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Methodological Handbook for Underperforming Talents

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I. Introduction

The LÉTRA Association (Dunakeszi), the Amőba Foundation (Sfântu Gheorghe) and the Móra István Cultural Association (Kevi) are implementing the project "Developing underperforming talents for a more accepting and inclusive talent-friendly society" in the framework of ERASMUS+ Small Scale Partnerships. Within the project, the collection of good practices focusing on the development of underachieving, disadvantaged gifted children/young people and the development of a methodological handbook to provide a theoretical basis for this project have been identified as a priority.

Underperforming, disadvantaged children and young people are simply referred to by the majority of the general public as 'odd children/young people'. In many cases, the peer group is unable to deal with these 'oddities' and therefore tends to marginalise them rather than find solutions. Under-achieving gifted young people often experience a sense of failure, which is coupled with a loss of self-worth and intrinsic motivation.

The aim of this methodological handbook is to provide a theoretical and methodological foundation for a collection of good practices focusing on the development of underachieving gifted children and young people, which presents good practices already in place to overcome disadvantages. Its aim is to provide a theoretical framework for personal development, motivation, self-assessment, self-awareness, learning and communication skills. The aim is to produce a methodological handbook which will provide complex support for the development of underachieving children and young people with fewer opportunities. The aim is that the introduction of the methodological handbook will provide parents, teachers and the NGOs concerned with a professional support that will provide a theoretical basis for overcoming disadvantages in the long term.

II. Theoretical underpinning

In looking at pedagogical practice in the third millennium, there are gaps that have been persistent in the educational literature for decades, and the experience is that despite considerable efforts, we are unable to address them satisfactorily. It is no exaggeration to say that these anomalies are among the debts of education to the present day, as a result of the sometimes intolerant manifestations of the social environment. Three serious areas require urgent intervention: school accountability, the professionalism of the teaching profession, and ensuring equal opportunities for underachieving pupils and helping them to catch up. In this respect, we must unfortunately say that the development of underachieving talents in Hungary,

Transylvania and Székelyföld has not yet been widely disseminated within the school framework, despite the systematic development and implementation of individual talent development programmes.

This of course raises questions among professionals, since the basic psychological and pedagogical concepts of this were already to be found in the literature decades ago, in the 1980s. The concept of differentiation, and within this the need for individual development, is by no means a new idea: it has long been discussed in the fields of learning, the educational process, strategies and methods of teaching, the organisation of learning, forms of work and methods of organisation (cf. M. Nádasi, 1986). At the same time, it must be said again: in official Hungarian didactic thought and literature, differences between pupils and schools have long been trivialised - especially in pedagogical practice - and the view has long persisted - often even in the first decade of this century - that individual and social differences must be levelled out by educational objectives and curricula that are equally valid for all pupils. In contrast, Zoltán Báthory, already in the early nineties, clearly stated: 'Differential teaching theory, on the other hand, argues that the entire logic of schooling and the organisation of learning - from the setting of objectives and the definition of content to the development of the internal organisation of the school - must be adapted to the values, interests and interests of the pupils in relation to learning' (Báthory, 1992, p. 74).

So the school and teaching must be adapted to the student, not the student to the educational objectives. Jenő Ranschburg (1989) has also considered this problem, and in his opinion "special education for pupils with outstanding abilities is therefore possible within regular schools, and a large number of researchers on the subject consider this form of education to be more economical... The fundamental dilemma of talent management - the contradiction between the pedagogical and psychological necessity of special training and the socio-political dangers of it - is not insoluble." (i.m. pp. 9-10) In a joint study by Éva Gefferth and Mária Herskovits (1989), the question of the need for diligence, perseverance

"Only this can ensure that a child really masters the things that interest him or her, does them well, develops the necessary skills. We must strike a balance between the two: a child who loses his curiosity at school and learns only out of obligation is as much a hindrance to the development of talent (and to personality development as a whole) as a child who does not learn to work." (ibid. p. 9) The natural conclusion to be drawn from this is that individual development programmes have a major role to play both in maintaining curiosity and in developing the skills of independent work.

As Zoltán Báthory would put it a few years later, the solution lies in the spread of differentiated development, which is "the provision of opportunities and conditions for the development and improvement of children and young people through education, taking into account their individual characteristics." (Báthory, Falus, 1997, p. 287). In his book published at the end of the 1990s (1997), Endre Czeizel describes the framework of the new euphenics programme, stressing that "the euphenics concept eliminates the contrast with the previous sectarian camps and creates an opportunity to bring together the activities of all professionals working for gifted children. It is a chance to create the conditions for the development of a new kind of euphony, which can open up the possibility of a "eufénie", a platform for the creation of a new kind of cooperation between all the actors involved in the development of gifted children. In his edited book, László Tóth (1998) emphasises that the individualised development of underachieving gifted children is based on a very different set of principles and, summarising Clark's (1983) ideas, draws attention to the following.

- Pupils have a degree of responsibility for their own learning.
- Pupils can learn independently after some practice.
- Learners have the right to progress at their own pace, according to their own learning style and their own ability level.
- Learners can weight knowledge.
- Learners can select between different materials. If everyone learns the same material, learning is not individualised. The more material there is to select from, the wider the range of learning opportunities available to each learner.
- Pupils should be graded according to their performance relative to themselves (if grading is necessary).
- School programmes should develop pupils' self-esteem. One or two of these basic tenets may be debatable today, but there is no doubt that gifted pupils can make significant steps forward in their development by engaging in a wide range of activities in their areas of interest.

There are one or two basic theorems that can be disputed today, but there is no doubt: underachieving gifted pupils can make significant progress in their development by doing many activities in their areas of interest.

The biographies of many great artists show that talent associated with learning disabilities and skill deficits can also make a difference in the sciences and arts.

Flaubert the writer, Yeats the poet were dyslexic, Benoit Mandelbrot the IBM researcher and developer of fractal geometry did not know the alphabet and had serious problems mastering basic arithmetic.

Einstein was also supposedly dyslexic. At the age of three, he could not speak, he just repeated words. It is a well-known fact that he was considered difficult at school and floundered, yet he won the Nobel Prize at the age of 26.

Anatole France learned to read on his own. He went to school at the age of nine, but did very badly; he was a bad student, careless, negligent.

He watched flies fly while his teacher explained. He could not write correctly, repeated classes several times and only managed to graduate at the age of 20, having failed the examination twice (Ambrus, 1935).

Thomas Alva Edison was declared unteachable and his mother took over his education. Although Edison learned to read, he had difficulty with spelling and grammar until adulthood. The talents of these great artists were already demonstrated by their achievements, proving that it is possible to create intellectual value without the skills that are essential for academic achievement.

But how many great creators with similar skills have been lost and are being lost today? Creators with learning difficulties during their school years are only one, albeit significant, group of underachievers. This has highlighted the unsustainability of the regular talent picture.

Modern definitions of giftedness recognise the different forms that giftedness can take, and are more appropriate than traditional theories for identifying disadvantaged gifted people. They are based primarily on extremely high intelligence. Despite a more appropriate definition, the latter population is at a serious disadvantage in terms of both identification and development. The transformation of theories of giftedness has brought with it a change in the approach to gifted education. Changes in attitudes favour the more effective identification and development of underachievers.

A change of direction in talent management:

- talent = ability talent = complex set of behaviours,
- child, the gifted, is gifted only by performance,

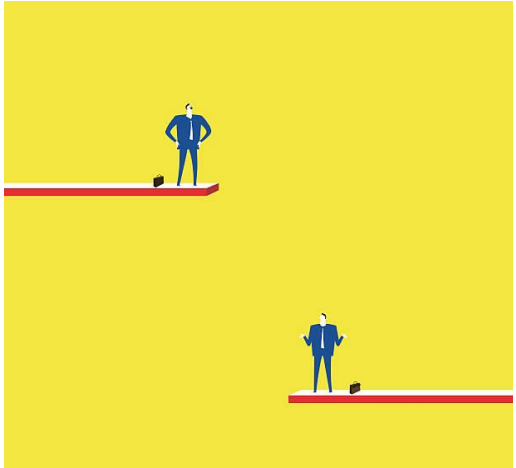
- talent identification understanding of ability structure,
- descriptive talent identification perspective identification,
- final screening continuous, long-term follow-up,
- general concept of giftedness, specific area,
- objective data combined with subjective data.

The main feature of the literature on underachievement is that almost all researchers use different definitions. The definitions vary, but they agree that there is a difference between the potential and actual performance of underachievers (Gefferth, 1990; Feldhusen & Jarwan, 1993). The problem is how large this difference is and how it can be captured.

