SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN UNIVERSITY: EDUCATIONAL TRAINING ACTIVITY FOR SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM STUDENTS

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Abstract: In line with the Bar-On model, emotional-social intelligence is a cross-cutting section of interdependent emotional and social competencies, stressors, and facilitators that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand and relate to others, and cope with daily demands. The competencies, skills, and emotional and social facilitators mentioned in this conceptualization include the five key components described above, with each component encompassing a number of closely related competencies, skills, and facilitators detailed in the annex. Consistent with this model, being emotionally and socially intelligent means understanding and expressing oneself effectively, understanding and relating well to others, and easily coping with daily demands, challenges, and pressures (Bar-On 2006). Given the specialized literature detailing important aspects of socioemotional development, I have developed a training program dedicated to final-year students in the social work specialization. The aim of this program is to develop socioemotional skills and raise awareness of these skills for their professional application in a competent manner. I have extracted six elements from the Bar-On model (empathy, social responsibility, interpersonal relationships, stress management, problem-solving, and optimism) that are relevant to the practice of the social work profession.

Keywords: social intelligence; emotional intelligence; social work students; university; training activity.

I. Conceptual Definitions and Theories Regarding Socio-Emotional Development in the Academic Field

Social Intelligence

Social intelligence can be described as an ability to understand other people, manage relationships with others, and act appropriately in various social situations (Seal, et al., 2010). Intelligence has been

divided into several categories, over time, each author making his own contribution. For example, Thorndike (1920) divided intelligence into 3 categories:

- abstract intelligence, which refers to the ability to understand people around and categorize ideas
- spatial intelligence, which refers to the ability to understand and manipulate objects
- social intelligence refers to the ability to manage relationships with others and to act appropriately and wisely in various social contexts.

Another categorization is that of Gardner (1983) who proposes a model of intelligence disposed on the basis of 7 distinct categories, among which we list linguistic understanding, which can be both verbal, as well as written, logical-mathematical intelligence, musical intelligence, kinesthetic, visual and spatial intelligence, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence.

Gardner (1983) also contributed to the definition of interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence, characterizing the interpersonal intelligence as an ability to understand intentions, the motivations and desires of the people we interact with, so to that ability to work effectively with others, and, on the other hand, to, intrapersonal intelligence as an ability to understand oneself, their own emotions, and to have the ability to understand oneself (desires, fears, fears, different emotions) and use these things for the purpose of regulating your own life.

Then Sternberg (1985) develops the concept of intelligence and brings forward the name of successful intelligence, which refers to the knowledge of strengths and weaknesses, and use the strengths so as to overcome the weak ones.

The same author developed the successful intelligence concept on 3 branches:

- analytical analysis, judgment, comparison and contrast;
- creative to deal with the novelty;
- basically to achieve the goal.

Emotional Intelligence

The second term, emotional intelligence (abbreviated IE) can be described as the ability to use information of an emotional nature to facilitate thinking (Bar-On 1988; Goleman 1995; Salovey & Mayer 1960). EI can also be described as a blending of emotion and intelligence, or, in other words, the intelligent use of emotions.

Nevertheless, according to Seal and Andrews-Brown (2010), the literature on Emotional Intelligence (EI) has been shaped by three primary streams of research. These streams have played a pivotal role

in both the evolution and widespread acceptance of the EI concept, forming the basis for many existing models and measurement tools: emotional traits, emotional abilities and emotional competence (Bar-On, 1988; Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1960)

Reuven Bar-On (1988) brought up the term "Emotional Quotient" or EQ in his seminal work, "Developing a Concept of Psychological Wellbeing. According to Bar-On (2006), the Emotional Quotient model focuses on emotional-social traits contributing to effective psychological functioning, utilizing five scales of EI: Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Stress Management, Adaptability, and General Mood. Boyatzis, Goleman and Rhee (2000) came to complement the pattern of emotional intelligence training and defined it as visible when a person uses those skills such as self-awareness, self-management of emotions, social awareness and social skills properly and at the right time. Four types of skills emerge from this model, according to the

- self-consciousness;
- self-management;
- social awareness;
- managing relationships.

