Zdeňka Braumová
Technical University of Liberec
ORCID 0000-0001-9951-9707
Lenka Nádvorníková
Technical University of Liberec
ORCID: 0000-0002-2964-8797

Interpersonal interaction as the source of reflexive knowledge: Insights from introspective dialogue in the teaching context

Interakcja interpersonalna jako źródło wiedzy refleksyjnej: Ujęcie na podstawie dialogu introspektywnego w kontekście pracy nauczycielskiej

Abstract: The authors analyze the role of introspective dialogue in the development of reflexive knowledge within the teaching profession. The study employed a qualitative research design consisting of two phases: in the first, participants produced introspective records of their professional interactions, which served as the basis for the second phase—semi-structured in-depth interviews. The analysis of these interviews revealed how interpersonal interaction contributes to the formation of experiential knowledge and reflexive insight. The study is theoretically grounded in concepts of experiential learning, sociality, and the function of internal dialogue in professional self-understanding and orientation. The findings show that introspective dialogue supports a deeper awareness of relational aspects in professional practice, enhances the ability to share and integrate experiential knowledge,

and improves the quality of team collaboration. The authors advocate for the systematic implementation of reflective techniques in educational practice.

Keywords: experiential knowledge, sociality, introspective dialogue, reflexive knowledge, teacher, working relationships, interaction.

Introduction

In today's changing educational environment, teachers and pedagogical teams face various challenges. Effective interpersonal relationships, the ability to self-reflect and continuous professional development are becoming key success factors not only for individual teachers but also for entire educational institutions. This article focuses on the role of introspection and reflexive thinking in the context of the teaching profession and teamwork in schools. We explore how teachers can use introspective techniques (dialogue) to better understand themselves, their colleagues and the dynamics of working relationships. We believe that the development of these skills can significantly contribute to creating a positive working climate, improving communication in teaching teams and ultimately improving the quality of the educational process. It is therefore necessary to determine whether this can be the case from the perspective of the respondents.

Experiential knowledge and sociality

One view of knowledge is that it is „the body of knowledge attained about the world, the universe, humans, and life, and that this knowledge is continually being refined… it presupposes a certain understanding and comprehension of knowledge" (Olšovský, 2018, p. 447). For our purposes of inquiry, knowledge is viewed in the context of experience. When experience is the source of human knowledge and is „constantly being incorporated into a body of self-understanding from which our schedules of meaning can arise, human existence with its attunement and understanding can flourish" (Olšovský, 2018, pp. 481-482). For then, experience is crucial when it is the basis for knowledge, and experience itself only becomes meaningful in conjunction with knowledge. Thus, experience becomes experience the moment it turns into knowledge. It can be said that at the moment when experience becomes meaningful, i.e. enters the consciousness of the individual, we speak of knowledge. Not every sensory perception is considered an experience in this sense. However, we perceive almost constantly. In order to define knowledge based on experience, we need to „suspend" this source of knowledge in consciousness. Then experience is a complex interaction between the

individual and his environment that is fundamental to the learning process and personal growth (Dewey, 1938).

When we think about the nature of knowledge in individuals with diverse experiences, we wonder whether it is appropriate to speak of different types of knowledge or rather of a single knowledge that is constantly evolving and transforming. Reflections lead to the conclusion that knowledge is inextricably linked to the individual and his or her changing experience. Knowledge is therefore not static, but changes dynamically in response to a person's new experiences and insights. For the sake of simplicity, let us not distinguish between different kinds of knowledge and focus on the term experiential knowledge. Already Kolb aptly explains that learning is a continuous process in which understanding is formed by the transformation of experience (Kolb, 2014). The chosen approach emphasizes the crucial role of experience in the process of knowledge acquisition and formation, while simplifying and unifying the view of knowledge as such. In this way, I seek to offer a more complex and dynamic view of knowledge that reflects its constant fluidity and its inextricable connection to each individual's personal experience. Knowledge is then deeply embedded in a sociality that recognizes the social nature and character of humanity. This knowledge is shaped through social acts and is constantly transformed as it enriches people, spiritualizes them and brings them closer to others. As Olšovský (2018, p. 377) states, „Overcoming alienation in society leads to more authentic relationships between people, to the realization of the wholeness of real individuals within a community."

In the context of professions requiring interpersonal contact, which is certainly the case with teaching, this socially embedded knowledge becomes both the source and the goal of our knowledge. Expertise in these professions is not defined by experience or theoretical knowledge alone, but by the synergy of these. As Burda (2014, p. 90) notes, „There is no theory that is not influenced by some degree of practice; theory is meant to be relevant to practice, just as practice enriches knowledge." This connection between theory and practice is crucial for the development of professionalism in fields based on interpersonal interaction. Experiential knowledge in these professions should be based on self-reflection and reflection of others (interaction). This includes approaching others with sensitivity, humility and respect, seeking examples of good practice, engaging in dialogue with oneself and others, listening and seeking understanding. This approach enables us to recognise what helps the other and what does not, and thus deepen our experiential knowledge. This notion of socially embedded experiential

knowledge complements and extends the relationship between knowledge and experience. It shows that knowledge is not just an individual matter, but is deeply connected to our social interactions and relationships with others.