These children, who make up a relatively large percentage of the gifted population, are uncertain and thus may be subject to treatment. Approximately half of the children who score in the top 5% on tests of intellectual ability perform below their ability in school (Whitmore, 1980). Their identification is most often done by comparing standardised tests with teacher assessment. The uncertainty of their identification is in direct proportion to the uncertainty of the definition of underachievement. As regards the causal factors of underachievement, researchers agree that it is a complex of symptoms consisting of several components. Underachievers differ in their behavioural characteristics from those who perform according to their abilities.

Studies comparing high-achieving and underachieving groups of gifted people have shown that underachievers have lower self-confidence, weaker internal control and lower achievement motivation, although strong affiliation motivation. These children tend to be socially immature, have emotional problems, antisocial behaviour and low self-esteem.

Their families are mostly unstable, low-income or single-parent families with little to offer socioculturally and educationally (Whitmore, 1980). The strategies used to develop underachievement fall into two categories.



One is personal counselling to correct low self-esteem and other personality disorders. Another possible strategy is to change the educational environment. This approach seeks to address negative personality development by improving school performance. It is likely that both approaches, or a combination of them, can be effective, but as Whitmore (1980) emphasises, only intensive, long-term developmental work can lead to real results. The real solution would be to prevent the development of problems, which would require identification and care at the earliest possible age.

If we are ever to develop a 'talent bank', a database or at least a conceptual system for screening underachieving gifted pupils, based at least on comparable data at national level, we must (also) establish an unambiguous, concrete benchmark for underachieving gifted pupils. This should include what kind of school performance at such and such an IQ constitutes underachievement.

Below we present our (discussion-starting) proposal to address this problem.

A proposal to establish the fact and extent of underachievement based on the relationship between IQ and academic performance:

If the intelligence quotient of the child/young person		
IQ between 115-129 and academic performance in grades	130 IQ or above and academic performance in terms of grades	Then…
1-2 (4-5 in Transylvania)	1-3 (4-6 in Transylvania)	Performs very deeply below ability (or is very severely underperforming)
around 3 (around 7 in Transylvania)	around 4 (around 9 in Transylvania))	Deeply underperforming (or severely underperforming)
around 4 (around 9 in Transylvania)	Although he is a 5 (10 in Transylvania), he does not receive individual differentiation according to his abilities, but progresses according to the regular curriculum at the pace of his average-ability classmates	Underperforming (or underachieving)

5 (10 in Transylvania)	5 (10 in Transylvania) and is enrolled in an accelerator and/or enrichment programme with individual differentiation according to ability.	Performs to the best of its ability

III. Who are the underperforming talents?

III.1 Concept

Renzulli's (1978) classic three-circuit model represented only the intrinsic characteristics of talent. Mönks introduced the 'social triad' (Mönks, 1992). His theory sees development as an interaction between the individual and his or her environment. The social environment - family, school, peers - constitute the main interactional spaces that strongly influence the development of an individual's abilities and subsequent performance. Everyone needs "significant others" as models and catalysts for development. Important people are usually drawn from these very circles. In his psychosocial model, Tannenbaum (1983) considered the right mix of non-intellectual factors and a challenging environment, in addition to outstanding general intelligence and specific abilities, as the basis for talent. All these factors, together with social, cultural and other factors influencing the life situation, constitute the necessary facilitators in the sensitive phase of talent development. It is therefore understandable that Tannenbaum considered chance to be a factor of equal importance to the others. Mackinnon (1975), analysing the biographies of outstanding individuals, found that there was almost always an effective adult in the child's life. Ericsson, Tesch-Römer and Krampe (1990) pointed out that achieving high levels of performance requires prolonged and intensive training and practice. In order to reach the highest levels, one has always needed and will always need the support of those around them, especially parents. Freeman (2000), in a work on underachievement, stated that "a child's drive to excel does not only come from personal experience, but is usually intergenerational." (p.39) The people around the child play a crucial role in the development of inner strength, self-confidence and attitudes, which, beyond any ability, are the foundation for the development of a gifted personality. Colangelo and Dettman (1983) in their synthesis reviewed studies on the role of home environment and family in child achievement. They found that for underachievers, more studies found rejecting, hostile parenting, while for high achievers they described a more accepting, affectionate atmosphere.

The following parental factors were identified as important factors in performance: close involvement of the child in family activities, parental acceptance and trust, positive family perceptions of teachers, school and intellectual activities. Suter and Wolf (1987) draw attention to the educational problems that turn the well-performing child away from school and its values. Conformity in school, a markedly convergent way of thinking, can develop negative attitudes towards school and lead to underachievement

underachievement. A finding that is valid for the very diverse definitions of underachievement is that all definitions basically have one thing in common, namely that they are all based on a negative mismatch between what is possible (what a pupil could achieve) and what is actually achieved (what a pupil actually achieves). 8 so-called complex models of school performance (Wigfield and Eccles, cited in Clemons, 2008)

illustrates the many factors that influence actual school performance: cultural beliefs, the beliefs of socialising parties (parents, teachers, significant adults), and student characteristics, ranging from aptitudes, to perceptions of gender roles, to the child's experience and interpretation of prior performance, but also including the student's emotional memory. Yet, researchers' interpretations of underachievement differ mostly in the extent and manner in which they measure the gap between potential and actual performance. According to Rimm (1997), the gap should not be interpreted as a difference between the IQ test and the results of a performance test, because when a student persistently underperforms, his or her scores on both IQ and performance tests may be reduced. Underachievement is defined as the difference between a child's performance at school and an indicator of the child's ability. Gefferth (1993) points out in his summary study that some authors define underachievement as a performance at least one standard deviation below an IQ score of 125 or more. Others consider a person to be underachieving if his or her performance is below the level expected of him or her - all based on parental and/or teacher judgements. There is also a definition of underachievers as those who are persistently low achievers and can only be identified through tests. Finally, there is a soft criteria approach, which simply states that it is a relative term for underachievement.

The above examples - without claiming to be exhaustive - highlight the difficulties of definition, the differences in professional opinion and the question for the reader: what is underperformance?

The following definition by Reis and McCoach is both integrative (reviewed in Balduf, 2009, p. 276) and provides a clear definition of underachievement and underachievement of gifted learners. According to this:

"'Underperformers' are students who show a serious gap between their expected performance (measured by scores on standardised achievement tests, or cognitive or intellectual ability measures) and their actual performance (measured by grades, teacher assessments). Gifted underachievers are those underachievers who show the highest scores on measures of expected performance (as measured by standardized achievement test scores or cognitive or intellectual ability measures)."

The authors also point out that this underachievement cannot be the result of a diagnosed learning disorder and must be a condition that has persisted for a long time. In terms of its temporal pattern, underachievement typically starts in the last years of primary school, but may start earlier for boys. Gifted pupils often achieve effortlessly in the early years of primary school, but stall when faced with increasing amounts of homework, greater effort and the challenges of actual performance. At the end of this process, they are labelled as underachievers (Reis, 2000). In further temporal aspects, we distinguish between temporary and persistent underachievement. In the transitional or situational form, performance falls below the expected level only temporarily. In this case, the phenomenon can be interpreted as a reaction to personal or situational stress, linked to events such as an increasingly frequent divorce, a move or a conflict with a substitute teacher. In the case of persistent or chronic underachievement, however, a consistent, enduring pattern is characteristic (Whitmore, 1980). Such a pattern is described by Gyarmathy and Szörényi (2004), who interpret underachievement as nothing more than a self-image-protection, frustration-reduction strategy, the underlying factor being inadequate education for the child's abilities.

Inadequate quantity and/or quality of education, in their view, leads to a sense of failure, which generates frustration and low self-esteem. In order to avoid frustration and to protect their self-image, pupils opt for a strategy of effort avoidance. The psychological dynamic of this choice is that if we do not make an effort for something, the eventual failure that occurs cannot be attributed to internal factors such as our lack of ability (since we have not tested it). It follows from the foregoing that the failure that occurs does not threaten our self-image.

Thus, by blaming external circumstances, the underachiever who develops an external control attitude - and who, with a kind of magical thinking, also believes that he can change his performance significantly at any time if he wants to - is easily trapped in this situation.

It is thought-provoking that, according to national studies of schoolchildren, ninety percent of upper school students believe that they could do better in school if they wanted to (Estefánné et al., 2000). In terms of methodology for identifying underachievement, the tools used to identify underachievers are those that are also used in giftedness diagnostics, or a combination of these tools (Gefferth, 1993). These are:

standardised intelligence and achievement tests (memory, attention, abstract thinking, etc.),
grades,
teachers' opinions, observations, comparisons with other students,
parent reviews, observations, comparison with siblings,
self-observation, personal information collection, comparison with others.

