

THE KNOWLEDGE TRIANGLE AND THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF KEY COMPETENCES IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Prof. Maria Alexieva, PhD
Burgas Free University

Abstract: *The knowledge triangle concept refers to necessity to improve the impact of investments in terms of the three activities — education, research and innovation. The effectiveness of the activities implemented in the knowledge triangle is a process based on the recognized need for cooperation between all interested parties. The process of awareness itself is slow and implies changes - in thinking, in organization and administration, in inclusion and participation in various activities - project, qualification, scientific, etc. In this context, we can talk about a practical realization of the concept of the triangle of knowledge.*

Modern education is oriented towards digitization and related methods and means, because the students who are educated today are representatives of the so-called "alpha" generation. a generation that grows and develops in the conditions of Internet communications, social networks and artificial intelligence. The representatives of the "alpha" generation seek information and learn in a different way compared to previous generations. In this sense, the Bulgarian school should become closer to the children's natural environment through the wider application of various educational models in training. And everything said so far is related to the role of the teacher.

Keywords: *trident of knowledge, teacher preparation, skills and attitudes, competences, competence approach, interactions, entrepreneurial skills, practical training, curricula, connection "university - practice", social partnerships, joint projects*

The knowledge triangle concept refers to necessity to improve the impact of investments in terms of the three activities — education, research and innovation. The effectiveness of the activities implemented in the knowledge triangle is a process based on the recognized need for cooperation between all interested parties. The process of awareness itself is slow and implies changes - in thinking, in organization and administration, in inclusion and participation in various activities - project, qualification, scientific, etc. In this context, we can talk about a practical realization of the concept of the triangle of knowledge.

The university as a synergistic center exceeds the effect of the "triangle of knowledge" - innovation, scientific research and education, because it gives much more than these structural components.

From the point of view of the formulated topic, the focus of attention will be on teacher preparation for the development of key competencies in primary school. In order to outline the importance of the primary teacher's role in the process of formation and development of key competencies, it is necessary to "look" at the beginning .



The transition from kindergarten to school is a turning point in children's development - from the change of educational institution to the meeting with the "real" teacher and the learning environment. At the very beginning of the long "journey", the primary teacher faces the challenge of making a smooth transition from the familiar and established regime in the kindergarten to the new school life, painlessly for the child's psyche. Here his role is primary and leading. For this meeting and for this challenge, he has been preparing for all his years of study at the university. He himself forms and develops key competencies that he needs to cope with the challenges of the profession. For this purpose, the teacher necessarily "passes" through the "triangle of knowledge".

One of his tasks in the course of practical professional realization is to create rules from the very beginning. This makes children feel more relaxed because they know what to expect. Therefore, it is important to create a clear study schedule for them to adhere to during the school day. This reduces stress and builds habits in them. The teacher can and should promote the development of children's social skills by encouraging them to meet, play and communicate with each other. This will help them integrate into the new environment and feel more confident, as well as pay special attention to children who feel embarrassed and restless in the new environment.

Between the ages of 7 and 11, the basic learning skills are formed - writing, reading, arithmetic, drawing. These skills are the basis for their successful development in the next stages of training.

"The first thing we, as teachers, need to achieve is to see education as a path that, in the long run, promotes, not detracts from, the intelligence of children. It's important to realize that." (*Wichert, Christoph, The Joy of Teaching, 2021, p.95*)

Love for children is a major part of the mission of the teaching profession. This is important as they feel when their teachers love and care for them. This includes acceptance, support and help to develop their uniqueness, making them feel safe, trust their teacher, which in turn facilitates the learning process and control with discipline at school.

Children are different and have different needs and interests. Primary teachers need to be flexible and adapt their teaching style and methods to the individual needs of each student. One of the primary teacher's roles is to be an inspiration who helps students discover their potential and develop their talents. If a teacher was able to help students believe in themselves and achieve excellence, they are likely to remember them as the teacher who inspired them and helped them reach their potential.