Experiential learning

Experiential knowledge, which is the basis of professionalism in fields requiring interpersonal contact, nurtures experiential scholarship. It is therefore a process leading to experiential knowledge. Valenta (2003) emphasizes that the individual should not leave the evaluation of his or her experiences to his or her own mind, but should verbalize and confront them with self and others. This process of clarifying phenomena and experiences is crucial for deeper understanding and professional growth. In any profession where we work with people, a high degree of empathy, tolerance and acceptance of others is essential. As Hupková and Petlák (2006, p. 45) state, a professional must purposefully reflect on his or her own work and learn not only from his or her own experiences but also from the experiences of others. Then reflective knowledge, which can be understood as mirroring or reflecting back, is applied to the human psyche and becomes the basis for a deep understanding of self and others. Knowledge reaches different degrees of depth depending on how the experience is processed. Reflective knowing, which is part of experiential knowing, works with the self. Reflective experience is processed experience that separates mere information from real knowledge. This awareness of experience strengthens knowledge and creates space for its deepening.

The process of processing experience involves asking questions about how we work with sources of knowledge, how we reflect on what we experience, and how we process experience in consciousness. This process of experiential learning is ongoing and continually works with, modifies, and shapes existing knowledge. As Géring aptly notes, albeit in a social work context (2011, p. 53), „cultivating a reflective stance towards ourselves, our actions, and everything we encounter in life is one of the essential skills of the social worker.“ This skill can be extended to all professions requiring interpersonal contact. Introspection, using reflexive and self-reflexive techniques, is a key tool for developing this type of knowledge. It involves consciously looking into oneself, one's experiences, actions and surrounding events. This process can take place either automatically or deliberately with a clear purpose. Reflexive thinking is a key element of experiential learning (not only) in the teaching profession. Hupková and Petlák (2004, p. 65) define reflection as „an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their educational

intentions, professional goals, and the values of their own work". This reflection leads to the development of the teacher's ability to make informed pedagogical decisions and to take responsibility for them. Nezvalova (2000, p. 7) understands reflexive thinking as „the process of making informed and logical decisions in teaching with subsequent evaluation of these decisions".

This concept emphasizes the cognitive aspect of reflection, involving the information process, knowledge and decision-making. However, even Dewey (1910), although preceding the authors, brings an emotional dimension to the discussion of reflexive thinking. He describes two stages of reflexive thinking: doubt and hesitation, which arises from a sense of relative failure in pedagogical endeavour, and subsequent search and inquiry, which involves the discovery and verification of materials. By integrating these perspectives, we can understand reflexive thinking as a complex process that involves both cognitive and emotional aspects. This process is essential for effective experiential learning, as it enables teachers to process their teaching experiences, critically evaluate them, and engage in continuous professional development based on them. Reflexive thinking thus forms a bridge between concrete pedagogical experience and its processing into new knowledge and skills, including in the field of interpersonal relationships. It is a central mechanism that can enable teachers to transform their experiences into more effective pedagogical practice and to improve their skills in the dynamic environment of interpersonal relationships. If they are willing to do so and if they learn the process.

Introspective dialogue in the cognition/knowledge process

If self-experience is an encounter with oneself, an experience (even repeated) of oneself, it leads to a certain self-knowledge. But how do I capture this encounter? How do I grasp self-experiential knowledge? How to strengthen self-experiential knowing in the process of knowing? Introspective dialogue offers a solution as a possible path to reflexive knowing. Not the only one. But one that seeks to conduct introspection through words (silent dialogue). To capture the meanings of experience in words, to be able to interpret oneself with certainty. And to do this by uncovering the meaning of thoughts, needs, feelings, actions, ..., aspects of living. Dialogue as creative-reflexive thinking in speech is the absolute basis for self-knowledge (Braumová, 2024, p. 98), „...letting speech come to one's inner self" (Braumová, 2024, p. 98) is what introspective dialogue is all about. For it is a necessity to be „able to understand the other as other (including myself), to understand that my perspective is not the only possible one, but at the

same time that each of my experiences is not random in its core meaning" (Rybák, 2019, p. 339). It is shaped by, and is the basis (and goal) of, experiential knowledge. „Then we must speak of a context where meaning is only formed in the context of the whole world, of relationships, encounters and encounters (Braumová, 2024, p. 98).

Introspective dialogue then represents an important tool for the development of reflexive knowledge and self-knowledge. It is a process of consciously looking into oneself, one's experiences, actions and surrounding events, which can take place either unintentionally and automatically or intentionally with a clear purpose. Švec (1996, p. 267) describes self-reflection as an „inner dialogue" during which an individual becomes aware of his or her insights and experiences, and this process involves describing, analyzing, evaluating, and generalizing pedagogical insights. The basis of internal dialogue is questions, which can be external (asked to oneself) or internal (asked from the external environment), with the aim being that the individual should be able to ask and answer internal questions. Tools of introspective dialogue include journaling, inner character dialogue, meditation techniques, and „pure" introspective dialogue involving asking questions and seeking answers.

Epler et al. (2013) recommend the use of thinking aloud, where people verbalize their self-reflexive thoughts when solving problems, which allows the linking of theoretical knowledge with practical experience and promotes continuous professional growth. By „pure" introspective dialogue, it has been suggested, we can mean asking questions and seeking answers to them. This is followed by an analysis of the answers, emotions and accompanying reactions. Of course, always from the perspective of the self. We enter into the experience of others through ourselves. There is a need to continually deepen our knowledge and acceptance of ourselves in our totality. Introspective dialogue is one way to become aware of much about oneself. Words are aids to knowing ourselves, our experiences. In this way we allow ourselves to come closer to the other. By strengthening our ability to listen to ourselves, we facilitate the process of listening to others. I hope and I wish.