Questionnaire for parents and teachers on underachievement (excerpts) If you want to know whether your child is at risk of underachievement, please answer the following questions. Each "yes" answer is worth one point. You will find a report of the total score for each response unit immediately after each set of questions. If you are a teacher, replace the term 'my child' with 'my student'.

My child forgets to do his homework?
Does my child give up easily?
Does my child avoid competitive situations unless he/she is almost sure of winning?
Does my child start homework late every night?
Does my child spend two or more hours watching TV (on the computer) on weekday evenings?

Meaning of overall scores: 4-5: My child shows characteristics that indicate a very serious underachievement problem. 15 2-3: My child shows characteristics that indicate a fairly serious underachievement problem. 1: There are only characteristics indicating a minor underachievement problem. 0: My child has no characteristics indicating underachievement.

III.2. Causes, background, personality traits

As underperformance is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon, involving social, personality and cognitive factors, researchers are looking at so-called external and internal factors. This means looking for causes that are external to the individual (e.g. low socio-economic status, inflexible school system, perhaps inappropriate parenting style, etc.) and internal to the individual (e.g. poor motivational characteristics, narrow career perspective, low self-esteem, inappropriate coping styles, etc.).

Factor	Components
School	Unfavourable school experiences, the development of good school work habits was not possible. Lack of challenges in secondary school, negative interactions with teachers.
Family	Dysfunctional family, strained relationships with family members, sibling problems, rivalry. Inconsistent role models and family values. Minimal parental monitoring and guidance, low parental expectations.
Community	Unfavourable school environment, unfriendly, hostile urban environment, inappropriate peer groups.
Personality	Behavioural problems, problems with unstructured use of time, unrealistic ideas, lack of perseverance, low self-efficacy, use of inappropriate coping methods.

Hébert (2001), for example, examined the underachievement of gifted boys, based on previous research (Dowdall and Colangelo, 1982), which found that they were more likely to underachieve. Her results show that they show deficits in organisational and self-regulation skills, and are therefore very frustrated by the mismatch between their learning style and the teaching process.

Colangelo and colleagues (1993) also support the above approach to underachievement. Based on a study of 257 gifted underachieving secondary school students, they describe the following 'profile': the gifted underachiever is more likely to be a boy, to come from a larger community, to be less satisfied with schooling and counselling services than his gifted but high achieving peers.

They need more support in personal matters and in developing learning skills, while having more negative attitudes towards school. Their career choices also show characteristics: they tend to be more oriented towards the arts or social careers rather than engineering or health professions. The research does not provide answers to the question of the motivation behind these career preferences, so this question remains open. The identification and care of under-achieving and under-achieving talented people has increasingly become part of a modern approach to thinking about talent. A very high proportion of gifted people under-perform or fail to translate their displayed abilities into outstanding work. There are several distinct groups of underachievers. Gifted children in pre-primary and primary school, who are more vulnerable than other age groups to neglect and neglect in an environment that does not take into account the special needs of the gifted, are underserved worldwide. Social prejudice and rigid norms mean that gifted girls are less likely than boys to be identified and supported. Ethnic minority talent is at a disadvantage because of its different culture and language, but this is often compounded by the fact that it is socio-culturally disadvantaged. The main problems in education are with ethnic minority children who are not effective in the analytical thinking style typical of Western culture. The socio-culturally disadvantaged gifted children also have the greatest problem with the lack of analytical thinking preferred in school.

The abilities of the gifted include those who have some kind of organic, developmental or partial disability or weakness, but who also have outstanding abilities. Perhaps the most controversial of their several groups is the group of gifted people with learning disabilities. Taking into account specific information processing preferences can also help in identifying and caring for these children.

In summary, traditional schooling is a major barrier for many groups of underachievers. The role of school is of course not exclusive in the development or elimination of underachievement.

Many elements of the environmental context, society, culture and, above all, the family, play a decisive role. There is almost always an important person in the life of a gifted person who has had a strong influence on the individual at some point or stage of development and who has contributed significantly to the development of the gift.

This person is most often a family member, but can also be a teacher, a partner, a colleague or even a special person who brings value to the children. Talent management is about giving as many individuals with outstanding potential as possible the opportunity to translate their talents into outstanding achievement. This requires recognising and acknowledging irregular forms of talent and accepting difference. In education, it is essential to recognise and develop as many different areas of ability as possible, so that different talents, including those that are still largely under-achieving, can be identified and nurtured as early as possible. Organised enrichment and mentoring programmes can play a key role in this process, helping children to come into contact with peers and individuals who can catalyse their development.

IV. Identifying underperforming talent

"No one is, in himself, beautiful or ugly, good or bad, great or dull wit, for the value of man always depends on whether he is believed or doubted."

A From Robert Musil: Man without Qualities

The social importance of talent has been recognised since ancient times. Gabriella Bodnár quotes Plato, who emphasised the importance of special training for the gifted in his writings as early as antiquity. Even then, Plato considered it important to develop the talents of the gifted and to provide special training (Bodnár, 2011). "Even before then, attempts had been made to explore the concept of talent and to find the roots of its development, but it was only in the last four decades that researchers really formulated their comprehensive theories for practical development work" (THURMEZEYNÉ , 2009)

"Talent is a force of nature that can become a creative force in an environment that is suited to its manifestation." (Professional Recommendations for the Further Development of National Talent Management, 2012), by the authors of the publication "Professional Recommendations for National Talent Management". To unleash this creative potential, many factors need to come together. The promise of talent, the family and many institutions in society play a role, including teachers of gifted young people. In higher education, it is expected that many gifted young people will be taught by teachers, so it is important that they have a good understanding of the nature of giftedness and the methods of gifted education.

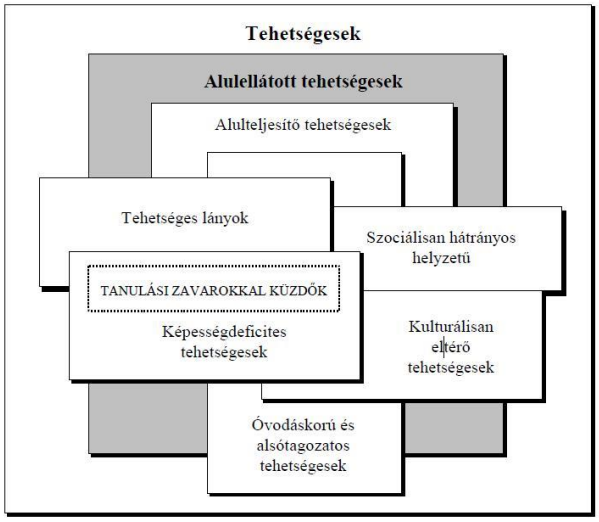
Partial ability-weakness often masks outstanding ability. School talent is effective in taking in, storing and retrieving information, while creative-productive talent is effective in reorganising information to create something new.

Landau (1980) distinguishes between three levels of talent: ability, giftedness and genius (Bálint-Orsós, 2022)

Ability is manifested in a specific field. Talent is a fundamental trait of the personality of a person of high ability, and can be extended to cultural and social areas. Genius is a very rare phenomenon (Bálint-Orsós, 2022).

Figure 1

Gifted students may excel in certain areas, but in others they may perform below average.



Gifted learners often do not have access to the educational conditions necessary for their development, yet the literature identifies as under-resourced groups of learners who are particularly disadvantaged in this respect. This group includes, according to the literature, pre-school and primary school gifted, socially disadvantaged or culturally different gifted, gifted girls and the abilities of the gifted. The latter are generally underserved and most often underachievers (Gyarmathy, 1998).

A person may suffer from more than one type of disadvantage.

These subgroups may overlap in several ways. Naturally, the more areas of disadvantage or deprivation, the greater the potential for exclusion.

Gallagher's (1988) study suggests that fewer girls score higher in maths and science tests, and thus fewer girls are enrolled in such gifted programmes (Bálint-Orsós, 2022).

A key consideration when making a diagnosis is which symptoms are the primary and which are secondary. A good way to distinguish underachievement from learning disorder is that underachieving students have adequate basic learning skills, and while learning disorder is diagnosed early, as early as

while underachievement often develops at later grade levels. Learning disability can of course be the underlying cause of underachievement in later years.

Underachieving pupils are characterised by - frustration with school requirements - dislike of reading and written work - failure to fulfil their obligations - low self-esteem - blame for their failures on external circumstances - rebellious or withdrawn - disinterest in learning - magical thinking - avoidance of hard work and demanding tasks (Hands in the Higher Education Institutions of Northern Hungary, 2004)

And after this brief literature review, we will try to give you some practical ideas on how to identify underachieving gifted students.

