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*"Social and Emotional Skills Development in Early Childhood
Education and Care in Europe" EU-Self 2019-1-BG01-KA201-062593*

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS IN EARLY AND PRESCHOOL AGE CHILDREN. EU-SELF PROJECT

UNLOCK CHILDREN'S POTENTIAL!



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Introduction

This project started with a dream of changing the world we live in, of contributing to children's development, wellbeing and prosperity, of contributing to a better future!

Social and emotional skills are part of the key competences! We are convinced of this, but we also know there is a lot to be done.

The original approved duration of this project was two years, and then extended into three. It was quite a journey! We had to face difficult times! Most of the project's lifetime coincided with the period of the global Covid-19 pandemic. We faced many professional and personal challenges. Collaborators came and went. We had to be innovative and creative, but also rational. We had to use all our cognitive but mainly social and emotional skills. Nevertheless, we did it! We succeeded! We managed to overcome all the challenges and difficulties we had to face and to produce very innovative and qualitative products!

All this is due to all of our EU-Self project consortium members! All of you deserve a great thank you! Thank you for all your work, your engagement, your commitment, your ideas during these three years.

Great thanks to Claudia Piovano (Galileo Progetti)! She was the person who gave me confidence to write this project. She supported me during the application process but also during the entire project. She was always there to give advice, provide support or simply talk with me. Thank you, Claudia for all this, for being there for me, for your time and numerous phone calls.

Many thanks to Galina Markova-Derelieva (New Bulgarian University) for the support.

Thanks to the ISMAI Team! Thank you, Francisco Machado for finding so dedicated and experienced team! Great thanks to Carla Peixoto and Vera Coelho for your brilliant ideas! Always there, always on time, always reliable! And not least Alexandre Sousa, the most experienced and prominent developer! Without you, there was no going to the EU-Self digital platform!

Thanks to the Swedish team, Björn Hofvander and Dariush Djamnezhad (Lund University). Because of their efforts and hard work, we managed with one of the very valuable outputs, our systematic analyses¹. It reached more than 3000 views just in half of year time.

Thanks to the Erasmus Brussels University of Applied Sciences and Arts (EBUASA/EhB) team from Belgium – mainly Mart Achten and Bert Wastijn as EhB project coordinators, but also to their colleagues who were all actively involved.

Thanks to our Bosnia and Herzegovina team, both representing the University of Tuzla and the kindergarten, Montessori IQ Corner, Amila Mujezinovic and Alma Dizdarevic.

Many, many thanks to our teams from the early education and childcare

¹ Djamnezhad D, Koltcheva N, Dizdarevic A, Mujezinovic A, Peixoto C, Coelho V, Achten M, Kolumbán E, Machado F and Hofvander B (2021) Social and Emotional Learning in Preschool Settings: A Systematic Map of Systematic Reviews. *Front. Educ.* 6:691670. doi: 10.3389/educ.2021.691670

facilities. They are our compass navigating our scientific endeavours and research findings through the real practice with the children. Our colleagues from Centro Social de Soutelo, Portugal, Isabel Sofia Costa and Isabel Fonseca, and from Kindergarten 37 “Valshebstvo”, Bulgaria, Gergana Petrova, Veronika Dilova and their colleagues.

This list can go on and on! Thanks to all like-minded people, supporters, assistants, etc. During the project, there were many challenges but the EU-Self consortium was also blessed with fine experts, dedicated people, and friends on board!

We hope that the EU-Self platform will continue its journey after the EU-Self project lifetime. We hope it will grow! We managed to establish an innovative and useful tool and three valuable compendiums with country overviews, programs and assessment measures. All of the compendiums required hard work but we are proud of our intellectual output. All of them are uploaded and can be downloaded for free from the EU-Self platform and EU-Self website² (<https://eu-self.nbu.bg/en>).

We would be happy if EU bodies, ECEC providers, practitioners (teachers, educators, psychologists, etc.), stakeholders, policy makers, researchers, parents could benefit from it.

Let's unlock children's potential!

Nadia Koltcheva, PhD
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² EU-Self website, <https://eu-self.nbu.bg/en>

EU-Self project. General Idea and Overview

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*“We cannot always build the future for
our youth, but we can build our youth for
the future.”*

Franklin D. Roosevelt, Great Speeches

Nowadays there is no doubt that social and emotional skills (SES) are the key elements of human development. Early and preschool years are the foundation of human life. Researchers in early childhood development (Muir & Slater, 2007; Lindon, 2012; Wilburn, 2000; Meadows, 1999; Craig & Bokum, 2005 (Крайг и Бокум, 2005); Newcomb, 2002, Durkin, 1997; Denham, 2015) believe that the social development of a young child is the most important developmental domain. It affects the development of the overall child’s potential.

Over the last decades, a considerable number of studies have convincingly demonstrated that if children are not attaining minimal SES at approximately six years of age, they are likely to be at risk in the next stages of their development (McClellan & Katz, 1993). According to F.Gresham and S.Elliott (2008), SES are critical to successful functioning in life as a whole. Adults may thrive or struggle with significant difficulties depending on the level of their SES when they were young children. Well-developed SES contribute to academic success and improve learning conditions. The deficits in SES lead to poor academic results (Caprara, et al., 2000; Malecki & Elliott, 2002; Wentzel, 1993) and may lead to problems with social adaptation or serious psychopathology (Coie & Dodge, 1983; Parker & Asher, 1987). As we see, plenty of research shows the long-term impact that social and emotional skills have on humans’ life – higher academic success, better adaptation in school, better learning, higher academic achievement, well-being, higher education degree, higher probability for full-time jobs after graduation, etc.

Research shows (OECD, 2018) that policy-makers and practitioners generally recognize the importance of SES. However, there are still many problem areas, detailed guidance does not always exist (teachers have limited understanding and/or tools), translating “intentions” into curricular frameworks, curricular activities and programmes, teachers are not necessary ready to adapt, etc. We need more convincing evidence to inform policy-makers, practitioners, and teachers; better data, better instruments of SES.

We still need to explain how different dimensions of SES relate, how these skills can be developed, to communicate “how to raise skills that matter” to policy-makers, teachers and parents. However, we still do not have a comprehensive understanding of “what works”. Policy makers, teachers, parents and researchers can help expand children’s growth potential by actively engaging in skill development. This is an important way to maximise the return to skills investment over the life cycle. All

parties would benefit from receiving information on what works and guidelines to help foster children's SES development. European countries differ in their approaches to fostering these skills. Moreover, there are big gaps between stakeholders' knowledge, expectations and capabilities on how best to mobilise children's SES.

The EU-Self project aims at raising the awareness of the importance of SES, at making an attempt to provide a picture of the state of SES in the European countries, providing country overviews, information about the interventions and programs, sharing experience between experts, researchers, teachers, and educators. With all the intellectual outputs and activities within the framework of the project, we aim at contributing to the support of social and emotional skills development in early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Europe.

The EU-Self project aims at an innovative approach in linking the knowledge and expertise in the field of SES and the educational practices. The research and practice should meet in order to achieve the goals based on solid research grounds but facing the reality of the practice. That is why, our approach is based on relying on the knowledge alliance between HEIs and ECEC providers and the planned collaboration between universities and ECEC providers, who share and develop their knowledge, good practices, and methodologies. We would like to promote the link between the scientific understanding of SES and the practice of educators, mobilising real-life examples and practical experience in existing curricular activities.

The EU-Self team produced the following results:

- An innovative and Europe-wide digital platform
- A scientific, sophisticated, systematic analysis
- Overviews of the state of SES assessment, development and interventions of early and preschool children for most of the European countries (47) and overseas (4), 51 countries in total
- Programs for SES development in the European countries
- Educational context in the partner countries
- Case studies of the of the practices in the partner countries
- A glossary of main concepts regarding SES
- Short overviews of key topics regarding SES
- Observational criteria

Additionally some of the partners worked on compendium of assessment measures for SES to use in the European countries and a survey related to the measures practitioners use in their assessment practice.

Below you find a more detailed description of the different EU-Self project's outputs. A schematic overview of all EU-Self Project outputs and activities is presented in Diagram 1.

Digital Platform

One of the main outputs from EU-Self project is a digital web-based platform. It is very innovative, it will allow us to have very high impact regarding the improvement of the state of children's SES, and not least, it will remain as a very efficient tool long after the life cycle of the project.

Our platform will have its main focus on CONNECTIVITY, INTERACTION and INFORMATION SHARING. The platform will have different features for that purpose, the main features will be:

- Repository (a database with all the information about good practices in SES development in preschool children will be stored and made available to all people interested in using that information to develop intervention in this field, for professional development and research. This will include a comparative European map of the state of children's SES assessment, development and interventions for future reference). All the information and resources created for the project is available to all the stakeholders (universities, schools and other educational institutions, parents, community institutions) and beneficiaries
- Community (teachers, education professionals and experts, researchers, parents, among other people with relevance to the project's aims and objectives)
- Forum (promote interaction, discussion, cooperative learning, professional development and information sharing between community members)
- Blog (a space to disseminate/share the most recent developments in terms of research and good practices, projects, useful information, communicate results and technical/professional opinion about subjects of relevance for social and emotional skills development of preschool children)

Combining the use of high quality information with experiences of cooperative learning, in this particular case, is supported by scientific literature in the field of School and Educational Psychology, namely by the human constructivist (Novak, 1993) and meaningful learning models (Ausubel, 1963).

It should be underlined that all platform development and main features are done accordingly with EU data security policies, which means, for example, that all participants of the platform will have to be fully registered and validated by the platform's administrators, to participate and interact. A series of security measures and features will be included in the design of the platform to ensure that every participant's rights are respect, and the platform can truly be a secure, comfortable and caring community.

The platform is an innovative tool. It will provide a interactive scientific content that will serve simultaneously as information hub and resource centre, and as tool for communication and exchange of information between ECEC providers, educators, researchers, stakeholders, experts from different countries supporting the achievement of key priorities in the EU. It will contain interactive content, reliable, scientific, and up-to-date information regarding the state of SES assessment, development and interventions of early and preschool children for 47 European countries, and in addition, information regarding some countries overseas (USA, Canada, Australia, and Japan), identified best practises, information on key topics in the field.



Diagram 1. EU-Self Project overview of outputs and activities

It intends to facilitate communication and interaction between educational institutions, education professionals and researchers. It is a framework that makes communication easy, accessible, direct and personal. It will allow and motivate more interaction, more questions being made and answered, more information exchanged and, consequently, a broader reach for the information that will help teachers to work better and children to develop SES. It is an interface between educational institutions, teachers and other education professionals and researchers, which will allow continuous dissemination, exchange and discussion about good practices in SES development in preschools, as well as the most recent developments in SES assessment and intervention (research).

By this platform, we hope we can contribute to the field that develops key competences for early and preschool children, their social inclusion, reduce the children's dropout from school, increase the quality of ECEC providers, etc., which respond to the new challenges of the today's European Union. Our country overviews' map can be indispensable tool for variety of further initiatives and activities – prevention, inclusion, research, educational services, planning of interventions, as well as contribution to the social inclusion of children, reduce the children's dropout from school, which responds to the new challenges of the today's European Union.

It has the potential to provide an intense communication on the topic between different parties and all of them can benefit from it – European bodies, ECEC providers, educators, teachers, professionals, experts, researchers, stakeholders, etc. It is a solid foundation for further research and applied projects, networking tool and connection. It has big transferability potential because it can be a valuable tool to use Europe-wide, but worldwide as well.

Reports from the last years (OECD, 2015; OECD, 2018; Lazzari, 2018, NESET II) recognize the importance of SES and provide evidences for variety of positive outcomes. However, in many EU countries there is no developed and/or adapted SES program; usually development of SES programs are not incorporated into the educational preschool curricula; usually detailed guidance is missing; teachers not always have the competences and/or tools to develop preschool children's SES; if they are trained, there is not much information regarding the quality of the performed activities; many countries lack valid and reliable measures for assessment of SES in preschool children; there is no equal understanding of those concepts; still there is a huge gap between the knowledge of the scientists and its implementation and application; etc. So, there is still a lot to be done regarding the translation of “intentions” into curricular frameworks, curricular activities and programmes. We contribute to this with four outputs.

Systematic Analyses

One systematic analyses that we have done - “Social and Emotional Learning in Preschool Settings: A Systematic Map of Systematic Reviews” (Djamnezhad et al., 2021).

Our design for this article is a systematic review of systematic reviews based on quantitative studies published in peer-reviewed journals. We used the following PICO (Population, Interventions, Control, Outcomes):

1. Population: children aged 0–7 years.
2. Interventions: universal programs with explicit intent to teach SEL skills, conducted in typical ECEC settings, i.e., not in high-risk or special education settings
3. Control: experimental or quasi-experimental design
4. Outcomes: efficacy and effectiveness of intervention as measured by child outcome data

Seven different databases were screened according to preliminary defined key words. The full article is accessible at the Frontiers in Education website³.

Country Overviews

The EU-Self project carried out a literature search for each European country (we targeted 47 countries). In addition, we also reviewed practices of countries with longer history of experience in the field (USA, Canada, Australia, and Japan.). This can be found on the platform and in the Country overviews compendium⁴.

Programs

Except the descriptions, we also searched, reviewed, selected and described numerous universal programs and practices for development of social and emotional skills in children in early and preschool years. After a thorough search, we ended up with 59 descriptions. They are available in the platform and also a compiled in a compendium⁵.

Assessment Measures

This is an output that is initially not planned in the project application. We decided to expand our literature search and compendiums with this one. This decision resulted in huge amount of extra work, but we find it a very valuable tool. Our search resulted in similar publications for the USA but we found none for Europe.

Survey

Regarding the assessment part of our overviews, we decided to also develop a survey and to collect information about what European psychologists know and use to assess SES of children from birth until the age of seven. The survey was disseminated in five languages (English, Portuguese, Bulgarian, Bosnian, and Hungarian). We managed to collect data mostly from Portugal and Bulgaria. The data from these countries will be analyses in a report. We collected few responses from Bosnian,

³ https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2021.691670/full?&utm_source=Email_to_authors_&utm_medium=Email&utm_content=T1_11.5e1_author&utm_campaign=Email_publication&field=&journalName=Frontiers_in_Education&id=691670

⁴ Koltcheva, N., V.Coelho, (2022). Social and Emotional Development for Children aged 0 to 7 years old: European Countries Overviews Compendium. EU-SELF Project.

⁵ Koltcheva, N., B.Wastijn, M.Achten, L.Van Rossem, I.S.Costa (2022). Programs for Social and Emotional Skills Development for Early and Preschool Children Applied in European Countries. Compendium. EU-SELF Project.

Hungarian and Swedish practitioners but they are not taken into consideration due to the low sample.

We view all these output and in combination with the digital platform as a good continuation, strong contribution to the recommendations, and update of the findings of OECD Education and Social Progress Project, OECD reports (OECD, 2015; OECD, 2018) and NESET II report (Lazzari, 2018). They provide a solid foundation for further project applications in which the partners plan to develop an instrument for direct assessment of children's social and emotional skills assessment and development and implementation of a universal program for early and preschool children's skills development. EU-Self partners' consortium looks at this project as a first step to achieving goals that are more ambitious.

We hope for a huge impact in terms of sensibilising of various agents within society regarding the importance of social and emotional skills and the options for their development as well as high preventive impact. It will be an information hub regarding SES state, relevant practices, and resources. Not only for Europe, but worldwide. Such map can be a tool for a variety of activities for early and preschool children – prevention, inclusion, research, educational services, planning of interventions, etc. This output aims also to be applied in different countries: to support professionals, educators, teachers, ECEC providers in children's SES development; to give common structure and maintain professional competencies; to act as dissemination product for the whole professional field; to give incentives for further development of theoretical and practical development; to share knowledge; to be base for further research and applied activities in the field.

By identifying, describing, and presenting various programs in European countries, we contribute to sharing not only among the participating partners but also on a European-wide scale. Additional impact for HEI: improvement of knowledge, knowledge alliance universities-companies, international networks and in a continuous collaboration between partner organizations.

One of the aims is to link knowledge with practice and vice versa. Those practises however are in specific national and educational context. One of the main impacts is to align existing practices to the specificities of the educational context, educational regulations, normative requirements, curricula. Some practices may be good in their own, but hard to implement in other cultural and educational contexts.

The third intellectual output consists of several parts. In it, we present overview of key topics in SES in children, the practises in the six partner countries (case studies), description of the educational context in the partner countries, glossary of key terms in SES. The educational context in each country, the level of implementation of development of social and emotional skills, are key elements that should not be underestimated. This will help us in linking the scientific knowledge with the real practice, observing the way real practices are applied and implemented. This knowledge and experience might be used and applied in other countries with similar contexts and new lessons might be learned by the practice of the others.

All these outputs are presented in the current book, so descriptions that are more detailed and the written materials themselves are further in this text.

The intellectual output hopes to have an enormous long-term impact, which. Not only for the participating partners, university researchers and ECEC providers, but also for many indirect groups as university students, future practitioners in ECEC, parents, educators, service providers, practitioners working with children and families, policy makers, decision makers, stakeholders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), public bodies, etc. The European Commission can benefit from the project results through the innovative platform and all the publications. The EU-Self project's scope extends wide beyond EU and Europe. This impact can be also on many levels: municipal, regional, national and international. We also expect impact and added value, such as the creation of a proactive and effective network(s) maintained after the end of project. As it was written above, the digital platform has the potential of a powerful network tool for people with different profile, needs and interests.

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EU-Self Project's Partners

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NBU is the initiator of the project. The university has very good expertise in coordination and building partnerships in a variety of projects with both research and applied practices.

All the partners in this project were selected very carefully. The main criteria for the selection of the partners are linked the relevant expertise needed for the project, taking into account the identified needs of improving the quality of life of young children, the quality of early and preschool facilities, reducing social inclusion and poverty, reducing early school leaving (ESL), and creating a well-balanced consortium with complementary skills.

When choosing our partners we focused on countries with different cultural backgrounds, which would benefit more from the EU-Self project, considering the needs and reality of each. Considering that among EU state-members with the lowest level of progress in reducing ESL are Bulgaria, Hungary, Portugal (Key Figures on Europe, 2017, EUROSTAT; Monitoring social inclusion in Europe, 2017, EUROSTAT), we believe that carrying out this project in these countries can contribute to identify common problems and solutions concerning the issue of reducing early school leaving (ESL), namely through supporting social skills development of young children. Sweden is a country at the other side of the continuum. Therefore, it has the capacity to share its good practice with the other partners.

Another important aspect of choosing the project partners was the need to have a well-balanced and complementary consortium in terms of skills and specialities, so we could develop high quality outputs, which means well founded theoretically, ecologically valid, technologically advanced and empirically validated. With this in mind, we chose university partners that could contribute to build a solid theoretical and methodological framework, develop web-based platform, and guarantee a rigorous and efficient impact assessment. At the same time, we also wanted to make sure that all the work done by the university partners had ecological validity. Therefore, we invited as partners also kindergartens. They are with different profile, so they can share different practices and experiences.