It seems to hold true that I cannot explore sociality, focus my investigations on relationships and social acts, unless I have experience of myself. One should develop knowledge in the widest possible scope, with an emphasis on understanding oneself. Self-knowledge is the cornerstone of experiential knowledge. The ability to interpret one's self, life, and its meaning enables one to communicate and interact effectively with others (Braumová, 2024). Self-knowledge stands at the threshold of self-experiential

knowledge. Self-knowledge that can be grasped. Therefore, self-knowledge is essential and introspection is the path to reflexive knowledge to (hopefully) knowledge itself. Introspective dialogue is therefore a tool to be able to embark on a given journey. It is a tool for exploring sociality. The reason for a given journey remains the need to make relationships and being with others more effective, whether for personal or professional satisfaction.

Research investigation - the path of introspective dialogue

The view of introspective dialogue can be different. Most investigations explore reflection, for example, looking directly at the technique of reflexive journals for prospective teachers (e.g. Abednia et al. 2013), while others look at the effects of reflection on the work stress of the helping profession (Contreras, et al. 2021), among others. The research described here has at its forefront the capture of its role in relation to the exploration of sociality. Thus, the investigation wants to seek how interactions with others shape reflexive knowledge from the perspective of the respondents.

Research aim: How do interactions with others shape the respondents' reflexive knowledge? These include the following specific aims: To explore, from teachers' perspectives, how the quality of interactions influences their ability and willingness to share experiences, to acquire and develop experiential knowledge, and to build meaningful professional relationships. Special attention is given to the role of introspective dialogue in the processes of self-understanding and professional learning. and share experiential knowledge in the work environment, thereby strengthening social relationships. This is especially through formal and informal encounters in (and outside) the workplace. To discover what is noted and identified as important for the interviewees to exist and build good working relationships. Alternatively, whether they include these findings in their own reflexive knowledge.

Research methodology: The research was conducted as a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews

Research Sample and Its Characteristics: The respondents in the research sample were selected through purposive sampling in order to include participants with extensive experience in the teaching profession and team collaboration. The following selection criteria were applied:

- Active involvement in the educational process in the role of a teacher.
- Experience with teamwork within educational institutions.

- Willingness and ability to reflect in detail on their own interactions and engage in introspective dialogue.
- Participation in a subproject titled „*Introspective Dialogue*“, where they systematically recorded and analyzed their interactions.

The final research sample consisted of 6 teachers (4 women, 2 men) from various types of educational institutions (preschool, primary, and secondary schools), with an average of 15 years of teaching experience. All participants provided informed consent.

Data collection was conducted in two phases during the period of November to December 2024. The subsequent data analysis was carried out using the principles of thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), following these five steps:

- Initial phase of data analysis (pre-analytical) – This phase involved repeated reading of the interview transcripts (including reflections from introspective records), which allowed for a deep familiarization with the data content.
- Generation of initial codes – Codes were derived inductively from the data in relation to the research questions. Key ideas and emerging concepts were identified and labeled.
- Development and review of broader categories/themes – Based on the initial codes, related codes were grouped into thematic categories. Some codes were split, merged, or discarded depending on their relevance and coherence.
- Final naming of themes – Each theme was carefully examined, finalized, and clearly defined to accurately capture the essence of the findings while remaining grounded in the data.
- Interpretation and presentation of findings – Conclusions were formulated based on the identified and defined themes. To support and illustrate the findings, direct quotations from the respondents' introspective records and interviews were used.

The preparatory phase of the research was about finding ‚suitable‘ respondents, they were properly introduced to the aim, purpose and ‚project‘ of the research, in particular how to conduct conversations with themselves, criteria for introspective dialogue, frequency, etc. These respondents were sought through interviews. Those who considered themselves capable of conducting introspective dialogue and who were interested in the planned research were selected. At the same time, they were those who, in their opinion, strive for „functional“ relationships in the workplace.

Introspective dialogue, as a tool of self-reflection, in order to allow a deeper understanding of oneself (thoughts, feelings,...) must meet the basic criteria (to strive for them as much as possible in the awareness of the impossibility/expectation of a perfect form). These criteria were established for the purposes of the investigation as follows:

- To be a dialogue - to dwell creatively in speech - to work purposefully with words - expression to mark the contents of consciousness, the willingness to view (know) oneself through logos - speech enabling understanding (Platon, 1971) - a creative, active process, not just decoding a speech signal.
- Relating - especially to oneself (and others) with respect, honesty - being authentic without hiding true feelings, thoughts, reflections.
- Intentionality - must strive for intentionality to self, state, event, content.
- Non-judgmental (self) - to dialogue with the goal of self-knowledge, not judgment, with the goal of self-acceptance, without too much self-criticism or, conversely, condescension.
- To be attentive, to listen to oneself - in the moment and in the process of recollection.
- Not to solve possible difficulties in dialogue - not to seek answers to everything, to leave authenticity to the cognitive process, it is impossible to know everything.
- To discover causes and consequences - of actions, emotional reactions, thoughts.
- Allow yourself to conduct dialogue independently of external expectations.
- To be open to change, humble to oneself and imperfection, allow oneself to change attitude, opinion, ...
- To be patient, to work sensitively with the time allowance for dialogue.
- To look for answers even with a positive charge, not to filter oneself through the optics of looking for a problem.
- Allow yourself to experience unevenness - emotions can be contradictory, hard to grasp, etc.
- Use metaphor, symbolism, visualization if it helps to capture oneself in dialogue.
- Stepping out of our comfort zone - acknowledging facts, historical moments, influences, ...