We have to admit that we also had difficulties in the beginning in managing this process and identifying gifted students, because as teachers we have of course been involved in assessing the individual abilities of our students for years, but we have not carried out specific assessment tools and tasks for the students..

However, one of the positive things about Erasmus+ for us as teacher educators is that we have been and continue to be given opportunities and possible alternatives to fill this gap. We see it as an opportunity to cooperate with other schools, to exchange experiences, to learn about the work and evaluation of different countries.

One teacher's example of how we have met and identified underachieving gifted pupils as class teachers is given below. We hope that sharing our own experiences will motivate others to work with students in the future.

Bálint was the first pupil in my class. There are four brothers and four sisters, four boys, and he is third in line. Mum was at home with the kids, dad worked in Zenta, 25 km away, and played in a band on weekends. The mother had to do pretty much all the housework and raise the children. The two older siblings went to school with us and both had difficulties with their studies, especially with reading and writing.

Bálint started the first grade well, and I knew him as a bright boy with good abilities. As we progressed up the grades, Bálint's performance deteriorated, especially when it came to reading and writing, and his homework fell behind. His academic performance also deteriorated, when he could have done so much better. His self-confidence dropped and he took a back seat.

I called Mum in several times for an appointment to find out what was causing the decline, whether it was a problem at home or something at school. The parent didn't see it as a serious problem that her son was not doing the best, as the two older children were not doing very well at school, why should Bálint be an exception. He tries to help, but with four children there is not much time. He thinks he'll be fine here, he'll develop and become a good skilled worker.

It was clear after the talks that the parents had no high expectations of their child's school results and their son accepted this.

Bálint is very mobile, has good movement and an excellent sense of rhythm. He loves music, dancing and singing games. He has always looked forward to the folklore classes. I have consulted with the folklore teacher to see how she sees him and what we can do to help him grow in confidence and have a sense of achievement. Somehow to make him realise that he is capable of much more than what he has achieved so far. We agreed to convince him to join the folk dance group of the cultural association, where he was also the instructor. This is how he joined the association's junior folk dance group, where he was already a "big" as a third grader. He quickly settled in, enjoyed going to rehearsals, enjoyed dancing and playing.

The instructor gave him more and more difficult tasks, which he did well and became one of the most skilful dancers. After rehearsals, he asked the instructor to practice with him separately to make sure he had the right steps and strokes.

As he improved in his dancing, his confidence grew, he had no problem getting up in front of the class, and his learning improved, as he wanted to prove himself there too. Parents slowly realised that their son could do better at school and were pleased that he was one of the best dancers in the group. He later became a leading light in the senior group, opening up completely and being looked up to by the others. The cultural association attaches importance to the development and progress of the dancers. It tries to arrange for the children to attend further training, folk dance courses and camps. Bálint has taken every opportunity to improve his skills and become a better folk dancer. The instructor's opinion was very important to him, they talked a lot, and not only about dancing. She looked up to him and trusted him.

After primary school, she went to a secondary school in a bigger city, where she found friends who were also folk dancers, and she joined the dance group of the local cultural association, where she is enjoying herself very much. Bálint is now a university student, but folk dancing is still a central part of his life, as he believes it is the way he can express himself and show his talents. He still considers his former teacher as a role model and is grateful to him for introducing him to the world of folk dance.

The attitude of Bálint's parents has changed positively and they are happy to see their son's talent in folk dance. They realised that it would also have a positive impact on their child's academic performance and personality.

They did their best to make sure that Bálint got to rehearsals and performances, and that his performing clothes were in order. They provided transport when needed and helped children get to performances. They were and still are always there for the association. They also made a difference to their son's education.

Our experience is that when a parent sees how talented their child is, they support and help their child's development, or at least do not stand in the way of it.

V. What can we do as parents, teachers, experts, NGOs?

"No organisation can rely on geniuses because they are few and unreliable. The test of an organisation's strength is whether it can bring out more in an ordinary mortal than he seems capable of, whether it can draw out its hidden energies to help others to develop their potential. An organization's goal is to empower ordinary people to do extraordinary things." *(Peter F. Drucker, 2009)*

As a parent, as an educator and as a member of a civil society organisation working on this issue, we need to be aware of the definition of the term. The most striking feature of the literature on underachievement is that almost all researchers use different definitions (Dr. Mező, 2019) "In essence, each definition is based on the difference between what is possible (what a student could achieve) and what is actually achieved (what a student actually achieves). The problem is simply that the size and nature of this gap is defined differently by different researchers and practitioners" (Gefferth, 1993). Implicit in this statement is the fact that the rather broad concept of giftedness is significantly narrowed by the conceptual category of underachieving pupils." (Mező, 2008) Beyond the dilemmas of definition, identification itself can be problematic, partly from a methodological and partly from a differential diagnostic point of view. László Tóth mentions two ways of identifying underachievement: comparing the student's performance with his/her abilities, and comparing present performance with past performance (Hands in the Cooperation of Higher Education Institutions in Northern Hungary, 2004)

The following methods are most commonly used for identification:

- using standardised tests to compare /intelligence test scores with various achievement tests and/or academic results
- taking into account teachers' opinions and observations
- parents' opinions and observations
- self-observation is also important in identification, as the existence of inner potential may be felt more by the pupil than by the adult in contact with him/her (who may see him/her rarely or only in the specific school situation).

- Personal information, peer comparison or a combination of these methods can be used for identification (Hands in Cooperation of Higher Education Institutions in Northern Hungary, 2004)

An important consideration for any agency dealing with underachievement is to keep these causes in mind.

Internal causes:

- Personality: lack of competitive spirit, self-image, perfectionism, lack of self-regulation mechanisms, anxiety, fear, low frustration tolerance
- lack of motivation/lack of motivation, lack of perseverance
- gender,
- ethnicity
- language
- learning as a process of cognition and its primitive level: including rudimentary cognitive factors and/or lack of knowledge of learning habits, techniques, methods (Dr. Mező, 2019).

External causes:

- The family: too high or too low parental expectations, parental pattern or lack of parental support,
- peer groups,
- teachers' personalities, teaching methods, the way they interact with students, their preparation,
- the school, the school climate
- the social environment, poor social background,
- culture (Dr. Mező, 2019).

Addressing underperformance in terms of pedagogical intervention

Changes in the classroom learning environment (group size, group composition, alternative learning tools, alternative teaching), teaching style, curriculum, learning timetable, learning methods, strategies, teacher.

In order to identify gifted children, teachers must also have the ability to provoke, stimulate, arouse interest and curiosity.

Eva Gyarmathy calls for teachers to be trained and to develop appropriate methods. She recommends the use of methods to address underachievement that do not only require cognitive, verbal and analytical thinking from students, but also require spatial, visual and global information processing. A good method is parallel curricula, in which there is the possibility to explore other areas of the curriculum, and also the individual's perspective. In a lesson planned in this way, there is no need to change the curriculum, only to make the approach more colourful (Gyarmathy, 1998)

The following practical ideas are available to support these:

In our school, Kevi has a small number of combined classes. The small number of students in our small schools has both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages include the ability to focus adequate attention on each pupil, to give the teacher time to reach and help each pupil individually, and to get to know the pupils' character, difficulties and outstanding abilities better and more comprehensively. Disadvantages might include the difficulty of applying forms of work (such as group work) and the difficulty of creating a classroom atmosphere in which pupils can compete with each other. Here again, the important moment related to our Erasmus+ work is how teachers in these small, combined classes can work and identify talented students. The classes have 5-10 pupils. The nearest town to the village is 25 km away. Teachers working here try to develop the dormant talent in the children. We focus on the development of skills and abilities in the early school years. We place a high priority on developing the strengths of gifted children.

As our village is far from the nearest town, where there would certainly be more opportunities for gifted children to develop their talents, we try to provide them with opportunities in school where they can develop their talents effectively:

- In the context of the Petőfi Memorial Year, we organised a ***writing competition***, where they copied a passage from a Petőfi poem in handwriting. In this competition, all the pupils of the school took part, and after two rounds of screening, the pupils reached the final. The winning students were rewarded and their talent in writing was highlighted. The competition provided an opportunity for development, both for teachers to screen gifted students and for students to identify an area where they could excel.
  It should be noted in this competition that it was not specifically those pupils who had previously done well in academics or sport who excelled, but also pupils who had not previously had positive feedback about their own talents.
- ***Reading competition:*** for this competition, as for the previous Erasmus+ competition, we tried to involve as many pupils as possible from the school. This also helped teachers to discover talents that were not yet known. The competition was very popular, with pupils practising for the competition with their parents. It is worth highlighting that parents have been involved in the process, supporting and helping them to discover and support their child's talents.
- ***Poetry contests***: students who are open to writing poetry will be entered in online poetry contests in addition to the school poetry contests. We cannot bypass the impact of online education. Students spend a lot of time in front of computers and laptops. But this competition gives them the opportunity to see the benefits of the online world from a different perspective.
- ***Drawing competition:*** we submit artwork to children's magazines. We also organise exhibitions of the work at school and at the local cultural association. In our country, a children's magazine called Gingerbread, which students can buy through the school. Students from all over Vojvodina can submit entries to this magazine. We try to highlight the work of our own students as well as successful entries from other schools. We evaluate them together with the students, encouraging them to improve and persevere.

