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SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN'S
COMMUNICATION AS A SOCIAL COMPETENCE
ON THE EXAMPLE OF CMC/4D – EDUCATIONAL
PROGRAMME AUTHORED BY EVA SCHERER

ABSTRACT: The theme of the discourse are cultural and social activities introduced in kindergartens in Poland on the example of CMC/4D (Children Massaging Children) – educational programme authored by Eva Scherer. The programme's superior relevance lies at its universality; created by a Polish woman living in New Zealand, it has been successfully transferred to Poland; trainings in the basics of CMC/4D were completed by 249 people. Currently, the programme is implemented in 80 centres (according to the author's knowledge). The paper presents the most important theoretical assumptions of the programme, based on current knowledge about the influence on a child development and it includes tests carried out under the programme. It describes the implemented methods and results achieved in cultural and social area. It also presents comments made by the programme's author and opinions of its users. The author stresses the issue of development of communication skills in education as an important factor in cultural and social area.

KEYWORDS: Children Massaging Children (CMC/4D); communication in education; educational programme; healthy touch; social competence

Children Massaging Children (CMC/4D) is an educational programme authored by Eva Scherer. Polish equivalent of the name is „4D. Dzieci Dzieciom Dar Dotyku” (Children to Children Gift of Touch). The programme has an advantage of its universality: created by a Polish woman living in New Zealand, in 2004 was honoured with the Prize of the Mayor of Auckland and in due course it has been successfully transferred to Poland.

Shaping social skills is a challenge for educational care centres; “A lot of behavioural disorders in children are brought about by the shortcomings in the area of social competence. (...) There is therefore a need to instil in children a set of basic social skills that will ensure proper and satisfactory functioning in the surrounding environment” (Musioł, 2011, p. 84).

Jill Morgan, who refers to the results of brain research conducted in the United States (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development) in the 70s of the twentieth century, argues: “Touch (or lack thereof) can determine proper development of a child: emotional, mental and physical. It establishes the foundation of – indisputably important – trusting attachment. We want children to be provided with adequate conditions for proper development. In the same way, we want to make them capable of building a healthy society. For the present, the task of familiarizing children with «touch» falls increasingly on educational institutions where children spend most of their time” (Morgan, 2010, p. 6). And although it is up to educational care centres to decide what programmes will be used to work with children, the policy of the state is not without significance.

COMMUNICATION IN EDUCATION

In Europe, attention was drawn to specific actions that were taken up in Sweden. The author of a blog expert on the branch portal, Agata Kułanowska, shares her thoughts: “A few years ago I learned of the existence in Sweden of the programme called Peaceful Touch [introduced in Stockholm by the Axelson Institute in the early 90s – ed. IB] and was pleasantly astonished. (...) My work in the clinic made me realize how incredibly important it was to build, starting from an early age, body awareness, and to do it in a society as a whole (yes, not just «in people» but in a society) (...)” (Kułanowska, 2013). In Poland, where the massage was perceived as a form of rehabilitation or relaxation, difficulties in this area were to be expected. The problems were further fuelled by advertisements in the press and the Internet.

With regard to the approach taken by New Zealand, Eva Scherer explains: “In the programme of New Zealand Ministry of Education emphasis was placed on «hauora», which in Maori means «health», perceived there as harmonious physical, spiritual, psychological, familial, emotional and social development. As a result, the idea of massage and touch was following a well-experienced path and easily surfaced in schools” (Pawłowska-Salińska,

2013, pp. 31-33). Such a holistic approach to health without pharmacological support is thoroughly realistic and can be achieved with the participation of professional masseurs and by the implementation of appropriate techniques of massage. The innovative value of CMC/4D programme manifests itself in the development of teaching instructions (songs) in a form that permits children in preschool and early school age to feel the gift of the touch, accept it, and pass it to other children.

According to Jill Morgan, “the idea of touch as a method conducive to a comprehensive development of child, presented in educational programmes authored by Eva Scherer, meets new demands of education in New Zealand. It may also be useful in any other education system” (Morgan, 2010, pp. 7-8). For the author of the programme, a Polish woman in the antipodes, the universality of the programme has a sentimental value, but for many users most important is, on one hand – its origin, and on the other – the fact that it is applied in Europe.