A teacher's curiosity can motivate and inspire students to also learn and seek new information. To be diligent and value the time spent in class. To develop creativity and social skills. As Ron Clark states, "By far the best way to engage a child and get him to learn is to show just as much excitement and enthusiasm about learning as you hope to see in him." (*Clark, Ron, End Boredom in Class, 2013, p.97*)

Another important quality of an elementary school teacher is his sense of humor. If he has managed to present the learning content in a way that is easy to understand, using artistry and has encouraged the active participation of students in the lesson, it is very likely that the children will learn the main content highlights, rules, algorithms already within the lesson unit. Children love teachers who can have fun with them and show them that education can have a fun side. Other options that the teacher can use are various creative techniques through games, music, drawing, theater. This helps to preserve unforgettable memories of pedagogical interactions in the classroom and increase the motivation to learn and the desire to go to school. The teacher must carefully select teaching methods using game methods, individual learning or working

in groups, create a stimulating learning environment, through interactive lessons, games and activities that attract the attention of students. To use rewards for those who achieve well, praise or help when they are in trouble, so that they feel respected and important to the class.

Mastering classroom discipline is another challenge for any teacher, but it is an important skill. For this purpose, at the very beginning of establishing business interactions, clear rules and expectations for the behavior of students at school should be established and, if necessary, repeated throughout the school year so that they are learned and respected. The adoption of rules for behavior and communication in the classroom has the character of standards of behavior and communication. Standards to be followed by all, including and from the teacher. This requires that the teacher has developed the ability to treat all students fairly and not show sympathy and preference for certain children in the class, to be proactive, prepared with alternative activities to be able to change the mood of the collective if he feels any tension in it. To be ready to listen carefully to the problems that concern students, to give and take suggestions, to show adaptability, to strive to be positive and encouraging towards them. Praise them in front of the whole class when they do something good and reprimand when necessary, but individually.

The teacher must pay attention to and demonstrate a tolerant attitude towards children with special educational needs (SEN) in order to provide them with optimal conditions for learning and development, choose and use appropriate teaching materials and methods that meet their needs, have open communication with parents and other professionals working with these children. Teamwork produces the best results. The teacher must support the social integration of these children to ensure that they are included in the community and have optimal conditions for the development of their social skills, preventing their stigmatization and isolation from other students. It is necessary to show love and patience to them, as well as to teach other children to show such an attitude. Discrimination in any form such as gender, ethnic origin, religion, socio-economic status and others should be avoided. All students should receive equal treatment and opportunities in class.

A challenge in the work of the teacher is the inclusion of parents as partners in the educational process. This requires maintaining open and regular communication with them. This can be done through three-way meetings, emails, phone calls, parenting advice and other means of communication. Communication can be about grades, student progress, problems, suggestions, or questions parents have. Parents can also be involved in the educational process by providing them with information about lessons, homework, upcoming exams and other activities. Parents can be invited to participate in classroom activities, help with projects or share their knowledge and experience.

"Teachers are increasingly realizing the benefit of including the student as a third party in parent-teacher meetings. Better awareness of parents. The increased desire of the student to carry out the decisions made because of his participation in making them. The increased sense of cooperation among all involved." (*Gordon Thomas, Coaching Successful Teachers, 2013, p.161-162*).

If there are problems with the children, the teacher can turn to the parents for help and cooperation, and always provide them with feedback whenever the children change. The teacher knows that parental support is very important for the success of students and should be encouraged since the beginning of the school year.

One of the roles of the teacher is to be the confidant of the children in the class. To this end, he must build trust with them by being open and honest in encouraging



them to share their thoughts and feelings with him, so that friendly relationships are built, which will bring the team even closer and increase team spirit. This can be achieved by giving them advice in difficult times, helping them to cope with their problems and encouraging them not to give up on their dreams, goals and talents.

"The most important thing we can do for our children is to encourage them to be curious, to give them time and space to explore the world, to allow them to make mistakes and to encourage them to keep learning and developing." (Gray, Peter, *The Freedom to Learn*, 2016, p.106)

Due to the fact that in primary school, the teacher of young students is an undisputed authority in their lives in the first years, he forms a model of behavior and attitude and helps to develop skills related to charity, social entrepreneurship, which "mirror" the practical positive effects on the community. This process stimulates and motivates students' commitment to continue working together for future causes and projects, developing in them skills of responsibility, empathy and mutual assistance.

Creating traditions and rituals in the classroom can also have very positive effects for the collective. Also, when there are pictures of the students in the classroom, they feel more connected and belong to the class. This can help them feel more comfortable and confident, giving them a sense of a more private and cozy space. It is the teacher's task to also act as a mediator by sharing the cultural customs and traditions that each child carries with him. This can promote mutual respect and reduce feelings of difference, especially in classes with children of different ethnicities and religions, in areas with mixed populations.