Experts from kindergarten took part in providing information regarding curriculum implementation, national regulation and guidelines. We wanted to ensure a solid science-based approach but also to make a link with the real practice. Choosing a well-balanced consortium was a present concern, as we tried to integrate partners that could offer teams with diverse and specialized training, professional background and area of work/research to increase productivity and efficacy. Thus, we focused on choosing partners that could offer a team with skills, expertise, and experience. For example, our Portuguese partner ISMAI has expertise and experience in the technological field. Galileo is a partner that has experience in international design and in the management of European projects and partnerships. It is a non-profit organization that works a lot on European networking and establishing connections

between expert, institutions, beneficiaries. Galileo's team aims at supporting the promotion of social inclusion for disadvantaged groups through the exchange of good practices, collaboration at local and European level. It was initiator and partner in other projects related to ECEC issues (I.ECEC, MECEC+, FINE!, READ, STEAM, etc.). Kindergarten 37, Galileo and CSS are partners in other Erasmus+ projects (FINE!, READ). Galileo, EhB, UNTZ have long-term partnership. EhB has extensive experience in European and international projects. Belgium, in particular the Flemish Community, is very advanced compared to the issues of ECEC and inclusion and overall reducing of ELS. Therefore, we rely on the involvement of Belgian partner to share its experience. EhB is also strongly competent on European policies. NBU and ISMAI have cooperation on research activities. We involved Lund University due to specific experience of the partner.

They have long-term experience in the field. Currently they are piloting SEL program for students. Scandinavian countries have very specific and advanced expertise. We involved also the Montessori Kindergarten. It is the only partner without European experience in previous projects. However, they can contribute with a specific educational context and alternative educational approach for early and preschool children. Short presentation of each partner is written below.

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New Bulgarian University

New Bulgarian University (NBU) is a modern university of great national significance actively participating in international university networks. It is the first and the biggest private university in Bulgaria.



Founded in 1991 in response to the need for a new liberal education model, the university has initiated substantial reforms in Bulgarian higher education by introducing Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes, admission based on General Education Test, interdisciplinary and individual Bachelor's programmes, minor programmes, the credit system, distance and web-based learning, innovative university environment and lifelong learning opportunities.

The academic profile of New Bulgarian University highlights social sciences and humanities, natural sciences, new technologies and arts. The university offers alternative programmes and practice-oriented education encouraging students' free choice and attracting outstanding individuals as its faculty. Annually, 12 000 students and single-course students study at NBU.

The university offers its students an environment of civil commitment and public awareness. Thus, it produces students with high academic competence and practical skills, enterprising and socially responsible. With its international programmes, NBU creates favourable conditions for student mobility. As part of the international university network, New Bulgarian University is always open for dialogue between academic traditions and modernity. Such dialogue is aimed at students and society, creating new contributions and practices.

NBU coordinates and is a reliable partner in many research and applied projects. The motto of New Bulgarian University is *Ne varietatem timeamus* - "Let's not be afraid of diversity".

Galileo Progetti Nonprofit Kft.

Galileo Progetti Nonprofit Kft. is a non-profit organization, funded by Hungarian and Italian partners in 2009 and based in Budapest. The main objectives of Galileo are the development of social economy and social sector in general and the inclusion policies, also thanks to the exchange of good practices and experiences among the European Union countries, and in particular by developing the Italian-Hungarian relations and encouraging European mobility and exchanges of experiences. Galileo also aims to develop the feeling of civil participation and European citizenship and works with particular attention for the inclusion of disadvantaged people or at risk of social exclusion, such as Roma minorities and disabled people. Galileo works in collaboration with private and public local bodies, involving in European experiences organizations that are



normally not very active at international level, guided by the belief that international experiences increase personal and professional skills and have a strongly positive impact on the development of the quality of the social sector at local level. It has the role of motivator, promoter, facilitator, manager and coordinator. Furthermore, over the years Galileo has developed a wide and solid network at European level, especially with social enterprises, educational institution and VET providers. Galileo is the Hungarian member of ENSIE, the European Network of Social Integration Enterprises for the employment of disadvantaged people, recognized and supported by the European Commission, and cooperated, thanks to the Erasmus+ KA2 MECEC+ project with the European Network EUROCHILD, and thanks to the KA2 project PRESS with the European Network ERIO, European Roma Information Office, also key networks of the European Commission. In Hungary too Galileo has developed a wide and solid network, and collaborates with the ELTE University, JEB and Magyar Bölcsődék Egyesülete, contributing to their European strategic plan by expanding the possibilities of international contacts for teachers and professionals, especially facilitating the connections between the academic world and the world of work at local and European level.

University of Tuzla

The University of Tuzla was established in 1976 and today it includes more than 50 study profiles in various disciplinary fields. The University organises and implements teaching-scientific process at undergraduate and postgraduate levels of study, spread across 13 faculties, and involving around 13.400 students, 741 academic and administrative staff members.

The teaching is organized in three cycles, in line with the Bologna Process, and the University offers study programs in bachelor, masters and doctoral studies. Research, academic excellence, creative and critical approach are the central values of the University of Tuzla.

The vision of the University of Tuzla is to conduct relevant activities within the integrated European higher education and research area; furthermore, it aims to use the research and international achievements as a basis which would provide the students of all three cycles of studies with top-quality education, encourage fundamental research in the fields of natural science, technical science, biomedical and health sciences, biotechnical sciences, social sciences and humanities thus becoming a major generator of development in the Tuzla Canton in all areas of life, economy, education, health, culture and sports.

The mission of the University of Tuzla is to continuously transfer and develop internationally recognized high-quality of research in the fields of science, art, and higher education in three levels of the Bologna cycle and lifelong learning, by generating, transferring and applying knowledge gained in various science fields and thus position the University (and maintain the position of) the leading higher education institution in the area of the North East Bosnia and Herzegovina and abroad.



Private preschool Montessori IQ Corner

Private preschool institution Montessori IQ Corner, based on the famous pedagogy of Maria Montessori, is the first Montessori preschool institution in the Tuzla Canton. All curriculums were authorised by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Tuzla Canton. Montessori IQ Corner promotes development of a child as a whole, reflecting the understanding that children learn through active sensory experiences and demonstrate their knowledge in different ways. Following the key Montessori approach, “help the child, so they can help themselves”, our space is child-tuned and totally organised to satisfy their learning needs. There are 80 children in 5 groups with children between 0 and 6 years old.



The mission of the Private Pre-school Institution Montessori IQ Corner is to become an institution to raise children to be able to face the reality of our life today, using the Montessori Method where “love is not a dependence, and discipline is not subordination”.

The vision of a kindergarten is to become the centre of excellence for the Montessori method in Tuzla and Tuzla Canton, as an example of life in the wider community.

Lund University

The Faculty of Medicine, in close cooperation with agents within public healthcare and medicine, contributes to increasing knowledge of high relevance to human health. This is done through education and research of the highest quality in cooperation with wider society. The faculty has about 2000 employees and 2800 students and offers 8 undergraduate programmes, 3 Master’s programmes and 10 specialised programmes for nurses and midwives. In addition, the faculty offers postgraduate education. We have about 1000 postgraduate research students and every year about 150 doctoral dissertations are presented.



FACULTY OF
MEDICINE

ISMAI – University Institute of Maia

The University Institute of Maia (ISMAI) is a private non-profit Higher Education Institution founded located in Maia - in the metropolitan area of Porto. The university campus occupies an area of 70,000m² and provides students with excellent infrastructures and leading-edge technological equipment. ISMAI is the 2nd largest private HEI in Portugal. ISMAI has about 4000 students and 400 lecturers. It offers 14 undergraduate



degree programs, 14 master's degree programs, 2 post-graduate programs and 2 PhD programs, divided into 4 departments: Social and Behavioural Sciences, Business Sciences, Physical Education and Sports Sciences, Communication Sciences and Information Technologies. ISMAI is also home to six RD&I units.

Centro Social de Soutelo

Centro Social de Soutelo is a Portuguese non-profit organization, founded in 1976. Our organization develops its activity in the Oporto district (Gondomar, Porto and Matosinhos). Our mission is “Meeting the legitimate needs and expectations of the community, promoting equality, participation, cooperation and solidarity”. We intervene in the areas of early childhood and youth education, support for the elderly and social and community intervention, with the support of 104 workers.



Kindergarten 37 “Valshebstvo”

Kindergarten 37 “Valshebstvo” is a municipal kindergarten founded in 1977 for the upbringing of children from a nursery age up until enrolment in primary school. It is located on the territory of Vitosha District, Sofia Municipality. It works five days a week from 7 am until 7 pm. There are 62 employees including a Director, a Deputy Director, 18 teachers, a pedagogue, a music teacher, a psychologist, a speech therapist, a resource teacher, 29 non-teaching staff, and 8 nurses. Altogether 319 children are educated and trained at Kindergarten 37. There are 11 groups, 9 of which are with children between 3 and 6 years of age. In these groups, children are taken care of by 2 pedagogues split into two shifts, and non-pedagogical staff represented by an assistant tutor. Our goals are to lay the foundations for the personal development of Europe's future citizens, helping them preserve their national, cultural and family identities. A core value in our pedagogical work, is to preserve the uniqueness of childhood. In order to prepare children for school, we take into consideration the individual dynamics of the child's development, while we search for unity and harmony in their physical, spiritual, moral, social and intellectual development. The compulsory pre-school preparation, which takes place two years before school enrolment, has a strong educational effect that has long-lasting benefits regarding socialization and general achievements of each child throughout the period of study. An intensive process of integrated training for children with special educational needs has also been implemented.



Erasmus Brussels University of Applied Sciences and Arts

Erasmus Brussels University of Applied Sciences & Arts (EhB) is a Flemish higher education institution located in Brussels. It offers 21 BA and 4 MA-programmes in 9 different fields of study which are attended by more than 5.000 students, clustered in 4 departments and 2 Schools of Arts located on 6 campuses throughout the city. The departments offer Bachelor programs with a strong professional focus while the Schools of Arts organize Bachelors and Masters in Music, Audio Visual and Performing Arts.



Erasmus Brussels University of Applied Sciences & Arts stands for student-oriented curricula through an intense collaboration between students and lecturers. The language of instruction is Dutch, however English modules are available for (incoming) students. During their studies, students at EhB are involved in ongoing research as much as possible, fostering an attitude of innovation and inquisitiveness.

The Department of Teacher Training and Early Childhood Education & Care

Through narrative, creative, and pedagogical coaching, we create cultural awareness, which enables people to grow personally and professionally.

Our expertise lays in creating a strong pedagogical climate in which children and their caretakers can thrive. We see diversity as a strength, the uniqueness of every person, the openness for every story helps us to unfold an attitude in pedagogical professionals that sees every person (child, student, or adult) as an active agent and skilled participant.

We believe we can enhance pedagogical practice on different levels (micro-, meso-, macro) by establishing a culture of critical reflection, cooperation, appreciation, and openness. Our experience in the creation of strong pedagogical networks with multidisciplinary participants allows us to see practice through different perspectives.

This holistic multitude becomes a synergy in which the sum is much more than its parts. We trust that our capacity for (ex)change of perspective can denaturalize prejudices and presumptions, and in doing so can value each participant as a knowledgeable and skilful expert.

Overview of the EU-Self Project Third Output

As it was written above, and as it can be seen on the Diagram 1, this output consists of these parts:

- Educational context in the partner countries
- Case studies of the of the practices in the partner countries
- A glossary of main concepts regarding SES
- Observational criteria

The key topic overviews are presented in separate short document and are not included in this book.

Learning from Experience

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*“We do not learn from experience...
We learn from reflecting on experience.”*
John Dewey

EU-Self Project consortium has nine partners from six European countries. One of the main aims is the exchange of good practises, sharing of experience and learning from that experience.

We would like to do that in an innovative way by linking scientific knowledge with the practice. Our consortium is a Knowledge Alliance between Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) providers. We have university partners that contribute to building a solid theoretical and methodological framework but at the same time, we also want to be sure that all the work, done by them, has ecological validity. Here, we rely on are our educational institutions' partners. They are with a different profile, so they can share different practices and experiences. We would like to ensure a solid science-based approach but also to link with the real practice. As it was already mentioned, many reports (OECD, 2015; McDougall, et. al., 2018) also recognize this gap between the knowledge and the practice in many EU countries.

Every practice takes place in a specific national and educational context. Some practices may be good, but implementing in another cultural and/or educational context might not work. That is why we want not only to share practices and to observe them but also to have a deeper understanding, starting from the broader context in which they exist. That is why we will review our practices concerning social and emotional skills (SES) of children in early and preschool years but aligned to the specificities of the educational regulations, normative requirements, educational context, curriculums.

We planned to work out three different documents in order to achieve this aim:

1. A description of the educational context (Educational Context)
2. A description of the kindergartens' practice (Case Study)
3. Observations of kindergartens' practice (Observational Criteria)

All these documents are inextricably linked. The diagram below shows this (Diagram 2.). We start from the broader national or regional context (Educational Context document). We have a description of a real practice within that context (Case Study). During project short-term joint staff training events, we will have the opportunity to observe the practice on the spot, to discuss it with the teachers, educators, other professionals, to reflect on it.

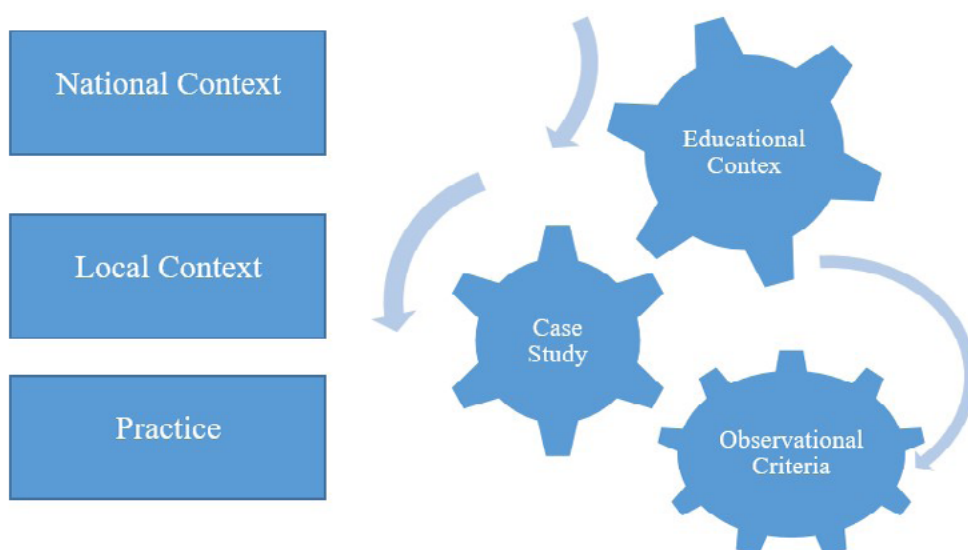


Diagram 2. Interconnection between Educational Context, Case Study and the Observation Criteria

We aim to learn from experience. Therefore, it is important to create an environment of trust in which practitioners, the academic community and the administration can discuss freely what is seen, ask questions, make recommendations. Below is the general description of the content of the three documents. We consider this part of our project, not only as a valuable tool for learning from experience but also with a high transferability potential. All the developed materials will be available on our digital platform. Representatives from other organizations within the partner countries or from abroad will have the opportunity to learn about the specific educational context and real practices, described in our case studies.

There is a need to rethink policies to address more what young children need, and to prepare them to face the challenges of the modern world. Investing in education and skills is one of the key policies for addressing today's numerous socio-economic challenges, and for ensuring prosperous, healthy, engaged, responsible and happy citizens.



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The educational context in partner countries

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Guidelines for the descriptions of the educational context were developed. This document includes important and useful information for the descriptions and includes information of each partner country about its educational system, laws and regulation, curriculums and important obligations related to SES learning as well as quality assessment and professional development and training of preschool staff. The suggested structure used to be the following:

- Introduction
- Short country overview
- The national educational system for children 0-6/7 years of age
 - General description of the educational system
 - Diagram of the structure
 - Education and/or care
 - Education laws and regulations
 - Preschool curriculum
 - Preschool curriculum related to children's social and emotional skills
 - Quality assessment
 - Staff Training
 - Other comments

Introduction with short information about document and definition of main terms related to document.

Short country overview includes basic information of partner country (one paragraph).

Description of national educational system need to provide information about national organisation of education, laws, and regulation as well as information about preschool national curriculum related to SES learning and professional development of teachers and nurseries.

This overview includes following parts:

- *General description of the educational system*

This description includes basic information about the organisation and implementation of education at a national level and all levels of education. That refers to a description of the public and private sector of education at all levels, as well as the number of institutions and children/students enrolled (if applicable).

- *Diagram of the structure*

Related to the previous description, authors may provide a diagram, which illustrates the educational system at national level.

- *Education and/or care*

This part of the document includes information about public and private sectors of pre-school institutions, type of system in the country (for ex. a split-system),

institutions which are responsible for monitoring practices in preschool education at national level, numbers of preschool institution and enrolled children and most important practices and methodologies in preschool institutions at national level.

- *Education laws and regulations*

This overview includes information about policies, laws and regulation of the pre-school educational system.

This part provides information about the system of developing and implementing educational laws and regulation in preschool education at national/regional/local level and description the role of main institutions in this process and process for monitoring and evaluation of educational policies.

- *Preschool curriculum*

The description of the preschool curriculum provides basic info about the process of development and implementation of the curriculum in preschool institutions at the national/regional/local level.

Questions related to this part are:

1. Which institution develops a curriculum?
2. How do institutions organise the implementation of the curriculum?
3. Which institution organises the evaluation of this implementation of curriculum?
4. What are the important areas of preschool curriculum?

- *Preschool curriculum related to children's social and emotional skills*

Description of preschool curriculum related to children SES needs to specify implementation about learning and enhance SES as a part of the preschool educational curriculum. That include presentation of information about educational plans related to SES learning as a specific themes or kindergarten activities with purpose of SES as a part of other skills learning.

- *Quality assessment*

Quality assessment include description of supervision and evaluation of work of preschool institutions. That include information about assessment of preschool programs, staff qualification and development and children's developmental skills with special refers to SES. This part provides information about the institution who are responsible to these processes at national/regional/local level and give short description of them.

- *Staff Training*

This shows an overview of formal and compulsory education as well as frequent and informal way of learning related to preschool teachers, nurseries and other professionals, continuous professional development.

- *Other comments*

The authors add other, relevant information about the country.

Belgium. Educational context

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Introduction

This document includes information related to the educational context of Belgium. In Belgium, the Communities are in charge of educational policy. Therefore, this document will focus on the educational context of the Flemish Community.

The paper provides information about the educational system, education laws and regulation, early childhood and care, preschool curriculums, quality assessment and professional development and training of preschool staff.

Short country overview

Belgium is a country in Western-Europe. It is bordered by the Netherlands to the north, Germany to the east, Luxembourg to the southeast, France to the southwest, and the North Sea to the northwest. Belgium is a constitutional monarchy with King Philippe as the Head of State. Belgium has 11,5 million inhabitants (2020) and a population density of 375,49. Belgium's official national languages are French, Dutch and German.

Since its independence in 1831 Belgium evolved into a federal state. The powers that were formerly controlled by the central state are now divided between three different tiers of governments.

Apart from the Federal State government, there are two types of federated entities:

1. three autonomous Regions: the Flemish Region, the Walloon Region and the Brussels Capital Region
2. three language Communities: Flemish, French, German-speaking

The Federal Government holds the responsibility for areas including social security, justice and defence. The competences of the three Regions are organised around matters related to the territory and the economy. Policy areas which are related to the individual including cultural, language and educational matters are regulated at the community level (OECD, 2015).

National educational system for children 0-6/7 years of age General

General description of the educational system

In Belgium, the communities (Flemish, French and German speaking) are in charge of education policy. The Flemish, French and German-speaking Communities each have their autonomous education systems. Only a small number of competences for education remain with the level of the Federal Government. These include determining the duration and age range of compulsory education, the conditions for the delivery of recognised qualifications, and the retirement regulations for teachers and educational staff. (OECD, 2015) Instructions are provided in the language of the

community. (Eurydice, s.d.) For this paper, the educational system of the Flemish Community will be discussed.

