

Social-Emotional Intelligence [SEI] Reflective Journey Soft Skills Development Tool for the 21st century

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Rationale

Academic institutions have been primarily focusing on cognitive learning and measures, echoing the more general perception that cognitive capacity and measures are the primary predictors of success - both at the academic level and the workplace.

In the last two decades there has been increasing realization that other abilities, skills and competencies may be as important for success and well-being. Such skills are often referred to as 'soft skills', and mostly fall under the umbrella term of Emotional Intelligence (EI), Social-Emotional Intelligence (SEI), or Social-Emotional Competence (SEC). However, there is little emphasis on such skills in higher education - in either cultivating them or assessing them as part of the general curriculum.

Assessment, which is not based only on achievement scores, is not only a change in methods. It is no less than a revolution in our cultural patterns of thinking in the last 200 years. One of these patterns is the profound belief that in order to assess students' abilities we need to test them in knowledge standards tests. This thinking is so deeply rooted in our minds that it is almost unacceptable to think that, in fact, it is meaningless to our life today. Another pattern is the belief that we must test each student in isolation from others, else how would we know what he or she knows.

The result of such thinking is a global race for standardized tests scores, thereby turning these scores to the ultimate life-value for learners, whether they are 5th graders or college students. This life-value managed to push aside the natural human need to learn and developed a social norm of struggling for scores rather than adding to oneself meaningful knowledge.

However, the need to change traditional methods of assessment is voiced louder and more frequently. Many educators sense and understand that 200-years old assessment methods can no longer meet the reality of the technological culture in the 21st century, and that the full range of skills necessary to face the contemporary, dynamic reality must be evaluated.



Theoretical background

‘Soft skills’ is a wide term. The concept of emotional intelligence (EI), a relatively recent psychological concept which emerged in the last 2-3 decades, captures a central place in the understanding of human behavior, performance and well-being. It refers to the effective integration of emotion and thought (Mayer, Ciarrochi, & Forgas, 2001; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). As such, it primarily concerns the ability to reason effectively with emotions, and the capacity of emotions to enhance thinking (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Interest in the concept developed from the growing understanding that emotions play an important role in thought, decision making and social interactions, and the realization that traditional notions of intelligence and cognitive measures are limited in their ability to account for the variations in success in people’s lives.

In their model of EI, Salovey and Mayer (1997) included four main components, which include the ability to perceive and express emotions, to use emotions to facilitate thought, to understand emotions, and to regulate emotions in oneself and in others. Others have broadened this definition to include skills and competencies, which underlie emotional intelligence and manifest themselves in behaviors. Such models increasingly referred to Social-Emotional Intelligence (SEI) and to Social-Emotional Competence (SEC), acknowledging the social context of emotions and emotional skills, and referring to skills and competencies that underlie emotionally intelligent behaviors.

Goleman (1998) suggested that SEC is comprised of the ability to be aware and regulate emotions in self and others and suggested that these four domains are comprised of twenty competencies. In his first book, Goleman credited interest in the concept to the fact that EI offered a new perspective on skills that could promote school and life success and noted education systems to be “the one place communities can turn to for correctives to children’s deficiencies in emotional and social competence” (Goleman, 1995: p. 321).

Bar-On (2006) referred to social-emotional intelligence (SEI), acknowledging the social context of emotions, and defined EI as “a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands” (p. 3). He included five main areas in his model: intra-personal, inter-personal, adaptability, stress management and general mood; each comprises several closely-associated competencies, for a total



of fifteen competencies and skills. These skills, according to Bar-On, are manifested in behaviors and closely related to life outcomes.

Indeed, EI has been promoted as an individual-difference variable that plays a role in determining success in various types of human performance (Van Rooy & Viswesvaran, 2007). Studies have established links between EI and physical and psychological health, well-being, stress coping abilities, and quality of relationships. In terms of work and career, SEI has been linked to work effectiveness, success at work, retention and lower burnout rates, interpersonal relationships at the workplace, teamwork and leadership, across a variety of professions and in different levels of organizations (e.g., Abraham, 2005; Brackett, Rivers & Salovey, 2011; Carmeli, 2003).

In particular, SEI skills have been found to be strongly related to students (Cohen & Sandy, 2007), including higher education students (Bradshaw, 2008; Low & Nelson, 2004; Nazir & Masrur, 2010; Vela, 2003): to improved learning and academic achievements (Brackett et al., 2009); higher retention rates and easy transition; increased pro-social behaviors and lower involvement in disruptive, violent and addictive behaviors (Brackett & Salovey, 2006); increase in quality social interactions (Brackett, Mayer & Warner, 2004); and enhanced well-being.

Looking at SEI's impact on both the educational and occupational spheres, it is apparent that the concept is strongly linked to both the present and future of higher education students, and thus important to be cultivated in students (Dolev & Itzkovich, 2017). Social-emotional skills have been noted to be even more important in the fast changing and increasingly challenging 21st century, in which knowledge has become a commodity and is constantly changing.

Challenges include the advent of new technologies, the different generations working side by side with different expectations and norms, stricter regulation, changes in professional requirements for a variety of positions, limited resources, and growing competition and expectations of clients and customers across domains (Tadmor, Dolev, Attias, Reuven-Lelong, & Rofe, 2006). Higher education systems similarly face many challenges such as redesigning the curriculum and rethinking teaching methods, demand for new technology, and integrating multicultural and international programs and students.

One of the main tasks and challenges of higher education is to prepare students for the world of today and to equip them with the skills that will be most required in a changing world. Such skills are increasingly included in many organizations' requirements of new recruits, or at least in their expectations from them, and are the skills underlying retention and promotion in organizations.



The 21st century skills are, to a large extent, social emotional skills such as the ability to regulate emotions, to adapt to change, to work well with others, to provide creative and out-of-the box solution, skills that can be least replaced by machines and AI. Yet, despite the growing understanding of the importance of social-emotional skills and a growing interest in EI training in different occupational settings, higher education studies are focused on academic learning, and consequently, on its measurement. Social-emotional programs are not common in higher education.

If we accept that soft skills are among the main skills with which we must equip our students for the challenges of the 21st century, these skills must be included in the academic curricula and cultivated in higher education. The development of soft skills can take place simultaneously and synergistically with academic studies of any subject and be assessed.

Soft Skills Assessment

As early as 1896, Dewey emphasized the social and emotional nature of the classroom, the links between social processes and learning, and the need to integrate social and emotional dimensions into teaching and learning. Day et al. (2007: p. 20), for example, warned that focus on academic output “leaves unmeasured (other) important features, such as social, affective and behavioral aspects”, which have been known to impact upon learning, while Low and Nelson (2005: p. 4) noted that by adopting such a narrow perspective educators may run the risk of losing “the true concept of education” and that social-emotional skills should be addressed.

