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SCHOOL: A WAY TOWARDS SOCIAL REVITALIZATION THROUGH CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICTS?

“If civilization is to survive, we need to cultivate science about human relationships – the ability of people of all kinds to live together on this world in peace”.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Introduction

We are starting with the notion, that school is an institution, which should support the bloom of the civilization in its fundamental parameters, react to and foresee change in those values, which are beneficial for living in this civilization. Changes of this kind do not come without conflicts. One of the most important categories, about which the educational sciences should be concerned, is therefore conflict, and strategy of resolving conflict should be deeply rooted in the schools “philosophy”, schools and class’s management (Jones 2004).

In this text we are introducing an approach towards revitalization of the society through revitalization processes inside school: school’s “treasure within” and it’s capitalization are introduced from the point of view of the schools work with conflicts. In the first, core portion of the paper, we are introducing basic approaches towards education, which are working with conflict, the second portion is showing an example of the concrete program, which is based upon these approaches.

Part one: School as a place of constructive conflicts

How is school doing in regard to relationship with conflicts? School can assume negative or positive position towards conflicts. Negative attitude

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of the school towards conflicts is based on the assumption, that they are destructive. This leads towards the need to eliminate them: by repressing, avoiding and denying their existence. Conflicts are therefore assumed as the source of problems in school, perceived as destabilizing element of the system. Also the procedures designed to prevent conflicts cause negative consequences (for example isolation of the persons, who are participating in the conflict). The training which deals with problem solving is missing from the curriculum.

When schools have positive attitude towards conflicts, the conflicts can be understood as characteristic for the school's life, education and teaching. They are valued as a meaningful tool that can help the school to be able to reach restoration processes. Fully utilizing the potential of the conflict means teaching the actors of the school life their acceptance and handling them even in communities in which they will operate outside the school – to their and these communities benefit (Tjosvold, Johnson 1989).

We, therefore, assume that school environment is offering the means for a long-term and lasting influence. We assume that the actors in this environment – teachers, directors and students should receive not short-termed unsystematic training in the strategic solutions of the conflicts, as we can often see in the practice, but really complex educational program. It is not dealing with minor innovation, but with fundamental change, which amounts to asking the questions like *What is substantial about education? On what principles are we basing teaching children? What will be characteristic about the climate of the school?*

It is obvious, that these questions ought to be asked by those people, whose profession is based upon questioning of this type. Complex program therefore starts with them. To create a school with positive attitude towards conflicts means that those, who are educating, must understand:

1. The nature of the conflict;
2. The difference between destructive and constructive resolving of the conflict;
3. The positive results of the constructive handling of the conflict.
4. Approaches that ensure, that students and teachers will be using matching procedures for conflict handling;
5. Steps, which will lead towards learning how to constructively handle the conflict (Johnson, Johnson 1995).

Ad 1. To understand the nature of the conflict

Conflict is a term, which is often used in everyday language, which is one of the reasons why there are layman interpretations for it. What is important for educational program directed to all of the promoters is that they have to understand its nature identically. There are many definitions of the conflict; from socio-psychological standpoint widely accepted definition comes from the works by Morton Deutsch (1973), who has also dealt with research of people's behavior in conflict for a long time. According to this definition conflict exists whenever incompatible activities appear, i.e. one activity is obstructing or influencing effectiveness of another activity. If we accept this definition, then there are four types of conflict which are important for the research of the relationship of the school environment and conflict:

- a) Controversy: comes to existence, even though ideas, information, conclusions, theories, opinions of the one person are incompatible with the ideas, information etc. of the other and these persons are searching for an agreement.
- b) Conceptual conflict: comes to existence if, when in the mind exist in the same time incompatible ideas, or if obtained information is in conflict with what a person already knows.
- c) Conflict of the interests: comes to existence if the actions of one person are to maximize his or her benefit and there appears a tendency to deny maximizing the benefits of another person.
- d) Development conflict: is related with the cycles of social and cognitive development (with their stability and change), which contribute to the incompatibility of the activities of a grown-up child¹.

The knowledge of all the conflicts that take place in the environment in which people appear is essential from the point of view of higher efficiency of different activities. To understand conflicts therefore means to understand their nature, their typology and also the basis upon which these types are identified.² Understanding can be based upon this knowledge, and therefore

¹Ie. In specific developmental period of the child that depends upon an adult, demanding adult's approval is important, in another period important is refusing this approval and we should remember that it is not child's choice, but an expression of socio-developmental imperatives.

