# GOLDEN5 PROGRAM

## STARTING UP

Lera, M-J., Jensen, K., Josang, F., Buccoliero, E., & Symanscka, J. & Timmermans, J. (2007)

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## General situation in Secondary Education: Problems, school failure, etc.

The five countries involved in this project have similar problems in their schools, specially related to behavioural problems and, as their consequences, the low achievement of students at risk of social exclusion. In fact, all the countries in the Community face the same challenges in actual multicultural and multi religious society, which is not compatible with traditional educational methods.

In Italy, Centre Promeco (It), working in teacher training since 1993, has expressed a specific need of support in educative work with students at risk, also because it is increasing the presence of immigrants and youngest with problems (recognizing rules and roles, motivation toward study and so on). Researchers show a strong problem of bullying in secondary schools, towards students who are "different" from the majority: attitudes, religion, country, physical aspect. This is linked to a problem of integration in the classrooms and dropout among students suffering social exclusion.

In Belgium, data show that 10 to 20% of pupils in some classrooms are marginalized, have academic problems in addition to social problems. Problems of integration are more relevant for immigrant students, just like the consequences of social exclusion, absenteeism, lack of motivation and low achievement. The NGO Le Soufflé participated in this project developing a program for teachers to deal with the diversity and children at risk.

In Spain, data are similar; under the NOVAS-RES project we have developed materials and courses to improve teacher resources to deal with this diversity. The current situation is not improving; the Comenius 21. "La maleta intercultural" gave us the opportunity to explore the situation of immigrant children, and results indicate that teachers need more resources, otherwise they will be soon at risk of social exclusion; these children have more personal, social and academic problems than others. Besides, there are other special groups that need urgent attention, as the case of gypsies and children of temporary workers.

In Norway and Poland, the situation is also very similar; 7% of pupils in Norway are marginalized in the classroom, having these pupils' academic problems in addition to social problems. In Poland the current situation of high unemployment is having effects on the school, and the lack of motivation of students is also directly related with more aggression and violence, social exclusion, school stress in teachers and students, etc. being all of them significant problems for Educational Authorities.

It is obvious the challenge who has to make all the teachers: In one face attend the diversity of students and in the other face attend individual academic needs of every student.

## Needs for School Adjustment

Harter (1996)[1] explains the change between primary and secondary school, being in secondary contexts where the environment is more impersonal and competitive than in primary.

Eccles (1988)[2] explains that in the transition to Secondary Education, the school environment becomes more impersonal, more formal, more evaluative, and more competitive than in the elementary grades. It is primarily teachers who communicate these changing values as standards. There is also an increasing emphasis on social comparison. Completing the model Eccles (1990)[3], they suggest that the lack of fit between the secondary school environment and the needs of young adolescents contributes to the negative shift observed in motivation. Teachers become more controlling when students need more autonomy, and relationships between them become more impersonal, when young people need more support of adults apart from their parents.

In order to explore this model, Harter has done various studies (see Harter, 1996) that revealed that motivational orientation is highly related to perceived scholastic competence (Harter and Connell, 1984; Harter and Jackson, 1992)[4]. Thus students who evaluated their competence positively will typically report that they are intrinsically motivated, whereas negative perceptions of their competence will be associated with extrinsically motivation (see Harter 1996). Studies have shown that intrinsic motivation declines over school years, being the biggest change between 6th and 7th degree (the equivalent of the change between primary and secondary education) (Harter, 1981)[5].

Harter carried out one longitudinal project to explain this negative shift, examining motivation of students before and after the school transition. They found that 50% of students with remain with the same motivation and perceived competence, whereas the other 50% reported either substantial increases or decreases in their perceptions of competence.

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[1] Harter, S. (1996). Teacher and classmate influences on scholastic motivation, self-esteem., and level of voice in adolescents. Social motivation: understanding children's school adjustment. J. Junoven and K. Wentzel. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

[2] Eccles, J. and C. Midgley (1988). Stage-environment fit: developmentally appropriate classrooms for young adolescents. Research on motivation in education, goals and cognition. R. C. Ames and C. Ames. New York, Academic Press. **3:** 139-186.