It is becoming clearer that what is needed now is to create sound assessment tools that can evaluate processes rather than outcomes. Based on the vast body of evidence for the contribution and importance of soft skills (SEI, SEC and other important concepts such as resilience, growth mindset, grit and empathy), it is clear that they should be cultivated and assessed.

Taking into consideration that higher education professionals are not necessarily familiar with the concepts and are not equipped to develop them, we propose a formative assessment tool which takes the students through a development and reflection process on the skills less addressed in higher education.

This formative tool also stands in contrast to the existing measures of SEI, which measure the current level of SEC through performance measures, designed to evaluate the maximal performance level of individuals on EI-related tasks



(Wilhelm, 2005), or self-report measures which are based on individuals' self-perceptions and use self-rated lists of EI-related descriptors.

Furthermore, as soft skills are typically not taught in higher education, in particular not as part of the subject matter, we designed a soft skills development tool that can be carried out as part of any teaching subject. It is a self-directed process carried out by the student and assessed by both the student and the teacher during the journey and at its end.



Learning environments

The soft skills assessment tool can be used in any constructivist learning environment and course subject in higher education. It particularly appropriate to promote learning in learner-centered courses which foster students' participation and learning activities. For example, problem-based learning.

Problem-based learning (PBL) is a teaching-learning method based on the idea of using problems as the starting point of acquisition and integration of new knowledge. The goal of PBL is to place the learners at the center of the teaching-learning-assessment activity and to give them full responsibility for their learning. The student becomes an independent learner who integrates experience with multidisciplinary knowledge acquisition, the learner is an active partner in the learning process, initiates it, and contributes to its content (Ertmer & Glazewski, , 2015).

With relation to the current tool, in problem-based learning, the teacher may choose the skills that are most relevant to the problem-solving process, for example, teamwork, independent learning, growth mindset etc. When introducing the problem, the teacher may discuss the skills most needed to succeed in working on the problem. The teacher will note that an important part of the process is developing those skills and will focus on one particular skill (or highlight two and ask the students to choose one of them). The teacher may explain that this is going to be a self-directed learning (introducing the map, card and work process). Throughout the course, the teacher will connect the problem to the skill. The teacher will check the mid-term assignment, and comment also to things he/she observed while working with the students on the problem, to increase awareness and development.

Target audience: undergraduate, graduate students.



Soft skills assessment tool: General description

The soft skills assessment tool combines development and its assessment. In its development section it is designed as a roadmap for the development of SEI skills within a specific course. It is a formative tool that captures a process rather than an end goal, and is personal for each student, taking into consideration their own starting point, unique profile and needs, and their own pace and preferences. It is a self-directed development process.

Within a number of skills selected by the teacher as related to the course, and which can be developed within it, students choose the skill they wish to develop. They develop the selected skill and monitor their development using a guide, which includes suggested development tools (to complete every 1-2 weeks), and which create the milestones for development.

Development assignments (practice tools) are documented by the students and shared with the teacher twice during the course - after setting the goals and at the end. The end product should include the development assignments with a reflection on the personal journey. An option of sharing with peers in small groups and receiving their feedback is also available.

Integrating the tool within any course does not require deep knowledge and understanding of the teacher, nor is it time consuming, as it is a self-directed process, in which tools for developing SE skills are provided with the map. As students monitor their own progress through the development tools (provided as part of the tool), teachers are not required to invest large amounts of work, but rather a general appreciation of the importance of their students' development.

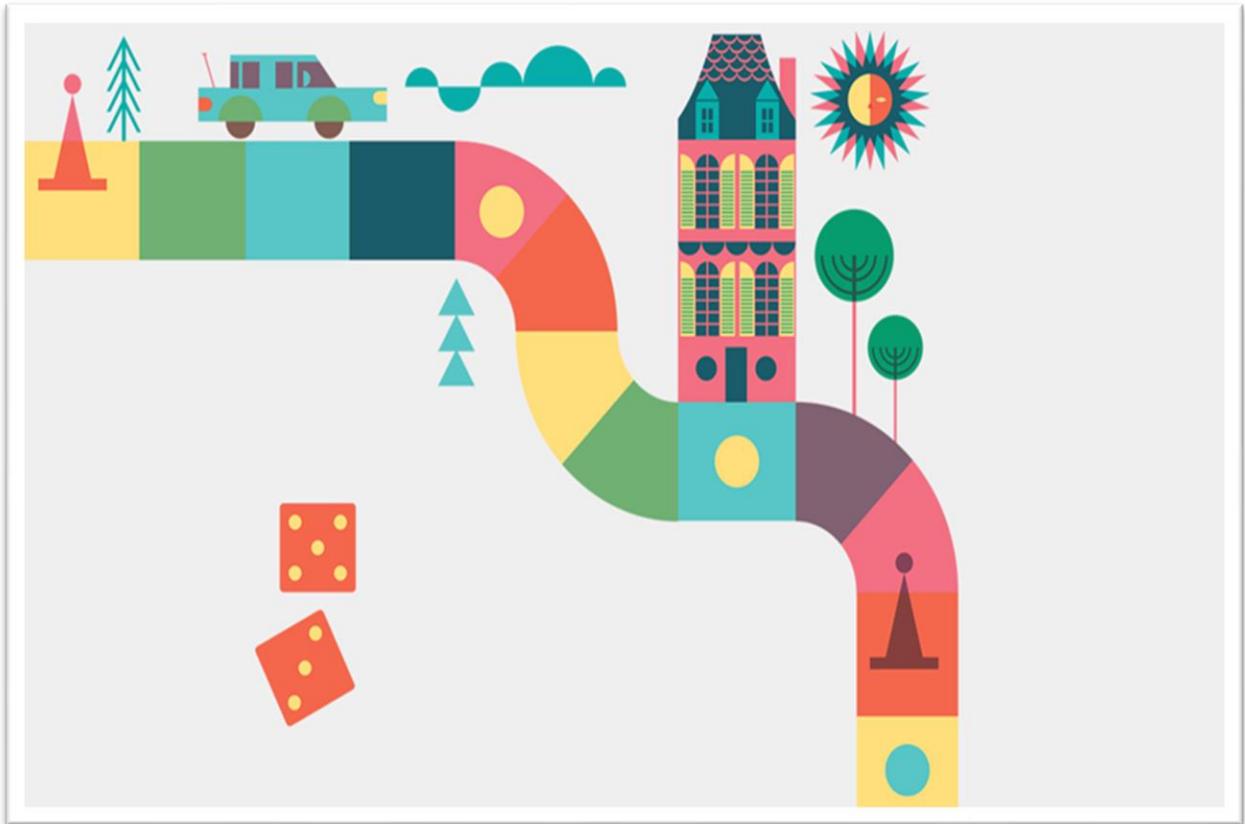
The end-of-course assessment is based on the assessment of the existence of a reflective process, engagement, understanding and effort that the student has demonstrated, rather than on actual change (a guide for assessment is provided).