In the Flemish community, schools enjoy a high degree of autonomy, which is part of the Belgian Constitution, “Freedom of education”. Freedom of education gives the right to any natural or legal person to start a school. This “freedom of organisation” also allows each school to develop its own educational policies, including its own pedagogical plan, teaching methods, curriculum and timetables, as well as to appoint its own staff. Although, schools receiving public funding are required to operate within a regulatory framework, they still enjoy “considerable autonomy” (OECD, 2015).

Schooling in the Flemish Community is compulsory from age five⁶ to eighteen. Until the age of fifteen, pupils have to attend fulltime compulsory education. From 15 years onwards, there is the possibility to engage in part-time schooling and to choose a structured learning path, which combines part-time vocational education in an educational institution with part-time employment (Eurydice, s.d.).

The school system is organised in four main stages, preceded by a non-compulsory offer of pre-primary education (2,5 – 6 years), which is free of charge.

1. Pre-primary education (2,5 – 6 years)
2. Primary education (6 – 12 years)
3. Secondary education – first stage (12 – 14 years)
4. Secondary education – second stage (14 – 16 years)
5. Secondary education – third stage (16 – 18 years)

In Belgium, a certificate of upper secondary education grants unrestricted access to higher education. Higher education institutions organize study programmes, which result in the degree of bachelor, master and doctorate. Higher education also contains the vocational education.

Schools in Flanders are mostly organized in educational networks. The following three pillars, or networks, are dominating the educational landscape:

1. GO! – This is the official education organized by the Flemish community itself.
2. There are the government-aided public schools that are organized and managed by the local municipalities or provincial authorities.
3. And there is the government-aided private education. These schools are organized by private organisations (or people) such as the concept of Catholic schools. But also non-religious initiatives like method education such as Freinet, Montessori, or Steiner schools.

Most schools are linked into a more bigger and local school network. Each supported by a community wide umbrella organization. All schools need to meet the national objectives. These objectives can be made more specific by a school network as long as it respects the minimal outcome that was defined by the Flemish government.

⁶ Since September 2020 the compulsory age to start school has been changed from six years to five years

Diagram of the structure

Belgium - Flemish Community

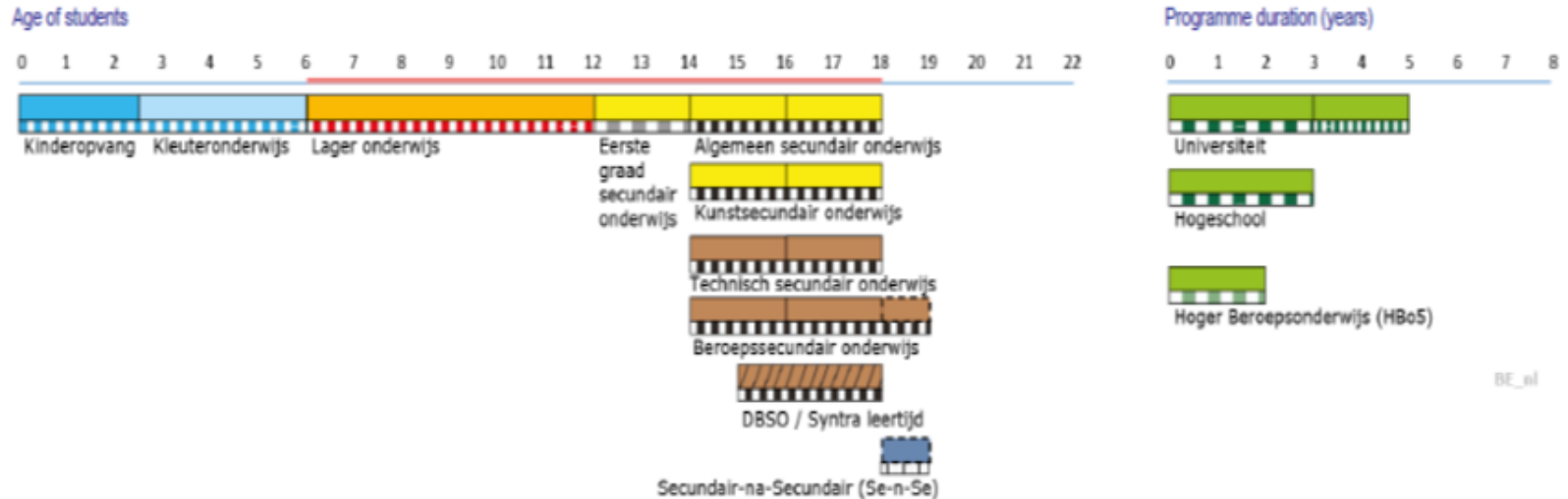


Diagram 3. Belgium educational system, source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018

Early Childhood Education and Care

Belgium has a split system for the organization of early child education and care. That implies (in all three communities) that there is a different ministry for childcare and education (Schreyer & Oberhuemer, 2017). For the Flemish community, childcare facilities for children age 0 to 3 years are under the responsibility of the Ministry for Welfare, Families and Equal Opportunities. Childcare provision is managed by the Agency Child and Family (Kind en Gezin), a governmental organisation which is responsible for the quality policy. In 2019, 95027 childcare places for babies and toddlers were provided by 6881 childcare settings in Flanders and Brussels. (Kind & Gezin, 2019)

Pre-primary education is under the responsibility of the Department of Education and is integrated in the system of elementary education (2,5-12) (Hulpia et al, 2014).

In 2019, 262435 children were enrolled in the Flemish pre-primary education. There are 162 autonomous nursery schools and 2231 schools providing nursery and primary education (Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, 2019).

Education laws and regulations

Childcare

In April 2014, a new Decree (Decreet Opvang van Baby's en Peuters) was launched for childcare settings in the Flemish Community. This decree unified the different regulations and financing methods that were applied. The decree stipulates that settings have to have a permit. In order to receive a permit for the care of babies and toddlers, starting conditions must be met. The childcare settings will be regularly evaluated whether the legal conditions are being met (Schreyer & Oberhuemer, 2017).

Pre-primary education

Art. 24 of the Belgian Constitution guarantees 'freedom of education' (art. 24). This is a two-sided freedom:

1. Organisation of education: the active freedom for every natural person or legal person to organise education and to set up institutions to that end
2. The freedom of choice of school for pupils and their parents

The central legislation concerning pre-school education is resumed in the decree on "Basisonderwijs" of 25/2/1997

Preschool curriculum

Childcare

A pedagogical framework for childcare for babies and toddlers has been implemented since 2014. The framework was created on the authority of the Child and Family agency and developed by a research group of the University of Gent and the University of Leuven. It contains a vision on how quality should be defined (and interpreted) within childcare. It offers direction and guidelines

for both childcare services as the organisations that monitor the quality. It is grounded in dialogue with all parties involved, in this way the different practices are customized to the local context. The implementation of the pedagogical framework, depends on the environment in which one operates, the pedagogical vision of the childcare setting, the neighbourhood, the parent's preferences, etc. (Vandenbroeck et al., 2014).

Vision of the pedagogical framework, literally cited from Vandenbroeck et al (2014, p. 8).

“Childcare for babies and toddlers in Flanders helps to ensure that every child feels good about himself, is challenged and feels connected to the people and his surrounding environment. Childcare wants to shape children’s education together with the parents. At the same time, it aims to support parents in their child-rearing responsibilities. A childcare facility wants to be a place where every child, parent and practitioner feels at home. In this way, it helps realise equal opportunities for children, as well as for adult men and women. Embedded in warm relationships with others, childcare wants all children to be able to grow up into adults who are confident in life and contribute to a learning, democratic society, where people treat each other and their environment in a respectful and sustainable manner.” (Vandenbroeck et al., 2014, p. 8).

The pedagogical framework takes four so-called “areas of experience” that are necessary for children’s overall development:

- “Me and the Other”: the development of the identity of children in a world with other adults and children;
- “Body and Movement”: about the physical changes of the child’s body;
- “Communication and Expression”: express themselves verbally and non-verbally, as well as creatively;
- “Exploration of the World”: discovering and get to know/understand the world (both objects and people).

Pre-primary education

For pre-primary education, the Flemish government defined broad developmental objectives, in terms of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes. The word ‘development’ refers to a process of growth, possible ‘pathways’ to achieve results. These developmental objectives do not have to be achieved but are aimed at and are divided into 6 areas of learning:

- human and society: self-awareness, social skills, society, time and space
- physical education: motoric competences, healthy and safe lifestyle and social integration;
- arts education: visual arts, music, drama, dance, media and attitudes;
- Dutch language : listening, speaking, reading, writing, linguistics;
- science and technology: nature, technique,
- mathematical initiation: numbers, measuring and space (geometric initiation).

Social and emotional skills of children in the curriculum

Childcare

Ensuring the well-being of the child is one of the main goals of the pedagogical framework. The wellbeing of the child is defined as “the positive feeling a child has when the situation he is in fulfils his basic needs: this concerns physical needs, the need for love and affection, the need for clarity and security, the need for appreciation and respect, the need to feel able to do something by himself and the need to matter (Vandenbroeck et al., 2014, p. 14).”

Through the different areas of experiences, social and emotional skills are fostered. In “Me and the other” Vandenbroeck et al. (2014, p. 25) describes how children should receive opportunities and appreciation by the staff on how children show the aspects of their personality so they can develop a positive identity. The practitioners should appreciate them and articulate their emotions. They support children to have a connection with themselves, truly experience their own feelings and feel good about themselves (Vandenbroeck et al., 2014, p. 25). Its result are children with self-confidence and believe in their abilities and those of others.

In “Communication and expression”, it is about creating opportunities for children to communicate with others (both children and adults). Opportunities to play, listen, enjoy different languages and expressions.

Pre-primary education

In the core curriculum for preschool education, set out by the Flemish government, the following goals are detected, related to the concept of social and emotion. The goals of development relevant for the development of SES are divided in 3 areas: “me and myself”, “me and the other” and “me and others: in a group”. Each group contains multiple goals. In “Me and myself” goals describe awareness of emotions, to encourage children to talk about things that have happened and to support the development of self-confidence. The domain of “Me and the other” are about how children learn how to recognize ways of interacting with (individual) others, the effect on other children (including their and own emotions) and learning to be sensitive to the needs of others. The last domain “Me and others in a group” are focused on developing a way of understanding of interactions in groups and why arrangements in groups are made. How they can adapt to or create new arrangements in specific situations (both with and without help of adults).

Quality assessment

Childcare

Since 2006, in Flanders, the quality is no longer controlled by Kind en Gezin but by “het Agentschap Zorginspectie” (Agency for Care Inspectorate). As part of the new decree on childcare for 0 – 3 years, a scientifically based tool, MeMoQ, has been developed in order to measure the educational quality of the childcare sector. A process engaging and supporting staff, parents and children. (Hulpia et al, 2014)

As the pedagogical framework (as mentioned above) implies a “best efforts obligation” for the services, achieving concrete results is not mandatory. There is no judgement of quality by measuring children’s development (MeMoQ, 2014).

Pre-primary education

According to the 2009 Decree on Quality of Education, each school is primarily responsible for providing good quality education. Internal quality assurance is therefore legally required, but how the quality control takes place is the autonomy of the school (OECD, 2015). The external evaluation of schools, is implemented by the Flemish Inspectorate of Education (Hulpia et al, 2014).

Staff Training

Childcare

The new decree on childcare for the 0- to 3-year olds from 2014 stipulates that all persons working in childcare have to have some kind of qualification by 2024. Childcare professionals of the Flemish community can work after a training on the vocational level (7 years of secondary vocational school) or completing a specific adult education. After graduation and working as professional in the field, the fore mentioned decree also foresees pedagogical support for every childcare worker as a right.

Because of the lack of a specific (pedagogical) childcare oriented training on a bachelor level, in 2011 a new program was developed. This Bachelor’s degree for pedagogical coaching (Pedagogisch Coach – ‘Pedagogy of the Young Child’) trains pedagogical coaches or advisors for aiming (besides other responsibilities) for continuous professional coaching of the child caretakers in the services itself (Peeters & Pirard, 2017).

Pre-primary school teachers

Most of the teachers (99%) in early education (pre-primary school teachers) have a Bachelor level qualification. (Hulpia et al, 2014).

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Bosnia and Herzegovina. Educational context

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Description of national educational system

General Description of the educational system

Bosnia and Herzegovina has been declared as an independent state composed of two entities (Republic of Srpska and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina). The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is separated in ten constituent cantons. Each canton has the right to organise and manage its own education system.

In the school year 2019/2020 1.785 pupils were enrolled in primary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There were 24.361 teachers involved in the education process, 17.813 or 73.1% of whom are women (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2020).

Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is organized in three cycles. The first cycle includes at least three and at most four years of study, the second cycle includes one or two years of education and the third cycle lasts for three years. Upon completion of the first, second or third cycle of studies, one obtains the right to acquire certain academic degree, that is, professional or scientific title in certain field of study.

In the academic year 2019/2020, there were 81.228 students enrolled in higher education. Total number of teachers and assistants was 7.911,5. Out of the total number of teachers and assistants, 46.4% were women (Agency for Statistic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2020).

Diagram of the structure

Overview of the educational system in Bosnia and Herzegovina is presented on Diagram 4.

Diagram 4 includes information about all levels of education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Preschool education is intended for children from 6 months old until six years old. Primary education is compulsory and it lasts 9 years. Secondary education is available in forms of general secondary education schools (grammar schools), vocational secondary education schools, art schools and other, less frequent types. Higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is organized in three cycles, which has been described in the previous paragraph.

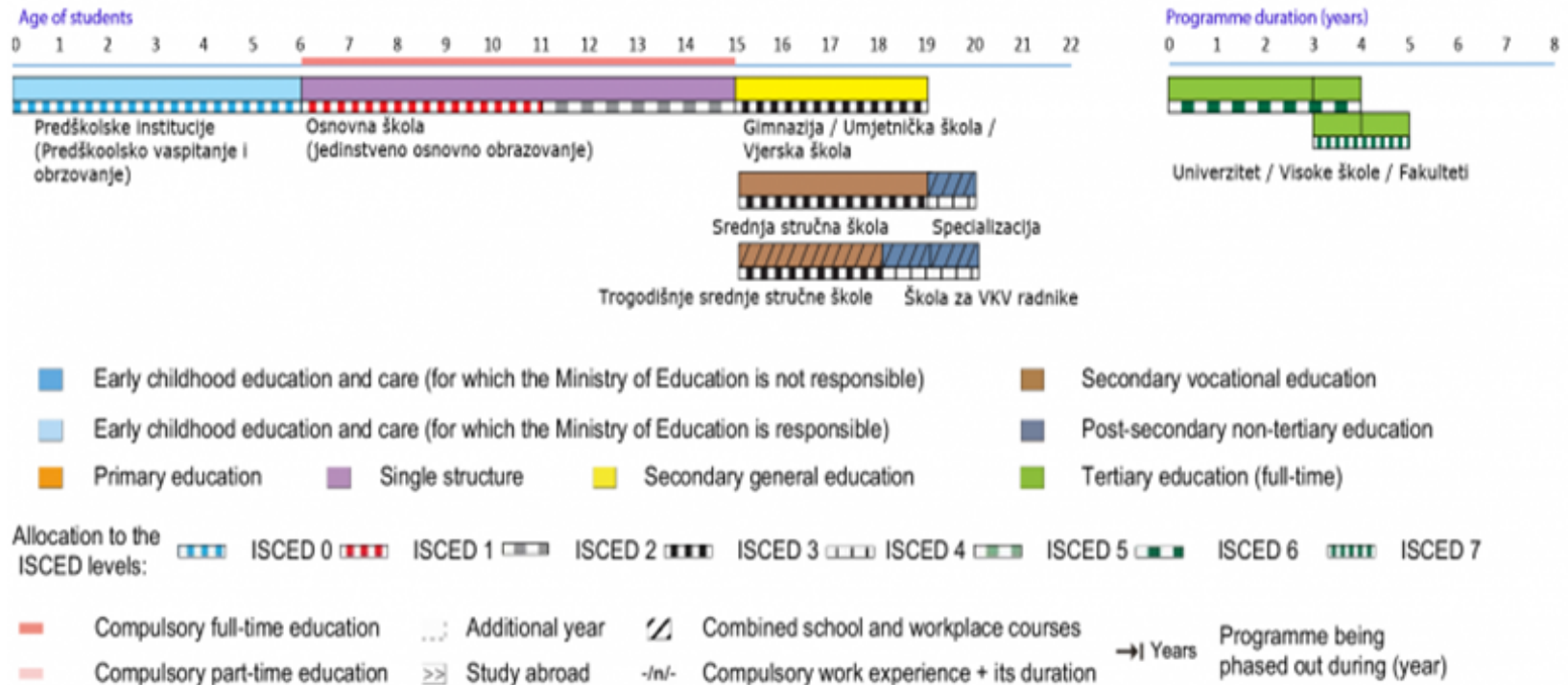


Diagram 4. Bosnia and Herzegovina educational system, source: Eurydice 2020/21

Education and/or Care

In the school year 2019/2020, on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, there were 390 pre-school institutions (209 public and 181 private institutions) with 30.587 children. Out of the total number of children, 65.7% attended public institutions. In the school year 2019/2020 6.076 children were attending nursery education, which represented an increase by 7.3% compared to the previous school year (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2020).

According to the provisions of the Framework Law, a common core of comprehensive development programs for work in preschool institutions should be established and implemented in all public and private preschool institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Both type of the preschool institutions (private and public) must implement at territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina with 10 cantons, District Brčko and Republic of Srpska) and ensure the conditions for the education of children prescribed by Framework Law of Preschool education, common core preschool curriculum and standards and norms for preschool education.

Education Laws and Regulations

The goal of preschool education is to provide all conditions for optimal physical, intellectual, emotional and social development of young children and successful further education.

The Framework Law on preschool education prescribes the principles, goals, standards and norms for preparation of the common cores of curricula for performance of the function of preschool upbringing and education. It is important to point out that the principles, goals and standards established in the Framework Law cannot be reduced. Furthermore, with the Framework Law it has been determined that the administration organs competent for organisation of the educational system in Brčko District Bosnia and Herzegovina, in Republic of Srpska, in cantons of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter referred to as the competent education authorities) pursuant to the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the constitutions of the entities and cantons are obliged to apply the principles and norms established in this law and they should ensure the upbringing and education under the same conditions for all children. The Cantonal assembly in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the National assembly in Republic of Srpska (RS) and Municipality assembly of Brčko District are, according to the regulations of the Framework law, obliged to harmonize their laws on preschool education with the Framework law. The realisation of the function of the preschool education is being conducted according to the determined standards, norms and basic principles-common core prescribed by the competent education authorities.

Preschool curriculum

According to the provisions of the Framework Law, a common core of comprehensive development programs and plans should:

- guarantee and ensure quality education for all children and achieve satisfactory standards of knowledge, skills and abilities;
- ensure consistency of the education standards in all preschool institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- ensure the implementation of programs that meet the developmental

needs of preschool children;

- ensure positive attitude and a sense of belonging to state;
- ensure harmonization of programs;
- ensure equal access to pre-school education.

The Ministry of Education of each canton of Federation/district Brčko/ Republika Srpska is responsible for further adoption of policies and implementation at local level. Public or private preschool institutions adopt Annual work plan and program each school year, which need to be in correlation with laws and common core curricula. The Pedagogic institute is responsible for evaluation and monitoring of implementation the Framework law, common core curricula, standards and norms of preschool education and quality assurance the preschool education at local level.