[3] Eccles, J. and C. Midgley (1990). Changes in academic motivation and self perceptions during early adolescen. Advances in adolescent development: from childhood to adolescence. R. Montemayor, G. Adams and T. Gullota. Newbury Park, Sage. **2:** 139-186.

[4] Harter, S. and J. P. Connell (1984). A comparison of alternative models of the relationships between academic achievement and children's perceptions of competence, control and motivational orientation. The development of achievement-related cognitions and behaviors. J. Nicholls. Greenwich, JAI Press.
Harter, S. and B. Jackson (1992). "Trait vs nontrait conceptualizations of intrinsic/extrinsic motivational orientation." Motivation and Emotion **16**: 209-230.

[5] Harter, S. (1981). "A new self report scale of intrinsic versus extrinsic orientation in the classroom: motivational and informational components." Developmental Psychology **17**: 300-312.

Examining why students lose their intrinsic motivation they used a questionnaire based on two factors: external evaluation and social comparison. Dimensions included in external evaluation were teachers' emphasis on grades, competition, control/choice and personal interest. Harter found that with increasing grade level, students perceive teachers put greater emphasis on grades, greater focus on competition and on control, heightened external evaluation on performance, and at the same time, paying little attention to students' personal interest. These factors make students to revaluate their sense of competence. In addition, students report increasing emphasis on classmate social comparison; and, the higher the grade level is, the more students feel that school-work is boring and irrelevant.  Also results show that more students felt that teachers emphasized the components of external evaluation the more they reported feeling stupid as a motive undermining intrinsic interest.

When teachers were asked about the same questions, they did not feel that they were emphasizing the external evaluation, nor they were making social comparisons, as much students reported. Both of them agreed that if students felt stupid, it would undermine their intrinsic interest in schoolwork. However, teachers did not show any evidence that educational practices might contribute to students' stupidity.

Classmates also influence to such reevaluation. A significant part of the students don't know each other previously, therefore the social reference group is widely expended, requiring that students reassess their competence in relationship to members of this new social comparison group. This increasing emphasis on social comparison, serves to foster a reevaluation of one's scholastic competence. These comparisons can have devastating psychological effects for a large number of students who conclude that they are relatively incompetent, compared to those at the top.

From these researches it seems that teachers are not only important in the transition to secondary school, but also they can do a lot to increase intrinsic motivation on students.

## Social and Personal Development

The model previously explained related motivation with school achievement, but putting to much emphasis on the intellectual competence, assuming that this is the first goal of children at school. However, there is evidence that the social worlds of children should not be excluded from models of classroom motivation and school adjustment.

Attribution theory is concerned with how individuals interpret events and how this relates to their thinking and behavior. Heider (1958)[6] was the first to propose a psychological theory of attribution. Heider believes that people act on the basis of their beliefs, whether these beliefs are valid or not. Heider introduced the cognitive balance theory which impose that if two or more persons share the same attitude, the same experience, and the same idea or framework, this will have influence on the relation between the two involved persons. This theory is built on the works of Mead (1934)[7] who explains that taking others perspectives and sharing the same collective idea or attitude is often based on what we think of the other person (symbolic interaction theory). Also influenced by George H. Mead, Newcomb (1961)[8] introduced his A-B-X theory saying that common orientations toward an object or a person (X) will have an impact on the relations between these two persons (A-B).

It is not the context where to develop all these theories, but the evidence is that relation between expectations and attributions is consistent conducts and group relations.

