

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54937/ssf.2024.23.2.102-110>

## **Rozvoj životných zručností u žiakov základnej školy**

### **Development of life skills of primary school pupils**

Mária Hrobková

#### **Abstract**

In the article, we focus our attention on the development of life skills that equip children with strong thinking, so that they can navigate different aspects of life and become responsible, independent and capable individuals. We categorize life skills and describe the process and methods of their development. We present some ideas for evaluating individual skills as well as proposals for procedures for their introduction and reinforcement.

**Keywords:** Life skills. Introduction. Reinforcement. Integrated thematic teaching.

#### **Introduction**

Currently, a number of changes are taking place that have a great impact on our society and especially on our children. These changes place great demands on children and they are expected to be able to integrate into society without any problems. Some of the essential factors influencing children are their parents and teachers. They should be able to provide knowledge and skills so that children can lead a meaningful and quality life in this society.

#### **Concept and categorization of life skills**

Everyone needs life skills in order to be able to lead a quality life, to know how to develop himself, to create and maintain good interpersonal relationships and to achieve the goals he sets in life. The concept of life refers to the skills necessary for a better life of a person in society (Bednařík et al., 2009) According to the Psychological Dictionary, the term "skill" refers to manual skills and means the disposition acquired through learning to correctly and quickly perform a certain activity using a suitable method (Hartl, Hartlová, 1994). There are several terms for life skills, but for our purposes we will use this one: „*Life skills are those skills that help a person to effectively manage normal as well as stressful life situations and contribute to improving the quality of his life*“ (Bednařík et al., 2009).

Similarly, there are more categorizations of life skills. As stated by Miron Zelina (1996) in the KEMSAK system, these strategies are:

- Cognitization - its goal is to learn to recognize, think, solve problems using DITOR heuristics;
- Emotionalization - the goal is to teach to feel and develop competences for feeling, experiencing, developing feelings and emotions;
- Motivation – the goal is to develop the interests, needs, desires, wants of the personality and its activities, it is about activation;
- Socialization and communication - the goal is to teach a person to live with other people, to know how to communicate with them, to create progressive interpersonal relationships, prosocial education;
- Axiologisation of personality - the goal is to develop the value orientation of the personality, to teach to evaluate;
- Creativity – the goal is its development, education for creativity.

Paligová (2012) talks about categorization according to social levels:

- Intrapersonal - personal level - managing emotions, creativity, self-reflection, cognitive skills, positive self-evaluation;
- Interpersonal - interpersonal level - active listening, conflict resolution, teamwork, cooperation;
- Community - social level - communication at the office, volunteer work, ecological feeling and behavior and others.

Kovalik in collaboration with Karen Olsen created the educational model of Integrated Thematic Teaching (ITV), which is described by theorists as pupil-oriented, humanistic and experiential education. In ITV, life skills were created as tools for achieving the best personal performance of the student. Life skills together with the norms of desirable behavior outline which aspects of behavior need to be developed in children so that their "working community" has an atmosphere that supports learning. They form an open system that is completed according to needs. These include: flexibility, initiative, communication, consideration, organization, participation, friendship, trust, trustworthiness, problem solving, self-confidence, cooperation, care, patience, effort, perseverance, common sense, sense of humor, responsibility, curiosity, courage, imagination, pride, acceptance, active listening (Bednařík et al., 2009).

### **The process of developing life skills**

Children come from different social, economic and cultural conditions that affect their personality development. It is very important that teachers have an overview of how they can develop these skills in a child. Developing life skills is more effective when teachers manage to involve parents in cooperation as well.

### **Process of life skills development**

Concrete life skills development procedures can lead children to master the chosen life skill. We present the individual steps that must be followed:

- **The first step** is defining the problem and choosing a life skill. In this phase, the problem is defined through behavioral manifestations, a key life skill is selected and analyzed.
- **The second step** is the introduction of the chosen life skill. In this phase, the understanding of the life skill will be explained and unified, the selected life skill will be divided into individual manifestations of behavior and the advantages and disadvantages of using the given skill will be compared.
- **The third step** is choosing the right method of developing life skills. In this phase, an appropriate activity developing a specific life skill is selected, practiced with the children and then used in real life.
- **The fourth step** is the evaluation of the success of acquiring life skills. In this step, it is necessary to focus on the level of life skills achieved by the children, on the identification of problematic behaviors that continue to persist, on the assessment of the appropriateness of the selected methods and on the identification of other life skills that need to be developed (Bednařík et al, 2009).