- Use your own language - don't limit yourself by looking for specific terms, don't leave out humour, etc.
- Have a need for self-actualization on a relational level - motivation not only in the area of performance, the need for effective communication within the work environment, consciously relating to others.

Introspective dialogue project was carried out by the participants themselves, during which they produced introspective records following a predefined structure. The actual research consisted of the subsequent analysis of these records through in-depth interviews with individual teachers, during which the participants interpreted and reflected on their own entries. The researchers did not analyze the introspective records directly but approached them exclusively through the reflections and statements of the participants in the interviews. This approach allowed capturing the meaning and context of the introspective records from the perspective of their authors.

Themes were assigned codes, then the relationships between the codes were observed (analysis of each part of the research), which was then situated in the observed context (in-depth analysis final). It was observed how the introspective dialogue took place, whether the set criteria for introspective dialogue were met, what questions were asked, how they were answered, what feelings accompanied the dialogue, ..., the aim was to capture the introspective dialogue in the context of interpersonal relationships. Both partial insights (individual dialogue transcripts through interpretations) and subsequent reactions to them - which were mediated by semi-structured interviews - were analysed.

Introspective dialogue project – template for teacher self-reflection

Aim: To use introspective dialogue to observe oneself interacting with colleagues in the workplace (and beyond) with the overall aim of making relationships more effective.

Time commitment: 4 weeks.

Presentation and project guidelines: oral individual form, handing over the structure of the questions and methodological guidance.

Motivation: an introductory speech along the lines of: ‚We would like to invite you to take part in a project that can help you to better understand your interactions with colleagues in and outside the workplace - and thus perhaps enable you to develop more effective and beneficial relationships. This introspective dialogue project will offer you a safe space to look at your thoughts and emotions in situations where you are in contact with other

people. You will try to recognize what certain interactions trigger in you and why you react the way you do. This will help you discover strengths and places where you can improve relationships and make communication more effective. As a result, you are more likely to be able to create a work environment where relationships are based on mutual respect and understanding. And why Introspective Dialogue? Because it's not about evaluation, it's about kindly getting to know yourself as you interact with others. It's a great opportunity to understand your patterns of behavior so you can be more open, more understanding and more attuned to your colleagues. If you want to take your communication and relationship skills to the next level, then this is the path for you. Join us - take the first step to better understanding yourself and others!"

Material requirements of the project: recording equipment (writing, PC, ...).

The project itself takes place individually over a period of 4 weeks and has been imaginatively divided into 3 blocks. First, an introduction to introspective dialogue - participants start with personal records of ongoing introspection. Goals are rubbed, inquiries are made as needed towards the assignor, and a unique way of recording the progress of the dialogue with respect to the presented project assignment emerges. This was followed by a practical and coherent daily application of the introspective technique = keeping a diary through answering guiding questions, plus accompanying comments. The last part could be called the final part, where the teachers went through their records (last day(s)) and tried to make an analysis and evaluation themselves, e.g. estimating whether the participants planned to maintain the introspective dialogue and whether and how they could continue their personal and professional growth through it after the project. In particular, participants need to continuously record:

- Date/time/location, if applicable.
- Situations and situational events - during the day, both formal and informal encounters, collaboration, social skills.
- Emotions and reactions - own feelings and reactions before, during, after interactions (expectations, etc.).
- Outcomes of interactions - to record changes, perceived influence, impact, context, capture relational skills, ...

The key questions after Part 1 and Part 2 of the project are exemplary to give an idea of the structure of the introspective dialogue: What happened today when you met a colleague? What did I expect from the meeting? How did I feel when he reacted? What made me feel uneasy? How did the colleague react to my actions? Did I detect emotions in the other person? What

were they? What did it trigger in me? Did anything surprise me today when I met my colleagues? Which interaction was most joyful today and why? Which was the most difficult? Did I tend to evaluate a colleague during an interaction? Did I feel understood? Was my/their communication open? In what ways did this manifest itself? What could I have done differently? Etc.

Recommended structure of the final introspective write-up with progress reflection (partial and final analysis):

- Summary of the most important interactions, events, feelings and reactions.
- Date and situation: Briefly describe the situation or interaction with the colleague (what happened, where and how).
- My feelings and reactions: How did you feel during this interaction? Did you have any strong feelings that influenced your attitude towards the situation?
- Analysis: What did this interaction bring to you? What did you learn about yourself, your values and your working style? Which feelings influenced your reactions, attitudes? How did it affect your professional knowledge?
- Action: How will you use this experience going forward? What will you change in your work or in your approach to colleagues?

The key questions after Part 3 of the project are exemplary to give an idea of the structure of the final reflection of the introspective dialogue: What specific interactions with colleagues have influenced my professional growth in these 4 weeks? What did I learn about myself through these interactions? What views of colleagues impacted me and why? In what ways could I improve my interactions with colleagues? What have I been able to do well? What is not going well? What was the atmosphere like during the interactions? Whether and how will I continue to self-reflect? Etc.