The effects of co-action and audience have been studied specially in the area of Psychology of the Motivation. Famous Triplett studies, as the situation of cyclists who pedaling strongly if they were with other cyclists, shows that being with other people activate body energetic resources, that means "effect of co-action" (Triplett, 1898)[9]

Audience effect means that people in a passive way perceive whatever the target is showing. This effect has a double result: on the one hand this technique could improve personal skills because the person who works feels observed, but on the other hand could cause the worst effects in observed individual. The explication of that is related with individual skills and probability of expected response. In fact when we have a high probability of good response, yield and motivation improve. Also we could have the opposite response if it probable a bad response, but in both of cases the presence of other people increases the activation and provokes the dominate response.

Again these effects share the same principles, if the expectation of a response is high, probably will happen, especially if that response is within a group that act as an audience. If students expectations of showing good response in front of their school mates, then it will probably occur, in the other hand if the group expectation are poor, probably the student observed will failed. In the sport fields, these effects have been widely studied, as everyone can see when a football team play at home, generally the

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[6] Heider, F. (1958). The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations. New York, Willey.

[7] Mead, G. H. (1934). Mind, self and society. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

[8] Newcomb, T. (1961). The acquaintance process. New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc.

[9] Triplett, N. (1898). "The dynamogenic factors of pacemaking and competition." American Journal of Psychology **9**: 507-533.

supporters provide the best context to get the best results (audience effect) Gall (1998)[10].

In order to apply these theories into the educational field, we have to consider the own perceptions of the students, and the expectations that their class-mates generate in relation to academic achievement and their behaviour towards others. Nick names, and popular stereotypes probable make "bad" students to become even worse, and the positive behaviour because rarely is expelled, rarely will occur. To encourage the positive side, the positive expectations about their own competences, will make a change in their own beliefs, and own and others expectations. It is crucial that teachers realised of the important of their perceptions as well, and the influence that they have in the classroom.

The phenomenon is the same for the teachers; if two teachers share the same thinking of X, then and following the cognitive balance theory, their own relationship will be encouraged as long the share the same perspective. This strong relation will become even stronger when it can be confirmed by facts. Then a selective perception of the facts observed that confirmed their point of view will be perceived, and X will be called again, the best or the worse, until their perception became a theory difficult to question. X then assume that perception and the audience effect increase the probability of showing just what the others are expecting.

Attribution become a fact and hearing effect gets results, if we have promoted negative behaviour we will obtain that. However, if we had based our way of teaching in positive behavior we would obtain positive results.

## Classmates

Classmates serve as potential companions and friends, meeting important social needs of the developing child. However, they also represent a very salient social reference group that invites intense social comparison. In addition, the approval or disapproval that classmates display can have a major effect on a child's or adolescent's sense of self.

"Among older children and adolescents, it is one's classmates who primarily represent this more public "generalized other" (Mead, 1934). Thus, the peer environment within the school context looms large as a critical determinant of one's sense of worth as a person" (Harter, 1996).

Self-esteem is profoundly influenced by factors within the classroom setting; following Mead (1934) social interactions with others shaped the construction of the

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[10] Gall, K.R. (1998). An examination of the relationship between arousal levels of athletes, motivation strategies, and performance. *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 58(7-A): 2585.

self. Harter has examined the correlations between perceived approval from parents, teachers, classmates and close friends. In late childhood and adolescence, classmate support correlates most highly with self-esteem (.50 to .60), followed by parents (.59 to .56), teachers (.40 to .45), being the less important the close friends (.35 to .40).Clearly peer support in the form of approval from classmates is critical to self-esteem.

When classmate support is not forthcoming, on a daily basis, rejection, disapproval, or neglect are critical for low self-esteem and their sense of personal worth. The difference between the influence of classmates and close friends, could be explained following Mead (1934), and the support from others in a public domain may better represent acceptance from the "generalized other" and can be perceived as more "objective" or commonly accepted than the support of the close friends (this that's not mean that close friends are not relevant; in fact they have an important function as a secure psychological base from which one can reemerge to meet the challenges of the generalized other).

