

## SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAINING AS ONE OF WAYS TO SOCIAL HEALTH

---

*Božena JIŘINCOVÁ, Vladimíra LOVASOVÁ, Michal SVOBODA*

**Abstract:** *The entry pays to problems of social health and socially healthy personality. One of important factors of personality development is the school, which has to bloom also social skills of the pupil according to the educating process. This is connected with positive social climate in the class and school, too.*

*The effectivity of the process is conditional on good connection between theory and praxis. Especially social-psychological trainings enable to develop good interpersonal relations in the group and help to develop social skills of the persona.*

**Keywords:** *social health, socio-psychological training, socio-personal development, reflexion, evaluation*

The integral part of training and training programmes at the beginning of the third millennium is in accordance with the programme of the World Health Organization named Health 21 education of a sane personality. In this connexion, the term of social health is often mentioned. We can imagine an socially healthy personality as an individual that has developed an appropriate self-concept, and is capable of appropriate self-assessment, can accept him/herself such as s/he is, is capable of self-regard, continues to develop his/her personal and social competences, especially skills of effective communication and cooperation, lives out positively and without stress various social situations including exigent situations in life. S/he is well informed about them and can accept consequences and connections of these relations to other men in his/her social vicinity. S/he is capable to make a quality individual social network. Social health is conditioned by learned personality characteristics in particular.

In the course of life man is a member of many social groups, is influenced by them and, at the same time, influences by his presence their vitality. Preparation for an effective placement in social groups should be an obvious part of the educational process. The development of personality that comprises cultivation and support of self-realization of each individual and the greatest developing and fulfilment of his/her potential occupies an important place in it. Traditional school in which the accent on knowledge acquisition prevails in absolute majority that is often the real aim of training cannot however teach the pupil consciousness of his/her own dignity and unique values of own personality, respect to rights and freedoms of others, abilities to exercise his/her rights

and at the same time to perform his/her duties of the free citizen of the democratic society.

The development of personality of the pupil requires a transformation of the school, especially from the point of view of climate and atmosphere with increased accent on educational function and the development of social relations, on interpersonal relations based on partnership and mutual respect, on knowledge and skills in the field of communication. The contemporary development of society and especially the world of work that today's pupils enter one day emphasize the necessity of development of social competence of each individual. V. Smékal (in Švec, 1998) defines social competence as "skilfulness and effectiveness in behaviour towards the others in social contact based on the respect of human dignity and on advanced culture of the own personality". He understands skilfulness as a skill of social communication, i.e., e.g. to make contact, to keep a conversation, to act cooperatively, etc. he understands effectiveness as reaching destinations, intents of an individual or a group in the social interaction. It embodies skills to identify a problem in social situation, to choose and to put into effect the strategy of its solution, to attract a partner to cooperation, to prevent conflict situations, and suchlike. He considers the essence of social competence as self-reflexion, i.e. the need and the skills of assessing effects of his influence on other men.

Similarly H. Belz a M. Siegrist (Belz, Siegrist, 2001) understand the social competence as communicativeness, cooperativeness, ability to face conflict situations and capability of teamwork. I'd like to emphasize that the competences are composed of various abilities and of their reciprocal influencing. They are acquired reflexively. Just the reflexion as a symptom of the process of critical thinking is the decisive moment at acquiring key competences. Reflexion can fully be accomplished only at common activities with other men. That is why the group teaching is also the basic precondition for learning of key competencies.

Social skills make social competencies of the man. One of important partial skills is the skill of effective communication by means of which we enter into reciprocal social interactions. A developed communicative competence enables not only to communicate verbally and nonverbally, to hand on information verbally and nonverbally, but also to convey one's own emotions, needs, expectations, wishes, to be empathic, to behave prosocially, to argue, to exercise assertiveness. Assertiveness is connected with self-conception of the individual and enables him/her, in a social situation, to express and to promote openly, clearly, convincingly and suitably his/her own feelings, opinions, needs and requests, but, at the same time, to respect the rights of other men. An assertively acting man is able to self-reflect his/her verbal and non-verbal behaviour, to accept constructive criticism from other subjects and to think positively of his/her errors. Assertiveness develops successfully on the strength of the healthy self-confidence. By its practical use, the man can effectively minimize the stress of interpersonal relations, which leads to vitalization of mental, social and also fitness of an individual.