Competence Development

authors:

The discovery of competence development resulted from the study of emotional and social intelligence to be useful in psychological wellbeing, especially in the position of manager (Boyatzis, 1982; Spencer & Spencer, 1993). Unlike the broader focus on overall psychological well-being or emotional cognitive processing, competence research hones in on specific capabilities that are linked to performance outcomes. These capabilities are identified, validated, and articulated as competencies through effectiveness assessments. The competence approach seeks to understand the intricate integration of social and emotional processes by connecting underlying physiological traits or capacities with observable actions or capabilities (Boyatzis & Sala, 2004; Gavrila-Ardelean, & Gavrila-Ardelean, 2017). Competence can be defined as a capacity or ability leading to a successful outcome, comprising a set of related behaviors organized around an underlying purpose or goal, known as intention. Competencies are the result of appropriate behaviors stemming from intention, efficiently used in a situation to achieve a fundamental goal. For example, the act of listening and asking questions involves multiple behaviors that can be driven by various intentional purposes. Successful use of these behaviors, such as empathetic listening, reflects an underlying intention to understand the other person, whereas alternative intentions may involve seeking influence or impact (Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2017).

In the current model of Social and Emotional Development (SED), there is increasing evidence demonstrating the significant impact of social and emotional competence on performance outcomes and suggesting that competencies can be refined. Spencer (2001) even argues that emotion-based training and professional development programs develop skills and subsequently add economic value for organizations.

Competencies are not static and can be improved through the learning process, unlike constructs such as personality and general intelligence that tend to remain unchanged until adulthood (Seal, Boyatzis, & Bailey 2006; Gavrilă-Ardelean, & Moldovan, 2014). The acquisition of knowledge, skills, and understanding is a part of learning, which is defined as a relatively permanent change resulting from experience. According to Kolb (1984), the process of learning involves the transformation of experience in creating knowledge. To manage these transformations, there are a series of discontinuities or discoveries that form an iterative cycle that leads to lasting individual-level change. Individuals can navigate these discontinuities by using a change model.

II. Models of Socio-Emotional Development

The model of SED proposed by Seal, Naumann, Scott, and Royce-Davis Seal, Naumann, Scott, and Royce-Davis (2010) proposed a social and emotional development model that integrates different theories and combines four interconnected factors to create a university context.

- Self-awareness: This factor includes self-emotional awareness, accurate self-evaluation, and trend identification Self-emotional (preferences). awareness comprises identification (knowing current states and feelings) and cause (recognizing triggers of emotions). Accurate selfevaluation involves talents (assessing strengths) and weaknesses), limitations (assessing while trend identification includes approach (knowing preferences) and avoidance (knowing dislikes). These elements form the core of the SED model, serving as the foundation for student learning.
- Consideration of others: This factor involves attention to consideration for others, emphasizing caring respect for includes individuals and situations. It empathy (understanding how others) and monitoring (recognizing adjusting behaviors based on consequences). The foundation for respect for others is established by empathy and monitoring, which influences students' ability to recognize and understand diverse perspectives.

- Connection to others: The focus here is on building meaningful relationships, encompassing ease and effort in developing quality connections. The foundation of meaningful relationships is sociability and intimacy, which are crucial for students' involvement in learning relationships and opportunities for deep learning.
- Impacting change: The final factor centers on positively influencing others, encompassing the tendency to seek leadership opportunities and motivate change. Impact includes initiative (taking the lead role and enjoying group responsibilities) and inspiration (having confidence in leading and motivating others). Individuals can exert positive influence on others by establishing initiative and inspiration.

In summary, the SED model incorporates these four factors: self-awareness, consideration of others, connection to others, and impacting change, creating a comprehensive framework that addresses social and emotional competencies crucial for students' holistic development and success in a university setting.

Bar-On's Model of Socio-Emotional Development

To assess different aspects of social and emotional intelligence and explore its conceptualization, the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-I) is developed using the theoretical foundation of the Bar-On model. This model posits that social and emotional intelligence is a mix of interdependent emotional and social competencies, inhibitors, and facilitators that collectively determine how effectively individuals understand and express themselves, comprehend and relate to others, and handle daily challenges. Five key components are outlined in the model, each of which encompasses a range of related competencies, facilitators and skills. Efficient self-expression, adept understanding and connection with others, and the ability to cope with daily challenges and pressures are all aspects of emotional and social intelligence that are aligned with this model (Bar-On, 2006).

