

Chapter 4:

Development of the social, emotional and intercultural learning programme for school staff

Helle Jensen, Katinka Gøtzsche

The Danish Society for the Promotion of Life Wisdom in Children, Denmark

Abstract

This chapter describes the HAND in HAND programme for developing the social, emotional and intercultural (SEI) competencies of school staff. The chapter includes the background theory, describes how the theory is operationalised in exercises and put together in the manual, and a short overview of the core elements called the programme's active ingredients. The framework of the HAND in HAND school staff programme is made up of the newly developed definitions of the core concepts presented by Kozina, Vidmar and Veldin (this publication), Scandinavian work with and understanding of relational competence as well as a Scandinavian version of how to work with awareness. The overriding point made in the chapter is that, in order to create a learning environment that fosters students' well-being, learning and development, teachers must train to be aware of their own actions in the classroom and take responsibility for them.

Keywords: relational competence, innate competencies, SEI competencies

1. Introduction

Over the last decade, the importance of SEI competencies while working with students has been an issue (Durlak, Domitrovich, Weissberg & Gullotta, 2015; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). The need to work on developing the SEI competencies of school staff has received less attention in the research area (Klinge, 2017), despite being a focus of many in-service programmes, e.g. seminars on how to deal with challenging children, and cooperation/dialogue with parents. The HAND in HAND programme for school staff has a background in Danish in-service programmes, e.g. developing relational competence, working with colleagues' reflections, and mediation. Add to that the experiences of combining working on a personal, individual level with a community level while at the same time taking care of the curricula level. The core concepts for the programme are relational competence (Juul & Jensen, 2002) and SEI competencies (Durlak et al., 2015; Blell & Doff, 2014).

2. Development of the HAND in HAND programme for school staff

The aim is to strengthen school staff's ability to create relationships with the students, their colleagues and the parents who can support the learning and development environment in the classroom as well as in the school generally (Nielsen, 2016; Nordenbo, Søggaard Larsen, Tiftikci, Wendt, & Østergaard, 2008).

The HAND in HAND school staff programme has been developed together by the partners under the lead of the Danish team. In the last 20 years, the Danish team has accumulated experiences as well in-service as pre-service programmes (Gøtzsche, 2018; Jensen & van Beek, 2016).

The HAND in HAND programme for school staff consists of a programme for teachers and a separate programme for school leaders and counsellors (Jensen et al., 2018a; Jensen et al., 2018b). The programme for teachers has four modules: two modules lasting 2 days and another two modules each lasting 1 day. The programme for the school leaders and counsellors requires 2 single days.

Exercises that strengthen contact with oneself and others by enhancing empathy and compassion for oneself and others, e.g. dialogue exercises and exercises

building presence and awareness, make up the core of the training and active ingredients.

3. Core concepts addressed in the HAND in HAND programme for school staff

3.1 Relational Competence

Both empirical findings as well as psychological and pedagogical theory show that teachers' relational competencies are extremely important for students' possibilities of developing social/emotionally and cognitively (Bae, Wastaad & Schibbye, 1992; Cornelius-White, 2007; Juul & Jensen, 2002; Schwartz & Hart, 2013).

The systematic review of 70 studies (Nordenbo et al., 2008) regarding "Which manifest teacher competencies affect the academic performance of students?" shows that three competencies of teachers are crucial:

- didactic abilities/competence – knowledge of one's subject and subject-specific didactics;
- management-competence/classroom management – the ability to create clear structures, an overview, clear rules; and
- relational competence.