Interviews after the project

The evaluation of the project was carried out exclusively by the participants themselves, who first prepared written evaluations and verbally interpreted their own introspective records. The actual research study consisted of subsequent in-depth interviews, during which these verbal interpretations of the records were analyzed and examined by the researchers. When the focus was not only on presenting the project results, but aimed at highlighting reflections on progress. Teachers were asked to reflect on how their interactions with colleagues influenced the relational domain (teamwork, communication, etc.) and to help researchers answer the question:

How do interactions with others shape respondents' reflexive knowledge? The interviews thus aimed to identify what specific knowledge, from the respondents' perspective, was enhanced through these interactions. For illustration, questions such as the following were posed: How do you perceive your entry into interactions with colleagues? Have you ever noticed any nonverbal signals you send at the beginning of a meeting? Can you describe a situation where you became aware of your reaction to a verbal or nonverbal cue during a work conversation? In what way has introspective dialogue led you to deeper self-reflection? What have you discovered about yourself through this process? And so on. For by being able to capture the knowledge gained through introspection after understanding and 'internalising' (becoming aware of) it, the respondents were turning the knowledge into (and saturating) knowledge. There was an initial awareness of the existence of reflexive knowledge precisely through the conduct of introspective dialogues. Respondents considered interaction as a condition and source of reflexive knowing, where we become aware of ourselves in the context of interactions. And they saw interaction as the essence of sociality! But that would not be enough, it was a superset - reflexive knowledge. But it was necessary to record specific knowledge - i.e. what respondents became aware of in reflexive interactions, to name sub-knowledges, sub-forms of knowledge. By conducting the dialogue themselves, repeatedly and in a focused way, they discovered elements of reflexive insight about themselves and the interactions. The research aim was fulfilled – it was possible to identify and describe areas of reflexive knowledge that participants became aware of and further developed through introspective dialogue. Key findings include: awareness of entering interactions, responses to verbal and non-verbal cues, self-reflection, need for recognition, working with expectations and prejudices, perception of group dynamics, development of empathy and listening skills, inspiration from colleagues, the importance of collaboration, collaboration strategies, comparing approaches, and conflicts as impulses for reflection, … These areas are elaborated in detail in the article.

These elements included, i.e., respondents considered the basic building blocks of overall reflexive knowledge = aspects that were based on the manifestations of interactions: **Awareness of entering into interactions.** Awareness of input into interactions emerged as a relatively key element of reflexive knowledge that respondents discovered through introspective dialogue. This aspect specifically targeted moments just before and at the very beginning of interactions with others (and self). Respondents described moments when they enter into interactions. „I realized that before I start

talking to my colleagues, I often unconsciously blink rapidly and adopt an upright posture. It's like I'm preparing for a theatrical performance." This realisation, she reflected, helped her to better prepare for interactions and feel more confident in them from the outset. Another respondent stated, „I find that I tend to hesitate for a moment, take a breath, and sometimes even verbally encourage myself before entering a room full of people. This brief moment gives me time to quickly assess the situation and tune into the atmosphere of the room." This observation allowed him to better prepare for different social situations and enter them with more confidence. Another study participant described how he began to notice his first words when starting a conversation, „I realized that often I often start conversations with colleagues with the phrase ‚Do you have time?' I now know that this can give the feeling of pressure or urgency, even if it's not meant to. I now try to choose more open and positive opening phrases." Overall, respondents emphasised, how this awareness helped them in making first contact, realising what they themselves were doing, feeling, how they were acting. One teacher commented: „I started noticing how important my first smile and greeting is when I address colleagues, sometimes it was missing. When I consciously adjusted my facial expression to be more open and friendly from the start, I saw an immediate improvement in the willingness of colleagues to engage in conversation." This increased awareness of input into interactions led to a deeper understanding of how the first moments of an interaction can affect its the overall course of the interaction. As one respondent summarized, „It's fascinating how much that happens in the first few seconds of an encounter. Now that I'm aware of it, I can better use these moments to create a positive atmosphere for further communication, and, consequently, relationships."

Other important aspects of reflexive knowing include respondents ranking their **own reactions and actions**, **as well as reactions to verbal and non-verbal signals**. They were more aware of their own behaviors and reactions in interactions with colleagues. „I realized that when a colleague responds incorrectly or disagrees with me, I tend to immediately respond with a negative facial expression. This can discourage some colleagues from making further efforts to reach an agreement." Another respondent said: „I find that I often react too quickly to colleagues' non-verbal signals, such as a confused expression, and even then sometimes I don't notice what they are saying." Another participant in the study described how he began to notice his reactions to different types of questions, „I realized that I sometimes react to questions that I consider simple with mild irritation, sometimes I make light of the questions, and sometimes I use cynicism. This can discourage

colleagues from asking questions. I now try to approach all questions with patience and some respect." Teachers also emphasised the importance of being aware of one's own non-verbal cues. „I have started to notice that when I am nervous or insecure, I tend to fidget in my chair or tap my pencil on my desk top. I realised that this can come across as dismissive or defensive." Now I make a conscious effort to maintain a more open body posture." This heightened awareness of her own reactions and actions led to a deeper understanding of how the teacher's behavior affects communication in the workplace. As one respondent aptly pointed out, „Even the smallest reactions can have a big impact on the atmosphere in the group."