Detailed tool description

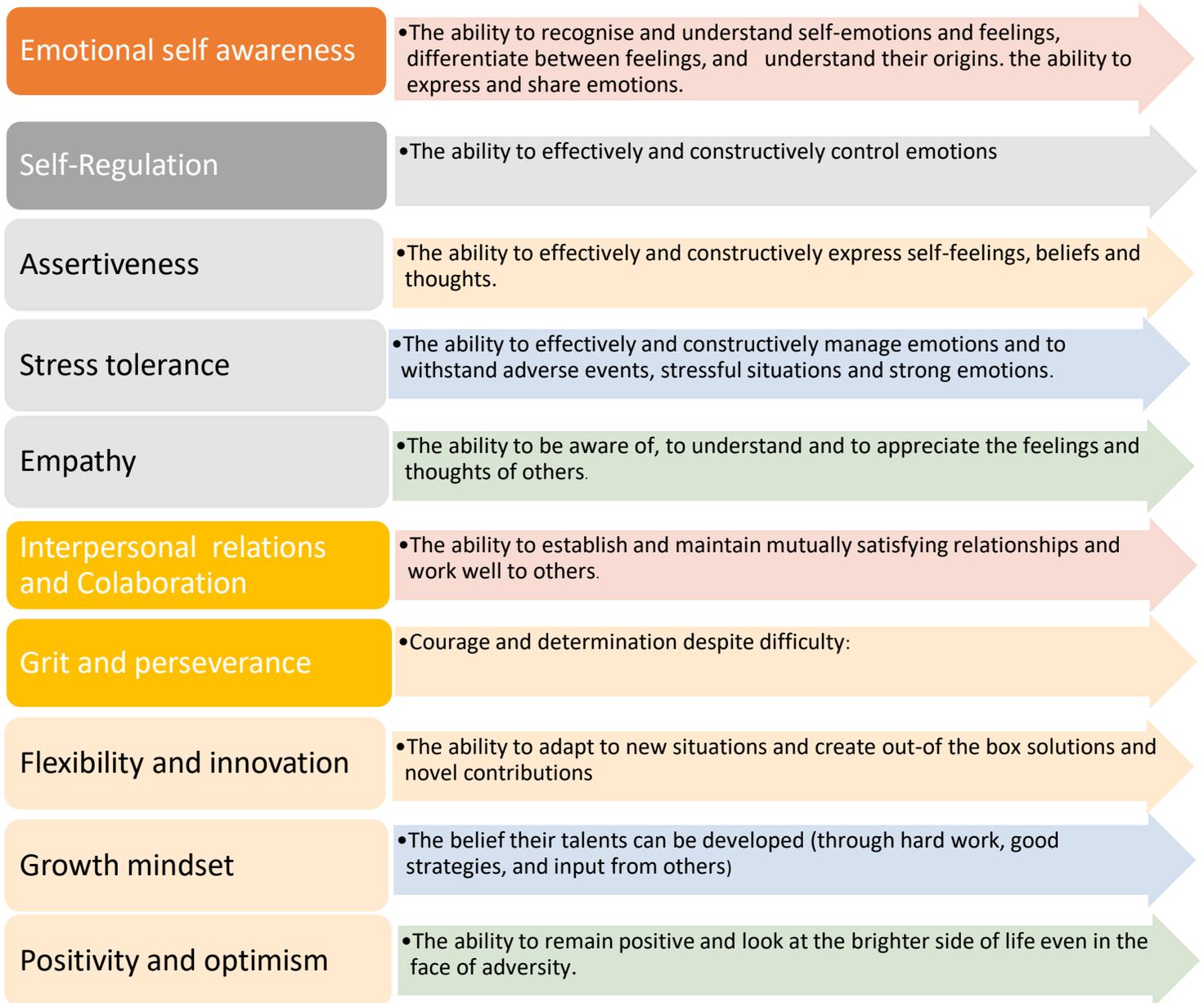
1. The soft skills assessment tool includes a development tool (for students) and an assessment tool (for teachers).
2. The SEI development tool for students includes a map which acts as a roadmap for soft skills development following a one-semester course. It is a general and generic tool that can be used with any soft skill selected for development and in any taught course.



3. The map includes 13 steps - the number of lessons in a typical semester allowing students to document their weekly development. However, some activities are given two weeks to complete, and furthermore, the development pace is flexible, meaning that students can complete the tasks at their own pace, as long as they meet the guidelines for submission at the middle and end of the course (see map below).



4. The set of skills which have been identified as particularly important for coping, succeeding and experiencing well-being, and which can be addressed by the assessment tool, include: self-awareness, impulse control, assertiveness, stress tolerance, empathy, interpersonal relations and collaboration, grit and perseverance, growth mindset, positivity and optimism (see diagram below).



5. The development tool for each skill is built with a similar structure:
 - a. Gaining knowledge/understanding of the skill, its manifestations, its importance and contribution (through articles, TED talks and guided questions);
 - b. Identifying one's personal starting point and setting development goals;
 - c. Reflective and practice exercise to develop the skill in daily life.
6. Each of the assignments is documented and becomes part of the assessment. It is submitted twice during the course. The two assignments are built one on top of the other.
7. The assessment tool for teachers includes two tools: a mid-term and a final assessment tool, in congruence with the students' submission stages. This allows for formative feedback and support in development. Additional support can be given by teachers if they wish to do so.

Process steps

Step 1: The teacher selects and presents the students with 2-3 SEI skills that are relevant for the course, are integral to it, contribute to it, or can be cultivated within it (from the list provided, or can add others).

Step 2: At the beginning of the course, the teacher presents the concept of soft skills for success and well-being in the 21st century (an explanation and a short presentation are included). The teacher explains the importance of cultivating SE skills and their inseparable role in learning and academic achievements.

Step 3: The teacher presents the skills selected to be part of the course, explains them and highlights their relevance for the course.

Step 4: Each student selects one of the skills presented by the teacher to be his or her target of development within the course. The selection should be made based on self-reflection and guiding questions incorporated in the tool. The choice should be explained as part of the reflective journey.

Step 5: The student is then given a personal roadmap with a set of tool cards. The cards include activities for the development of the skill including cognitive (knowledge and understanding the skill, its manifestation and value), emotional, and behavioral.



