of the teachers – impact and benefits
- II. The school and the class: contexts, emotional challenges, possible effects upon the teachers
- III. Evaluation, analysis of negative behaviors of students. Applications:
  - the “hats” carried by teachers – positive and negative emotions experienced by teachers in different roles
  - possible lists with positive pedagogical interventions, side-effects upon teachers
  - the map of the opportunities of teachers working with teenagers (the teacher defined by a high-level of self-consciousness, a high level of social-consciousness, a high level of responsibility in taking decisions, a high level of self-management, well-developed abilities of relating with the others)

#### ***I. Approaches of socio-emotional competences of the teachers – impact and benefits***

Besides knowledge and academic performances (and more than these), the emotional and social abilities are real ways of measuring their success and their abilities to face the challenge that life brings to them. According to the same approach and to the same perspective of analysis, the success of the teacher depends on his/her theoretical and didactic knowledge, on his/her pedagogical skills, but also it depends on his/her ability to work with and manage the class of students. In conclusion, the welfare and the success in personal and professional life of the two actors from the educational background are closely related to social and emotional factors and demands the students and the teachers to owe social and emotional competences, as well.

A great part of the literature dealing with educational problems focused on the role of teachers in developing students’ abilities (taking in consideration or not his/her own level of developing these competences), in order to create programs of social and emotional learning addressed to the class of the students. From the students’ perspective, the programs of developing social and emotional competences have highlighted a wide panel of benefits, including the improvement of students’ school frequency, the rise of motivation for study, the reduction of early school leaving problems, an easier and faster inclusion of the students

with special needs, the development of social cohesion, the improvement of school results. A quite considerable part of the literature goes for the importance of the quality of relations and interactions between teachers and students, from the perspective of the students' result – academic, social as well as emotional results.

Emotional and social learning refers to students as well as to adults, equally, to each member of the educational community. Students from different fields of activity (psychological, sciences of education) have as common aim synthesizing and extension of information about social and emotional competences of the teachers and the impact that the implementation of the SEL programs can have upon teachers, upon their personality, upon the educational practices implemented. One of the first theoretical studies which deals with SEC and SEL is the model of pro-social class proposed by Jennings and Greenberg (2009)<sup>1</sup>, which highlights the importance of social-emotional competences of the teachers and their welfare, in order to offer the students' emotional, social and academic support. According to the explanatory model, teachers' experience in implementing SEL (social emotional learning), their beliefs and attitude towards SEL highly influences their educational training and the level of their own social and emotional competences. In fact, the model highlights the relation between socio-emotional competences and welfare, with other four factors: teacher-student relation, class management, implementing SEL and class climate. Jennings and Greenberg state that teachers with a high level of emotional welfare and of development of social and emotional competences succeed to build positive relations within the class of students, to support students no matter their particularities, to create a climate of safety and respect, of mutual support, to manage more efficiently the critical situations and conflicts.

In the same time, a supportive learning background, when we constantly offer positive feed-back to students, where students are encouraged to involve, to freely express themselves, to freely present their opinions, to accept that they are different personalities; it is a background which also supports the academic results of the students and the construction of quality impersonal relations between students and students, students and teachers. A proper climate in class and in school also supports the development of social and relational competences of the teacher and the reduction of professional stress. The pro-social class model sustains the mutual relation between social and emotional competences of the teachers and the efficiency of implementing social and emotional learning programs addressed to students. Social and emotional competences, welfare, teachers' motivation and beliefs regarding social and emotional learning programs, all of these highly influence the attitude towards and the application of social and emotional learning program, according to Jennings and Greenberg (2009), but also Collie, Shapka and Perry (2012).

Related to operationalization of social and emotional competences, there are several theoretical and practical approaches, but the most well-known and generally used is the model of the five competences, proposed by the CASEL group – Collaborative for Academic, Social and Educational Learning. The way it works and the impact of these

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<sup>1</sup> Patricia Jennings and Mark Greenberg, *The Prosocial classroom: Teacher Social and Emotional Competences in Relation to Student and Classroom Outcomes*, <http://sagepub.com/cgi/rapidpdf/0034654308325693v1>

competences of teachers upon students, upon the academic results, but also their social and emotional competences were also approached in the in-training course in Romania, with 113 teachers, in the project Relational and Emotional Competences REC – ERASMUS+ strategic partnership 2017-1-IT02-KA201-036763, and the impact of these training activities was measured within the research done by the partner countries.

Social and emotional competence is a large construction, usually understood as an expected result of the SEL programs. Social and emotional competent teachers will present the main competences described by CASEL: self-consciousness, self-control, social consciousness, the ability of establishing relations, the ability to take responsible decisions, also a high ability to apply their abilities for school activities.

According to Jennings and Greenberg (2009, page 495), self-consciousness, defined as the ability to understand their own feelings, aims and values, is that SEC dimension which allows teachers to build a good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses which characterize their emotional state, to have a real feeling of self-confidence, to recognize emotional patterns and to know to generate and use emotions to motivate class-learning and to build a positive, supportive climate. Besides the classroom, this ability is found in the belief of the teachers and also in their positive mentality in relating with students' parents and with their colleagues. The self-efficiency, the teachers' beliefs in their ability to bring significant positive changes in learning, is associated with a limitation of the risks to be emotionally exhausted, with a higher involvement at work and with a lower tendency to drop-out the educational system.

**Social consciousness**, another SEC dimension, refers to the teachers' ability to have a perspective and to empathize with students, students' family and colleagues in school. Teachers with a high level of social consciousness are aware of the way their emotional expressions affect their interactions with the others, recognize and understand the others' emotions, build strong relations of support through mutual understanding and co-operation. These teachers are sensitive to cultural diversity and appreciate different perspectives of students, parents, colleagues and are able to easily solve conflicts within the educational background. In everyday activity, this ability of teachers is manifested in their efforts to seize and empathize with the perspectives of students and parents they work with, in the compassion shared with students, parents, colleagues, in their behavior developed in the relation with different members of the educational community (support, shelter, interest for the others' problems and perspectives), in the interest to find the most appropriate resources which can support the learning-teaching process (with evident effects when working with students with special needs)

**The ability to take responsible decisions**, taking in consideration the ethical standards, focusing on safety, respect for social standards and for the others, it represents another dimension of social and emotional competences requested to the teachers (CASEL 2011, p.1: Jennings&Greenberg 2009, p. 495). Teachers with a high level of responsibility of taking decisions take in consideration the way these decisions will have impact on schools, students, members of the professional community, and take the responsibility for their own decisions and actions. Teachers have permanently to take decisions, in their activity, from didactic strategies, conflict solving, designing teaching-learning-evaluation activities, to curricular strategies, rules and regulations in class. All these decisions mean

constructive and respectful choices which take in consideration the teachers' own welfare and the welfare of the others, and which supports the development of students' autonomy, self-determination, through involving and implying the students to participate in taking decisions.

Another dimension of SEC is represented by the **self-management**, the ability to control emotions, thoughts and reactions when confronted with difficult situations, emotionally speaking. According to Jennings and Greenberg (2009), the teachers who get a high level in self-management are able to express emotions in healthy ways, to build positive relations with the others, face calmly and efficiently negative behaviors of students, parents and colleagues, feel comfortable and even encourage students' autonomy. These teachers show their ability to face stressful situations minimizing, for example, the frustration they feel in different situations, show their ability to choose clear and tangible aims, to keep the enthusiasm and the success in his/her work. Self-adaptability, as specific way of self-regulation, is another ability upon which recent studies have been made (Collie and Martin, 2016)<sup>2</sup>, characteristic to the teachers who are able to adapt their thoughts, actions and emotions to the ever changing situations, and which correlate with a better welfare and with the academic results of the students. Other relevant additional fields of research relevant for self-management are coping skills, motivation and objectives' setting, which proved to be a very good support for teachers in the management of difficult situations at work, in reducing the burnout and the development of the welfare.

Teachers with **well developed relationship abilities** are able to prevent, deal with and solve the interpersonal conflicts within the class of students, within the teachers' room, within relations with the parents and are ready to recognize the fact that they need and ask for help when it's necessary (CASEL, 2011). Relationship abilities implies the setting and maintaining of high quality relations, such as clear communication, listening and cooperating with the others, negotiating conflicts properly, giving and asking for help (CASEL, 2013, Weissberg et al. 2015). High quality relations between teachers and students are in a strong connection with welfare, motivations and offering didactic help of high-quality, as well as with the motivation, commitment and academic involvement of the students. In the same time, communication abilities of the teachers are also seen in the relations with the colleagues and the management team, in their efforts for using collaborative teaching and high-quality informal interactions, with a great impact at the level of their welfare and motivation. Also, the welfare and the commitment of the teachers, efficient setting of the objectives are positively influenced by the availability of the teachers to ask for help, to ask questions, to look for support at the more experienced teachers. (De Neve, Devos and Tuytens, 2015).

As a conclusion, nowadays we can speak about a considerable research literature which analyzed all these five social and emotional competences identified by CASEL (2013), all

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<sup>2</sup> Rebecca J Collie, Andrew J Martin, *Adaptability: An Important Capacity for Effective Teachers*, Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice 38(1):27-39 · March 2016, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/299592012\\_Adaptability\\_An\\_Important\\_Capacity\\_for\\_Effective\\_Teachers](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/299592012_Adaptability_An_Important_Capacity_for_Effective_Teachers)

of them offering proofs of their relevance for the welfare, motivation and pedagogical practices of the teachers, as well as for the improvements they brought in several areas of personal, social and academic life of the students: socio-emotional abilities of the students, attitude towards the inner-self, attitude towards school and the others around, positive social behavior, reducing behavioral problems and emotional stress.

Regarding the impact upon students, several proofs suggest that social and emotional factors have clear benefits, which reduce the barriers in accessing education and promote the abilities which allows students to engage in diverse social and academic activities. In fact, social and emotional competence profile of the teachers, together with the inclusion of students in SEL programs (which follow students' acquisition and effective application of knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to recognize and manage emotions, to show emotions and empathy towards the others, to take responsible decisions, to develop positive relations and to manage difficult situations) leads to a development of academic, social and emotional performances of students.

These changes deals to a great extent to the motivation for learning, for the commitment to school, to the development of strong feelings of belonging to a school community, to reducing inner-self problems (such as depression and anxiety) or outer-self (aggressivity and interpersonal violence), to reducing school drop-out. If students are encouraged to express positive emotions and to engage into effective relations based on respect, even from the primary school, it is more probably to avoid depression, violence and other psychical and behavioral problems as a grown-up. The attachment to and the feeling of belonging to a school community is more developed, negative behaviors are reduced, and the academic results are positively influenced. The students who have clear behavioral and social standards, which allows them to feel secure, valued, confident, will also have a good school behavior and will learn easier. Socio-emotional abilities used and the supportive background where they are taught seem to contribute to the resilience of all students, those identified with negative behavior or positive behavior.

Teachers who are calm, positive and satisfied are more capable to approach students in a calm and sensitive way, even if when these behave not so properly. And the way teachers navigate in stressful situations every day is attentively observed by the students and taken as model, the students learning from the way their teachers manage frustration, confront with conflicts or maintain self-control in the classroom. And if teachers want to teach in a class well-organized, where creativity and autonomy are encouraged, they have to maintain a spirit of calm and respectful involvement, they have to be organized and to develop social confidence.

