



ICDP RELATIONAL ASPECTS AND PRINCIPLES INVOLVED

PREPARED FOR THE SDIA EDUCATION WORKSHOP IN GREAT MALVERN

17-18TH of August, 2015

by Nicoletta Armstrong



I ICDP APPROACH TO EDUCATION - BASIC PRINCIPLES

1. Pupils as persons – empathic identification as the basis of care

Seeing children/pupils as persons is seeing them as sensitive beings, with the same need for love, inclusion, recognition, self-esteem as we have. This means that we try to understand their behaviour, as a human response to their special life-conditions – how would I have reacted if I had been exposed to the same conditions? What is the story behind his/her failure and misery – or success? So we look at *the inside narrative truth*, not only *the external normative truth* based on comparisons with others through diagnostic standard instruments.

As human beings we have an innate capacity for **empathic identification** with others, the ability to feel and sense the feelings, intentions and state of others, to identify with and join in. This concept refers to the unique capacity of human beings to participate in the experience of the other and to interpret the other from the point of view of her or his intentions, states and feelings.

Empathic identification constitutes the basis for human caring, and the activation of this capacity is the key to the ICDP Programme – to activate the teacher's or caregiver's capacity to see their children or pupils from the point of view of their inside story.

2. Seeing the child/pupil and recognizing potential – the role of positive definitions

Most diagnostic systems map deviations from the normal as failures and deficits. This is not only a widespread professional practice, it is also a normal social practice when we are faced with persons that deviate from our expectations; we tend to label such persons into simple reductive categories usually with negative connotations – “he is like his father, he was also difficult – you know that family”, “she is quite stupid, she will face problems in school”, “he has behaviour problems”...

The problem arises when these labels become public and are reflected back on the child as attributions or accusations from caregivers and teachers. They may then be appropriated by the child and accepted as a standard and directive for how to behave. In other words, children may actually start to act out the stigmas that others attribute to him.

Pupils are usually burdened both with a primary educational problem such as reading-difficulty, but also with a secondary problem of being labelled as a school failure, as a person with reading problems. As a consequence children develop low self-esteem and aspirations, which again facilitate further failure in school.

For this reason ICDP tries **to counteract negative labelling with positive definitions, instead of focusing on deficits**. What are the strengths and the positive competencies of the child, what is the potential of the child/pupil, yet to be realized? How should we proceed to facilitate this potential?

3. Emotional support and encouragement in order to stimulate motivation to learn

Emotions represent the energetic aspect of cognition – interest, enthusiasm, engagement or commitment. When this is present, learning or acquisition of knowledge and skills come easily. The focus is then on the enjoyment of the activity itself, not only on the outcome. This is the way

babies explore the world, but it is also the way our most creative researchers and artists function, problem-solving becomes a passion, it runs by itself day and night. Confucius indicated this in his famous saying: *“The mind is not a box to be filled, but a fire to be ignited”*

So how is a teacher going to “ignite fires”?

- Joining the child by showing enthusiasm for things he or she is interested in
- Supporting what the child is doing through exchange and dialogue
- Expanding and creating a fascinating context through stories that are adjusted to the child’s world
- Providing confirmation and approval for the child’s initiatives
- Praising the child for efforts and achievements
- Teaching in a committed way and sharing personal examples and stories

This means that teachers avoid creating fear, ignoring or humiliating their pupils.

When these positive qualities are present, the will to learn will be sustained and an atmosphere of positive interest, commitment and inclusion may emerge. Learning and exploring then becomes a joyful thing. This is an ideal that most of us cherish, but it is not always easy to achieve because the positive atmosphere of the class, is not only the sole responsibility of the teacher, it is also a joint, dialogical responsibility to which both teacher and pupils contribute.

4. “Inter-subjective space” - 8 principles (guidelines) for good interaction

The nature of care and education, whether in the family or in the classroom is dialogical and relational, this means that a teacher may respond differently and show different teaching qualities depending upon the nature of the pupils – they affect the teacher through their attitude and their conduct and the teacher affects them through his attitude and conduct. In other words, these are dialogic qualities emerging between them as - an “inter-subjective space”.