Step 6: The students document their development, using the activities, reading materials, reflection questions and exercise guidelines provided to them. They mark them briefly on the milestones in the map, and in a detailed manner in the reflective journal.

Step 7: After the goal setting stage (5-6 weeks into the course), the students should submit whatever they had done up to that point and receive feedback. The teacher is provided with a formative assessment tool. The student integrates the feedback into his/her assignment, and it becomes part of the final assignment, to represent the formative nature of the assessment and the development as a continuous journey. The final assessment therefore contains all the assignments and exercise of the entire semester including the intermediate one.

Step 8: At the end of the course, students submit their review of the entire process they have experienced, including the map, the exercise, a general reflection of their journey, the development of the skill, their insights, and areas for further development (reflecting the fact that SEI development is an on-going process).

Step 9: The teacher accordingly assesses the work done by the students and provides feedback twice in the course of the process: after the goal setting stage and at the end of the course. The assessment of the end product is based on the extent to which the student shows understanding of the concepts, commitment to the process, insights along the way, development since the starting point, and not by the level they have reached at the end of the process

Peer feedback (optional)

Twice during the semester, students gather in small groups, share and discuss their journeys, provide support and insights to each other. The groups can be formed by the skills selected for development. The students comment based on guiding questions provided to them at the beginning of the course (which are created as part of the tool). Feedback is documented by the respective student and is added to the reflective journal with the student's feelings, thoughts and 'take-away' from the feedback.

Teacher preparation for using the SEI formative assessment

Before introducing the tool, teachers go through a workshop in which they are presented with the rationale for soft skills formative assessment, and with the importance of developing SEI skills in higher education, and in particular in the 21st century. They are also presented with the SEI skills and the relevance of each one to learning and different subject matters. A document summarizing the knowledge,



which can be used with the students at the beginning of any course, will be provided. The teachers will also get familiar with the assessment tool.

Student development tool

See attached document (example for Self-Awareness).

Teacher Assessment tool

See attached document for the intermediate and final teacher evaluation tool.

Evaluation of students' perceptions of the process and tool

(Evaluation of the assessment for quality assurance purposes based on Farrah, 2012). In this questionnaire, the student indicates the extent to which he/she agrees with the following statements regarding his/her views about journal writing by putting a tick in the appropriate box using a 5-point Likert scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly agree.

The items of the soft skills tool:

1. The soft skills tool helped me to talk about my experiences.
2. The soft skills tool helped me to express my feelings, ideas and opinions.
3. The soft skills tool helped me to respond to my thoughts and feelings.
4. The soft skills tool stimulated my critical thinking skills.
5. The soft skills tool was a way of thinking to explore my learning.
6. The soft skills tool was an opportunity to gain self-knowledge.
7. The soft skills tool helped me understand what I was learning.
8. The soft skills tool allowed me to describe what I understood.
9. The soft skills tool offered me a chance to develop and reinforce my writing skills.
10. The soft skills tool enhanced my communication skills.
11. The soft skills tool increased my creativity.
12. The soft skills tool motivated me to write more.
13. I did not understand what I was supposed to do or write in my journal.
14. I did not have enough time to develop my skills.
15. The soft skills tool is a waste of time.
16. I find it easy to write in my journal.
17. The soft skills tool should be encouraged and/or continued.
18. I would like to share with the class what I wrote in my development journal.
19. Overall, this was a worthwhile experience .



Pilot narrations

By Niva Dolev, Kinneret Academic College, Israel

Setting: The Soft skills tool was implemented in one class of second-year students at the Education and Community department at Kinneret Academic College. The tool was implemented in a Developmental Psychology course for one semester. The course is a compulsory course for second-year students. It is a 1.5-hour lesson once a week for 13 weeks. The tool was integrated throughout the course

Participants: 50 students participated in the course, 4 males and 46 females, 12 native Hebrew speakers, and 38 native Arabic speakers.

The tool: The Soft Skills tool aims to develop soft skills as part of a regular course and integrated within it. It is based on the assumption that soft skills play an important part in the academic and occupational success in the 21st century. As the higher education curriculum is typically hard to change is mainly academic, the tool allows us to integrate soft skills development within any course. The tool offers a selection of soft skills. One skill is selected to be integrated, and the students go through self-directed activities at their own pace.

Implementation: The skill selected for the pilot was well-being. The rationale was based on the evidence for the importance of well-being for success, health, and relationships. It has been found a top skill for educators, as well as one which educators should develop in children.

In the first lesson, I introduced the concept of well-being and highlighted its links with the course and its importance for children's development, as well as for those educating them. I dedicated the whole lesson to the topic and explained how the tool will be integrated into the course.

As of the second lesson, personal exercise to develop well-being were uploaded on the Moodle, in two weeks intervals. The students had to submit them any time within these two weeks and then move to the next. The exercise was all evidence-based and included gratitude exercise, identifying strengths, acts of kindness, and meaning. Each exercise ended in a short reflection as well as connecting this well-being aspect to education. The tool allowed to meet each student's starting point and pace, as well as to gain a more general understanding of the concept and its links to education



In each lesson, I made connections between the different development areas and well-being, for example, nature and nurture were discussed also regarding the origins of positive disposition. I also integrated short class exercises to enhance learning using cards, post-it notes, short group discussions, etc.

At the end of the course, students had to reflect on their journey. I assessed the way they approached the development process, how serious and reflective they were, and how much understanding of the concept and themselves they demonstrated.

They also worked in groups to create a developmental calendar with tips for parents and educators on the different areas of well-being regarding development. Overall, the pilot allowed for the introduction and the development of awareness to well-being and its importance, as well as provide some tools. One of the improvements would be to integrate more exercise and enhance the connections within the class even more to make a bigger impact.



By Nino Chikoivani, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia

The course, where the tool has been piloted, is 'Methodology of Teaching English' to one-year (60 ECTS) program students who are practitioners and potential teachers that are supposed to apply for the senior teacher's position at schools after graduating from the program. There are overall 20 students in the group with different qualifications of bachelor and master. The major focus of the course is on methodological, pedagogical, and psychological preparation of the yet inexperienced teachers who have passed the Teacher's Certification National Exam and were permitted to the TSU program. The course is compulsory and the students are granted 10 ECTS that ensure two semesters of intensive sessions in different aspects of teaching, such as classroom management, contemporary approaches, methodology, strategies, and techniques for effective teaching, assessment system, its tools, and components, lesson planning, etc.

Amongst the group members, one is a male and the rest are females. They all are originally from different regions of Georgia. Due to the reason that experienced teachers are a vast minority in the group, most of them are beginners, therefore, are boosting the methodological awareness of the teaching process via theoretical and practical base on a weekly basis.