Through the project ERASMUS+ Relational and Emotional Competences REC, through the in-training course which took place in Romania, after the presentation and the analysis of the five dimensions of social and emotional competences, all the 113 teachers involved in the training activities designed a „portray” of the teacher competent from the emotional and social point of view. The most significant characteristics of this type of teacher, taken from the analysis of his/her own educational experience and from the reflection upon the practices developed in the school he/she works and in the Romanian school, generally speaking, designs a teacher who:

- sustains the development of prosocial behaviors at students, by offering as many opportunities as possible to cooperate, to help the other, to reflect upon their colleagues' experiences and needs, to participate in mutual decisions; a teacher who understands the basic need of the students to belong and contribute to a community - the class and the school;
- approaches as rare as possible to punishments to control undesirable behaviors of students, encouraging prosocial behaviors to students, establishing clear limits through assertive approach and preventive strategies;
- recognizes their emotions and know how to manage positive emotions, such as joy and enthusiasm to motivate students to learn;
- manages with calm and efficient the demands imposed by standardized testing of the school results;
- is preoccupied by the students' welfare and comfort at school, is preoccupied to promote high-quality relations, manifesting concern, compassion, support towards students, fact which determines the increase of motivation and interest of the students to learning and towards school, generally speaking;
- manages efficiently the relations of collaboration with parents, sometimes too difficult or too exigent;
- recognizes the students' emotions, understands cognitive evaluations which can be associated with those emotions and the way in which emotions motivate/determine the students' behavior; creates within the class a context which is able to generate and to sustain positive emotions of the students, because the feeling of welfare, the feeling of security and valorization increase students' motivation, promote and encourage learning;
- is proactive, able to use emotional expressions and verbal support to promote enthusiasm and the joy of learning
- understands the dynamic of conflict situations within the class and negotiate effectively and efficiently adapted solutions;
- is characterized by trust, receptivity and involvement, promote students' social and emotional development, ensure a state of security which helps students to explore new ideas and to take risks.

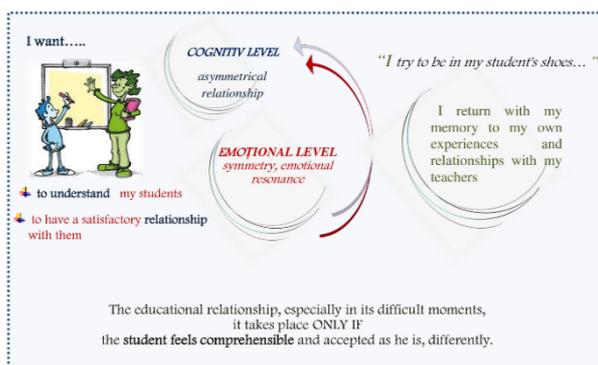
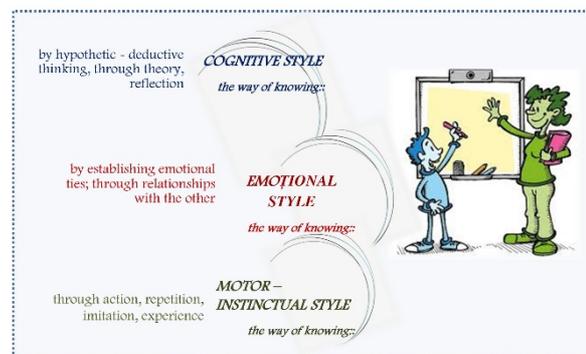
## ***II. The school and the class: contexts and challenging situations from the emotional point of view, possible effects upon the teacher***

Researches from the last decades have moved the accent to a new perspective upon social and emotional competences of teachers, not only to state their ability to develop these abilities to students, but also as an essential condition to their own welfare, for a proper answer to the challenges and requests from the professional space. The actual context asks the teacher to have a good ability to answer and to manage the situations which are more and more challenging and the teachers complains about one of the highest levels of occupational stress. We all want a competent teacher from the social and emotional point of view, able to generate relations of support within the class of students, able to design his/her own didactic scenarios starting from his/her students' strengths and from their

resources. A teacher who creates moments of success, of support, of continuous motivation for learning. A teacher who encourages collaboration, who values the differences among students, who allows and sustains the expression of feelings in a context of mutual respect, who promotes enthusiasm and the joy of learning, who understands and manages the dynamic of conflict situations from the class.

But, how close are we, truly speaking, to our students' souls? To what extent do we understand them? How often do we empathize with them? With this generation who seems more and more in a hurry, who can find out extremely fast and easy, by accessing the technologies, numerous things about the world they live in, but who knows almost nothing about the world they represent? Children and teenagers, fans of "emotional fast-food" (Augusto Cury, 2005)<sup>3</sup>, which need an amazing teacher "to discover their emotional territory first, and then to discover the cathedral of their thoughts", creating during the class emotional states, generating amazing educational moments. (A. Cury, 2005, pg. 31)

For the teachers is extremely important to know and to respect, to value the way each student thinks, acts and feel, because these determine specific ways in which students develop relations with themselves and with the others, and relate to knowledge. Our students relate in different ways to knowledge: some of them appeal to hypothetic-deductive thinking, to reflection, to theory; others connect themselves to the subject to be known through emotions; others discover the world through action, repetition, imitation and experience.



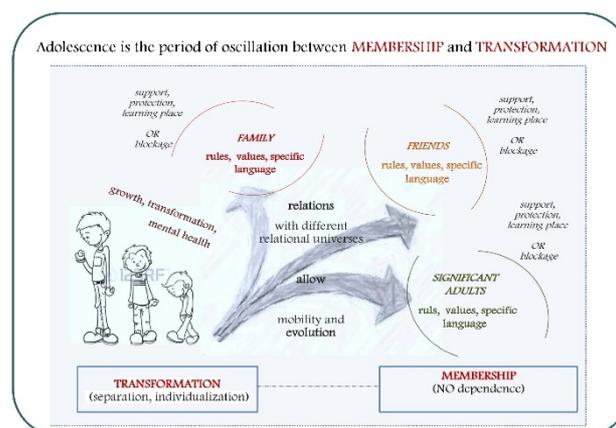
A profound educational relation, generating knowledge and personal evolution of both actors, teacher and student, takes place only if the students feels understood and accepted as he/she is, different, each from the other. An asymmetrical relation between teacher and student, at cognitive level, has to be completed by the emotional symmetry and

resonance between those two, in the educational act. In **Model of inter-systems articulation (MAI)**, proposed by Luigi Baldascini, it is considered that in the educational training it is extremely important to identify and connect the type of personality of the student, what makes him/her sensitive (the specific of the emotional, cognitive, motor-instinctual universe) to the things that the student expresses, to the thigs he/she thinks and does, to give a new dimension to the teaching process, to enrich and lead the educational

<sup>3</sup> Augusto Cury, *Glamorous parents, fascinating teachers*, 2015, Publishing House For You

training to support the evolution, the transformation and the development of the child. This kind of identification of the type of personality the student owes should be used by teachers not for diagnosis purpose, but for increasing the degree of personal and social awareness, through activating some ways of developing more functional relations for teaching and learning. (Luigi Baldascini, 2018)<sup>4</sup>.

More, in the case of teenagers, their relations with themselves, with their parents, with adults, with their mates are all brought into the game and into the educational space of the classroom. Interpersonal systems: family, friends, significant adults give to the teenager rules, values and a specific language, offering support and protection, with the condition not to generate addiction and to allow the student his/her development through separation and individualization from the others. His/her entire growing and transforming process at this age is highlighted by a crisis (generated by the unknown, the ignorance, the permanent changing), and the very diverse moments the teenager experiences - controversy, depression, extremely joy- will influence the relations from the classroom (Luigi Baldascini, 1994)<sup>5</sup>, and the global rebalancing of the multiple internal relations and of the relations with the external world, asks the teacher special abilities, the ability to wear several hats, to play several roles, having in the same time the equilibrium and the wisdom to ensure his/her own emotional welfare.



Yet, the teacher cannot always focus (only) on the student! Even because, at his/her turn, the teacher needs an efficient management of his/her own emotional state and a supportive context. In order to know and empathize with the emotional answers of the students, the teacher has to be aware of his/her own emotional answers. It is a reality of our times that the teacher is seldom put in emotionally demanding situations, but he/she cannot answer because his/her status and in a way assigned by the role the teacher has, most of the time at the expense his/her own emotional equilibrium. (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009)<sup>6</sup>. It is also very well-known that an increasing number of students are not interested in the learning process, they came to school without doing their homework or without learning a word, and sometimes with huge behavioral problems, and at school are not always

<sup>4</sup> Luigi Baldascini, *Il gruppo in formazione*, <http://www.iprnapoli.it/pdf/Formazione/Ilgruppoinformazione.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Luigi Baldascini, *L'adolescente tra appartenenze e trasformazioni*, <http://www.ipr.napoli.it/adolescenza/78-%E2%80%99adolescente-tra-appartenenze-e-trasformazioni.html>

<sup>6</sup> Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2009). *The Prosocial Classroom: Teacher Social and Emotional Competence in Relation to Student and Classroom Outcomes*. *Review of Educational Research*, 79, 491-525. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0034654308325693>

understood, supported and individualized. Besides, the parents seldom play the role of harsh judges of the teacher's interventions and gives the teacher tasks that deal more with family and not with school. At his turn, the bureaucracy brings too often an additional and unreasonable burden for the teacher, and the relations from the teachers' room and from the school are not always the most supportive ones. The constant experiencing of some negative emotions such as furry, guilt, sadness can reduce inner motivation of the teachers and the feeling of self-efficiency and can lead, finally, to burnout.

The teacher with a low level of social and emotional competences cannot create an optimum climate within the class and the students' failure and the negative climate from the classroom can lead, finally, to depersonalization, to the feeling of lack of personal fulfilment and to emotional burnout. As a chain reaction, the teacher loses his/her enthusiasm for positive relations with students and colleagues, becomes less implied, can become less tolerant, he/she can take negative decisions and maintain a rigid climate within the classroom. A damaged climate leads to the increase of negative behaviors of the students and the teacher gets to emotional burnout trying to manage this climate and his/her negative emotions.

The hereby sub-chapter proposes an outlining of the challenging situations from emotional point of view in the context of the Romanian school, as well as of the possible effects of the teacher's exposure to these situations, in the absence of a high level of development of socio-emotional competences. Also, from the in-training experience within the project Relational an Emotional Competences REC ERASMUS+, we will present in the next sub-chapter some practical explanations, self-analysis instruments to measure behavior in the classroom, a list of positive and negative emotions experienced by teachers in class, a list of the positive pedagogical interventions and their effects upon students.

Dealing properly with emotions is, in the pedagogical literature, an important construction referring to social and emotional competences of the teachers. A huge research literature states the fact that negative emotions of the teachers strongly interfere with the quality of teaching. In addition, teachers who are able to deal with their emotions serve as good models for students and settle socio-emotional expectations for them. The quality of the relation teacher-student depends in a great deal on the way the teachers express and manage negative emotions. Even though teachers face regularly situations which cause anger, furry, disgust, sadness and frustration, in order to develop and maintain healthy relations with students, the teachers have to find proper ways to express or inhibit feelings in a formal background, that of the classroom. Challenging problems from emotional point of view the teachers usually face seldom involves interactions with students who do not have a good emotional background, including those who experience furry, sadness, anxiety.

Compared to other jobs, teachers face some of the highest levels of occupational stress, being permanently exposed to challenging situations from the emotional point of view, but having limited options to answer. But, as the social climate of the classroom gets damaged, teachers become emotionally exhausted and develop attitudes more and more negative towards students and teaching, generally speaking.

In Romania, at least, the initial in-training service during the university studies does not include any program to aim the training and developing of the social and emotional competences and training the teachers for the extremely emotional challenging contexts

which teaching and establishing a relation with parents implies. For this reason, a teacher at the beginning of his/her career hardly deal with challenging situations. Many of them do not have the experience of emotional self-consciousness, the ability to deal with, to apply some management of behavior strategies, absolutely necessary for a successful career as a teacher. Most of the time they unconsciously emotionally act to the disruptive behavior of the students, in ways which worsens that behavior and starts quite a real battle for power. (Tish Jennings, 2009)<sup>7</sup>. The repeated try to repeal negative emotions, to keep under control a situation in class, leads to the emotional burnout and depersonalization. Another mistake which is very often done by teachers is that they judge, they label the student's behavior without even trying to understand the real cause of it, which is not the student's attitude towards the teacher or the learning process itself, but which simply has social causes, which come from the student's familial background or from recent negative experiences faced by the student in his/her relations with friends, representative adults, family.