²Ie. During conflict of the interests the need for understanding the volition (desire for something), need (universal necessity for survival) and goals (demanded ideal state of the future matters), which are based upon the volition and needs, arises. From this fundamental core understanding can be further developed, and therefore conflict can be managed.

conflicts can be resolved.

Ad 2. To understand the difference between the destructively and the constructively mastered conflict

Whether the conflict is constructive or destructive determines the way how the conflict can be controlled.

Constructive conflicts:

- a) The entry into the compliance, which allows all participants to achieve their goals. Common consensus then maximizes the shared outcomes, everyone benefits from it and it is in the best interest of participants.
- b) They strengthen the relationship between the participants in a way that the popularity, the mutual respect and the trust to one another grow.
- c) The ability of participants to deal with the future conflicts with one another constructively increases.

The constructive potential of the conflict increases when individuals:

- d) appreciate the differences and the ways in which these differences support and enrich the learning and the teaching, decision making, problem solving;
- e) seek some mutual favors that can result from the solution of the conflict, they understand that they have some mutual interests and seek their common basis;
- f) have confidence in their abilities and the abilities of their classmates or colleagues to skillfully use the same procedure to resolve conflicts;
- g) see the effectiveness of conflict management.

The destructive potential of the conflict deepens when the results of the victory of one participant over another dominate over their related emotional states (anger, disbelief, disappointment, etc.). The conflicts mastered destructively are “unprofitable” for the organization; they reduce the possibility of solving future conflicts constructively and thus reduce the efficiency of the organization. Negative relationships between adults and children and the lack of a sense of security distract the attention from the essential aspects of the life of the community, which is meaningful education, effective teaching and learning (Kasikova, Valenta 2009).

For the school development, it is essential to understand the difference between these two approaches to the conflicts. The necessary key to change it is that the school should recognize the current approach to the conflicts, realize the possibility of these two basic options as well as any change of the position of school on the imaginary attitude scale designed for the specific conflicts. From here, the tendency may result from the shaping of the school environment with the positively mastered conflicts.

Ad 3. To understand the positive values of resolving conflicts in a constructive manner

According to the research of last decades (Deutsch 1973, Tjosvold, Johnson 1989, Jones 2004) constructively resolved conflicts have many positive results:

- a) They can raise quantitative and qualitative performance; lead to higher thought processes and creative problem solving.
- b) They can raise the quality of the decisive processes and problem solving, in connection with ethical questions.
- c) They are essential for a healthy cognitive, social and psychic development.³
- d) Conflicts supply energy towards individuals for action.⁴
- e) Skills to resolve conflicts constructively lead to students being better at finding employment in labor market⁵, but they are also increasing the possibility of a career growth and quality of life in general.
- f) Constructively resolved conflicts are supporting the quality of the community life. If school is understood as a center of the community, then the dealing of this type is one of the creators of the new concept of the school.

³Conflict helps the child to back away from egocentrism, through conflicts in social relationships the sociability of individual is developed, development stimulation starts usually with the appearance of the discrepancies between the world of the adult and that of a child. Through well managed conflicts mental health, the ability to deal with stress and unfavorable factors are unfolding.

⁴Realizing of the conflict is releasing mental energy, intensive psychical focus comes to existence, which leads towards strong motivation to deal with conflict and convert their imaginations, plans towards action.

⁵School, according to the experts, is offering a twisted image of reality, because it does not equip students with knowledge essential for the labor's world, to work cooperatively in team also means to contend with conflicts.

- g) Conflicts support change – they are creating offers towards change of the stereotypes, strayed-out and non-functional ways of solutions, customary behavior patterns change towards others, personal habits.
- h) Conflicts lead towards self-discovery (who are we, what do we need to change about ourselves) and towards knowledge of others (we can see what do they stand for, how do they seek solutions), we get to know their values, attitudes, perspectives.

To summarize: The investment into the creation of programs concerning constructive conflicts is one of the most beneficial strategies of schools development, formation of the optimal education and learning environment, which is helping the revitalization processes.

Ad 4. To know how to provide for all students and school staff identical procedures for conflict resolving

It is established through our upbringing and influence of social environment, that everybody has his or her own strategy how to solve conflicts. Students also have their notion how to deal with conflicts (some are reliant upon their physical dominance, others use verbal attacks, others renounce them etc). This diversity is natural; on the other hand it leads towards many misunderstandings, uneasy balancing with problems. Programs aimed at constructive handling of the conflicts therefore include processes of so called co-orientation. Co-orientation should secure that everybody understands relevant processes and is able to use them in according manner.

