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INDIVIDUAL'S SELF-IMAGE AND SELECTED PRECONDITIONS FOR ITS ADVANCEMENT

Self-confidence is the first secret of the success

R. W. Emerson

Involvement of the human being into the social relations enables us to create a relatively stable picture of one's own self. In this sense, one can speak about the **self-consciousness as of a comprehensive expression for self-evaluation, self-respect, self-appreciation, self-recognition, self-confidence and self-realization**. All this is closely connected with the consciousness of one's own psychophysical and social identity – I myself and the world and my place in it.

I MYSELF IN MY OWN MIRROR

Where does the **healthy self-consciousness of the pedagogue, teacher, educator, parent, student, child and generally of the human being** derive from? What conditions the fact that we are accepted by the people that respect us and appreciate us? Professional qualities, personal features, and working results, even the overall external smartness and appearance are certainly important preconditions for the social success. However, without communication abilities, without mastering effective tactics and negotiation strategies in interpersonal relations, it is possible that a person, otherwise respected for his/her encyclopaedic education, can socially fail in an ordinary life situation and thus he/she will not be socially competent. Great importance in this context is given to the development of the teacher's healthy self-consciousness, that is one of the preconditions of his/her successful pedagogical profession¹.

¹ J. Vyrost, I. Slaměnik, *Sociální psychologie (Social psychology)*, ISV, Praha 1997, p. 181.

Self-consciousness (a feeling of certainty and one's own value) is forming and changing from the childhood up to the adulthood (i.e. in the course of the ontogenetic human being evolution). **Healthy self-consciousness is an expression of the formed, socially mature personality, which is able to estimate his/her own real possibilities and limits, sets himself/herself achievable targets and responsibly fulfils the assigned tasks.** (VALIŠOVÁ, A. Self-control in the context of the life contentment of the young people 2016). Self-consciousness in such manner is a part of the self-image and thus of individual's picture of his/her own self. It is developed in the course of the contacts with parents, peers, teachers, colleagues and also with other people. Such a personality is able to get a natural respect in the social contact, to assert itself in an adequate way, respect the others and is able to cooperate, adequately critical and does not excessively depend on the assessment by other people.

The process of development of the healthy self-consciousness involves forming of the **complex image about oneself**, it is interconnected with self-confidence, with the awareness of one's own value, qualities and abilities. The conception of self, and **self-image** is a complicated psychological phenomenon that expresses more than the simple awareness of one's own qualities or their evaluation. Self-image cannot be exhausted only by the question "Who am I?", leading to a description, but it involves also self-determination and self-actualization in the sense "Who can I be and who will I become, what are my possibilities and perspectives, what have done I and what can I do in addition to that"? It is difficult to answer such questions objectively as each of us can perceive, identify, evaluate and "invent" in different situations diversely the conception of the individual's self, its own identity affects its entire behaviour².

Self-image is a **complex of individual's attitudes to itself** and includes the following components:

- recognition (**self-recognition**);
- emotional appraising (**self-evaluation**);
- volitional (**self-realization**).

Otherwise we can speak about three groups of attitudes related to the self-image:

- **Real self** (how a human being sees himself/herself at the present time – it is an answer to the question "What kind of human being am I?" "What do I know and what I am able to do?", "Where do I pertain?", "What social status do I have?");
- **Mirror self** (expresses views of the individual to the fact of how can himself/herself be seen by other people from the environment);
- **Ideal self** (connected with the wish, what kind of individual would he/she like to be, what kind of human being is he/she and who does he/she would like to become).

² I. Gillernová, J. Buriánek, *Základy psychologie a sociologie (Foundations of the psychology and sociology)*, Fortuna, Praha 1995, 47-48.

Exercise: Fill in as honestly as possible, only for yourself (without senseless underestimation or excessive self-consciousness), the following incomplete sentences:

- a) I know myself very well in the sphere of...
- b) What do I appreciate on myself....
- c) I am better than the others in....
- d) On the contrary I am worse in and it is related to.....
- e) Which negative qualities do I have from my point of view....
- f) What kind of things do the others mostly negatively evaluate on myself
- g) I can change myself in....
- h) I have got preconditions for

“The bridge” represents a symbol of the communication, “the mirror” is a symbol of the self-evaluation. It is a good idea sometimes to think over oneself just for one’s own. Get straight “Who am I at this moment, who can I or who do I want to become, what are my possibilities and perspectives, what have I done and what can I do in addition to that? It is possible to get back to the completed sentences sometime in the future and compare them with the answers that you will have filled in the future (maybe in a couple of years....)