The important areas of preschool common core curricula are: Health and physical development of children; Personality of children and interaction; Speech, language and communication; World around us; Art and Culture.

Preschool institutions related to Framework law of preschool education should use the following programs: Comprehensive development programs; Specialized development programs; Intervention, compensation and rehabilitation programs; Programs to strengthen parental competencies; Programs for children in year before school. The content of these programs adopt public body at local level as well as preschool institution at individual level. The content of the Comprehensive development programs include skills of motoric, cognitive and socio-emotional development and communication.

Preschool curriculum related to children's social and emotional skills

The content of the Comprehensive development program for socio-emotional skills learning includes these goals:

- Protection of integrity of the child in interaction with the world
- Protection of negative impact for psycho-social development of children
- Protection of wellbeing and emotional skills of the child
- Support of the development of basic social competences
- Respect of the needs of other children and adults

The Comprehensive development program includes specific skills and activities for their development related to age of the children and field of development (cognitive, motoric, socio-emotional, communication). For example SES related to four year old children include these milestones: Joins children in play; Shares toys with other children; Accepts models of social behaviour and rules of the game; Imitates children, adults and animals; Waiting in line; Expresses feelings through behaviour and words; Consciously tests prohibitions of adults, etc. The activities related to development of these skills are: Symbolic and imitative games; Games with strict and specific rules; Preparation the party for friends; Game: Who calls me; Imitative game: Do the same as me; Role-play game: Family lunch, Mood clock, Dad and I fix the car; Pantomime games; Board Games (Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, 2009).

Quality assessment

The institution established by the relevant law at the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education) is responsible for the implementation of standards and norms and common core curriculum in the



field of preschool education. All preschool institutions are obliged to adopt an annual work program, which shall be adopted by the board of directors of the preschool institution and submitted to the competent educational authorities and the founder (Ministry of Education). Also, preschool institutions have the obligation to submit and send a Report of previous working year to the competent institutions for consideration and adoption. Pedagogical Institute or other institution established by the public body at local/regional level performs professional supervision over the organization and performance of teaching and other forms of educational work in all preschool institutions. Professional supervision includes: monitoring of implementation of the curriculum, form of methods and procedures of educational work; evaluating the professional work of teachers, educators, nurseries and director of the institution; supervision of documentation and records and other activities in accordance with the law (Preschool Law of Tuzla Canton, 2018).

Staff Training

The reforms of basic education based on Common Core Curriculum (CCC) and learning outcomes have not been accompanied by reforms in the programs of teaching faculties. In fact, no reforms of pre-service teaching programs were conducted in the last decade. Hence, as with basic education programs, pre-service teaching programs are outdated and content-based. Moreover, according to expert informants, the number of Pedagogy, Psychology, Didactics and Methods (PPDM) hours and the number of hours dedicated to practice in teaching faculties are insufficient. Additionally, the experts noted that pre-service teacher programs are not in line with the Standards of Occupations or the Standards of Qualifications for preschool, primary, and secondary school teachers, which have been developed on the basis of learning outcomes and harmonized with the European Qualifications Framework. Hence, young graduates from teaching faculties are insufficiently prepared to teach, prepare tests, and examine students based on CCC and learning outcomes. Moreover, pre-service teacher trainings omits some topics of great importance for basic education, such as inclusive education, intercultural education, and strengthening partnerships between parents and schools. In-service teacher training in Bosnia and Herzegovina is experiencing several problems. There are no systematic approaches to professional development, and there are no quality assurance or accreditation mechanisms. Professional development programs organized by the ministries and pedagogical institutes are not continuous or tailored for individual teachers, and are often described as theoretical. Although regular participation in such programs is mandatory, there are no serious consequences for not participating in these trainings. Most donor activities in basic education include teacher training for interventions they are implementing. Such programs are, in most cases, attended by “the usual suspects,” highly motivated teachers who see them as an opportunity for professional growth. All donor activities in education also provide teacher trainings. For example, every EU-funded intervention has a capacity building component that includes teacher training. Step by Step is implementing the activity “Teachers Are Important” to empower teachers to work on improving the status of the teaching profession. The goal of the initiative is to establish Step by Step’s capacity to offer high-quality professional development programs and services based on research and analysis and to advocate for systematic changes in the field of professional development. In addition, Inskola (www.inskola.com), a web platform for teachers

developed in 2016 by teachers and experts, offers more than 200 lesson plans, manuals, and other resources for teachers. Step by Step's Best Innovative Teacher Award is an initiative aimed at promoting innovative and high-quality preschool, primary, and secondary teaching in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a particular focus on practices that support the development of critical thinking skills and social responsibility. The awards are presented at an annual event, followed by stories and videos that aim to promote the teaching profession, raise awareness about the importance of investing in high-quality teachers and improve the image of teachers in society (USAID, 2018).

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Bulgaria. Educational context

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Introduction

This document includes information related to the educational context of Bulgaria, information about Bulgaria's educational system, laws and regulation, curriculums, quality assessment and professional development and training of preschool staff.

Short country overview

The Republic of Bulgaria is located in South-eastern Europe, in the North-eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula. Bulgaria borders Romania to the north, the Black Sea to the east, Turkey and Greece to the south, and Macedonia and Serbia to the west. The population is about 7 million. Bulgaria is a republic with parliamentary government, and the official language is Bulgarian. The traditional religion in the Republic of Bulgaria is the Eastern Orthodox religion. Sofia is the largest city and capital of Bulgaria, as well as the 15th largest city in the European Union. As of January 1, 2007, Bulgaria is a member of the European Union.

National Educational System

General Description of the educational system

In the Republic of Bulgaria, the educational system is characterized by centralized management of the Ministry of Education and Science.

1. Preschool education

Preschool education is fundamental to children's lifelong learning, ensuring the physical, cognitive, linguistic, spiritual, moral, social, emotional and creative development of children, taking into account the importance of games in the process of pedagogical interaction.

Preschool education in Bulgaria includes children from 3 to 6/7 years old. Preschool preparation of children two years prior to starting school is mandatory. The aim of the compulsory pre-school education for children who have reached the age of 5 before entering the first grade is to provide every child with the opportunity for an equal start when entering school. This period is especially important for children whose mother language is different from Bulgarian. Compulsory preschool education is provided in the third and fourth age groups.

The organization of preschool education is carried out in four age groups:

- first age group - 3-4 y.o.;
- second age group - 4-5 y.o.;
- third age group - 5-6 y.o.;
- fourth age group - 6-7 y.o.

The preschool education is provided by kindergartens, and compulsory

preschool education - by schools that can provide conditions for this.

Nursery groups for children from 10 months to three years of age can be opened in the kindergarten. Children enrolled in nursery groups in kindergartens are raised, educated, socialized and trained according to standards for early childhood development, by an ordinance of the Minister of Health and the Minister of Education and Science.

Preschool education is organized in school years. The school year in preschool education begins on September 15 and lasts 12 months. In case September 15 is a day off, it starts on the first following working day. The school year includes study and non-study time.

The school time during the school year is in the period from September 15 to May 31 of the next calendar year. Study time consists of school weeks and school days and is organized in pedagogical situations. The number and duration of pedagogical situations are determined by the state educational standard for pre-school education. The pedagogical interaction in pre-school education is organized in a basic form and additional one. The pedagogical situation is the basic form of pedagogical interaction.

The additional forms are activities that are organized by the teacher of the group outside the pedagogical situations, which are carried out every day considering the individual needs and interests of the children. Only additional forms of pedagogical the interaction takes place in extracurricular activities. The main forms of pedagogical interaction are carried out full-time, half-day, part-time or in an independent organization of the parent's choice under established conditions and in accordance with the state educational standard for preschool education. At the end of the pre-school education a certificate for compulsory pre-school education is issued in accordance with the procedure determined by the state educational standard for pre-school education.

2. School education

School education in Bulgaria starts at the age of 7. At the assessment of the parents / guardians, 6-year-olds can go to school if their physical and mental development allows it. Within the structure of Bulgarian education, primary and lower secondary education are integrated into a single structure:

Basic (single structure) education in Bulgaria (1st to 8th grade) includes primary (1st to 4th grade) and lower secondary (5th to 8th grade) schooling. Basic education can be acquired at state, municipal or private schools.

All schools are coeducational. Apart from private schools, the education is free of charge. Basic education can be acquired at primary schools (1st to 4th grade), lower secondary schools (5th to 8th grade) or secondary general schools (1st to 12th grade). Some schools offer lower secondary vocational education and training, as well as specialised education. Upon completing 7th grade, and after sitting national standardized tests, students can enrol at vocational or specialized schools, where they finish their basic education and move on to upper secondary education.

General education provides acquisition of the general education minimum and, where possible, specialized training, according to the State Education Requirements. Basic education aims to give students basic knowledge and skills, assisting them in their studies, instigate them to be active, to think independently and critically, and to show creativity.

School education is organized in classes. The duration of education in one class is one school year for all forms of education, except for the cases provided for the individual and independent form of education. School education is organized in school years. The school year lasts 12 months and starts on September 15, and in sports schools - on September 1. In case September 15, respectively September 1 is a day off, it starts on the first following working day. The school weeks in a school year and their distribution by classes are determined by the state educational standard for the curriculum.

The state educational standard for the organization of activities in school education determines: the school deadlines and their duration, the length of the school week, the length of school hours, as well as vacations. The organization of the school day is half day and full day. The duration of school hours and the breaks between them are determined by the state educational standard for the organization of activities in school education. The total number of compulsory and elective school hours for one school week should not be less than 22 and more than 32 school hours.

3. Higher education

The goals of higher education in Bulgaria are to develop science and culture in the country by training highly qualified specialists above secondary education.

There are 37 state universities in Bulgaria. Of these, 25 universities, 1 independent college and 11 specialized universities. There are also 14 private universities (5 universities, 2 specialized universities and 7 independent colleges. The academic year includes 32 study weeks and is divided into two semesters. Each university determines independently, the exact start and end date of the academic year.

Regarding higher education, it should be noted that the Law in Bulgaria provides full autonomy in the activities of higher education institutions. The system of higher education organizes training after completing secondary education for acquiring the following educational and qualification degrees:

- Educational Qualification Bachelor degree:
The normal duration of a bachelor's program is four years in accordance with the curriculum and requires the acquisition of at least 240 credits (ECTS). Bachelor's programs are offered by universities and specialized universities. Bachelor's degree training in accordance with the curriculum provides comprehensive training or specialized professional training in professional fields and specialties.
- Educational Qualification Master's degree:
The training for acquiring the educational-qualification degree "master" provides in- depth scientific-theoretical and specialized training, combined with specialization in the respective specialty. The training is organized in programs after obtaining a bachelor's degree, i.e., persons who have successfully passed the state matriculation exams, persons who have acquired a qualification "professional bachelor by ..." or "bachelor".
- Educational and scientific degree "Doctor":
The training is organized in doctoral programs after obtaining a master's degree. In case of independent research work and regular form of education, the term of preparation is up to 3 years, and for part-time and distance learning is up to 4 years. Exceptionally, regulated in the regulations of the respective

higher school or scientific organization, the term may be extended, but by no more than one year.

- **Adult education and training:**
Adult education and training are accepted as a tool for human resources development in several strategies and in the national plan of Bulgari. The main goal of adult education and training is to improve the qualification level of the unemployed and employed.

Diagram of the structure

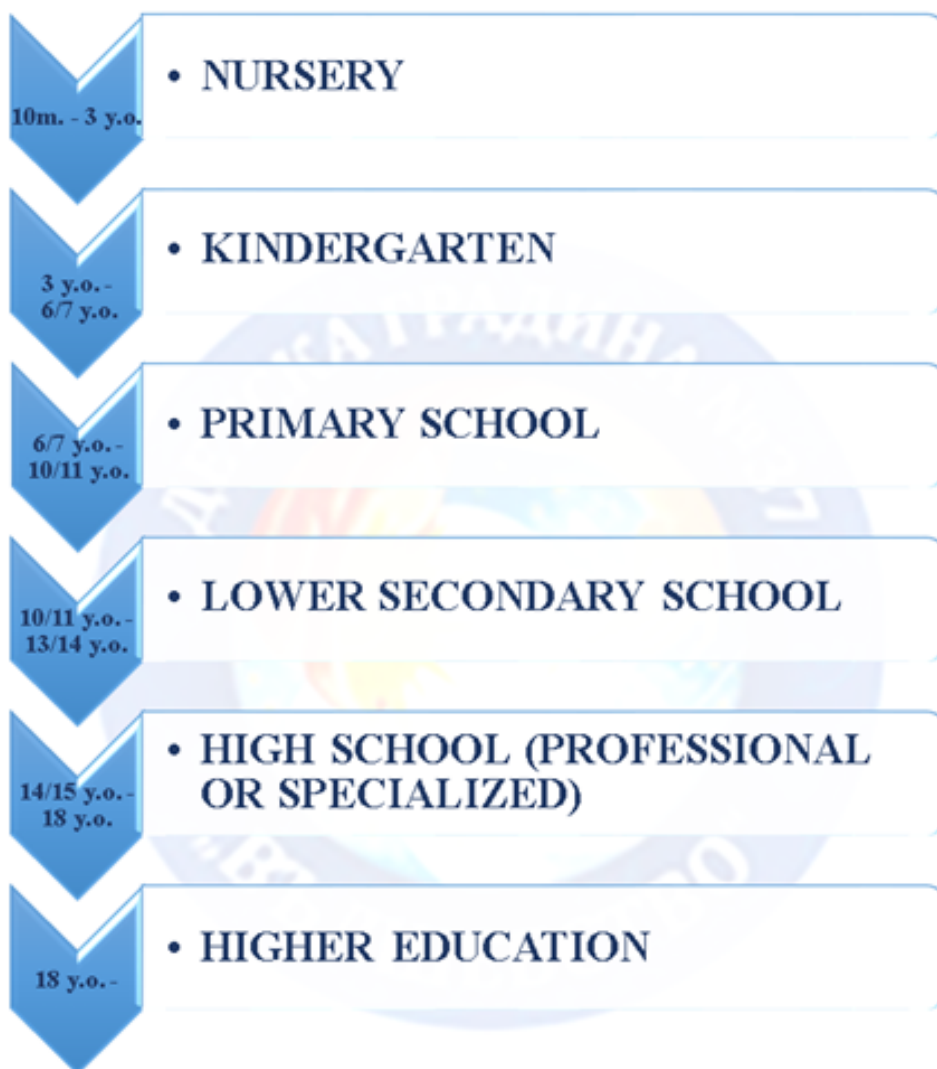


Diagram 5. Bulgarian educational system

Education and/or Care

1. Public and private sectors of preschool institutions in Bulgaria

Education in the Republic of Bulgaria is carried out in the following public organizations:

- preschool education – half-day kindergartens, all-day kindergartens and kindergartens with nursery groups;
- secondary education, including primary schools, lower secondary schools, secondary general schools;
- higher education – includes universities, specialized higher schools and self-contained colleges.

Preschool and secondary education are characterized by decentralized (by municipalities) management and funding (with the exception of vocational schools and some organizations of national importance). Higher education is managed and funded centrally.

The system of pre-school and school education must include the participants in the educational process and the institutions as well as their relationships and connections in order to achieve the set goals in education. The participants in the educational process are children, teachers, principals and other educators, including parents. The institutions in the system of pre-school education are kindergartens, schools, centres for support of personal development and specialized support units.

Pre-school and school education aims at the following:

1. “1. intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual, moral and physical development and support to every child and every pupil in accordance with their age, needs, abilities, and interests;
2. preservation and strengthening of the Bulgarian national identity;
3. acquisition of competences which are needed for a successful personality development and professional career and active civic life in modern communities;
4. acquisition of competences for applying the sustainable development principles;
5. early identification of the aptitudes and abilities of every child and every pupil and encouragement of their development and realization;
6. shaping of lasting attitudes and motivation for lifelong learning;
7. acquisition of competences for understanding and applying the principles of democracy and the rule of law, human rights and freedoms, and active and responsible citizen participation;
8. shaping of tolerance to and respect for the ethnic, national, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of every citizen;
9. shaping of tolerance to and respect for the rights of children, pupils, and people with disabilities;
10. knowledge of the national, European and global cultural values and traditions;
11. acquisition of competences for understanding global processes, trends and interrelationships;
12. acquisition of competences for understanding and applying the principles, rules, responsibilities, and rights ensuring from the membership of the European Union.”

(Law on preschool and school education - Effective from 01.08.2016, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

“Preschool and school education are secular in the Republic of Bulgaria. The preschool and school education system should not allow the inculcation of ideological and/or religious doctrines. Each citizen exercises the right to education in accordance with his or her preferences and abilities.

Teachers instruct children and pupils in the Bulgarian language and help them in the acquisition and use of literary language norms in the study of all subjects, except for the subjects of foreign language, mother tongue, and subjects taught in a foreign language.

The kindergarten is an institution in the preschool and school education system for the raising, upbringing, socialization and instruction of children from the age of three to their admission in the first grade at school in accordance with the state education standard for preschool education.

The school is an institution in the pre-school and school education system for the raising, upbringing, and socialization of pupils, creating conditions for the completion of a grade and stage and/or for the acquisition of an education degree. The personality development support centre is a private kindergartens and schools should engage it their activities after their entry into the register of the institutions in the preschool and school education system.

According to Art. 40 of the Preschool and School Education Act, private are the kindergartens and the schools, which are established by natural and / or legal persons as commercial companies, non-profit legal entities or cooperatives or as companies under the legislation of a Member State. Institution in the pre-school and school education system, where activities are organized to support the inclusion, instruction and upbringing of children and pupils, as well as activities to develop their interests and capabilities. The institutions in the pre-school and school education system should be legal persons.

Private kindergartens and private schools should acquire the status of a legal person under the terms and conditions laid down in the Commerce Act, the Non-profit Legal Persons Act, the Cooperatives Act, or the legislation of another Member State.

Private kindergartens and schools should be those which are established by natural and/or legal persons as businesses, non- profit legal entities or cooperatives or undertakings under the laws of a Member State.” (Law on preschool and school education - Effective from 01.08.2016, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

Private kindergartens, as well as schools, can start functioning after their entry in the register of institutions in the system of pre-school and school education.

The number of groups and the number of children per group at the state-owned and municipal kindergartens are established by the headmaster of the kindergarten in consultation with the teaching staff and in accordance with the state education standard for the financing of institutions and the state education standard for the physical environment and the information and library services at kindergartens, schools, and personality development support centres.

The number of groups and the number of children per group at the private kindergartens should be laid down in the state education standard for the physical

environment and the information and library services at kindergartens, schools, and personality development support centres.

(Law on preschool and school education – Effective from 01.08.2016, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

Numbers of preschool institution and enrolled children. Practices and methodologies in preschool institutions at national level

“In the 2019/2020 school year, the number of kindergartens in Bulgaria is 1,840, of which 106 are private kindergartens.”

Table 1. Number of children by types of kindergarten, National statistical institute, Republic of Bulgaria, Data from 24.04.2020

NUMBER OF CHILDREN BY TYPES OD KINDERGARTEN 2019/2020

Type of kindergarten	Children
Total	217 867
All day	203 931
Special	449
Half a day	13 463
Seasonal	24
Pf the total number in private kindergartens	4 982
Including in the villages	42 732
All day	39 228
Half a day	3 504

“The education of children in kindergartens aims to develop their life knowledge and practical skills and habits, which is extremely important for their further education. The successful acquisition of these knowledge, skills and habits is guaranteed through the use by teachers of many interactive methods and modern pedagogical technologies by the teachers.” (The new Ordinance № 5 of 03.06.2016 on preschool education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science).

The main form of the learning process in kindergartens is the pedagogical situation.