Since the course refers to the teaching methodology, students have acquired different methods so far that are effectively used in the 21st-century schools of the western world. Since we are piloting the Values and Knowledge Education (VaKE) approach and use problem-based learning (PBL), and case-based learning studies, the course, in parallel with the theoretical part, is mainly constructed on practical examples, so-called cases, dilemmas, and problems that students are supposed to search for the clues to. Since the whole segment of the group is potential teachers, they need to be aware of not just teaching methodology, but assessment tools and criteria as well, consequently, make the best use of them in a real learning environment in order to focus on study outcomes and then measure what they teach, but not always with marks and figures, relatively.

In terms of hard skills, they need to be aware of the 21st-century job market demands and to raise skillful generations equipped with soft skills that are an obvious priority for today's employers, study exchange programs, etc. However, before focusing on their students' upbringing and education, they need to work out and find gaps in their own needs of what skills they lack as teachers and members of the society in order to join and wade into the fast-paced competitive world where being just a professional of your field is too narrow, therefore, contrary to



it, they are expected to be equipped with social-emotional skills that will be beneficial while working with their students, colleagues, other staff members, or just a general society surrounding them.

Before presenting the tools to the students and then giving the weekly tasks, I decided to make a survey amongst them to check their general awareness of soft skills. In response to the question of what their perception of soft skills, they mentioned:

- “Soft skills are emotional intelligence, personal qualities, empathy, assertiveness, and other personal traits, that enable a person to have a good social life and be good at teamwork.”
- “Not enough, but I think these are the skill we need to practice for future development.”
- “Soft skills are those crucial abilities, which every person needs to be professional, successful, and desirable one in his/her own job and social life as well. Clearly, people that obtain those skills are more confident, happy, and full.”
- “Soft skills are professional skills and they are the combination of social skills”.

Students also outlined the importance of soft skills in the 21st century:

- “As nowadays computers perform much better in many special skills than humans do and teamwork has become much more important than solo work, people now need to be not only good at their work, but they also need to be good team-players, creative and emphatic individuals.”
- “Since our global world is becoming more and more reluctant we should start to help not only ourselves but also others in order to lead future generations in the right path.”
- “Soft skills, are really important in the 21st century. In fact, today's life is totally based on soft skills, because no matter how brilliant you are in your field if you're not aware of effective communicative skills, if you can't put up with stress or show empathy, etc.”
- “What kind of soft skills you have got it determines how well you perform your role and responsibility for the rest of the society members. This is why soft skills matter in the 21st century.”

They obviously took interest in it, especially after getting acquainted with their descriptions provided by the teacher which was followed by several sessions



using case study and PBL, students worked on different dilemmas and, collaboratively, they elaborated solutions to problems from different standpoints and roles they had acquired.

Dilemma:

A 15-year-old boy Luka, due to the psychological stress from the family, school, and police has recently ended up his life with a suicide which decision could have been made due to reluctancy from society.

Task:

Students were grouped in four in each and were given an instruction to imagine the victim in the center and make a spidergram of the parties who were involved in the pressure which possibly led him to the lethal result (family, school, friends, and police). Students were brainstorming on the causing reasons for all the four perspectives. In terms of the arguments they outlined that people, including the victim, possessed no skills for stress tolerance, there was just apathy from the society/lack of empathy, segregation, neither self nor other peoples' feelings awareness, no self-regulation, grid, and perseverance, etc.

The brainstorming stage was followed by possible solutions, namely, what could have been done to avoid such a fatal outcome. Students in their small groups elaborated on the solutions and presented to the whole group that was followed by open-class feedback and anonymous nominations from the students to choose the most dignified one who showed the best skills of detecting and collaboratively fixing the problem.

Right after such sessions, it became obvious for the group which skills they needed to develop on their own. I provided them with all the necessary resources for individual work on certain skills. In terms of the survey they enlisted the skills they would like to develop personally and professionally:

- "I have problems with expressing and sharing emotions. Low assertiveness, as I prefer to accept other people's views rather than defend my opinions. weak collaboration skills, because I don't like it when I follow dumb leaders on the wrong path and I never argue with them so I prefer to work alone. in all the other aspects I consider myself perfect."
- "Emotional self-awareness because I think I lack the ability to recognize and understand self-emotions and feelings. Stress tolerance, flexibility, and innovation."
- "I would like to be more assertive, stress-tolerant person, or obtain self-regulation skills. Developing those skills would help me to be more successful"



in personal and career life. I consider that these three elements can change and conduct our life in better ways.”

- “Assertiveness, stress tolerance because if you are not confident and if you are not sure about the thing that you are talking about then how other people can believe you. Stress tolerance is very important because if you lack this it means that you are in very bad condition. If you can't overcome your stress it will defeat you and will affect badly on everything you try to do.”

As future school teachers, it was fascinating what skills they wished their students to have developed:

- “Empathy - to be able to feel what others feel and understand other children's points of view. 2) assertiveness - to express self-feelings, beliefs, and thoughts effectively and constructively 3) Grit and perseverance - to keep growing and moving forward despite difficulties. 4) Interpersonal relations and Collaboration - to achieve greater goals together with others. also all the other skills would be beneficial for children, but the four skills are a must.”
- “Empathy because they need to feel themselves in other's shoes, self-regulations to properly express and control their feelings, interpersonal relationships, and collaboration which they will find useful in the future.”
- “School children will be able to work with each other. They should be not only solo-workers but also team-workers. This ability develops their social skills and makes them more friendly and tolerant people. They should have got the ability to be aware of, to appreciate and to understand the feelings of others, the ability to adapt to new situations. All of these skills help them to fit the 21st century.”
- “School children need to have empathetical skills, communicative skills, technological skills. First of all, children should have empathetical skills. If they don't learn how to think from other peoples' point of view then they will never be able to determine how badly they behave to their classmates by telling rude or offensive words to them or by using violence and very often by telling such offensive words like miserable, ugly, fatty how they destroy the self-esteem of those children or how they make these children psychologically broken.”

On the question of what the role and importance of formative assessment were, the feedback was also notable:



- “I think formative assessment is a good way to encourage people, assessing not only their knowledge of the subject but their soft skills too. when a person gets a prize (no matter formal or other kinds) for being innovative, emphatic, or a good leader, he/she is most likely to do it again and work on developing the particular skills more and more.”
- “Formative assessment help teachers and students to deliver high-quality lessons, follow the regulations, reveal their true feelings, maintain discipline, enlarge their mindset, and achieve short and long-period goals.”
- “Formative assessment helps children and adults in general to show their gaps and weaknesses. If we are ready to see and estimate our weaknesses, then a formative assessment will be efficient and helpful. To the help of it, we can develop ourselves.”
- “Formative assessment is very important because this kind of assessment, first of all, outlines the strengths and weaknesses of the particular person. In this case, when the person knows what are his weaknesses he can better work on improving his weaknesses and making them his strong points. I am for formative assessment.”

