

Sandra Reitz



Improving Social Competence via **e-Learning?**

The Example of Human Rights Education

PETER LANG

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Preface

“Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.”
William Arthur Ward (1921-1994)

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1 Introduction

“Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little.” - Edmund Burke (1729-1797)

E-learning – electronic learning or learning with a computer –¹has been researched for several years now, and the “hype” about how it can decrease costs and at the same time revolutionize learning has calmed down. Although people have realized that e-learning can be expensive and that not all e-learning programs fit all needs, it is still gaining importance. The fact that knowledge can be acquired through e-learning is not questioned anymore. The question is whether e-learning can also foster attitudes and skills (i.e., influence the emotional and behavioral area). Programs, let alone evaluative research, in this area are still very rare. The field of social competence, and, more narrowly, human rights education, has been chosen to place this theoretical question into practice. An e-learning program in this area is being developed and evaluated as part of this thesis.

Social competence has become an almost meaningless buzzword for professional and even private advertisements encompassing simply likable behavior. On the other hand, it reveals the general consensus that pure knowledge (or only cognitive skills) is not the only factor for success in the professional, but also private, life. Therefore, the term social competence seems well-suited to describe a focus on attitudinal and behavioral skills. This will be investigated further in the second chapter.

News about mobbing and violence in school, or even more tragic events such as high school shootings not only in the United States of America, but also in Germany and Finland, have traumatized many people. They are left helpless as to why this happens and how it can be prevented. While these extremes are certainly cases for psychiatrists, moral education research can shed some light on the development of an average person’s moral norms, as well as on attitudes and behavior, which will be shown in the third chapter. The focus here is not on training for people with social skills or moral behavior deficits, or an “at risk population”, but on how moral education is developed and can be fostered in general.

Alongside these more general terms of social and moral competence, human rights education has also gained more importance. Since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, more and more treaties have been signed. In spite

1 For a definition of e-learning, see chapter 5.

of discussions around cultural diversity, it seems that a truly global consensus of what is right and wrong can be found in these documents. In the political science field, human rights have become an acknowledged measurement of sustainable policies even though the term can, of course, also be abused. Moreover, human rights education is applied not only to politics, but also to all humans and behavior in everyday situations. Coming from the area of social competence in which values are not prescribed per se but depend on the context via the general term of moral education, human rights education defines “good behavior” to graspable and concrete ideas and concepts as laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A more detailed analysis of human rights education, including definitions and best practice examples, will follow in chapter four.

Another crucial development in the past few years or decades is the new media. Today’s life – professionally and privately – is hardly imaginable without computers. The education field needs to be aware of the challenges as well as the chances of new media development. Even though violence in computer games is widely discussed (especially related to the previously mentioned shooting events), this thesis wishes to focus on the potential the new media have for education. Recently, the term 'Web 2.0' has been used to describe the increasing usage of more interactive websites with forums, chats, and collective projects rather than websites with purely one-way information dissemination. This also reveals a pedagogical shift in the internet's use in learning. E-learning understood in this sense – not necessarily isolated learning, but as learning in networks – can lead to new ways of learning, as will be discussed in chapter five.

Whereas chapters two to five lay the theoretical foundation of this thesis, chapters six to eight will focus on the practical planning, realization and evaluation of an e-learning course for human rights education. Chapter six will analyse existing e-learning programs on moral competence and human rights education before planning a new e-learning course on human rights education. This includes an informed choice for a virtual learning environment, the platform on which the learners will access the material and communicate with one another, as well as background on the learning groups and goals.

Chapter seven will then describe the realization of the e-learning course by giving an overview of the content and describing the main activities in more detail (including the exact wording for some activities and a few screenshots) to give an authentic overview of the course. While chapter seven describes these activities neutrally and does not include many examples of what the learners produced in reaction to the tasks and to the exchange between one another, chapter eight deals with the 'outcome' of the course. The evaluation plan, as well as the reasoning behind the items of the pre- and post-test, will be described in the first part of chapter eight. Afterwards, the evaluation of these activities, in-

cluding both qualitative and quantitative methods, will be carried out. The thesis concludes with the findings and ideas for further research in chapter nine.

The heart of this thesis is the e-learning course that has been planned, realized, and evaluated as a practical part. This course has been conducted with two different learning groups at two different times. The first group consisted of two classes in Geisenheim, Germany. The course was part of their social sciences class and the project took place in spring 2007. In summer 2007, a global educators' course was conducted with around 60 participants from 30 different countries. The course was advertised through www.hrea.org and through the Amnesty International Network, enabling broad participation. The content of this course is not relevant to this thesis and will not be covered in detail. The aim of the educators' course was, on one hand, to quality check the e-learning course, as the educators were asked to provide feedback about the tasks and the questionnaire. On the other hand, some educators from this course were interested in joining a second e-learning course with their learners in autumn 2007, the second learning group covered in detail in this thesis. Around 80 learners from the United States of America, the Dominican Republic, the Kingdom of Morocco, the Federal Republic of Germany, and Mongolia participated in a global learners' course for human rights education. According to the Mongolian educator, it was the first e-learning course on human rights education in that country.

The practical orientation of this thesis is crucial. Even though the first five chapters focus on theoretical concepts, they lay the basis for a well thought-out course that accounts for the discussed theoretical findings. Nevertheless, one can hardly expect the first try of such a course to be perfect; chapters six to nine will focus on areas of improvements and possible developments in the future.

In order to understand the focus of this thesis and the limitations of the evaluation, one aspect needs to be clarified: this thesis does not wish to investigate whether e-learning is the better approach to human rights education than classroom-based or face-to-face approaches. It simply wishes to investigate whether such an e-learning course impacts all areas of human rights education – or, more generally, of social competence: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Even though course learners came from countries as diverse as Mongolia, the Dominican Republic, the Kingdom of Morocco, United States of America, and the Federal Republic of Germany, intercultural comparisons will not be the focus. The number of participants from each country was too small to draw any conclusions. Moreover, the heart of the thesis is the learners' personal development through the course, which will be investigated with pre- and post-tests.

A final note on the language: This thesis is written in English to enable a wider dissemination and reception. Due to the background of the author, the focus lies on publications in English or German. Even though this is, of course,

another limitation, the usage of German literature might also serve as an interesting insight for those who cannot read German.

2 Social Competence

“If we were to wake up some morning and find that everyone was the same race, creed and color, we would find some other cause for prejudice by noon.” - George D. Aiken (1892-1984)

The term 'social competence' is gaining more and more importance in today's discussions relating both to private and business life such as in the handbook “The Way to Social Competence in Seven Days”². Social competence is often mentioned as a prerequisite in job adverts and even in the personal columns. A 1994 survey showed that 61% of 111 companies required social skills for their open positions,³ a number which is likely to have increased in the meantime due to the fact the social competence seems to have become a buzzword. Another survey conducted by Rost showed that 72% of her interview partners agreed to the statement “Social competence gains importance in the selection of personnel”, whereas 0% agreed to the statement “The importance of social competence is being overestimated”.⁴

This consensus about the enormous significance of social competence is as striking as the disagreement about what exactly is to be understood by it. Some critical authors go as far as stating that the interpretation of the term is deliberate.⁵ In the following sub-chapters, a working definition for the term social competence will be phrased (2.1), including sub-components such as empathy or tolerance (2.2). A short overview of the history of social competence and related terms will be given (2.3) and issues around measuring social competence will be discussed (2.4). Finally, some preliminary considerations on how social competence can be improved will be described (2.5). As this thesis focuses on human rights education as an example of general social competence, the whole phenomenon of social competence cannot be described in total. Therefore, the follow-

2 Zimmer-Waldbröhl, Barbara (2002). *Der Weg zu sozialer Kompetenz in 7 Tagen*. Paderborn: Junfermann.

3 Cf. Infas-Sozialforschung 1994, Page 33. Quoted in: Crisand, Ekkehard (2002). *Soziale Kompetenz als persönlicher Erfolgsfaktor*. Heidelberg: I.H. Sauer-Verlag. Page 11.