Together with the teachers from the training groups REC, within the project Relational and Emotional Competences REC – ERASMUS+, contexts using games and context using their own didactic activity analysis and the analysis of the specific background of the school have been created and there were identified **the most significant situations and factors which can cause stress**. So, teachers have identified factors which are related to:

- the student's personality and behavior: students face feelings such as furry, anxiety, sadness, and they do not know to manage such emotions; students with low marks and with behavioral problems;
- the relations with parents: pression from them, unjustified demands, poor communication, poor implication in their children education;
- the professional background, with too high demands: national evaluations and other standardized evaluations, with higher and higher stakes, birocratism;
- the relations and the climate in the teachers' room, in school: teachers who are not used to work in a team, who do not offer their help to the younger colleagues, unsatisfied teachers, who do not support the managerial team and do not share the school's values;
- the dissatisfaction to salary and work conditions: financial resources which are not corelated to the teaching value and effort, lack of proper material and educational IT resources.

The exposure of teachers to such challenges, in the absence of good social and emotional competences, brings effects upon the emotional state of the teachers, but also upon the quality of the educational act and upon the relation with the students. From the most frequent and significant consequences, teachers from the training groups REC in Romania have identified:

- the rigid behavior in class (from planning, teaching, evaluation to class management) and in the teachers' room;
- the use of hostile, punitive, coercive measures; teachers exposed to emotional burnout risk to behave cynically and intolerant with students;
- the feeling of insecurity in class, also experienced by students, not only by teachers;

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<sup>7</sup> Tish Jennings, *The importance of Teachr Social and Emotional Competence*, AERA Social Emotional Learning SIG Newsletter, [http://www.aera.net/Default.aspx?menu\\_id=352&id=3172](http://www.aera.net/Default.aspx?menu_id=352&id=3172)

- the lack of cooperation and the feeling of belonging to a community, in class;
- negative emotions of teachers (furry, anger, frustration, sadness) can reduce inner motivation and the feeling of self-efficiency;
- demotivation of teachers, indifference, lack of enthusiasm to develop positive relations in school;
- tensed relations with the management team and colleagues
- improper relations with parents, low involvement of parents in their children education.

Teaching emotional demands can drain teacher's ability to be involved and to answer to all the needs of the beneficiaries of the educational services, and can generate the feeling of being tired, lack of energy, and even burnout. Teachers who are exposed to the phenomenon of burnout tend to be more indifferent to students and even to their colleagues. Cynicism can be also installed, that attitude of disregard, negation, general suspicion to the others' integrity or reasons. Depersonalization, actively ignorance of the benefits of the educational services, effort to keep the distance from students can also be considered side effects; an attitude of negative neglect and detached from the students, colleagues, management team, doubled by the feeling of lack of personal fulfillment.

Regarding to negative emotions the teachers from the training groups in Romania have identified, they mentioned that they experience these emotions at work and, if constantly repeated, can lead to emotional burnout, and emotions such as anxiety, frustrations, anger and furry have been analyzed. For teachers, anxiety is an emotion caused by some circumstances, triggered by situations when teachers feel unsecure or when they feel they have a low control over the situations. Anxiety is more frequent at teachers at the beginning of their career, due to their lack of knowledge and experience in the educational curriculum and in class management. Generally, anxiety is launched by the feeling of lack of knowledge in teaching; the fear not to lose control in an undisciplined class; relations with colleagues, manager and parents; changes due the educational reform; fear not to be judged by the others; the fact that they can be interrogated by parents regarding their expertise, judgement, status and purpose.

The source of frustration is, most of the time, represented by factors outside class: administrative work, different changes in the educational curriculum, conflicts among the didactic objectives and the expectations of the management team. Teachers feel frustrated when the deviations and difficulties in the educational activity are not caused by a certain student, but by circumstances upon which they feel they cannot control. The anger of the teachers can be caused by the lack of agreement between the aim (such as the inadequate behavior of the student or failure, especially if the teachers feel these as being made on purpose or controlled by the student, or if they feel that students with high opportunities fail because they want to, or to express their lack of respect towards teachers). The guilt is an unpleasant emotion felt by teachers due to the feeling of responsibility and care about the students (teachers can feel guilty because they feel they are responsible for the ignorance of their students when these have problems at home or at school, they feel guilty when students give up learning, when they consider the academic failure of their students is their responsibility).

The significant accumulation of stress due to the teacher's work leads in time to the denudation of the commitment to the didactic activity, at the beginning important and

challenging, but which turn to be unpleasant and senseless. Gradually, exhaustion replaces the feeling of energy, the feeling of inefficiency replaces the efficiency, cynicism replaces hope. Besides the demographic factors (age, sex, marital status, teaching experience, level of education), some very important factors which determine burnout are represented by organizational factors: lack of social support from other teachers and from the managers, reduced socio-economical status of the school; organizational rigidity, insufficient and inappropriate income sources, excessive demands from the managers, insufficient academic preparation of the teachers in approaching behavioral problems of the students, lack of involvement of teachers in taking decisions at work, oversized classes. At the same extent, transactional factors of burnout: the perception of the self, self-efficiency, professional satisfaction and inner motivation; teachers' perception upon social support and upon the relations (when the teachers feel they give more than they receive from the institution, or when students' results are poorer than they expected, they are predisposed to burnout; teachers' experience to iniquity in the exchange relations with students, other teachers and the management team, can lead to emotional burnout); deviant behaviors of the students (Mei-Lin Chang, 2009)<sup>8</sup>.

### III. Applications, tools used in the training program

The way that students behave in class and the manner in which the teacher responds to these behaviors significantly influences the type of relationship and type of communication within the classroom context. The difficulties in communication and the problematic relationships that children have established since early childhood in kindergarten, with educators, are associated with academic and behavioral difficulties in the 8th grade (Hamre & Pianta, 2001)<sup>9</sup>. Over time, the problematic relationships due to the communication gap between teacher and students tend to stabilize and produce negative repercussions on school adaptation (Henricson & Ridell, 2004). Everyday practice shows that problematic teacher-student relationships are associated with discriminatory treatment. Thus, these children benefit from less positive attention from the adult, they are less asked to respond to classes, are less brave, receive less positive feedback, receive fewer gestures of affection. Essentially, a teacher's perception of a child affects the way in which they communicate and relate to their needs.

The way in which emotions are communicated and managed puts its mark on the relationship between the teacher and the child and on the communication process. The emotional and behavioral responses of teachers are a learning context for the appropriate / inappropriate behaviors of the students, in their turn. It is extremely important that the teachers' reactions to the same situation or student behavior can be very different, being influenced by the significance given to the behavior and the context in which it occurs. In many instances, inappropriate student behaviors (crises of anger, snatching of objects, embarrassing someone, using inappropriate words, interrupting others, leaving the bank, refusing to get involved in the

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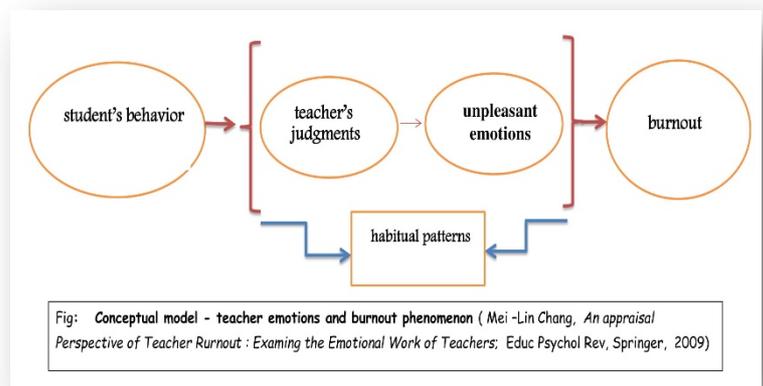
<sup>8</sup> Mei-Lin Chang, *An Appraisal perspective of Teacher Bournout: Examing the Emotional Work of Teachers*, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/226517875\\_An\\_Appraisal\\_Perspective\\_of\\_Teacher\\_Burnout\\_Examining\\_the\\_Emotional\\_Work\\_of\\_Teachers](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/226517875_An_Appraisal_Perspective_of_Teacher_Burnout_Examining_the_Emotional_Work_of_Teachers)

<sup>9</sup> Hamre, B.K., & Pianta, R. C. (2001). *Early teacher-child relationships and the trajectory of children's school outcomes through eighth grade*, *Child Development*, Vol. 72, No. 2 (Mar. - Apr., 2001), pp. 625-638, <https://www.healthiersf.org/RestorativePractices/Resources/documents/RP%20Community%20Resources%20and%20Articles/Power%20of%20Relationships/Early%20Teacher-Child%20Relationships%20and%20the%20Hamre%202001.pdf>

given task) are interpreted as an attack on a person, a lack of respect, lack of education or malice. These interpretations give the teacher a wide range of discomfort emotions, manifested through a wide range of behaviors and verbal messages.

To assess and judge the students' disruptive behaviors, in such a way that this assessment affects neither the teacher's emotional state nor the student-teacher relationship, in the framework of the training activities of the Relational and Emotional Competences Project – R.E.C. ERASMUS +, with the teaching staff in Romania, there was the proposal to address emotions as answers to the interpretations we give to the events, not the events themselves (Smith and Lazarus, 1990; Roseman and Smith, 2001).

The teachers reflected on the emotions they were experiencing in class, being aware that they are caused by their judgments and by their assessment of the causes triggering the events. The first step was an analysis of the relationship between the negative emotions felt while teaching and the possibility to experience the burnout phenomenon (conceptual model proposed by Mei-Lin Chang, 2009), underlining the importance of assessing and judging correctly the student's behavior, by taking consideration the entire context in which it occurs.



One of the tasks proposed to the teachers was the reflection on some situations experienced in the classroom, that were considered emotionally demanding due to the students' undesirable behaviors, and respectively a self-analysis of the teacher's behavior. The worksheet asks the teachers to answer the following questions:

- How can I **describe that situation**, experienced at that point in the class of students?
- **How did I interpret**, as teacher, that situation?
- **How did I feel**, as a teacher, in that situation?
- **How did I react?**
- **What messages have I sent to my students** through the reactions I have had?
- **How would you react now**, knowing that my emotional reactions are generated by the judgments that I make in relation to that situation and context?

There were proposed and discussed, with the teachers, some examples, taken and adapted from the CJRAE Bacau practice, in the counseling project "The Emotions in a Schoolbag" applied in schools in Bacău County by teachers acting as school counselors. The

examples are grouped on various school-age levels and highlight both the teacher's reaction and the impact that this reaction has on the pupils.

### **Low-age school (7-10 years old)**

#### **Example of situation:**

*A child hits with his palm the colleague who has taken his pen from the bench. The teacher notices the incident.*

#### **How does the adult interpret the child's behavior?**

The teacher interprets the child's behavior as an indicator of his self-reliance as an educator. Thus, thoughts such as: "This child does not respect me, how dare he/her hit someone in my presence" can cross the teacher's mind;

#### **How does the adult feel?**

This type of interpretation triggers emotions of anger and irritation.

#### **How does the adult react?**

The primary-school teacher can:

- scold or to criticize the student ( What you are doing is not nice! Are not you ashamed ?!);
- use a high tone;
- hurt the child for him/her to see how it feels it;
- punish (have the child stand up during the class for a few minutes). The teacher's response occurs in this situation as a response to the emotion felt (a way of emotional self-regulation).

#### **What does the child learn from this situation?**

To show anger through aggressive behavior in future situations.

#### **What does the adult learn from this situation?**

His response stops for the moment the child's inappropriate behavior, which confirms that this reaction works. As a result, the teacher will tend to use this type of response in future situations as well. Although the teacher's reaction may stop the child's misconduct at the moment, it does not have long-term effectiveness because it does not teach the child an acceptable alternative behavior to replace aggressive behavior (what to do in the future when he/she is angry). Consequently, in a similar future situation, when the child is angry, he will adopt the same type of behavior.

