



Cap sur l'école inclusive  
en Europe



## Pedagogical Sheet

### How to address the child's affective and emotional needs as an accompanying person

#### Section of the module /E.

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#### 1. Thematic

This pedagogical sheet aims at describing the positions to be adopted and developed in the context of the affective and emotional expression of a child with special educational needs. In situations of disability, these expressions may seem to overflow and put the child away from the learning relationship. The challenge here will be to consider and rely on this dimension of affective and emotional expression in order to enable pupils to re-enter the learning dynamic and the life of the "class" group.

Faced with the affective and emotional expressions of the child with SEN, the position to be adopted will be one of **reassurance, empathy, correct distance and benevolent listening**. These positions will enable the child to experience a secure learning environment in which he / she can then enter in a serene way. **This will be a structuring environment for the child**. He / she will find in the adult a figure of support that can enable him / her to be available again for mobilizing his / her skills and his / her resources (which, because of a sense of insecurity, were not accessible to him / her).

- The **classic affective development** (see in particular John Bowlby's **attachment theory**) makes it possible for most school-aged children to build a "secure" affective base, and thus to rely on this base to experience new cognitive or social situations (outside the family environment) with some sense of internal security. However, in situations of disability this ability can be latent, hindered and less deeply rooted in the child. This may result in regression dynamics, as the child needs to check in the present time that the new situations he / she is experiencing (including learning situations) are safe and secure for him / her.

- **Benevolent listening** (see in particular Carl Rogers) will enable him / her to express his / her emotions without risk of being judged. Expressing one's emotions and knowing that they are received and heard per se will enable him / her to organize, structure and make sense of these new situations. These positive relational experiences will enable him / her to anticipate serenely new learning situations, which can become **potential spaces** (on this notion see especially D. Winnicott) to build a positive self-esteem.

- Personifying a position of **"correct distance"** (neither too close nor too far: close if the child needs it, and less close if the child needs it) while making oneself available will offer the child a space to understand these new situations at his / her own pace. Rather than **"correct distance"** (D. Winnicott), one could even speak of **"correct proximity"** (Depenne).

More than any other, the child with SEN needs proximity, renegotiating the **primary attachment** (Bowlby) in order to feel a sense of security that enables him / her then paradoxically to break away and go toward the other and thus also to learning. The caregiver must thus find the **correct distance** between this need for **attachment** and the need for **separation**. One can't refuse a hug to a child who feels the need, but one must then make him / her understand that he / she must break away to join a group, a game, an activity. This movement takes some time, but it is a necessity.

## 2. Context

We are in a class (primary or secondary school) where one or more pupils are psychologically handicapped. Faced with a new pedagogical activity that he doesn't know, this pupil is in trouble. This new situation is causing complex emotions, even anxiety, and can make him feel insecure because it risks reactivating a situation of failure. But confronted with him, the caregiver or the teacher can feel powerless and this is often the case with the profile of SEN pupil that is increasingly encountered in recent years. His psychic and emotional outbursts destabilize the personnel of the educational community in the broadest sense. It is therefore important that they can develop conceptual approaches and tools that can enable them to visualize what is at stake for these children in learning situations.

## 3. Goal

This sheet is to be attached to the module's trunk D as Define. It is a matter of defining what we are talking about when speaking about finding the correct position in the relationship between a learner / pupil and a teacher / coach. Correct distance especially confronted with what the child with SEN can show in terms of affective and emotional expression. Offering a conceptual or problematic vision of what is at stake in this type of situation is not providing "ready-made thinking", but rather an aid to understanding. This is to offer the base for the interpretation of an experience that is specific to the teacher and the caregiver. They are ultimately the most legitimate authors of the meaning they wish to give to what they understand about the child and the relationship they have with him / her.

## 4. Limits

As development psychologists point out as regards children's affective and emotional expressions, these expressions may have extremely different and protean modalities. This is all the more significant in the context of accompanying children with special educational needs. Here, a particular place is to be made to the singularities of these expressive modalities, and a real work on the personal representations of what is "socially admitted" is to be engaged by the caregiver in order to be able to welcome each child's peculiarities, and thus adapt to his / her needs.

## 5. Prospects

Considering the emotional and affective dimensions in the learning relationship offers new opportunities for the accompanied child from the educational and pedagogical point of view. This accompanying dimension can be complemented by considering the levels of development (emotional, social, cognitive and psychomotor) reached by the child.