An estimate of someone's emotional and social intelligence can be obtained through the EQ-I, which is a self-report measure of emotional and social intelligence behaviors. It was notable that it was the first measure of its kind to be published by a psychological publisher (Bar-On, 1997), the first measurement was examined by peers in Buros' Mental Measurements Yearbook (Plake & Impara, 1999) and is now considered the most commonly employed measure of emotional-social intelligence.

To sum up, the EQ-I is comprised of 133 items presented as brief sentences, using a 5-point response scale with a textual response

format ranging from "very rarely or not true about me" (1) to "very often true about me or true about me" (5). Bar-On (1997) provides a complete list of inventory items in its technical manual that are targeted for individuals aged 17 and above. The EQ-I is divided into five scales, each of which has specific subscales that provide a detailed understanding of an individual's emotional and social intelligence. These scales and their corresponding subscales are as follows:

- 1. Intrapersonal:
- Self-regard
- Emotional self-awareness
- Self-expression
- Independence
- Self-actualization
- 2. Interpersonal:
- Empathy
- Social responsibility
- Interpersonal relationships
- 3. Stress Management:
- Stress tolerance
- Impulse control
- 4. Adaptability:
- Reality testing
- Flexibility
- Problem-solving
- 5. General Mood:
- Optimism
- Happiness

These scales and subscales offer a comprehensive evaluation of an individual's emotional and social competencies, providing insights into various aspects of their interpersonal relationships, stress management, adaptability, and overall mood. The EQ-i's detailed structure enhances the precision and depth of its assessment, making it a valuable tool for understanding and developing emotional and social intelligence.

Social-Emotional Competencies

Cognitive abilities, introspection, emotional literacy, and self-awareness are non-cognitive aspects of emotional intelligence that are

crucial for overall functioning and adaptation. In its widest sense, it encompasses overall mood, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, stress management, and adaptability, which is crucial for therapeutic relationships in both professional and personal settings. The interconnected nature of emotional intelligence is illustrated by changes in one area that often trigger changes in others. This interconnectedness is dynamic and adjusts with increased awareness of one's emotions (Khurram & Mobeen, 2023).

Individuals' capacity to express, receive, and regulate emotions, as well as their success in building and maintaining relationships, are all part of socio-emotional abilities. Denham (2006) brought out the essential elements of this field, which include self-awareness, emotional expression, emotion and behavior control, social problem-solving skills, and social interaction skills. The elements mentioned can be in a continuous evolution and would represent basic social skills. (Denham, et al., 2012; Rose-Krasnor, 1997a, 1997b).

The term "socio-emotional competence" broadly encompasses abilities related to perceiving, expressing, regulating, and evaluating emotions during interactions. Theoretical models frequently incorporate four fundamental domains: the ability to empathize, the capacity to form relationships, and constructive coping with intense or problematic social interactions (Leuzinger-Bohleber, 2014).

Given this general theoretical framework, aimed at helping me build a professional training plan that targets socio-emotional development in the university domain, I have chosen a few elements from the socio-emotional development model proposed by Bar-On, which I will further develop below. I specify that the chosen elements have a direct connection to social work practice, and my experience in the field of social work and as a student dictate that those are the most relevant or immediately important aspects in the training of students.

III. A proposal for an educational training activity for social work program students

Group of participants: Social Work, Year 3. The third year is a crucial period for students specializing in social work. In the earlier years, students acquired theoretical information on various aspects of social work, and the subjects in the final year become more practical. Given the current situation, students are on the verge of coming into contact with beneficiaries—groups/persons in various vulnerable situations and beyond. However, the question arises: are they sufficiently prepared, or do they have enough information to put into practice everything they have accumulated over these years? Therefore, this training project aims to emphasize crucial aspects of a social worker's life in relation to their profession.

Duration: The training activity will take place over 3 months, during which students will have two training sessions per month (6 stages in total).

Objective of the activity:

- O1 Awareness of the importance of empathic ability and its practical application.
- O2 Increase social responsibility and correlate it with social work.
- O3 Awareness of the role of interpersonal relationships.
- O4 Management of stressful moments in professional life.
- O5 Finding effective methods for problem-solving.
- O6 Awareness of the role of optimism in social work.

