

Croatia

Country Overview

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Country name

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Introduction

In the Croatian educational system, the most represented intervention related to social and emotional learning is PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies). This programme is the most widespread and can be represented as the only program at the national level. The key concepts in realising preschool PATHS-RASTEM represent lessons of self-efficacy, emotional understanding, self-control, thinking skills and social skills and peer relationships (Krušelj, 2014). Next to PATHS-RASTEM, a national programme, several public/private institutions and NGOs applied various types of development and implementation specific SES programmes during various projects.

Development

In 2005, Croatia initiated an educational reform with the goal of introducing new and innovative teaching methods in school, and social and emotional learning (SEL) in the educational curriculum. After that several programs for SEL were adopted and implemented, as well as promoted through research projects, scientific journals and media.

Assessment

The Republic of Croatia has no systematic implementation of programmes aimed at development of social and emotional skills (SES). The implementation of specific batteries for assessment of SES are provided and used at national level. Professionals apply different types of scales depending on their research, as well as practitioners in their work with children. There are more additional efforts for the adoption and validation of other specific assessments for SES, such as validation of Croatian version of Scale of socioemotional well-being and resilience of preschool children, (Tatlović Vorkapić i Lončarić, 2014).

Intervention

The PATHS program was implemented as a part of the project "Implementation of evidence-based prevention programme of socioemotional learning through science evaluation and its application into Croatian kindergartens and primary schools (PATHS-RASTEM)." Based on a collaboration between the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences (University of Zagreb), and The Prevention Research Centre of Pennsylvania State University (USA) from 2008 to 2012. After the collaboration, the PATHS program was promoted and implemented around Europe through the project "European Assessment Protocol for Children's SEL Skills (EAP_SEL)". The PATHS program is being implemented within an experimental research design within 15 experimental and 15 control elementary schools (in select first and second grade classrooms/groups) in the cities Rijeka and Zagreb, and several cities in the Region of Istria. Also, the preschool PATHS-RASTEM programme is being implemented within a quasi-experimental research design in 6 kindergartens in Rijeka, Zagreb and Labin and Vrsar in Istria (total of 12 groups of preschool children). For the purposes of implementing the PATHS-RASTEM programme, a research licence was obtained, and programme materials translated and prepared for all participants of the programme (University of Zagreb, 2010).

One of the ongoing projects related to SEL is the HAND in HAND project, which focuses on the development and implementation of SEL programmes. The HAND in HAND project will develop an open access systemic policy tool – an EU based universal social and emotional learning programme (a programme for students and school staff) based on multiculturalism and diversity awareness. This programme fosters inclusion and develops more tolerant and non-discriminative learning environments for all students (including immigrant and refugee) to prevent discriminative bullying, segregation and ESL (www.handinhand.si).

Project PROHEMS (Promoting Mental Health in Schools) is co-financed under the Erasmus+ project, which has partnered with Croatia, is expected to develop a curriculum that will enhance the social and emotional well-being of students. The developed curriculum will aim at improving students' attitudes towards themselves, others, and education, as well as reduce conduct problems and aggression, emotional distress, and anxiety. PROHEMS will provide high-quality training for school staff as one of the most impacting and affecting factors in mental health promotion in schools (www.promehs.org). Some other project related to development and implementation of SEL program is the "Comprehensive approach to treatment and social and economic reintegration of drug addicts - CLOUD," co-financed under the IPA Operational Program Slovenia-Croatia 2007-2013 of the European Union between Slovenia and Croatia.

These programmes have been exclusively implemented by the organisations involved in the project, and a small number of organisations at the local level. However, it cannot be stated if it is a matter of implementing a certain programme in a systematic way. Also, there are a number of scientific research and professional papers published for the implementation of the programmes and the projects.

References

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