Formation of the **individual’s self-image takes place from the early childhood**, in course of the social interaction with people in the near and broader environment (parents, peers, and other adults), during the activities that the individual is occupied with (games, learning, work)³.

The child plays with something, works, learns and the adults and also the peers evaluate his/her performance during these activities, compare his/her with the others. They tell the child that he/she is handy (or left-handed), bright (or stupid), diligent (or sloppy), well-behaved (or badly-behaved) etc. The persons in this way contributes to the **individual’s picture**, and influences the contents and adequacy of this picture. We also know that children that are predominantly positively evaluated, that had positive emotional relationship with parents, that were not confronted with the inadequate expectations of parents or teachers or excessive protection, that were never in the firing line, such children had better condition for building the adequate self-image. Negative self-evaluation is a personal and also interpersonally-related problem that negatively affects the individual’s activities and performance. For the formation of the adequate self-image and healthy self-consciousness, children and young people need in particular **love and respect, understanding, but also positive evaluation**.

³ A. Vališová, *Sebeovládání v kontextu životní spokojenosti mladého člověka (Self-control in the context of the life contentment of the young people*, in: *Výchova, vzdělávání a výzvy nové doby (Upbringing, education and appeals of the new age)*, J. Semrád, A. Vališová, P. Andres, M. Škrabal, a kol., Paido, Brno 2016, p. 47.

PRAISE AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE HEALTHY SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

Positive signals are a certain expression of our positive and pleasant sensations **towards another human being**. With the aid of these signals, we can at the same time **get to know something about our own behaviour** – about something what the others like in us, what appeals to them, what they admire and what they appreciate on us. We ourselves often evaluate – our appearance, performances, successes and also our failures, relationships with other people, our behaviour... The human being is in its substance an active and creative personality. He/she thinks about the majority of activities, and at the same time considers how to perform it better and faster. Thanks to this admirable human ability “to create”, the world comes to epoch-making discoveries and inventions⁴.

Each human being needs of course **to feel also pleasure and to hear words of recognition**. However, many activities in the ordinary life are taken for granted, as a mere expected fulfilment of the duties. But why isn't it sometimes possible to praise also for the mater of course? Why cannot be appreciated also for a well fulfilled duty? Why couldn't a good executive appraise his/her subordinate for a well drawn up report, in spite of the fact that the subordinate has seemingly done only such a thing that forms a part of his/her job content? Why are kind words so much missing in the family between the adults and children, but also among the adults themselves? Each praise and encouragement motivates and additionally it also brings pleasure. Therefore **be full of praise for everybody!**

Food for thought: *Let us become aware of the fact how often we were praised at home, at the workplace, by a close friend? How rarely can we offer a praise to somebody from the circle of our relatives or friends? Are you able to remember when you got compliments for the last time and when you yourself praised somebody? Is the recall at such situations connected with a great endeavour and excessive descent to the depths of the memory?*

We can hardly change the fact that some of us are sad from the nature and the others cheerful, that some people are able to give more and the others only receive. If we could, in the course of negotiation with other people, always abide the classic principle of the Roman law “I give, in order that you can give”, we would live to see disgruntlement or even disappointment. At the occasion of an awkward praise or compliment, somebody would be like a fountain and another one like a natural spring. Somebody pulsates straight by surplus of emotions and in view of the sunny temperament, he/she naturally sends all positive, but sometimes unfortunately also negative signals to his/her environment. Another human being is able to recognize such signals and share it internally, but it is very difficult for him/her to express it outwardly. Such a human being does not need to be insensitive, but he/she is more withdrawn and moderate. He/she usually commits less variations in his/her actions and if, after a long time, he/she displays the feelings,

⁴ A. Vališová, *Mezigenerační vztahy a proměny autority (Intergeneration relations and alteration of the authority)*, *Veřejná správa (Public affairs administration)*, Praha 2012, vol. XXIII, č. 9, p. 19.

we can expect that it will be something without the risk of sudden surprises and rapid changes of his/her mood.

Who would not like to praise or compliment! Let us not omit this even in the **education environment**, in the family and at school - any opportunity to make pleasure to the others, let us take notice of the fact that is agreeable in their conduct, with what they are close to us, what suits them, what they managed to do, and what they are able to achieve. And let us also have courage to show it clearly to them as positive feedback – purely, simply and sincerely praise them.

