The im2be Program

1. Who are we and what are we doing?

Intelligent Technologies S. A. (ITSA) is a substantial and well established ICT organization headquartered in Warsaw. ITSA has launched a research and development program to develop a new category of human development tools. Virtually all information and communications development so far has been driven by goals of business or government efficiency and control or simply marketing products and services. We believe that it is time for individuals to use technology to help them become self-aware, achieve their own goals and realize their own potential. We will deliver new human development tools that help people make themselves more successful.

The team we are building in 2015 will create and deliver to testing and pre-production hardware and software addressing universal goals for positive child development and new applications for kid’s individual development. We are assembling a multidisciplinary team of creative people who we believe can change the world – starting with Kids as individuals. Ultimately we hope to develop personal tools under the banner IAMTOBE for all ages, groups and circumstances.

1. Who do we want to serve?

The im2be tools are planned to meaningfully contribute to the voluntary development of boys and girls from 7 to 12 years old. This age range is usually recognized in child development psychology as **late childhood and early school age**. It matches the age of responsible behavior and the period of primary school up to the entry into adolescence. This age includes non-controversial development goals and includes some of the most dramatic changes in a person’s life situations. It is the beginning of a systematic education to gain fundamental knowledge accompanied by daily home obligations while play is still among the essential fields of activity. Now actions cannot be as spontaneous as in the previous stages of development but are often directed by a “superior”. In addition children enter into utterly new environments beyond the parent’s reach and play entirely new social roles. This is the period when the young human claims deals with his first responsibilities and she becomes the subject of constant evaluation. This is surely the most intensive period where she learns how to work individually and in a group, and his independence grows dramatically.

These changes as well as constant physical, cognitive, language, moral, emotional, and social development raise absolutely new challenges that children have to cope with. Meeting these challenges, solving those problems and expanding positive methods of functioning in this period will affect child’s entire life.

1. What are our theoretical foundations?

Among numerous theories of human development we take into consideration, we briefly identify two with merit for the im2be program, namely those of Erik Erikson and Robert Havinghurst.

The theory of Erik Erikson describes period of human life between 5 and 12 years as the **time of competence** when industry and/or/vs inferiority are most important features. The existential question describing a problem in this phase is: “Can I make it in the world of people and things?” During this stage children start to feel a need of being competent and want to be engaged in serious activities similar to what adults are doing. The internal drive for achieving acclaim, positive results, and the character of striving to do things well or even perfect is exposed and/or developed. All these needs may be realized due to entering into new environment – school. Classes are, for every pupil, the opportunity to prove themselves and experience success in something. Children also learns that being diligent and assiduous gives rewards.

The positive side of the developmental process is expressed by an increase of sense of competence, adequacy and industriousness. On the other hand the main threat during this stage is appearance of sense of inferiority and hypertrophy of adequacy and correctness. In the future this may cause an excessive self-restraint, a very strong sense of duty and, consequently, dependence on given obligations and tasks as well as striving for fulfilling them at all costs. Then work and meeting other’s expectations becomes the only criterion of the human’s value.

Our goal is to support negotiating this period of life evolving a healthy sense of competency, which Erikson defines it as a casual experience of effectiveness, ability and intelligence in fulfilling tasks which is not disturbed by infantile inferiority felt in the face of other, possibly more competent people. It may be achieved by the typical activities for this age – learning, play, developing interests and helping adults. Competence corresponds with an ability of reasonable choice making and, in adulthood, is responsible for a sense of quality of performance deriving from professional realization of tasks. When one achieves successes, he experiences a feeling of social approval and in consequence forms a sense of satisfaction from own competence – sense of productivity. A child’s sense of industry developed during primary school is a source of specific strength which affects all new roles in her future. Without positive feedback the risk of developing a sense of inferiority and bitterness appears which can drive a gradual decline of effectiveness of activities. What is more, a child might form a sense of inadequacy and misfit that will create barriers and setbacks to using his own potential extending to the development of the syndrome of learned helplessness.

Robert Havinghurst main assertion is that development is continuous throughout the entire lifespan, occurring in stages, where the individual moves from one stage to the next by the means of a successful resolution of problems or **performance of developmental tasks**. Developmental tasks, according to Havinghurst’s definition, are a set of skills and competences acquired by individual during the lifespan through contacts with environment reaching, during the development higher and higher level of mastery. The tasks which children between the ages of 7 to 12 will meet include:

- learning the physical skills necessary for ordinary games;

* building wholesome attitudes toward oneself as a growing organism;
* learning to get along with age-mates;
* learning a masculine or feminine social role;
* developing fundamental skills in reading, writing, and calculating;
* developing concepts necessary for everyday living;
* developing conscience, morality, and a scale of values;
* achieving personal independence;
* developing attitudes toward social groups and institutions.