Classmate support is most critical to self-esteem, however, the impact of teacher support is not trivial, and higher teacher support resulted in higher levels of self-esteem. Also, this support compensated family support. Those children with low support from both, parents and adults, had low self-esteem, whereas when teachers were high support their scores on self-esteem were higher.

## Teachers' role

The role of the teachers is crucial in the perceptions of students, and their relationships with students have a huge impact on the processes in the classroom. In the previous study commented, teachers rated on the third place, in relation to self-esteem (Harter, 1996); in this sense Nordalh (2002)[11] found that this relation is related to the social competence of students (.60), in the general attitude towards school (.31), in the involvement in problem behavior (.44), and in pupils attitude toward teaching practices (.60). In the same sense, the research of Bru and Thuen (1999) conclude that the positive relation between the pupils and the teachers reduces problems behavior in the classrooms as well as it increases the pupil academic concentration.

Birch and Ladd proposed three distinct features of the teacher-child relationships which are particularly important for young children: closeness,

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[11] Nordahl, T. (1998). "Er det bare eleven?" Nova Rapport.

dependency and conflict (Birch and Ladd, 1996)[12] these features could be applied to adolescents, in particular in the transition to elementary and secondary school.

Closeness is reflected in the degree of warmth and open communication that is manifested between a teacher and a child and may function as a support, as the children seem comfortable approaching the teacher, talking about feelings and experiences. This closeness may facilitate positive affect and attitudes towards school, supportive teachers will increase school motivation and involving in school activities and in this manner may encourage children's learning and motivation.

Dependency can be constructed as a relationship quality that interferes with children's successful adjustment to school. Optimally in supportive relationships, it is considered adaptive for closeness to increase over time and for dependency to decrease. Children very dependent on the class teacher may be tentative in their explorations of the school environment, they may feel less motivated to explore surroundings or other social relationships; negative feelings toward school, as well as loneliness and anxiety are common between children who display high levels of dependency.

Conflict teacher-children relationship functions as a stressor for students, and may impair successful adjustment to school. Conflict relationships are conceptualized by discordant interactions and a lack of rapport between teacher and child. It may be related to children becoming disengaged or uninvolved in addition to negative school attitudes.

Wentzel, trying to find out what students understood by a supportive teacher, examined a sample of students (middle school). He asked them to write down three things that teachers do to show that they "care" about them, and three things that show that they "don't care". Responses were categorized into four dimensions: democratic interactions as a demonstrated respect, recognition individual differences (social and academic), high expectation for achievement, and positive encouragement and feedback.

When teachers showed that behaviours, they were perceived by students as people who had interested in them, but when they were authorities or disrespectful with them their relations turn into troubled.

On the other hand, Wentzel points out the importance of develop social goal activities, given that there are evidences of being related with better school

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[12] Birch, S. and G. Ladd (1996). Interpersonal relationship in the school environment and children's early school adjustment: the role of teachers and peers. Social motivation: understanding children's school adjustment. J. Junoven and K. Wentzel. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

adjustment (Wentzel, 1996)[13]. Firstly, emphasizes the importance of setting up goals, as a cognitive representation of future events, and can be powerful motivators of behavior; secondly, research on achievement goal orientations are suggesting that school adjustment requires the pursuit of multiple and often complementary goals, both social and academic.