***Example:** How frequently the praise and compliment could be used just at school! In a simply form: "Martin, your story about the parrot was a success today. Other children also liked it very much, you could see, how many questions they had. How long do you have your parrot about which you have spoken today?"*

In the family: "Mum, you look wonderful today." The mother says to the daughter: "Jane, this skirt suits you really well!"

***Exercise:** For practising of praise communication at school can be used the play "Post-man". The children write on small cards the praise for a certain classmate (they rotate) or they write these praises on a piece of paper that is attached on the child's back with a pin. The child itself reads the praise. Then the teacher asks questions, whether the praises are precise and correspond to the reality. He/she also asks questions on the feelings that the child receiving the praises has enjoyed (and also those children who have written the praise on the paper). The children in this way learn to evaluate the other, they get to know each other, and they learn to enjoy it.*

Most frequently we should **communicate and accept the compliment or appraise as a token of a real recognition** – first of all, recognition deserves all such qualities that cannot be found so frequently, for example humanity, frankness, and honesty. Let us pay attention to the last mentioned quality.

***Example:** A short time ago I had a coffee at a supermarket buffet. The important lecture had to start in about twenty minutes and my thoughts were already elsewhere I took mechanically the small change and the coffee and I was leaving. The shop assistant then called after me: "You have forgotten to take your money." In view of the fact that I have paid with a five hundred banknote it could be a sad experience for me. And so I went back and in view of the suffered shock and her honesty I bought the good woman and myself a cup of good coffee.*

Let us be aware of the fact that **we have the right to be successful, and therefore we have also the right to be praised**. That's why, at the occasion of receiving positive signals, we should not have the feeling that a positive appreciation must be belittled, unnecessarily explained and justified, get into disconcertion or immediately appraise another one as if in reciprocation. Let us learn "to enjoy" the praise (and sometimes render it ourselves and really enjoy it with pleasure. Only then will we be able to receive it responsively and also propagate it in our environment.

PSYCHO-HYGIENE AS THE PREVENTION OF A FAILURE

The psychological health of a human being is related to a complex of many aspects of the preceding development, of the present state and also of the expected future way in the course of life. A certain, individually different role, is here played by the conditions that have some effect on it, directly from the **macro-environment** (economical, political, cultural), further on there are **physical** factors (somatic), alike as the **family and partner factors** (emotional relationship of parents to children, emotional atmosphere of the family, the school and class climate, and partner relationships). **Work and study environment** and its influence, and last but not least also the **regulatory and auto-regulatory mechanisms** (upbringing and self-discipline) are also important.

Psychological hygiene – in other words it concerns a complex of rules, recommendations and procedures that support the psychological health and secure managing of difficult life situations. To a certain extent, it plays an important role in prevention of a failure in case of the increased demands placed on the teaching profession, life situations or combination of another unfavourable circumstances. Psycho-hygiene draws its knowledge not only from the psychology, but also from medicine, biology, ecology and pedagogy.

***For consideration:** Similarly, as we do not consider the observance of rules and principles of the physical hygiene as luxury or useless fastidiousness and therefore we do not wait for an outbreak of the infectious disease, in order to start washing one's hands regularly, in a number of demanding professions or life situations, it should be viewed as a rule of observed cleansing and refreshment of our psychological self. Thereby we have in mind the regularly executed procedures that at least reduce the unfavourable effects of stresses (excessive psychological pressures) and in a better case they can lead to a personal self-refinement and development of the healthy self-consciousness.*

Let us now try to look at the fact **how the teacher can do something for support and development of his/her physical, psychological and also social well-being** – as it sounds in the presented definition of health. Despite of the fact that the recipe is not easy, fast and universal, we will try to offer you here **some principles of the psychological hygiene:**

If I do not praise myself, nobody will do it instead of me or else the Positive access.

Do not make yourself any illusions that somebody else knows exactly what the cost of this and those in your life or profession was. The only one who knows it quite precisely is you yourself. The others do not have the duty of being a visionary, they can have another problems than to pay attention to us, they must not know how much effort or self-control or self-restraint we have invested. Moreover, another human being differs from us and what can be easy for us, represents for him/her an unsurpassable difficulty, and inversely. Beside this, if we are able at least inwardly to appreciate our own effort for ourselves, then it rises the chance that we ourselves will be able to appreciate for ourselves well and with good quality and this is a skill that every public servant, office worker or executive should have at his/her professional disposal.

