



The case study describes the progress of a child from a socially disadvantaged community attending a school club using the Feuerstein Instrumental enrichment method (FIE).

### Model casuistry – Danko, 9 years old

#### *Personal anamnesis*

Danko was born an unwanted child in a socially disadvantaged environment of a Roma family. He did not suffer any serious illness. He was not diagnosed in any way deficient. He seems shy and timid.

#### *Family anamnesis*

Danko (\*2007) comes from a family with many children. He has three older and four younger siblings. Last year (2016) his youngest sister died at the age of three months of the sudden death syndrome.

His parents are not married. Both have not finished basic education, father (\*1986) is unemployed and mother (\*1988) is on maternity leave. Their budget consists of child benefit and a poverty benefit. The relationship between parents is full of conflict. The father assaults the mother in the presence of children and many times the conflict was resolved by police. Parents do not look after the children very much. Most of the year they are unkempt, in dirty and rugged clothes, they wear shoes several sizes wrong. They do not like to talk about their parents. In their presence they are silent and they stop smiling.

The family rents a row house in a Roma settlement. It consists of a kitchen, bedroom a bathroom with social facility. They have both electricity and water available in the house. For

heating they burn solid fuels in the stove. The house does not seem cosy, looks rather neglected and the surroundings of the house are covered in garbage that spreads bad smell.

#### *School anamnesis*

Danko did not visit pre-school. Because of that he was sent to the zeroth grade after entering the school and undergoing psychological examination. As he comes from a family that does not provide basic functions, which are needed for a healthy development of a child, he faces a lot of obstacles in school. The major barrier for Danko is communication in Slovak. When he entered school he only spoke Romani.

Deficits of upbringing manifested when he failed the first grade and had to repeat it. He is assessed as a quiet, rather solitary, but obliging, thankful for attention and interest towards him. Despite repeating the first grade he did not learn to read and write letters, does not know basic numbers, he expands his vocabulary very slowly. His class teacher has not so far recommended him for a special pedagogy examination.

#### *Social anamnesis*

Danko is rather solitary. He does make friends among his peers. During playtime he tends to play on his own. In collective he is feeble and silent. He respects authority of an adult, but does not seek his presence. Of all activities he enjoys drawing simple shapes and colouring pictures the most and is able to concentrate on them for a longer time.

At home he spends most of his time helping father, they collect and chop wood or look for metal to sell to get some money. He often wanders aimlessly around the settlement with his older siblings.

#### *Difficulties observed after entering the club*

Danko was invited to visit the FIE club when he entered first grade, to which his parents agreed. During first meetings he hid his uneasiness behind a smile.

He fulfilled obligingly any given tasks. He helped with handing out pencils, closing doors and windows, taking out chairs. Problem arrived when handling school work. He was paralyzed by fear of failure he knew from every day at school and was not able to think any further. He kept repeating “*I don't know,*” even before we finished explaining the task.

During the club he did not speak to either us or his classmates. He was shy and did not make an eye contact. After being directly addressed by an adult he bit into his fingers and looked into the ground. When addressed by his peers he answered in Romani. He totally refused to

step out of a crowd. During the playtime in club when children choose what they want to do, he was drawing on his own silently. He was not content with his work and refused to show it to anyone. He had no self-confidence.

We observed that when he was facing tasks he could not solve he would become completely stuck. He was afraid we would do a mistake so much he would not even start solving the task. He laid his head on the desk and became withdrawn. Until the end of the club he did not react to any stimuli. Once he even pretended he had fainted so that he did not have to solve a math problem.

### *Progress under the influence of FIE*

After two school years of working with FIE Danko made significant improvements. We went through two Instruments, Organization of Dots and Identify Emotions. Most notable improvement was in his communication. He understands Slovak much better than before. We are slowly building up his vocabulary. It is necessary to talk to him slowly and make sure with questions, whether he understood everything we told him.

He began to make eye contact with his peers and his teachers too. When working with Instruments he even answers question of his own volition and tells us how we should proceed. He even offered himself to carry a borrowed ball back to the staffroom to completely strange teachers.

His fear of the unknown has significantly lessened. He is anxious when approaching new task, but is able to overcome it. In the last year he has not become withdrawn even once. When he is not sure about something he is able to ask for help. Thanks to FIE we eliminated his fear of mistake, he understood everyone makes mistakes and it is natural. He learned how to work better with mistakes, to correct them when possible, to respect them when not.

Instrument papers are exciting for him, he is looking forward to them. He is able to go through them without major issues and is so focused he tends to forget his surroundings.

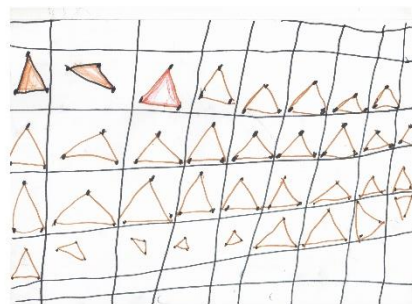
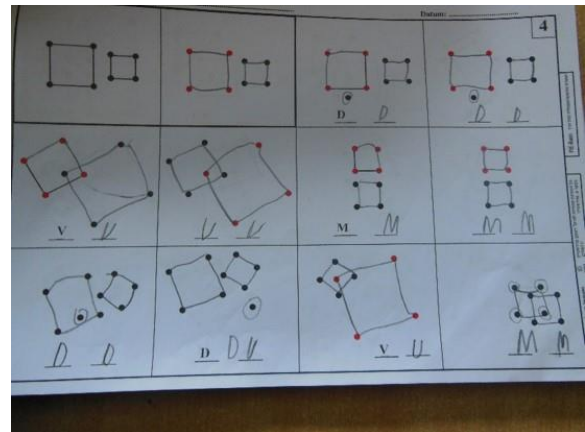
Which is a paradox, compared to his school results where he has such difficulty to concentrate and learn. Many times he asked for one, two or three more papers after we finished working and filled them out again. It is amazing to watch him work, how he thinks and plans how to continue. He checks his work after himself and corrects it when he is not satisfied.

Beyond that Danko's memory has also improved. Information he collects thanks to FIE he keeps in mind. That is proved by his own hand drawn instruments he began drawing long after we finished working with them.

When working with Instruments he felt successful for the first time. He feels he can achieve something, he likes the outcome of his work, it brings him satisfaction and he is not afraid to show it to anyone. He is more unforced, calm and content. There is not as much fear behind his smile as there was. He is more perceptive of his surroundings and started talking about things he saw, encountered, which happened around him. From a shy boy he is slowly becoming a one with self-confidence, beginning to have faith in himself.

### Conclusion

Danko keeps on visiting the school club. Together we are working on building self-confidence and developing all aspects of his personality. We still have lot to do, but it is certain we are on the right path.



*Due to the personal information presented, the child's name has been changed.*

Veľká Ida, August 2018