Nordenbo et al. (2008) puts it this way:

*If we want to create a good learning environment it's important to teach teachers to create good relations: To show tolerance, respect, interest, empathy and compassion to each child and appeal to the children's understanding of a conflict instead of bullying them (Quote translated from Danish. In: Svanholm, G., *Fagligt dygtige lærere er ikke altid de bedste*, Politiken, 8.5.2008).*

In addition, Cornelius-White's (2007) review of 119 studies shows how important the quality of the teacher–student relationship is for academic performance and for emotional and behavioural aspects like satisfaction, participation and self-efficacy, with the work of Durlak et al. (2015) coming to similar conclusions. Relational competence has also been raised as being key to early school leaving

prevention in research (for a review, see Vidmar, 2018) and EU policy reports (Cefai, Bartolo, Cavioni, & Downes, 2018; Downes, 2011; EC, 2013). It has also become part of professional development interventions (Sabol & Pianta, 2012) and initial teacher education training (Nielsen, 2017).

Having worked with learning theories, Illeris (2012) stresses that learning and cognitive processing is deeply associated with emotional responses. When we wish to understand how something is learned, we should always pay close attention to the actual situation and acknowledge that our ways of relating and communicating influence the students. Learning is emotionally preoccupied (Illeris, 2012).

The concept of relational competence was first used in Denmark in 1998 (Klinge, 2017). Later, professional language concerning relationships was developed in the Scandinavian countries (Bae, Waastad & Schibbye, 1992; Juul & Jensen, 2002). In Denmark, we defined it as:

The professional's ability to 'see' the individual child on its own terms and attune her behavior accordingly without giving up leadership, as well as the ability to be authentic in her contact with the child. And as the professional's ability and will to take the full responsibility for the quality of the relation (Juul & Jensen, 2017, p. 149).

The relational competence concept is only used with respect to professionals. When defining relational competence as *not giving up leadership and the ability and will to take full responsibility for the quality of the relationship*, it relates to the asymmetrical relationship existing between teacher and students/parents, where due to their profession the teacher holds greater power as part of the established system and more experience and knowledge due to their education and position.

This fact leaves the teacher with overall responsibility for the classroom climate and for realising the SEI competencies in the classroom. It is very often seen that children and teenagers and sometimes parents are regarded as guilty when something goes wrong in the classroom. Instead of declaring one of the parties guilty, it might also be the teacher, making it much more fruitful to view the teacher as the professional and thereby as being responsible for the quality of the

relationships. It can be very hard to accept responsibility because the circumstances are often particularly challenging for teachers: It is important to acknowledge this. And still – if the teacher recognises their influence and responsibility, it also gives them the power to do something, to bring about change when they identify a need. In the teacher training, this aspect of responsibility for the quality of the relationship is given a critical emphasis in work on the relationship and the classroom atmosphere.

Every classroom relationship/situation has at least two dimensions: *what* are we doing together, and *how* are we doing it? The content the students must learn, and the atmosphere in which the teaching take place. When instructing on teacher relational competence, it is *how* which is most important. Klinge (2017) asks how the teacher can create a good learning environment – a good classroom climate – which we know is key to the learning possibilities of all children.

An important aspect is the personal authority held by the teacher. Compared with how it was a few generations ago, there is arguably, in least in some cultural contexts, no longer an authority connected to the role of being a teacher – to the profession (Varming, 1992). Today, every teacher must rely on their personal authority if they are to get through to the children (ibid.). Development and learning depend on the quality of the relationship, in turn demanding a teacher who can be present while also relying on their personal authority for authenticity (Juul & Jensen, 2002). The HAND in HAND programme aims to strengthen both of these aspects – not so as to return to the old authoritarian way of teaching, but to create a learning environment that builds on the present, empathic and compassionate relationship.

The CASEL model (2013) is useful for better understanding the definition of relational competence that is being used. The CASEL model has five dimensions: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. Use of the CASEL model gives knowledge of how to enhance personal as well as community development to strengthen not only social/emotional competencies but also intercultural/transcultural ones.

Moreover, some concepts are given to elaborate on in order to understand what it means to be authentic and take responsibility for oneself and the other, as well as the relationship itself.