Self-awareness in interactions is about perceptions of self-worth and ability during social interactions in professional settings. Respondents often described how they became aware of their feelings of confidence or insecurity in various interactions. „My self-confidence, and therefore probably my speech, changes significantly depending on who I am talking to. I feel confident when discussing with a colleague, but often feel nervous and self-doubt when dealing with a supervisor." This realization helped her begin to work on building more consistent self-awareness across different types of interactions. Another respondent noted: „I have found that my confidence in interactions is often related to how well prepared I am and my mood. When I am clear about what I want to say, I feel much more confident. Now I always take time to prepare before important meetings, which helps me feel more confident. Sometimes I just need to eat and drink well." This realization, he says, will lead to a concrete change in his work habits and improve his performance in professional interactions (time will tell if it does, decisions count). Another participant in the study described how he began to notice his internal dialogue during interactions, „I realized that I tend to underestimate myself internally when talking to colleagues I consider more experienced. I tell myself things like ‚I'm sure they think I'm incompetent'. Now that I realise this, I try to replace these thoughts with more positive ones and remind myself of my achievements and abilities. I'm pretty good at it." Respondents also highlighted how this awareness helped them in building a more authentic self-concept. One teacher aptly added: „I began to realize that my self-esteem is strongest when I am honest and authentic. I used to try to always appear perfect, but now I know that admitting my own insecurities or mistakes can paradoxically boost my self-esteem and credibility in the eyes of others. After all, everyone is in a similar position." This heightened awareness of self-awareness in interactions led to a deeper understanding of how internal attitudes affect external expression and communication

effectiveness. „It's fascinating how much my internal self-awareness affects how others perceive me and then how they treat me."

The element of need for recognition and social validation focuses on the desire to be respected, valued and recognized for one's abilities, skills and contributions in the work environment; it is a confirmation of one's social (professional) role. Respondents often described how they had begun to realise the importance of recognition to their motivation and the self-esteem mentioned. „When my ideas and efforts are not accepted, I feel less motivated and less willing to come up with new ideas, I keep my ideas to myself." Another respondent commented: „I have found that the need for recognition is not just about praise, but also about having my opinions taken seriously and influencing decision-making processes. When I feel that my contributions are valued, I am much more engaged in teamwork." Another study participant described how he began to notice different forms of recognition, „I realized that recognition does not always have to be public or formal. Sometimes a sincere thank you from a colleague or a brief mention of my contribution during a meeting is enough. These small acts of recognition often have more impact than large formal awards." Respondents also highlighted how the need for recognition affects their relationships with colleagues and supervisors. „I began to realize that when I actively acknowledge the work of my colleagues, our relationships and collaboration improve. It's like we are creating a positive cycle of mutual recognition and support." This heightened awareness of the need for recognition led to a deeper understanding of how recognition affects work atmosphere and performance. „What's interesting to me is how the need for recognition affects the overall team dynamic. When we feel recognized, we are more willing to take risks, innovate and support each other. It creates a place where everyone feels valued and motivated to give their best. That's how I see it."

Personal expectations - working with preconceptions focuses on how preconceived ideas and expectations affect our interactions and perceptions of situations in the work environment. Respondents often described how they became aware of the influence of their expectations on the course of interactions. „When I expect a meeting with a particular colleague to be difficult, my expectations are often met. I enter the interaction with a defensive attitude, which can trigger a negative reaction." Another respondent shared, „I find that I tend to assume that professionally younger colleagues will be less experienced and their ideas less valuable. This realisation shocked me and made me actively work to remove this prejudice. I now try to listen to all ideas regardless of age or experience." Respondents also overwhelmingly

emphasized how personal expectations affect their own performance. One teacher commented: „I have begun to realize that when I expect a particular meeting to be challenging, I often feel more nervous and less prepared. I now try to reframe my expectations and focus on the opportunities." Elsewhere, „It's strange but seems true how our expectations and biases can function as self-fulfilling prophecies." Awareness of the existence of expectations and biases allowed all respondents to identify and challenge some of their preconceived ideas, which could lead to a more open and fair approach to themselves, colleagues, and work situations.

Group dynamics. Respondents often described how they had become aware of the complexity of group processes in their work teams. „Through gradual records, it dawned on me that our teaching staff is not just a group of individuals, but a complex system of relationships and interactions. Some colleagues have a stronger influence on decision making, while others act as a cementing element of the team; someone stands on the periphery, so where do I think I stand?" Another respondent also asked rhetorically, „Does the change in the dynamics of our team depend on what topic we are addressing? Maybe." Interestingly, most respondents were open to exploring this topic. They weren't necessarily looking for answers, but the pondering did raise wonder and the need to continue to address the area. Which seemed desirable for further progress towards reflexive knowledge. Another interviewee described how he began to notice the different roles that colleagues take in the team: ‚We have informal leaders in the team who often set the direction of discussions, but also mediators who help resolve conflicts and innovators who come up with new ideas. Understanding these roles has helped me a lot." Respondents also emphasized how group dynamics affect their job satisfaction and performance. One teacher commented: „I have begun to realize that during times when our team dynamics are positive and supportive, I feel much more motivated and creative in my work. On the contrary, when relationships are strained, it negatively affects my energy and desire to innovate. I wonder, what is my role and how is it changing?" This awareness of group dynamics can be summarized as, „By trying to read these group processes better, I could (hopefully) contribute more actively to the collaboration." According to the analysis, introspective dialogue helped respondents develop a deeper understanding of group dynamics in the work collective. They definitely started to look for their own role, its characteristics, etc.