4 Rost, Katja (2002). *Sozialkompetenz. Entwirren des Begriffdschungels*. Hamburg: Diplomica GmbH. Page 183. Translation by S.R. Original German statements: „Die Sozialkompetenz gewinnt bei der Personalauswahl zunehmend an Bedeutung” versus 0% „Die Bedeutung von Sozialkompetenz wird überschätzt”.

5 Cf. Friede, Christian K. (1994). *Sozialkompetenz als Ziel der Berufserziehung: begriffsanalytisch betrachtet*. Zeitschrift für Berufs- und Wirtschaftspädagogik, 90, pages 606-625. Page 608.

ing sub-chapters will concentrate on those aspects that would also be covered in human rights education.

2.1 Working Definition of the Term

Social Competence: A Compromise between Assimilation and Assertion

Several authors state that a common definition of the term *social competence* cannot be found.⁶ Weiland sees the reason for this lack of a common definition in the fact that the dimensions of social competence underlie the same constant change process as the whole social structures they relate to.⁷

However, newer literature shows some similarities in the definition. Kanning consolidates the perceived lack of a common definition and the existence of similar working definitions by classifying social competence as a generic term. In order to start a serious analysis, one would have to examine the more concrete social competencies, like empathy or tolerance.⁸ Some authors, who come to similar working definitions, first clarify the meaning of “social”, then the meaning of “competence” and then come to a definition of social competence. Most of them⁹ define social as

-
- 6 According to Dodge, there are as many definitions as researchers. Cf. Dodge, Kenneth A. (1985). Facets of social interaction and the assessment of social competence in children. In: Barry H. Schneider, Kenneth H. Rubin & Jane E. Ledingham (Eds.): Children's peer relations: Issues in assessment and intervention. Pages 3-23. New York: Springer. Cf. also Schuler, Heinz & Barthelme, Dorothea (1995). Soziale Kompetenz als berufliche Anforderung. Page 79. In B. Seyfried (Ed.). Stolperstein Sozialkompetenz: Was macht es so schwierig, sie zu erfassen, zu fördern und zu beurteilen. Berichte zur Beruflichen Bildung Bd. 179. Bielefeld: Bertelsmann.
Cf. Rost (2002), page 2.
- 7 Cf. Weiland, Dieter (1993). Soziale Kompetenz. Köln. Page 20. Quoted in Crisand (2002), page 15.
For the discussion of these competencies or sub-components of the generic term, see chapter 2.2.
- 8 Cf. Kanning, Uwe Peter (2003). Diagnostik sozialer Kompetenzen. Göttingen u.a.: Hogrefe. Page 17.
- 9 E.g. Cf. Rost (2002), pages 59ff.
Cf. Crisand (2002), page 15.
Cf. Karkoschka, Urs (1998). Validität eignungsdiagnostischer Verfahren zur Messung sozialer Kompetenz. Empirische Untersuchungen zu den Auswirkungen von Methodenvariationen auf die soziale und kriterienbezogene Validität. Frankfurt a.M. u.a.: Peter Lang. Pages 11-12.
Cf. Schuler & Barthelme (1995), page 81.

- relating to the human society or community
- relating to the common welfare, being charitable
- interacting, having contact with other human beings

Basically, the person displaying socially competent behavior must be engaged in an interaction with another person – otherwise this would not be a social behavior at all. However, this can also be an indirect interaction (e.g. writing e-mails or even doing public relations).

The word competence¹⁰ is defined as:

- linked to a task
- incorporating qualification, proficiency, aptitude, capability
- also incorporating authority, responsibility
- as opposed to performance, competence signifies a potential, not an actual behavior

The last attribute goes back to a distinction made prominent by the linguist Noam Chomsky,¹¹ and, transferred to the psychological and educational field, bears a key consequence: a person can be competent, even if their behavior in a certain situation does not show the desired results. Essential is only that the person is able to show a certain behavior in principal. Therefore, we need to observe the person in several situations, ideally over a longer period of time, before we can judge about their competence – and even then, it can only be an assumption. In addition, the question of what can be regarded as socially competent depends on the specific context, and therefore, the concrete situation must always be taken into account. This challenge will be analyzed in more detail in chapter 2.4.

Consequently, Kanning differentiates between social competence and socially competent behavior. Socially competent behavior is a concrete behavior in a

For the term competence, cf. also Vollmer, Helmut Johannes (2008). Kompetenzen und Bildungsstandards. Stand der Entwicklung in verschiedenen Fächern. In: Georg Weißenö (Ed.): Politikkompetenz. Was Unterricht zu leisten hat. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. Pages 33-49.

Cf. Schlömer-Helmerking, Rainer (1995). Lernziel Sozialkompetenz. Ein Bildungskonzept für die Erstausbildung in den industriellen Metallberufen. Frankfurt a.M. u.a.: Peter Lang.

10 See also chapter 2.2 for a reference to the educational debate in German educational policy regarding the term “competence” and how it is used in newer educational standards.

11 Cf. e.g. Chomsky, Noam (1957). Syntactic Structures. The Hague: Mouton. Reprint. Berlin and New York, 1985.

specific situation.¹² From this behavior, we can draw conclusions about the person's competence. However, one has to be careful with these conclusions. On the one hand, as stated above, competence is a disposition, but not a guarantee for competent behavior. On the other hand, a certain behavior that might be regarded as socially competent might as well be the result of pure chance or rather of variables that were not controlled in the situation.

Another distinction that is being made by several authors is the one between skills and competence. Competence is regarded as an “evaluative generalization”¹³, whereas skills are defined as specific abilities used in a specific context or for a specific task.

Coming to a definition of socially competent behavior as a whole, one finds more similarities than the quotes from the beginning of this chapter had predicted. Kanning, for example, sees socially competent behavior as “the behavior of a person which leads in a specific situation to the achievement of the person's goals while at the same time guaranteeing the social acceptance of the behavior”¹⁴. Social competence, then, is the sum of knowledge and skills of a person that determines the quality of socially competent behavior. A lot of authors define the desired behavior as a 'compromise between assimilation and assertion'.¹⁵

12 Cf. Kanning (2003), pages 12-13.

Cf. also Cartledge, Gwendolyn & Fellows Milburn, Joanne (1986). *Teaching Social Skills to Children. Innovative Approaches*. Second Edition. New York: Pergamon Press. Pages 7-8.

Cf also Greif, Siegfried (1994). Sozialkompetenz. In: Dieter Frey & Siegfried Greif: *Sozialpsychologie. Ein Handbuch in Schlüsselbegriffen*. Pages 312-320. 3. Auflage. Weinheim: Beltz.

13 McFall, Richard M. (1982). A review and reformulation of the concept of social skills. In: *Behavioral Assessment*, 4, pages 1-33. Pages 12-13.