3.2 Self-awareness

As stated in the description of the core concepts of the HAND in HAND by Kozina et al. (this publication), self-awareness is the ability to recognise one's emotions, bodily sensations and thoughts, and the ways in which they influence how we react. This includes having a sober, accepting/recognising way of looking at oneself, and the will and ongoing desire to work on establishing all of it.

In former work (Juul & Jensen, 2002), self-awareness was defined with the help of the concept self-esteem. The development of self-esteem is connected to the basic human existential need of feeling valuable when in contact with other people (Sommer, 1996; Stern, 1995). 'Valuable' is not meant in the sense of doing something good or right, but in terms of being acknowledged/recognised with all the different emotions, bodily sensations and thoughts that every human being possesses. Self-esteem is developed in the dialectic relationship between self and other (Schibbye, 2002).

As part of their upbringing, many people have been pushed away from their self-esteem, e.g. when a child feels pain and cries and is told by a parent, "That's nothing, that's not worth crying over – stop it!" This makes the child move away from their self-esteem, leaving the child, who loves the parent and wishes to please them, doubting their own feelings. If during their upbringing a child is often talked away from their own emotions and bodily sensations, they will become detached from them because it is too painful to feel these often unpleasant emotions and bodily sensations without being recognised and having the chance to share the experience (Brodén 1991).

This also negatively influences self-awareness and makes the person unable to know which emotions and bodily sensations they have in a given situation and how to relate to them; when self-esteem is low, the individual might only feel chaotic inside when under pressure and be unable to differentiate e.g. anger, sadness, shame etc. (Sommer, 1997; Juul & Jensen, 2002).

A child or adult who is not allowed to feel or express anger often becomes detached from the emotion of anger. This means they do not recognise the emotion since they do not know about emotion as something that is an equal part of their own human emotions. This will affect their way of relating to the emotion later in life when they will be reacting to and thinking about that emotion as if it was still

forbidden and hence not an integral part of them. This makes it difficult for them to accept personal responsibility for the influences of their own behaviour (Hart, 2016).

Example: How to work on developing self-awareness in the HAND in HAND programme

Short exercises where the person is guided to sense and come in contact with their bodily sensations, e.g. by doing a body scan, or being guided in the observing of one's breath or the feelings that exist in the present moment. They might also consist of a dialogue situation where one person tells in detail about how they reacted in a given situation in their working life, and also describes their thoughts, feelings and senses on that occasion.

3.3 Self-management

As noted by Kozina et al (this publication), self-management in the HAND in HAND programme is the ability to regulate one's emotions, bodily sensations, thoughts and behaviour adequately in different situations. This includes managing stress, sensing and using impulses in a constructive way, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.

In order to self-manage, one needs to be aware of oneself; to be consciously aware of your emotions, bodily sensations and thoughts so as to be able to regulate them (Hart, 2016; Schwartz & Hart, 2013). Being genuinely present is actually very demanding because it requires awareness of one's emotions, bodily sensations and thoughts simultaneously. Most people do not realise what is going on at the moment they are being hurt, are afraid, or feel powerless. They develop a survival strategy that prevents them from feeling and sensing themselves in these situations or, if they are feeling and sensing themselves, they prevent themselves from seriously considering what they feel and then react accordingly (Juil & Jensen, 2002).

The reason for this difficulty of being genuinely present is to be found in childhood where it assumedly was often not possible to process these painful feelings because the inner cognitive and emotional capacity was not developed enough to deal with the reactions to a situation. When combined with the absence of external

support from parents or professionals to acknowledge or recognise the child, a lack of self-awareness and self-esteem develops in the child that is coupled with poor self-management skills which then form their personality in adult life (Juil & Jensen, 2002; Schibbye, 2002). The way of working on this is to create situations where bodily sensations, emotions, thoughts and behaviour are brought to a conscious level such that the person can learn to accept and acknowledge them in order to constructively integrate them (Schibbye, 2002).