“The main and leading activity in the kindergarten is the game. While children play, they show different forms of behavioural activity - intellectual, motor and artistic, and at the same time begin to gain social experience. Teachers in preschool groups stimulate creative potential in accordance with their individual qualities, abilities and interests in order to ensure the best self-expression of children in a play situation.

During the game, children reproduce their environment and human relationships in simulated situations.” (The new Ordinance № 5 of 03.06.2016 on preschool education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science).

Textbooks and teaching aids are used in preschool education. The textbook is a product of creative activity and diligence, which is approved and authorized by the Minister of Education and Science for the purposes of preschool education. The textbook is a didactic tool to support the overall education and development of the child for the specific preschool age group. Textbooks should be tailored to the age of the children.

The choice of methods depends on the general purpose of education, on the specifics of the educational content and on the age characteristics of the children. The main methods that are used in kindergarten are: observation, demonstration, conversation, storytelling, exercise. In preschool childhood, one of the activities, which is based on all typical types of activity, in view of its specificity, combines movement, communication, research, search for new knowledge and their practical application, is constructive activity. This is the children’s favourite productive activity. It is aimed at creating a structure (model) of various elements using different joining techniques and mutual arrangement of parts. The special significance of the constructive activity consists of the fact that it allows children to get creative tasks directly, for the solution of which there is a need to use their full potential of knowledge and skills, based on which to seek a solution to the problem. Solving the problem is accompanied by research accumulation of information, analysis of parts and their technical connection, selection of materials, activity planning and achieving results. From this perspective, the stages of model construction completely coincide with the stages in the design activity.

Situational methods hold an important place in the learning process – for illustration, for receiving feedback, for the formation of skills and habits, for training, for consolidating knowledge and skills, for checking and evaluation.

Discussion is a process of interaction controlled by the teacher, through which children learn information and experience. The dialogic form is used to consolidate knowledge; to present the children different approaches and interpretations; to increase the already acquired knowledge, to clarify the already known material or to change its perspectives; to develop the ability to think; to gain experience in self-identification and problem solving.

In role-playing, children are tending to merge in their minds the hypothetical and the real in terms of some activity or function, and as a result they learn it by playing. The children simulate a specific situation to play out what they have learned or do in order to develop new abilities. They may confront another person and will have to answer questions, steer the problem in different directions or respond to criticism. The role-playing develops in the children several social skills: communication (formulation of opinions, listening to opinions, verbal and non-verbal expression); cooperation; negotiation; overcoming conflicts.

Institutions responsible for monitoring practices in preschool education at national level

The management of education is concentrated in the Ministry of Education and respectively in the Minister. This type of management exercises control over all educational institutions and service units.

Its functions are the following:

- development of educational standards and requirements for student achievement;
- approval of textbooks in all subjects for each class;
- conducting an external assessment of student's achievements and organizing entrance exams for transition from one educational system to another;
- developing guidelines, rules, methodological requirements, improving curricula and programs to be implemented by schools.

The management of preschool education in Bulgaria is realized on four levels:

- National, led by the Council of Ministers;
- Regional, headed by the Regional Department of Education;
- Municipal, headed by the Department of Education;
- Internal management exercised by the principals of the educational establishments.

The assessment of education in early childhood is regulated by the requirements of the new Ordinance № 5 of 03.06.2016 on preschool education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science.

“Assessment is a process of establishing and measuring the learning outcomes achieved and the level of preparedness of children. The main objectives of the evaluation are:

- diagnosis of the individual achievements and progress of the child;
- monitoring of the educational process for implementation of measures aimed at improving the quality of education.” (The new Ordinance № 5 of 03.06.2016 on preschool education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science.)

“The monitoring of the child's achievements is carried out by the teachers of the respective group at the beginning and at the end of the school time for the period from September 15 to May 31 of the next calendar year.

Children's achievements are assessed through observation by the teacher, through the products of children's creativity, and through games.

The assessment of the achievements should stimulate and show the positive aspects of the child. This process must be well reasoned to support the child in his understanding of development, learning and initiative. The assessment should always promote the child's natural qualities and abilities.

The ongoing effort to raise the quality of education for Bulgaria to remain competitive in a fast-changing market environment has created the need to establish reliable methods for quality assurance. Quality assurance in early childhood and school education is carried out at national, regional and school level. All three methods of evaluation are compulsory and are used both for evaluation of educational institutions and individual teacher evaluation.” (The new Ordinance №

5 of 03.06.2016 on preschool education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science).

Several approaches are applied in the management of pre-school institutions in the public sector, such as: programs for improving the quality of education in kindergartens; introduction of new technologies for communication with parents; training programs and platforms, etc.

Approaches and Methods for Quality Assurance

“The state requirements for the Quality Assurance in the system of pre-school and school education are regulated in the Law on pre-school and school education and in the State educational standard.” (Law on preschool and school education - Effective from 01.08.2016, issued by the Minister of Education and Science).

The objective is to improve the quality of the education provided in kindergartens and schools and to improve the individual progress of each child and student in terms of its educational results. Thereby is supports the organizational development of kindergartens and schools.

The state educational quality standard is based on the following principles: efficiency and effectiveness; autonomy and self-government; engagement and collaboration between actors.

It applies in kindergartens and the schools and regulates the nature, principles and objectives of quality management in these institutions and the framework requirements for quality management.

“The minimal binding requirements for the quality management should be adopted before the beginning of the school year by the Staff Council and are approved by the Public council of the kindergarten or school.” (Law on preschool and school education - Effective from 01.08.2016, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

These requirements cover seven main areas:

“1. Analysing, planning, implementation of the activities and improvements in the work of the kindergartens and schools. The process is realized within every two years through the development and implementation of the development strategy of the kindergarten / school with an attached action plan and funding which are published on the website of the institution.

The analysis of the quality of the institutions provides the basis of the data for:

- the results of implementing the objectives of the institution;
- strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and risks for the development of the institution;
- individual progress of each child and student in terms of its educational outcomes;
- institution-specific key factors that influence the quality of the education provided, including factors of the social environment.

The planning of activities for quality management should be based on this analysis and should regulate:

- the specific activities for achieving the objectives of the development strategy of the institution;

- the responsible persons and the deadlines;
- the necessary resources;
- the indicators for measuring the achievement of the objectives set in the strategy.”

(Law on preschool and school education - Effective from 01.08.2016, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

“2. The areas of self-assessment - The process for evaluating the quality includes two components - self-assessment and inspection. Self-assessment is related to the preparation of an internal evaluation in the quality of the education provided by activities, procedures and criteria determined by kindergarten or the school. The process of self-assessment ends before the end of every second year.

Self-assessment is carried out within the following two areas:

- management of the institution, which includes efficient allocation, use and management of the resources for improving the quality of the institution; leadership, strategies and planning; interaction between all stakeholders;
- the educational process which includes training, education and socialization, and their results. Adequate allowance must be individual progress of each child, the support of children with special educational needs and prevention of dropping out of the education system.”

(Law on preschool and school education – Effective from 01.08.2016, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

“3. Participants in the process of self-evaluation – students, teachers, principal, other pedagogical specialists and parents. A working group of representatives of the institution which:

- a) proposes to the principal the activities, procedures, criteria, indicators and tools for self-assessment in the quality of the education provided in the kindergarten or school;
- b) conducts self-assessment;
- c) draws up a report on self-assessment that is submitted to the principal.

Criteria, indicators and tools for self-assessment in the quality of the education provided should be adopted by the Pedagogical Council and approved by the principal. Compulsory tool in the process of self-assessment is organizing regularly a questionnaire survey for the opinions of the parents about the quality of the education services and the overall activity of the institution.” (Law on preschool and school education – Effective from 01.08.2016, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

“4. Terms and conditions for carrying out the self-assessment - after conducting a self-assessment the results are processed and analysed. Measures for improvement of the work of the institution for improving the quality of the education provided are proposed. A final report with the results of self-assessment is prepared.” (Law on preschool and school education-Effective from 01.08.2016, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

“5. Content of self-evaluation report – The report is approved by the principal before the end of the second year and is part of the biennial implementation report of the action plan for the development strategy of the kindergarten or school.

It contains:

- Information about the internal and external environment in which the operates institution operates;
- data for the tools used in the self-assessment;
- details of the results obtained and comparison with the results of previous self- assessment;
- an analysis of those results;
- proposals for measures for improvement of the work of the institution for improving the quality of the education provided, deadlines and responsible persons for their implementation. These measures should be published on the website of the institution and are available for a period not less than four years of publication.” (Law on preschool and school education – Effective from 01.08.2016, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

“6. Routes of presenting the results of self-assessment;

Period for document storage of self-evaluation - not less than five years.” (Law on preschool and school education – Effective from 01.08.2016, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

Education laws and regulations

Laws, ordinances, regulations related to preschool education in Bulgaria are:

ORDINANCE № 9/19.08.2016 for the institutions in the system of pre-school and school education;

“This ordinance determines the state educational standard for the institutions of the Preschool Act and school education. The state educational standard includes:

1. the conditions and order for opening, transformation, change and closing of the institutions in the system of pre-school and school education;
2. the conditions and order for determination of the national schools and innovative schools.” (ORDINANCE № 9/19.08.2016 for the institutions in the system of pre-school and school education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science.)

ORDINANCE № 5/ 03.06.2016 on pre-school education;

“This ordinance determines the state educational standard for preschool education, as well as:

1. the organization of the activities in pre-school education;
2. the requirements to the application of a program system;
3. the mechanism for interaction between the participants in the process of preschool education

The state educational standard is a set of requirements for the learning outcomes and determines:

1. the educational directions in which the preschool education is carried out;
2. the goals and content of the separate educational directions;
3. the requirements for results of the training in each educational direction in the different age groups.“

(The new Ordinance № 5 of 03.06.2016 on preschool education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

ORDINANCE №10/ 19.12.2017 on the reference books, textbooks and teaching aids;

“The ordinance determines the state educational standard of the Preschool Act and school education. The state educational standard for the cognitive books, textbooks and teaching aids include:

1. the requirements to the content, graphic design, polygraphic and electronic implementation of the cognitive books, textbooks and teaching aids;
2. the conditions and order for evaluation and approval of the projects of cognitive books, textbooks and study kits and the changes in them, including the appointment of evaluators;
3. the conditions and order for evaluation and approval of the projects of teaching aids to support training organized abroad;
4. the conditions and order for approval of the list of cognitive books, textbooks and study kits that can be used in the preschool and school system Education” (ORDINANCE №10/ 19.12.2017 on the reference books, textbooks and teaching aids, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

ORDINANCE/ 20.10.2017 on inclusive education;

“This ordinance determines the state educational standard for inclusive education. The ordinance regulates the public relations, related to insurance of inclusive education of children and students in the system of preschool and school education, as well as the activities of institutions in this system to provide personal support development of children and students. The state educational standard for inclusion education determines:

1. the conditions and order for providing general support for personal development of children and students;
2. the terms and conditions for providing additional support for personal development of children and students;
3. the structure, conditions and order of approval of the individual curricula and individual curricula of students with special educational needs;
4. the conditions and order for admission and organization of training of children and students with special educational needs in special schools for training and support of students with sensory disabilities;
5. the conditions and order for education of children and students in a centre for special educational support;” (ORDINANCE/ 20.10.2017 on inclusive education, , issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

LAW on preschool and school education;

“This law regulates public relations related to ensuring the right of pre-school and school education, as well as the structure, functions, organization, management and financing of the system of pre-school and school education. The system of preschool and school education includes participants in the educational process and institutions, as well as the relationships and connections between them to achieve the goals of education. The participants in the educational process are the children, students, teachers, principals and other pedagogical professionals, as well as the parents. The institutions in the system of the pre-school and school education are kindergartens, schools, support centres for personal development and specialized

service units.” (Law on preschool and school education - Effective from 01.08.2016, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

ORDINANCE №13/ 21.09.2016 for the civic, health, environmental and intercultural education;

“This ordinance determines the state educational standard for civic, health, environmental and intercultural education. The state educational standard defines:

1. the essence and goals of the civic, health, ecological and intercultural education;
2. the forms for realization of the civic, health, environmental and intercultural education;
3. the framework requirements for the results of the training in civic, health, environmental and intercultural education;
4. the institutional policies to support civic, health, environmental and
5. intercultural education.

Civic, health, environmental and intercultural education is carried out in schools, kindergartens and personal development support centres in the system of pre-school and school education.“ (ORDINANCE №13/ 21.09.2016 for the civic, health, environmental and intercultural Education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science.)

ORDINANCE № 6/ 11.08.2016 on the acquisition of the Bulgarian literary language

“This ordinance determines the state educational standard for the acquisition of the Bulgarian literary language in the system of pre-school and school education, as well as the conditions and the order for the acquisition of the Bulgarian language by children and students for whom it is not their mother language.“ (ORDINANCE № 6/ 11.08.2016 on the acquisition of the Bulgarian literary language, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

ORDINANCE № 15/ 22.07.2019 on the status and professional development of teachers, principals and other pedagogical specialists

“This ordinance determines the state educational standard for the status and professional development of teachers, principals and other pedagogical specialists in the system of preschool and school education. The state educational standard for status and professional development of teachers, principals and other pedagogical specialists determines:

1. the functions of the pedagogical specialists and their positions in the institutions of the system of the pre-school and school education, as well as the professional qualification necessary for their occupation;
2. the professional profiles;
3. the conditions and order for increasing the qualification of the pedagogical specialists, the professional qualification degrees, the conditions and order for their acquisition, as well as the system of qualification credits; etc.” (ORDINANCE № 15/ 22.07.2019 on the status and professional development of teachers, principals and other pedagogical specialists, issued by the Minister of Education and Science.)

Preschool curriculum

“The implementation of the curriculum gives a strong initial start in the enrolment of children in school. The programs are child-oriented and are the basis that provides play, learning and other interactive activities to promote their physical, social, moral, emotional and cognitive development, as well as their well-being in a safe, stimulating and caring environment. The curriculum is distributed in educational areas and by age groups, as follows:

- Bulgarian language and literature;
- Mathematics;
- Environment;
- Art;
- Physical culture;
- Music;
- Construction and technology.

The teacher organizes the pedagogical interaction with the children by independently selecting appropriate pedagogical technologies (games, teaching and educating) depending on the specific characteristics of the children’s group and the specific topic.

State educational standards are a set of mandatory requirements for results in the preschool system and school education, as well as the conditions and processes for their achievement. The state educational standards in the system of pre-school and school education are for:

- pre-school education;
- acquisition of the Bulgarian literary language;
- curriculum (15.11.2015);
- general education preparation (15.11.2015);
- profiled training;
- acquisition of qualification by profession;
- inclusive education;
- civic, health, ecological and intercultural education;
- evaluation of the results from the education of the students;
- information and documents;
- institutions;
- 12. physical environment and information and library provision of the kindergartens, the schools and centres for support for personal development;
- cognitive books, textbooks and teaching aids (15.11.2015);
- status and professional development of teachers, principals and other pedagogical specialists;
- quality management in the institutions;
- inspection of the kindergartens and the schools;
- financing of the institutions;
- rationing and payment of labour;
- organization of the activities in the school education.“

(The new Ordinance № 5 of 03.06.2016 on preschool education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

Kindergartens work according to a program and teaching aids approved by the Ministry of Education and Science to cover State educational standards for preschool education in each age group.

“The distribution by educational areas for each age group is characterized by:

- Rhythmic and balanced distribution of educational content by topics, months and weeks.
- Belonging of each topic to the respective educational core.
- Expected results from the purposeful work on each topic.
- Tools suitable for the child’s activities on the topic.

Monitoring the results of the educational process has the following tasks:

1. to check the effectiveness of the individual approaches and forms of pedagogical interaction;
2. to monitor the results of the educational process;
3. compliance of the educational process with the individual features or special educational needs of the children.

The approaches of pedagogical interaction, the basis for the realization of the program system, in particular: the content of the forms of pedagogical interaction; thematic distributions by educational areas in all age groups; monitoring the individual results of the child from preschool education; the set ideas for an effective mechanism of interaction between the participants in the pre-school education; are the following:

- a) Personal and individual approach to each child.
- b) Situational and integrated approach.
- c) Constructive approach.
- d) Use of e-learning and technology
- e) Cooperative learning
- f) Intercultural education
- g) Creativity and success”

(The new Ordinance № 5 of 03.06.2016 on preschool education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

“Each kindergarten develops its own curriculum in which the minimum total weekly number of pedagogical situations is:

- for the first age group – 11;
- for the second age group – 13;
- for a third age group – 15;
- for the fourth age group – 17.”

The new Ordinance № 5 of 03.06.2016 on preschool education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

“The maximum total weekly number of pedagogical situations for each age group may not exceed by more than 5 the minimum total number indicated above. The duration of a pedagogical situation at the discretion of the teacher is from 15 to 20 minutes – for the first and second age group, and from 20 to 30 minutes – for the third and fourth age group.

The process of preschool education is subordinated to the implementation of a program system as part of the strategy for the development of the kindergarten, respectively of the school, which is adopted by a decision of the pedagogical council.

The program system is a complete concept for the development of the child with approaches and forms of pedagogical interaction, subordinated to a common goal.” (The new Ordinance № 5 of 03.06.2016 on preschool education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

“The program system includes:

- approaches and forms of pedagogical interaction;
- distribution of the forms of pedagogical interaction;
- thematic distribution for each age group;
- mechanism of interaction between the participants in the pre-school education.

Educational direction „Bulgarian language and literature aims to build the attitude of the child to listen to an active work of art and to express their attitude to it and the actions of the characters in it. The content of the educational field is structured in six educational sub-fields: Related Speech, Vocabulary, Grammatically Correct Speech, Sound Culture, Perception of a Literary Work and Reproduction of a Literary Work. The planning of the activities in the educational field guarantees acquaintance with the national values and traditions in order to preserve and affirm the national identity. It is necessary to provide conditions for stimulating the child to be active in the process of speaking and listening, as the child: names objects, signs, actions and uses the words in the context of the sentence; understands the meaning of the words he uses; constructs different types of sentences in his/ her daily speech; pronounces phonemes correctly in the Bulgarian language; manifests a culture of speech communication. Teachers focus their efforts on building an environment for stimulating games as a means of: enriching children’s speech; encouraging children’s interest in the meaning of words; stimulating interest in books and listening to short fiction texts; tracking a dialogue and participating in it; use accurate vocabulary and stimulate the child to separate the elements of the formal and the content side in the processes of speaking and listening. Achieving the expected results is realized in at least one pedagogical situation per week - for the first age group, at a minimum two pedagogical situations per week - for the second and third age group, and in at least three pedagogical situations per week - for the fourth age group.“ (The new Ordinance № 5 of 03.06.2016 on preschool education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science.)