Training methods: debate, exercise, role-playing, storytelling, description, exemplification.

Training materials: worksheets, posters, markers, A4 sheets, colored pencils, laptop, projector.

STAGE 1: EMPATHY (1h40min)

Methods: debate, exercise, role-playing, storytelling, description, illustration

Training tools: worksheets, boards, markers, A4 sheets, colored pencils, laptop, projector

Evaluation methods: feedback and active involvement in activities

Activity stages and allocated time:

- Introduction to the training project 10 minutes: A few words about the overall framework of the project: what socio-emotional development is, the presentation of the model of socio-emotional development (Bar-On), and the elements discussed in the project activities.
- Introductory discussion 10 minutes: The empathyrelated activity will begin with an open discussion about empathy. Therefore, answers will be sought to the following questions: What does empathy mean? What role does it play in our lives? How about in a student's life? And in a professional's life? Why is it important? What happens if we lack empathy?
- Presentation of a concrete situation 30 minutes: Students will be asked to present a specific situation in which they watched a movie or read a book and empathized with a character. They will have 10 minutes to put on paper a title and a drawing that conveys what they felt at that moment.

- Break 10 minutes
- Role-playing 40 minutes: The large group will be divided into two smaller groups, one representing the professional and the other the beneficiary. The group representing the beneficiary will be tasked with constructing a story about a divorced woman with a teenage daughter, who, during counseling sessions, shares an important situation with her that the social worker disagrees with. The group representing the professional will need to find a response based on empathy. Impressions left by the exercise will be discussed at the end.
- Feedback 10 minutes: Was the activity helpful? Did we learn something new?

STAGE 2: SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (1h40min)

Methods: debate, exercise, storytelling, description, exemplification *Training tools:* worksheets, boards, markers, A4 sheets, colored pencils, laptop, projector

Evaluation methods: feedback and active involvement in activities **Activity stages and allocated time:**

- Introductory Discussion 10 minutes: Brief lecture on the fundamental rights of humans, found in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights: https://fra.europa.eu/ro/themes/eu-charter-fundamental-rights
- Creating an Exhibition 60 minutes: Groups of 5 people will be created. The groups will have 40 minutes to create a poster about a situation illustrating social responsibility. Results will be presented, and a plenary debate will follow.
- Break 10 minutes.
- Ethical Dilemmas 20 minutes: Social responsibility will be outlined concerning professional responsibility through examples of ethical dilemmas that may arise in the social worker's intervention.

Examples to be discussed:

A pregnant minor who comes to the social worker for help and asks him not to disclose the secret to her parents.

- A drug-dependent teenager in a situation similar to that of the pregnant teenager. Risk and protective factors will be considered.
 - Feedback 10 minutes: What did we learn? How can we apply what we learned?

STAGE 3: RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS (1h40min)

Methods: debate, exercise, role-playing, storytelling, description, exemplification

Training materials: worksheets, posters, markers, A4 sheets, colored pencils, laptop, projector

Evaluation methods: Student feedback, involvement in the activity Activity stages and allocated time:

- Introductory discussion 20 minutes: Students will have 10 minutes of reflection on a moment when they faced a difficult situation and were helped by someone to overcome it. Debate on the importance of interpersonal relationships.
- The importance of the multidisciplinary team in social work 40 minutes: Working in teams: Groups of 4 will be formed, and the following task will be assigned: Choose a social service for a vulnerable group (residential or day) and make a list of multidisciplinary team members. Then, outline, in general, some main tasks for each.
- Break 10 minutes
- Ecomap 30 minutes: Individual work: students will have 20 minutes to create 2 ecomaps, one referring to personal life and the other to professional life. The ecomap model and its relationships will be drawn by each student.
- Feedback 10 minutes: What did we learn? How can we apply what we learned?