As a model for the teacher's behavior, the role of setting an example of respect is also assigned. This is taught by encouraging students to respect those around them, including their classmates, parents, teachers and neighbours. To respect the elderly, to help them, to be kind to animals and plants, to appreciate nature, to love the city and their homeland. The achievement of all this is realized in the hours of the class, in the disciplines of literature, national studies, man and society, technology and entrepreneurship.

The role of the teacher as a "referee" to resolve conflict situations is also very important. Classroom problem solving is an important part of classroom community management and is relevant to creating an inclusive and learning environment. The teacher must be attentive and observe his class to spot problems while they are still small and solve them in time. Holding a general discussion can be useful as it puts the questions in front of the students and asks for their opinion, creating an atmosphere of listening and mutual respect to solve the problem. This would help the smooth running of the classes thereafter.

"Active listening is an important element of the ever-growing movement to make the classroom a place of comfort, understanding, safety, and growth—a way of realizing the maxim that teaching is a way of loving." (*Gordon Thomas, Coaching Successful Teachers*, 2013, p.163)

It is important for the teacher to find the most appropriate methods that work best for his class and apply them according to the nature of the teaching material.

"Remember: Leave children alone until they are okay. Work together as a team until you realize you shouldn't. Let them work on their own, but be available for advice." (*Jacobson Sid, Teaching Children to Learn—To Succeed*, 2016, p. 147)

Also, the teacher must be a patient listener. "Expert counselors say that their success depends mostly on getting the person to start talking, then 'getting out of their way' and just listening." (*Gordon Thomas, Coaching Successful Teachers*, 2013, p. 89)

Patience is one of the most important qualities a teacher must have in order to work effectively with each child in the class. To give each of them enough time to express their thoughts and feelings without interrupting or judging. To try to understand his motives and to approach each situation with wisdom. Be patient when they make mistakes, encouraging them to learn instead of blaming them or hurting their dignity. "The language of acceptance opens children up. It gives them freedom to share their feelings and problems. Professional therapists and psychologists have discovered the power of such an acceptance. That's why we so often hear counselors or therapists brag about how relieved they feel that the counselor isn't judging them. And that this gives them freedom to share the worst in themselves with him; because they feel that the counselor will accept them no matter what they say or feel. This acceptance is one of the most important elements that contribute to the growth and change that occurs in people as a result of seeing a counselor or therapist." (*Gordon Thomas, Coaching Successful Teachers, 2013, p. 85*)

Another important skill of a teacher is to admit his mistakes. If he messed up or lost his patience, he should be able to admit it and apologize to the children. This will show them that mistakes are part of the learning process and that it is important to be understanding and patient with other people.

Discovering the potential in each child is an important task for the teacher, which requires attention, patience and objectivity. He must carefully monitor the children during lessons and other activities. This will help him discover their strengths, interests and capabilities. To find suitable moments to talk with them about their dreams, if they have any goals and specific interests. This can give him an idea of what they are good at and what they want to achieve. It can also learn what parents expect from the child.

"The teacher must create an educational environment that is loaded with interest and excitement, that places the student at the center of learning and supports him to learn in the best way for him." - says in his book "How to learn fast and remember easily" the author Tony Buzan - British author with more than 100 published books, TV presenter and lecturer, known for his methods of learning and visual organization of information, helping learners to remember and understand the learning material better.

An important part of a teacher's image is the dress code he maintains. In an unconscious way, the teacher's clothing has an influence on the students' perception of him as an authority figure. Moreover, the teacher does not just present himself, he is a representative of the school as an institution. Therefore, the dress code presented should correspond to the school environment, such as clothes without cynical inscriptions or pictures showing a preference for a certain style of music, always wearing clean and pressed clothes of a decent length. The teacher needs to feel comfortable in their clothes so that they can concentrate on interactions with students and in their role as a conduit between the learning content and the classroom community of students. It is important to note that clothing alone is not enough to gain authority in the eyes of students. A teacher must also demonstrate other qualities such as knowledge, skills, good interpersonal relations and discipline in order to be accepted as an authority figure in the classroom. He must constantly train and upgrade with new knowledge, participate in various qualification forms that aim to promote his cultural competence, because he has a key role in the education and development of students. The teacher not only imparts knowledge, but also serves as an inspirer and motivator, encourages them to think critically, helps them develop skills and qualities for creativity, innovation, communication, ethics and morality.