The main obstacle was no access to the online platform where I could have uploaded resources and follow up tasks. However, since it was an individual approach, I managed to provide them with the articles and video links that facilitated them to work on the google docs prepared by me, where they had an opportunity to give feedback on the gained information through answering the questions.

Another hindrance was a time limit that my students had due to their overloaded study and working schedules, as they are quite busy adults and do not have decent time to devote it to such tasks despite their extensive interest and a feel of a necessity which they had outlined through the feedback they provided while working on tasks.

However, since we have left another semester as well, together with midterm and final assessments from both teacher and students’ sides, I am planning to use another assessment tool and grant them with individual badges, which will certainly raise their general self-esteem and motivation for further development.

I have adapted the materials to the local context and opportunities due to the above-mentioned reasons. I have to admit that I have gained an enormous pleasure and a motivation from the students because of their interest towards the



topic and how sincerely they see the necessity of having all those skills for their development on a personal and a professional level, especially while having interpersonal relations with the society. Therefore, I would appreciate to sophisticate the materials first of all and search for more up-to-date information about this tool to ensure validity and reliability.

While working on the skills, it is interesting what three most important skills they appreciated working on, or strive for further development:

- “First, a positive way of thinking. Second, finding inner strength. Third, considering it as an instrumental part of my life.”
- “1) Knowing that it does not stress itself, that damages health, but it's our negative expectancy. 2) Stress can strengthen our heart and overall health. 3) in stressful situations body releases Oxycontin and makes people more social.”
- “Making people social, overcoming your weaknesses, making you believe that you are a strong person.”
- “1. Think positively during a hard period of life. 2. What does not kill us it makes us stronger. 3. Focus on other people and their needs, rather than ourselves. complaining is a really dangerous thing that stops us to overcome stress.”
- “1. We should try not to focus on stress or let stress defeat us. We should try to be more sociable and see that life without stress is beautiful.”
- “1. Stress can make people healthier, 2. Stress makes people more social, 3. The person who obtains the skill can handle stressful situations and strong emotions.”
- “Stress is less harmful to our health than the belief that stress is harmful. 2. Stress hormone makes us willing to communicate with others, share our feelings, or help them. 3. If we believe that stress is not harmful to our health, our body's stress response will change positively.”
- “1. We learn how to meet and face challenges; 2. It pushes us for a passionate heart; 3. It teaches resilience.”
- “1. not to pay attention to stress, think that it is good for us 2. stress hormone force us to hug and be social, 3. we should change our opinion about stress.”
- “In my view, for successful stress management, we have to be more assertive, we have to keep a positive attitude and we have to learn more about stress.”



By Adia Meirovitch, Hadassah Academic College, Israel

The pilot was conducted in the course “Patient Caregiver Relations” at the Strauss campus of Hadassah College. It was held in the first semester of the 5780 (2020) academic year and included 12 lessons. Throughout the course, students were exposed to experiences and issues that influence the building of satisfactory relationships between therapists and patients and discussed them through concepts, theories, and models. Twelve undergraduates participated in the course “Management of Service Organizations – Health Track”.

The students are orthodox women aged 20-35, 67% (8) are married, some are mothers of children (1-3 children). All students work full time. The course took place in the late afternoon, with students coming straight from work. The teaching approach is Student-Centered learning (SCL). The approach is characterized by an interpersonal orientation, in which the lecturer considers the students’ perspective, provides them with relevant information and choices, and encourages them to take more responsibility for their behavior. The approach emphasizes the importance of a supportive learning environment that has a positive and collaborative interpersonal relationship between lecturers and students.

Using the tool included the skill development phase and its assessment phase Developing soft skill – empathy

The “module” developed a “road map” for students with 9 assignments (on average, one every week/two weeks) whose purpose was to help them develop their empathy independently. The process included three stages – each one referring to a different component of empathy: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral.

1. The **Cognitive component** was developed through 3 assignments that referred to knowledge and understanding of empathy, its behavioral expression, and the values it embodies:

Assignment 1 – Reading an article placed on the course site: reference to its learning outcomes regarding empathy and recognition of the three most significant characteristics of empathy in the eyes of the students. In addition, they had to find another article on the topic and refer to the information learned from it.

Assignment 2 – Watching a video and noting 3 things learned from it and what it added to their knowledge about empathy. At the end of this assignment, they had to define empathy based on the two assignments.

Assignment 3 – Reference to the importance of empathy in different fields of life: the studies course, study in general, work, family, friendships etc.



1. **Transition from referring to empathy in general to a personal reference.** Carried out in a dedicated lesson. Each student shared her understanding of the meaning of empathy and its importance in her life. We (students and lecturer) shared personal examples that we discussed and clarified their personal goals in developing the skill throughout the course. We conducted two role playing assignments in class about situations from the students' lives where they have difficulties acting with empathy and how they can handle it – all in an accepting and safe learning environment.

After this lesson, students carried out **assignment 4**: A reflective observation on the manner and measure in which empathy characterizes them (including examples). In addition, they asked someone who knows them well how they think they each use empathy and compared the person's view to their own views. At the end of the assignment they defined a specific behavioral goal for improving empathy in their lives, including reference to how they would carry this out; to the factors that may help or hinder them in achieving their goals; and to their perception of the benefits of improving their empathy in advancing their quality of life and success.

1. **Emotional component** – Developed using two assignments (5 and 6) which referred to self-diagnosis of facilitating and hindering factors of students' empathetic behavior (one assignment for each topic). In both assignments student were asked to think of various aspects of their lives and identify in which ones they are empathetic (assignment 5) and where they have difficulties expressing empathy (assignment 6); they had to describe a specific event for each of these situations and explain how they coped; examine what triggered their behavior/hindered their behavior; and note what they learned about their strengths and weaknesses (in accordance with the assignment) with regards to empathy.
2. **Behavioral component** – Developed through two assignments (7 and 8) that referred to empathetic behavior in effect in various fields of life.