14 Kanning (2003), page 15. Translation by S.R. Original quote in German: „Verhalten einer Person, das in einer spezifischen Situation dazu beiträgt, die eigenen Ziele zu verwirklichen, wobei gleichzeitig die soziale Akzeptanz des Verhaltens gewährt wird.“

15 Cf. also literature consulted and quoted by: Kanning (2003), page 16. Crisand (2002), page 17. Rost (2002), page 64. Karkoschka (1998), pages 26-27. Cartledge & Fellows Milburn (1986), page 7. Müller, Jürgen G. (1994). “...und raus bist du.” *Soziale Kompetenzen türkischer und deutscher Kinder in der Hauptschule*. Frankfurt a.M. u.a.: Peter Lang. Pages 51-57.

Cf. also Pickett Rathjen, Diana (1980). An Overview of Social Competence. In: Diana Pickett Rathjen & John P. Foreyt (Eds.): *Social Competence. Interventions for Children and Adults*. Pages 1-24, especially page 2 with the concepts of “self-actualization” and “social expectancies”. New York: Pergamon Press.

Therefore, a person refusing to adapt in any way to society is behaving as socially incompetent as a person who may at first glance seem to be doing good to others, but in reality is unable to assert him- or herself, display self-confidence and pursue his or her own goals. Rost writes: “Social interaction alone, which expresses itself e.g. in praise, sympathy, support or encouragement, cannot be regarded as socially competent behavior yet. Only if the behavior is directed to a certain goal, can it be attributed to social competence.”¹⁶

Following that definition, socially competent behavior does not prescribe values per se, because the social acceptance mentioned in the definition depends on the environment. For example, the social acceptance within a group of priests is certainly different from the social competence within a group of criminal gang members. Basically, every kind of behavior can be called socially competent; it just depends on the situation.¹⁷ This phenomenon will be re-investigated in chapter 3, where morality is added to this concept.

2.2 Sub-components of Social Competence

So far, the discussion has been about the generic term *social competence*. As soon as one talks about concrete components, it would be more appropriate to use the plural form: competencies. In order to be able to group together similar sub-components, it makes sense to distinguish between different areas of social competence. The following illustration draws its terms from both Kanning and Döpfner, and numerous other authors.¹⁸

Cf. also Reinders, Heinz (2008). Soziale Kompetenzen messen und fördern. In: Georg Weißenro (Ed.): Politikkompetenz. Was Unterricht zu leisten hat. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. Pages 89-107, especially pages 90-91.

- 16 Rost (2002), page 168. Translation by S.R. Original quote in German: “Soziales Handeln allein, das sich z.B. in Lob, Verständnis, Unterstützung oder Ermunterung ausdrückt, kann noch nicht als sozial kompetentes Handeln aufgefasst werden. Erst wenn das soziale Handeln auf ein bestimmtes Ziel ausgerichtet ist, werden die Verhaltensweisen der Sozialkompetenz zugeordnet.“

Cf. also Oppenheimer, Louis (1989). The Nature of Social Action: Social Competence Versus Social Conformism. In: Barry H. Schneider, Grazia Attili, Jacqueline Nadel & Roger P. Weissberg: Social Competence in Developmental Perspective. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers. Pages 41-70. Oppenheimer rightly points to missing studies regarding when children begin to articulate and understand their own goals, and therefore are able to improve their social competence. See also Chapter 2.5.

- 17 Cf. Kanning (2003), page 16. Cf. also Karkoschka (1998), page 27.

- 18 Cf. Kanning (2003), Page 21.

Cf. also Döpfner, Manfred (1989b). Soziale Interaktion und Gruppenprozesse. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer. Page 2. Quoted in Rost (2002), page 63.

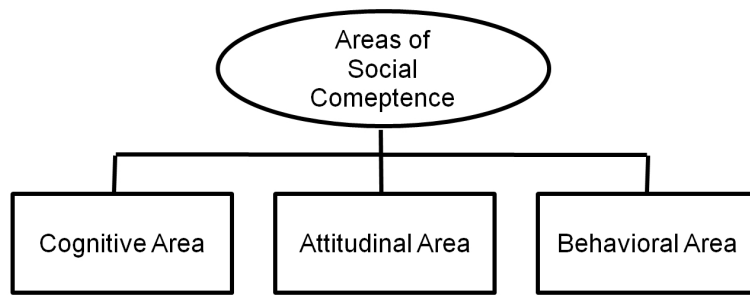


Illustration 1: Areas of Social Competence

Even though there is no commonly accepted - let alone empirically based - taxonomy of social competencies,¹⁹ the shown model is widespread and also finds its parallels in chapters 3 and 4. For example, the OECD defines competence as “more than just knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilizing psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context”²⁰. The current educational debates in Germany follow a similar definition by Weinert, who stresses cognitive problem-solving skills, but also motivational, volitional and social willingness and skills, to master variable situations successfully and responsibly.²¹ The term

Kanning uses the terms perceptive-cognitive, motivational-emotional, and behavioral, whereas Döpfner uses cognitive, emotional, actional.

Cf. e.g. Rotheram, Mary Jane (1980). Social Skills Training Programs in Elementary and High School Classroom. In: Diana Pickett Rathjen & John P. Foreyt (Eds.): Social Competence. Interventions for Children and Adults. Pages 69-112. New York: Pergamon Press. Especially pages 74-75.

Cf. also Cox, Roger D. & Gunn, William B. (1980). Interpersonal Skills in the Schools: Assessment and Curriculum Development. In: Diana Pickett Rathjen & John P. Foreyt (Eds.): Social Competence. Interventions for Children and Adults. Pages 113-146. New York: Pergamon Press. Especially pages 116-117.

19 Cf. Kanning (2003), page 22.

20 Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development: Definition and Selection of Key Competencies: Executive Summary. Page 4. Retrieved July 13, 2008, from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/47/61/35070367.pdf>

21 Cf. Weinert, Franz E. (2002). Vergleichende Leistungsmessung in Schulen - eine umstrittene Selbstverständlichkeit. In: Franz E. Weinert (Ed.): Leistungsmessungen in Schulen. Zweite Auflage. Weinheim: Beltz. Pages 17-32. Especially pages 27-28.

Cf. also Weißeno, Georg (Ed.) (2008). Politikkompetenz. Was Unterricht zu leisten hat. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung.

Cf. also Birkelbach, Klaus (2005). Über das Messen von Kompetenzen. Einige theoretische Überlegungen im Anschluss an ein BMBF-Projekt. Vortrag auf der Herbsttagung der Sektion Berufs- und Wirtschaftspädagogik der DGFE am 20./21. September 2005 in Erfurt. Retrieved July 13, 2008 from http://www.klaus-birkelbach.de/Veroffentlichungen/Kompetenzmessung_Birkelbach.pdf

'competence' is widely used in the educational standards developed in the past few years in Germany. Weinert's definition is broadly accepted and quoted, even though there has been a lively discussion on the implications, especially in relation to evaluating these competencies.²² Analyzing these general discussions in more detail does not relate to the core of this thesis, but the difficulties with evaluation are re-investigated in chapter 2.4.