Through reciprocal attunement and adjustment between the teacher and the pupils in the class-room setting, a common basis for interaction, or an atmosphere is created - an "inter-subjective space". This regulates what is fitting and appropriate (plausible) to say and do (by whom) within that situation. This space does not belong either to the teacher or the pupil(s), but is emerging between them as a third voice beyond the voices of both the teacher and the pupils.

It is inside this space that the ICDP **three dialogues or 8 guidelines for good interaction** find their expression.

The three dialogues for good interaction form the basis of the ICDP approach to interaction both with children/pupils and caregivers:

- **The emotional dialogue** with its four guidelines; 1) expressing love and positive feelings, 2) seeing and following the initiatives of the child, 3) close emotional exchanges 4) approval and confirmation

- **The meaning oriented dialogue** with its three guidelines; 1) focusing and joint attention, 2) creating meaning and 3) expansion, going beyond the situation by explanations, connecting and comparing, telling stories, drawing, singing.
- **The regulative dialogue** with 1) positive limit-setting, 2) planning and guiding step by step

These dialogues are important because they prepare and provide the basis for:

1. *Emotional security and attachment* (emotional dialogue),
2. *Understanding and realistic expectations and knowledge of the world* (meaning oriented dialogue) and
3. *Self-control and direction in the world* (regulative dialogue).

5. Facilitation: Activating and supporting positive skills and initiatives – sensitive support and “scaffolding”.

Facilitation can be applied in relation to a child or pupil or it can be a teacher or caregiver who is supported in their teaching or interacting (ICDP facilitators are trained in ICDP facilitation in order to support teachers/caregivers).

The principle of facilitation is similar to the concept of *scaffolding* (Wood 1995), which means that the support should be sensitively adjusted to the learner’s existing level of competence, if the task is difficult (or competence low), the support is increased, if it is easy, it is reduced. The point is that the “ownership of the activity” and the outcome should be with the learner, not with the supporter.

In relation to caregivers and teachers, the ICDP approach is about activating the existing positive skills, without imposing new and alien practices. Imposing elements out of style with their existing practices would not be sustainable in the long run and such a strategy might also create uncertainty and reduce confidence.

Activities and initiatives are supported in a non-intrusive way, through approving comments and hints on how a difficult problem or situation might be solved, requesting alternative solutions etc. The idea is to find the positive through observation and support it through a confirming approach. In some cases this can be done through reflective video-feedback providing confirming and constructive comments.

For this reason ICDP approach is facilitative, the programme is a **sensitization – not an “intervention**. By bringing to awareness the positive in caregivers and teachers, their confidence is strengthened in line with their cultural background.

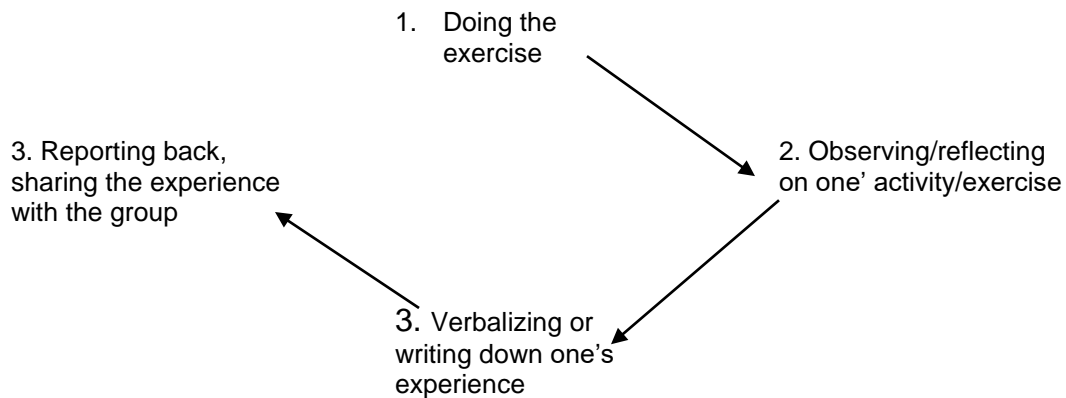
6. Self-initiative and active participation through exercises – the cycle of doing, observing and communicating