There is evidence to suggest that student's pursuit of prosocial and social responsibility goals is related to their levels of social acceptance by peers and teachers, and studies also show the pursuit of goals to behave in prosocial and socially responsible ways have been related consistently with academic motivation and performance (Wentzel, 1996), and students who pursue multiple goals reflecting social as well as academic objectives are those who are most successful at school (Wentzel, 1996 pp 227).
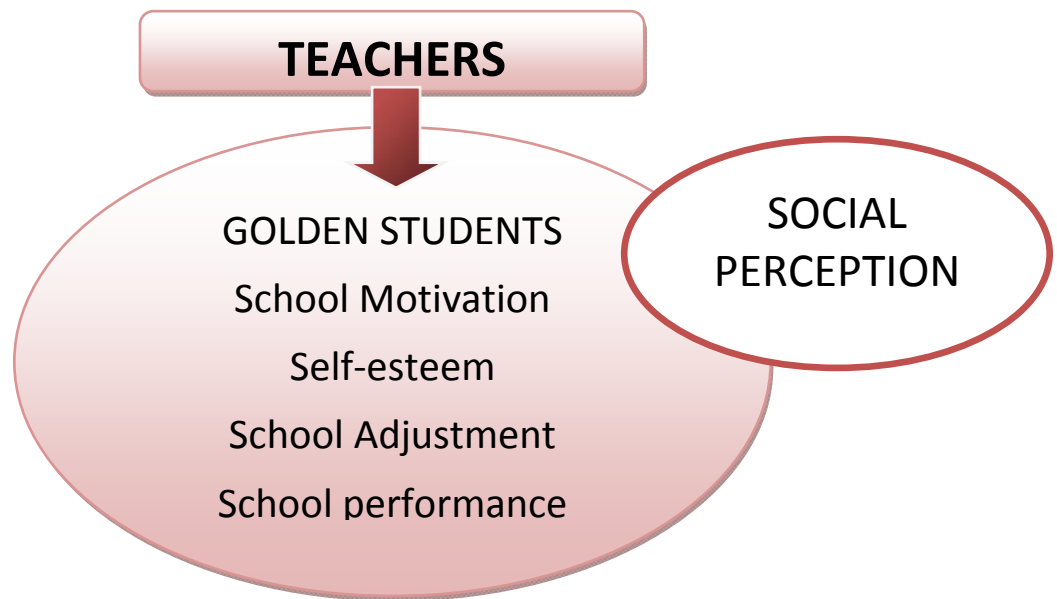
However, research on classroom processes that correspond to promote prosocial skills and socially responsible behavior has not been very extensive; although in all Western Educational Systems the "development of socially integrative skills has long been a primary function of the schooling process". Wentzel tried to explore ways in which student's pursuit of goals to be prosocial and responsible is related to interpersonal support with teachers and classmates. Results indicate that students' feelings of helping and cooperation and to follow classroom rules are related to perceived social support from teachers and peers. These findings were solid.

## GOLDEN5: Intervention model proposal

Role of the teacher seems to be crucial improving school adjustment of students and increasing their self-esteem. At the same time, they also play an important role as a mediator of the social perception of their classmates.

If teachers can change the perception and expectations of a student, if they do public samples and indicate the positive aspects of them, probably the group starts to change. And if some members of the group modify their expectations, the hearing effect can extend the change to the whole group, which will reinforce the subject in question, who will end up responding to more positive and human expectations according to his development.

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[13] Wentzel, K. (1996). Social goals and social relationshops as motivators of school adjustment. Social motivation: understanding children's school adjustment. J. Junoven and K. Wentzel. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

**TEACHERS**

GOLDEN STUDENTS

School Motivation

Self-esteem

School Adjustment

School performance

SOCIAL PERCEPTION

The teaching staff must have an appropriate set of tools and abilities to understand the operation of a group, and to be able to manage it suitably. They must also have enough resources to build suitable and positive relationships with their students, to create a climate that facilitates the relations and the learning processes in the classroom. It is also important to consider the flexibility in the learning; the diversity must be dealt as a classroom that offers a variety of activities, in accordance with general characteristics of the teenagers, and equally different to adjust to the needs and particularities of every pupil. Finally, the implication of the families is necessary in order that changes of social perception and self-perception might take place.

In short, it will consist of creating an atmosphere of suitable relations, where the whole of pupils can be considered to be Golden.

Basing on these principles we propose to select five areas, In order to improve the classroom climate all these areas should be developed. To do this we propose a number of key-steps related to each one that can be easily implemented by teachers to improve the classroom management ant to help the needy students.

1.  Classroom management

2.  Building relationships

3.  Social Climate

4.  Adjusted learning

5.  Family-school relation