In accordance with Kanning and Döpfner, the cognitive area can be described as providing effective information processing as well as an appropriate cognition of the self and of the environment. The emotional, attitudinal or motivational²³ area encompasses the ability to develop and express feelings that are adequate to the situation, and to regulate one's own emotions. Finally, the actional or behavioral area comprises verbal and non-verbal abilities.²⁴ Obviously these areas are closely related. Lewis and Michaelson concentrate on the relationship between the emotional and the cognitive area when they write: "... neither process should be described as causing the other. Rather, the best model is of two processes continually and progressively chasing each other, weaving their separate strands of behaviour into a single composition not unlike that of a

For an overview of the discussions in education policy, cf. also Becker, Günter (2008). Soziale, moralische und demokratische Kompetenzen fördern. Ein Überblick über schulische Förderkonzepte. Weinheim: Beltz. Pages 26-60.

- 22 Cf. Weinert, Franz E. (Ed.) (2002). Leistungsmessungen in Schulen. Zweite Auflage. Weinheim: Beltz.

Cf. also Weißeno (2008).

Cf. also the differences described by Goll between the broad definition by Weinert and the Kultusministerkonferenz who focuses on "verifiable competences related to a special field" (translation by S.R., original quote: "überprüfbare, fachbezogene Kompetenzen". See Goll, Thomas (2008). Standardisierung in den EPA „Sozialkunde/Politik“. In: Weißeno, Georg (Ed.) (2008). Politikkompetenz. Was Unterricht zu leisten hat. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. Pages 347-359. Especially page 350.

Cf. Veröffentlichungen der Kultusministerkonferenz (2005). Bildungsstandards der Kultusministerkonferenz. Erläuterungen zur Konzeption und Entwicklung. München: Luchterhand. Especially pages 6-7, 16. Retrieved July 8, 2009 from <http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/doc/Bildung/IVA/IVA-Dokumente/Intern/Argumentationspapier.pdf>

- 23 Most authors use the term "emotional" area, but especially when focusing on moral education and human rights education, the term "attitude" has its relevance, as it includes values and believes more explicitly. In alignment with Henerson, Lyons Morris and Taylor Fitz-Gibbon, "attitude" shall describe here measures that have to do with affect, feelings, values, or beliefs. See Henerson, Marlene E., Lyons Morris, Lynn & Taylor Fitz-Gibbon, Carol (1987). How to Measure Attitudes. Sage Publications: Newbury Park et al. Page 13.

- 24 Cf. Kanning (2003), page 21 and Döpfner (1989b), quoted in Rost (2002) page 63.

musical fugue”²⁵. Even though in real life these areas are so intermingled, it is very difficult to make a clear distinction. Separating them is still helpful for theoretical purposes such as analyzing their functioning and planning a certain training program.

The list of sub-components of social competence that can be found in literature seems to be never-ending. Even though the authors claim to have grouped together similar aspects, one can easily find lists of 20 aspects or more. Crisand, for example, lists “collegiality, openness, interpersonal competence, honesty, self-confidence, empathy, capacity for teamwork, sensitivity, critical faculty, open-mindedness, social perception, ability to communicate well, openness, tolerance of frustration, self-reflection, proactiveness, social responsibility, ability to integrate, collegiality”²⁶ – and seems to have missed that “openness” and “collegiality” were mentioned twice on his list. As illustrated by this example, most of these terms lack delimitations to other terms: what exactly is the difference between “openness” and “open-mindedness”²⁷? But even in shorter lists, these delimitations are unclear: can “empathy” be seen as a sub-component of “ability to manage conflict in a productive way”? Is “capacity for teamwork” composed of “ability to manage conflict”, “ability to cooperate” and “communication skills”?

These areas and attempts to create a hierarchy of sub-components will be resumed in chapters 2.4 and 2.5. Since this thesis focuses on human rights education as a sub-field of social competence, the focus will be on sub-components such as empathy, tolerance, and, to a certain degree, communicative skills.

2.3 Social Competence and its Related Terms

One of the terms closely associated with, but older than social competence, is social intelligence. One of the first researchers in the area of social intelligence was Thorndike. He distinguished between two components: the comprehension of others (i.e. the cognitive assessment of other people, without necessarily act-

25 Lewis, Michael and Michalson, Linda (1983). *Children's emotions and moods: developmental theory and measurement*. New York: Plenum Press. Pages 92-93. Quoted in: Cartledge & Milburn (1986), Page 18.

26 Crisand (2002), page 16. Translation by S.R. Original German quote: “Kollegialität, Offenheit, Interpersonale Kompetenz, Ehrlichkeit, Selbstvertrauen, Empathie, Teamfähigkeit, Sensibilität, Kritikfähigkeit, Aufgeschlossenheit, Soziale Wahrnehmung, Kontaktfähigkeit, Offenheit, Frustrationstoleranz, Selbstreflexion, Eigeninitiative, Soziale Verantwortung, Fleiß, Kooperationsfähigkeit, Integrationsfähigkeit, Kollegialität”

27 Original German terms: „Offenheit“ and „Aufgeschlossenheit“. Crisand (2002), page 16.

ing) and the behavior in relationship to others.²⁸ Thorndike defined social intelligence as “the ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls – to act wisely in human relations”²⁹. Other authors defined slightly different components of social intelligence. For example, Probst found, in contrast to Thorndike, three aspects in the definitions of social intelligence: realization (analysis of the situation), behavior, and memory (remembering successful behavior from the past).³⁰ The comprehension that was identified by Thorndike is split by Probst into realization and memory from past behaviors.

Although Thorndike and other authors claimed social intelligence was independent from general intelligence, empirical studies failed to prove it.³¹ This may be caused by deficient test procedures which will be dealt with in chapter 2.4.

Authors like Marlowe and Sowarka regard social intelligence and social competence as synonyms.³² Marlowe defines social intelligence as “the ability to understand the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of persons, including oneself, in interpersonal situations and to act appropriately upon that understanding. It is composed of a set of problem-solving skills that enable the individual to find and/or resolve interpersonal problems and create useful social products. Social intelligence may therefore be equated with social competence”³³. This understanding is mirrored by the term “social problem-solving skills” under which research was conducted in the 1980s.³⁴

28 Cf. Thorndike, Robert L. (1920). Intelligence and its uses. In: Harper’s Magazine, 140, pages 227-235.

Cf. Thorndike, Robert L. & Stein, Saul (1937). An evaluation of the attempts to measure social intelligence. In: Psychological Bulletin, 34, pages 275-285.

29 Thorndike (1920), page 228.

30 Cf. Probst, P. (1998). Empirische Untersuchung zum Konstrukt der „sozialen“ Intelligenz. In: Kurt Pawlik (Ed.): Multivariate Persönlichkeitsforschung. Pages 201-226. Bern: Huber. Pages 202ff. Quoted in Karkoschka (1998), page 13.

31 Cf. Probst, P. (1998), quoted in Karkoschka (1998), page 13.

32 Cf. Marlowe, Herbert A. (1986). Social intelligence: Evidence for multidimensionality and construct independence. In: Journal of Educational Psychology, 78, pages 52-58.

Cf. Sowarka, Bernhard H. (1995). Soziale Intelligenz und Soziale Kompetenz. In: Werner Sarges (Ed.): ManagementDiagnostik. Zweite, vollständig überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage. Pages 365-382. Göttingen: Hogrefe. Quoted in Karkoschka (1998), page 10.