Even when the development and acquisition of knowledge and skills is supported through a facilitative approach, there is still a need for self-initiated activity on the part of the learner for the knowledge to become personalized – to become the “owner” of knowledge. As Piaget pointed out “to understand is to invent”, that is, to explore and to reformulate and develop ones’ own solutions or versions based on one’s own activities, experiences and background. This is an important part of the ICDP programme: **participants are not expected to assume a passive receptive role but an active controlling role that leads to their ownership of knowledge.**

ICDP has therefore developed a series of practical exercises to help teachers and caregivers to find their own practical solutions in tune with their cultural background. These exercises are in three different categories:

1. *Observing*, exercises such as training in reading a child's expressions or identifying the 3 dialogues/8 guidelines in pictures and in video sequences
2. *Acting or doing*, such as testing out the 8 guidelines in practice at home and in the class-room, and reporting back, providing examples and role-playing, making a handbook with personal pictures and examples.
3. *Communicating*, telling others about personal experiences, explaining to others about the 3 dialogues /8 guidelines, presenting the basic principles of ICDP to colleagues.

In practice these exercises are implemented in regular group meetings of teachers or caregivers, as part of the ICDP training. Participants carry out positive self-reflective exercises, including by video recording own performance, and then report back by sharing with the rest of the group. In this way **a practical cycle of learning** is established which has the following elements:



7. Working in groups - sharing and constructing knowledge among equals

8. Internal monitoring and corrective feedback – checklists, self-monitoring and evaluative meetings

9. Structuring of the setting – providing a facilitative setting and environment; having a structured agenda but flexible to follow the needs of the group



II TEACHERS TRAINING AND FORUM FOR SELF-REFLECTION

The idea is to create a forum where the teachers bring out and share their own experience and knowledge, and analyse it by using the 8 guidelines for good interaction as analytic tools. The teachers can thus find their own ways of improvement – instead of being instructed by experts from outside.

The objective:

1. To create a self-sustaining, non-threatening, reflective group for teachers to bring out their practical experiences of teaching, relating and communicating with their pupils; thus raising their awareness of their own performance as a teacher.
2. To raise teachers' awareness of each student's strengths and positive sides, not only deficiencies, and discover how to correct their tacit negative "contracts" with pupils – through discussion and assistance from colleagues.
3. To test out new and improved ways of organising teaching – and sharing these experiences with colleagues.

The initial training:

6 days training/sensitisation course in the ICDP Programme split into two periods with practical exercises in between.

The implementation of ICDP intervention in school:

Regular meetings in the reflective forum are held every week or fortnightly. The ethical code is to be positive and constructive in commenting on the videos or performance of each participant and never to criticize a colleague in such a way that he feels insulted or lose face in front of his colleagues. There is a rotational leadership of the meetings – all participants have to take a leader-role.

The agenda for the meetings includes the following:

- At each meeting the teacher in the leader-role shows and analyses a video recording of personal interactive performance in the class-room – as introduction for group discussion.
- Video feedback: The format for analysis and discussion of the video is based on the ICDP criteria, i.e. the 8 guidelines for good interaction
- Redefinition of each pupil in the class is also a recurrent topic in addition to video-feedback:
 1. Each teacher is requested to characterise each pupil with two adjectives and discuss this with the colleagues.
 2. After two weeks the same exercise is repeated, but in addition the teacher is asked to use adjectives indicating the pupils area of possible development, the strengths, the positive qualities and developmental/educational potential of each pupil.
- Suggestions are made to test out new improved ways of relating and communicating with the pupils
- New ways of organising the class-room and thus also class-room's "participant structure"

This agenda is organised in three phases:

First phases meetings:

1. ***Definition training*** - each teacher is requested to characterize each pupil in his class plus redefining him or her by indicating "zones of possible development". Each pupil is discussed in the group in order to identify positive possibilities and positive ways to relate to each pupil.
2. Each teacher presents ***self-analyses of a video recording of personal interaction in the classroom to the group of colleagues***. The presentation is discussed with the group and afterwards written down. All participants have to present one video for analysis. The tacit code in these meetings is to give constructive feedback. (During the project each participant should be video-filmed four times).