Example: How to work on the self-management in the HAND in HAND programme

A dialogue develops between the focus person and their dialogue partner where the dialogue partner must listen actively and give acknowledging feedback throughout the dialogue.

3.4 Social/Transcultural awareness

The ability to adopt the perspective of and have empathy and compassion for others coming from different backgrounds and the ability to evaluate flexibly based on multiple perspectives and perspective change, practices and products beyond the self/other (perspective consciousness); to be aware of cultural synergies and dissents/perspective consciousness and to understand, accept and recognise social and ethical norms of behaviour and allow room for different points of view while recognising the influence and important roles of the family, school and community.

Being able to take the perspective of and empathise with others from various backgrounds and cultures is a central part of the school staff programme. In the definition of relational competence, it is called the teacher's ability to 'see' the child/children, which also calls for the ability to change perspectives and engage with the other with empathy and compassion.

To enhance these qualities, the individual must not only be able to understand another person but also needs to have the will and ability to acknowledge the other person as they are, together with curiosity and interest in other people's ways of living. This explains why the importance of accepting and acknowledging other people is added and emphasised. And, just as importantly, while being open and

flexible, not abandoning one's own social and ethics norms. It means making space for different points of view and being open to explore how it is possible to be, live, do and learn together with everyone's possibly completely different ways of looking at life and the world.

Especially when it comes to recognising the family, school and community, it can be really challenging to recognise the deficits/deficiencies and destructive parts of families, schools and communities and to find a constructive way of dealing with it; particularly when it is a fact that what one group regards as a deficit/deficiency is regarded by another group as resources. This is where people's empathy and compassion become truly challenged.

While developing SEI competencies for students and teachers and relational competencies for teachers it is important that the knowledge about different social and ethical norms is anchored in individuals, meaning that it is not only cognitively understood, but also embodied and embedded in the person.

This makes it relevant to specifically examine intercultural awareness and competence. Intercultural competencies are closely related to social/emotional competencies, that are often defined as part of being interculturally competent. Jensen (2013) sees intercultural competencies as having three aspects:

- a) social/emotional competencies;
- b) knowledge about cultures (one's own and others'); and
- c) knowledge about discrimination and cultural conflicts.

Stier (2003) adds to this the great importance of general social/emotional competencies in his summary of the primary aspects of intercultural competence.

To obtain a more nuanced understanding of this topic, we wish to include both intercultural competencies and transcultural competencies in our work. Blell and Doff (2014, p. 82–83) offer six propositions for initiating such change:

1. *Dialogue is constitutive for both inter – and transcultural learning*
2. *Perspective awareness is a central competence to constantly negotiate between 'floating identities'*
3. *Transcultural learning demands searching for both common ground and difference*
4. *Transcultural learning includes discourses on power*

5. *Transcultural learning has a great affiliation to Global Education*
6. *Transcultural learning demands the development of 'border literacies'.*

Training one's SEI competencies includes, among others, being aware of one's own reality, making it conscious, while also understanding that we are all different, for a moment to adopt the other person's perspective and to contain the differences. This requires the ability to inform and communicate along with the ability to sense the other person (Hildebrandt & Stubberup, 2012).

Example: How to work on social/transcultural awareness in the HAND in HAND programme

The teacher is guided how to be aware of their values – positive and negative – and how they influence the children's perspective in the classroom and the classroom climate. The reflections are later shared among smaller groups as they look for patterns that may enhance or prevent a non-prejudiced classroom climate.

3.5 Relationship skills

The ability to establish and keep constructive relationships and the will to carry on when it seems impossible to maintain a constructive relationship. This includes the ability to accept both personal and social responsibility, and to go into the relationship with personal presence while aware that a constructive relationship requires that the individuals involved establish synergy between taking care of their own integrity and that of the group/society.

The crucial part of this definition is “the will to carry on when it seems impossible to maintain a constructive relationship”. Much more is at risk when everything has broken down and you must still find a way to stay in the relationship, be it in the classroom or in society.