STAGE 4: STRESS MANAGEMENT (1h50min)

Methods: debate, exercise, storytelling, description, exemplification *Training materials*: worksheets, posters, markers, A4 sheets, colored pencils

Evaluation methods: Student Feedback, Involvement in the Activity, Ouestionnaire Results

Activity stages and allocated time:

- Introductory discussion 10 minutes: What is burnout from students' perspective? Burnout = stress, exhaustion, lack of will, lack of productivity (Cautin and Lilienfeld 2014)
- Measuring burnout 30 minutes: Students who have been in one of the following situations will raise their hands (Burnout Measurement Scale, Malach-Pines 2005): Has it ever happened that when you think about college, you feel: Tired? Disappointed? Hopeless?

Without escape? Depressed? Sick/ill health? Useless? Have difficulty falling asleep? Concrete situation examples will be discussed.

- Break 10 minutes
- Stress management methods 30 minutes: After this measurement exercise, students will be asked about the coping methods they used. Students will be given sheets with the simplified Dewe and Guest (1990) stress coping model:

When I was stressed at college, how often did I turn to: Rational thinking: focusing on solutions, Emotional release: expressing feelings, Recovery and preparation to cope with the problem: taking a break, Action delay and distraction through other activities, Passive approach: trying not to be affected. Students have 10 minutes to think about which coping method they used when they were in a state of burnout. In the next 20 minutes, each strategy will be discussed with examples from the students.

- Stress in the social work occupation 20 minutes: What factors can lead to burnout in social work? What coping methods from those listed can we use to overcome stress?
- Feedback 10 minutes: What did we learn? How can we apply what we learned?

STAGE 5: PROBLEM SOLVING (1h40 min)

Methods: debate, exercise, storytelling, description, exemplification *Training materials*: worksheets, posters, markers, A4 sheets, colored pencils

Evaluation methods: Student Feedback, Involvement in the Activity, Questionnaire Results

Activity stages and allocated time:

- Discussion Introduction 10 minutes: Continuing from the previous stress management activity, we will focus further on problem-solving. Have we recently encountered a challenging situation? How did we overcome it?
- Problem Solving Steps 20 minutes: Wood's Model (2003):

Motivation (Can I do it?)

Problem Definition (What information do I have about it?)

Problem Exploration (What goals do I set?)

Solution Planning (sub-problems and methods for solving each one)

Plan Implementation

Solution Verification

Solution Evaluation

Explanation of the model and its exemplification with a problem

- (provided by the students).
- Thinking Hats Method: Presentation of the method 10 minutes:
- There are Six Colored Hats Corresponding to Thinking Methods (De Bono 1985):
- **Black Hat** What is the evidence? Is what we propose correct? What is the logic behind what is being proposed? Is it possible? Why can't this plan work? What might not work if we proceed this way? What are the weaknesses of this strategy? What threats do we need to face? What consequences will result from these actions?
- **Blue Hat** Defining the goal, exploring alternatives, how to achieve what we have set out, exploring implications, formulating a strategy, organizing a thinking plan, defining expectations.
- **Green Hat -** A reactive idea, immediate, a starting idea, an additional idea, and a new idea.
- **Red Hat -** What are the feelings about this issue, what do we find interesting about the idea, what do we not like about this idea, what other choices would we like to make, how do we evaluate the solution.
- White Hat What information do we have about the problem, what information do we need, what questions should we ask to obtain relevant information, where does the information come from, how will we analyze and understand the data, is the information relevant, what other information could be helpful.
- **Yellow Hat -** What are the advantages, what are the strengths, why will this idea solve the problem, are the resources sufficient, will the solution be done in a timely manner, what contribution can be made, how can the plan be improved, how can the situation be improved.
 - Break: 10 minutes
 - Applying the Model 40 minutes: Students will be divided into 6 groups, each assigned one of the 6 colors. Each group will think about solving a common problem (for example, writing the thesis or another issue raised by students) and will go through the stages corresponding to each hat.
 - Feedback 10 minutes: What have we learned? How can we apply what we have learned?