Strengthening empathy - perceiving others' perspectives, listening. The development of the ability to empathise with the feelings and thoughts

of others and to listen to them effectively was highlighted by all respondents. „It's probably important to really listen to your colleagues, not just to hear their words, but to try to understand what's behind them. When I started paying attention to their non-verbal signals and emotions, I found that I understood their needs and concerns much better. I stopped targeting just my fellow friends, but other team members as well." Another respondent noted: „I find that when I try to look at a situation from a colleague's perspective, I often discover reasons for their behaviour that I had missed before. This helps me to respond with more understanding and patience." Respondents also stressed the importance of active listening. „I have started to practice the technique of ‚mirroring', where I paraphrase what a colleague has said to me to check that I have understood correctly. This not only improved our communication but also strengthened the trust between us. I don't fake it, I'm just more receptive when I talk."

This is followed by the discovery of the need for **inspiration from others**. This element focuses on how colleagues and their work can be a source of motivation, new ideas and professional growth in the work team. Respondents often described how they had become aware of the influence of their colleagues on their own work and approach to teaching. „I realized how deeply inspired I am by the way my colleague Iveta approaches problem-solving topics. Her patience and creativity motivate me to rethink my work." Another study participant described how he began to notice inspirational qualities in his colleagues, „I realized that each of my colleagues has something unique that inspires me. With Vojtěch I admire his ability to use technology in teaching, Marta inspires me with her empathetic approach to students, and Petr with his ability to explain complex issues simply. I try to learn something from each of them and incorporate it into my practice." Respondents also highlighted how the inspiration of others influences their motivation and professional development. „When I see the achievements of my colleagues, I feel much more motivated to improve myself and collaborate. I don't see it as a competitive battle. It's good to be aware of this."

Collaboration and shared achievements. It is about finding out through concrete events that collaboration between teachers leads to the achievement of common goals and how shared achievements strengthen team spirit in the teaching team. Respondents often described how they began to realize the power of collaboration and its impact on achieving results. „It occurred to me that when we work together on projects, we get much better results than when everyone works in isolation. Another added: ‚I have found that collaboration is not just about big projects. It's also

about the everyday little things - sharing teaching materials, consulting each other, or just having short conversations about how to handle a particular teaching situation." Yes, it was the „little things" said in informal meetings that respondents considered to be of the utmost importance, even the most important: „When I realised this, I started going to the lunches too, not for the food, but for the discussions over it."

Closely related to this are **strategies for collaboration** - methods, techniques. In the introspective dialogue, respondents often discovered approaches that helped them improve collaboration with colleagues. „I realised that the pair technique we use is not only useful for the students but also for us teachers. When we have a meeting, we often first think about the problem individually, then discuss it in pairs, and finally share ideas with the whole team." Another related to roles in completing a task: „When we do projects together, we clearly divide our roles - for example, coordinator, note-taker, timekeeper - our collaboration tends to be much more effective, yes." Everyone knows what they are responsible for, and we can focus on our tasks." Respondents also stressed the importance of regular reflection and evaluation of collaboration. „We started to do a short reflection after each major joint project on what worked and what didn't. This practice helps us to continuously improve our collaboration strategies." Most were aware that reflection on the form of collaboration was sometimes lacking or inadequate. They agreed that a long-term teamwork strategy needs to be established.

Comparing, contrasting - this aspect focuses on the ability to analyse similarities and differences between different pedagogical approaches, situations or experiences. It has been noted that comparison is important, but not for the sake of competition or comparing performance, but in order to pursue the best form of work. „It may be important to compare different teaching methods. When I compared my traditional approach with the new interactive methods, I found that each had specific benefits for different types of learners." Unique strengths also emerged when she began to look at events through the lens of herself and others, „I found that what I take for granted is actually my strength." Another participant in the study described how benchmarking helps in professional development, „Comparing my current methods to those I used early in my career shows me how I have evolved as a teacher. And that's good." This realization allowed them to better appreciate their unique contribution to teaching, identify areas for improvement, and adapt their methods to meet the diverse needs of their students.

Conflicts - an impulse to reflect, to act. This revealed aspect focuses on how conflicts among colleagues can serve as a catalyst for personal

growth, professional development, and improved team dynamics: „Disagreements in our teaching staff that I previously viewed as something terrible can actually be an opportunity to move us all forward. After a challenging discussion about the division of tasks, I also reflected on my approach and realized that I used to be in opposition and that we needed to improve our teamwork processes." Another respondent noted: „I have found that conflicts between colleagues over teaching methods can be a great opportunity for mutual learning. Instead of insisting on our own, we now use these situations to openly discuss and share experience. Finally, you've been scared a lot, but it's working." Another study participant described how conflict led to positive change in the group: „After the conflict about the division of responsibilities in the school project, we realized that we needed a clearer system of delegating tasks. This conflict motivated us to create a new project management system for our team." Respondents also emphasized how conflicts can lead to systemic changes throughout the school. „The recurring arguments about communication between departments have caused us to rethink our communication externally as an institution." This heightened awareness of the role of conflict as an impetus for reflection and action led to a deeper understanding of how challenging situations can be used for the development of the whole team, the importance, and sometimes outright necessity, of reframing the perception of conflict from something negative to an opportunity for workplace development.