In 1999 in Poland, within the framework of the reform of the school system, subject teaching was replaced with inclusive teaching – in order to promote comprehensive and harmonious development of students. Among the so-called key skills were “(...) the ability to establish and maintain correct relations with other children, with people with disabilities (which led to creating inclusive classes, and even schools), and with representatives of other nationalities and races (formation of tolerance)” (Juszczak, 2011, pp. 28-29). In recent time, touch, used as a tool to help the child to overcome the blockade or reluctance in relationships with children who are in some way “different” (starting from dysfunction, to end up with racial differences), may gain significant importance in Poland – it is needed here even more than in New Zealand, where representatives of different races and many nationalities have long been living side by side.

Touch, as a stimulus, is experienced by human being at the early stage of fetal life. Despite this, it was relatively late that its significance in interpersonal communication was described, along with the role of the skin in the process. Przemysław Bąbel recalls Harlow's experiments from the 50s and subsequent studies that have shown the importance of direct contact with the child's mother (Bąbel, 2007, p. 54-57). One of the most important communication functions of touch is affiliation – the function rich in various manifestations in later life (i.e.: relationship with other children in the kindergarten, relationship subordinate – chief). The effectiveness of massage in preventing child aggression is scientifically acknowledged (von Knorring

A.-L., 2008, pp. 1265-1269), as well as negative effects of the lack of touch in childhood – especially, the ineptitude to shape social bonds (with all the consequences – starting from inability to cooperate, through depression episodes and ending up with aggression and suicide).

Agata Kułanowska, writing from the position of practitioner and massage expert, draws attention to the value of Eva Scherer's programme in the area of communication: "Communication is the foundation for almost all human relations. 4D teaches how to talk about the body and about the touch; unfortunately, modern society has forgotten how important component of life is this model of communication" (Kułanowska, 2013). The author of the CMC/4D programme stresses the importance of body language as the one that – on a global scale – is not only the oldest, but also the most versatile and demonstrating impressive powers of persuasion. She does not, however, yield to temptation of giving excessive significance to body language in interpersonal communication; her extensive knowledge is proved by the fact that she disavows the Mehrabian myth as a common misconception (7% attributed to the impact of words, 38% – to the tone of voice influence and 55% – to the impact of body language; verbal communication is losing importance when it is contradicted to body language).

THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF THE PROGRAMME

The inspiration to create CMC/4D programme came from observations of the relationship in which touch was inhibited even among family members. The observations were made by Eva Scherer after she had settled in New Zealand. Theoretical foundation for her work was the current knowledge about the effects of touch on the child development. As a therapist who was working with the body, Eva Scherer was aware that massage was important in rehabilitation process, so as in broadly defined wellness treatments. But she also knew that children, from birth to the stage of puberty, need touch as a stimulator of a proper development. She shared humanistically oriented definition of a child's space used by Jadwiga Izdebska (Izdebska, 2009, p. 9), who saw it as the crossroads of many spaces – starting with physical and moral ones, and ending with social and informative.

Today, not only in Poland, touch is considered as a stimulus, which effects are strong, and still it is often rejected due to connotations with sex and aggression. What escapes attention of the interested parties is that

touch in body massage is a functional touch, just like the touch in sport or while greeting each other. Illustrating such an aversive reaction, Joanna Niedziela writes: On the forum of gazeta.pl I found the following comment: «*While searching for a good kindergarten for the next year for my five year old daughter, in one of those I came across the information that they apply, as was mentioned in the thread, 4D method. And, to be honest, this information deterred me radically from the nursery, because this method I totally, but totally dislike*». Such way of thinking frightens me. According to the author of the method, children learn quickly what kind of touch suits them, how to respond to it, which touch is bad for them, and how to communicate their limits. Such activities often fill gaps between the more cerebral lessons: improve concentration, relax, open up and reduce stress. The method does not have sexual overtones, as many parents might think” (Niedziela, 2013). In view of these problems, arranging demonstration lessons in order to acquaint the tutors of children with the CMC method before the programme is applied, constitutes a valuable initiative (e.g.: in non-public kindergarten „Calineczka” [“Thumbelina”] in Wólka Kosowska). In many places (e.g.: in Warsaw’s Wola Kindergarten No. 45) open classes are organized, during the course CMC programme is presented.