Second phase meetings:

3. ***Testing out new and improved ways of interaction:***
 - a) Through role-play
 - b) By testing out directly methods in the classroom and reporting back to the group
 - c) Through video-demonstrations of own interaction where possibilities for improvement are identified

Third phase meetings:

4. ***Analysing different class-room organizations*** - How could you improve and enrich the interaction with pupils by reorganizing the classroom? Which situations tend to invite conflict? Which situations/organisations invite cooperation? What is my way/style of organising the class-room and selecting situations? How could it be improved?
5. ***Designing and changing of routines***, to improve situations in the class-room. Each teacher is supposed to suggest, implement and report back to the group about their new design.
6. ***Future plans for how to organise the teaching*** education in order to sustain the positive experiences and effects achieved during this intervention.

NOTE: Although this is described in phases, both video-analysis and redefinition of pupils will be recurrent topics in most meetings.



III ASSESSING CLASSROOM INTERACTION

Issues to address:

1. About creating “room” for change

If the ICDP course is to have an effect there must be commitment by both the participants and the school. In addition to an intensive course, one must anticipate a follow up procedure over a period of time - see Forum for Reflection. Change and improvement requires effort and time.

2. The teacher’s approach to the pupil:

- a. Exercises to see the positive sides in the pupils
- b. Working in the “zone of proximal development” to extend the child’s abilities and skills.
- c. Recognising that improvement can be achieved with effort and by mobilising interest.
- d. The importance of praise and encouragement.
- e. The dangers involved when focusing on the negative conceptions that hinder development.

3. Analysis of interaction in classroom

Video recording of interaction episodes in a classroom; the task is to identify positive aspects.

Which of the 8 guidelines for good interaction can you identify? Give concrete examples. Which could be strengthened?

Which of the 8 guidelines for good interaction do you practice often? Which do you practice more seldom?

4. How do the dialogues take place in your class?

How is the pattern of dominance/control? Is there room for the pupil’s initiative and contribution?

Is it successful or is there “chaos”?

Do the pupils have the opportunity to express themselves through discussion and choice of activities and interests?

Is it possible for you to have dialogues with individual pupils? When does this happen?

Do some pupils dominate the situation and prevent others from speaking?

Are there many silent pupils in your class? In which subjects and under which conditions is your dialogue with the pupils at its best? Can you repeat these conditions more often?

Is there anything to prevent an active dialogue in class? Can this be changed?

5. How is the atmosphere/climate in your class?

Is there a warm emotional atmosphere where you think the pupils feel secure, or do they seem insecure and uncomfortable?

Do they seem indifferent?

Do you feel that the atmosphere is heavy and uninspiring? What can you do about it?

Does anyone feel left out? Why do they feel left out? How do the other pupils perceive them?

Does “mobbing” occur in your class? Who is the perpetrator and who is the victim? Does more covert psychological mobbing and exclusion occur?

What are your own conceptions of the pupils, both positive and negative? Provide examples.

Which pupils do you experience as difficult in your class? How have you “defined” them? Can you see them in a different way? How do they view themselves? How do the other pupils see them? How do their parents see them?

6. How do you practice the emotional dialogue?

What are your strong and weak sides - according to your own evaluation? Do you provide support and praise for the weak pupils?

Do you respond to their emotional expressions and initiatives? Are you affectionate in your interaction with your pupils?

How do you promote enthusiasm and commitment for school subjects? What prevents enthusiasm?

6. How do you provide explanations and expand on the meaning?

Are you “where the pupil is” when you give explanations?

Do you have a joint focus when you give explanations?

Are you able to keep the dialogue going and exchange viewpoints? How can you do this in the best way? Do you allow the pupils enough time to answer when you ask questions?

Do you give room for the child’s interests and initiative?

Do you provide the pupils with challenges and the encouragement to extend themselves beyond their usual level of functioning? How?
Discuss how you can provide meaning, expand and enrich your instruction in a subject you enjoy teaching.

7. Is there room for the pupil's own activities in your class?

Do you mostly lecture, or do you also provide the opportunity for group work, exploration and dialogue?

Do the pupils occasionally have the chance to pursue their interests over a period of time? How?

Have you tried reciprocal instruction? In which subjects could you try out this form of instruction?

9. How do you set limits in the classroom?

When you intervene with a prohibition, do you explain why?

Do you discuss with the class which rules should apply so that pupils are familiar with the rules and the reasons for them?

Do you occasionally allow the pupils to decide rules for themselves and to participate in the decision about what the consequences should be for breaking them?