Process of the co-orientation is starting with establishing of the norms, i.e. common expectation, what behavior is appropriate in conflict situation and which procedures should be used. These norms should be clearly and publically established: physical violence, humiliating of the other, lies and scams should be excluded. All of the actors should afterwards learn consistent range of procedures towards conflict solving in such a way that their goals should be achieved and their relationships towards others strengthen so that their ability to solve future conflicts improves.

Ad 5. To understand steps, which will lead towards learning to solve the conflicts in a constructive manner

To handle conflicts in a constructive manner means to work with three basic steps:

- A) Creating of the co-operative complex.
- B) Usage of the academic (educational) controversies.

C) Integration of the conflict solving program/peer mediation.

Ad A. Creation of the co-operating complex.

Co-operative environment is a frame, in which the using of the teaching strategy of academic controversies and integration of the programs that deal with conflicts, thrive. The optimum path of how to install co-operative environment at school is the selection of the cooperative learning as basic means of arrangement of the social relationships in tuition, its predominance over other means of arrangement – individual and competitive.

Cooperative learning is based upon five basic principles: interaction face to face, positive mutual dependency of the members in a group, individual responsibility of each member of the group, usage of interpersonal skills, reflection of group activity (Johnson, Johnson 2009)

Complex research of cooperative learning, which intensively proceeds namely since the 1970´s, has shown positive effects of the cooperative learning in many ways – cognitive growth of the student, the inner motivation towards learning, mental health and sociability of the student (Kasíková 2009). Significant for the forming of the school “constructive conflicts” are all effects of the cooperative teaching, namely two: the focus on long-termed perspective and the support of the learning of the social skills (Kasikova, Valenta 2008).

If school is to become a place of the constructive conflicts, it is necessary to recognize, that long-termed relationships are more important than the result of any short-termed conflict. Mutuality during the reaching of the goals is a core condition of this knowledge and also condition of the acknowledgement of this arrangement, which works as a mutual investment. Because co-operative endeavor requires interaction of the individuals and coordination of their actions, the integral part of this workability are social skills. To most significant (and also most difficult) are skills to manage the conflict in a constructive manner.

Formation of the co-operative complex also concerns the environment outside the teaching. This is particularly about formation of the collegial relationships of the teachers, their activities in teaching and profession communities, in which they will not avoid conflicts, dealt with the principles of cooperation.

Ad B. Usage of the academic (educational) controversies

It is important, within co-operational context, to support intellectual controversies, conflicts of the ideas, during with an agreement is sought (see above). Strategy of academic dispute is based upon so called conceptual

conflicts. Conceptual conflicts are the basic category of the new educational paradigm, which is defined not as handing over the knowledge, but as creating the conditions for constructive activity of learners. Contemporary didactic tendencies highlight the value of conceptual conflicts (Bertrand 1998). Effectiveness of the teaching, maximization of the student's performance, critical thinking, usage of higher mental processes and argumentation strategies relates with integrating of the intellectual conflicts into the notion of education.

A view upon the practice of the schools suggests that we will not encounter intellectual conflicts too often. Strategy, which has been designed for their support, is based upon the theory of controversies (Johnson, Johnson 2009). It provides to teachers the structure, which is based upon two only seemingly contradicting phenomenon – cooperation and conflict.⁶

The basic goal of the strategy is to encourage the process of investigation of alternative views upon problem in that manner in which the students occupy contradictory standpoints. In opposition to well-known methods, based upon the same principle (disputation i.e.), this strategy is carefully structured into several steps in co-operative context. Students in groups occupying contradictory standpoints realize from the start of this activity, that they are heading towards mutual goal, which is position, with which all the members of the group can agree upon. These phases are characteristic for the strategy: a) Work on contradictory standpoints (pairs) and their presentation to another pair in group of four; b) Discussion in this group based upon rules given in advance; c) Reversal of the perspective: pair will reverse their perspective on given topic and they present their standpoint to each other. (This step, often difficult for participants, is helping to ensure, that they need not to stay bound to one specific position, but they can be open towards the consideration of other alternatives.); d) Joint report: Group of four processes common material, with which every member of the group can agree, based upon well-structured information and provided evidences.