Since human beings are social beings from birth, it is essential to be in contact with other human beings from the very beginning in order to develop (Stern, 1995; Stern, 2000). Throughout life, human beings must live with an existential coherence between the need to cooperate with one's surroundings and the need to take care of one's personal integrity, including the fact that personal integrity develops in a dialectical interaction with one's surroundings (Juil & Jensen, 2002; Schibbye, 2002).

An environment is needed that is able to enhance this kind of synergy between cooperation and integrity; a space that can contain both the individual and society. This calls for the development of two different kinds of responsibility, here called social and personal responsibility (Juul & Jensen, 2002).

Human beings must be able to take the perspective of self and other in order to communicate clearly and listen actively, and need to alternate between two perspectives while being, working and learning together. The ability to accept these two types of responsibility gives the basis for resisting inappropriate social pressure and for having a sense of what is inappropriate for the individual. It also gives the possibility to negotiate conflicts constructively and to know when to ask for help and when to offer it.

Personal responsibility is the starting point for developing social responsibility – one must be able to be in contact with oneself if one is to be able to be in contact with other people and obtain a sense of their needs and wishes. From that viewpoint, it makes it possible to work with the empathy, understanding and compassion that is needed to make a group function. The teachers are very crucial in this process because it is their way of assuming leadership, also in resolving classroom conflicts that can inspire and lead to the individuals' greater personal and social responsibility and thereby their relationship skills.

Example: How to work on relationship skills in the HAND in HAND programme

The teachers work in pairs and do different exercises practising, maintaining awareness of oneself and the other at the same time.

3.6 Responsible decision-making

Building on the foundation of knowledge about social groups and their products and practices beyond self/other, and knowledge about asymmetrical and disputed global cultural processes, responsible decision-making is the ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behaviour and social interactions based on a consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, a realistic evaluation of the consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.

Example: How to work on responsible decision-making in the HAND in HAND programme

Working on responsible decision-making demands good dialogue competencies and open mindedness with respect to ideas and values that are dissimilar to one's own. This entails working with the five dimensions that were described before: self-awareness, self-management, social/transcultural awareness, relationship skills and relational competence are the foundation of responsible decision-making. This is practised in the programme when the teachers work on concrete examples to find the most appropriate way of responding in a specific situation.

4. Ways in which the HAND in HAND school staff programme enhances these skills and competencies

These five dimensions can be categorised as inner awareness (self-awareness and self-management), outer awareness (social/transcultural awareness and relationship skills) and a combination of the two (responsible decision-making).

The primary understanding of the HAND in HAND programme is that you cannot meet other people more fully than you have actually met yourself. That means the training is basically about: you, me, and what is going on between us in the relationship.

The importance of staying in contact with oneself in order to establish good contact with others demands an ongoing interest and a routine of being aware of what is occurring with oneself. This is not something that can be established once and for all, but must be worked on throughout life. To nuance and expand on this understanding, another model and theory will be used. This theory is based on well-tried-out exercises that strengthen contact with oneself and personal authenticity in the relationship setting.

4.1 The Pentagon – the innate competencies

The Pentagon Model presented below (Figure 1) is a map of essential elements of the whole human being that can be explored and developed.