Other important social skill is the skill of cooperation, which is a prerequisite for a successful process of solving problems in interaction with other men. H. Kasíková (Kasíková, 2001) reminds that the cooperative setting of interaction in the group is based on the principle of cooperation at achieving objectives. The results of an individual are assisted by activities of all group and all the group benefits by the activity of an individual.

Other important group of skills and attitudes that can improve the quality of social interactions among men are prosocial skills. In accordance with J. Křivohlavého (Křivohlavý, 2000), “the behaviour of the man aiming at the assistance to the other in case of need, emergency or in sense of impotence” forms the essence of prosocial behaviour. It is a matter of a complex of social skills and competences, moral attitudes and other personal qualities. To these skills belong, e.g. empathic skills, the skill of behaving authentically, the skill of cooperation with other subject, the skill of distinguishing and analysing a social situation in which other man needs assistance.

Empathy, the ability that enables to the subject to empathize with other subject in immediate situation, belongs to social skills as well. This empathy enables to go beyond and to understand emotions, motives and intentions that other man does not express by words directly and that do not always follow from the social situation. Vymětal emphasizes “the empathic ability and competence enable, to a certain extent of exactness, to retain current experience of other man, enables to understand current subjective world of that man”. Vymětal)

The mentioned social competencies are not only the prerequisite of an effective achievement of educational objectives, but they develop themselves in this process. The task of a today’s teacher is not only to transmit pieces of knowledge of his/her field to other generation. The development of the potential of each pupil depends of the teacher. A positive and social climate in the classroom is the protective factor facilitating for the teacher his/her realization of educational objective. It is an important factor of social health in the group, in which pupils develop personally and socially, and it contributes to the quality of all education process. At the same time, individual partial factors of social competence of pupils can be optimally developed. Stability of the group, effective communication among members, idea of reciprocal collaboration, ability of cooperation, mutual respect and esteem of individuals towards themselves influence performance and creativity and are important attributes of the success of activities of all group. If the social climate is positive, it affects not only the general activity of the group and its performance, but at the same time, also the psychological state of its members. Satisfaction with the membership in the group has psychological and mentally hygienic aspects.

In some cases, however, the classroom social climate is not favourable for the educational process and then it is desirable that the teacher can influence the climate in the classroom in such a manner that optimal preconditions can be created for the realization if the curriculum. The important requirement is that the teachers themselves have a good mastery of not only professional knowledge, but also personal and social competences. At this moment, however, we often meet helplessness of teachers who are lacking both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. They often do not know how to work with such a social group. A question arises: does the teacher have adequate and sufficient professional, personal and social competences to be able to work effectively using proper forms, methods and techniques of a personally social development?

Our considerations lead us to the sphere of pre-gradual and further education of teachers. With regard to existing course especially of pre-gradual training

of teachers, we consider significant resources in the sphere of their personal and social development. In textbooks of didactics of school subject, stress is put before all on those forms and methods of work with pupil which are aimed at intellectual education. It is no wonder then that goal-directed focus on the development of an individual in accordance with his/her individual dispositions, stimulating his/her own effort to become an authentic, internally integrated and socialized personality is often lacking.

One of the possibilities of how to increase personal and social competences of the man systematically and in a focused manner is the realization of trainings aimed at the development of the personality of individuals and the development of social groups (classes, working groups). In accordance with S. Hermochová (Hermochová, 1982) socially psychological trainings are systematically planned approaches to influence the group and its behaviour. It is a matter of such procedures and methods by means of which we try to bring about some changes on the level of an individual and a group.

The conception of SPV forms emphasizes personalities and social factors of the development of the undergraduate. Methods based on personal experiences are used in trainings of personal and social skills. Their effectiveness is conditioned by the quality of processes of social education. By means of these methods, it is possible to achieve an improvement of social skills that concern both the relation to oneself (e.g. self-knowledge and self-reflection, recognition and appropriate denomination of emotions, emotionality), and interpersonal relations (empathy, acceptance of the others, open and frank expression of oneself, listening, understanding of the position of the other man, toleration of different points of view, recognitions of the others, interpersonal communication, handling conflicts, etc.). Training methods are based on simulated or real social situations, they build on the situation "here and now" (i.e. in the group) and on its experience, they use self-reflection of participants and provide them with a constructive feedback of their social behaviour, they lead to formation and development of social skills and experience, or the methods of social behaviour as the case may be (ways of solving of social situations). The simulation of real social relations in a safe environment of the trained group enables to shed one's restraints and blocks of existing potentials of the personality, it contributes to a surer appraisal of oneself, and to a more real appraisal of other men. At the same time, an improvement of skills to regulate dynamics of one's social relations occurs.