“The educational content in mathematics is in line with the general goal of preschool education and for the purposes of teaching mathematics in first grade. The specificity of the educational field is that its content must provide the formation of elementary ideas about basic mathematical concepts that are learned later in school. Mathematical learning stimulates general cognition activity and develops the child’s mental abilities, which are the basis for child’s intellectual development. The educational content direction includes specific quantitative, geometric, spatial and time ideas and skills, systematized in five educational sub-fields: Quantitative relations, Measurement, Spatial relations, Time relations, Geometric shapes and forms. The specificity of preschool mathematics preparation is that its content must ensure, above all, the formation of the main mathematical notions, based on which the mathematical knowledge will be mastered in school and the child’s

mental abilities will be stimulated, which will determine its further development and adaptation to school education. Achieving the expected results is realized in at least one pedagogical situation per week - for the first and second age group, at least two pedagogical situations per week - for a third preparatory one group, and in a minimum of three pedagogical situations per week - for the fourth preparatory group. Math education retains its playful nature in all age groups.“ (The new Ordinance № 5 of 03.06.2016 on preschool education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

“The priority of the educational direction “Environment” is the social skills to be transformed under the influence of the cognitive skills in getting to know the world. The overall nature of the experience’s changes under the influence of the specific acquisition of social experience in pedagogical situations and in independent gaming. The activities in the field of education are subordinated to the goal of providing a happy childhood for each child and building motivation and self-confidence in his capabilities. When planning the activities, acquaintance with the national values and traditions is ensured in order to preserve and promote national identity. The purposes of the educational direction are related to various ways of successful connection with others. The teacher’s partnership is built on emotional relationships with the children, suggesting a positive mood and sincere joy of working together. The educational direction includes specific ideas and skills for the surrounding world, systematized in four educational sub-fields: Self-affirmation and communication with others, Social and health environment, The world of nature and its guarding and Cultural and national values. The topics should be general and conditional, should derive from the attitude and perception of the child as a subject and centre in interaction, to provoke an attitude in accordance with the expected results in the education direction. The confidence and tolerance for the others prepares security in the close social community. Achieving the expected results is realized in at least one pedagogical situation per week - for the first age group, and in at least two pedagogical situations per week - for the second age group and for the preparatory groups.” (The new Ordinance № 5 of 03.06.2016 on preschool education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

“The educational direction “Art” is aimed at the development of various pictorial activities. Much more systematic the child is involved in cognitive, visual and creative activities for preparation for school, such as skills to solve individual and group tasks, planning, etc. Graphics and detailing are purposefully mastered skills in preparing the hand for writing. More in-depth is also the acquaintance with applied-decorative art and sculpture. Children improve their skills to recreate objects from reality through painting and colouring. Children are involved in activities in which they learn skills and techniques for creating images based on imagination, memory, impression and observation. Achieving the expected results is realized in at least two pedagogical situations per week for each age group.” (The new Ordinance № 5 of 03.06.2016 on preschool education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

“The educational direction „Music” presupposes the realization of a wide range of activities based on children’s emotional activity. The choice of musical repertoire is subject to the thematic distribution for children of all ages. The main activity in

kindergarten is singing. All further requirements can be only recommended. Music and games are connected through the opportunities they give the child to choose a role or partner for expression. That is why teachers focus their efforts on organizing play activities to stimulate children's emotionality and initiative. Achieving the expected results is realized in at least two pedagogical situations per week for all age groups." (The new Ordinance № 5 of 03.06.2016 on preschool education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science.)

"The educational field "Construction and Technology" includes manipulative and practical skills and important cognitive skills in preparing the child for school. For example: work with schematic images, problem solving, work on small projects, knowledge transfer, etc. The work on initial acquaintance with the technique is also differentiated- tools, machines that children encounter and use as models and toys for transport and construction equipment and household appliances. The children are aimed at understanding their role in people's lives and some rules for safety. The activities for achieving the results of this educational direction are oriented to the reproduction of sequentially shown by the teacher operations, activities, movements, techniques for creating model or layout. The practical work is focused on step-by-step instructions demonstrated by the teacher for making simple products from the child's familiar environment – vehicles, furniture and appliances, toys, animals, etc. Achieving the expected results is realized in at least one pedagogical situation per week - for the first and second age group, and at least two pedagogical situations per week - for the preparatory groups." (The new Ordinance № 5 of 03.06.2016 on preschool education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science.)

"The educational field "Physical Culture" includes the complex development of the preschool child: good health, physical development; cognitive activity and emotional satisfaction from motor activity; game and communication skills. The activities in the educational field are subordinated to ensuring a happy childhood for every child, and for building motivation and confidence in his own abilities. Additional form is the morning gymnastics, including breathing and corrective exercises, different types of walking, running with short duration, general developmental exercises and mobile games. Achieving the expected results is realized in at least three pedagogical situations per week." (The new Ordinance № 5 of 03.06.2016 on preschool education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

Preschool curriculum related to children's social and emotional skills

"The preschool curriculum related to the social and emotional development of children are part of ORDINANCE № 13/ 21.09.2016 on civic, health, environmental and intercultural education." (ORDINANCE №13/ 21.09.2016 for the civic, health, environmental and intercultural education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science). Civic, health, environmental and intercultural education are applied in schools, kindergartens and centres for personal development projects in the system of pre-school and school education. Civic, health, environmental and intercultural education are interconnected and form interdisciplinary complex aimed at acquiring social, civic and intercultural competences and competencies related to health and

maintaining sustainable Environment. Civic education is aimed at the formation of civic consciousness and civic virtues and is related to knowledge of the structure of a democratic society, of rights and the obligations of the citizen and with the skills and willingness to be responsible civic behaviour.

“The objectives of civil, health, environmental and intercultural education are: building an autonomous and active person who:

- understands and upholds universal human values, the values of democracy and human rights, participates in civil, political and social life in a responsible, creative and an effective way for oneself and for the society;
- knows the institutions, structure and procedures of democratic society, economic and political realities of the globalizing world;
- respects the importance of each human person in diversity of its identities, recognizes the right and value of difference, accepts the equality of all in the general social space;
- is aware of and values its cultural identity;
- interacts with members of his family, community and other people in a constructive and respectful way;
- expresses its civil position reasonably and critically;
- takes independent decisions on its development, shows initiative and ability to set goals, plan and to justify his actions;
- is responsible for its conduct and assesses the impact of his actions for his life and that of others;
- knows and observes the norms for ecological culture and behaviour with view of nature protection and creation of a sustainable environment;
- knows the mechanisms of the public institutions and civil society for the implementation of shared responsibility for the protection of the environment and is ready to participate in them;
- is able to make connections between separate spheres of the public life and to understand the causes of social inequalities, environmental and global challenges.”

(ORDINANCE №13/ 21.09.2016 for the civic, health, environmental and intercultural education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

“In pre-school education, civic, health, environmental and intercultural education carried out in all age groups:

- integrated in the education in the educational directions;
- integrated in additional forms of pedagogical interaction;
- as an independent educational field, when an innovative or proprietary software system provides for this.

The forms of realization of the civic, health, environmental and intercultural education for the different age groups are defined in the program system of kindergarten or school, which is developed in the order and at the conditions of the state educational standard for preschool education.” (ORDINANCE №13/ 21.09.2016 for the civic, health, environmental and intercultural education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

Framework Requirements for the Results of Civic Education Training- Preschool Education

Table 2. Framework Requirements for the Results of Civic Education Training-
Preschool Education

Area of competence	Result of the child's education
1. Relationships with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child describes and explains different roles in hers/his family, rights and responsibilities, related to them; • The child has a positive attitude to cooperation with others in joint activities; • The child can express appropriately hers/his feelings, declares his/hers needs and desires, shares problems and searches for help.
2. Social environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child has a positive attitude to holidays in family for preservation of the spiritual connection between the generations; • The child orients in the symbolism and the ritual of the most popular Bulgarian holidays.
3. Human rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child describes the attitude or/and behaviour of adults/ children, which violates rights; • The children makes a self-assessment of their behaviour and understand the consequences of violation of rules in the relationship;
4. Democratic citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child determines its national identity
5. Identities and differences in society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child determines its national identity
6. Power, politics and democratic values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child recognizes local authorities for order and security and has an idea about their activity, related to compliance with children's rights
7. Social politics, justice and solidarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child shows concrete acts of solidarity in resolving group tasks and games; • The child understands the need for rules in the communication with others; • The child explains his/hers actions by linking them to rules and values

This framework presents only part of the program for social and emotional development of the children. Social development is related to the way a child behaves and plays with other children and adults. Emotional development is associated with the child's sense of security, as well as the ability to express, understand and control their emotions. Social and emotional development is closely related to the development of behaviour.

The socialization of the child and the development of skills for living in a community with other people is one of the key aspects for his/her personal, social and emotional development. These skills include the acquisition of certain rules, social norms, patterns of behaviour, values and attitudes. Socialization is supported first by the family; then from the environment and the network of contacts maintained by the family; from educational institutions (kindergarten, school, college); from peers; from the media; etc. In order to develop a rich set of social skills, the child should acquire experience of communicating in different social communities.

All children go through different phases of social development. They develop social skills mostly through games. The way they play changes over time. As they grow older, they change their preferences - from playing alone to playing with other children.

The teachers in kindergartens create a positive and friendly atmosphere in the group. They encourage the sharing of toys and belongings. They are aware that they must have reasonable expectations of children in terms of sharing. Some toys can be shared with others more easily than others.

Teachers help the child to build a positive self-esteem, which is a very important part of his/her social skills. Children face various obstacles and challenges in communicating with others depending on their age, background and individual characteristics. Some make friends easily, others harder. Some are shyer and others are more communicative. In one situation they have no problem making social contact, and in another- they fail. The role of both parents and teachers is to monitor the child's behaviour in each social situation in order to learn more about him. Just as they learn to walk and talk, so children learn to communicate. To develop his/her social skills, the child needs care, practice and support. By using games, conversations and additional forms of pedagogical interaction, teachers strive to develop children's social and emotional skills.

Quality assessment

The state educational standard for management of quality in educational institutions includes:

1. nature, principles and goals of quality management in institutions;
2. framework requirements for quality management in institutions;
3. quality management bodies in the institutions.

The state educational standard for management of the quality in the institutions applies to kindergartens and schools from the preschool and school system education.

Quality management in the institutions is continuous organizational development process based on analysis, planning, implementation of activities, evaluation and submission of improvements in the work of kindergartens and schools.

The analysis, planning, implementation of the activities and introduction of improvements in the work of the kindergartens and the schools is carried out under conditions and by order, determined by the state educational standard for the quality management in the institutions.

Quality management in institutions is based on the following principles:

1. efficiency and effectiveness;
2. autonomy and self-government;

3. engagement and cooperation between the participants in the process;
4. clear distribution of responsibilities for achieving the goals of the institution;
5. continuity and transparency of the management process quality in the institution.

Quality management framework requirements in institutions are the minimum required requirements for quality management in kindergarten and school and relate to:

1. the analysis, planning, implementation of the activities and making improvements in the work of kindergartens and schools;
2. the areas of self-assessment;
3. the participants in process of self-assessment;
4. the conditions and order for carrying out the self-assessment;
5. the content of the self-assessment report;
6. the ways of presenting the results of the self-assessment;
7. the term of storage of the documentation from the self-assessment.

“The analysis, planning, implementation of activities and making improvements in the work of kindergartens and schools are held every two years. The analysis in the process of quality management in institutions is based on data on:

1. the results of the implementation of the objectives of the institution;
2. strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and risks for the development of the institution;
3. the individual progress of each child and student in relation to his educational results;
4. the institution-specific key factors that influence the quality of education provided, including factors of the social environment.”

(Law on preschool and school education - Effective from 01.08.2016, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

“Evaluation in the quality management process is performed through self-assessment and inspection. Self-assessment is a process of preparing an internal assessment of the quality of the provided education for two consecutive school years through activities, procedures and criteria defined by kindergarten or school. The self-assessment process ends before the end of each second school year. Self-assessment is performed in the following areas:

1. management of the institution, which includes: effective allocation, use and management of resources to increase quality in the institution, leadership, strategies and planning, interaction of all stakeholders;
2. educational process, which includes: training, education and socialization and their results, considering the individual progress of each child, the support of children with special educational needs and dropout prevention the education system.” (Law on preschool and school education - Effective from 01.08.2016, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

“The self - assessment is carried out by a working group of representatives of the institution which:

1. propose to the principal the activities, procedures, criteria, indicators and tools for self-assessment of the quality of the education provided in the kindergarten or school;

2. conducts the self-assessment;
3. prepare a self-assessment report, which he shall submit to the principal.

Self-assessment activities and procedures are including in the regulations for the activity of the kindergarten or the school.

The inspection is a process of preparing a comprehensive independent expert assessment of the quality of the education provided by the kindergarten or school at a certain moment of their activity and determining the directions for improvement.

Inspection is the process of preparing a comprehensive independent expert assessment of the quality of what is provided by the kindergarten or school education at a particular point in their activity and setting guidelines for improvement. The inspection shall be carried out according to criteria and indicators, grouped by inspection areas. Every 5 years at least one inspection is carried out in each kindergarten and each school. The National Inspectorate of Education, as a legal entity supported by the budget of the Council of Ministers based in Sofia, is established to carry out the inspection. The National Inspectorate of Education is also managed represented by a principal. The principal of the National Inspectorate of Education is appointed and dismissed by the Prime Minister. The structure and functions of the National Inspectorate for education, the rights and obligations of inspectors are determined by regulations adopted by the Council of Ministers on the proposal of the Minister of Education and Science.” (Law on preschool and school education - Effective from 01.08.2016, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

Staff Training

“According to Ordinance № 12 / 01.09.2016, pedagogical specialists are persons who, in accordance with the acquired education and professional qualification, hold positions in the system of pre-school and school education and perform functions related to: the education, upbringing, socialization and support for personal development of the children and students from the kindergartens, schools and the canters for support for personal development.” (ORDINANCE № 15/ 22.07.2019 on the status and professional development of teachers, principals and other pedagogical specialists, issued by the Minister of Education and Science).

“Teachers have functions related to the preparation, organization and conduct of education, upbringing, socialization and support of children and students in institutions in the system of preschool and school education. The position of “teacher” includes following functions:

1. planning of the educational process and / or of the activities like: self-preparation, organized vacation, physical activity and activities of interest, considering the age, individual abilities and features and special educational needs of children and students, as well as the opportunities for their development;
2. organizing and conducting the educational process, of self-preparation, organized vacation, physical activity and activities of interest to students, use of effective teaching methods, information and communication technologies, creation

and maintenance of stimulating and supportive educational environment and positive discipline that encourage the development of children or students;

3. monitoring the progress of the children/students, promotion of the achievements or rendering the necessary support and assistance for their full integration in the educational and social environment according to their specific needs;

4. cooperation and participation for support of the personal development of the children and the students together with other pedagogical specialists, interaction with other institutions and organizations for realization of support for personal development of the children or of the students;

5. controlling and encouraging the participation of the children or the students in the educational process;

6. responsibility for the life and health of the children during the educational process in a pedagogical situation, and during the organized additional activities or activities of interest;

7. participation in the assessment and selection of appropriate knowledge books or teaching aids, considering the specifics of the group or class.” (ORDINANCE № 15/ 22.07.2019 on the status and professional development of teachers, principals and other pedagogical specialists, issued by the Minister of Education and Science).

“Positions of pedagogical specialists are held by persons acquired higher education in the relevant position professionally direction according to the Classifier of higher education and the professional qualifications required for the performance of the respective position.

The position “teacher” can be held after obtaining a minimum bachelor’s degree with a profile of “Preschool pedagogy”. The training of pedagogues is built based on knowledge and competencies in psychology, pedagogy and private didactics. The duration of the training is 4 years. Professional competencies for working with preschool children, abilities for education and upbringing of the child’s personality and development of its creative potential are acquired.” (ORDINANCE № 15/ 22.07.2019 on the status and professional development of teachers, principals and other pedagogical specialists, issued by the Minister of Education and Science).

“Professional development is an ongoing process of improvement and enrichment of the competencies of the pedagogical specialists for effective fulfilment of the requirements of the performed work and for career development. The increasing of the qualification of the pedagogical specialists are carried out by:

1. specialized service units, higher schools and scientific organizations;

2. training organizations, whose training programs have been approved by the Minister of Education and Science and have been entered in an information register.

The increasing of qualification is carried out according to programs and in forms of choice of the pedagogical specialist in order to:

1. updating or improvement of acquired and / or acquisition of new additional competencies;

2. the implementation of the policy of the institution for ensuring progress and improvement of the educational results of the children;

3. satisfaction of the professional interests of the pedagogical specialist in accordance with the professional profile;

The planning, coordination, management and control of the activities for increasing the qualification of the pedagogical specialists are carried out at national, regional, municipal and school level.” (ORDINANCE № 15/ 22.07.2019 on the status and professional development of teachers, principals and other pedagogical specialists, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

“The qualification of the pedagogical specialists depending on the needs, goals and content of the trainings is:

1. introductory - aimed at the acquisition of knowledge and formation of skills, introducing the profession, oriented to adaptation in the educational environment and for methodological and organizational support

2. continuing - aimed at continuous professional and personal improvement in the framework of lifelong learning, oriented to the career development of pedagogical specialists and their successful implementation”

(ORDINANCE № 15/ 22.07.2019 on the status and professional development of teachers, principals and other pedagogical specialists, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

“For participation in trainings for increasing the qualification on programs of the pedagogical specialist are awarded qualification credits. One qualification credit is awarded for:

1. participation in training with duration of 16 academic hours, of which not less than 8 academic hours are present;

2. preparation, presentation and publication of a report in a specialized publication;

3. scientific or scientific-methodical publication in a specialized edition.

Based on the achieved level of qualification pedagogical specialists can acquire the following consistently professional qualifications:

1. fifth professional qualification degree;

2. fourth professional qualification degree;

3. third professional qualification degree;

4. second professional qualification degree;

5. first professional qualification degree.”

(ORDINANCE № 15/ 22.07.2019 on the status and professional development of teachers, principals and other pedagogical specialists, issued by the Minister of Education and Science)

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ORDINANCE № 9/19.08.2016 for the institutions in the system of pre-school and school education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science

ORDINANCE №10/ 19.12.2017 on the reference books, textbooks and teaching aids, issued by the Minister of Education and Science



ORDINANCE/ 20.10.2017 on inclusive education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science

ORDINANCE №13/ 21.09.2016 for the civic, health, environmental and intercultural education, issued by the Minister of Education and Science

ORDINANCE № 6/ 11.08.2016 on the acquisition of the Bulgarian literary language, issued by the Minister of Education and Science

ORDINANCE № 15/ 22.07.2019 on the status and professional development of teachers, principals and other pedagogical specialists, issued by the Minister of Education and Science

Hungary. Educational context

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Introduction

Two types of full-time ECEC facilities are available in Hungary: nursery (bölcsőde) for children up to three and kindergarten (óvoda) for children between the ages of three and compulsory school age. Both offer all-day services for 50 weeks a year.

The regular public education system in Hungary consists of a primary school (*általános iskola*), a general secondary school (*gimnázium*), a vocational secondary school (*szakközépiskola*) and a vocational school (*szakmunkásképző iskola*). In addition, some special schools for short-term vocational education (speciális szakiskola) also provide two years of schooling. These vocational schools belong to the adult education system and are run by NOVETAL (*Nemzeti Szakképzési és Felnőttképzési Hivatal/National Office of Vocational Education and Training and Adult Learning*)

General Description of the educational system

The national educational system for children 0-6/7 years of age

During socialism up to 1989, providing education and care for young children became a state responsibility and was highly centralised and uniform for a particular age group. Traditionally, the competence for childcare for children under three belongs to the Ministry of Health. Competence for children between the ages of three and six belongs to the Ministry of Education.

Today, the system of children's services in Hungary is shared by two sub-ministries within the Ministry of Human Capacities (*Emberi Erőforrások Minisztériuma*):

- the State Secretariat for Family and Youth Affairs (*Család-, Ifjúság- és Népeségpolitikai Intézet*) is responsible for centre-based care (bölcsőde)
- for children under the age of three; and the Ministry of National Resources (*Nemzeti Erőforrás Minisztérium*) is responsible for the kindergarten education system (*óvoda*) for children 3-6 years old.

