

North Macedonia

Country Overview

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Country name

North Macedonia

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Introduction

The overview of literature indicates that North Macedonia is currently reforming preschools, focusing on providing conditions for developing and implementing social and emotional learning (SEL) in preschool institutions. The assessment of preschool children is based on the observation of behavioural and developmental skills in relation to standards that include social and emotional skills achievements. There are no systematic or standardised tests for social and emotional skills (SES) at the national level, as well as nor any adopted programmes for SEL in preschool institutions. Currently, there are efforts made by UNICEF, as well as other organisations, to develop a nationally based platform with different types of resources for teachers and parents. It is necessary for this platform to include SEL resources for preschool education. Also, non-government organisations, kindergarten, ministries and UNICEF all promote SEL and have implemented a programme “Peer Support Teachers” across the kindergartens at the national level.

Development

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) in North Macedonia provides care and education to children from birth until 6 years of age, however, it is not compulsory. Typically, children start attending preschool when they are 8 to 9 months of age. There are two types of centre-based ECEC settings: preschools (detska gradinka) which include nursery groups (jasli) for children under 3 years of age, and centres for early childhood development (centar za ran detski razvoj). Centre-based provision can be public or private. The enrolment rate of children from 3 to 6 years of age in 2019 was 40%, which is far lower than the European Union’s recommended level of 95%. Participation in preschool is also low across minority groups, showing only 2.6% of children 4 years of age from Roma communities attend preschool education. The Early Learning and Development Standards specify what children from birth to 6 years of age should know, and be able to accomplish, across six developmental domains: physical health and motor development, social and emotional development, development of approaches to learning, language development, literacy and communication, and cognitive development and general knowledge acquisition. Home-based early childhood education and care is the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, but is largely organised by local authorities. The provider needs to have specific qualifications, such as at least a high school diploma and a valid caregiver licence, and to follow the national regulations, which states that the maximum number of children per childminder is up to five children (EURYDICE, 2020).

Assessment

Child progress has been monitored through a teacher-compiled children portfolio. The portfolio includes information regarding the children's achievement of required outcomes, which are defined in the Early Learning and Development Standards. The portfolio for children from 2 to 6 years of age covers the physical, cognitive, language and social development domains. It helps identify children with developmental delays so teachers are able to adjust their teaching strategies accordingly (EURYDICE, 2020).

Intervention

Over the past three years, UNICEF and the UK Government invested US \$1,978,413 in North Macedonia to start a long-term reform in early childhood education, which included a new framework for teachers, a SEL programme for preschool children, and launching the learning Eduino platform (UNICEF, 2021). The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, UNICEF and the United Kingdom Government supported the programme "Peer Support Teachers" to introduce the SEL in preschool institutions. This programme includes play, exercises and storytelling to express feelings, empathy, care about the environment, and feel happier. Initially piloted in selected kindergartens, this programme is now in the process of being implemented across the country (UNICEF, 2019).

EDUINO is an educational platform designed for teachers and parents that provides resources in the form of videos, educational materials and games for children from 3 to 6 years of age. The resources from the platform can be used in both preschool institutions and in the home with parents. The video resources can be found in the educational platform, which provides over 150 videos in Macedonian and Albanian, each video including a thorough presentation and narration/explanation by a knowledgeable teacher (EURYDYCE, 2020). The implementation of this project for this specific SEL programme in preschool institutions will be the first systematic and nationally based programme for SEL in North Macedonia.

References

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Citation

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