### **The teacher's reaction, congruent to the child's learning need**

#### **Cum poate să răspundă cadrul didactic în acord cu obiectivele de învățare?**

#### **How can the teacher respond, also meeting the learning objectives?**

- observes and translates into words the child's emotions (I can see that you are sad!);
- relates the emotion to the context (what happened?);
- facilitates emotional expression (tell ... how you feel about him/her having hit you), relates equally to the other child's experience (the one who hit);
- translates into words the other child's emotion (I can see that you are angry);
- relates emotion to the context (what happened?);
- makes an appeal to the rule (the rule is that when you want to take something that is not yours, you ask for permission, the rule is when you're angry to say in words how you feel);
- applies logical consequences for rule violations (3 minutes during the quench stage);
- identifies solutions for future situations (how can we resolve the situation differently? what can you do differently when you are angry instead of hitting: express in words how you feel, take your distance, ask for adult help if you can't solve the problem by yourself; what you can do when you want to take something that is not yours: you ask for permission).

#### **What do the children learn from this situation?**

To express their emotions properly; to look at things from the perspective of the other; to use behaviors that facilitate social interaction (expressing emotions in words, requesting permission); to properly manage their emotion of anger.

## Secondary school (11-14 year old)

**Example of a situation:** *Dan is a fifth grade student and has good school results. George, his colleague, during the break, runs along the aisle between the desks, heading for the door. When he runs past Dan's bank, George pushes him out of his way. Dan runs after him and punches him.*

### How does the adult interpret the child's behavior?

The teacher's reaction to the behavior of the two students is determined by the way in which he/she perceives and interprets their reactions. In this case, the way in which Dan and George behave is seen as a sign of "**bad upbringing and lack of education**". This type of interpretation often leads to an aggressive response from the teacher.

The teacher's aggressive response to the situation in which the two students are involved is a reaction to his/her own emotion. The teacher feels angry and has a behavior that helps him to eliminate his/her personal discomfort.

### Another way of interpreting this behavior is:

**"... children sometimes push each other ... kids will be kids, if they fight, they will reconcile".**

Often, aggressive reactions in lighter forms such as pushing or shovelling the others are considered as common types of interaction specific to all children. This explains why, most of the time, they go unnoticed as they are considered as part of a *pedagogical routine*. In fact, these light forms represent the incipient stages of more serious forms of physical violence.

### How can the teacher respond, also meeting the learning objectives?

1. Observes and names the identified emotion: *"I notice that you are sad"*;
2. Relates the emotion to the context: *"What happened?"*
3. Summarize the information received: *"I understand that you are sad because Dan has hit you"*;
4. Encourages emotional expression: *"Tell Dan how you feel because he hit you"*;
5. Relates to the other child's experience and changes the perspective to identify the emotional consequences of his behavior: *"I understand that you have hit George"*;
6. Supports the understanding of the consequences of one's own behavior on the other student: *"In a similar situation when someone pushed you, how did you feel?"*, *"In a similar situation when someone hit you, did you feel?"*;
7. Makes an appeal to the rule: *"The rule is that you have to say in words how you feel when you are angry."* *"The rule is that you have to tell the other in words to make room for you to pass"*;
8. Applies the logical consequence of rule violation (sanctioning the behavior and not the students' emotions): *"Because you have hit someone, now you are going to spend 3 minutes at the quench place"*.

### Validating the emotions of the two students and identifying appropriate ways of expressing them

- George, it is natural for you to be anxious to go out during break time, but what can you do differently next time when you are in a hurry and a colleague stands in your way?
  - *I ask in words for permission to pass. I say "sorry, it was by mistake", in case I hit someone;*
  - Dan, it's normal to be angry, but how can you express this emotion differently?
    - *I say in words how I feel.*

Our behaviors have a number of social and emotional consequences. Students are encouraged to know the emotional and social consequences of their behaviors (how the others feel when we behave in a certain way, what are the long and short-term consequences of how we behave with the others).

### Self-analysis sheet of teacher's classroom behavior

*Based on the suggested guideline, please identify a situation that you have experienced in the classroom, self-analyze your emotional and behavioral reaction as well as their effects. Share your experience and reflection with another colleague from the training group.*

| <b>The situation</b> in the classroom  | <b>How I interpreted,</b> as a teacher, the respective situation   | <b>How I felt,</b> as a teacher, in the respective situation  | <b>How I reacted</b>  | <b>What messages did I send to my students,</b> through the reactions that I have showed?   |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| <p>A high achieving class student protests by non-participation because he is not permanently asked to go to the board and is not given the opportunity to respond</p> | <p>1. It is clearly a disrespectful behavior towards me.</p> <p>2. The student's desire to affirm and confirm is commendable, but we can't ignore other students</p> | <p>Hurt and angry because my best student no longer wanted to work, so he risked not having the same progress; slightly overcome by the situation.</p> <p>Affected by the fact that I could be disfavoring a good student, or even his colleagues</p> | <p>I scolded her and asked her parents to come to school the following day, for us to have a talk about her attitude</p> <p>I explained to her that her classmates also want to go to the board</p> | <p>Any protest will be followed by consequences, and not the most enjoyable ones. There is a power relationship that governs the teacher-student relationships in the classroom, which students can't avoid respecting.</p> <p>Each student is important, regardless of his/her grades, and has the right to be given opportunities to be valued.</p> |
| <p><i>..... Describe a classroom experience that you have experienced</i></p>  | <p>.....</p>   | <p>.....</p>  | <p>.....</p>  | <p>.....</p>  |

Within the training groups, the teachers have gone through the necessary steps when addressing emotionally demanding situations, from a perspective that has enabled them to become, once more, fully aware of the need to reflect on their own emotions and judgments, as well as on the use of effective strategies of emotional self-regulation.



Finally, teachers need to adopt multiple **coping strategies** in order to regain their calm and to be pro-active towards their classroom problems.

Thirdly, a way to effectively regulate emotions is through the use of **reevaluation strategies** to adjust the goals and meaning assigned to the **behaviors** of students, colleagues, managers, parents.

Secondly, Secondly, teachers have to accurately **label** their **emotional experiences**, identify the inefficient patterns of judgments that they issue about classroom events, and **reflect on the emotions** they feel and on the judgments they issue, which underpin their emotions.

First of all, teachers need to understand that **emotions are an integral part of the teaching activity**.

Another application used during the training sessions, which can be used to raise awareness of the different roles that a teacher plays in the classroom and of the difficulty / often the impossibility of displaying the true emotions felt (which can bring about the risk of emotional dissonance, with all its consequences), is the **application *What hat do we wear / What mask do we show?*** The teachers discuss in groups, on a worksheet in which they will list, on the one hand, the pleasant emotional experiences most often experienced in the classroom, and, on the other hand, the negative emotions, and the discussion with the whole training group will be guided in such a way as to highlight the reasons why, very often, there may appear a discrepancy between the emotions felt by the teacher and those displayed by him/her. The worksheet that was used is the following:

*"Teachers wear many hats such as: the friend, the protector, the mentor, the disciple, the one who keeps the entrance for the academic success." (Davis 2001, p. 431).*

Teaching gives the teacher the opportunity to feel close and intimate in his / her relationship with his / her students and colleagues, which creates opportunities for experiencing pleasant emotional states such as:

- ✚ enthusiasm, joy, pride and hope;
- ✚ .....
- ✚ .....
- ✚ .....
- ✚ .....

However, teaching also offers contexts where teachers can experience negative states, feeling:

- ✚ worried, frustrated, guilty
- ✚ vulnerable, helpless
- ✚ .....
- ✚ .....
- ✚ .....
- ✚ .....

### WHAT HAT DO WE WEAR? / WHAT MASK DO WE SHOW?

(RISK: **emotional dissonance**» burnout, emotional exhaustion)

**Emotional dissonance**= the discrepancy between the emotions felt and those displayed. A person may not experience any emotion when emotions should be displayed, or, on the contrary, the display rules may require the suppression of a negative emotion and the display of a neutral or even positive one.

Another tool used during the training sessions throughout Module I, session 3, *Meetings for Mutual Understanding*, starts from the premise that, in order to be able to understand the other, to understand their own pupils, to create bridges of genuine relationship and communication with them, the teacher must be able to emotionally resonate with them. With this objective in mind, the exercise of returning to his/her own life experiences, to the relationships he/she has had with their own teachers can represent a beneficial context of practice and awareness.

By talking about himself / herself at student age, the teacher will better chances of understanding his / her student, of creating a symmetrical relationship with him / her, a relationship from person to person.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b><i>Describe a pleasant memory with a teacher, from your own personal history as a student.</i></b></p>    | <p><i>The age when it occurred</i></p> |
|                                |  |
| <p><b><i>Describe an unpleasant memory with a teacher, from your own personal history as a student.</i></b></p> | <p><i>The age when it occurred</i></p> |
|                               |  |

By using the autobiographical method, the teachers talk to each other, share the experiences they felt at school age, recall the emotional and relational skills that they had when they were students. Then, the discussion is conducted in a group, guided by questions like: "How did you feel about telling about yourself? What emotions have arisen? How can this experience be useful for you, in regards to your students? Are there similarities or differences? Why". In this way, the teachers are guided to

reflect on their own past experience, to change their point of view and to regain their own emotional experience, in a self-observation activity that can also be useful when meeting with their students.

Starting from the premise that the classmates can provide students with identification patterns (particularly in the case of adolescents who are in the process of personal transformation and in the quest of their own identity), during three sessions in Module III *The teacher's relationships and the class of students* a complex training methodology has been used with the teachers, in order to provide them with the context of analysis and reflection on the way in which the group of peers, the family group and the group of significant adults, respectively, create a relational system in which the student's / teen's personality evolves and defines itself. The links of belonging to these groups, in fact, provide a network of interpersonal relationships that is indispensable to the student's / teenager's process of separating-individualizing. This bond of affiliation ensures that the adolescent is part of several relational universes that act as support, protection, and learning places during its growth. The link of dependence, on the other hand, can also generate immobility: the individual can get stuck in the network of a relational system, and, generally, assumes the interactive models specific to this system, proposing them in other contexts of life as well. The teacher who is interested in his deep mission must understand the "empty space" between the subject and the group he / she interacts with. (Baldascini Luigi, *Systemic Relationship Psychotherapy with the Group*).

The period of adolescence, tumultuous and conflictual, carries out by belonging to the three groups: friends, family, significant adults, and the intersystem mobility allows the adolescent to use the resources of these systems for the purpose of harmonious development. Thus, the

adolescent will be able to experience change and tolerate the anxiety caused by his continuing and unknown becoming, inasmuch as he will take from the three groups, the necessary resources: he will attract the necessary protection from the family; will seek to achieve the success towards which the group of significant adults pushes him/her; will know how to combine all these with peer group membership, which supports the opposition to the adult world and to the family (Luigi Baldascini, *L'adolescente tra appartenenze e trasformazioni*)<sup>10</sup>

In order to fathom the way in which the teacher can accompany the students in their becoming, in the process of seeking their resources in the three universes of belonging, the first step was an exercise of analysis and identification of the role and impact of the three categories of inter-relational systems on the teenager, then the case study method was used, each teacher participating in the training having worked on the case studies proposed by the trainers.