Exercise: Let us recommend you to pay attention to how difficult it is for us to express a positive appreciation to be said loudly. And as every change means a long-term work on oneself, try to start off with a small exercise. The offered exercise could be occupationally named "Me and my profession". Take a piece of paper and divide it with a vertical line or by folding to two halves, on the left side you can put down "The plusses" or What I like about my profession (for example – my work is not boring, it offers me contact with the people, I am forced to do something new, my warm lunches are provided regularly, I can exert influence on the others, we have a good team at work, I am forming relationship with other people, it forced me to mental flexibility....do not be shy to be engaged in a flight of fancy being completely free and capture also such facts that perhaps other people could hardly understand, not to say approve and follow the keynote - the more positive facts I discover, the better, and thus more stable I can be in my profession). The right half of the paper can be marked as "Changes" and here you can write what you imagine to be changed in your profession, respectively how differently you would like it to be and add in a bracket how you yourself could contribute to it and how the given changes can be jointly influenced.

The object of this exercise is to admit oneself also the professional positives (the written word here highlights this tendency) and constructively fix the demand for a change, including awareness of one's own possibilities and activities. In summary: we meet also nice things at work, we are not a passive victim and if we "grumble" about our profession, it is often a display of our close relation to this work and our interest in it.

I have a rest at least 5 minutes before it is too late for Regime, relaxation, rituals and work with the time

With this headline, we would like to draw your attention to several principles of the work with time, tension and release of tension that we usually do not observe. Allow me once again to present a parallel with the physical hygiene – in order to bring a positive effect from teeth brushing, it must be done regularly. Similarly, if we want to be effective at work, we must have an effective rest (unfortunately, with the increasing age, we feel the irregularities of the life regime more clearly).

Exercise: Let us try again a little exercise "Map your time for yourself". In most cases we postpone a thorough rest to "WHEN" ... only when we have more time, as far as we finish this and that, as far as the children are older and suchlike. In this manner, we can effectively bring it to a total collapse. Let us therefore try to be aware (eventually put it down) whether and to what extent do we have some time only for oneself in our programme. And do we have it regularly? It does not excessively matter whether it is a get-together with friends, or sporting activities, reading of professional books or visit at the hairdresser's (perhaps with a reservation; the time used for sports activities has a double value in the case of the sedentary job). At the same time it is not so substantial whether it concerns 10 minutes per day or one hour per week. But let us pay attention to the fact that the time is used in this way repeatedly, it represents a certain rest to catch a breath, from which you can take energy for a while after and look forward to it beforehand. A small trick in conclusion – put down this time for yourself to your working calendar, it is equally important

as another tasks. If you consider this view too selfish, be aware of the fact that it concerns some very functional selfishness. When you stand longer and in a good condition, you will then stand longer also for the others.

A number of **relaxation exercises** can also work equally positively, however, in most cases, it requires regular practising in order to see its effect on stress reduction or preparation for a difficult situation, which could be perceptible. As there is always no time to spare, let me offer you one of the shortest exercises “Controlled breathing” that furthermore does not require any special requisites.

***Exercise:** Try to take a relaxed body position (in case of necessity it can be in standing), close your eyes and several times carefully breathe in and lengthily and slowly breathe out. The breathe out should be twice as long as the breathe in (in this way you can better reduce undesirable chemical effects accompanying the stress situation) and, for the intensification of the effect, you can accompany the exercise with an imaginary self-suggestion formula “I am” (breathe in) ”absolutely calm and a human being”(breathe out). As a last resort, it can be used also at school staffroom during the ordinary activity.*

The so-called “**taking work and problems home**” – we think here about carrying problems, emotions, tension, troubles and certain ways of communication to the own home environment, into the context of one’s own family. This is a real problem for a number of teachers. This of course does not contribute to the mental well-being. We want therefore, to inspire, to draw your attention to the **importance of small “rituals” of the working day** that enable easier transition and retuning between the different environments (open the day with switching on the personal computer or making coffee with a coffee maker, finish work by taking shower and then change clothes etc.). Please notice the way that **you yourself retune your attention after arrival at home** and pay attention in particular to the moments, **when this strategy functions well**. Perhaps the already mentioned shower can help, or putting legs on a table for two minutes, or having a good chat with somebody at home, or perhaps a return trip aboard a train or bus? If you discover your own personal strategy that is at the same time also acceptable for your family members, integrate it to your daily programme quite systematically – also this can be your recourse.