The author of CMC/4D programme finds it in the following way: “We have *touch* in our genes. It’s something most natural – a basic sense and the primeval form of connecting with other people and with the world. Meanwhile, we are trying to eliminate touch, put it under control. We instruct our subconsciousness that we know better what is good and what is bad. We have qualified the touch as something potentially bad, dangerous and, as a result, we increasingly estrange ourselves from it” (Cichocka, 2013, pp. 113-115). In this social context, the innovativeness of CMC/4D programme was in eliminating the adult person as the participant of the massage as he or she was foreign to the child, even if well-known to him in the role of educator or teacher.

IMPLEMENTATION OF CMC/4D PROGRAMME

All you need to arrange CMC/4D activities is to find some room for the foam pads or towels. Children freely choose their pairs and massage each other. The teacher’s role is restricted to monitoring the activity; he/she intervenes only if necessary. Massage techniques have been developed for

the use in kindergartens and primary schools for children aged 5 to 12 years. In practice, it turned out that the programme is suitable also for younger children; teachers emphasize that children very quickly memorize instruction songs, which are played from a CD and composed specifically for back, hand or head massage.

Implementation process of CMC/4D programme is described in detail based on the example of Inclusive Kindergarten No. 45 in Warsaw in Katarzyna Kelm's thesis, submitted to Maria Grzegorzewska Academy in Warsaw (Kelm, 2005). Students and practitioners from different countries may learn about Eva Scherer's programme directly from her; in recent past the practice was followed by Anna Hansson (Mid Sweden University, Östersund – the Department of Social Work). The location where the practice was held had been agreed by both parties.

Methodological workshop, opening the way to acquiring qualifications and certificates required time when CMC/4D programme is to be used in work with children, are organized – in consultation with the author of the programme – by the Training Centre KLANZA – a private, nationwide and teacher training institution. Training on the basics of the CMC/4D programme was completed by 249 people (at the end of 2015); currently the programme is – to the knowledge of its author – used in eighty pre-school (and other) institutions (see the table no. 1), mainly in Warsaw and its neighbourhood (see the table no. 2), but also elsewhere in the country (see the table no. 3).

Table 1. Users of CMC / 4D programme – summary according to types of schools

No.	Type of facility	Number of facilities
1.	Kindergarten (public, private, special, with inclusive classes, Montessori)	65
2.	Primary school (public, non-public, special)	7
3.	Other (college, pedagogical counselling centre, psychoeducation centre, ecclesiastical institution, etc.)	8
Total number of facilities		80

Source: own study based on site <http://childconnection.org.nz/users/>

Table 2. Users of CMC/4D in Warsaw and the surrounding area – statistics by location

No.	Localization	Number of facilities
1.	Warsaw area (total)	50
separated in individual districts		
	Mokotów	19
Ursus		6
	Praga Północ, Śródmieście, Ursynów	4 in each
	Włochy	3
	Bielany	2
	Bemowo, Białołęka, Praga Południe, Targówek	1 each
2.	Surrounding area (total)	11
including individual towns		
	Izabelin, Józefów, Józefosław, Komorów, Marki, Otwock, Piaseczno, Pruszków, Raszyn, Wołomin, Zielonka	1 each

Source: own study based on site <http://childconnection.org.nz/users/>

Table 3. Users of CMC/4D out of Warsaw – statistics by location

No.	Provinces	Number of facilities
1.	Total number	18
including individual provinces		
2.	Pomerania Province	6
3.	Wielkopolska Province	5
4.	Silesia Province	2
5.	Kujawy-Pomerania Province, Małopolska Province, Łódź Province, Lower Silesia, West Pomerania Province	1 each

Source: own study based on site <http://childconnection.org.nz/users/>

Authorization to use CMC/4D programme while working with children is granted to a natural person. As the trainees usually represent specific kindergarten (or other establishment), links to all the facilities are listed at Eva Scherer's website. Parents and guardians of children who want to check whether a given facility currently uses the programme they should check its site or requested for a direct contact. Changing the workplace by a trained person may mean that the programme will not be implemented, because the right to use of the programme does not encompass permission to give further training.