✚ exercise of analysis and identification of the role and impact of the three categories of inter-relational systems:

*Analyze the specifics of the group of peers / group of friends / family, more exactly what they offer the teenager in the process of becoming. Complete the picture of this group, starting from the premise that it has its own rules, values, specific language and can provide support, protection, and a learning place to the teenager. Discuss, within the team, about this group's role in supporting the teenager in the process of growth, transformation, preservation of mental health.*

The group of peers offers the teenager:



- individual reflection within the group and the triggering of common resonances;
- a specific language and a system of values that he/she relates to, in order to shape his/her own identity
- socializing, reorganisation and identity reconstruction;
- experiences new roles
- socializing, reorganisation and identity reconstruction – puts oneself to the test by being faced with new tasks
- learns new behaviors, that will be useful for social integration
- the group supports him/her in the reaction of opposition towards the family
- the feeling of solidarity, of emotional well-being (“we have a good time together”)
- offers a system of support and cognitive validation (“we all think in the same way”)
- provides him/her with the necessary security that enables him/her to change from the inside and in relation to the world, without any major conflict with the adult subsystem
- if there a BLOCKAGE here, there may arise phenomena of deviance / delinquency; this can induce a different pathology, from neurosis to psychosis; this is the pathology of the motor-instinctive system: the three aspects of thinking, feeling and acting thus becoming automatic and impulsive.

*(La psicoterapia sistemica relazionale con il gruppo, Luigi Baldascini)*

<sup>10</sup> Luigi Başdascini, *L'adolescente tra appartenenze e trasformazioni*, [https://www.academia.edu/25028114/Ladolescente\\_tra\\_appartenenze\\_e\\_trasformazioni](https://www.academia.edu/25028114/Ladolescente_tra_appartenenze_e_trasformazioni)

The group of family offers the teenager:



- care: the teenager finds in the family support and power to venture into the individualization attempt;
- processing: it erodes to decode what is happening inside and outside the world through the values, myths and prejudices of the family and the individual
- pushing: the game of attachment and separation; pushing each member into more experimental, physical and emotional spaces;
- control: modulates family exchanges within and with the outside world, thus distributing the burden of implicit existential anxieties in this process in the evolution of each.

Positioning towards family members:

- ✚ a side: feels parents as friends;
- ✚ behind him: he feels his parents as persecutors
- ✚ above it: the mythical parents
- ✚ a lower floor: parents as roots

The therapeutic group, when reflecting the family of origin, gives each member the opportunity to correct their own emotional repertoire.

- constructive competition, concern for the others, assuming his/her own responsibility;

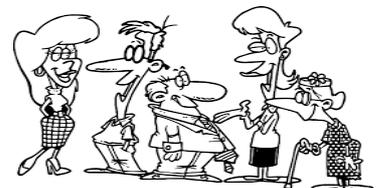
- the adults' relational universe, that is isomorphically connected with the cognitive system, stimulates competition, efficiency, commitment, responsibility, planning, rationality;

- provides the teenagers with a pattern that is aimed at leading to individual growth; a stimulus towards "the stage of adult of the mind", as an ideal state, characterised by intentionality (setting goals and strategies in order to reach them) and individual responsibility.

*One's own time is the future.* the ability to plan brings about the uncertainty of having reached the designed plans, the feeling of suffering and inner void, cancelled by the ability to symbolically plan the future.

(Systemic Relationship Psychotherapy with the Group. Luigi Baldascini)

The group of significant adults offers the teenager:



✚ **Application – the case study method:** on a case study describing the way in which a teacher manages the emotions in the context of a class featuring a student who exhibits an undesirable behavior, the teachers in the training groups have identified the personal characteristics and possible causes of that student's behavior and then staged, through role play, a similar case designed by them. Also, starting from a second case, relative to the way in which a classroom teacher handles the classroom relationships, the teachers in the training groups had the task of proposing possible solutions of managing the situation, then they staged a similar case, designed by them, followed by discussions on the given situation, the ways of settling the conflict used and the impact on the students and the teacher.

The entire set of pedagogical tools, methodologies and training techniques used during the training program within the project was built on the premise of capitalizing on the teachers' experience, creating the contexts in which they develop their social and emotional skills, of developing the ability to effectively manage the specific context of the school they work in, as well as the class of students. Because a teacher's success depends, to a certain extent, on his theoretical, didactic and pedagogical training, but the extent of his emotional well-being and professional success is largely given by his social and emotional skills.

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## **Social-emotional competencies among Slovenian teachers**

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### **Abstract**

The pedagogical profession has changed considerably in Slovenia and most European countries, especially in relation to the definition of pedagogical and organisational obligations. In the classroom context, the learning process has a social component as students are learning in collaboration with peers and teachers. In the process of learning, the emotional component influence motivation and engagement in learning as well as academic success and wellbeing. Studies are reporting reverse influence of emotional states and cognitive and motivational functions (Fiedler and Beier, 2014). For quality classroom climate and students' engagement, social and emotional learning needs to be addressed (Brackett and Rivers, 2014). Social classroom management facilitating students' social and emotional skills is in focus of teachers. Teachers' competencies The Republic of Slovenia devotes a lot of professional and scientific attention. Teacher competencies that emphasise his self-esteem, awareness of themselves and the mirroring of another are especially regulated in Slovenia in the following areas: strategic, normative (laws and by-laws and regulations) and in individual expert, scientific reports and research projects. Research findings indicate that social-emotional learning (SEL) in schools improves students' academic success when supporting social-emotional development and school climate (Hargraves, 1998). Social-emotional skills involve thinking, feeling and behaviour (Elias et al., 1997) and contribute to cognitive and metacognitive skills and development. Social-emotional competencies include self-awareness and management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making (Brackett, Rivers, 2014). The main focus of REC training was to offer some general professional possibilities to develop teachers and consequentially student's social and emotional skills. The fundamental idea of the REC training is therefore that teachers need to develop competencies that would allow them to interact in socially skilled and emotionally intelligent ways. The REC training took place in the social context within school level in the context of the workplace, teachers' day-to-day work in a classroom and participation in a community and collaboration with parents. The training offered the reflections process and sharing of experiences on the school level in groups of 10-15 teachers and on the level of sharing between school groups and on the large scale of an on-site training event.

**Keywords:** emotion, teacher-student relationship, emotional and relational competencies

## Introduction

The pedagogical profession has changed considerably in Slovenia and most European countries, especially in relation to the definition of pedagogical and organisational obligations. In the Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications (2009), the principles that need to be taken into account in the elaboration of national strategies for teacher education are defined. Teaching and education should be seen in their societal context, where teachers should be especially able to “work with others” in a profession which should be based on the values of social inclusion and nurturing the potential of every learner. They need to have knowledge of human growth and development and demonstrate self-confidence when engaging with others.

In the classroom context, the learning process has a social component as students are learning in collaboration with peers and teachers. In the process of learning, the emotional component influence motivation and engagement in learning as well as academic success and wellbeing. Studies are reporting the reverse influence of emotional states and cognitive and motivational functions (Fiedler and Beier, 2014). For quality classroom climate and students’ engagement, social and emotional learning needs to be addressed (Brackett and Rivers, 2014). Social classroom management facilitating students’ social and emotional skills is in focus of teachers.

Teachers need to be able to work with learners as individuals and support them to develop into fully participating and active members of society and be able to work in ways which increase the collective intelligence of learners and co-operate and collaborate with colleagues to enhance their own learning and teaching (Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications, 2009). In the Green Paper on Teacher Education in Europe (2001, p. 29), the concept of professionalism and the pedagogical professionalism of the teacher should encompass "a broad general research-based knowledge of teaching, a wide selection of empirically validated practices that effectively improve the teaching, learning and learning processes and enable the autonomous and competent professional behavior of teachers as critical intellectuals who act in the interests of their clients (pupils, students, students) and with responsibility to autonomous professional organizations in the teaching profession in accordance with their ethical code." In its report Skills Studies Skills for Social Progress, the OECD (2015) also found that many countries already recognise the social and emotional competence of students and teachers as an important area that the school should develop; however, few educational systems provide teachers with guidance on how to achieve this. Consequently, the design of the initial and further teacher education (continuous professional development), which would best prepare teachers for this, has become an important topic for political decision-makers, teacher educators, teachers and the general public. Referring to main European documents, in Slovenia we don't have specific legislative and programme guidelines and other requirements in the field of social-emotional competences (SEI) or competencies for teachers (also not mentioned in White Paper, the Elementary School Act etc.). But SEI can be developed and mentioned in the preparation of the annual work plan (LDN or AWP), the curriculum and the training syllabus with focus on the development of social and emotional competences in the pedagogical context, including the development of related competence and empathy.

Teachers' competencies The Republic of Slovenia devotes a lot of professional and scientific attention. Teacher competencies that emphasise his self-esteem, awareness of themselves and the mirroring of another are especially regulated and regulated in Slovenia in the following areas: strategic, normative (laws and by-laws and regulations) and in the individual expert, scientific reports and research projects. The White Paper on Education (2011) is a strategic document in the field of education. Teacher competencies are specifically defined in Article 2, which discusses the development of teacher education, about the framework competencies that must be acquired by professional staff. They are defined at national level and recorded in the Standards of Higher Education. (White paper on education in the Republic of Slovenia, 2011)

In the national legislative field, the competence of teachers is regulated by the Financing of Education Act (ZOFVI). The article 1 (ZOFVI) stipulates that it is the task of the director to promote professional education and training of professional staff. In addition to his regular work obligation, teaching within the scope of educational work also includes the obligation of organised, professional education and training (ZOFVI, Article 19). In the field of teacher education, the individual regulations, which are derived from the ZOFVI Act, are regulated separately (ZOFVI, 2016).

The Ministry of Education in the Republic of Slovenia pays particular attention to the competencies of teachers by commissioning individual research in qualified institutions or faculties in the framework of the Government Program Target Research Programs (CRP), in the light of the implementation of educational policy objectives. The research report Teacher Education for new competencies for the knowledge society and the role of these competencies in the implementation of educational goals in school should be highlighted. The research report was prepared by a team of Slovenian experts and educators from the Faculty of Education and Philosophy in Ljubljana within the CRP "Competitiveness of Slovenia 2006 - 2013" (Peklaj, 2008). One of the main emphasis is that the teacher communicates effectively with pupils and develops positive relationships with them, creates a stimulating learning environment, sets clear rules for behaviour and discipline in the classroom. Teacher competences influence the different levels of attainment of educational goals in the classroom (cognitive, motivational and social) that are interconnected. The competencies of teachers on learning success work indirectly by encouraging the motivation of pupils and their competent social behaviour. (Peklaj, 2008).

The Center for Vocational Education and Training, as an organisational unit of the Ministry of Education, has developed a special Competence Map. It is a tool for the professional development of teachers and mentors. The map consists of a set of six soft and two hard competences. The emotional competence of the map ranks among soft competencies. These are a focus on excellence; innovation; organisation; communication capabilities; flexibility and critical thinking.

Teachers' competencies are also devoted to several non-governmental projects, among which the focus is on the Preventive Platform. In Vilnius, on September 27, 2017, a meeting took place in Lithuania, attended by Slovenian representatives. This meeting was part of the European project "Learn2Be", the focus of which is social and emotional competences and the competences for healthy decisions of children and adolescents. For the Slovenian school system, the challenge is to introduce knowledge and practice into a regular school curriculum.

## **Social and emotional learning**

Research findings indicate that social-emotional learning (SEL) in schools improves students' academic success when supporting social-emotional development and school climate (Hargraves, 1998). Social-emotional skills involve thinking, feeling and behaviour (Elias et al., 1997) and contribute to cognitive and metacognitive skills and development. Social-emotional competencies include self-awareness and management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making (Brackett and Rivers, 2014).

The main focus of REC training was to offer some general professional possibilities to develop teachers and consequentially students' social and emotional skills. The fundamental idea of the REC training is, therefore, that teacher need to develop competencies that would allow them to interact in socially skilled and emotionally intelligent ways. They are not only expected to be academic professionals, but also professionals of their own emotional and social skills. Teachers' social and emotional skills are extremely important because they are helping them avoid burnout, stressful situations, increase well-being, self-esteem and finally create positive learning and also job environment. Socially and emotionally competent teachers are crucial for strong and supportive relationships between teachers and

students (Baker, Grant & Morlock, 2008; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Jennings 2011). Besides, a socially and emotionally intelligent (SEI) teacher is fundamental for the healthy development of students and positively associated with students' academic performance, achievements, social functioning, school engagement, and learning motivation (Baker, Grant & Morlock, 2008).