33 Marlowe (1986), page 52.

34 Cf. Gesten, Ellis L., Weissberg, Roger P., Amish, Patricia L. & Smith, Janet K. (1987). Social Problem-Solving Training: A Skills-Based Approach to Prevention and Treatment. In: Charles A. Maher & Joseph E. Zins: Psychoeducational Interventions in the

However, this equation is, in some aspects, problematic. Tests to measure social intelligence are confined to cognitive aspects only, such as abstract problem solving tasks, or the interpretation of non-verbal cues.³⁵ Furthermore, terms used in Thorndike's definition such as “wisely”, Marlowe's repetition of “understanding”, and two of the three aspects mentioned by Probst (realization, memory), prove that the focus of social intelligence is on cognitive aspects. This is supported amongst others by Karkoschka, who believes that social intelligence can only relate to the cognitive component in a social situation.³⁶ Authors who see a difference between social intelligence and social competence, such as Frey and Greif believe that the term competence expresses in a better way the link to a specific situation and the convertibility of social competencies.³⁷ Even more importantly, the emotional area as described in chapter 2.2, or, in other terms, the attitude and the willingness to act in a certain way, seems to be missing here. Socially intelligent people do not automatically behave socially competently. Therefore, this thesis regards social intelligence as a subset of social competence, but not as a synonym.

Another term related to social competence was made popular through a bestseller: emotional intelligence. According to Goleman, emotional intelligence encompasses five skills: perceiving one's own emotions, managing emotions, converting emotions into actions, being emphatic and managing relationships.³⁸ Salovey and Mayer give a similar definition of what emotional intelligence is: the ability of an individual to perceive and to distinguish between one's own emotions and the emotions of others, while these insights are used to control the own behaviour.³⁹ This latter definition focuses more on the cognitive elements than Goleman's definition.

Just like social competence, emotional intelligence is of a multidimensional nature. Some overlap to social competence is obvious, especially when looking back at the emotional area described in chapter 2.2. However, whereas the term 'intelligence' implies the focus on cognitive aspects, social competence includes also behavioral elements. In order to delineate these two terms along with many

Schools. Methods and Procedures for Enhancing Student Competence. Pages 26-45. New York: Pergamon Press.

35 Cf. Kanning (2003), page 23.

36 Cf. Karkoschka (1998), page 18. Cf. also Kanning (2003), page 23.

37 Cf. Frey, Dieter & Greif, Siegfried (1994). Sozialpsychologie: Ein Handbuch in Schlüsselbegriffen. Weinheim: Psychologie Verlagsunion. Page 312.

38 Cf. Goleman, Daniel (1999). Emotionale Intelligenz. 10. Auflage. München: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag. Pages 65-66.

39 Cf. Salovey, Peter & Mayer, John D. (1990). Emotional Intelligence. In: Imagination, Cognition and Personality, 9. Pages 185-211.

others, a more holistic approach is needed. It is possible to group certain aspects together and to come up with a cube that illustrates one way to look at the phenomena described by social competence and its related terms:

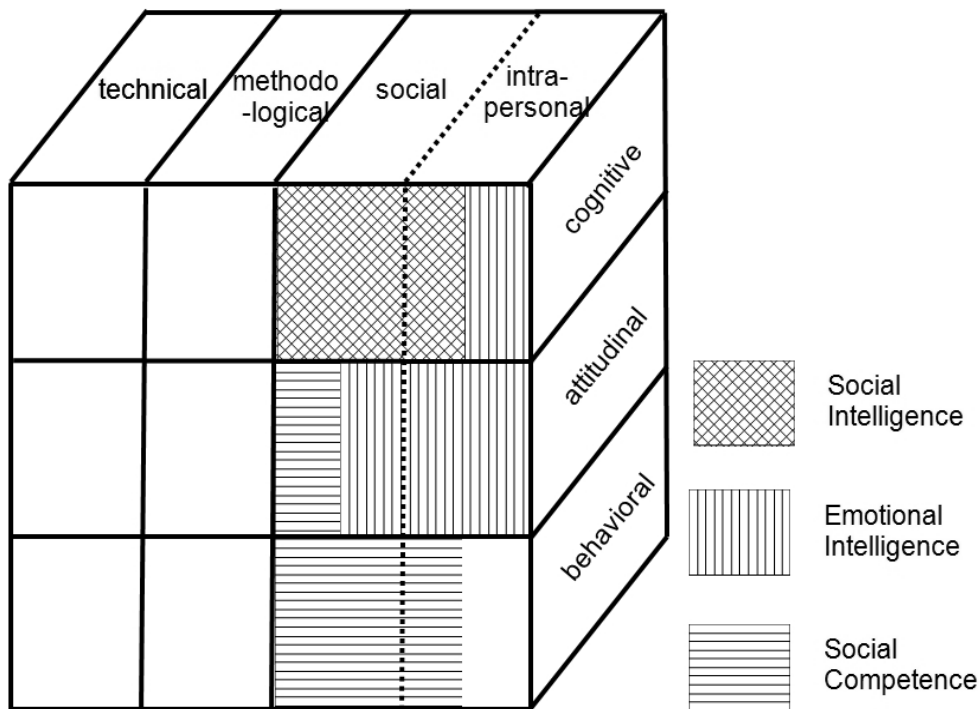


Illustration 2: Social competence and related terms visualized as a cube⁴⁰

In this illustration, social intelligence (checkered area) as defined above, forms the intersection of cognitive competence and social competence, partly covering intra-personal competence as a required basis for social competence.

Emotional intelligence (vertical stripes) covers the areas of cognitive and emotional competence. Some elements Goleman attributes to emotional intelligence, such as “managing relationships”, and “converting emotions into actions”, also touch behavioral competence. This would be more limited when following Savoley and Mayer's definition, in which the behavioral aspect is described as using emotional insights to control the behavior. On the other axis, emotional intelligence would focus on intra-personal competence, and, to a certain degree, social competence. Intra-personal competence in this sense means self-perception, self-reflection, and controlling one's emotions.

40 Idea based on an illustration by Rost (2002), pages 81, 127f. However, the cube by Rost only shows the dimensions, not the terms social competence, emotional intelligence or social intelligence.

Cf. also Kauffeld, Simone & Grote, Sven (2002). Mit viel Gefühl am Problem vorbei. Die überschätzte Sozialkompetenz als Mittel zur Bewältigung von Optimierungsaufgaben. In: new management, 1-2. Pages 42-48.

Social competence (horizontal stripes, partly covered by the other colors) in this model includes all areas of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral competence, while focusing on the column of social competence – although the basis for social competence is often intra-personal competence, and therefore also partly covered. An individual not capable of perceiving or controlling his or her emotions will have problems showing social competence. This is also why the line between social and intra-personal competence is dashed. Following this definition, social competence is the broadest of the three terms, as it covers the cognitive, attitudinal and behavioral area, the whole social column, and partly the intra-personal column.

Other areas of competence such as technical or methodological, are not touched by the terms, although one might argue for a slight overlap for the methodological competence.

Yet another term closely related to social competence is social skills. Different authors use this term differently. Some use it only for very specific, trained competencies, others only for competencies used in specific situations, and yet other authors do not distinguish at all between social skills and social competencies.⁴¹ In accordance with Kanning,⁴² this thesis understands social skills as a subset of social competencies. Following this definition, social skills are used in concrete situations for specific tasks and can be trained and improved, whereas social competencies are more general and more difficult to improve.