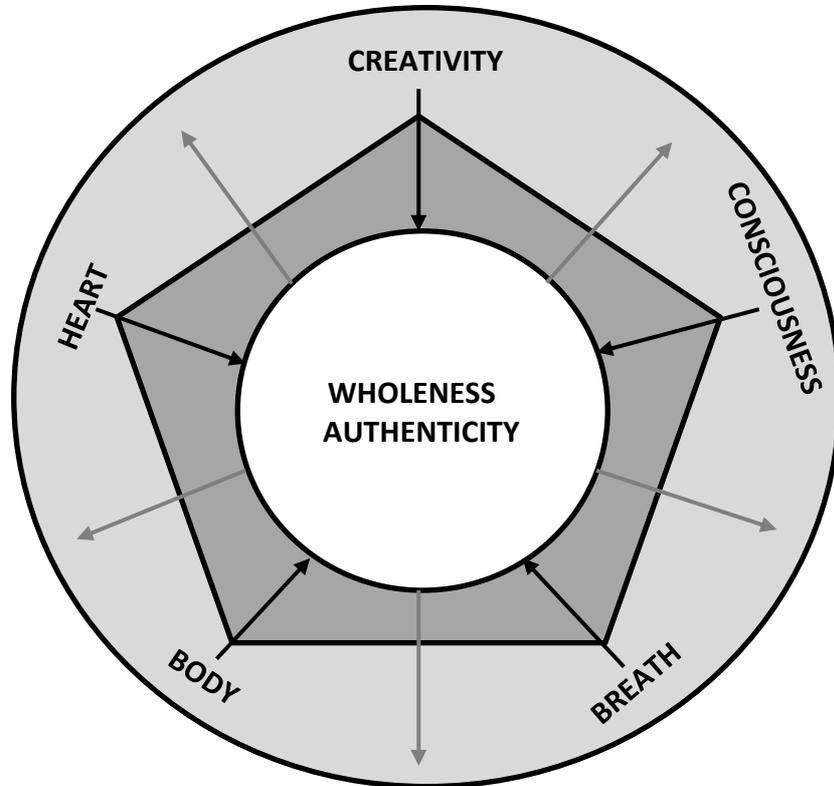


Figure 1: The Pentagon – the innate competencies

According to Bertelsen (2010, 2013), these capacities are innate, natural competencies and do not need to be learned. They need only be brought to awareness and remembered. This map shows five different domains of the innate competencies: body, breath, heart, consciousness and creativity.

Innate competencies are very simple and could even be so simple that in a strict definition of the concept of competence they might not even be seen as competencies, but as abilities:

The five competencies are as shown in the model above: body, breath heart, creativity and consciousness. Every human being has a body and is able to sense the physical sensations of their body. Breathing is vital. It is there in every moment of life, keeping living beings alive. Everybody can breathe and sense their breathing. Children are born with the capacity to feel love and attach themselves to other people; feelings that are connected to the heart. This includes the capacity for

empathy and compassion. If new-borns did not possess these capacities, they would not survive. Creativity is to be understood as the very fact that our entire external and internal reality, bodily impulses, mental content and sensations can be experienced as uninterruptedly undergoing change and renewal. The last competence in this context is Consciousness. This refers to the ability to focus to ensure a more open awareness and the fact that human beings know about themselves while being awake.

These competencies are something all humans possess. They are not part of the personality because they exist before it develops. They are connected to the human being as such and not to the individuality of each person (Bertelsen, 2010, p. 73–89).

Being aware of innate competencies expands the experience of one's self in the sense that more parts of the human being are brought to awareness. It provides the possibility of anchoring one's awareness in that part of the human experience which is not affected by the patterns and limits of individual personality. Our awareness is mostly preoccupied with the area of personality that is often controlled by the impact of one's childhood and various idiosyncrasies. Bringing awareness inwards of one's innate competencies provides a momentary sense of unattachment from personality, a process that creates the freedom and space to view a given situation from another perspective (Jensen et al. 2016; Gøtzsche, 2018).

The arrows in the model show that when being aware of one's innate competencies will help in establishing contact with one's authenticity, that can then be used in contacts with other people. The last aspect is shown by the outwardly pointing arrows.

Being aware of one's innate competencies may be compared with how Kabat-Zinn defines the concept of mindfulness: "Mindfulness is the awareness that arises when we pay attention, on purpose, in the present moment, with curiosity and kindness to things as they are" (Kabat-Zinn, 1991). Innate competencies are domains that contain and offer the possibility to anchor awareness in the present moment. Being aware of one's bodily sensations or breath creates awareness of the moment and of the feelings and states of the heart can establish an environment of kindness towards oneself and others. The equality lies in the practice of

turning such awareness inwards to those parts of the human being not attached to the specific personality with the aim of being more present.