Addressing underperformance by involving civil society organisations

It is becoming increasingly clear that the special development and education of gifted children is in our own interest. We are educating our future leaders - who will be left to solve the many serious and complex problems of the world, both visible and not yet visible - and it matters how we prepare them. For a long time it has been clear that special development methods are needed to educate children with various disadvantages, disabilities and handicaps.

It is slowly becoming clear that the same care - but different methods (e.g. skipping steps instead of breaking them down into small steps) - is needed to develop those who are 'more gifted' or simply have a faster development rate, so that they can benefit us all by realising their best potential (Balogh , 2011).

Diagnosis, prevention and intervention of social stimuli (family, school, peer harm), low self-image, feelings of inferiority, etc., which are detrimental to performance, personality development, transfer of communication strategies. Such organisations are available to children and their parents and teachers who have already shown above-average abilities and to parents and teachers who need help in developing these abilities and in dealing with their problems. Here we consider it important to highlight the following possibilities, which we, as an NGO, often use. Outside the school, our pupils participate effectively in various workshops in the local Móra István Cultural Association. In these sessions there is more cooperative learning, more small group and individual development work. These extra-curricular activities are mostly in line with the lessons and are also based on individual interests (science, music, environment).

Addressing underperformance from the parents' perspective

When we talk about the development of school-age talent, the first thing that comes to mind is the role of the school and the teacher. We think about the programmes that schools can put in place to help talent develop, and the expectations of the teachers who take on this task. Less is said, however, about the equally important role of the family in the development of gifted children, even though the socialisation context is different. In the present text, we approach giftedness development from the family's perspective, emphasising that the key to success lies in the cooperation between the two socialisation arenas (Balogh , 2011).No matter how promising a child appears to be, in order to achieve excellence in later life, he or she must be provided with a rich material environment and a variety of learning opportunities. If this is in place, and if the family is committed to high achievement, the effects on the child will be cumulative (Balogh, 2011). Interventions to improve underachievement are grouped in the literature as follows

- The importance of early identification and early initiation of interventions,
- It is important to know that effects can only be expected in the longer term,
- For treatment initiated in early childhood, the development of basic learning skills can trigger positive psychodynamic changes, improving self-image and performance,positive self-image formation is important, which can raise expectations and aspirations for personal performance.

The presence of parents is also an essential element in the identification and care of underachievers. It is important to recognise and support your child's talents. It is also important to have the opportunity to meet and exchange experiences with other parents. We have a local network of parents, thanks in large part to Erasmus+. This programme has given parents the opportunity to meet each other, exchange experiences and ask for help with their stumbling

blocks and uncertainties. They are actively involved, sometimes even taking part in person. These include the puppet show put on by parents during the Christmas show, and the school playground, created with donations from parents and others, where members of the parent community have worked hard and sacrificed a lot to create a playground in the schoolyard for pupils and the village.

The following example demonstrates the importance of involving parents in the development process.

One of our pupils (11 years old) is in grade 4. Already in the first grade, her mother underestimated her child's abilities, she was insecure and had low self-confidence. At school, she excelled in her Hungarian lessons and was confident. Her teacher noticed her and took her to recitation competitions. Since then, she has achieved good results and is much more confident in other subjects. There is constant cooperation with her parents, very good communication and constant support for her child.

VI. Methodological solutions

VI.1 Confidence, motivation

If we observe successful people, we can see that they shine because of their confidence. If we believe in ourselves and what we do, it is much easier for others to believe in us. Building self-confidence is a lifelong process: while we may feel confident in one area, in another we may perceive that there is room for improvement in self-confidence.

Talents with high self-confidence think differently about themselves and the performance situation than those with lower self-confidence: they have more positive thoughts and images about themselves and the situation, and they consider themselves capable of achieving their goals (Zinsser, Bunker and Williams, 2001). Talents with self-confidence are able to distinguish between performance and their own personality. If they make mistakes or poor decisions, they are more receptive to criticism.

Talents with low self-confidence, especially underachievers, can easily undermine performance. Underprivileged and/or underperforming talents may reflect more on their

weaknesses and often become discouraged. Children/young people with low self-confidence will have low self-esteem and find it easier to get into stressful life situations, and more difficult to cope with the competitive situations life generates.

One of the most important sources of self-confidence is an increase in self-esteem. Self-esteem is best strengthened by the love and unconditional acceptance of the people who are important to us. Another important source of self-confidence is much more internal. According to Mária Szepes (2006), setting realistic goals is an excellent way to boost self-confidence.

Self-confidence is the belief in our own abilities, skills and judgements, and in our ability to face everyday challenges. Children/young people who have a healthy self-confidence not only do better at school, but also do better in their own areas of interest. Important Developing self-confidence is a process, so it is the continuous practice of techniques that leads to results.

What are the symptoms of self-doubt?

The most common symptoms are sloppy posture, negative facial expressions, moodiness, sadness, sadness and last but not least, teasing and irritability. We often meet people who are too loud, too boisterous, always trying to be the centre of attention. In fact, this is also self-doubt, only overcompensated in this form.

Addressing self-doubt, developing self-confidence

The first and most important step is the measurement of self-confidence, which is done with the motivation and creativity self-characterization questionnaire (Mária Dávid, Imre Dávid) and the Renzulli-Hartman scale. The administration of the tests will be accompanied by a 45-60 minute exploratory interview. In addition, depending on the age group, it is recommended and worthwhile to take the Parental Opinion Test with parents.

It is essential to find the root cause of the self-doubt. Based on the results of the evaluated tests and the interview, the development process can start

Methods to develop self-confidence

- Developing self-awareness: until we know who we are, what our strengths are and what areas we need to develop, we cannot have a truly complete and healthy self-confidence. Developing and addressing the gaps identified in this way will give us extra self-confidence. An excellent method for developing self-awareness is the methodological workbook of Hajni Ságodi-Sturm Hajni Ria Horváth Ságodi-Sturm.

- Focusing on strengths: it is good to focus on strengths because they help us to achieve our goals faster, which generates more positive things, thus increasing self-confidence. In our activities, we pay particular attention to areas of interest and talent and their further development.

- Rewards and praise: in an overloaded, hectic world, we spend less and less time on rewards and praise. This is particularly true in the school environment. Especially underachieving and/or disadvantaged gifted children/young people are less likely to experience reward and praise. It is essential that the children/young people who come to us receive the individual attention and praise that they often do not receive in a school environment.

Developmental board games, card games: there are a number of board games and card games that focus specifically on developing self-confidence. Positivity, Soul Butterfly, Relativity, and the Resource Activation Card are all well-established tools in our development sessions,

The role of motivation in talent identification

Often, the desire to meet the expectations of parents and teachers is what drives children to perform better and achieve their goals. Hence, achievement and goal motivation are learned behaviours. At the same time, they can also be barriers for a child, possibly causing anxiety, which can significantly reduce performance.

Motivation can also be seen as a component of talent. In the case of formal giftedness education in schools, this draws attention to the study of motivation in schools. School motivation helps students to meet the requirements of the school and their teachers (Kerekes, 2013).

It also helps children/young people to develop their talents in school or even outside school. Often lack of motivation is the cause of underachievement in gifted children, so developing

motivation plays an important role in talent management. Maintaining motivation, interest and curiosity provides the basis for talent to flourish.

Kozéki (1986, 1990) identifies three areas of motivation in schools, namely:

- the affective social domain,
- the cognitive activity domain,
- the moral, self-integrative motivational dimension.

According to professional observations, motivated children are not only interested in a preferred activity, but are also more receptive to stimuli and more receptive to information in general. At the first level, motivation is based on compliance with the social environment (parents, peers, teachers), at the second level on the pleasure of acquiring knowledge, and at the third level on moral and conscientious considerations.

Motivation is quite variable and depends on the child's current physical and emotional state, or even on social factors (Páskuné Kiss and Fodor, 2019). However, Százdi (s.a.) has stated in one of his papers that motivation is useful as long as it is present in optimal levels. Excessive motivation inhibits activity and restrains performance by causing excessive stress, which creates inhibition. Motivation can be controlled and shaped.