All in all, social competence is the appropriate term for this thesis, because it does not accentuate too much either the cognitive or the attitudinal area; it focuses more on social than on intra-personal competencies and it can be understood in a broader sense than social skills. Even though the term 'social skills' might also be considered appropriate for this thesis, as social competence is more difficult to improve and to evaluate, the latter term is broader, less dependent on specific situations or tasks and therefore more appropriate. Delineating social competence against similarly used terms clarifies what exactly is meant when using the different terms.

2.4 Measuring Social Competence

The difficulties in reaching a common definition of social competence as seen in chapter 2.1 obviously also impact the attempt to measure social competence. Rost, for example, believes that the complexity of the construct makes it almost

41 Cf. Becker, Robert E. & Heimberg, Richard G. (1988). Assessment of social skills. In Alan S. Bellack & Michel Hersen (Eds.): Behavioral assessment. Pages 365-395. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

42 Cf. Kanning (2003), pages 24-25.

impossible to measure general social competence.⁴³ This is in alignment with McFall who writes: “The competence of a person’s behavior can never be evaluated in the abstract; it can be evaluated only with reference to a particular task”⁴⁴. Consequently, the instruments to measure social competence, or rather the performance in a given task, vary as much as the tasks. There is not a single instrument one can use to measure social competencies; therefore, researchers need to combine or create their own methods and possess appropriate knowledge.⁴⁵ Naturally, evaluation plays a crucial role. And there is yet another issue when evaluating social competence: what behavior is regarded as socially competent and who can determine this?⁴⁶ Scaling may define quantitatively which value can be regarded as normal, above or below average, but: “What is common does not always have to be what is desirable”⁴⁷. This will be further discussed in chapter 3.

If one attempts to measure social competencies in spite of these limitations, the measures can be used in different views: measuring social competence through behavior or through consequences of social competence. These objects of investigation can be combined with a number of methods such as multiple choice questionnaires, observation, self-descriptions, diary journals, etc. Often, a mixture of these methods is applied. A very popular example of this mixture of methods is the assessment center used to evaluate job applicants, for example. In general, the chosen methods are a compromise between realistic and standardized tasks. Tasks that are more realistic (e.g. reacting to a given situation), are less standardized, and highly standardized tasks such as questionnaires are hardly close to reality, but on the other hand, allow better comparability and evaluation.⁴⁸ In the following section, the methods to evaluate cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects of social competence will be discussed in more detail.

2.4.1 Evaluating cognitive aspects of social competence

Cognitive aspects of social competence are mostly evaluated through proficiency questionnaires. The advantage of questionnaires over interviews is that questionnaires show a higher degree of standardization and they are less expensive to conduct. On the other hand, cognitive questionnaires have a major drawback: there must be an objectively correct or incorrect answer to each question. This

43 Cf. Rost (2002), page 149.

44 McFall (1982), page 16.

45 Cf. Kanning (2003), pages 124f. Cf. also Müller (1994), pages 58-60.

46 Cf. Karkoschka (1998), pages 24f. Cf. also Kanning (2003), page 105.

47 Kanning (2003), page 105. Translation by S.R. The original German quote: „Was üblich ist, muss jedoch keineswegs immer auch wünschenswert sein“.

48 Cf. Karkoschka (1998), pages 50-66.

shows already the limitations in attempting to measure social competence, as socially competent behavior does not fit as easily into these categories as mathematical questions. In spite of this, proficiency tests have been enormously popular, especially in the related field of social intelligence. These tests usually include three elements:

- Perception: identifying emotional states through pictures or videos or identifying verbally described psychic states.
- Memory/ Knowledge: assigning names to faces or knowledge questions about the “nature” of human behavior. This can also include knowledge questions about social norms.
- Deductive thinking: arranging pictures into a meaningful story, completing picture sequences, anticipating the ending of picture or video scenes.

Most of the tests available fail to prove validity. For example, it is questionable whether an individual’s social performance can be predicted based upon his or her answers in these questionnaires.⁴⁹ The coherence of these tests with the individual’s IQ – especially verbal intelligence – is extremely high. Consequently, Kanning deplores the lack of clear delineation of social intelligence as measured through these tests from general or verbal intelligence. He claims only extreme cases of socially abnormal performance could be detected through these tests, but that this might also be possible through the usual IQ tests.⁵⁰ Schmidt sums up that the attempt to measure social competence with intelligence-like tasks has widely failed.⁵¹

In spite of these severe limitations, there are also some promising new ideas in the field of proficiency tests for social competence. On the one hand, new

49 Cf. Kanning (2003), page 32, Karkoschka (1998), page 31, Probst (1982), pages 220ff, Schmidt, Jens U. (1995). Psychologische Messverfahren für soziale Kompetenzen. In Brigitte Seyfried (Ed.). *Stolperstein Sozialkompetenz: Was macht es so schwierig, sie zu erfassen, zu fördern und zu beurteilen*. Berichte zur Beruflichen Bildung Bd. 179. Bielefeld: Bertelsmann. Pages 117-135.

The evaluated tests are mostly focused on Social Intelligence, and not so much on Social Competence. They include e.g. the George Washington Social Intelligence Test (GWSIT. F.A. Moss, T. Hunt, K.T. Omwake & M.M. Ronning (1927). Social Intelligence Test. Washington: Center for Psychological Service. Quoted in Schmidt (1995), page 118 and in Kanning (2003) pages 31f.), the Six Factor Test of Social Intelligence (M. O’Sullivan & J.P. Guilford (1966). Six factor test of social intelligence. Beverly Hills: Sheridan Psychological Services. Quoted in Kanning (2003), page 32), and the Namen-Gesichter-Assoziationstest (NGA. J. Kessler, P. Ehlen, M. Halber & T. Bruckbauer (1999). Namen-Gesichter-Assoziationstest. Göttingen: Hogrefe. Quoted in Kanning (2003), pages 34-35).

50 Cf. Kanning (2003), pages 35-36.

51 Cf. Schmidt (1995), page 122.

media makes it possible to uncouple the tests from verbal intelligence. Instead of having to focus on described situations or still pictures, some newer tests allow the test subject to see a film either on video or with a computer and to react to more authentic situations.⁵² Another new element in these tests is to ask knowledge questions about norms. Even though this knowledge is not a sufficient prerequisite for socially competent behavior, for example, in the case of a choleric person who knows the norms very well but usually does not behave accordingly, nevertheless this knowledge seems to increase the probability of an according behavior.⁵³ One example is a selection of personnel procedure for the German Border Police.⁵⁴ The test persons are not asked how they would behave in a certain situation, but rather how one should react. This approach bypasses elegantly the issue of the test persons tending to portray themselves not honestly, but rather how it is socially desired. Instead, it tests knowledge of norms. These two new approaches have not been evaluated extensively, but they seem to be logically enhancing the concept of testing social competence with cognitive tests.

2.4.2 Evaluating attitudinal aspects of social competence

A proficiency questionnaire can also try to also cover the attitudinal area, but it is questionable whether the answers given by the test persons are valid. The first main reason is the artificiality of the situation: there might be a description of a situation, but the test person has time to think about it and there is no possibility for interaction. The second reason is the phenomenon of describing socially desired behavior. The test person is able to guess what the “right” answer to the question is, and therefore, answers accordingly, regardless of whether the individual would actually behave like this in the given situation. This results in a deliberate manipulation of the test results even though questionnaires often include items that check for too distinctive socially desired answers.⁵⁵

Still, there are hardly any alternatives to questionnaires when evaluating the attitudinal aspects of social competence. Other methods to draw conclusions

52 Cf. Karkoschka (1998), pages 63-64.

53 Cf. Kanning (2003), pages 37-40.

54 See Kanning, Uwe P. & Holling, H. (2002). Entwicklung eines computergestützten Personalauswahlverfahrens zur Messung sozialer Kompetenzen. Beitrag auf dem 43. Kongress der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Psychologie in Berlin. Quoted in Kanning (2003), pages 37-39.