I multiply every success by 10 and divide every failure by the same number thus Positive balance.

The thing that sometimes influences our psychical hygiene is a certain contemporary culture of negativities, eventually the reduction of appreciation, profession, human being, and life values to a mere appreciation of money. It seems that we differ particularly from the others if we follow also another rules - and it is so difficult to differ. In addition, **the difference in the outside point of view on our profession** (it frequently devaluates the pressure) **and the inside point of view** (more likely it concerns the devaluation of positives) come into consideration. Apart from this, work with people itself accentuates more likely the failures and lack of success than positive results.

***Exercise:** And here is another exercise for you - "The cake of pleasure". Draw, please, two circles and divide them into several segments – the first one according to the things that are troubling you (the cake of worry), in the second one try to concentrate on the things that make you happy in your life. Think about the final schemes for a while, you can consider the place, which is taken by the profession in this review and whether the picture hides any appeal to possible changes of your lifestyle. This exercise can be adapted also in such a variant of what takes you energy and on the contrary what gives it to you. It will pay off after some time (3 – 6 months) of repeating the exercise and there is a chance to notice the changes, if any occur.*

And once again let us add one more inspiration to these principles of survival, the one from the point of view of the favourable, so-called gender researches. When men finish work ,they often say to themselves "I have fulfilled this, I have done, repaired, finished this". (And he is content). When the same thing is done by a woman, she thinks about it in the following way "I did not have a chance to manage this and that when I was doing this work and a great deal of duties still remains". And she is not fully content. In the view of this fact, our schools for various reasons present this consideration of women. Please, let me give a recommendation "Dear ladies, be inspired by the wise men"

CONCLUSION

This study deals with the selected aspects of issues of self-image, self-evaluation, self-consciousness, self-respect, self-recognition or self-realization. The mentioned concepts have a great **importance in formation of "one's true self" and self-image** – and therefore it is necessary to pay attention to these concepts in the **educational environment** and also in the **contexts of the pedagogical interaction**. The text briefly defines the theoretical terms, and also presents the selected preconditions for healthy self-consciousness. It accentuates primarily the **practical questions with examples and exercises** – especially from the sphere of **the positive feedback (praise)** as an important motivation factor in the interaction of the teacher and pupil (parents and child). A part of the text is then devoted to **practical suggestions from the sphere of the mental hygiene**. We suppose that the text can be inspirational for teachers, pupils, parents and the general public as well..

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Vyrost J., Slaměnik I., *Sociální psychologie (Social psychology)*, ISV, Praha 1997.

Alena Vališová: Indywidualny obraz siebie i niektóre wstępne warunki jego rozwoju

Streszczenie: W prezentowanym opracowaniu zostały ukazane problemy samoświadomości i możliwości jej rozwoju. W tym kontekście została określona także koncepcje samooceny, szacunku dla samego siebie, uznania dla siebie, rozpoznawania siebie, pewności siebie i samorealizacji. W tekście podkreślono, że samoświadomość wiąże się ze świadomością własnej tożsamości psychofizycznej i społecznej – ja sam i świat oraz moje miejsce w nim. Ważnym środkiem do rozwoju zdrowej samoświadomości jest również uznanie. W podsumowaniu artykułu zwrócono uwagę na higienę psychiczną jako zapobieganie niepowodzeniom rozwojowym.

Słowa kluczowe: Samoświadomość, samoocena, szacunek dla samego siebie, samo-docenianie, samo-uznanie, pewność siebie, samorealizacja, higiena psychiczna, pochwała, pozytywny dostęp, aktywna pozycja życiowa.

Title: Individual's self-image and selected preconditions for its advancement

Summary: The presented article points to the issues of self-consciousness and the possibilities of its development. It defines in this context also concepts of self-evaluation, self-respect, self-appreciation, self-recognition, self-confidence and self-realization. In the text, it is emphasized that self-consciousness is related to the awareness of one's own psychophysical and social identity - I myself and the world and my place in it. An important means for the development of the healthy self-consciousness is also praise. In the conclusion of the article, attention is paid to the psycho-hygiene as prevention of the failure.

Key words:

Self-consciousness, self-evaluation, self-respect, self-appreciation, self-recognition, self-confidence, self-realization, psychical hygiene, praise, positive access, active life position.