According to Százdi (s.a.), motivation can be shaped primarily through emotional influence. Motivation is primarily shaped and influenced by the immediate environment. The role of the teacher is crucial, but peers can also be a driving force in the development of motivation. Csíkszentmihályi sees expectations, recognition, support, skill development and, of course, the flow experience as the factors behind the development of talent and, within this, motivation (Csíkszentmihályi, 2010). All instruments are suitable for measuring motivation in upper primary school pupils. They have the advantage of being self-assessment or self-characterisation questionnaires that can be taken in groups and require a time interval of 5 to 40 minutes to be taken and evaluated. In addition to the questionnaire recording, observational aspects can also help to collect data on motivation.

The S.M.ART diagnostic tools, developed by Ferenc Mező and Katalin Mező, include observation criteria for gifted students in the visual arts, literature, music and dance (Mező and Mező, 2020 a, b, c, d).

Overall, motivation has a significant role to play in the expression and development of talent, as well as in talent development. The diagnostic possibilities for talent include the assessment of motivation, but there is a lack of a large number of diagnostic procedures in this regard.

VI.2 Literature therapy

Literary therapy for gifted young people in primary and secondary schools is a highly creative field. This age group is confronted with new challenges almost year after year, due to the rapid changes in their personal development, and it is essential to have an understanding and supportive environment and tools to help them to identify problems and possible solutions.
One way of doing this is through bibliotherapy (also known as literary therapy), which uses poems, stories, stories, lyrics or film extracts to help identify and communicate emotions, to help identify and look outside the problem, to suggest alternative solutions and to engage in constructive discussions, by providing a surface (the text itself) that is slightly removed from everyday reality. During literacy therapy sessions, young people tell as much about themselves as they want, in exactly the way they want, while their self-awareness, creative and problem-solving thinking is constantly developing.

As a group therapy method, bibliotherapy develops young people's empathy, communication and debate skills, and tolerance towards each other.

In her book "Azért olvasok, hogy éljek" - Az olvasásnépszerűsítésől az irodalomterapieáig (Kronosz Kiadó, Pécs, 2017), Judit Béres points out that it is not enough to build sessions around a literary work alone when engaging secondary school students in bibliotherapy sessions; to arouse and maintain interest, it is at least as important to present other active and creative tools. Pre-reading activities are essential for building a climate of trust and group unity, and the more colourful activities that follow are essential for active processing.
In addition, joint processing can also provide insights into the individual needs and problems of the group members, which can be the aim of literacy groups.
In terms of text choice, it is essential to touch on themes to which young people can relate emotionally and through the evocation of concrete experiences. When choosing themes and texts, we can take into account young people's individual preferences and their age (e.g. young people are often reluctant to listen to stories, older people to do movement exercises). The texts should not be limited to high literature or even fiction: for example, young people can use the lyrics of their favourite songs, their own writings, or films or digital works, which are so popular today. Other complementary creative techniques (e.g. postcards, drawing or collage, movement exercises) are usually close to children and adolescents and help them to express their tensions and feelings, and to develop their communication and cooperation skills by creating a joint work with their group mates.

In the case of bibliotherapy for underachieving young people, we must also take into account that children who are disadvantaged in various ways are more emotionally vulnerable, have a more fragile self-esteem and less effective coping strategies than their peers.
They are more likely to suffer from anxiety and depression and are more likely to be victims of abuse than better-off young people.

Bibliotherapy sessions for disadvantaged young people have already been proven in several cases in Hungary. or the János Arany Talent Support Programme, or the series of literary therapy sessions. The latter programme specifically targeted disadvantaged and gifted students, with the aim of helping them to release their emotions, promote independent decision-making and support their cooperation skills.

Programmes for disadvantaged young talented people are typically not implemented in the school setting, at least not in the classroom, as the school environment can carry unpleasant moments of classroom failure that we would like to avoid when dealing with children.

The curricula of the Arany János programme, for example, included training sessions outside school hours and in dormitories, which covered a wide range of developmental activities, from improving relationship skills to career guidance and creative writing exercises to enhance self-awareness.

The Renzulli test for talent identification was also a useful starting point for us in the literature therapy group sessions. As Judit Béres puts it in her description of the Pécs programme:
"The sessions have also demonstrated that above-average skills such as high level abstract thinking, advanced higher order thinking and language skills, or effective information processing strategies are particularly useful and beneficial for bibliotherapy work, but also elements of creativity such as originality, inventiveness, advanced associative skills, problem sensitivity, and multitasking. Of course, bibliotherapy also includes the development of all these aspects, but these areas are inherently stronger in gifted students, so we start from a different basis than, for example, in the case of students with weaker abilities in vocational or technical secondary schools, and we can focus more on compensating for the socio-emotional vulnerability resulting from disadvantaged situations and on self-actualisation, empowerment and mobilisation of inner resources. "

In preparing for literary therapy sessions, students may have difficulty in distinguishing the nature and usefulness of the process from the literature lessons they experience in school, and may also approach the word 'therapy' from its often intimidating, psychological side. Unfortunately, no substitute for the term 'literary therapy' has yet been found that more attractively reflects its true meaning, so the best way to stimulate interest is to focus on the issues involved: e.g. social relationships, deeper self-awareness, stress reduction or planning for the future.

In this collection of good practice, literacy therapy as a method is presented using a variety of techniques and texts. It includes working with contemporary poetry, song and film, using short stories to find the qualities we identify in ourselves and in others, and working with creative writing to identify preferences useful for career guidance. We help each other to get to know each other by weaving a story from associations generated by cards. The range of texts that can be used for literary therapy is endless, and with the right openness and creativity, an extremely wide variety of materials can be used. What we need to be careful of is the management of group dynamics, which often need to be counter-intuitive to what young people are used to.

At the beginning of the sessions, it is important to establish group rules together and to keep changing them as necessary, so that the children understand that they will not be subject to asymmetrical relationships in school, but will have to take responsibility for the process and their role in the group. To this end, it is of the utmost importance to explain clearly at the first meeting the peculiarities of communication in literary therapy sessions, the way in which they relate to each other, the rules for discussing possible differences of opinion. Our experience has shown that these forms of communication can be difficult for students to follow at first, so it is the responsibility of the group leader to ensure that the rules are consistently applied. In the sessions, everyone speaks their own point of view, their own feelings and perceptions, which should not be open to discussion. It is therefore not a matter of establishing a universal truth, nor of conforming to the leader (who is often identified with the teacher) with the right answer, but of working with their own inner feelings and reflections. They can share their experience, their opinion, which can inspire the next person to contribute, but he or she can also engage in the process with his or her own experience, taking care that the opinion expressed earlier remains valid. This style of communication, which is not usually the norm for young people, if mastered, can greatly foster empathy and cooperation, and the practice of constructive expression.

As Eszter Csorba-Simon says in her study "Texts that give wings - the impact of literary therapy on adolescents in children's homes" (Library Monitor, 7 December 2019), sociotherapy and art therapy tools are mainly used to sensitise young people, increasing their perceptive and perceptual skills, the lack of which is often the cause of the barriers to their social integration. "When participants learn to differentiate between problems and opportunities, their perceptual, cognitive and social skills change. Group sessions can help in this process of change: while we know that we cannot work miracles, since personality can hardly be changed in its entirety, the focus of the personality structure can be rearranged, which may be enough to develop a person's normal way of life and orientation towards socially accepted goals and future, assertiveness."

Yalom (YALOM, Irwin D.: Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy. Budapest, Animula Publishers, 1995), points out that group membership and the degree of acceptance within the group are of paramount importance in the life of every human being. The importance of belonging to a peer group in childhood, an adolescent clique, a fraternity or a social group can hardly be overestimated.

Based on his theory, the following group dynamics can be observed in literary therapy sessions: interpersonal learning and self-understanding, although very indirect, also take place in literary therapy sessions for disadvantaged young people, as young people are in a mutually learning, feedback relationship with each other and can talk to each other about topics that have not been discussed before. This also shows a transformation of interpersonal relationships, i.e. people can become deeply connected with each other who had not been before.

Of course, it cannot be expected of a young person with a multiple disadvantage to be able to fully express their emotions. However, as human beings are social beings, they instinctively need to belong to a group and their personal development can only take place in an

interpersonal context. All members of a cohesive group experience a sense of belonging, acceptance and validation.

The role of the bibliotherapist as group leader is complex in group sessions with underachieving and disadvantaged young people. On the one hand, he or she has to take into account the cognitive level of each child and his or her ability to absorb or create texts, and on the other hand, he or she has to maintain interest and discipline at all times, using democratic means where possible.