Describe typical disciplinary problems and how they can be apprehended.

How can one help pupils to set limits for themselves? Are you able to assist them to develop their self-control by planning together and by offering "scaffolding" support to their goal oriented activity?

Use typical tasks in some of the subjects to practice scaffolding.

Are you able to give examples of the scaffolding approach? Are you able to create and role play an example?

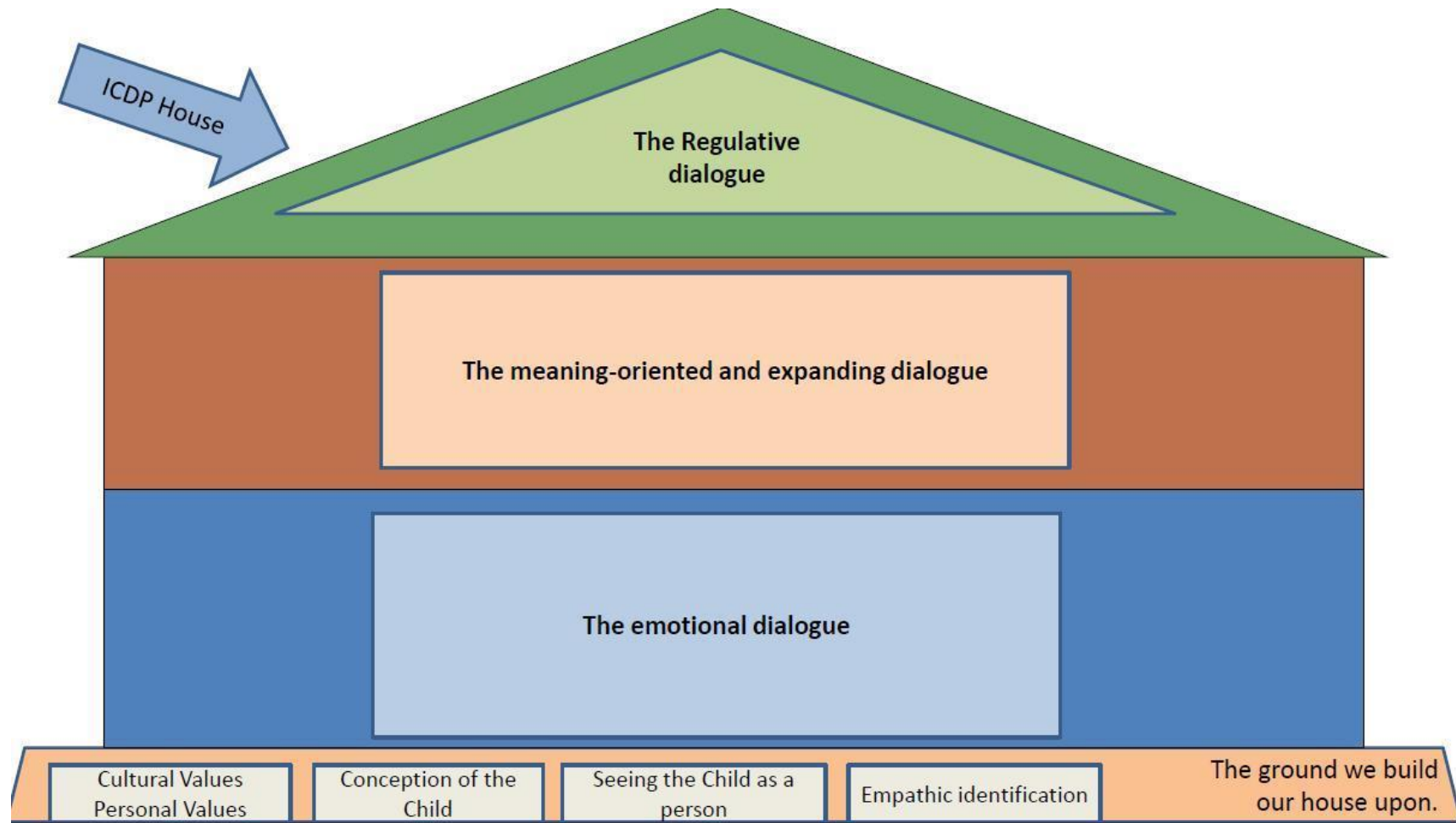
10. How to create pupils who respect both others and themselves, who show responsibility and feelings for others?