Also, the teacher has an important role in educating children about national heroes, as well as the patron of the school where they study. They can use different methods to learn and remember historical facts, persons and events related to the national and cultural identity of their country, city and school. One of the roles of the teacher is to kindle the patriotic flame in the hearts of the young students towards the national heroes and the patron of the school and to encourage their interest and love for the history and cultural heritage of our country. This can help children form the competence of identity and belonging to the national value system, inspiration to achieve their own life goals. Yet no matter how good and inclusive a teacher is, there are children in every class who stubbornly refuse to learn and see no point in education. For such children, John Gatow (an American teacher and author of books on education who criticizes the traditional education system as mechanical and insufficient to prepare children for real life) expresses his thoughts: "Are they unhappy children who are headed for a joyless future or else we are the unfortunate ones..." (*Gatow, John, Weapons of Mass Depersonalization, 2011, p.77*)

Here the teacher's role is to find out the reason. Some children may not learn because they have difficulty with certain subjects, while others may have problems with motivation. Understanding the cause of the lack of motivation is the first step for the teacher to deal with the problem and be of maximum benefit. Once he understands the reason for the lack of motivation, he can create an individual plan for that child. This plan can include goals to achieve together with the child and actions to take to motivate him. It takes patience and working on it through constant, daily effort.

One of these methods can be encouragement. This is one of the effective ways to motivate. To encourage the child when he achieves good results or when he takes some good initiative. To show him that it matters as a student and as a person. Approaching him with due respect. "When people feel their efforts are noticed and appreciated, they work harder and perform better." (*Clarke Rohn, End Boredom in Class, 2013, p.179*). in cases where certain students have difficulties in certain academic subjects but are talented in another area, the teacher can work individually with them and focus on their talents. This may include providing additional time and resources for them to study the subject, as well as different teaching methods to suit their needs. "Children are biologically predisposed to see their own education. When given the freedom and means to pursue their interests in a safe environment, they flourish and develop in a variety of unpredictable ways and gain the skills and confidence needed to meet life's challenges." (*Peter Gray, The Freedom to learn, 2016, p16*) The teacher can integrate students' talents into the learning process by encouraging them to use these gifts in various projects or activities related to the learning topic. For example, if there is a student who is very good at fine art, he can be encouraged to create illustrations for exhibitions, competitions and class or school presentations. His drawings can decorate the classroom.

There are many examples of the so-called "behind" students with highly gifted skills, in certain fields, who later achieve success in life and are an example that one's success does not always depend on one's academic achievements alone. They can serve as inspiration and motivation for students who may feel unproductive or unsuccessful in school. According to J. Gatow "For children to be successful in the world, they don't need to be sheep who calmly follow the herd. They need courage and creativity, to take risks and make mistakes in order to reach their true talents and develop into them." (*John Gatow, Dumbing Down - The Hidden Purpose of Public Education, 2010*) The teacher's role in such cases is to discover the student's talent and support him in his efforts to develop it. Different methods and techniques should

be used to stimulate the gift and achieve success in the area in which the student is talented. For example, if a student exhibits enviable athletic skills, the teacher may encourage him to participate in the student sports team as a way of stimulating his motivation to develop.

The teacher must not forget that each child is unique and has his own individual needs and aptitudes and needs to give him individual attention, supporting him in his efforts to pursue his dreams, talents and desire to succeed. The experience of Ron Clark is very valuable, who in the book "End of the scum in an hour" writes: "Children look at us, eager to know what impression they make on us, so we must remember that they will strive to become those personalities that we see in them. The behavior we mold in them, at an early age, will help them model themselves when they grow up, so we must not forget that our words, as well as our influence on our children, are paramount in shaping their habits , of their personality and of their own self-esteem." (*Clark Ron, Ending Boredom in Class, 2013, p.213*)

The role of the teacher is multifaceted. Colorful and motley, loud and quiet, bright or discreet, but always one-way - the success of the student - his development and growth in a given area. Because the student's success is the teacher's success, his pride and recognition for the efforts made and the time invested. Because behind every developed talent, there is a teacher who invested time and effort, planned and implemented strategies, how to "pave" the path of each of his students up the path of knowledge, on the path to success. Because children are his wealth.

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