Discovering blind spots. Becoming aware of areas that have been overlooked or underestimated, either in individual practice or within team dynamics, has proven to be very significant. „It slowly dawned on me that I had a blind spot in the area of gender stereotypes in teaching. It was only when a colleague sensitively pointed this out to me that I noticed I was unconsciously using examples that reinforced traditional gender roles. This revelation led me to rethink my use of certain words." Another respondent noted: „We probably have a blind spot in communication between different departments and groups. We often duplicate work or compete with each other for resources." Or, „I began to realize that I had a blind spot in the area of feedback. I always thought I was giving constructive criticism, but it was only through reflection with colleagues that I realised my feedback could sometimes be too direct and demotivating." Overall, there was a realisation that what we don't know or see can have just as much impact as what we do know. „This project taught me to be more humble and open to continuous learning and improvement. I also kind of like myself more."

Values and priorities overarch the previous findings; it is about reassessing and potentially changing personal and professional values and priorities in the context of teaching practice. „I already suspect that my original priority of being the ‚perfect' teacher in all respects was counterproductive. Through reflection I have reconstructed my values and am now focusing on authenticity. I have found that this change allows me to be more effective and, most importantly, more satisfied in my work." Other words also confirm the existence of reassessment, „I began to realize that my original priority of being a popular teacher led me to avoid challenging but important conversations with students. The examples illustrate how introspective dialogue helped teachers develop a deeper understanding of their values and priorities and how they can reconstruct them for better alignment with their current teaching practice and personal beliefs.

The interviewees considered the above mentioned to be an absolute basis in awareness of themselves, others, and the process of interactions, and thus, in their opinion, they could more easily approach the streamlining of relationships in the workplace. Without the regular records that the project required, they would never have realised the importance of interactions to their professional functioning to such an extent, in their own words. The overall aim was to capture what they felt was important in interactions for good workplace relations. And this was achieved. It was found how specifically interactions with others shape their reflexive knowledge, this finding was reached by using an introspective dialogue tool. This awareness, they believe, will make workplace relationships more effective. At the very least, they will strive to do so. For it is this deeper awareness (‚reflexive knowing') that can begin the journey to self, to others.

Relationship awareness

The conclusion of the investigation suggests that introspective dialogue, or reflexive knowledge, plays a key role in the development of professional competences and improving interpersonal relationships in the workplace. Through conducting introspective dialogues, the respondents discovered the importance of reflexively looking at themselves and their interactions with others. This process enabled them to become aware of a number of important aspects of social interactions that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. As Švec (1996, p. 267) states, self-reflection as an „inner dialogue" allows the individual to become aware of his or her insights and experiences, leading to a deeper understanding of self and others. The results of the investigation confirm that the regular practice of introspective

dialogue can lead to a significant enhancement of reflexive knowledge, which in turn contributes to more effective interactions and better relationships in the workplace. However, it is important to note that the practice of introspection and reflexive thinking may be associated with certain concerns and obstacles. Fragkos (2016) points to „epistemological incongruence" as one factor that can raise concerns about introspection. To overcome these fears and obstacles, Winkel (2017) emphasizes the importance of coaching and training. Creating a safe environment for reflection and providing support from more experienced peers or mentors can help alleviate fears associated with the introspective process.

On the basis of these findings, the authors of the article suggest practical and regular applications of introspective techniques in pedagogical settings. Specifically, these include the introduction of regular reflective sessions for teachers, the use of semi-structured introspective journals, and the promotion of informal meetings for teachers to share experiences. Platt (2014) proposes the use of a creative (narrative) approach to reflection and emphasises the importance of holistic curriculum design, which should include reflection as an integral part of the educational process. In a broader context, these findings support the importance of reflexive practices in professional development. They show that systematic self-reflection and introspection can be powerful tools for improving interpersonal skills and overall effectiveness in the work environment. However, as De la Croix (2018) notes, it is important to acknowledge diversity in reflection and respect individual reflexive styles. This approach to professional development, based on reflexive knowledge, has the potential to contribute to creating a more positive and productive work culture across different disciplines. The potential, therefore, depends on whether and how it is fulfilled. To effectively support introspection, it is essential to see it as an integral part of a broader reflexive process. It cannot be isolated or reduced to cognitive aspects alone, but must be understood in its full complexity. This includes the recognition and integration of emotional experiences, bodily sensations and intuitive insights as legitimate parts of the introspective process. The key is not to exclude introspection from the reflexive process. The findings and outline of the Introspective Dialogue Project presented here can contribute to further research, but also, and especially, as a motivation and informative basis for defining introspective dialogue as such. Although other possible concrete forms will be diverse, it is not possible any other way, the point is to show which way to go. Only then can it be true that introspective dialogue is a way of entering into a relationship. It is a certain awareness of the existence

of the relationship/relationships. It is a unique opportunity to capture oneself in sociality. Words here help to „tread" the path to consciousness. It is an awareness of humanity based on sociality, enacted through social acts - this is knowledge - reflexive knowledge.

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