Referring to mentioned, SEI of teachers is necessary for personal and teaching-learning processes in the classroom and the social and emotional development of the students. In our training programme, we've tried to empower our preschool teachers and teachers in different ways, but the focus was also on three ways in which teachers' social and emotional intelligence can be developed and can further effect on students and the learning environment.

The first focus (1) of training was based on the idea that we need to be aware that teachers' Relational and Emotional intelligence, which can influence the quality of teacher-student relationships. Not only the teacher-student relation but also the relation between teachers and relation teacher-parent. Teachers who are calm, positive and satisfied with their life are more likely better equipped for treating students warmly and sensitively, even when students behave in challenging, difficult ways or they are teaching in inclusive classes.

So, to know yourself means seeing what you feel and do, knowing your strengths and challenges, and recognising your behaviour patterns. And this is what we were doing – trying to know ourselves. The most important and essential skills that teacher and future teachers must achieve are: (1) Know yourself and others (identify feeling, be responsible, recognize strengths); (2) Make Responsible decisions (manage emotions, understand relations, set goals and plans, solve problems creatively); (3) Care for others (show empathy, respect others, appreciate diversity); (4) Know how to act (communicate effectively, build relationships, negotiate fairly, refuse provocations, seek help, act ethically) (Elias, Arnold, 2006). Empathy is in teacher education one of the most important elements as long as empathic teachers possess high moral standards, successfully communicate with their students both emotionally and mentally and encourage them to create similar relationships with others (Jennings, 2011; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

The second idea (2) was based on the assumption that Teachers navigate stressful situations every day and students are paying attention to it. They daily learn from how their teachers manage frustration, deal with conflicts, or maintain control in the classroom. So we highlighted the need for taking the responsibilities of our self-management, self-awareness and mindfulness. A training session was based on the fact that our teachers need to become more aware, more intentional and more purposeful. Because when we are mindful of our emotions, we feel more in control and make better decisions. The third idea was (3) that teachers must maintain a sense of calm, be organised, and develop social trust if they want a well-organised classroom that encourages creativity or student autonomy.

The REC training took place in the social context within school level in the context of the workplace, teachers' day to day work in a classroom and participation in a community and collaboration with parents. The training offered the reflections process and sharing of experiences on the school level in groups of 10-15 teachers and on the level of sharing between school groups and on the large scale of an on-site training event.

## Methods

The data were collected by questionnaires and observation grids at the beginning in 2018, during the training (2018) and at the end of training (2019).

The questionnaire and observation grid was designed based on the SECTRS – Social Emotional Competence Teacher Rating Scale (Tom, 2012). Relational Emotional Competences Questionnaire (RECC) consists of 4 scales with 6 items. The first scale focuses on Self-Awareness and Self-Management, the second scale focusses on Social Awareness, and the third and fourth scales focus on Relationship Skills. It consisted of a 4-point scale (1-not at all to 4-a lot).

## Teachers' self-assessment of relational and emotional competences

The Slovene version of REC questionnaire for REC teachers was completed by 98 teachers at the beginning of the training, 73 during the training and 55 after the training. The average age of teachers was 41 years, and average teaching experience was 15 years.

Table 1: REC teachers structure by gender, educational level, work position, degree of studies

|                          |                                  | Questionnaire |              |           |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------|
|                          |                                  | Initial       | Intermediate | Final     |
| <b>Gender</b>            | Male                             | 7             | 4            | 3         |
|                          | Female                           | 91            | 69           | 52        |
| <b>Educational level</b> | Kindergarten                     | 20            | 13           | 13        |
|                          | Primary school                   | 62            | 51           | 36        |
|                          | Secondary school                 | 12            | 6            | 5         |
|                          | Higher school                    | 4             | 3            | 1         |
| <b>Work position</b>     | Classroom teacher                | 73            | 55           | 45        |
|                          | Administrator or supervisor      | 4             | 1            | 3         |
|                          | Pupil support professional staff | 21            | 17           | 7         |
| <b>Degree of studies</b> | High school diploma              | 25            | 20           | 15        |
|                          | Graduation                       | 56            | 42           | 28        |
|                          | Master                           | 15            | 11           | 11        |
|                          | Other                            | 2             | 0            | 1         |
| <b>Total N</b>           |                                  | <b>98</b>     | <b>73</b>    | <b>55</b> |

Table 2: REC teachers structure by age and year of teaching experience

|                          |    |       |
|--------------------------|----|-------|
| <b>Age</b>               | M  | 41,34 |
|                          | SD | 8,88  |
| <b>Years of teaching</b> | M  | 15,29 |
|                          | SD | 10,23 |

The Slovene version of REC questionnaire for NO-REC teachers was completed by 29 teachers at the beginning of training and 60 after the end of the training. The average age was 39 years, and average working experience was 13 years of teaching.

Table 3: Non- REC teachers structure by gender, educational level, work position, degree of studies

|                          |                                  | Questionnaire |           |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
|                          |                                  | Initial       | Final     |
| <b>Gender</b>            | Male                             | 5             | 6         |
|                          | Female                           | 24            | 54        |
| <b>Educational level</b> | Secondary school                 | 6             | 9         |
|                          | Further educational institution  | 18            | 44        |
|                          |                                  | 0             | 7         |
|                          | Higher school                    | 5             | 0         |
| <b>Work position</b>     | Classroom teacher                | 24            | 55        |
|                          | Administrator or supervisor      | 0             | 0         |
|                          | Pupil support professional staff | 5             | 5         |
| <b>Degree of studies</b> | High school diploma              | 9             | 11        |
|                          | Graduation                       | 10            | 44        |
|                          | Master                           | 5             | 4         |
|                          | Other                            | 5             | 1         |
| <b>Total N</b>           |                                  | <b>29</b>     | <b>60</b> |

Table 4: Non-REC teachers structure by age and year of teaching experience

|                          |    |       |       |
|--------------------------|----|-------|-------|
| <b>Age</b>               | M  | 37,97 | 39,5  |
|                          | SD | 9,73  | 9,97  |
| <b>Years of teaching</b> | M  | 12,24 | 13,82 |
|                          | SD | 9,63  | 10,46 |

Teachers were self-assessing on the scale of Emotional and relational competencies indicating their self-awareness, social awareness and relationship management with students, colleagues and parents. In the initial questionnaire at the beginning of the training, REC teachers expressed high, especially in components of social awareness and relationship management. The high average is indicated in social awareness and relationship management items “paying attention to emotional climate in the classroom” (3.36), “building positive relationship with parents” (3.23) and “creating collaborative classroom atmosphere” (3.20), as well as in low average of reversed items “having difficulties establishing relationship with students or colleagues” (1.65). In self-awareness, teachers indicated high awareness on the reverse scale “getting angry in classroom” (1.48). Applying the same questionnaire at the end of the training it was discovered that teachers reported more favourable competences at the end of the training on all, except on one item. However, differences between initial and final assessments were small. Highest absolute differences between final and initial estimation was found for items describing self-awareness (e.g. “instinctively acting”, “get carried away by emotions” and “analysing details before acting”) as well as social awareness (e.g. “valuing differences in-group”, “listening to students feelings”. This indicates that in the REC training teachers were encouraged 1.) to reflect and monitor their own

emotions and behavioural responses and 2.) to try to understand and value differences and emotions in others. On the total scale teachers participating in REC training did not significantly differ from control group neither in the initial nor in the final stage.

Table 5: Teachers' self-assessment of Emotional and relational competences

|          |   | REC     |      |       |      | Non-REC |      |       |      |
|----------|---|---------|------|-------|------|---------|------|-------|------|
|          |   | Initial |      | Final |      | Initial |      | Final |      |
|          |   | M       | SD   | M     | SD   | M       | SD   | M     | SD   |
| Item 1*  | I often get angry in classroom and I do not understand the motivation.  | 1.48    | .502 | 1.38  | .490 | 1.55    | .506 | 1.47  | .623 |
| Item 2*  | I know that my emotional states affect my interactions with students.   | 3.03    | .805 | 3.11  | .832 | 2.83    | .928 | 3.00  | .991 |
| Item 3*  | It is very difficult for me to build positive relationships with my colleagues.                                 | 1.65    | .576 | 1.42  | .498 | 1.52    | .634 | 1.37  | .610 |
| Item 4*  | I instinctively act.  | 2.47    | .661 | 2.09  | .646 | 2.38    | .561 | 2.28  | .715 |
| Item 5   | In the classroom, I spend time listening to what my students feel.  | 2.97    | .680 | 3.20  | .590 | 3.14    | .639 | 3.12  | .739 |
| Item 6   | I can "create a climate" of cooperation in my classroom.  | 3.20    | .536 | 3.38  | .527 | 3.21    | .559 | 3.42  | .619 |
| Item 7   | I can value individual differences within the class group.  | 2.98    | .626 | 3.27  | .622 | 3.07    | .593 | 3.20  | .659 |
| Item 8*  | I get carried away only with my emotions.   | 2.14    | .497 | 1.85  | .405 | 1.93    | .458 | 1.85  | .606 |
| Item 9*  | I feel so cheap to my colleagues.   | 1.88    | .646 | 1.89  | .712 | 1.90    | .724 | 1.78  | .715 |
| Item 10  | I make an effort to ensure that my way of teaching is culturally sensitive to differences.                      | 3.04    | .798 | 3.16  | .938 | 2.69    | .967 | 3.10  | .858 |
| Item 11* | It is very difficult for me to build positive relationships with my students.                                   | 1.65    | .520 | 1.45  | .603 | 1.59    | .682 | 1.35  | .515 |
| Item 12* | It happens that my emotions and personal situation of the moment affect my interactions within the class group. | 1.98    | .537 | 1.84  | .462 | 1.83    | .711 | 1.75  | .571 |
| Item 13  | I pay attention to the emotions of the staff members of my school.  | 3.08    | .620 | 3.18  | .696 | 2.79    | .675 | 2.92  | .809 |
| Item 14  | When I go to school, I always go there with joy and enthusiasm.   | 3.18    | .615 | 3.33  | .579 | 3.24    | .636 | 3.25  | .628 |
| Item 15  | I consider mainly my students' emotional well-being before making decisions.                                    | 3.00    | .689 | 3.07  | .690 | 2.86    | .639 | 2.98  | .676 |
| Item 16  | I can build positive relationships with parents.  | 3.23    | .472 | 3.40  | .627 | 3.10    | .724 | 3.43  | .563 |
| Item 17  | I pay attention to the emotional climate of my class group.   | 3.36    | .613 | 3.53  | .539 | 3.31    | .604 | 3.45  | .565 |
| Item 18  | In every situation, I always analyze every detail before acting.  | 2.44    | .690 | 2.73  | .732 | 2.55    | .632 | 2.72  | .761 |
| Item 19  | I feel comfortable talking to parents.  | 2.89    | .672 | 3.00  | .638 | 2.93    | .704 | 3.13  | .623 |
| Item 20  | I can manage the class group in critical situation.   | 2.98    | .592 | 3.11  | .567 | 3.17    | .539 | 3.18  | .676 |
| Item 21  | I can mediate conflicts with /among students.   | 3.07    | .646 | 3.24  | .637 | 3.14    | .693 | 3.38  | .640 |
| Item 22  | My colleagues seek my advice when resolving a problem within the class group.                                   | 2.45    | .675 | 2.62  | .757 | 2.41    | .568 | 2.35  | .709 |
| Item 23  | I feel "respected" by my students.  | 3.20    | .555 | 3.31  | .605 | 3.38    | .561 | 3.32  | .567 |
| Item 24  | I can understand my students' feelings.   | 3.10    | .465 | 3.16  | .601 | 3.17    | .602 | 3.28  | .524 |

\* Reversed items: Lower scores represent higher competences.