STAGE 6: OPTIMISM (1h40 min)

Methods: debate, exercise, storytelling, description, exemplification Training materials: worksheets, posters, markers, A4 sheets, colored pencils **Evaluation methods:** Student Feedback, Involvement in the Activity, Ouestionnaire Results

Activity stages and allocated time:

- Introductory discussion 10 minutes: We start the activity with a short questionnaire https://researchcentral.ro/detalii.php?id=153
- SWOT Analysis 30 minutes: Individually, each student will conduct a SWOT analysis, considering the completion of their studies. In the end, we will focus on optimistic methods of viewing the situation.
- The Importance of a Positive Approach in Social Work Part I
 10 minutes: Debate: What is a positive approach? Have you encountered this concept before? How can we implement it in the profession of social work?
- Break: 10 minutes
- The Importance of a Positive Approach in Social Work Part II 40 minutes: Role-playing games: Two groups will be formed, the social worker and the beneficiary. The following situations will be given in which the social worker must adopt a positive approach:

The beneficiary's child has a severe disability. How do we break the news?

The beneficiary has cancer. How do we approach the situation?

The beneficiary's brother is addicted to drugs. How do we support him? Each group will specifically establish the details of the cases, starting from the given situations, and will send a representative for each case.

• Feedback – 10 minutes: What have we learned? How can we apply what we have learned?

IV. Conclusions and Possible Directions for Further Development:

To evaluate the training program and summarize the conclusions, conducted a SWOT analysis:

Strengths (S):

Diversity of Activities: The inclusion of varied activities for each stage ensures a rich and dynamic learning experience. This approach caters to different learning styles and keeps participants engaged throughout the training program.

Activity Details: Providing comprehensive details for each activity is essential for seamless implementation. Clear instructions and well-defined objectives contribute to the smooth execution of the program, preventing potential challenges.

Theoretical Foundation: Ensuring that each activity is grounded in theoretical concepts adds depth and relevance. This theoretical underpinning enhances the academic rigor of the program, helping students connect practical experiences with established social work principles.

Student Involvement: The emphasis on student engagement is a key feature. Initiating discussions at the beginning of each stage and centering activities around the students' experiences, emotions, and opinions fosters a student-centric approach. This strategy encourages students to actively participate, make choices, and develop unique intervention methods, promoting individualized learning.

By incorporating these elements, the training program not only covers a broad spectrum of activities but also ensures that each activity is well-structured, theoretically grounded, and focused on student engagement. This holistic approach contributes to the program's overall effectiveness and the participants' meaningful learning experiences.

Weaknesses (W):

Activity Details: One identified weakness is the potential inadequacy or lack of detail in the descriptions of activities. If the details are insufficient or unclear, it could pose challenges during the implementation phase. To address this, it's crucial to ensure that all activities are thoroughly explained, leaving no room for ambiguity.

Time Allocation: Another weakness lies in the allocated time for each stage. It's acknowledged that the set time for each stage may be insufficient, and discussions might exceed the allotted time. This could lead to rushed activities or incomplete discussions. Adjusting the time frame for each stage or finding strategies to manage time more effectively could enhance the overall program delivery.

By addressing these weaknesses, the training program can achieve better clarity in activity descriptions and optimize time management, ensuring a more successful and impactful learning experience for the participants.

Opportunities (O):

Practical Approach: An opportunity lies in the practical approach of the program. As students are nearing the completion of their studies, this project provides valuable exposure to elements of social work. The practical application of theoretical knowledge enhances their understanding and prepares them for real-world scenarios, bridging the gap between academia and professional practice.

Practice Enhancement: The program offers an opportunity for students to enhance their practice. Building on the theoretical and practical

aspects accumulated during their years of study, this project provides a platform to improve specific areas within the field of social work.

By capitalizing on these opportunities, the training program can empower students to seamlessly transition from academic learning to hands-on practice, fostering a more comprehensive and effective learning experience.

Threats (T):

Examinations and High Workload: A significant threat to the success of the training program is the concurrent presence of exams and a high level of academic workload. As students approach the conclusion of their studies, they may find themselves immersed in crucial exam preparation, potentially overwhelming them with competing priorities. This can impact their ability to fully engage and participate in the training activities, hindering the effectiveness of the program.

Boredom: Another potential threat is the perception of boredom among students. They might perceive the activities as repetitive or uninteresting, which could lead to a lack of engagement and enthusiasm. Boredom poses a risk to the overall effectiveness of the training program, as it may hinder students' receptiveness to the content and impede their ability to extract valuable insights from the activities.

Mitigating these threats involves careful scheduling, considering the students' academic commitments, and ensuring the activities remain dynamic and relevant to maintain their interest throughout the program.

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