

Slovakia

Country Overview

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Country name

Slovakia

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Introduction

According to the study “Teachers’ perceptions of children’s Kindergarten readiness in Slovakia” (Stillerova et al., 2019), the main knowledge given to children by the Kindergarten teachers in Slovakia are the following: how to draw, communicate, sing, recite, geometric shapes with some emphasis on pre-writing, pre-reading and elementary mathematical concepts. In Slovakia, kindergartens are included in the pre-primary education, and their aim is to improve children’s intellectual, moral, social-emotional and physical skills. The compulsory Slovakian school begins with primary school (usually starting From 6 years of age), whereas kindergarten is not mandatory and is provided by the government from 3 to 6 years of age. Slovakian Kindergarten classes are divided from elementary school classes. Finally, a child who finishes kindergarten should not only have developed the above-mentioned skills, but they should have developed appropriate behaviours.

“A standard curriculum could also be developed with social–emotional and early academic content for Kindergartens based on the international standards. Teachers would have to follow standard curriculum, which would result in fewer discrepancies among individual Kindergartens and thus lead to a reduction in learning inequality” (European Commission, 2021).

Development

The Slovakian kindergarten’s teachers do not have to be pedagogically qualified to teach academic skills. For this reason – and for the fact that this type of education is not compulsory – there does not exist an official and standard curriculum devised for the kindergartens. According to Upadyaya, Aunola, & Nurmi (2009), the philosophy of the kindergarten is based on several activities, such as:

Play with number and letters;

Learn social and linguistic skills;

Learn concepts related to reading and mathematics.

The growth of the social-emotional skills of the children in Slovakia had an important enhancement thanks to the Second Step (Druhy Krok) Social-Emotional Learning programme, fostered by the non-profit organisation Profkreatis. The Ministry of Education also allowed the use of this programme in elementary schools beginning in January 2014, however, it would be beneficial for the Profkreatis organisation to promote this implementation further.

Assessment

Stillerova, Troxler, Cubry, & Roth, a group of researchers from the Psychology Department of the George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia (USA), conducted a study in 2019 concerning the analysis of the perception of Slovakian kindergarten's teachers views of children readiness, social-emotional and academic skills, and which skills are the most important to evaluate children's readiness according to the teachers. The study focuses on the lacking skills of the children upon beginning kindergarten. The researchers surveyed 182 Slovakian Kindergarten teachers. The main findings regarding the teachers' views are the following:

Most of the children are ready for kindergarten at the start of the year;

At the same time many children showed some difficulties with social-emotional and academic skills;

In terms of readiness, the teachers attributed a higher value on socio-emotional skills over academic skills.

The latter finding is common in different countries, this explains how despite the different socio-cultural contexts, the Kindergarten's teachers may have similar experiences.

Intervention

The Profkreatis organisation is very active on this topic, going so far as to conduct a longitudinal study from 2014 to 2015. The aim of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the before-mentioned program. Since 2010, Profkreatis has had great success in expanding it. The Druhy Krok program has been implemented in more than 150 elementary schools. Moreover, the number of the teachers that have been trained and certified to teach the research-based curriculum amounts to 250 teachers (Second Step, 2010).

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