The topics of the dispute can be varied, including topics of revitalization. Strategy of the controversies can even be an approach to the problem of how to deal with dispute amongst the members of the teaching staff. If

⁶Authors of this strategy prove, that the stronger the cooperation, the more conflicts appear: if the members of the group are motivated, engaged towards performing a task and towards helping each other, it is even accompanied by disagreement. The key towards effectivity of the strategies that use conflict is a mix of cooperative and competitive elements: the more cooperative and less competitive element, the more constructive conflict is (Deutsch 1973).

the teachers are aware of this strategy and can use it in the time, when they need to reach substantial conclusion, then it can become a significant instrument.

Ad C. Implementation of the program of conflict resolution/peer mediation

Implementation of this program has several steps:

a) Learning to negotiate in conflict management.

Bargaining (negotiation) occurs when individuals have the same or opposing interests and they want to try to come to an agreement. For long-term relationships it is preferable to negotiate toward solving the problem, rather than to win. Pupils and teachers are in long-term relationships, so they should be taught problem solving negotiation procedures. It is a so-called knowledge. We can tease out two interests in conflict (own needs, goals versus maintaining adequate relations), and unfold from them knowledge of several strategies for managing conflict, here belong: negotiations to solve the problem, smoothing, pressure (win – loss), compromise escape. It is important that all gain competence for all five strategies as each situation requires different strategies, depending on the interests of the two.

b) Learning mediation.

Mediation implies the intervention of three – a neutral person (mediator) interventions should help resolve a conflict between two or more people in a way that will be acceptable to them. Mediator listens carefully to both sides and helps them go through every step of effectively negotiating sequences that would lead to an agreement. Mediation skills are useful not only to students but also to those of teachers who do not have these skills.

c) Implementation of the peer mediation program.

One option of work at the school of constructive conflict is the inclusion of this program. After students have passed the initial negotiating and mediation training, the school according to its specific conditions implemented peer mediation program. Every day selected pairs of students take part in their classes or perform the role of school mediator, the model situation was tried in the US.

d) Improving pupils' skills in negotiation and mediation.

In the school curriculum it should be calculated to improve pupils' skills to negotiate and to be good mediators. This time it can be provided outside school hours or during conflict resolution, negotiation and mediation can be part of the normal teaching. Practising these skills is embedded in the curriculum and arranged to be taught in every school year at more complex level.

e) Arbitration of the pupil conflict.

If pupils fail in the conflict settlement and mediation also fails, a space for teachers or other school employee appears. Arbitrator of the dispute is an uninvolved third party that assesses dispute or makes a final decision on a solution. This decision does not often satisfy both sides, so the process of arbitrage is used in the last resort in resolving conflicts in the classroom and at school.

Implementation of the program of conflict resolution and peer mediation program is basically a program focused on discipline, that teaches pupils to regulate and to control their behavior and the behavior of pupils. It is contrary to commonly used mode where conflicts of pupils at the school are solved. (The children thus learn that they need to resolve the conflict or suspend any adult authority). Thus, the program teaches responsibility and self-regulation, i.e. the qualities that will make the most of their apprentices for professional and family life.

Second part: Realization of programs aimed at complex subject of constructive conflicts.

In this part we provide a brief view into issue of realization of program, which was founded on ideas outlined in the first part. It is a program designed for teaching staffs of individual schools. Educational programs for teaching staff have their pros and cons.

- a) Pros: Possibility of application of chosen method and technique for individual school optimally for problems and relations in said school, possibility of easier evaluation of program, thus not only realization evaluation (how did training work out for participants), but also result evaluation (how do the learnt principles and skills work in environment that they are applied in).
- b) Cons: Longer time required for co-orientation of participants on issue (not every participant chooses said issue willingly), overcoming hurdles for open communication (stereotypes of teaching staff, norms which they hold unto, issue of conflict is a personal issue, where people must overcome emotional barriers).

We established optimal process on basis of experiences gained from programs realized in last two decades.

1. Let's begin with program used for creating cooperative context. This context creates conditions for communication, which are necessary for execution of next phases of project and also for understanding key information and learning basic skills, which are required in said phases.

Main goal of this project is to understand basic differences between positive and negative relations of people in task situation (e.g. cooperation and competition) and their consequences in school application, whether it is concerned with activities of students or teachers themselves.