The author of the programme, in an effort to adapt the programme best suited to the specific needs of the educational care centres, allows changes that do not violate the concept of CMC/4D and the framework of the programme. Eva Scherer on all occasions encourages initiatives which support children in their development. A good example is Kindergarten No. 145 „Czterolistna Koniczynka” (“Four-leaf clover”) in Warsaw's Mokotów district, where the educational programme CMC/4D – because it is closely related to sensual teaching – is implemented alongside with the programme “Trust the senses – Sensual teaching” by Anna Czapska, teacher. On the kindergarten's website you can read that “the implementation of these two programmes facilitates building and fostering self-esteem in children is helpful in preparing them for school” (<http://www.czterolistnakoniczynka.com.pl/>).

THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH ON CMC/4D PROGRAMME

In 2006, study conducted over a period of 15 weeks by Dep. P.E. RMT Jill Morgan (Eastern Institute of Technology, Hastings) – Burnett scale was used and following confirmed the advantages of CMC/4D programme (Morgan, 2007, pp. 14-19). The survey covered 140 students from the elementary school in which CMC/4D programme was implemented (Ebbet Park, Hastings), and the same number (the control group) in the primary school Kimberley.

The results showed that after CMC/4D programme was introduced significant changes could be observed. According to the author of the programme, the most important among them were as follows (Scherer, 2010): students became calmer; interpersonal relations were improved; the number of aggression cases decreased; level of empathy increased; students started to inform about situations when their perception of touch was negative;

physical fitness of students increased; concentration of students in the classroom improved. These changes ultimately had a positive impact both on academic performance and behaviour of students.

What is more, it was observed that CMC/4D programme was helpful to the children and to their parents as it was conducive to better relations in the family, especially when contact between the child and the father was involved. The latter aspect of programme deserves special attention, because – as emphasized by its author – abuse of children by their fathers is a problem by no means limited to New Zealand, and improvement of the child's contact with his father was observed uniquely under based on CMC/4D programme (such a positive change is not mentioned in other studies dealing with massage activities in the class).

THE IMPACT OF CMC/4D PROGRAMME IN SOCIO-CULTURAL AREA

Those teachers who apply CMC/4D in their work highly appreciate development of the child's competence in the sphere of social communication. In the course of a short, a few minute long massage children learn (Scherer, 2016):

- listening to the other person with understanding and also responding to verbal and non-verbal communication;
- reacting to touch and informing about their feelings (also negative) and expectations;
- accepting the touch in a way that is safe to them;
- responding more quickly to commands;
- focusing on successful completion of the task.

In Warsaw's Mokotów district, at Inclusive Kindergarten No. 45, in which teaching with the implementation of CMC/4D programme is arranged for groups of four- and five-year olds, the information on the website is laconic, but precise: "Children learn the difficult art of acting for the good of other person through developing empathy and gentleness in their mutual relations. They become assertive and acquire ability to distinguish between bad and good touch. This method is simple and applicable in all sorts of conditions" (<http://www.pi45.waw.pl/>).

The director of the kindergarten, Monika Mokrzyżczak who in TC KLANZA is the instructor of CMC/4D (in Poland), has developed a way of achieving one of the most important objectives of the program: massage at

home, where the child massages the parent/guardian and the parent/guardian massages the child. Strengthening ties is particularly important in the so-called patchwork families, in which the child learns how to determine the boundaries of the contact in a new set of relations. Key benefits of CMC/4D programme, brought to the notice of Eva Scherer by people who completed the course in Poland, related to many areas, but above all to the benefit of acquiring the ability (in the broad sense) to communicate with other children (see the table no. 4). This is an important benefit of the programme – especially at the stage of forming civil society, when willingness and ability to communicate is so important to foster formation of desired attitudes, which are manifested by the commitment of individuals for the common good.