To this end, the programme can be supplemented with self-awareness games, card exercises, music and song lyrics, and other art therapy tools. As young people, especially those with behavioural difficulties, are used to direct disciplinary tools, they often test their limits within softer rules, thus destructively affecting group processes. It is therefore the task of the biblioterápiás to create a balance in an atmosphere that is inspiring enough to maintain attention, but also provides a firm framework for maintaining group cohesion. The ultimate aim and the most effective environment is to create an accepting atmosphere free of expectations, which, if the children can feel it, they can certainly benefit from.

It can also help students who do not need therapeutic help but want to turn literature into an experience to develop their personality. Beth Doll and Caroll Doll, in their book on young people, write that the simplest form of bibliotherapy is the personal insight a young person can gain from a book or a film.

What impact can you expect from bibliotherapy sessions? Whether working with high-achieving or underachieving young people, in addition to the communication skills that can be developed, young people can become able to identify their emotions and learn ways of behaving and coping that they may have been left to face alone and without tools. However, this requires that the theme and the text are able to reach and touch them, both in their situation and in their feelings.

Katalin Jókainé Molnár Jókainé puts it in her study entitled Personality-developing literary experiential activities with secondary school students in the Arany János Programmes: "in order to achieve a truly therapeutic effect, the reader must be able to identify with the protagonist, to recognise and relate the events of the story to his or her own life, and, having lived the story, to become involved in the plot, and become emotionally attached to the characters and the story, they must experience the catharsis of the work and the moment of insight, which means that the reader is able to leave the faulty pattern of behaviour and adopt a more optimal one. Through identification and catharsis, it is possible to build effective and alternative patterns of behaviour to replace old, inappropriate behaviour.

Of course, the role of the group is essential to this, supporting each other in finding a more workable alternative by using the communication techniques learned and sharing their own experiences.

As an example, we list some of the topics that reading texts can help teenagers to cope with life and their problems: self-acceptance, breaking bad habits, accepting differences between people, dealing with criticism, keeping friends, affirming latecomers, accepting difference and different external traits, realising we should be kind, realising we are special, appreciating and valuing individual differences, the importance of conflict resolution and solutions, "new kid syndrome", sibling fear, sibling fighting, teasing.

VI.3 Communication

We can express ourselves in many different ways. In fact, we communicate every minute, as we send a message to the world around us through the way we dress, the way we talk, the way we behave, the way we use our body language. We can say our thoughts, write them down or express them in any artistic way we like.

Disadvantaged young people are not always able to express themselves in the way they would like to. Their self-image is often distorted by negative feedback, and the patterns of expression, problem and conflict management they receive at home are often insufficient to develop appropriate coping strategies. We need to help them to develop a realistic self-image and to show this self-identity. We need to teach them positive ways of coping with difficult life situations and social interaction, which can have a positive impact not only on their lives but also, through them, on their environment. An important part of this development is communication, developing and improving the messages we send out into the world and the way we express ourselves. Effective communication techniques can be taught to children in a variety of ways, in order to help them become more successful, cooperative and self-confident adults.

What areas should we focus on when we talk about improving communication?

- The classical understanding of communication includes the development of self-expression, social cooperation, conflict management, empathic expressions,
- Encouraging young people to read and related reading comprehension and processing expand their vocabulary and worldview, and illuminate individual and social issues from different perspectives,
- The development of writing and composition (composition) helps self-reflection and helps young people to express themselves well and to communicate their ideas to others,
- The non-verbal and creative tools of self-expression can be used through artistic communication and a wide range of opportunities to express themselves in different media (including social media).

The most appropriate tools for learning communication techniques are experiential, drama and literary therapy, which help young people to explore, with the help of a support group, how they influence others through verbal and non-verbal means of expression, what impressions they make on others and what communication methods and channels are most useful for them.

In developing communication techniques, the following topics should be addressed:

- Who am I? What do I communicate about myself?

In this theme, we will try to explore different personality traits through a variety of games and self-awareness tools. The development sessions will also focus on the relativity and relatability of positive and negative traits. Group work will provide an opportunity for comparability, deepening self-definition in the field.

- How do I communicate with others?

The theme leads from the world of individual competences and characteristics to the field of interaction and communication with peers. How can I express myself well, how can I build relationships, how can I introduce myself, how can I listen and hear others.

- Specialised areas of communication - e.g. lectures, presentations, speaking in front of others

We are often in a situation where we have to speak in front of others, give a lecture or a presentation, which is not always easy. This topic will also cover the technical basics of this.

An important area for developing communication skills is dealing with everyday stressful, problematic and conflict situations.

It has also been shown that young people with special needs, who are not disadvantaged, tend to be different from their peers, have low acceptance and, as this factor also reduces their self-esteem, the fact of being gifted has a negative impact on their cooperation skills. This problem is further negatively influenced by disadvantage, which can lead to underachievement. By improving communication and cooperation skills, we aim to enable young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to be able to behave in a self-assertive and resilient way within

their groups, to identify with whom they should develop relationships and to manage them appropriately.

The foundation for improving communication and cooperation skills lies in developing empathy skills. Young people, often in spite of the bad patterns that surround them, need to realise that the differences of opinion between children, parents and teachers around them are often not their own, that they are often expressed in terms of their own experience, education and ability. Thus, an important skill for young people to develop is the ability to put themselves in other people's roles and situations, which enables them to view conflicts more objectively and empathetically.

Through targeted tasks, experiential learning tools and techniques to improve communication effectiveness, we can help children to become effective self-regulators and able to achieve their goals. The methods that can be used to develop all these skills can be extremely varied, some of which are listed below.

- Blogging and journal writing, creative writing techniques for self-awareness can help pupils to develop self-awareness by making them aware of their thoughts and feelings;
- Children can be taught techniques that follow the guidelines of "Think before you act". In situations that require a sudden decision, even thinking about a few well-established points in advance may be enough for the young person to decide whether to intervene actively or to resort to some kind of tension-relieving technique. These techniques can also be used for the purpose of anger management.
- By learning distraction, reframing, relaxation and reviewing typical thought distortions, they will be able to reduce their tensions and negative emotions;
- They can master techniques that can help them:
- Solve problems creatively and with the involvement of others (e.g. goal setting, brainstorming, choosing a solution and then checking back);

- by sending self-messages, understanding others' points of view and giving feedback, they will be able to formulate realistic requests in a way that is not offensive to others and to achieve their goals without violence;
- learn to say NO to a request in a simple and polite way, to set their limits and to negotiate their points of view with their peers, teachers and parents;
- be able to speak simply and effectively, using their feelings and body language to make others listen and understand them;
- listen attentively to others, without interjecting, forcing their views on others, or allowing their thoughts to wander;
- they can understand the behaviour of others, recognise non-verbal communication cues and empathise with others' motivations and life situations;
- build and maintain mutually supportive relationships through positive communication;
- find sources of pleasure and meaning in life, and set realistic goals that are appropriate to their self-awareness.

In communication sessions, self-empowering, assertive communication is usually given a prominent role. Through assertive communication, we can ensure that others listen to us and really understand us, while we can give the same to others. An effective, assertive individual seeks to resolve conflicts while taking into account the needs of all participants. An assertive communication style is always honest, seeks acceptance of self and others, aims for a win-win outcome, and has empathy for the person of the other party. The practice of assertive communication can be based on three simple steps that will enable children to effectively advocate for themselves in problematic situations:

- Empathy: Say something that shows the other person that you understand them or want to understand them, rather than trying to generate an unnecessary argument.
- Problem: Say what your problem is, using I-messages
- Need: Tell me what you need to solve this problem.

While practicing assertive communication, it is important to realize that successful communication requires not only being a "good speaker", but also being a good listener! A good listener listens to his/her partner, both verbally and non-verbally.

In addition to learning all these skills, we can use targeted experiential learning exercises to teach children the importance of giving feedback and support to each other, talking through past experiences of failure and finding ways to resolve them. We can also support the exercise with concrete situations and examples, which can be acted out together or handed out on word cards in pairs and then discussed with the participants.

- What would you do if your mother wanted to cut your hair but you didn't want her to?
- What would you do if you knew you were going on a long trip that would be very boring for you?
- What would you do if your parents made you try foods you didn't like?
- What would you do if you had to spend an afternoon at your grandmother's and you knew it would be boring for you?

Young people can also practise ways of communicating well with each other, observing and discussing their role in a team, through team games.

At the end of the experiential learning sessions, building on the lessons learnt from the exercises, we can collect together and highlight the factors that promote effective communication and cooperation. For example, respecting your partner and their opinions, not being afraid to learn from others, and focusing on cooperation rather than competition.