2. Second part of the project – also in time order – is a program aimed at learning academic controversies. Program is mainly aimed at exploring and perhaps changing view on conflicts. Work with intellectual conflicts – e.g. work with conflicts of knowledge, ideas and opinions are a good start for the following work with conflict of interests in school environment. School is a place for gaining knowledge and work with knowledge: If teachers accept the fact that conflicts can be instruments for introducing ideas, it creates a possibility for accepting conflict as constructive part of evolution of organization. Strategy of educational conflict, which is the main method for these goals, can then be used by teachers as one of basic methods of teaching. It can also be used to solve problems concerning restoration of school and life in it.
3. Third part of project is solving of problems in conflict/peer mediation. This phase is on the last place in time ordering because of reasons, which were written previously. Another reason is the fact, that this issue was at schools transferred to assigned person: educational councilors, school psychologists or educator. Goal of this phase is not only having all teachers complete said program, but also making solving conflicts and peer mediation an integral part of life in school. This is why the core of this program is application of ability to solve conflict of interests in close connection to educational content of respective school.

Methodical characteristic of the program:

- The program is based on analysis of educational needs of respective schools.
- It is based on principle of learning by experience.
- The program is of interactive, active nature, but also it is working with extension of these rules into discussion on themes such as philosophy of education, school policies, etc. (meaning and nature of education in present society, need of renovation of school and revitalization of social life, etc.).

- Integral part of the program are reflections and evaluations done by participants of the program, and reviewing application of the program in real school environment.

In realization of this program, we verified, how difficult it is sometimes for teachers to change their opinions regarding renewing processes in school. In our experience, it is caused by fact, that some aspects of school life and education are not reflected upon enough. In relation to our topic it is for example criticizing students for inability to cooperate, their presented positive attitude towards cooperation was supported by real competences. Need for improvement was discovered in connection with issue of cooperation and also in ability to work with conflicts of ideals and interests. We consider as necessary for teachers and principals at schools to adapt a positive outlook on the program. It is a complex, extensive and long term program, where training phase (programs led by trainer-animator-lecturer) must flow into programs, which are organized by school leadership, teaching staff themselves or student peer programs (Marzano et al.2000). A path to making constructive conflict integral part of school life should be then more obvious. Extension of this idea into life of community outside of school is then also more probable.

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SCHOOL: A WAY TOWARDS SOCIAL REVITALIZATION THROUGH CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICTS?

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The study deals with the issue of possibility to revitalize the society through revitalization of the inside school processes. The conflict as an important concept of these processes is introduced: strategy of resolving conflict should be deeply rooted in the school "philosophy", school and class management. The study is divided into two parts: in the first part of the study, we are presenting basic approaches towards education, which are working with the concept of conflict. Focus is put predominantly on understanding positive values of resolving conflicts in a constructive manner and on implementation of identical procedures for conflict resolving for all students and school staff. In the second part of the contribution we are presenting an example of the concrete program, which is based upon these approaches. It is an educational program designed for teaching staff of individual schools: as we have to take into account some obstacles in the program implementation, we propose optimal steps in procedures based on own experience gained from programs realized in last two decades.

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TEACHER EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SKILLS CURRICULUM

Introduction

We consider socio-relational dimension of the teacher profession and the competence of teachers to develop the social skills of pupils to be key factors in education nowadays. Teacher education and teacher training focusing on social dimension are closely connected with challenges like societal changes, inclusion, multiculturalism, but also life on social networks, socio-pathological phenomena etc. From that point of view curriculum reconstruction is in need with stronger accent on teachers social competence in the frame of new approaches in education sciences and psychology.

When we mention “stronger accent on sociability”, we mean that social competence is not an entity that is side by side with the teacher academic competence and social curriculum dimension, it is just added to intellectual one, but rather in developing them we can count on support of one area towards the other. As Nemo (Boudon et al. 2001, p. 111) reminds us schools could not be understood like after-school clubs where teachers just monitor students behavior: impulses for students intellectual growth should be the core of their professional endeavour. And based on these ideas, do we know whether teachers are ready for this quite a complex work with children? And if not, how could we help them to succeed?

Teachers social competences are often taken for granted (in the norms, postulates, professional standards), but less attention is paid to its development or building up the conditions for it. Thus it is obvious that a field

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for educational research is open with quite important research questions. The general research question which has tied together our research over the last several years (1999-2015), which will continue into the following years, is as follows: How do we create the educational conditions for the development of teachers' social competence for a curriculum in which the social relationship dimension is emphasized? We approached the research field from two essential, mutually interconnected – points of view:

1. Teacher social competences and their development
2. Competences for teaching personal and social education

1. Teacher social competences and their development

In order for us to not stay at a general level, we will specify the teacher social competences with focusing on the issue of cooperation. Cooperation, in the current educational environment, is a key concept and also an essential structure for the teachers social development. Cooperation – between teachers and students – is established as a basic requirement and means of the transformation of schools. However, the reality does not yet meet these requirements. In curriculum documents for primary and secondary education, cooperation has an unshakeable position in the frame of student personal and social competencies. Cooperative learning is considered as an optimal educational model focusing on the cognitive abilities and on the social learning as well (Johnson, Johnson 2009, Kasikova 2009). This is a tendency but a challenge for the practice at the same time: in our research implementation processes break down very often because teachers are not offered systematically with possibilities to develop their social competence for cooperative activities.