### **Development of life skills in the program of Integrated Thematic Teaching**

An important part of ITV is the educational methodology of working with life skills. ITV, or highly effective learning creates a positive social climate in the classroom, the supporting environment that is necessary for teaching to be effective. The process of learning life skills takes place in two phases: introduction and reinforcement (Chlebničánová, Lašová, 2022). During the introduction, we answer the questions What? and Why? In this phase, it is important to identify the life skills that need to be worked on, to clearly justify the choice of the life skill, and to identify the components of the life skill. When reinforcing, we answer the question How? In this phase, we focus on the skill that we try to develop, teachers and parents model the life skill for children and we also practice the skill with various activities. „*Comprehensive and systematic learning of life skills increases the effectiveness and quality of learning and the prerequisite for their successful use, both in the classroom and in everyday life*“ (Paligová, 2012).

### **Methods of developing life skills**

In the teaching process, the teacher can use different situations in which children can learn something new. When creating activities aimed at developing life skills, we use methods that we divide into three categories:

- **Cognitive methods** - cognitive methods include those activities that primarily initiate cognitive processes. When learning with these methods, it is appropriate to consider how we can use students and their possible interactions to support cognitive processes.
- **Experiential methods** - are characterized by the fact that students have a direct experience of the implementation of a practical activity. The activities

are usually playful, and the game draws students into powerful experiences through which they learn spontaneously.

- **Experience-based methods** - in their essence they require not only student's emotional investment, but also conscious cognitive processing of events and control of behavior throughout the activity“ (Paligová, 2012).

### **Proposals for the introduction and consolidation of life skills**

The goal of developing life skills is to lead students to understand which social behavior will increase their success. It is not necessary to use them all at once and theoretically explain them to the students, but it is important that they gradually adopt them so that they become part of their personality. We present proposals for introducing and strengthening selected life skills that teachers can use in the teaching process.

#### **Life skill active listening**

**Activity name:** In the farmyard

**Type of activity:** introduction

**Tools:** cards with names of animals

**Duration:** 30 minutes

**Realization:** Each child chooses a card on which an animal living in the farmyard is drawn or written. At the teacher's command, all the "animals" start making sounds. The children start to move around the classroom and their task is to find all the relevant animals (all cats, goats, rabbits are grouped together).

**Activity Name:** Corrupt Listener

**Type of activity:** reinforcement

**Utilities:** none

**Duration:** 20-30minutes

**Realization:** Talk about active listening. We divide the pupils into pairs, the first of each pair goes out the door. The first in the pair has the task of thinking about a topic on which they will lead a monologue for about 5 minutes. The second of the pair receives the following instructions (the first are still behind the door, they cannot hear): initially they actively listen to their partner while he is talking, look at him, follow him with their eyes, keep their whole body still, supplement him with questions, summarize his thoughts. At the agreed upon signal of the teacher (e.g. opening the window, etc.), they immediately stop listening so actively, look away, or jump into the conversation, etc. After about two minutes, the teacher ends the exercise and invites the students to the community.

### **Life skill trustworthiness**

**Activity name:** Walk of trust

**Type of activity:** introduction

**Accessories:** scarf, shawl

**Duration:** 30 minutes

**Realization:** The children are divided into pairs. One of the pair blindfolds himself. The task of the second of the pair is to safely guide him through a route prepared in advance, which also has obstacles. Then the children in pairs change and follow the same route back to the classroom.

**Activity Name:** Circle of Trust

**Type of activity:** reinforcement

**Tools:** paper, pen

**Duration:** 15 minutes

**Realization:** All the children form a circle, standing next to each other. One child stands in the center of the circle, crosses his arms over his chest and closes his eyes. Then he falls against the outstretched hands of someone in a circle. The group gently catches him and pushes him back again. (Portmanová, 1999).