Assignment 7 – focused on understanding the other – students were asked to recollect an event in which they experienced empathy in the last week and describe the situation through the eyes of the person for whom they felt empathetic, i.e. to describe the situation in the first-person from the point of view of the other person. In the second stage they “became” the person they were empathetic within the described situation and wrote down what that person would have said to them; what was it in the student's behavior, in the things she said, in her body language,



etc. that made us feel she was empathetic. At the end of the assignment, they answered a reflective question referring to what they learned from the assignment. **Assignment 8** – focused on honing their understanding of behavioral expressions of empathy in different fields of the lives of students (in accordance with the areas referred to in assignment 3). Students were asked to construct a table noting the number of times they were empathetic over the last week with regards to each aspect of life. In addition, they were asked what signs/clues were recognized by them in the different situations that made them understand empathetic behavior was required. With regard to situations where they did not behave with empathy, they were asked to state what the hindrances were. At the end of the assignment, they answered a question regarding the manner in which their empathetic behavior contributed to them and to others.

1. **Summarizing assignment** – Assignment 9 – students submitted a file with all their assignments throughout the semester and included the summarizing assignment which included two parts:
2. Quantitative assessment questionnaire regarding their experience with the tool (Likert scale 1-5). Here are the questions asked:

- I feel the process was significant for me
- I feel it requires more time
- I started an important process
- I'm interested in continuing the process
- I received new insights I didn't have before
- I learned to look into myself in a more reflective manner

1. Qualitative-reflective assessment questionnaire regarding their experience with empathy development tools, which included the following questions:
 - How would you summarize the process you experienced?
 - What did you learn about yourself?
 - Is the process applicable to your day-to-day life?
 - If so, how was it expressed?
 - What benefits did the process have for you? In what manner?
 - Do you think you achieved the goal you set out for yourself at the beginning of the process?
 - Were there any difficulties? If so, how did you handle them?
 - What would you like to continue developing in this area? How do you think you can achieve it?



Assessment of empathy / soft skills development through the tool

The assessment was carried out at three points in time: after the fifth lesson (assignments 1-4); during the ninth lesson (assignments 5-6); and during the tenth lesson (penultimate) – assignments 7-8 and summarizing assignment (assignment 10).

On the first two assessment dates, the papers were submitted in a model only and the lecturer sent each student detailed verbal feedback on the assignments sent at that time (without numerical evaluation). The feedback referred to at least three points from the following points, which is part of the tool (for each student according to her work, the points were selected for reference) and suggested ways to improve learning and use of the tool:

1. Level of understanding the material (especially with regards to assignments 1-3)
2. The connection between relevant terms and self-reflection: relevance of examples to the concepts (relevant from assignment 3)
3. Reference to the comparison between personal perceptions with the perceptions of others (especially relevant to assignments 4,7)
4. Understanding the contribution of improving the ability in our day-to-day lives (relevant to most assignments)
5. The clear wording of the goals for improving the ability, including identifying hindrances and promoting factors (starting from assignment 4)

At the last assessment date, all assignments, including the summarizing work (assignment 9) were quantitatively assessed. Students were also asked to print the work in the model so that the whole process could be seen from start to finish. The assessment was based on an indicator that is part of the tool. 30% of the grade in the empathy development course was divided among the three dimensions tested – 10% for each dimension:

- Knowledge – cognitive familiarity with the concept, organization of writing
- Self-contemplation description of the work process and its observation through the concept/feature/skill
- Reflective process

In each dimension, the tool allows for an evaluation of students' performance by three levels. For each level, the lecturer sets a maximum score: Level A – up to 10%; Level B – up to 7%; Level C – up to 5%. The grade range was 22% - 30%. In addition to numerical assessments, students were given verbal feedback in the body of work.



Strengths of using the tool

A deeper and more sensitive understanding of the course content, higher involvement in the course.

“The empathy course has given strength and validity to lessons in the classroom since with every subject we have studied, the concept of empathy came into play”.

“It helped to understand what empathy is, how it’s expressed correctly and appropriately. It increased the self-awareness with everything related to empathy from a personal aspect”.

- Students’ self-development of empathy and other soft skills.

“It made me pay more attention to my listening to others. To my view of others in a deeper, more understanding way and taught me how to really react to different situations”.

“It contributed to me, and also added a lot of tools that helped me to empathize, be better, accept and listen more”.

- Transferring the soft skills learned – empathy – to many areas of life beyond lesson learning.

“Empathy is the most important ability in a patient-therapist relationship. Understanding the ability, deepening it, and improving it has contributed to me on a very personal level. In this course in particular, and in life in general. The topic of empathy helped me and was very interesting to me”.

“Contributed to me on a personal level. This is a very important area for learning. It makes people better and more considerate. Looking from a different angle on situations”.

Weaknesses of using the tool

- Workload – too many assignments.

“The workload was a bit much”.

“In order to answer such things, you need a lot of quiet time and availability (which can happen in class) but at home + work + children it is not so available”.

- Repetition – some overlap between some assignments: Understanding the concept (1-2); reference to empathy in different fields of life (3, 4, 8). The student felt that in the last assignment (assignment 9) there was a repetition of some things and examples they wrote in previous assignments.
- Schedules – the assignments were not sent every week but three times during the semester: after the fifth lesson (assignments 1-4); during the ninth lesson (assignments 5-6); and in the penultimate class (assignments 7-9). In addition, some of the students prepared the assignments – all of them – at



the same time before submission and not as required and planned – every week/fortnight.

“Classes were too “heavy” relative to the rest of the curriculum. It demanded a little more thought. In classroom exercises, I didn’t just want to babble but to answer honestly, and that required concentration and a bit of looking into myself. There are pluses and minuses (memories of the past, etc. and changes that are always hard to change!)”.

1. The tool is online and with the exception of one lesson that was on empathy and connected to work on assignment 4 (setting goals), empathy was presented in the course through the atmosphere created there and the lecturer acts as a model for empathic behavior for students. This atmosphere was built from the first lesson in which we made a deep personal acquaintance and clarified the topic of empathy and its importance for patient-therapist relationships and life in general. Group size allowed work in the format of a workshop with a student-centered approach. This is reflected in an in-depth and open-ended discourse, illustrating the life issues of the students and lecturer, role-playing games that illustrated empathic behavior, videos (both as part of the tool and lessons).

One of the students summarized:

“The links during lessons and class discussions and especially the very interesting way in which the material was conveyed, the amazing rhetoric, the acting ability and the lecturer’s empathy who contributed most and was a vivid example of what empathy is”.

Conclusions and recommendations for improvement

Conclusions

- The comprehensiveness and gradual nature of tasks contribute to the in-depth personal work of students in developing their empathy and its application in different areas of life.
- Detailed feedback, which promotes discourse and knowledge between the student and lecturer and demonstrates the lecturer’s empathy towards students, is essential and constitutes a behavioral model that helps develop it.
- Assessment tools integrated into the soft skill development tool help the lecturer in providing feedback on the development process and final work



assessment. The final assessment tool categories are relevant to the development evaluation and are clear.