Diagram of the structure

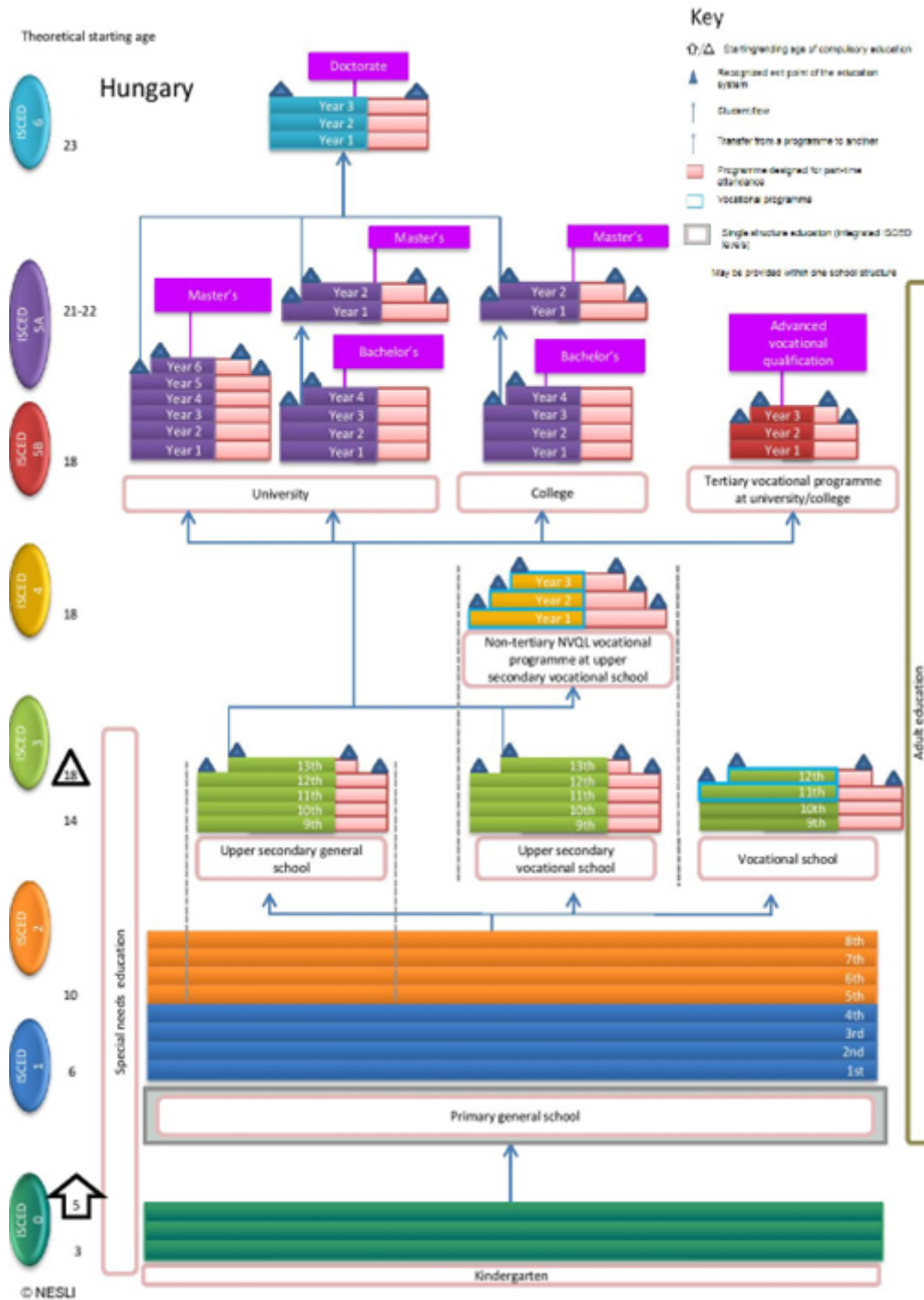


Diagram 6. Hungarian educational system, source: Oktatási Hivatal, 2014

Education and/or Care

„The pre-school system in Hungary is, as in other countries, well developed. According to the comparative data of the OECD, children attended nursery schools for 3.2 years on average, while in the OECD countries for 2.1 years. In Hungary, almost every 5-year-old child (99.2%) attended kindergarten; in the OECD countries, only 82%.” (Oktatási Hivatal, 2014).

Day-care for children under three years is provided by nurseries (creche). It offers day-care and upbringing for children from 20 weeks of age to 3 years. If the child has reached the age of 3 but is not capable of pre-school education based on its level of physical or mental development, he or she can stay in the nursery until the age of 4. The nurseries may also provide the upbringing and care of a child with special educational needs up to six. In addition to primary care, the nurseries can help families with special counselling, regular childcare, running a children’s hotel or other childcare services. (Examples include a parent-child playgroup and game and equipment rentals for families.) These services are available until the child reaches the age of six.

Nurseries and kindergartens have opening hours, usually from six in the morning to six in the evening, with some local variations, providing full-time care and education. Children get four meals a day: breakfast, mid-morning fruit, hot lunch, and afternoon snack. Centres usually close for six weeks during the summer and Christmas holidays.

Education laws and regulations

The Fundamental Law declares that in Hungary, all its citizens have the right to education, the freedom of learning, and, in the manner provided for by law, the financial support of those receiving education and the freedom to teach. Moreover, the Fundamental Law (*Alaptörvény*) also declares that primary education is free and compulsory. The professional framework law for public education is Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education. This Act regulates the main points related to public education; for example, it regulates how and under what conditions a child of compulsory school age can start school. Regarding the concept of mandatory schooling is closely linked to the school. Still, since participation in pre-school education is mandatory in Hungary from the age of three, it is also regulated by the law mentioned above.

Ministerial decrees provide a framework for the day-to-day running of the institutions, partly administrative and partly relevant to the content of education. The framework curriculum decree is (was) of decisive importance for regulating the content of school work. At the same time, the operation details are held by EMMI Decree 20/2012 (VIII. 31.) on the operation of educational institutions. The strategic and operational regulatory documents (pedagogical programme, organisational and operational regulations, work plan, house rules) of the professionally autonomous public education institutions are determined by the institutions themselves by the legislation.

The Act XXXI of 1997 on the Protection of Children and Guardianship Administration discusses the place, role, and responsibilities of day-care centres within the child protection system and the rights and obligations of children and parents. Article 42 * (1) Daycare shall be provided for children under three years unless this Act makes an exception.

Preschool curriculum

In Hungary, the *National Core Curriculum* is an educational framework which regulates the content of the Hungarian public education policies. The last version has considered most of the recommendations made by the European Union. The priority and main focus of the National Core Curriculum (NCC) is the development of key competencies such as: communicating in the mother tongue and improving literacy skills or the importance of the social and 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 as well. Hence, the main goal of the curriculum is to develop educational practices that foster the competencies mentioned above. It is regulated by schools' local educational programmes at the local level, including local institutions' curricula. However, the local curricula of the institutions (nurseries and kindergarten) both include the development of social and emotional competencies and have been seen as a tool for the inclusion of children with special needs. (Csáth, 2010) Each ECEC institution has its own Pedagogical Program and is designed to support the process of becoming autonomous and independent. Kindergartens and nurseries have different pedagogical focuses. While nurseries train the children to do everyday tasks and become self-reliant and autonomous, kindergarten emphasises passing on cultural values and preparation for school.

Unfortunately, in Hungary, there are few social and emotional skill programs. The existing model programs focus primarily on children and are not so complex as the international programs like Strong Kids and I can Solve Problems. Furthermore, they are not an explicit part of the curriculum and are always held by school psychologists.

Quality assessment

Government authorities regularly supervise both institutions. There are health visits, and according to need, both nurseries and kindergartens can use the services of other professionals, such as psychologists, special education teachers, speech therapists, etc. Hungary has its national standards for nurseries and kindergartens, which cover basic principles of care and education, minimum criteria for the environment, staffing, health and safety requirements, and necessary documentation.

Staff Training

Children's education services are dominated by female workers with an average age of 41 years. These facts forecast different and complex problems and questions such as why is the popularity/prestige of this profession so „low”. This topic has been very often discussed in the last years in Hungary. Recognising the need to increase the reputation of the teaching career, making the job attractive, and the importance of retaining pedagogues, the education policy created a government decree to support and help the career development system of pedagogues: it introduced a **teacher career model** on September 1, 2013. The promotion system is valid for everyone who works in public education and pedagogical-professional service institutions. The promotion system is valid for everyone who works in public education and pedagogical-professional service institutions. The qualification system classifies teachers into five grades: trainee, teacher I., teacher II., Master teacher, and research teacher. Regardless of the type of institution in which they start their work, junior

educators take an internship qualification exam in the second year of their internship. This profession life model regulates the steps of the qualification procedure valid for trainees and the course of the implementation. The most important document related to the qualification process that an educator must prepare and submit electronically is the portfolio, which demonstrates professionalism by complying with certain mandatory content elements.

Academic qualification and working conditions: Pre-primary teachers (ISCED 02) have a Bachelor's degree (as in most other OECD countries) they face comparatively low salaries and high workloads: the annual number of hours of teaching is higher than the OECD average (1 152 hours and 1 005 hours, respectively). Care worker to child ratios is usually 1:6 in groups of 12 in nurseries and 1:11 in groups of 22 in kindergartens. The balance is better for groups with children having special needs. Professional support for nurseries is provided by institutions whose staff: (a) monitor other services in a given geographical area, (b) organise ongoing training, conferences, exchange visits, etc., (c) provide consultation and guidance, and (d) circulate information.

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Portugal. Educational context

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Introduction

Access to Education is right of all Portuguese, enshrined in the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic and in the Basic Law of the Educational System (Law no. 46/1986, October 14th), and that education is consigned as universal and free, during the period of compulsory education (up to the 12th grade). The State recognises, in parallel, the freedom to learn and teach, including the parents' right to choose and guide the educational process of their children.

The present paper aims to characterise the Portuguese educational context, providing a description of the educational system overall organisation, focusing on preschool education. At this level, issues such as the applicable legislation, the curriculum organisation (concerning the promotion of social and emotional skills development), the quality assessment, and the education professionals' training are addressed.

Short country overview

Portugal, officially the Portuguese Republic, is a state in southwestern Europe, founded in 1143, occupying a total area of 92.212 Km². The mainland part is located in the far southwest of the Iberian Peninsula, being bordered to the north and east by Spain and to west and south by the Atlantic Ocean. Its territory also includes two autonomous regions: the Atlantic archipelagos of Madeira and the Azores. Portugal has 10.6 million inhabitants (2011) and a population density of 115.4 inhabitants/Km², with a higher concentration along the coast. The country's main official language is Portuguese, being also recognised as official languages the "Mirandês" and the Portuguese Sign Language.

General Description of the educational system

According to the Basic Law of the Educational System (Law no. 46/1986), all Portuguese have the right to education, and it is the State's responsibility to promote the education democratisation, in order to ensure the right to a fair and effective equal opportunities in educational access and success. Despite its responsibility, it is not the State's right to programme education. This role is entrusted to the Directorate-General for Education (DGE) of the Ministry of Education (ME), which is a central office of the State's direct administration, endowed with administrative autonomy. This office is responsible for implementing the policies regarding pedagogical and didactic components of preschool, of primary and secondary education, and of extra-school education and technical support to its formulation, focusing mainly on the areas of the curriculum development, the teaching and assessment tools, and the support and educational supplements (Decree-Law no. 266-G/2012). In addition to the guidelines

and orientations of the ME, a law was enacted in 2018 giving autonomy and flexibility to schools, which allow them to manage up to 25% of the basic curricular matrices, aiming at the development of curricular and pedagogical innovation plans that meet the needs of each context and that allow knowledge enrichment, developing the students' skills and attitudes, crucial to achieve the competencies set out in the Profile of Students Exiting Compulsory Schooling (Decree-Law no. 55/2018).

Like other European countries, Portugal has defined a compulsory education of 12 years, organised in three educational cycles. Although the legislation of the educational system [Basic Law of the Educational System, Pre-School Education Framework Law (Law no. 5/1997)] does not cover nursery education, it is considered, according to the Recommendation of the National Council of Education (CNE), that this is a child's right and, therefore, it is vital the existence of a pedagogical unit for early childhood, where the professionals' work has common grounds and is guided by the same principles (ME/DGE, 2016).

Preschool education is, therefore, the initial and optional level of education and provides for the continuation of the educational and learning process started in the family or nursery contexts. In this respect, some of the most specific objectives, among others established (Law no. 46/1986), include the stimulation of each child's abilities, as well as providing a balanced development of all its potentialities; to contribute to children's emotional stability and security; to foster child's integration in diverse social groups; to develop the child's expression and communication abilities, as well as creative imagination.

Basic Education, of universal and compulsory nature, aims to ensure a general education, common to all students, in order to provide the acquisition of founding knowledge that allows the continuation of studies, as well as the development of skills, interests and aptitudes, fundamental to a civic, and social and emotional awareness and maturity (Law no. 46/1986). Basic Education consists of the 1st cycle, with a duration of four school years (1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th years), and foresees the development of oral language and the initiation and progressive mastery of reading and writing, of the essential notions of arithmetic and calculation, of the physical and social environment and of the artistic, dramatic, musical and motor expressions. It is the responsibility of one single teacher, who can be assisted in specialised areas. The 2nd cycle, which lasts two school years (5th and 6th years), is organised by interdisciplinary areas of basic training and is predominantly carried out by a teacher per area. Humanistic, artistic, physical and sports, scientific and citizen education, among others, aim at enabling students to assimilate and interpret information critically, so as to empower the acquisition of methods and instruments of work and knowledge that will allow them to pursue their education. The 3rd cycle, which lasts three school years (7th, 8th and 9th years), is organised according to a unified curricular plan, integrating diversified vocational areas (humanistic, artistic, physical and sportive, scientific and technological dimensions), essential for entry into working life and continuing studies. This teaching is developed in a system of one teacher per subject or group of subjects.

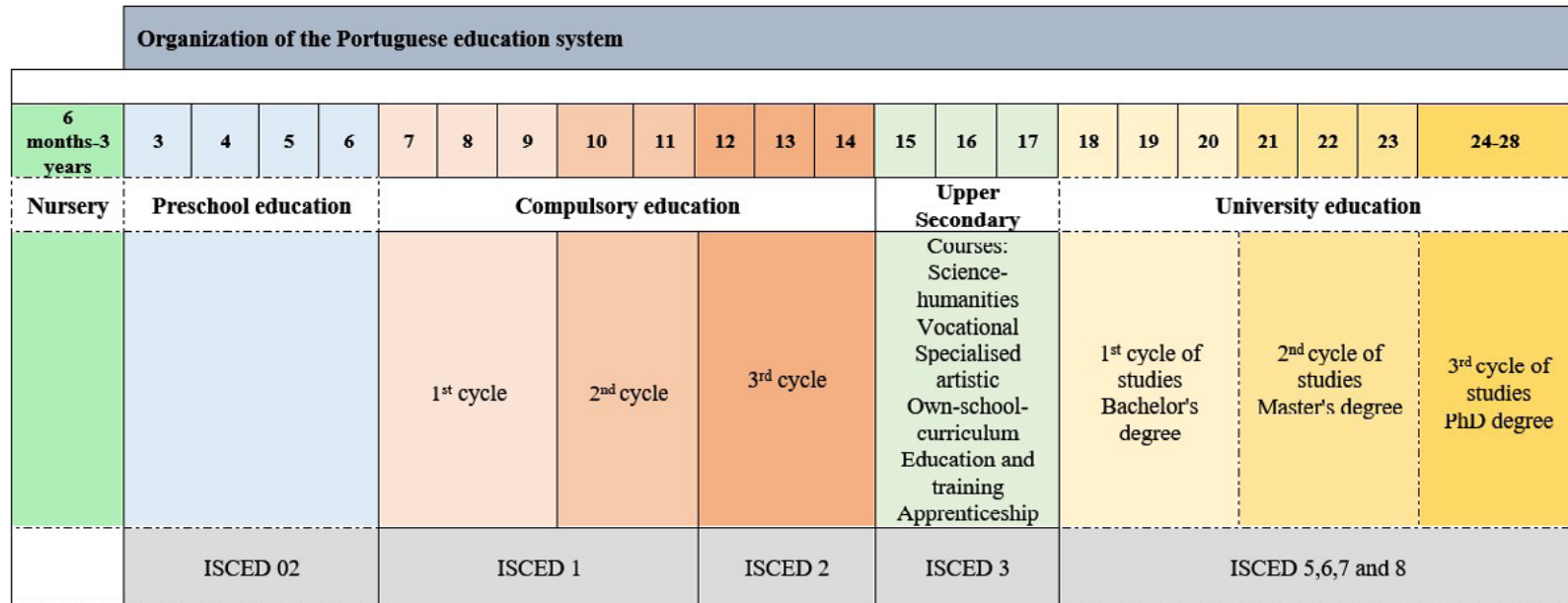
Secondary education is the last level of compulsory education and has a duration of three school years that correspond to the 10th, 11th and 12th school years. It is organised in differential forms, contemplating the existence of courses predominantly oriented to active life or to the pursuit of studies, containing training components of technical and vocational nature, suitable to the nature of various courses. In secondary education, each teacher is responsible for one subject (Law no. 46/1986).


After concluding the compulsory education, young people can choose to enter the labour market, opt for post-secondary and non-higher education, or pursue studies in higher education. The post-secondary and non-higher education are organised in Technological Specialisation Courses (CET), aiming at the qualified insertion in the world of work and the acquisition of professional training level 4. Higher education, in turn, subordinate to the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education (MCTES), is structured under the principles of the Bologna Process and is provided in polytechnic institutes and universities of public, private, cooperative and concordat nature. Higher education is organised in 3 years study cycles: graduate/bachelor, master and doctorate which, upon conclusion, recognise the academic degree to which it corresponds, being conferred graduate degree, master degree and doctorate degree. The national education network is composed of the public and the private network. The public network includes preschool education establishments of the Ministry of Education (ME) and the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security (MTSSS). The private network includes non-profit and profit-seeking establishments, namely private and cooperative education institutions, in the first case, and Private Social Solidarity Institutions (IPSS) in the latter case.

In practical terms, the private sector is governed by its own legislation and statutes but must comply with the provision of Law no. 46/1986, 14 October.

In 2019, according to the statistical data provided by the Directorate-General for Education and Science Statistics (DGEEC), Portugal counted a total of 3.667 educational establishments with male prevalence in the different cycles, except for higher education, whose female gender proved to be dominant (208.582) compared to male gender (176.660). Of the total number of educational establishments, more than a half (5.735), belongs to the public network and the rest belonging to the private network (2.632). The public network provides a greater number of schools and children and young people enrolled in all study cycles. In preschool education there were 3.540 establishments accounted for, with 128.512 children enrolled, whereas the private network had a total of 2.252 schools and a total of 115.207 children enrolled. In what concerns basic education, it was confirmed a high number of schools and children enrolled in the public network; the 1st cycle had 3.623 schools and 341.463 children enrolled, the 2nd cycle held 918 schools and 192.896 children enrolled and the 3rd cycle had 1.142 schools and 314.351 children enrolled. In secondary education, there were a total of 580 schools accounted for, with 314.703 children registered in regular education and 5.257 in CET; there were also 316.189 young people enrolled in higher education. The private network had, in turn, in the 1st cycle 517 establishments with 52.230 children enrolled; the 2nd cycle had 266 establishments and 26.011 children enrolled; the 3rd cycle had 320 establishments and 43.178 young people enrolled. There were 379 secondary schools with 84.683 young people enrolled in regular education and 18 in CET. Finally, there were 69.058 young people enrolled in higher education.