Where and how we can find and create conditions for social competence development?

A. In the pre-service teacher education

We consider the whole conception of teacher education to be the key in forming optimal conditions for social competencies development. In analysis of teacher education in the Czech Republic we have concluded that in pre-service curriculum there are courses focusing on social competencies (courses of personal and social development, courses of communication, and so on) but there are carried in the context of the transmissive paradigm of education at university. The transmission of knowledge pushes out cooperation out of educational processes (Tonucci 1991): the practical cooperative activities become only a small part of the study programs for future teachers: according to our research (Kasikova 2015) it is approximately 5-10% of the entire teaching time. We know the effect of returning to “safe” teaching stra-

tegies like frontal recitation if teachers feel insecure in the difficult first few years of teaching in school practice. If we therefore want for the teachers to deal with cooperative skills smoothly both in the classrooms and staffrooms, there is no other option than to plan and realize pre-service curriculum where cooperative dimension is strongly accentuated. Student teachers should not only have knowledge of cooperation and cooperative learning, they need to learn intensively in a cooperative environment with the help of cooperative educational means.

How to do this specifically? Through cooperative strategies – from the simplest type of “think and share” which can be used also in large lecture auditoriums to the more difficult structures – for example, the use of academic controversy or cooperative projects based on principles of cooperative learning like individual accountability and processing (Johnson, Johnson 2009). The other possibility consists in studying in long-term cooperative learning groups (informal and so called base groups) where the members cooperate for example to complete or check of several assigned tasks, during preparation for exams, for the first supervision of teaching etc.: this is a powerful approach for their academic success and future teacher social competence as well (Johnson et al. 2007, Hui, Grossman 2008).

Results of our research oriented on cooperative strategies in pre-service teacher education (gained by observation, interviews, questionnaires, material analysis) could be summarized in several statements concerning students beliefs, attitudes and a level of social skills:

- Student teachers value these strategies as optimal in the preparation for their profession (both for teaching in the classrooms and for cooperation with other teachers in school practice).
- They appreciate these strategies for bringing trust among students which results in willingness to share ideas, materials etc.
- They are willing to incorporate cooperative strategies into their teaching strategies repertoire in quite a great amount of teaching time because they experienced them and thus believe more in their effectiveness.
- They believe that they will be able to implement cooperative strategies in classrooms and are open to learn more how to use them, elaborate them in various practice conditions. They expect support from management of the school in implementation processes.

- They have formed the basis of social competence for cooperation during studies but they feel more secure for organizing cooperation with their students than cooperate with future colleagues (Kasikova 2015).

B. In the in – service teacher education and training

If the teacher himself did not undergo the school curriculum which was explicitly and in a hidden manner saturated with social competencies for cooperation, he will always be somewhat in a position of someone who teaches a language yet is only one lesson ahead of his students. The teacher's fear of failure in implementation of the new strategies is natural but at the same time it is one of the greatest obstacles for their realization. This is why it is so important to rely on systematical support than simply graduate from a course focusing on training social skills.

The systematical approach for staff development is founded on the following factors: knowledge, workculture and environment, educational activities and personal/social competencies. Since our research was focused primarily on cooperation, we will again use examples from this area. Teachers need knowledge especially on the meaning of the curriculum based on social competencies (why) and significance of their personal social competencies during its realization. It is however necessary to provide this knowledge in the framework of schools which are indicated as the learning organization (Senge 1990, Mortimer 1995). Cooperation can then be considered as the main principle of this conception. According to Robert Mucchielli (1996) the greatest psychological barrier to the cooperation of individuals is so-called defense of one's ego, which is explained as an unconscious fear of changes in the perception of oneself. In the conception of school as a learning organization there can be found a number of mechanisms (for example the acceptance of risk in a secure environment), which support the cooperation of teachers. However, according to our findings, the Czech schools are only at the beginning to move towards this: when teachers and directors of schools described social relationship in the schools they seldom indicated higher forms of cooperation – professional opinions sharing and exchange of common work (Kasikova, Dubec 2009).