## Teachers observations of younger students of age 3-10 years

Students experience was observed according to teachers' observation grid with 37 teachers at the beginning of the training and 57 after the training. Cronbach alpha indicated very high reliability of teachers' observation grid for younger students (0.922).

Table 6: REC teachers structure by work position and degree of studies

|                          |                                  | Questionnaire |           |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
|                          |                                  | Initial       | Final     |
| <b>Gender</b>            | Male                             | 1             | 5         |
|                          | Female                           | 36            | 52        |
| <b>Work position</b>     | Classroom teacher                | 34            | 52        |
|                          | Pupil support professional staff | 3             | 5         |
| <b>Degree of studies</b> | High school diploma              | 13            | 26        |
|                          | Graduation                       | 16            | 25        |
|                          | Mater                            | 8             | 4         |
|                          | Other                            | 0             | 2         |
|                          | <b>Total N</b>                   | <b>37</b>     | <b>57</b> |

Table 6: Teachers structure by gender and degree of studies

|                          |    |       |
|--------------------------|----|-------|
| <b>Age</b>               | M  | 41.38 |
|                          | SD | 8.46  |
| <b>Years of teaching</b> | M  | 16.37 |
|                          | SD | 10.42 |

At the beginning and the end of training, teacher observations were very similar. They tend to identify good classroom climate with students experiencing fun and enthusiasm for school.

Table 7: Students observations

| Observing my class group. I notice that my pupils ... |   | Initial |      | Final |      |
|---|---|---------|------|-------|------|
|   |   | M       | SD   | M     | SD   |
| Item 1  | ...Are enthusiastic when they go to school.                         | 3.03    | .440 | 3.05  | .479 |
| Item 2  | ... show interest in the activities carried out in the classroom.   | 3.00    | .408 | 3.09  | .474 |
| Item 3  | ...at recess, demonstrate to have fun among themselves.             | 3.14    | .673 | 3.11  | .618 |
| Item 4  | ...are inclined to group work                                       | 2.70    | .661 | 2.81  | .718 |
| Item 5  | ... are able to collaborate in class with their classmates.         | 2.92    | .595 | 2.89  | .748 |
| Item 6  | ... defend each other in the face of injustice                      | 2.70    | .702 | 2.93  | .704 |
| Item 7  | .... Help each other.   | 2.92    | .682 | 2.95  | .610 |
| Item 8  | ... After an argument, they finally are able to reach a compromise. | 2.92    | .640 | 2.96  | .778 |
| Item 9  | ... are able to help their classmates in need                       | 2.78    | .712 | 2.79  | .674 |
| Item 10   | ... are able to respect the ideas of their classmates.              | 2.68    | .626 | 2.72  | .648 |
| Item 11   | ... are able to respect the feelings of their classmates.           | 2.65    | .716 | 2.79  | .647 |
| Item 12   | ... are able to do constructive proposals when emerge conflicts.    | 2.38    | .594 | 2.54  | .803 |
| Item 13   | ... share their own things.   | 2.97    | .600 | 2.82  | .685 |
| Item 14   | ... cooperate with others for the common good.                      | 2.92    | .722 | 2.79  | .750 |
| Item 15   | ... express their feelings openly, without hurting others.          | 2.49    | .651 | 2.74  | .768 |
| Item 16   | ... are able to recognize their emotions.                           | 2.76    | .723 | 2.72  | .701 |
| Item 17   | ... are able to recognize the emotions of their classmates.         | 2.57    | .555 | 2.58  | .625 |

|                              |       |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Cronbach's Alpha (all items) | 0.922 |
|------------------------------|-------|

## REC students

Slovene version of students' REC questionnaires was completed at the beginning of training by 134 students. After the training, 101 students completed questionnaire. The average age of all students was 16 years. The Cronbach alpha indicated lower reliability of a questionnaire version for this group of students (0.688).

Table 8: REC students by gender

|        |                | Questionnaire |            |
|--------|----------------|---------------|------------|
|        |                | Initial       | Final      |
| Gender | Male           | 28            | 45         |
|        | Female         | 106           | 56         |
|        | <b>Total N</b> | <b>134</b>    | <b>101</b> |

Table 9: REC students by age

| Age | M  | 16.53 |
|-----|----|-------|
|     | SD | 2.01  |

Students express confidence in understanding emotions and valuing differences. They are aware of their emotional states and critical towards being carried away by their emotions. After the training, students indicated slightly higher critical awareness of their emotional awareness and appreciation of individual differences. However, trainers believe that training facilitated discussions and awareness on the classroom level and the level of interaction between teacher and classroom.

Table 10: REC students' self-assessment

|          |   | Initial |      | Final |      |
|----------|---|---------|------|-------|------|
|          |   | M       | SD   | M     | SD   |
| Item 1*  | I often get angry in classroom and I do not understand the motivation.  | 1.40    | .602 | 1.54  | .728 |
| Item 2   | I pay attention to the emotional climate of the class group   | 2.31    | .778 | 2.48  | .844 |
| Item 3   | In every situation, I always analyze every detail before acting.  | 2.37    | .800 | 2.38  | .915 |
| Item 4   | I can recognize the emotional state of my classmates by their facial expressions.                               | 3.10    | .703 | 2.94  | .798 |
| Item 5   | I can create a climate of cooperation in my classroom.  | 2.69    | .879 | 2.73  | .948 |
| Item 6*  | It happens that my emotions and personal situation of the moment affect my interactions within the class group. | 2.58    | .852 | 2.26  | .913 |
| Item 7*  | I know that my emotional states affect my interactions with others (classmates, teachers...).                   | 2.66    | .894 | 2.38  | .947 |
| Item 8   | If someone in the classroom is sad, angry or happy, I think I know what he is feeling.                          | 2.57    | .729 | 2.70  | .867 |
| Item 9*  | I instinctively act.  | 2.40    | .706 | 2.62  | .915 |
| Item 10  | I can create positive relationships with my classmates.   | 3.14    | .747 | 3.15  | .853 |
| Item 11  | It is easy for me to understand how my classmates are feeling.  | 2.75    | .750 | 2.86  | .825 |
| Item 12  | I feel respected in my classroom.   | 2.79    | .814 | 2.78  | .923 |
| Item 13  | I can value individual differences within the class group.  | 3.17    | .771 | 3.28  | .873 |
| Item 14  | When I go to school, I always go there with joy and enthusiasm.   | 2.33    | .802 | 2.43  | .942 |
| Item 15* | It is very difficult for me to get in touch with my classmates.   | 1.78    | .779 | 1.62  | .859 |
| Item 16  | I can mediate conflicts with / among my classmates.   | 2.25    | .733 | 2.43  | .920 |
| Item 17* | I get carried away only with my emotions.   | 2.11    | .711 | 2.16  | .833 |
| Item 18  | I understand why my classmates act the way they do it.  | 2.50    | .712 | 2.71  | .887 |

|                                     |       |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| <b>Cronbach's Alpha (all items)</b> | 0.688 |
|-------------------------------------|-------|

## Conclusions

The REC training in Slovenia revealed that teachers are aware of the importance of relational and emotional competences. The training took place in the social context within school level in the context of the workplace, teachers' day to day work in a classroom and participation in a community and collaboration with parents. The training offered the reflections process and sharing of experiences on the two levels. The first level was at the school in a group of 10-15 teachers. On the second level, teachers shared between school groups and on a large scale of an on-site training event. Results showed that teachers participating in REC training reported higher competences, especially of self-awareness and social awareness after the training. However, the differences were small. Differences before and after the training were more evident for teachers than for their students, but the effect of heightened teachers emotional and relational competencies on students competences may be expressed later.

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Mapa kompetenc učiteljevega strokovnega delovanja v poklicnem in strokovnem izobraževanju [http://www.cpi.si/files/cpi/userfiles/projektno-sodelovanje/ROQET/MAPA\\_KOMPETENC.pdf](http://www.cpi.si/files/cpi/userfiles/projektno-sodelovanje/ROQET/MAPA_KOMPETENC.pdf) (27. 5. 2019)

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## Appendix

### Statistics REC Questionnaire

|                               | Initial questionnaire |                  | Intermediate questionnaire | Final questionnaire |                  |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
|                               | REC teachers          | NON-REC teachers | REC teachers               | REC teachers        | NON-REC teachers |
| <b>N</b>                      | 98                    | 29               | 73                         | 55                  | 60               |
| <b>Mean</b>                   | 66.81                 | 67.38            | 69.16                      | 70.65               | 70.16            |
| <b>Std. Deviation</b>         | 5.64                  | 6.62             | 6.72                       | 8.04                | 7.18             |
| <b>Skewness</b>               | .145                  | .413             | .053                       | -.027               | .287             |
| <b>Std. Error of Skewness</b> | .244                  | .434             | .281                       | .322                | .309             |
| <b>Kurtosis</b>               | -.347                 | .100             | -.038                      | -.464               | -.838            |
| <b>Std. Error of Kurtosis</b> | .483                  | .845             | .555                       | .634                | .608             |
| <b>Minimum</b>                | 54.00                 | 54.00            | 52.00                      | 53.00               | 58.00            |
| <b>Maximum</b>                | 81.00                 | 83.00            | 84.00                      | 87.00               | 85.00            |

## Initial REC comparison

### Tests of Normality

|                             | Kolmogorov-Smirnov |    |       | Shapiro-Wilk |    |      |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|----|-------|--------------|----|------|
|                             | Statistic          | df | Sig.  | Statistic    | df | Sig. |
| <b>RECQ</b><br>REC teachers | .058               | 98 | .200* | .986         | 98 | .389 |
| NON-REC teachers            | .162               | 29 | .050  | .968         | 29 | .502 |

\* This is a lower bound of the true significance.

### Independent sample test

|             |                             | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances |      | t-test for Equality of Means |        |                 |                 |                       |          |         |
|-------------|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|--------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|----------|---------|
|             |                             | F                                       | Sig. | t                            | df     | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | Lower    | Upper   |
| <b>RECQ</b> | Equal variances assumed     | .631                                    | .428 | -.461                        | 125    | .645            | -.57319         | 124.217               | -303.161 | 188.523 |
|             | Equal variances not assumed |   |      | -.423                        | 40.766 | .675            | -.57319         | 135.577               | -331.170 | 216.532 |

## Final REC comparison

### Test of normality

|                             | Kolmogorov-Smirnov |    |       | Shapiro-Wilk |    |      |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|----|-------|--------------|----|------|
|                             | Statistic          | df | Sig.  | Statistic    | df | Sig. |
| <b>RECQ</b><br>REC teachers | .088               | 55 | .200* | .984         | 55 | .674 |
| NO REC teachers             | .099               | 60 | .200* | .963         | 60 | .063 |

\* This is a lower bound of the true significance.

### Independent test

|             |                             | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances |      | t-test for Equality of Means |         |                 |                 |                       |          |         |
|-------------|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|----------|---------|
|             |                             | F                                       | Sig. | t                            | df      | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | Lower    | Upper   |
| <b>RECQ</b> | Equal variances assumed     | .530                                    | .468 | .344                         | 113     | .732            | .48788          | 141.895               | -232.333 | 329.908 |
|             | Equal variances not assumed |   |      | .342                         | 108.666 | .733            | .48788          | 142.598               | -233.846 | 331.422 |

## **Social Stress among pupils as a challenge for the teacher`s social and emotional capacity.**

By Frode Joesang, Lenden school and resource center, Stavanger, Norway

Social stress can be defined as a situation which threatens one`s relationships, esteem or sense of belonging within a dyad, group or larger social context. Social stress can immerge in several different situations. Social stress can stem from difficult social interactions or conflictual or tumultuous relationships (Kiecolt-Glaser, Gouin & Hanstsoo, 2010). We can identify social stress both on an individual level and on a group level. For teacher it is very important to have knowledge of social stress, to see the social signs of stress, understand the social structures in the class and to have the capacity to intervene. We can have different levels of social stress from a light version which we can find in almost every class to a toxic version with bullying, school absence, increasing mental health challenges and discipline problems. Parents will also notice the social stress in a classroom and can in many cases both be the origin for the stress, can increase the level of stress by intervening in a wrong way but can also be the solution to decline the stress.