Social psychological techniques are realized in a small social group. It is not only an important means for the development of personal and social competences of undergraduates, but also, at methodically right use of social psychological techniques in the group, a positive development of group relations comes up. The advantage of social psychological techniques is they are based on a spontaneous activity of undergraduates, they are not made up thoroughly, but they are finished according to a concrete situation in the sense of "here and now", in accordance with the requirements and needs of participants.

Various forms of trainings are used in education of future secondary school teachers of psychology at the Department of Psychology of Pedagogical Faculty of the University of West Bohemia. The undergraduates attend more than one hundred

hours of trainings in the course of their study. Each of them has its objectives, its structure and characteristic methods and work techniques.

At the beginning of study, the undergraduates go through an interactive training (IAV). The matter is primarily to create optimal conditions for the development of interactions in the group, bringing about and support of these interactions. Reciprocal interactions run within the framework of group activities, e.g. in communication, in cooperation, in performance of assigned tasks, and the like. It allows the members of training group to know, on the basis of their own activities and experiences, the problems of social perception and social behaviour. The objectives of training are realized by various methods aimed at relieving of trainees, at the effective training and the training of group communication, at the improvement of self-reflection and at the recognition of others, at the training of new forms of social interactions and skills, at the training and the analysis of cooperative forms of behaviour. Self-developing techniques that include self-recognition, self-regulation, psychohygiene and the creativity of an individual are regularly included in the IAV programme.

The character of interpersonal relations is conditioned by mutual perception of trainees. They do not know well one another at the beginning. Therefore we use such activities at which the undergraduates get acquainted with one another, abolition of imaginary barriers and intensive common experience occur. By their means, the group cohesion increases in the group that is based on mutual respect and mutual understanding.

Cooperation techniques make the strongest impression on undergraduates. The undergraduates perceive other members of the team whose part they are. Each of them has a role and by means of it s/he contributes to the performance of a task. The trainees complement one another by their individual skills and aptitudes. A relaxed atmosphere, open communication and participation reign at cooperative techniques training. The undergraduates are aware of the fact that team decision is often more risky, but more effective than the individual decision. A strong experience was for some undergraduates the awareness of the fact that their schoolmates would help them and do not leave them in the dark in hard conditions. The thing was a certain sense of confidence and certitude that they have never felt among them. This positive phenomenon most occurred in psychic and physical difficult techniques within the frame of outdoor activity.

In the course of the training the undergraduates begin to be aware of certain shifts in the group vitality. It creates a friendly atmosphere in which they like to work. The trainees are well informed about mutual relations, they communicate with one another more easily and the cooperation begins to be completely natural at performance of their tasks. The majority of the trainees state that in the course of the training they were aware that all of them were very much alike, that each normal group can make a team, and that it is possible to suppress the infighting. The undergraduates also mentioned their awareness of their own mistakes in social perception in relation to the other, they became conscious of own values and the uniqueness of the other.

A good training always has its diagnostic and pre-therapeutic aspects. Each stage of the training is connected with complicated experience. The process is not

only rational, every individual must continuously cope with lots of emotional problems and stresses. It is sometimes difficult for the trainees to interpret properly all their inner experience and to speak of them with the other. Many undergraduates stated their participation at the training had forced them to reflect a lot of things about which it had not come to them to think about before. They became aware that they view in a different way their schoolmates with whom they sit together at the same school desk, but, as a matter of fact, they know very little about them as men. They became aware of what really means to respect the other man and his/her different opinions. They came to know the differences among men and different view of the world need not at all be an obstacle for cooperation. They became aware they had much more common problems like others, worries and enjoyments than they had thought. They put emphasis on the fact that everything was under way of easy games and exercises in which they learnt a lot of important things that spoke deeply to their personality.