In the frame of school as learning organization there is a specific conception of educational activities. If we would like teachers to learn for social skills curriculum, we must consider teacher learning communities to be a basic means of this. Work in the so-called mutual assistance teams is based on the principles of cooperative learning that means that teachers follow the same principles as their students in the classroom (interaction face-to face, positive interdependence, individual accountability, using interperso-

nal skills for working in small groups, processing). It is not easy to get into the processes in aforementioned activities in teachers mutual assistance teams. To manage this, we coordinated participative action research: small teams from various schools (primary, secondary) analyzed their work in implementation new educational strategies and members of the teams described also what and how they learn from working in the teams (in diaries, questionnaires, interviews).

The research results clearly show a link to the global school conception (especially the role of school management – supportive or not): but besides that we collected findings concerning teachers' social skills. Among other things there are quite interesting data that teachers do the same thing they often criticize in their students – for example they do not cooperate with those they do not like. Another data show that teachers feel insecure in conflict situation, even in controversies (conflicts of ideas) and they often hurry on with group agreement (avoiding discrepancies, silent individual disagreement etc.) They indicated skills for communication of disagreement and dealing with conflicts as the weak part of their teams: they expressed need for training skills for solving conflicts and importance of training them in safe environment, where they can trust each other (often out of their own school staff). In our opinion to promote cooperation means to deal with conflicts as well (based on the thesis “The strong cooperation brings stronger conflicts which are solved constructively”) but training teachers in this area does not mean to undertake an isolated one-time step (to introduce a course on problem solving). It is about working with the complexity of the whole issue, focusing on the four aforementioned approaches – knowledge, workculture and environment, educational activities and personal/social competencies.

2. Competences for teaching personal and social education

Challenge coming from the curriculum in which the social dimension is accentuated is a challenge especially for the teacher competences to deal with it. Are teachers ready to plan, realize and evaluate possibilities for developing students personal and social competencies (i.e. self-recognition, self-regulation, building trust and respect in human relations and skills for social interaction)? And if not, what is missing and how could we overcome difficulties and help them to succeed?

In this part of the article we present results of research and investigation in a relatively new school curriculum component called “personal and social education” (primary and secondary schools as well). To get ready teachers for teaching this component, courses in preservice and inservice were run by authors of this article: investigation and research have been carried on

(1999-2015) concerning issues connected with our general research question How do you create the educational conditions for the development of teachers social competence for a curriculum in which the social relationship dimension is emphasized? More specifically: What are the difficulties in teaching (in so called methodology/didactics of personal and social education) to overcome? In these courses we worked over time with approximately 500 teachers, we observed approximately 400 sample teaching hours, we analyzed 250 lesson plans. Conclusion of our research could be formulated in this statement: Teachers are not aware enough of lack of knowledge and skills which should be in their competence for teaching personal and social education. We came to the conclusion through following research results:

1. The teachers are not adequately embedded in the theory of personal competencies, theory of trust, respect, human relations and social skills. In defining these phenomena and in working with them they often use “folk-concepts”.

2. The teachers do not have “pedagogical content knowledge”, that is they do not have an adequately clear perception of the practical functioning of social competence. It means that:

- they do not have the understanding knowledge of phenomenon from the area of social competence
- they do not have the skills of practical differentiation/recognition of these phenomenon

3. The teachers have problems connecting to certain themes from the area of personal and social competence and building trust and respect with specific methods (games, exercises etc., despite the fact that they know many games and exercises) (Valenta 2006, p. 139; 2013, p. 47).

The following explanation will include examples of these three areas whether they are separate or connected.

- There is a lack in knowledge. The knowledge level of phenomenon from the area of examined competencies is quite low, the theoretical basis or practical activities are poor.

The teachers do not have adequate knowledge of phenomena associated with self-recognition, building trust and social competence. For example, they do not completely know what is empathy, active listening, or group dynamics. The following problems emerge out of this to a large extent:

- Phenomena are labeled with incorrect terms

For example several aggressive displays are labeled as assertive.

- There are problems in the differentiation and recognition of phenomena in practice

When using the methods of role play the teachers repeatedly said that the students “live”/empathize in these roles, however from the students in the games it was evident that this was not the case. Or: They do not differentiate that in a game training body language students will begin to be interested rather in mutual relations in the classroom than body language. If they do not see this, evidently an important theme which the students bring to the games themselves escapes.

- There are problems in the knowing or understanding of the connection among certain phenomena

A number of teachers – during the period of our investigation – for example believed that dividing students into groups for work on a certain task automatically creates cooperation among all members of the groups. But from the point of observer it was not so.