For the teacher it is very important to cooperate with parents on an early stage before the problems emerge and get out of control. The teacher`s own social and emotional capacity is the main tools to improve the social climate in the classroom. Capacity is more than competence because it also include the motivation and courage to act and intervene into a social minefield. The teacher`s relational skills, his/her social sensibility and ability to build good and positive relations towards every single child in the classroom is extremely important for the development of a inclusive and positive learning environment in class.

The teacher also have to do systematic observations and to survey the social structures in the class using sociograms. But most important is the teacher`s ability to identify the social vulnerable children in the class and work systematically on helping them to be included and establish positive relations towards their classmates. This strategy we call relational design.

**Key words:** Social stress, Toxic stress, Social and emotional capacity, Social and emotional courage, Relational design, Social Vulnerability, Sociograms

Social stress can be defined as a situation which threatens one's relationships, esteem or sense of belonging within a dyad, group or larger social context. Social stress can immerse in several different situations. Social stress can stem from difficult social interactions or conflictual or tumultuous relationships (Kiecolt-Glaser, Gouin & Hanstsoo, 2010).

Social stress can be analysed on an individual basis but also on a group level. The stress could be connected to a special situation, a social challenge or can be a more permanent situation.

In the classroom pupils will be subjected to different types of stress:

- Stress about performance and good results
- Personal stress connected to self-esteem, appearance etc.
- Traumatic stress through bad personal experiences, war experience, severe illness, divorce, abuse, severe bullying or low quality of caring.
- Social stress concerning social relations, lack of friendship, loneliness, conflicts and social lability.

Pupils are very different in the way they cope with stress. Vulnerable pupils have often less skills in problem solving, lower social skills and lower capacity for stress. These children are suffering a lot in classes with higher rates of social stress. They are more likely to either act aggressive or to withdraw and be passive, or in fact use both strategies. They are also in danger of having lower support from teachers, other pupils and own parents.

When starting up new groups there is a higher chance of social stress. In such transition periods we can observe two kinds of stress:

- Stress concerning norms, rules and expectations.
- Stress about relations, social structures and social attractions.

In a normal class there will be more social stress in the beginning. But in some classes this stress continues and becomes a big challenge for the whole class, and thus for the quality of the learning environment.

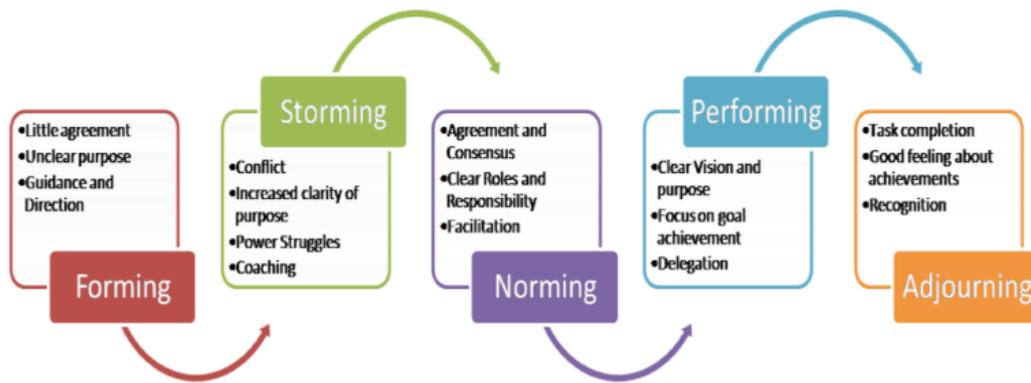


Fig 2: Team Development stages

Source: Okpalad, based on Tuckman and Jensen (1977)

This model from Tuckman tells us that some classes normally follow different stages.

### **Forming**

The team is formed, and everyone shows their best behaviour. There is a positive and polite atmosphere. Strong guidance is needed by the facilitator as group tasks are not clearly defined yet.

### **Storming**

Emerging boundaries become contested and conflicts occur. Also, frustration with the lack of progress is common. Guidance is needed by the facilitator.

### **Norming**

Team members start to resolve their differences, appreciate colleagues' strengths, and respect the leader's authority. Behaviour from the storming and norming phases can overlap for some time when new tasks come up.

### **Performing**

Hard work goes hand in hand with satisfaction about the team's progress. Team confidence makes team roles more fluid and more tasks can be delegated by the facilitator. Problems are prevented or solved as they pop up.

### **Adjourning**

When all tasks are completed, it's important to celebrate the team's positive achievements. Letting go of the group structure after a long period of intensive team work can also generate uncertainty for individual team members.

However, some classes could be in the forming or storming stages for a longer period. They don't reach the norming and performing stages. They use all their effort on social structuring

and less effort on academic achievement. There is also a danger of more bullying and more discipline challenges in such classes.

Though Tuckman presented the different phases as a linear model, it is important to realise that in practise, the phases are rather fluid and group formation is not always a linear process.

Having a way to identify and understand causes for change in the team's behaviour can help the team to maximise its process and productivity. This is especially the case when the Tuckman analysis is used as a basis for conversation instead of a fixed diagnosis.

In the starting up periods or in classes with a more permanent storming period, it is very important to have a teacher with authoritative strategies (Cornell, 2016). Authoritative means that the teacher both show interest in each individual pupils' life, classroom life in general, has a good relational capacity but also has good structure, clear expectations, works daily on good routines and classroom rules. If the teacher shows low quality in authoritative leadership, it can either lead to a permanent social stress or that some of the pupils in the class are taking responsibility for leading the class. In classes with social stress these pupils don't necessarily impose positivity and inclusion.

Cornell concludes that there is a clear link between a teacher's authoritative perspective and the level of discipline problems, delinquency and bullying in schools. There is also a clear link between different kind of stress in school and the level of bullying (Konishi og Hymel, 2009).

We here talk of two different theoretical frames. Structure means that things are clear, and the norming period has been passed. In a class with structure the whole class will, in a positive manner, use social sanctions and influence each other in a positive way. There will be a positive, inclusive atmosphere, and the class helps pupils with bad behaviour through positive social corrections.

In classes who continuous are in the forming and storming phase each individual incident will have a larger impact on the classroom culture. In theoretical frames we call this interactionism, and it is often connected with feeling unsafe, insecurity and social stress. The opposite is structuralism when norms, rules and routines are clear and individual insedents will have less impact on the classroom culture.

We can analyse social stress on two different levels:

- The individual perspective: The individual pupil's feeling of belonging, social security, social recognition. This perspective is very much linked to the child's social and emotional competence and social vulnerability.
- The class perspective: A general insecurity, general fear of not being accepted, general social lability, general social anxiety.

If the social stress is over a long period it will be classified as chronic stress. Such stress will have a massive impact on the psychological welfare in the class, on school presence and psychosomatic problems among pupils.

Bullying is normally a phenomenon taking place in normal classes and normal groups and not only in pathological groups. Bullying is a part of the processes of inclusion and exclusion when new groups are created. Bullying is more likely to emerge in social stress periods (Petersen 2011).

We will find periods in a child's life when the social stress is higher than other periods. Of course, all periods of transition will be difficult. The transition from kindergarten to school, from primary to secondary and after long school holidays. But we also have a social turbulent period at the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade in the primary school (ages 9-11) and at the 9<sup>th</sup> level in secondary school (age 15) concerning girls. Here are the results of bullying in Norwegian schools in 2018/2019 : ( Boys mentioned first)

5.th class : 8,1/8,7      6<sup>th</sup> .class : 6,0/7,3      7. th class : 5,3/5,9      8<sup>th</sup> .class : 4,5/4,5      9.th : class 4,5/4,9      10.th : 4,2/4,9

What is the effect of social stress in a classroom (Søndergaard, 2016)?

1. A lot of social struggling and conflicts about social positions, status and social influence and power.
2. Marginalization processes. Some pupils will be pushed out and be less social valued than others.
3. General production of contempt. A lot of discussion about sympathies and antipathies.
4. A general focus on ridicule and social negativity through negative comments, negative social sanctions, negative nicknames.
5. A lot of focus on "uniforming", be like all the others, dress like all others, not distinguish from the mass.

6. A general feeling of social anxiety, afraid of not having friends, to be an outcast or to lose the friendships you already have made.

The pupils exposed for social stress might have four different strategies to deal with it:

1. Hunting for a common victim.
2. Create a victim and use negativity towards the victim.
3. Making social hierarchies and social ranking.
4. Making social cliques.

(Lyng, 2018)

The reason for bullying can have many aspects and different angles. One of the perspectives can be a result of social stress and social anxiety. Pushing someone into social darkness, bullying others also set the boundaries for exclusion and inclusion. Being on the inside feels good and increases the feeling of belonging. The insiders will create a community of social bonding through expelling others. We show our common bonding through our mutual disrespect, mutual negativity and mutual disliking of the one(s) defined as the victim(s). But in classes with high level of social stress it also creates an anxiety for who will be the next victim, it could be me.

For those pupils who experience the wrath of the group and who are victimised and isolated it has a great impact on the social self-esteem and psychological welfare. Pupils having experienced this kind of social exclusion and social contempt are more pessimistic about future relations and have less confidence in other people. They lose their social confidence and are constantly afraid of it to happen again. They therefore tend to be more passive and often withdraw from social interaction. They also show a higher rate on depression, anxiety, stress and experience less support from others, both other pupils and teachers (Mittelmark og Hetland, 2010).

There is also a concept called relative deprivation. It means that the loss and consequence of losing a friend you have is worse than never to have had a friend. It is worse to be the only one in class who is bullied than if there are others. It is worse to be the only one the class experiencing a bad learning environment/social climate if everybody else is satisfied (Bø, 2005).

Why don't fellow pupils in the class give support to these victimized children? There is different explanations:

1. To help the victim might expose me to the same risk as the victim. It can be me next.
2. To help the victim requires social courage because I can get negative response from the classroom leaders (bullies).
3. I am more social secure if I do what the others do and not stand out in any way.
4. I don't know what to do or how I can help.

A pupil can help a victimized classmate in different ways:

1. Tell the teacher (active strategies).
2. Tell the bullies to stop (requires courage and social risk valuating).
3. Not be a bully yourself, go away, do not be a spectator (passive strategies).

The number of defenders and the social status of these defenders is very important for the social climate in a class.

There is a clear connection between the defender strategies and the relations toward the teacher.

Those pupils who use reactive emphatic support and active strategies to help bully victims will have better relations to their teacher (inner motivation for helping others). Those who use passive strategies have a less positive teacher relation. With passive strategies we mean that you feel sympathy for the victim, but you don't inform teachers or don't try to stop the bullies. (Jungert et al. 2016).

How can we reduce or, even better, prevent social stress in classrooms?

1. Put a lot of effort in transition periods. Be prepared.
2. Encourage the teachers to develop an authoritative leadership strategy.
3. Work constantly on social norms in classrooms. What is a good friend? What is a good classmate? How can we help and support each other?
4. Practice on these social norms daily in the classroom, refer to norms and use social stressing and corrections if the norms are not followed up by the pupils.
5. Show interest in each individual pupil, be sensitive, observe, analyse and ask the children about their feelings and social welfare in class.
6. Conduct social surveys (sociograms) on a regular basis to identify children at risk.
7. Include the parents in creating a social inclusive social environment.

8. Use co-operative learning strategies as a method for both academic and social learning.
9. Be constantly aware of the social atmosphere in the class, find out what is going on, show interest in the children's social life and well-being.
10. As a teacher; constantly improve your relational and emotional capacity and be a relational designer and positive role model.

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