Recommendations for improvement

- Incorporating skill development work into ongoing instruction through demonstration and illustration, role-playing, and analysis of events that arise with tool-driven assignments.
- Reducing and varying the number of tasks. I suggest changing some of the weekly / bi-weekly reflective assignments on events where empathy was expressed – what helped to express it? How did it come to fruition? What cues in the situation indicate the need to relate empathy to another?
- Ensure that you submit and provide feedback on each assignment individually (rather than in batches) once every two weeks. Enables student process work, as well as closer interpersonal feedback and interaction between the lecturer and the student.
- Refine the parameters for the assessment of levels (A, B, C) in each of the final work assessment categories. Alternatively, I suggest considering scoring for each assignment individually, with a higher weight for the concluding work. I also propose considering giving a separate score for student development – compared to the goals set (assignment 4); And with reference to the development and deepening of the analysis of the process undergone.



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Assessment tools for the student

ASSIGNMENT #1

Getting to know the skill:

Read the attached article (see link).
What did the article teach you about the skill?

In your view, what are the three most important things about the skill?

ASSIGNMENT #2

Watch the TED lecture (see link).

Three things I took from the lecture:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Define the skill based on both the article and lecture.

ASSIGNMENT #3

What is the relevance of the skill to your success in the course?

What is the relevance of the skill to your success in learning and life in general?

ASSIGNMENT #4

From the general to the personal:
Think about the skill on a personal level. How do you use it? (Use examples.)

Ask someone who knows you well how they think you use this skill.

Compare with your own view.

What would you like to improve?

Define it as clearly as possible.

How would its improvement promote the quality of your everyday life and your success? How

would you do it and who can help you? What could get in the way of achieving the goal?



ASSIGNMENT #5

Emotional literacy:

List 15-18 emotions.

Sort them into groups by any criterion you choose.

Choose 5 emotions from your list and explain their meaning.

What is the connection between this assignment and the soft skill that you chose to develop?

ASSIGNMENT #6

Emotional timeclock:

For 4 days, at least twice a day, stop and ask yourself how you feel.

Record your emotions, and write what had caused them.

What did you learn about yourself?

What is the connection between this assignment and the soft skill that you chose to develop?

ASSIGNMENT #7

Understanding emotions:

Tell about an incident you experienced in class this week. What did you feel? How strongly (on a scale of 1 to 10)?

What caused the emotion?

What did you think? What did you do? How often do you have this emotion? What is the connection between this assignment and the soft skill that you chose to develop?

ASSIGNMENT #8

Expressing emotions:

For 3 days – check how often you use words that express emotions or share your feeling.

If you share your feelings, what makes you do so? How does it help?

If you don't share, what stops you?

Try to share with someone something you felt – record what happens and how it affects both of you. What is the connection between this assignment and the soft skill that you chose to develop?



FINAL ASSIGNMENT

Throughout the semester, you worked on developing one of your personal skills. Create a portfolio of all your assignments throughout the course. Complete the last assignment and

FINAL ASSIGNMENT 2

1. **On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you summarize the process?**
 1. I feel the process was meaningful for me. 1....2....3....4...5
 2. I feel it needs more time.. 1....2....3....4...
 3. I began an important process. 1....2....3....4...
 4. I want to continue this process.. 1....2....3....4...5
 5. I had insights that have never had before.. 1....2....3....4...
 6. I learned to look at myself in a more reflective way.. 1....2....3....4...5
 7. I felt a need to share the process with others.. 1....2....3....4...5
 8. I made changes in my everyday life.. 1....2....3....4...5
9. **Freely and reflective**
 10. How would you summarize the process you experienced?
 11. What did you learn about yourself?
 12. How was the process expressed you would like it to be expressed in your everyday life? (Give at least 3 examples.)
 13. Connect the exercises you performed to your development – What did you do? How did they work? What was their effect?
 14. How useful was this process to you? In what ways?



Assessment of intermediate assignment (teacher)

The learner:

1. Demonstrated understanding of the theoretical material (article summary, TED lecture).
2. Demonstrated an ability to link the relevant concepts with introspection.
3. Was able to provide examples for the concepts.
4. Related to the comparison between personal perceptions and perception of others.
5. Demonstrated understanding of the contribution of the improved skill to everyday life.
6. Formulated the goal of improving the skill coherently, including the ability to identify obstacles and helps.



Assessment of final assignment (teacher)

Category	Level		
	A	B	C
Knowledge – cognitive understanding of the concept, organization of writing	At least 8 assignments were concluded fully and in depth. Most of the writing is in paragraphs and written coherently. The concept is clear and explained in depth.	At least 6 assignments were concluded fully and in depth. Some of the writing is in paragraphs and is generally clearly written. The concept is explained clearly.	The student concluded less than 6 assignments, or did not answer the questions, or answered superficially. Most of the writing is not formulated clearly. The concept is unclear and is explained superficially/partially.
Introspection Description of the process and its observation by means of the concept/skill/ability	A clear, specific goal was defined. The student gave specific, relevant examples from everyday life. There is full, in-depth connection of the student's experiences, emotions, feelings and thoughts with the concept and theoretical materials.	A general goal was defined. The student gave short but specific, relevant examples from everyday life. There is partial connection of the student's experiences, emotions, feelings and thoughts with the concept and theoretical materials.	The goal was not clearly defined. The student gave short, general examples, some of which were not relevant. There is little connection of the student's experiences, emotions, thoughts with application of the concept and the relevant theoretical materials in the examples.
Reflective process	The student demonstrated meta-cognitive thinking that describes and explains processes such as doubts, dilemmas, considerations, and personal beliefs. The student related in-depth to challenges and difficulties s/he dealt with during the process. The student revealed and explained in detail the process s/he had undergone throughout the course, in a way that demonstrated his/her development and actions. The student related to issues in which the process helped or would help in the future in various contexts, including ideas for future improvement.	The student demonstrated partial meta-cognitive thinking. In some assignments, doubts, dilemmas, considerations, and personal beliefs were described and explained. The student related to some challenges and difficulties s/he dealt with during the process. The student revealed but did not explain the process s/he had undergone throughout the course, in a way that demonstrated his/her development and actions. The student related to issues in which the process helped or would help in the future in various contexts, but had only one idea for future improvement.	The student did not demonstrate meta-cognitive thinking, but used 'slogans' without relating to processes such as doubts, dilemmas, considerations, and personal beliefs. The student related briefly and superficially to only one challenges s/he dealt with during the process. The student summarized briefly, without examples or explanations, the process s/he had undergone throughout the course, with only general reference to the characteristic. The student related in general to issues in which the process helped or would help in the future in only one context, without referring to ideas for future improvement.



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