The Pentagon model is used in the HAND in HAND programme to operationalise the work on the previously described dimensions. It provides the framework for connecting inner and outer awareness. Being present and aware of oneself and simultaneously having awareness of all the impulses coming from one's surroundings is a key area of training in the programme.

4.2 Building Relational Competence and SEI competencies by turning one's awareness inwards

Research on the neurobiology of mindfulness in adults suggests that sustained mindfulness practice can enhance attentional and emotional self-regulation and promote flexibility, pointing toward significant potential benefits for both teachers and students. Early research results on three illustrative mindfulness-based teacher training initiatives suggest that personal training in mindfulness skills can increase teachers' sense of well-being and teaching self-efficacy, as well as their ability to manage classroom behavior and establish and maintain supportive relationships with students. (Meiklejohn J., 2012, p. 3)

The HAND in HAND programme works on strengthening relational competence as well as SEI competencies by employing mindfulness practices to stabilise the contact with one's innate competencies. This means bringing the awareness inwards to let the innate competencies become anchors for the awareness.

In practice, the training could entail:

Awareness of one's body and one's breath: Sitting or lying down in silence while being aware of one's body and breath. Or moving with awareness of one's body in movement and of one's breath in order to enhance the contact with the body and the breathing. The body and breath are introduced as anchors that are always available if the teacher needs to become balanced and calm down in a stressful situation.

Awareness of creativity: Attention to one's body and breathing also helps with remaining present and focused and thus able to sense impulses when they occur, not only to control them, but to sense the energy in the impulses and use this energy in a creative way in both the relationship and for personal development.

Awareness of the heart: When well anchored in oneself through body and breathing exercises, the contact with the heart and heart feelings (kindness, empathy, compassion) will be in focus as a basis for strengthening social awareness and relationship skills. This competence is deeply associated with the fact that human beings are social individuals from birth (Stern, 1998; Broden, 1991). The child has the capacity to respond to the adults taking care of them, and actually cannot develop physically or psychically without being part of a relationship or community. This capacity needs to be supported throughout life to develop and remain a resource for the person and the community. Heart feelings allow us to recognise and acknowledge other people, with this recognition and acknowledgement enhancing both our mental and physical health. Yet it is not only about acknowledging other people, but about acknowledging oneself and having a sober and accepting view of oneself – which we earlier called healthy self-esteem (Juul & Jensen, 2002). These qualities form part of what can create a good learning environment and classroom climate (Durlak, 2015; Nordenbo et al., 2008).

Awareness of the consciousness: All through the programme work unfolds on the innate competencies of consciousness and creativity. This occurs via training on being aware and attentive, by training the ability to focus and defocus, and by training one's presence in order to be aware of the immense creativity contained in our body, thoughts and feelings.

4.3 Building relational competence and SEI competencies through activity and gearshift

Working with innate competencies is not only practised in silence. The HAND in HAND programme also uses physical exercises combined with awareness as a way of guiding awareness inwards while being in action. It also uses playful activities to raise the group's energy level and strengthening the feeling of being a group. This is accomplished through individual exercises, exercises in pairs, and whole-group exercises.

Gearshift is that which connects what is called inner and outer exercises in the programme; namely, shifting gear between high outgoing energy and exercises in silence. It entails a shift between raising and lowering one's level of arousal. Gearshift is a way of regulating the nervous system and also a training platform where the daily life of the teachers is mirrored in high arousal exercises and training that introduces pauses in high arousal states.

4.4 Building relational competence and SEI competencies through Dialogue

Another tool the programme uses is dialogue. Dialogue involves at least two roles: the focus person and the dialogue partner.

