Social Club

BRIDGE Lab

Activity 2.1

Scenario

Read this scenario individually:

Alex recently joined a new school. During group work, Alex does not speak much, avoids eye contact, and usually works alone. Some classmates have started to think that Alex is unfriendly, uninterested, or not willing to cooperate.

A. Individual Reflection (5–7 minutes)

Reflect silently and write short answers to the following questions:

- What is your first impression of Alex? Would it be the same or different as described in the scenario?
- Why do you think you formed this impression?
- What influenced your thinking?

B. Group Analysis (10–15 minutes)

Create small groups (3-5 people). Analyze the scenario by dividing possible explanations into three categories:

Visible factors (What we can immediately see and how we interpret them)

- Quiet behavior
- Avoiding eye contact
- Working alone

What conclusions would you make based on the information you have? Also, it is important to recognize that we all might interpret also visual factors differently.

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Invisible factors

What kind of invisible factors may there be behind? Also, it is interesting to share what kind of factors are visible for some and invisible for some. We are different in this way also.

- Shyness or social anxiety
- Language issues
- Cultural norms about communication
- Previous negative experiences
- Feeling excluded or insecure
- What else?

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Structural factors (Wider social or environmental influences)

These broader mechanisms also have an impact on us and might have in this case on Alex as well. Reflect on the following examples, due to Alex's situation, what kind of impact they can have:

- Being new to the school system
- Lack of institutional support
- Cultural differences in classroom participation
- Social inequalities
- School climate and peer attitudes

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C. Discussion (10 minutes)

Discuss together after the group work on your learnings:

- Why is recognizing stereotypes important?
- Why are first impressions often incomplete?
- What did you learn from the groupwork and analyzing Alex's situation?
- What can we do to create a more inclusive learning environment where everybody is welcomed?

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Key Message

What we see is only part of the story. Fair understanding requires looking beyond first impressions. It is not even realistic to think that our understanding would ever be complete or perfect. We don't need to know everything or have explanations for everything.