- They try to apply one pedagogical theory that they know into an area where it is not suitable.

For example, we repeatedly met with efforts to use Bloom’s cognitive goal taxonomy for planning objectives in the area of behavioral skills (Valenta 2013, 2016)

- They do not know how to determine precisely the core of social competencies. Therefore, they often use inadequate teaching methods.

For example although the aim of the lesson is focused on promoting empathy, teacher uses methods of text reading (mismatch) (Valenta 2013, 2016). During research time we finally defined so-called “myths” relating to the personal and social education teaching. Here are several of them:

- Personal and social education (abbreviation P. S. E.): is used whenever we talk about life.
- P. S. E.: Occurs as soon as children are taught in an active manner or can talk to each other.
- P. S. E.: It is not possible to train social competence when children do not have social competence.

- P. S. E.: Reflection after activities means that the teachers say what they think and how it should be.
- P. S. E.: Where there are groups, there is cooperation and cooperation = P. S. E.
- P. S. E.: Everything relates to anything else – whatever game can reach whatever educational goal.
- P. S. E.: Teachers do not need to have the competencies which they want from the children – they are teachers, not students.
- P. S. E.: Every teacher “has” a personality and an university degree – they are therefore experts on how to live (Valenta 2013, p. 48).

We see the solution of aforementioned difficulties in giving more attention to curriculum for social skills, define it more clearly. Here we obviously enter into the field of debate on what social skills curriculum is and what we expect from it. Social competencies – for example, for us in the Czech Republic is often understood as a part of the hidden curriculum or as a part of the informal curriculum and it is expected that social competence as an objective value of the work of schools will grow out of the optimal social climate of schools and from good mutual relationships. In conclusion, there is a need to educate teachers so that they could teach personal and social competencies as explicit ones.

We are on the right path now: in basic curricular documents of the Czech school reform there is “personal and social education” part.¹ We have our own point of view on personal and social competence, respectively skills which the school should pay attention to in order to move within the framework of standard and formal curriculum.

But if we have curriculum in which skills are indicated it still doesn’t mean that teachers will teach them really as skills. There is a need to teach skills, not about skills. Then we arrive at the same platform which was expressed in the 1970’s in the USA, in the nicely titled book by Karen Stone: *The subject is me!* That is the student, where the subject is the student himself, the student’s social competence. The student at this same

¹The Czech concept of personal and social education (as a part of the climate of the schools, as a cross-curricular topic or as a subject) was created at the Pedagogical Department of the Prague Philosophical Faculty – and it contains overall 11 themes (further specified) in three areas: personal orientation (self-concept; self-regulation; psychohygiene; social creativity; cognitive development); social orientations (human relations; getting to know others; communication; cooperation and competition; moral orientation (daily morality and solving problems of a moral nature) (Valenta 2007).

time becomes an element of the curriculum: he is the objective; he is the subject and also partially the means.

And in order to be even more complicated, we would like to add that a further element of the curriculum becomes even the teacher, respectively his behavior. Or in the case of the development of social competence, the teacher is not just an actor who thinks up games for social competence and skills. We would be happy if in schools, the skills used in the social competencies of the students and the teachers were not understood only as a part of the hidden curriculum, but also as a part of the evident curriculum. That is: not only the Sahara, not only the Battle of Hastings, not only the past perfect or squirrels is the subject, but also the students and the teacher are teaching materials.

Our school transformation is however based on the principles of competencies. Four of the six key competencies defined in the curriculum documents lead are connected also with personal or social skills. It will therefore be evidently necessary for even universities teaching future teachers to take into account that not only squirrels but also the teachers and students are elements of the curriculum.

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TEACHER EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SKILLS CURRICULUM

Keywords: teacher education, curriculum, social competence, social skills, personal and social education.

We consider socio-relational dimension of the teacher profession and the competence of teachers to develop the social skills of pupils to be key factors in education nowadays. Teacher education and teacher training focusing on social dimension are closely connected with challenges like societal changes, inclusion, multiculturalism, but also life on social networks, socio-pathological phenomena etc. From that point of view curriculum reconstruction is in need with stronger accent on teachers social competence in the frame of new approaches in education sciences and psychology.

In the article we analyze especially two ways of developing curriculum based on social- relational dimension. First one is focused on promoting the personal level of teacher social competence, especially cooperative competence, the second one on teacher education and training in the didactics of social skills (why, what and how) in the frame of cross – curricular theme of “personal and social education”. The analysis of two ways are based on research and authors experience both in pre-service and in-service education.