### **Life skill friendship**

**Activity name:** Advertisement for friendship

**Type of activity:** introduction

**Tools:** paper, pen

**Duration:** 20-30 minutes

**Realization:** First, we start a conversation with the children on the topic - what I expect from my friend, what my friend should be like. Then we show them various newspaper advertisements. Each child writes an advertisement "Looking for a friend." and "I offer friendship." Advertisements are anonymous or under a pseudonym, or everyone can put their own brand or picture under them. This is followed by an evaluation interview - how writing these advertisements made the children feel, what came to their minds, etc. We will display advertisements on the wall. We will attach an envelope or a bag under each of them, in which the children can put their reactions to the advertisement (Karnsová, 2001).

**Activity name:** Jigsaw puzzle

**Type of activity:** reinforcement

**Tools:** paper, pen

**Duration:** 20 minutes

**Realization:** Each student receives a piece of paper on which he writes his name. He hands the paper to a classmate on his right. He writes something positive about the classmate, folds the paper and passes it to another classmate. We play until everyone from the group has had a turn. Each student gets his

paper back and reads what his classmates wrote about him (Lokšová, Lokša, 1999).

### **The life skill of cooperation**

**Activity name:** Balancing with a pencil

**Type of activity:** introduction

**Tools:** pencil

**Duration:** 15 minutes

**Realization:** Pupils divide into pairs. Each pair takes a pencil, holds it between their index fingers and moves around the room. They must not talk and their pencil must not fall. Gradually, the teacher gives them instructions: e.g. go forward, backward, raise your arms, do a squat and others. A group that fails to complete the instructions and drops the pencil is out of the game (Portmanová, 1999).

**Activity name:** Relay race

**Type of activity:** reinforcement

**Tools:** textbooks, notebooks, school bag, pencil case

**Duration:** 20 minutes

**Realization:** We divide the children into 2-3 groups with the same number of players. The groups stand behind the starting line. At the same distance from all groups, there are desks on which notebooks, books, pens, pencils and a school bag are laid out. The task of each student is to run to the chair and pack things into the bag. When he is done, he bows, which is also a signal for the next teammate, who runs out, puts all the things back on the desk, the third one runs up, packs the things into the bag, and everything is repeated until the last player (Szaboová, 1999).

### **Life skill patience**

**Activity Name:** Treasure Hunt

**Type of activity:** introduction

**Supplies:** ancient coins that are no longer in use

**Duration:** 15 - 30 minutes

**Realization:** The players sit in a circle. One volunteer goes behind the door. The leader gives one of the players a coin, which this player may (or may not) give to another player. All players then clench their hands into fists, place them on their knees and the treasure hunter can come. He can search three times and he has to justify his guess every time. He can talk to others and explain his thoughts out loud. After three wrong guesses, the player who has the treasure in hand shows it, the unsuccessful seeker goes back out the door and tries his luck one more time. After guessing correctly, another player is selected to be the treasure hunter. The leader points out that during the search, the player must pay attention not only to the hands, but also to the facial expression, gaze, body posture, etc. We can motivate children with stories about treasure guardians

who were determined to protect the treasure from thieves and cave finders with their own lives. It was not because of greed, but many things, for example: Indian tribes kept the treasures of all members of the tribe in one cave, in one place (Hermochová, 1994).

**Activity name:** Fishing

**Type of activity:** reinforcement

**Tools:** fishing rods made of twigs and twine, there are magnets at the end of the rods, candies, paper clips

**Duration:** 21-30 minutes

**Realization:** There are candies with attached paper clips in the enclosed space that symbolizes the pond. Each angler receives a fishing rod with a magnet at the end of the twine. When hunting, a magnet will attract a candy with a paper clip. The task of the fishermen is to catch as many candies as possible within the specified time limit. The winner gets five candies, the others get two.

### **Life skill confidence**

**Activity name:** Washing line

**Type of activity:** introduction

**Utilities:** none

**Duration:** 20-30 minutes

**Realization:** We divide the class into two halves, which are placed in two parallel rows quite close to each other. One student (chosen by the teacher, the class or randomly chosen) goes between the rows - the washing line. Everyone touches him on his way through the washing line and says something to encourage him, please him, praise him. Touches - patting, caressing, shaking hands, verbal support... A happy, radiant and "clean" child leaves the washing line (Canfield, Wells, 1995).