This is a central theme that is dealt with both in discussion and practical exercises, e.g. in reciprocal affirmation and praise. Which conditions promote self-respect, mutual respect and responsibility? What can prevent such development?

The point is to create a framework and to guide teachers through a series of practical exercises with observation, trying out and an exchange of experiences which will both enhance their self-reflection and insight as teachers as well as their interaction and contact with their pupils – see Forum for Reflection.



IV “BUILDING THE ICDP” HOUSE – ICDP COURSE FOR PARENTS IN A NUTSHELL:





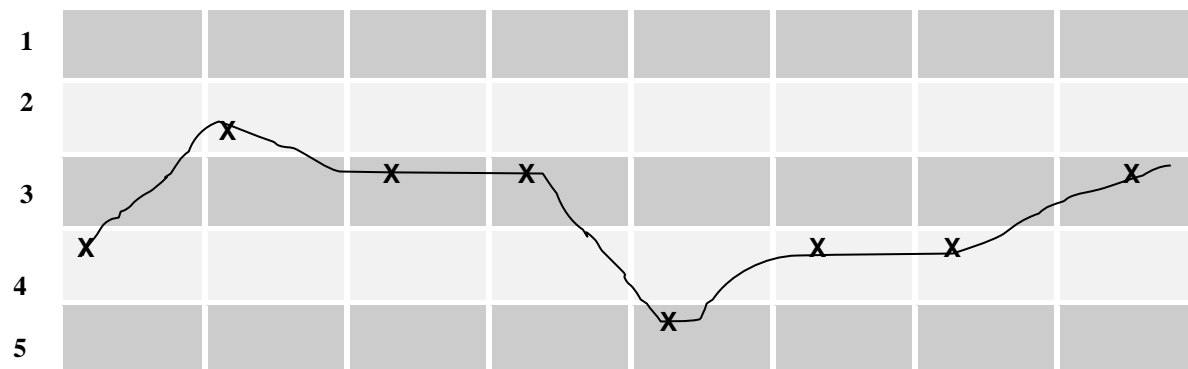
V YOU CAN ANALYSE YOUR DAILY INTERACTIVE ROUTINES

Try to observe how you communicate with your child during one of the typical interactive daily routine or situation with your child, such as: meal time, washing, dressing, going for a walk, playing, reading a book, making a drawing etc. - these are all opportunities for good quality interaction. Afterwards, try to answer the following questions:

1. How did I feel and how did my child feel during this particular interactive situation?
2. Were we attuned to each other? Was I responsive to my child's lead, interest and feeling state?
3. Did we share a meaningful dialogue? Did I expand and enrich the experience with meaning?
4. If the activity had a goal did we achieve it by working together in a cooperative way (scaffolding)?

Then make an assessment of the interaction situation you considered above by giving yourself marks from 1 to 5 for each of the 8 guidelines. Put an 'x' in the relevant space on the table below and at the end trace the profile by connecting all the spaces where there is an 'x'. We filled in an imaginary profile in the table below as an example of how to do it. Share the result and try to make your own future strategy by selecting some situations in your daily routine where you will put more emphasis in the future in order to strengthen your weaker points.

Mark:



Guideline:

g.1 g.2 g.3 g.4 g.5 g.6 g.7 g.8

Repeat the exercise from time to time by sharing with some of your friends from the ICDP group you had attended.



3 DIALOGUES FOR GOOD INTERACTION/8 GUIDELINES

- **THE EMOTIONAL DIALOGUE** with its four guidelines:
 - 1) How do you express love and positive feelings?
 - 2) How do you see and follow the initiatives of the child?
 - 3) How do you establish close and attuned communication?
 - 4) How do you express approval and confirmation?
- **THE MEANING ORIENTED DIALOGUE** with three guidelines:
 - 1) How do you establish focus and joint attention?
 - 2) How do you create meaning for the child's experience?
 - 3) How do you expand on the meaning and go beyond the present?
- **THE REGULATIVE DIALOGUE** with two guidelines:
 - 1) How do you set limits in a positive way?
 - 2) How do you plan an activity and guide step by step?



www.icdp.info