

Hungary

Country Overview

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Country name

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Introduction

In Hungary, the National Core Curriculum (NCC) is an educational framework that regulates the content of the Hungarian public education policies. The latest version has taken into account most of the recommendations made by the European Union. The priority and main focus of the NCC is the development of key competences such as: communicating in the mother language, and improving literacy skills and social emotional competencies (including, for instance, communicative, decision making, co-operative skills) as well. The NCC defines cross curricular themes like: mental health and communication culture, too.

Considering this, the main goal of the curriculum is to develop educational practices that foster the above mentioned competences. At the local level, it is regulated by the local educational programmes of schools including local institutions curricula (Pedagógiai programme).

In Hungary, there are currently no complex and large scale programmes for Social Emotional Learning (SEL, but there are some very interesting programmes (e.g., Magical Games, Happiness Lessons), tests and interventions (e.g., DIFER) which promote childrens' social and emotional skills. The existing SEL programmes in early childhood education can be found in the local kindergarten curriculums especially linked with the different inclusion programmes for the children with special needs. The existing evidence based programmes are mostly linked to school changes and school years.

Pre-primary education has recently received renewed attention from educational policy-makers, which is mainly the result of the key role it plays in the social integration of disadvantaged groups.

Development

In Hungary there are different evidence-based experiences on SEL development and measurement (see below the good practices).

The Hungarian kindergartens (3-6 years), similarly to most other European countries, are organised by children's experience fields rather than by subjects, and aims to develop various skills and competences, including socio-emotional ones, as required by the National Core Curriculum given from the Hungarian Ministry of Health, Social and Family Affairs and the Ministry of Education. The responsibilities related to early childhood education and care are shared by considering that they contribute to the construction of children's identity, autonomy, and competence and initiate them to citizenship.

Assessment

In Hungary, the need for the evaluation and assessment of social and emotional competencies is mentioned in the National Core Curriculum.

The evaluation system is more structured and tested for schools, while evaluation in pre-school institutions is mainly focused on identifying the children who lack social and emotional skills. If the child needs socio-emotional development, based on the observation of the pedagogical staff or parents, they can get individual developing programmes. This individual assessment and developing programme is held by a psychologist. The child will be assessed by one of the

committee of experts, and if it is needed, these will become the developing lessons in the Educational Consultant Institute.

The pedagogical research in this field consists of mostly basic research, with a few correlation studies as well (e.g. Braunitzer, Kasik & Benedek, 2009; Kasik & Tóth, 2009). However, currently, there is very little reliable empirical data about the existing developmental programmes available. Most of the measuring instruments operate basically with child-like self-characterization, and the judgement of the teacher or parent. However, developmental programmes - like most in the case of the international programmes - are built on the evaluations and interpretations of adults (mainly teachers) (e.g. Konta & Zsolnai, 2002).

Intervention

In Hungary, early childhood education existing SEL programmes are as follows:

DIFER (Diagnostic Development Test System) of Hungarian development is increasingly used. This system of tools can be effectively used in kindergarten, in the period of transitioning from kindergarten to school, and for lower graders in the diagnostics of criteria-oriented development of children's cognitive and social competencies assessment and their development.

The DIFER developmental programme of the social competencies includes concrete pedagogical plans and situations for the pedagogical staff. The pedagogical games for developing the social and emotional skills in the kindergarten years includes various games and descriptions for: games developing social relationships, self-knowledge, knowledge of peers, games of trust, collaborative games, joint experience, relaxing and concentration games, interaction games, understanding and following rules, communication development games etc.

Varázsjátékok (Magical Games)

Orsolya Göbel's "Magical Games" programme is a practical implementation of Socio-Emotional Pedagogical Therapy (Göbel, 2012 a). The programme is based on the work of German psychiatrist Klaus W. Vopel, who developed children's emotional intelligence with imaginative games. The essence of the Hungarian adapted programme is that it helps during the sessions to address: self-knowledge, verbal and nonverbal communication, emotional abilities, skills, social information processing, social relations, social perception, empathy, the development of cooperation, the change of perspective with activities that provide opportunities, to the children to share and process their previous experiences.

Magical Games are age-appropriately developed and can be properly used in early childhood education. The programme includes: movement games, fantasy games, breathing games, touch games, soul games etc. The programme gives accurate methodological suggestions to the educators not only for each task, and how to initiate and conduct each task, but also makes recommendations for appropriate group organisation methods, knowledge, stages of experience sharing, as well as well-executed pedagogical questioning and the method of active listening.

The impact assessment and the follow up studies of the Magical Games programme showed that children can become very well developed in several areas with the programme. Children's communication skills have significantly improved, which resulted in a positive change in the relationships with their peers (Göbel, O.2012 a). As a result of development, with the active involvement of parents, family relationships became closer. Significant changes were noted in the children in the experimental group emotional and social development, shaping their social relationships more effectively so they are able to communicate their emotions and are more open to their environment.

The joint experiences (e.g: joint drawing) reduced aggressive manifestations, which can be a good foundation for starting the school years too.

Boldogságóra (Happiness Lessons)

The Happiness Lessons programme (Bagdy B. et al., 2017) aims to provide methodological support to develop the ability to nurture happiness- to develop and practice positive emotions and social attitudes - in children attending nurseries and schools. This evidence based programme is based on the results of positive psychology and has proven that this programme effectively fosters the

emotional development and inner well-being of children.

The programme developed for preschool children aims to provide positive experiences and emotions from a very young age, and develops self-confidence in children, self-knowledge, divergent thinking, an ability to concentrate, problem-solving ability, emotional intelligence, altruism, social skills, and reduces negative emotions and aggression.

The programme helps by processing ten topics:

- 1) the exercise of gratitude;
- 2) the exercising optimism;
- 3) cultivating social relationships;
- 4) practising good deeds;
- 5) commitment to a goal;
- 6) coping strategies,;
- 7) enjoyment of small pleasures;
- 8) the practice of forgiveness;
- 9) exercise;
- 10) sustainable happiness.

The development programme includes session plans that kindergarten teachers can easily apply in the pedagogical activities, as well as in many other topics. Each session follows the general process of knowledge processing, at the same time starting with relaxation exercises and personality development children's songs developed by the authors. The effectiveness of the programme was studied and confirmed by Prof. Attila Oláh of ELTE (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest) Positive Psychology Team. His research found that the children who participated in the experimental group had significantly better emotional intelligence than their peers and also their empathic skills, social sensitivity and divergent thinking significantly improved as a result of the programme also significantly improved as a result of the programme.

Among the development methods developed for kindergarten age-group, there are children's songs that develop a positive self-image and self-confidence, board games, personality development cards, colouring, expressing positive and negative emotions, images of characters that all serve to make children's personal and social development and their competencies in as many forms as possible. In addition to individual and peer group sessions, the programme actively involves family members in the development process.

References

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Citation

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