Feedback on the impact of communication and cooperation skills is provided directly in the interpretation of young people's experience by Emőke Bagdy, Zsuzsanna Kövi and Zsuzsa Mirnics in their book Unfolding Talent (Helikon Publishing, 2014), in which young people who participated in a talent development camp were asked to describe in their own words the impact of the social skills development work in the camp on them.

The young people's comments reflect both the success of the communication skills development objectives and the sense of well-being and positivity that they felt as a result of the social experiences they had.

"I have made a lot of friends."

"It helped me a lot to reassess my attitude towards people! I have become more open with large groups, I dare to express myself."

"I became more interested in other people...I also became more courageous in making contacts, which was my goal. This big and formative experience has definitely had an impact on me."

"Yes, I have become more friendly."

"I have learned to be more accepting of people I don't particularly like."

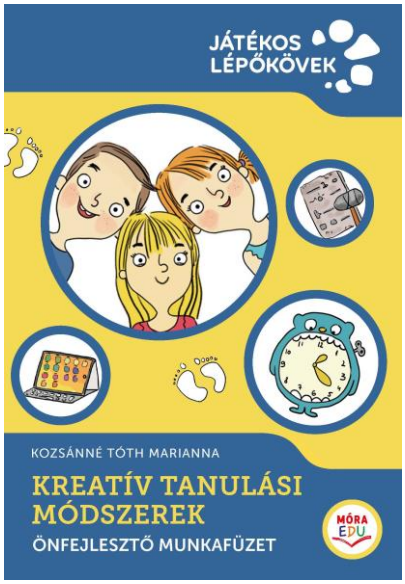
"Yes, I have become more open-minded and have reassessed my attitude towards people!"

"Yes, I've become more persistent, more patient, more tolerant and I think friendlier."

"I belonged to a cohesive, helpful and intelligent group. I had the opportunity to experience what it feels like to ask for, receive and accept help from my peers."

"It reinforced my belief that the shortest way to communicate between two people without swearing is to speak directly and honestly."

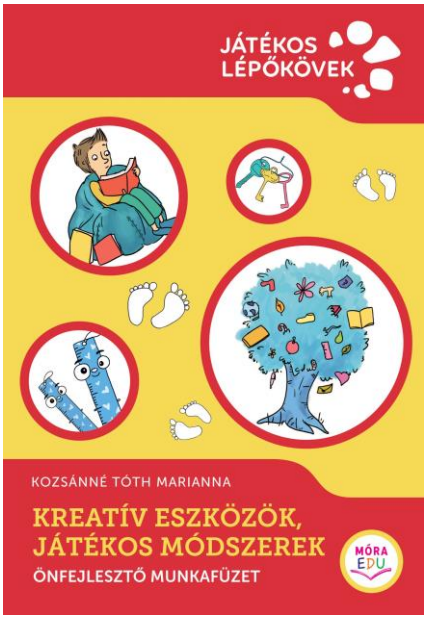
VI.4 Methods of learning-Learning self-awareness



Supporting children's learning in and out of institutions has been a pressing issue since the beginning of the century. Methodological ideas, subject-specific development packages, articles and studies aimed at deciphering learning types have all outlined the difficulties of motivating children to attend school and to engage in learning processes. For almost 20 years, teachers have been targeted by methodological training to provide sufficiently interesting and colourful lessons for pupils to keep them motivated. Yet the process has stalled, until we realised that it is not the teacher's arsenal and toolbox that needs to be expanded, perhaps not even the children's in the first instance, but rather a different approach.

As a first step, the basic premise of the concept is that self-awareness in learning is an outstanding area of our time that needs development, even a "preparatory" for primary and secondary school education, since children today are exposed to a wide spectrum of environmental influences, so that the course of the world becomes untraceable for them in every respect.

Life management difficulties are often linked to a lack of conscious planning, so that eating and sleeping habits become irregular in their daily lives, and organisational difficulties become more pronounced, with the inevitable consequence that this has an impact on school life. This lack of order is first of all reflected in the family, then in the peer group and finally in the school. The depth and motivation of the relationship with learning is already apparent from the start of school, at the age of 6 or 7, and into adulthood. Children usually 'stumble' through the initial stages with their parents and teachers, as they are accompanied by two teachers in the lower school, but when the 'subject scissors' open up in the upper school and new subjects are added to the educational palette, the educational and training process takes on a new colour. The result is that attachment does not develop in the same way for this age group, so stability and safety nets are sometimes felt to be unravelling beneath them. Parents also see the difficulties of the toddler and the older child, but it is precisely because of their age that they find it most difficult to accept suggestions from them. Differentiation is increasingly lacking, as it is difficult to focus on the individual development of 30-35 pupils in specialised classes. We are left with pupils who are unable to plan, keep up with the subjects and select what is important and what is not. Partly because of this, the number of children who are hyperactive or considered to be so is rising. The flood of information they are confronted with, and the variables that make it difficult for them to absorb the expected amount of information, such as the number and type of teachers, teaching methods, the pace of delivery, changes in the classroom, staffing levels, etc., also require new adaptations, and require changes to the learning processes and time spent on learning.



Thus, the most necessary work processes to develop learning self-awareness, including group work on organisation, are needed before starting school at the age of 6-7, at the age of 10-11 when entering upper secondary school and at the latest at the age of 14-15 when moving on to upper secondary school. With so much new ground to cover, children often become rather under-achieving or superficial under the pressure of a sense of achievement or duty, and after a while, without success, disinterested. At the other extreme, there is the pressure to conform to external motivation, where a child always wants to achieve excellence in line with parental or teacher expectations. Fear of failure, on the other hand, raises the stress factor, and after a while the whole development and learning process can be transformed from an initially

failure-oriented, externally motivated to a success-oriented form of behaviour, which reduces the possibility of building learning as a joyful process in this form, and can also lead to a serious self-esteem disorder.

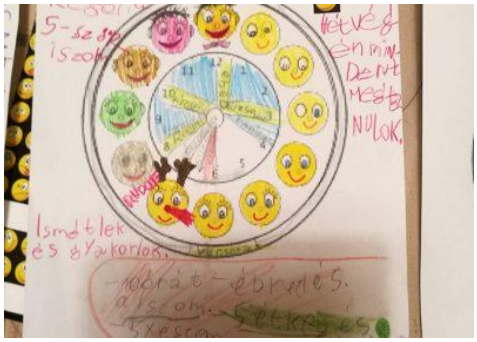
Maintaining the motivation to learn and the joy associated with the success of the steps in the learning process can give new impetus to building learning habits for the following years, laying the foundations for LifeLong Learning.

The first good practice in the Stepping Stones suite of programmes relates to a number of Gardner's talent areas, as the development of learning self-awareness targets time planning, building learning habits, possible ways of working through text tasks. It is linked to all subjects and even to personal development processes beyond them.

First of all, a complex and differentiated package of work aimed at developing learning self-awareness can be linked to the intrapersonal area. In this context, it is further linked to the logical-mathematical area, with the development of learning strategies and enrichment materials linked to the general knowledge subjects. It contributes to the development of language skills through games in the mother tongue and in foreign languages, to the development of reading comprehension through learning tactics to extend vocabulary and support communication, to the physical-kinesthetic area through movement games between theoretical and creative tasks, to the visual and musical area through related games, and to the musical area through practice-oriented tasks requiring musical creativity and aimed at developing short- and medium-term memory. Self-confidence development, communication games and debating skills are all linked to a creative sequence of tasks aimed at developing the whole personality. Based on the Renzulli revolving door model, we see a developmental process that can be addressed by all children. This is a great opportunity, and also a novelty for Hungarian institutions, as it could be used as a subject to be integrated in all classes, enabling the pupil to organise his or her own life and approach to learning, thus enabling him or her to shift motivation from external, parental and teacher influences to an internalised process, and to set his or her own goals for the end of the learning process, relying on internal reinforcement.

These methods help to lead them back from the online world of computers and mobile phones to the "offline" world of real life, and to create a temporal balance between virtual and real life experiences, according to their age. The QR-code tasks support the learning of protected

games on the Internet that offer a real sense of achievement and development, the safe movement in the online space by completing the tests, and the avoidance of addiction by means of appropriate "conscious planning packages", i.e. the development of computer use and the competence required for online tasks is also a targeted area for the development of learning self-awareness.



VII. Concluding thoughts

The collection of good practices regularly used by our partners is intended to provide professional assistance not only to teachers and NGOs, but also to parents. The methodological handbook, based on this collection of good practices, is intended to provide a better understanding of underperformance, its causes and its theoretical background.

We trust that after reading this handbook, the reader will have gained a comprehensive picture and a better understanding of the importance of developing underachieving, disadvantaged gifted children/young people.

"Everything is possible. Only, what is impossible takes longer." - Dan Brown

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