55 Cf. Karkoschka (1998), pages 34ff, 59, Rost (2002), page 138, Kanning (2003), page 125.

about a person's emotions and attitudes include observing behavior and measuring reactions to a certain stimulus.⁵⁶

Often, the emotional aspects are combined with behavioral aspects, especially when reflecting one's own behavior. Since this is often a combination of evaluating emotional and behavioral aspects, these methods will be covered in 2.4.3.

2.4.3 Evaluating behavioral aspects of social competence

Behavior can be evaluated through the individual themselves or through externals. The evaluation can happen directly, i.e. through observation in a given situation or rather simulation⁵⁷, or through the description of previous or concurrent behavior. As noted at the beginning of the chapter, a mixture of these methods is the rule rather than the exception.

When observing a behavior directly, the observers draw their conclusions about the individual's social competence from their performance, so a number of different situations need to be evaluated in order to enable a more accurate evaluation. If the behavior is consistent over various settings, these conclusions are regarded as reliable.

The advantage of external evaluation over self-observation is objectivity. Also, self-observation itself already means an intervention and a less 'natural' setting.⁵⁸ However, most of these observations are conducted in artificial settings and even the presence of an observer usually turns the setting from 'natural' to 'artificial'. A very popular method is the assessment center, which often combines role-plays, presentations, group discussions, and sometimes group tasks. Again, the grade of standardization determines the rate of authenticity, and vice versa.

Self-observation is usually only done in combination with other methods. For example, it is a common procedure to ask the participants after a role-play to assess themselves. The assessment of other observers and/or participants follows directly. Especially the individual's assessment is rather unstructured. In natural settings, the diary method is popular especially for people in treatment. One example is the controlled interaction diary for measuring social interactions, rela-

56 Cf. Frey & Greif (1994), page 386.

57 As soon as an observer is included in the situation, be it directly or indirectly, one has to consider that the tester's behavior might change because of this observance, so it would be more appropriate use the word simulation rather than the neutral word situation.

58 Cf. Cartledge & Fellows Milburn (1986), page 58.

tionships and personality traits,⁵⁹ which allows drawing consequences regarding social competencies.

The description of behavior can again be done by the test persons themselves or by externals. If done by externals, they are often laypersons in constant contact with the test person. Their perception, of course, is highly subjective and selective, and the quality of the evaluation depends upon their memory, as the evaluations are usually done retrospectively. If the test persons are asked to describe their own behavior, the same limitations as with external descriptions apply: the portrayal is very subjective and selective, and memory plays a crucial role.

Finally, another method to evaluate behavioral aspects is looking at consequences of social competence. The interpretation of these 'consequences' allows only cautious statements about the social integration of a test person or the quality of their social contacts. However, these evaluations can be a starting point for hypotheses or they can be used to accompany therapeutic actions. Methods include questionnaires, interviews, diaries and sociometric data from external evaluations. In questionnaires or interviews, questions deal with whether the test person used to be a class representative, a leader of a youth group, a member of a sports club, etc. The idea is that if a number of these indicators for social competence are true for the test person, they are usually socially competent because otherwise, they would have avoided these situations. Moreover, their social competence has probably improved because of these situations.⁶⁰ However, one has to be careful with these assumptions: other factors can play a crucial role in choosing these situations, and the mentioned improvement does not happen automatically; interventions such as reflection or coaching activities are usually needed to achieve an improvement.

The diary method can also be used as a self-portrayal, but if the focus is on describing the quantity and quality of social interactions, it is used to evaluate the consequences of social competence. On the other hand, the diary method can also be used to reflect on feelings and emotions. Again, the evaluation has to be very cautious. The last method, sociometric data gathering, attempts to draw

59 Cf. Asendorp, J.B. & Wilpers, S. (1999). KIT: Kontrolliertes Interaktionstagebuch zur Erfassung sozialer Interaktionen, Beziehungen und Persönlichkeitseigenschaften. Quoted in Kanning (2003), page 44.

60 Cf. Kanning (2003), pages 106-110, 114-115.

Cf. Seiffge-Krenke, Inge, Scherbaum, Susanne & Aengenheister, Nicole (1997). Das „Tagebuch“: Ein Überblick über die Anwendung der Tagebuchmethode in Forschung und Therapiepraxis. In: Gabriele Wilz & Elmar Brähler (Eds.): Tagebücher in Therapie und Forschung. Ein anwendungsorientierter Leitfaden. Hogrefe, Göttingen. Pages 34-60.

conclusions from the general popularity of a test person in a group. Usually, all group members are asked to rate the person they like the best with a high score and those they like the least with a low score. Some researchers have found a significant correlation between peer acceptance and socially competent behavior as well as between peer rejection and socially incompetent behavior.⁶¹ However, the instrument has some weaknesses in the reliability and objectivity of interpretation,⁶² and like other assessment procedures, sociometric techniques cannot be relied upon as a sole measure of social behavior.

All these measurement methods are important to assess the current status of a learner or a learner group before trying to improve their social competence and constantly evaluate their progress. While this thesis will cover all three areas – cognitive, attitudinal and behavioral areas of social competence – limitations due to the nature of the e-learning course are inevitable. One important element of the evaluation is a questionnaire to be filled out by the learners before and after the e-learning course. Knowledge questions about norms, more specifically, about human rights, will be included in the questionnaire for the cognitive area. The questionnaire will also include questions about attitudes and behavior. However, neither external evaluations nor simulations as in an assessment center are possible due to the distributed location of the learners. Another element to be included in the evaluation is the data from the virtual learning environment: partly individual tasks completed and partly communicative behavior with the other learners. The instruments evaluating consequences of social competence, such as sociometric data or questionnaires about previous situations requiring social competence seem less suitable for the e-learning course due to the very limited assumptions that can be drawn from these data and due to the different possibilities of interpretation, especially in a global setting. However, the diary method can easily be adapted to the e-learning setting with a blog, for example, and adds to the methodological variety of the evaluation. We will come back to these areas of evaluation in chapter 8 when planning the evaluation for the e-learning course. In the following sub-chapter, the possibilities for improving social competence will be analyzed.

61 Cf. Cartledge & Fellows Milburn (1986), pages 33-34.

Cf. also Asher, Steven R. (1985). *An Evolving Paradigm in Social Skill Training Research With Children*. In: Barry H. Schneider, Kenneth H. Rubin & Jane E. Ledingham (Eds.): *Children's peer relations: Issues in assessment and intervention*. Pages 157-171. New York: Springer.