Table 4. Key benefits of the program CMC/4D (according to users in Poland)

Benefit	Change	Area of benefits
Better relations with other children	Children believe that they have developed a liking for another child, with whom they did not have (good) relations before	Interpersonal relationship based on positive emotions, which shape desirable social attitudes
Informing about the well-being	Children say that after “a little massage” (as they call the program CMC/4D) they feel better	Greater self-awareness reflected in more effective way, communicating health problems to guardians
Less stress	Children notice that after “a little massage” they no longer feel like crying	Reduction of stress, which is beneficial for the child’s health
Improved relationship within the family	Children express pride that the father or older siblings like “the little massage” from the kindergarten	Increased sense of intimacy with family members, which is important not only in the so-called patchwork families
Contacts are easier to establish	Children understand that while touching another child they communicate a message without words	Useful in unusual situations – facilitates contact with a disabled child, foreigner, etc.
Less aggression	Children observe that anger disappears (if they felt it before “the little massage”)	Programme facilitates coping with negative emotions
Recognizing the intention of touch	Children identify good touch and react without hesitation opposed to the touch that does not suit them	Greater likelihood of response to the so-called bad touch, reducing thus the risk of harming a child

Feeling the pleasure of giving	Children love the feeling of pleasure that accompanies giving someone "a little massage"	The attitude of the recipient is complemented with the attitude of the donor, which promotes concentrating not only on yourself, but also on others
An increase in empathy	Children notice that different people react differently to the same "little massage"	Communicating by non-verbal means the feelings of sympathy and understanding
Willingness to learn, better concentration	After the holidays children ask for CMC/4D, because they believe that after "the little massage" other activities are easier	Better attitude to learning and opportunity of acquiring knowledge, which contributes to better advances in learning

Source: own study based on author's interviews with Eva Scherer which were conducted in July of 2015 in Warsaw

Karolina Popłońska, who is administering CMC/4D programme in the Kindergarten "Jedynka" ("Number One") in Pruszków, describes the children's reactions on the website: "As at the beginning [children] lacked sensitivity and had no understanding whether their touch was weak or strong, I encouraged them to speak out about their feelings ... After the first trial runs children said that they enjoyed it very much and felt relaxed: «I would like to have it more strongly», «I was over the moon», «and I was feeling as if I ate the whole chocolate»" (Popłońska, 2013).

SUMMARY

Ability to communicate, a significant factor in socio-cultural domain, is gaining in importance nowadays; the smaller is the social space in our direct interpersonal relationships the more even important it becomes. Jill Morgan, the author of the study on CMC/4D, noted: "The last two decades mainly focus on improving the ability of logical thinking. Students more often have computers – not only at home but also at school. This is due to the belief that it will positively affect their academic performance. Such one-sided action has pushed the development of the emotional brain (limbic system) to the sidelines. It was not taken into account that this would disadvantage both perception and logical thinking" (Morgan, 2010, pp. 5-7).

At the same time it could be deduced, that, if nowadays the dominance of sight (established in the print era) seems to be replaced by touch, which is closely associated with the new technologies, this leaves perhaps more space

than ever to the development of that sense. Magdalena Szpunar, who extensively and in an interesting way writes about this phenomenon, cites, inter alia, the opinion of Derrick de Kerckhove: “history of computer simulation is basically a step-by-step penetration of the touch environment (...) rapid development of tactile experience and feedback of sensations draws us into a richly adorned, electronic whirl” (Szpunar, 2012). Contemporary research suggests that sounds can affect humans in such a way that they elicit a sensory feeling of touch. Thus, common among children and adolescents immersion into music or seeking contact with electronic devices may reflect the desire for touch.

The educational CMC/4D programme of Eva Scherer seems to meet the expectations of those preschool and early-school teachers, and also parents and guardians who can appreciate the importance of touch for physical, mental and social development. Only such approach can alleviate concerns over the challenges awaiting Europe in the face of changes in socio-cultural trends which refer to childcare and education pursuits.

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