1. What are our main goals and principles?

Main developmental goals of the project, which will be realized with aid of new hardware, software and information technologies, are classified in 3 different areas:

1. Self-Discipline,
2. Balance,
3. Self-esteem.

**Self-Discipline** should be understood as supporting the child’s voluntary motivation to work on his tasks and problems in both school and home environments. To realize this objective im2be tools will encourage and teach rational decision making. This includes features like learning how to set reasonably demanding goals and how to plan activities and manage time. What is more to achieve efficient self-discipline it is necessary to learn coping with stress and anger as well as other emotions often disconcerting reasonable judgment. This aim also includes teaching children to delay gratification. Delayed gratification, is an ability to resist the temptation for an immediate reward and wait for a later reward. Generally, delayed gratification is associated with resisting a smaller but more immediate reward in order to receive a larger or more enduring reward later. A person's ability to delay gratification relates to other similar skills such as patience, impulse control, self-control and willpower, all of which are involved in self‑regulation.

**Balance** also involves time and emotion managing but in terms of keeping balance between different aspects of life, ex. free and work time. It also concerns balance in relationships with other people.

**Self-esteem** is connected with the reasonable evaluation and building positive self-image. Children have to learn how to judge their own efforts and results. It aims also to teach pupils how to create schemes of thinking that will help them to function positively and deal with difficult situations. It is worth noting that the self-esteem formed during childhood remains relatively stable and is very hard to reformulate. Again and again, the quality of experiences children gain during early school age is extremely important.

All categories interconnect. Good self-esteem facilitates self-discipline and effective problem solving. Balance in life is a necessary condition for good self-esteem and it is built thanks to proper discipline.

Our main principles to support our goals are to absolutely maintain **privacy** and facilitate **voluntary participation**.

It is not very difficult keep personal data of users private - it is only business decision not to create a platform that will allow it to be collected and sold. We know that the children of this century will grow up entertained and informed, monitored, recorded, analyzed and sold as digital data by mega-business that profit from seducing more people to replace self-reflection with publication. We hope to act quickly while there is still time for an alternative for children from growing up ignoring the dangers of sharing with no objections to post any sensitive information on the Internet. The nature of our program and the fact that the tools will manage extremely personal data make privacy one of the most important issues.

Voluntary participation is simply fundamental and necessary to realize the main goals. Children should have an internal motivation for starting usage of im2be, because when forced they will not benefit from application and it will be just another obligation to fulfill for parents or school. Whereas the idea of self-development lies mainly in our own will to make progress for ourselves.

1. What is the state of the art related to the im2be program?

There is shockingly little research conducted in area of general self-improvement with usage of ICT and other new technologies. Most of ICT self-development tools accessible on the Internet market focus on providing materials and instruments to support education and lifelong learning. There is a meaningful lack of websites and applications dedicated to general personal progress in the areas we wish to address.

The other thing to recognize about the current state of self-development tools, primarily on the Internet, is that most of these programs are intended for participants of higher education or adolescents (high and secondary school students). Children and pupils of primary schools are actually neglected with regard to ICT supported help in self-development. Some exceptions include Khan Academy and work with e-portfolios which can be used in even in preschool education.

Another problem connected with ICT is that in spite of huge increase in the availability of communication technologies people with lower social capital do not use fully the potential of ICT – a situation called **digital inequalities**. Uneducated people who have problems with accessibility to traditional educational resources, despite of availability of free online materials serving lifelong learning, rarely use global network for increasing their competences or gaining knowledge. They see Internet mainly as a source of entertainment. At the same time people who anyway would have access to educational resources are using the Internet to expand their knowledge constantly extending the competence gap between two groups.

It seems that those who can benefit from e-learning are those who are **motivated** and disciplined enough to sacrifice their free time for self-development and learning. The usage of ICT is determined by social capital and socio-economical background and theories claiming that easiness of access to knowledge in the Internet will help eradicate social inequalities are naive - actually these technologies are multiplying the differences.

1. Who are we looking for to join our team?

First, thank you for the time you have already invested to consider the challenges we have accepted. This year we continue to work with graduate students and offer flexible paid internships in the im2be program. We are building an R&D team of extraordinary, people.

**If you are:**

* **Creative and open-minded;**
* **Bravely innovative and eager to develop new beneficial technology;**
* **Fluent in English;**
* **If have one or more of the following skill sets, and you are ready to work and think flexibly in an unconventional way… CONTACT US!**

**The bright minds we are seeking now will include passionate experts to experiment and test, conducting research to determine benefits from the fields of:**

**• Child Psychology and Development;**

**• Education and Motivation;**

**• Market and Competitive Research;**

**Soon we will be seeking more expertise to begin application development and develop pre-production prototypes in the fields of:**

**• Hardware Development;**

**Software Development;**

**• Applications Development.**