The quality of interpersonal relations is immediately related to the effective communication. That is why the training of communication skills (KODO) is put on the curriculum. It is realized in form of four-day training block. Within the frame of the training the necessary theory is combined with various games and techniques, into which both verbal and non-verbal communications are incorporated including transactional analysis, assertiveness and fundamentals of neuro-linguistic programming. Group work is often used (communication in cooperation, playing roles, and the like.). A great asset of a course conceived like this is that the undergraduates revise and strengthen knowledge acquired in theoretical studies. Extension and deepening of view of possibilities and pitfalls of communication strengthen not only communication skills of undergraduates, but they contribute to self-confidence and self-assurance strengthening, to a better knowledge of others and to a relief of stress from interpersonal relations. The result of training programmes of communication skills is a better skilfulness of individuals to be well informed about interpersonal relations and to be more effective in them. This undoubtedly contributes to a better sense and to minimization of stress.

One of topical questions related to the application of social psychological techniques in the training of psychological disciplines is the finding of their effectiveness. On the basis of an analysis of final reflections, discussions and observations, a hypothesis held true to lecturers that during the course of training really a positive change in relations among participants comes up and some changes take place on the level of individual in the group as well. The result of training programmes is a better skilfulness of individuals to be well informed about interpersonal relationships and to be more effective in them.

As an illustration, we state partial results of questionnaire survey that was realized within the frame of final evaluation of the courses. 245 answered questionnaires were processed. The questions were focused on finding out of the contribution of social psychological techniques for self-knowledge of participants, for the development of social skills of participants and for the development of interpersonal relations.

### Social psychological techniques help the participants of the courses:

	Very noticeably	Noticeably	Partly	Rather not	Not at all
To know better his/her personal qualities	10 %	3 %	57 %	30 %	0 %
To know better his/her reactions in unexpected situations	3 %	37 %	40 %	17 %	3 %
To be aware of his/her own value and uniqueness	7 %	10 %	56 %	27 %	0 %
To cope better with negative emotions	7 %	43 %	37 %	10 %	3 %

### Social psychological techniques contribute to positive changes in interpersonal relations in the study group:

	Very noticeably	Noticeably	Partly	Rather not	Not at all
To a better cooperation in the group	7 %	53 %	30 %	10 %	0 %
To a better communication in the group	10 %	70 %	20 %	0 %	0 %
To a better solidarity of the group	17 %	23 %	60 %	0 %	0 %

It is evident from a more detailed analysis that social psychological techniques have a bigger contribution for the development of social skills of participants and for positive changes in interpersonal relations in the study group. Changes on the personal level of individuals are not considerable to that extent, particularly because a short-term application of social psychological techniques does not permit to produce deeper changes in the structure and the dynamics of the personality. In spite of that the participants confirm certain positive changes took place. On the basis of the results of evaluation research and also on the basis of empirical experience of lecturers we state that social psychological techniques develop the man in dimensions of personality and social skills, they strengthen his/her social competences and, at the same time, they contribute to positive changes in interpersonal relations in social group. This corresponds to the demands for improving social health of the individual and of the social group that are integrated in national and international documents.

## SOCIÁLNĚ PSYCHOLOGICKÝ VÝCVIK JAKO JEDNA Z CEST K SOCIÁLNÍMU ZDRAVÍ

**Abstrakt:** Příspěvek věnuje pozornost problematice sociálního zdraví a sociálně zdravé osobnosti. Jedním z významných činitelů rozvoje osobnosti jedince je škola,

kteřá musí v rámci edukačního procesu rozvíjet i sociální kompetence žáka. To souvisí i s tvorbou pozitivního sociálního klimatu ve školní třídě i celé škole.

Efektivita celého procesu je podmíněna vhodným propojením teorie a praxe. Zejména sociálně psychologický výcvik umožňuje prostřednictvím rozmanitých technik rozvíjet dobré interpersonální vztahy ve skupině a přispívá významnou měrou k rozvoji osobnostních a sociálních kompetencí jedince.

**Klíčová slova:** sociální zdraví; sociálně psychologický výcvik; sociálně osobnostní rozvoj; reflexe; evaluace výchova ke zdraví