62 Cf. Kanning (2003), pages 110-115.

2.5 Teaching⁶³ Social Competencies

The implicit assumption here is that social competencies can be improved by pedagogical interventions and programs.⁶⁴ Obviously, social competence develops from early childhood to adolescence, and can be impeded or fostered by external factors. However, in-depth evaluations of programs to improve social competence are rare, so the effectiveness must be questioned. Crisand, as well as Schuler and Barthelme, identify two major issues when designing a social competence training program: on the one hand the choice of the appropriate criteria with which to evaluate approaches and their effectiveness, and on the other hand the prerequisites for a transfer from training contents to daily life. For both issues, which are generally a controversial topic in pedagogical discussions, empirical data are rare and not unequivocally pointing into a single direction.⁶⁵ Especially in school settings, it seems that social behaviors and academic achievements are highly correlated,⁶⁶ which leads back to the discussion about the relationship between social competencies and IQ (see chapter 2.3, especially on social intelligence, and chapter 2.4.1).

Not surprisingly, different philosophies exist about how best to teach social competencies.⁶⁷ Historically important is the deficit model which emphasizes

63 Even though other terms such as 'fostering' might be considered more appropriate, especially when dealing with attitudinal and behavioral aspects, the e-learning courses are conducted in a mostly formal setting, and therefore, the term 'teaching' is used to emphasize this setting.

64 Several studies and meta-analyses of interventions show that this is a fair assumption. Cf. Schneider, Barry H. & Byrne, Barbara M. (1985). *Children's Social Skills Training: A Meta-Analysis*. In Barry H. Schneider, Kenneth H. Rubin & Jane E. Ledingham (Eds.): *Children's peer relations: Issues in assessment and intervention*. Pages 175-192. New York: Springer.

Cf. also Ladd, Gary W. (2005). *Children's Peer Relations and Social Competence. A Century of Progress*. Yale University Press: New Haven and London. Especially pages 338ff.

65 Cf. Crisand (2002), page 83, Schuler & Barthelme (1995), pages 109f. Cf. also Bungard, W. (1990). *Team- und Kooperationsfähigkeit*. In: Werner Sarges (Ed.): *Management-Diagnostik*. Hogrefe Verlag, Göttingen. Quoted in: Seyfried, Brigitte (1995). *Team und Teamfähigkeit*. In: Brigitte Seyfried (Ed.). *Stolperstein Sozialkompetenz: Was macht es so schwierig, sie zu erfassen, zu fördern und zu beurteilen*. Berichte zur Beruflichen Bildung Bd. 179. Bielefeld: Bertelsmann. Page 29.

66 Cf. Cartledge & Milburn (1986), page 4.

67 For an overview regarding those approaches relevant for school-settings, see Manns, Marianne & Schultze, Jona (2004). *Soziale Kompetenz und Prävention*. Berliner Präventionsprogramm für Haupt- und Gesamtschüler. Frankfurt a.M. u.a.: Peter Lang. Especially pages 55-124.

'abnormal' behavior, meaning not conforming to certain norms. This model tries to eliminate this kind of behavior, traditionally with psychoanalytical therapies and medication. In contrast, the newer competence model, also called positive model, considers the individual needs as well as strengths and weaknesses in order to train certain patterns of behavior. The individual has a more active role, as his or her personal responsibilities are stressed. The reference therefore is no longer the social norm, but the individual situation and needs.⁶⁸

The different philosophies in improving social competencies mirror those philosophies generally existent in educational discussions, as will be seen in chapter 5.2 when discussing learning theories for e-learning. One of the first approaches of interest for improving social competencies is behaviorism as developed by Skinner and the social learning theory as developed by Bandura. Their focus on behavior in contrast to (only) knowledge has an immense appeal for social competencies training, even though the theoretical assumptions, such as the sequential adherence to learning steps or a continuous positive strengthening of behavior, could not be confirmed by researchers.⁶⁹ The rather simplistic stimulus-response and imitation scheme as described by Skinner seems a bit outdated today, but still a lot of programs are based on these theories, especially when they stress the importance of giving positive or negative feedback depending on the learner's behavior.⁷⁰ Historically, these approaches relate more to the deficit model because behavior that does not apply to the norm is inhibited while conforming behavior is reinforced. However, newer programs also focus on the learner's needs, strengths and weaknesses. Contracts between learner and trainer are made and the trainer is often seen more like a facilitator than a strict authority representing norms, punishment and reward.

Based on the general behaviorist approach, researchers have dealt with information processes, mainly in order to apply to the sequential order of learning steps that was claimed to be very important. This has also taken place in the area of social competencies. For example, Döpfner and Dodge developed a similar sequence of information processes for socially competent behavior: a) encoding of social stimuli, b) interpretation of the stimuli, c) response search for possible

68 Cf. Müller (1994), pages 47-50, Cartledge & Fellows Milburn (1986), page 14, Schuler & Barthelme (1995), pages 111-115, Ladd (2005), especially pages 113-144.

69 Cf. Kerres, Michael (2001). *Multimediale und telemediale Lernumgebungen. Konzeption und Entwicklung*. München: Oldenbourg. Pages 59-60.

70 Examples for a training program based on behavioristic assumptions can easily be found when paying attention to the language used, such as stimulus, response, etc, even though the program may very well be developed in directions enhancing behavioristic theories. One example is Cartledge & Fellows Milburn (1986). Ladd (2005, page 342) also mentions "a series of rehearsal, practice, or generalization sessions".

reactions to these stimuli, d) response evaluation, including possible consequences, e) enactment of the response – Döpfner adds a planning sequence here, f) self-monitoring of the responses and effects of the behavior just shown.⁷¹ This segmentation can also be done with the different sub-components of social competence. One example is empathy, which can be subdivided into a) taking the role of someone else, in both seeing and feeling, b) being able to read nonverbal cues and to interpret the feelings expressed, and c) conveying a feeling of caring or sincere effort to understand and help.⁷² A teaching method based on these information processes would analyze the individual's performance per step and focus on those steps where the individual needs help.

The transfer of what has been learned in an artificial setting to the actual application in the “real world” is a hotly debated issue in the educational field. In the behaviorist approaches, this kind of generalization is supported by a sequential program. The desired skills are first taught in one specific, then in different settings. Ideally, the program is trained by more than one person, including people from the natural environment. The trainer or teacher needs to ensure that the behavior is controlled by explicit aspects of the training, and not by incidental factors. Since reinforcement – mainly positive and negative feedback, including forms of reward and punishment – is an important factor in the behaviorist training program, but hardly available to the trained person in everyday situations, the reinforcement needs to be changed in the course of the program as well. In particular, the timing of the reinforcement is delayed more and more, the reinforcement quantity is reduced, and the sources of reward are moved from extrinsic to intrinsic sources. Moreover, self-management skills are being developed. First, trainer and participant agree on a set of standards. The participant's performance is to be measured against this set of standards. To do so, the participant is trained to do self-monitoring and self-evaluation. There are also coping strategies that can help the participant to work on the desired skills, such as using language as mediators (e.g. actually saying or writing down what one plans to do as a way to control the behavior).⁷³

What needs to be ensured in these training programs is that the responsibilities for setting the standards, monitoring, evaluating and reinforcing are actually transferred to the participants. However, if this takes place too soon (i.e. before

71 Cf. Dodge (1985). Cf. also Döpfner, Manfred (1989a). Soziale Informationsverarbeitung – ein Beitrag zur Differenzierung sozialer Inkompetenzen. In: Zeitschrift für Pädagogische Psychologie, 3, pages 1-8.

72 Cf. Goldstein, Arnold P. & Michaels, Gerald Y. (1985). Empathy. Development, training, and consequences. Hillsdale, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates. Quoted in Cartledge & Fellows Milburn (1986), page 67.

73 Cf. Cartledge & Fellows Milburn (1986), pages 117-140.