

Czechia

Country Overview

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Country name

Czechia

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Introduction

The concept of social emotional learning (SEL) is not common in Czechia. However, the key educational documents state similar goals as social emotional learning does. The effort made by Czech Government in the prevention of risk behaviours is acknowledged, mainly in primary and middle schools through a systematic work on social-emotional competencies. There are programmes that are aimed at developing these competencies, labelled as non-specific primary prevention programmes, to develop the important skills necessary for life. The target group for the Second Step Programme is the primary school group, having used the programme in Czechia since 2015, and the social emotional learning program in kindergarten since 2018.

Social emotional learning is still in its beginning stages in Czechia. Although there are texts dictating the importance of developing these skills, there is no systemic approach to date, only cues in the key educational documents stating that these skills should be promoted.

Therefore, following their experience both in the research and in the practice, the researchers stated recommendations for the social emotional learning in the country.

They recommend:

- 1) Creating a social emotional learning program that would fit into the Czech educational system;
- 2) Preparing validated methods for evaluating the progress in social emotional competencies;
- 3) Train the teachers according to specialised training;
- 4) Work in cooperation with other educational organisations who have experience in similar preventive programs, and;
- 5) Implementing social emotional learning.

Development

The Second Step Program, which was created by the Committee for Children Seattle in 1987, is currently used in Czechia. The main aim of this programme is to help the development of the social-emotional competencies of kindergarten and secondary school's children. It is composed of three parts: Empathy, Impulsivity Management and Problem Solving, and Anger Management. Moreover, the Second Step Program has been used all over the world, being implemented in Czechia in 2015. Among the studies that contributed to the utilisation of this program, studies carried out by Palová & Smékalová (2019), two researchers from Palacký University (Faculty of Arts, Department of Psychology), aimed to analyse the success of the program in Czech schools. The participants of the pilot research study were sixty-six children from primary schools in Olomouc and surrounding areas.

The program's implementation in Czechia is the result of the cooperation with the citizen's organisation PROFKREATIS Plus, which is currently the owner of the program's licence for both Czechia and Slovakia.

Since 2015, several versions of the social emotional learning program for the main target group, primary school, have been in use, starting the kindergarten version in 2018.

Assessment

The methodology used by researchers varies:

Students filled in a set of surveys:

an Intelligence and a Development Scale for Children aged 5-10 (social competence);

B 4 (class climate), and;

Piers Harris Self Concept Scale (self-concept).

Teachers filled in a survey about the situation in their classes, for example, sharing possible behavioural problems.

These surveys were completed in September 2017 (pretest), in June 2018 and June 2019 (post-test). Teachers involved in the program were interviewed at the end of the school year 2017/2018 (Palová, 2019).

Parents had the possibility to evaluate the program as well with an online survey.

Intervention

Since 2015, in the framework of several small-size research projects on students, the effectiveness of the Second Step Program has been investigated. Each research project had a different number of participants, but, in general, the number of respondents was about forty students in the experimental group (students who worked with the Second Step Program for 5 months) and forty students in the control group, who did not receive any social emotional intervention.

Primary schools (second and third grade students). The effect was confirmed in the following areas:

Social emotional competence;

Self-concept;

Creativity, and;

Positive class climate.

Kindergartens: the kindergarten pilot research has started in 2017 and is still in the process The research has confirmed effect on:

Social emotional competence, and;

Cognitive abilities.

The results and methodology recommendations of the pilot research were used to prepare a longitudinal research project on the effectiveness of the Second Step Program in Czechia. The research project started in 2016. The last set of data was collected in June 2019. However, the project is still not closed.

The main goal of the research was to verify the effect of the Second Step Program in the following areas: social and emotional competence, class climate, self-concept, risk behaviour, and the attitudes of the teachers working with the program (Palová, 2019, Smékalová, 2016).

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