**Activity name:** Collage of my top 10

**Type of activity:** reinforcement

**Materials:** quarters of A3 cardboard, glue, newspaper clippings and magazines

**Duration:** 45 minutes

**Realization:** We give quarters of A3 cardboard to the children. They should collect and cut out pictures, names, words, symbols that characterize their top 10 - best qualities or behaviors. Children stick the prepared material on the cardboard either in order (best - worse) or just randomly to create a collage. They do not sign their creations. At the community, we put the collages in a circle and the children try to guess which collage belongs to whom. Each child explains what the individual parts of the collage mean to him (Canfield, Wells, 1995).

### **Life skill sense of humor**

**Activity name:** Funny stories

**Type of activity:** introduction

**Tools:** notebooks, pens

**Duration:** 30 minutes

**Realization:** By brainstorming, we write all the words that evoke a sense of humor in the students on the board. The teacher writes six of these words on the board, e.g. smile, sun, mouth, darkness, joy, sadness (words can be varied and supplemented). The students' task is to write a funny story or a short poem in which they use these words.

**Activity name:** Advertising campaign

**Type of activity:** reinforcement

**Tools:** paper, pen

**Duration:** 45 minutes

**Realizácia:** Pupils are divided into tribes and in the form of brainstorming, they come up with certain products and write their brief description on cards. All tribes hand over their cards to the teacher, who shuffles them and turns them upside down. Each student draws 1 card and invents and presents an advertisement for the given product. Originality, sense of humor and persuasiveness are evaluated (Portmanová, 1999).

### **Conclusion**

Life skills do not only refer to the skills themselves, but also to personal qualities, values, attitudes and knowledge, which give a person a real internalization of the given skill. Nowadays, many educators and parents are aware of the acute need to teach children life skills. If we guide children in this direction, we will help them live a better life, they will be more successful in defending themselves against threats, and it will be much easier for them to find a job.

### **Bibliography**

- Bednařík, A. et al kol. (2009). *Životné zručnosti a ako ich rozvíjať*. Bratislava : NDS, 2009, 231 p. ISBN 80-969209-2.
- Canfield, J, Wells, H. C. (1995). *Hry pro zlepšení motivace a sebepojetí žáku*. Praha : Portál, 1995, 189 p. ISBN 80-7178-028-6.
- Hartl. P., Hartlová, H., (1994). *Psychologický slovník*. Praha : Budka, 1994, 297 p. ISBN 978-80-262-0873-0.
- Hermochová, S. (1994). *Hry pro život I*. Praha : Portál, 1994, 174 p. ISBN 80-85282-80-1.
- Chlebničianová, A., Lašová, E. (2022). *Životné zručnosti – nástroje výchovy a vzdelávania*. Bratislava : NDS, 2022, 68 p. ISBN 978-80-89403-25-7.
- Karnsová, M. (2001). *Jak budovat dobrý vztah mezi učitelem a žákem*. Praha : Portál, 2001, 151 p. ISBN 80-7178-032-4.



- Lokšová, I., Lokša, J. (1999). *Pozornost, motivace, relaxace a tvořivost dětí ve škole*. Praha : Portál, 1999, 200 p.
- Portmanová, R. (1999). *Hry pro posílení psychické odolnosti*. Praha : Portál, 1999, 104 p. ISBN 80-7178-331-5.
- Szaboová, M. (1999). *Cvičení pro rozvoj psychomotoriky*. Praha : Portál, 1999, 88 p. ISBN 8071782769.
- Zelina, M. (1996). *Stratégy a metody rozvoja osobnosti dieťaťa*. Bratislava: Iris, 1996. 230 p. ISBN 978-80-89256-60-0.

**PaedDr. Mária Hrobková,**

external doctoral student

Department of preschool and elementary pedagogy

Catholic University in Ružomberok, Faculty of Education

Hrabovská cesta 1, 034 01 Ružomberok

*maria.hrobkova937@edu.ku.sk*