Following a certain concept, the two explore a situation in order to discover new perspectives and unrealised competencies to deal with the situation in a more constructive manner (Jensen et al., 2018).

The focus person shares a situation taken from their professional life as teachers where they felt under pressure in their work. In this dialogue, the focus person has the possibility to elaborate on this example and mainly express herself through the dialogue.

The dialogue partner helps the focus person unpack the situation and bring awareness into the situation by asking questions and helping to strengthen the teacher's self-awareness regarding this experience. The dialogue partner listens with interest, empathy and compassion and with a sensitivity, responsivity and willingness to dive into the dialogue.

The focus is on understanding and recognising both the student/students in the situation and the teacher. This means the empathy and compassion must run in both directions: toward the student/students, and toward the teacher.

By giving feedback, the dialogue partner shows empathy to both the teacher and the student/students, and creates room for the teacher's feelings and emotions by acknowledging the teacher and taking the feelings and emotions expressed in the situation seriously. The acknowledgement, empathy and compassion shown by the dialogue partner often helps the teacher in some kind of parallel process to

acknowledge and meet not only herself but also the student with the same qualities.

Acknowledgment through dialogue is only possible if trained in the use of personal language (Juul & Jensen, 2002). Personal language includes finding appropriate words for the individual to express what is going on in the person. This means going into details about what is happening in one's body, emotions and thoughts when under pressure or in challenging situations. It is exactly the process of expressing oneself that can enhance the ability to stay in contact with oneself and the other. Finding words that cover as much as possible how the person experiences and feels in the situation can strengthen SEI competencies and the ability to make changes in a difficult situation.

The use of personal language and working with a focus on the professional is in opposition to what frequently happens when a challenge or conflict arises between people: in such situations, both parties tend to talk about what the other party to the conflict or in the relationship has done, instead of talking about and taking responsibility for their own contribution.

Personal language differs from academic language and analysing, in which most of us are trained. Academic language goes in the direction of analysing, e.g. a conflict. This analysis seldom leads to a solution because the analysis often contains an aspect of defining the other. Most people move towards resistance when defined or analysed by others, rendering it difficult to negotiate constructively (Bae et al., 1992).

Example: How to work with dialogues in the HAND in HAND programme

The programme sees school staff practising both positions. This gives them the chance to practise the two critical elements in dialogue and development via dialogue: 1) the element of being present and clear while expressing oneself; and 2) the element of being empathic and interested in the other person and their perspective.

The principles of dialogue and personal language are also applied while working with intercultural competencies. It is the way of being in the dialogue that enables new perspectives to emerge when the content in the exercises touches on e.g. discrimination, privilege or prejudice.

5. Active ingredients in the HAND in HAND programme

The programme aims to enhance the SEI competencies and relational competence of school staff because that is a precondition for the well-being, learning and development of children.

While developing the manual (Jensen et al., 2018a; Jensen et al. 2018b), the feedback received from the trainers concerning the active ingredients was that the inner exercises, physical exercises and dialogue exercises were crucial, and these must be combined with attention to making a gearshift when necessary.

The exercises that focus on innate competencies are repeated in the programme as a way to establish a basis for staying in contact with oneself. This is especially important when under pressure by giving the possibility of creating better contact with the other person(s). The teachers are recommended to do the exercises regularly even when the programme has finished in order to remain balanced. When they feel familiar with the exercises, they are encouraged to use them in the classroom with the children. The inner exercises are also used as a kind of gearshift to sharpen awareness and presence when the participants have been engaged in a single activity for some time.

Conclusion

An overriding issue throughout the programme is that the trainer be sensitive, responsive and willing to go into acknowledging dialogues with the participants. For the trainer, this means it is important to create a learning environment where the participants feel safe, are encouraged to be true to their own limits and boundaries during the training programme, and are sure that what is shared is confidential and will not be revealed elsewhere.

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