Diagram of the structure



 Optional education, not mandatory


 International Standard Classification of Education

Diagram 7. Portugal educational system

Education and/or Care

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), in Portugal, is organised in a two-tier structure, with different responses for younger children, under 3 years of age, and older children, over 3 years of age. The offer for children under 3 years old is focused on childcare, constituting a bonding and stability focal point for children. The ECEC for children under 3 years old, as previously mentioned, is not part of the educational system, and is under the responsibility of the MTSSS, and is mainly ensured by private non-profit organisations, which maintain cooperation agreements with this Ministry, and private profit-seeking organisations, with an operating license approved by the Ministry.

The social and educational offer oriented to children under 3 years old is constituted by:

- Nursery – social response of a social and educational nature (Ordinance no. 262/2011; Ordinance no. 411/2012) which welcomes children up to the age of 3. Its primary objective is to support and collaborate with families in sharing children's care and responsibilities through the promotion of children's wellbeing and fully-rounded development.
- Nanny (Childminders) – social response (Decree-Law no. 115/2015) carried out by a service provided by a person duly licensed, for this purpose, by the Institute of Social Security, Public Institute (ISS, I.P.) who provides care in their residence, taking in children up to 3 years of age. Each nanny can take in up to 4 children, preferably of different ages (EACEA, 2020).
- Familiar Nursery – a social response (Ordinance no. 232/2015) consisting of a group of nannies, no less than four, who exercise the activities under an institution framework [Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa, Private Social Solidarity Institutions (IPSS) or legally equivalent institutions], aiming at the care of children up to three years of age (EACEA, 2020).

Preschool education is the first stage of basic education, in the process of lifelong education, and aims to complement the educational action of the family (Law no. 5/1997) contributing to the children personal and social development, expression and communication, curiosity and critical thinking, and guaranteeing an affectionate, warm and safe environment. Preschool covers children from 3 years old up to compulsory school age (6 years old). Regarding the constitution of groups, according to the legislation, they should have a minimum of 20 and a maximum of 25 children. The decision of the children group age composition agrees with a pedagogical option, safeguarding that the interaction between children at different stages of development and with diverse knowledge, acts as a facilitator of development and learning (ME/DGE, 2016).

As mentioned in number 1, the national preschool education network is composed of public kindergartens, inserted in school groups, and private and cooperative education establishments. Regardless of the network to which they belong, the Curriculum Guidelines for Preschool Education (OCEPE) – a reference for building and managing the curriculum that should be adapted to the social context, the characteristics of children and families and the evolution of learning of each child and group (ME/DGE, 2016) – are mandatory for both networks.

The present paper has contributed to elucidate and clarify the favourable conditions for school success and constitutes a useful tool for early childhood educators to structure processes, strategies and modes of progression, in order to provide learning experiences for all children before entering the 1st cycle. It should be pointed out that, when defining learnings to be performed in each one of the areas set out in the OCEPE (Personal and Social Training Area, Expression and Communication Area, Work Knowledge Area), professionals should seek to address the different areas in a holistic and integrated way. The achievement of the objectives requires, on the professionals side, a close look at each child in order to know and understand each child, as well as maintaining a continuous interest in improving the quality of the educational response. Observation and recording are complementary tools for professionals in the sense that they allow them to collect information to assess, question and reflect on their practices and to understand the progress of children in terms of development and learning. The information gathered allows to substantiate and adequate the planning of pedagogical action.

The pedagogical supervision is the responsibility of the ME, which is responsible for ensuring the quality of education in the establishments of the national preschool education network. The technical supervision, which aims to monitor the organisation and operation of preschool education establishments, is the responsibility of the ME in conjunction with MTSSS. The guidelines for the conduct of kindergartens inspections include a section on issues where inspectors should seek the opinion of children. These include questions about their preferred activities, their playful activities free choice and the quality of their relationship with the educational staff (EACEA, 2020).

Education Laws and Regulations

The Basic Law of the Educational System approved by Law no. 46/1986 (subsequently amended by Laws no. 115/97, 49/2005 and 85/2009) establishes the realisation of the right to study, the guarantee of continuous training that favours the overall development of the personality, the social progress and the democratisation of society. According to this Law, the education system operates through different structures and actions that are responsibility of different institutions and organisations, of public, private and cooperative nature.

Following the Basic Law, emerges the Pre-School Education Framework Law, Law no. 5/1997 of 10 February, where it was established the legal framework for preschool education, namely as a complement to the educational action of the family, with whom it should be established a close cooperation.

In the same year, other legislation was surfaced, such as:

- Approved the Curricular Guidelines for Preschool Education (Dispatch no. 5220/1997) which were homologated in Dispatch no. 9180/2016;
- Established the legal framework for the development and the expansion of the national preschool education network, and defined its organisation and funding system (Decree-Law no. 147/1997);
- Defined the criteria to be used by preschool establishments, regarding the choice of facilities and teaching equipment (Joint Order no. 258/1997);

- Defined the pedagogical and technical requirements for the installation and operation of preschool education establishments. Installation standards (Joint Order no. 268/1997);
- Defined the norms that regulate the co-participation of parents and guardians in the costs of non-educational components of preschool education establishments (Joint Order no. 300/1997).

In 2008, the Law no. 3/2008, of 7 January, was enacted, which defined the specialised support to be provided in preschool school, and in basic and secondary education for the public, private and cooperative sectors. It was republished in 2012, by Decree-Law no. 137/2012, which includes the approval of the regime of autonomy, administration and management of public establishments of preschool education and basic and secondary education. In 2009, Law no. 85/2009 established the compulsory schooling regime and consecrated the universality of preschool education for children from 5 years of age which, with Law no. 65/2015, changed the age to 4 years of age. In 2013, the MTSSS extends the Programme of Support and Qualification of the National Early Childhood Intervention System (Ordinance no. 293/2013) and there is, with Dispatch no. 4818/2013, the creation of a working group with the mission to analyse and identify the impacts of the implementation and the inherent procedures of the Programme for Expansion and Development of Preschool Education. Finally, in 2015, there was the amendment of the Normative Dispatch no. 7-B/2015, by the Rectification Declaration no. 511/2015, which established the enrolment and renewal procedures, and the rules to be observed in the allocation of children and pupils, the creation of classes and the operating period of the education and teaching establishments.

The educational system comprises the entire national territory, both the mainland and the autonomous regions, but it must be flexible and diversified enough to include all the countries and places where Portuguese communities live, or where there is considerable interest in the development and dissemination of Portuguese culture.

The ME is responsible for the policy coordination in basic and secondary education. However, it is the Directorate-General of School Administration (DGAE) that has the mission to ensure the implementation of strategic management policies and human resources development, allocated in mainland Portugal, as well as monitor and deliberate on matters related to professional qualification and teaching assignments of the public, cooperative and solidarity schools. The mission of the Directorate-General of Schools, in turn, is to ensure the regional implementation of administrative actions and the exercise of the Ministry of Education peripheral attributions, guaranteeing the schooling guidance, coordination and monitoring, and promoting school autonomy. It is also responsible for coordinating with local authorities, public and private offices in what concerns to the intervention in the educational system.

Preschool curriculum

Preschool experiences are nowadays of fundamental importance, as it is necessary to respond to children's interests and curiosity, stimulate them, in order to provide them with conditions that promote their psychomotor, cognitive, and social

and emotional development. Furthermore, preschool functions as an educational context that facilitates the development of fundamental skills for the whole and successful integration of children into the 1st cycle. Hence, professionals who deal with educational issues have been warning to the pressing need to prepare, at kindergartens, the child's transition to primary school, besides the child's overall development. They emphasise the importance of a quality preschool education when predicting success in the schooling, and in the quality of life of young people and adults.

Preschool education is the educational level in which the curriculum is developed with full articulation of learning, where spaces are flexibly managed, in which children have an active role in planning their learning. It is a fact that the curriculum development, in preschool education, has as reference the OCEPE, presented in Dispatch no. 9180/2016, which completed and clarified the OCEPE of 1997, and that is composed by a set of general pedagogical and organisational principles to support the creation and management of the curriculum in kindergarten, the responsibility of each educator, in collaboration with the educational team of the educational establishment/school group (ME/DGE, 2016).

Despite the multiple educational options and the way they manage the educational process, educators should attend to the three content areas referred to in the Curricular Guidelines for Preschool Education:

1. **Personal and Social Development Area** – supports all the other areas and focuses on the development of attitudes and the acquisition of values, which allow children to continue to learn successfully and to become autonomous, aware, supportive and problem-solving citizens.
2. **World Knowledge Area** – through a process of questioning, curiosity and quest for knowledge, it aims to give children a better understanding of the world around them.
3. **Expressions and Communication** – understood as a basic area that includes different forms of language essential for the child to interact with others, provide meaning and represent the world around it. This area brings together different areas, namely: Physical Education Area; Artistic Education Area; Oral Language and Writing Approach Area; Mathematics Area.

In each component, the aforementioned document refers to the learning to be promoted in children, how this learning can be observed, how the educator promotes this learning, and at the end of each area suggestions for reflection are presented to the educator.

With regard to curriculum assessment, Preschool Education has specificities to which the assessment practices and forms used in other educational levels are not suitable. The assessment in the preschool context assumes a formative dimension, focusing on the processes rather than the results, and seeks to make the child the major player of its learning process (DGE, 2021).

Evaluation, as an integral and regulatory element of educational practice, allows for a systematic gathering of information that, once analysed and interpreted, supports appropriated decision-making and promotes learning quality. "Evaluating the process and the effects implies becoming aware of the action in order to adapt the educational

process to the needs of the children and the group and their evolution. The evaluation carried out with the children is an educational activity, constituting also a basis of evaluation for the educator” (Dispatch no. 9180/2016, page 27). Thus, the reflection process inherent to the educator’s performance makes it possible to establish the learning progression to be developed with each child and, simultaneously, contributes to the adjustment of practices and regulation of educational action, according to the educational measures defined in the OCEPE. Moreover, the assessment also implies a shared construction between the multiple players (educators, family), in relation to processes and results, to create contexts that facilitate a successful educational and formative path. Furthermore, a final evaluation report of the project developed is produced by the educator, which is available for consultation in the educational establishment.

Preschool curriculum related to children’s social and emotional skills

According to the Basic Law of the Educational System, the curricular organisation should take into account the balance of emotional and social development with the other components of the student’s education. As mentioned before, the OCEPE are common references for all educators. They are given great flexibility in the orientation, construction and management of the curriculum that aims to meet the specific needs of each child and each class, including the needs for emotional wellbeing, crucial for the overall development of the child.

The development of SES at preschool age is included in the area of Personal and Social Development, which, like the others, is based on the recognition of the child as the subject and agent of the educational process, whose unique identity is built in social interaction, influencing and being influenced by the environment around it. It is a transversal area, present in all the educational work carried out, and is based on the construction of a relational and reassuring environment, in which the child is valued and listened to, constituting a democratic context in which children participate in the life of the group and in the development of the learning process (ME/DGE, 2016). The educator’s role, as a promoter of social and emotional development, includes planning emotional literacy activities, symbolic and social games, and plays, among others, which promote the development of self-regulating skills, attention control and that boost interpersonal skills. It may also resort to the implementation of programmes, duly structured, based on a solid theoretical basis and allowing an efficient intervention. At this level, the work developed is supposed to allow children to identify and recognise emotions, in themselves and in others, to be able to express and manage them effectively, to become emphatic, able to make appropriate decisions, to build healthy relationships and to respond to different personal and social needs and situations [Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), 2021].

Social and emotional learning, in addition to promoting a healthy growth in children through better management and reflection of feelings, has a strong impact on better academic adjustment, positive social behaviours and fewer behavioural problems (CASEL, 2021; Costa & Faria, 2013). Given the central role of social-emotional skills in the development of children and young people, there has been a greater investment

in the area of mental health in the school context. As a result, the need emerged to establish a conceptual framework of reference and guidance regarding the application of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in the school field (DGS, 2016).

In 2016, the Manual for the Promotion of Social-Emotional Skills was developed, which is a pedagogical resource to facilitate the training and implementation of a promoter project on Mental Health in schools, from preschool to basic and secondary education, guided by the typology of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs. This manual is based on a comprehensive and holistic approach of the whole school; on models based on scientific evidence; in the promotion of a safe, supportive and protective school environment; among other principles (DGS, 2016). It has a structured programme in sessions and works on issues related to: Identity, Communication, Emotions, Autonomy, Protection, Violence, Choices, Challenges and Losses, Values, Interaction, and Belonging. Besides this one, there are other support manuals such as the “Activities Manual for Preschool, 1st and 2nd cycle”, a product of the RESCUR project centred on the theme of resilience – closely related to social-emotional skills – which is reflected in the ability to deal with life’s challenges and/or adversities. The manual has activities to develop communication skills, establish and maintain healthy relationships, develop a positive mind, develop self-determination and develop resources (Cefai et al., 2015).

Some programs can be implemented in preschool settings, such as “Zippy Friends” (original version, <http://www.partnershipforchildren.org.uk/zippy-s-friends.html>), “Giant Leap” (Correia & Pinto, 2016) and “Emotional Education Program – School of Emotions” (<https://www.escoladasemoco.es/academias-gulbenkian-do-conhecimento.html>), which aim to develop SES (e.g. adaptability, self-regulation, communication, problem-solving, creative thinking, resilience). The implementation of these teaching resources is not included in the OCEPE and therefore is not compulsory. Nevertheless, they are important tools to assist the work of the educator in the area of Personal and Social Education, and consequently in the promotion and development of SES.

Quality assessment

The evaluation system, according to Law no. 31/2002, covers preschool education, basic and secondary education of the national school network, including its special education formats, and extra-school education. The objectives of the evaluation system of education and non-higher education aims, among others: to provide the local, regional and national educational administration, and society in general, with a framework of information about the functioning of the educational system; to ensure educational success; to ensure the credibility of the education and teaching establishments performance, and to enhance the role of the various members of the educational community (EACEA, 2020).

The evaluation of the education system is carried out by CNE and the services of the Ministry of Education. The former, within the scope of the evaluation system, exercises the powers of issuing opinions, pieces of advice and recommendations, and is responsible, in particular, for evaluating the rules relating to the self-evaluation



process, the annual plan of actions inherent to the external evaluation and the results of the internal evaluation processes. The ME services are responsible, in turn, for planning, coordination, definition of processes, implementation and development of the evaluation of the national education system, identifying the information to be obtained, defining and implementing the processes and systems for fathering them (EACEA, 2020). Therefore, the ME services should prepare an annual report with a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the educational system, as well as a triennial report with a diagnosis of the education system and a prospective analysis of it. The results of the evaluation should allow the formulation of concrete proposals on the organisation of the educational system; the curriculum system structure; the initial, continuous and specialised training of teachers; the autonomy, administration and management of schools; incentives and diversified support schools; schooling network; and the system of student assessment.

The evaluation of schools occurs externally, being developed by central offices of the ME as the General-Inspectorate of Education and Science (IGEC), through the implementation of a national plan or by educational area. The external evaluation of the teacher is centred on the observation of lessons and monitoring of the teacher's pedagogical and scientific practice. For this purpose, a group of evaluators is formed, consisting of teachers from all recruitment groups. Another backbone of quality assurance and improvement is the internal evaluation carried out by staff members working in the organisation. Internal evaluation is a quality control process aimed at assessing or monitoring the performance of the organisation, informing about its overall quality and suggesting ways to improve educational practice and provision. The results of the evaluation can include, for example, a self-evaluation report, an annual activity report, a development plan or a revised pedagogical plan. This type of evaluation is the most usual in the preschool context (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019).

Staff Training

The Decree-Law no. 22/2014, of 11 February 2014, favours a system of continuous training, oriented to improving the quality of the educators/teachers performance. It is centred on the priorities/needs identified in schools and in the teachers' professional development, such that continuous training enables the improvement of the teaching quality and is articulated with the objectives of local and national educational policy. The analysis of these needs allows the conception of annual or multi-annual training plans and is based on the results of the evaluation of schools and the professional development needs of their teachers.

The continuous professional development of teachers and early childhood educators occurs through two formal routes: continuous training (Decree-Law no. 22/2014) and specialised training (Decree-Law no. 95/1997). Continuing education, considered a right and a duty, aims to deepen and update professional knowledge and skills, professional mobility and career progression. Continuing training takes on various forms – courses and training workshops, study circles and short duration actions – and can be organised by different types of training entities: higher education

institutions; school association training centres, municipal and inter-municipal based; training centres of non-profit professional or scientific associations; central services of the ME in areas considered relevant to the development of the educational system; and other institutions whose intervention is considered relevant in this area. This new model of continuous training enshrines short-term training, recognised and certified by the training entities, with a minimum duration of three hours and a maximum of six hours (Decree-Law no. 22/2014).

The specialised training is, in turn, additional training that qualifies teachers to exercise other educational functions necessary for the operation of schools and the development of the educational system. The following training areas are defined in the Legal Framework for Specialised Training: special education, school administration and educational administration, social-cultural animation, educational guidance, organisation and curricular development, pedagogical supervision and training of trainers, management and animation of training, educational communication and information management. The specialised training courses are provided by higher education institutions and shall have a minimum duration of 250 hours and are intended for professionalised teachers with at least five years of teaching service at the date of admission to the course (Decree-Law no. 95/1997).

Teamwork among professionals who play a role in the education of children is also a mean of learning and improving practices, and in preschool, this teamwork takes place at three levels:

- Regular meetings of the team working with the same group of children – educator, educational assistants or other professionals who work with children during school time (special education teacher) – to develop articulated practices/activities, which is integrated into the overall dynamics of the group and the work that is being carried out.
- Regular meetings between all kindergarten teachers – to discuss and reflect on the pedagogical work carried out and to decide on future actions. This cooperative relationship, in which teachers coordinate, plan and evaluate their actions, is a mean of professional development and improvement of practices with effects on the children's education.
- Meetings between professionals from different educational levels – nursery and preschool educators and primary school teachers – in order to ensure the articulation and continuity of the process in each child's education (ME/DGE, 2016).

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Sweden. Educational context

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Introduction

This document provides information about the educational context of Sweden, primarily as it pertains to preschool.

Short country overview

Sweden is located in northern Europe, in the region commonly known as Scandinavia. Recent census data places the official count at over 10.4 million inhabitants. At the moment, about 665 000 of these inhabitants are children at the age of 5 or below (Statistiska centralbyrån, n.d.). Sweden has a publicly elected parliament on a national level. On a regional level, Sweden is divided into 21 counties and 290 municipalities with their own respective elected officials (Government Offices of Sweden, 2015).

General Description of the educational system

In general, there are four blocks that constitute the Swedish educational system: preschool (ages 1-6), compulsory school (ages 6-16), upper secondary school (ages 16-20) and higher education. Parents and students may choose which school to attend to, and schools are publicly funded, eliminating, or considerably reducing fees associated with education. Schools can either be organized by municipalities or independent owners, while higher education is organized by the state. Preschool, compulsory school, upper secondary school (and corresponding adult education) are all regulated in the education act (Skollag, 2010).

Approximately 30 years ago, two successive reforms were taken into effect, starting with municipalisation of schools, and followed by the onset of independent schools. Municipalisation in this case, refers to the government transitioning responsibility over public schools from state to municipalities. This included employer responsibilities, resource allocation, organization etc. (Lewin, 2014). Shortly following this reform, the next government introduced a reform intended to increase freedom of choice in the educational sector (Prop. 1992/93:230). Consequently, public schools are organized by municipalities, but a notable amount of schools are counted as independent. During the school year of 2020/2021, about 17% of the compulsory schools had independent owners, which can vary from corporations, foundations, associations, religious institutes etc. (Skolverket, 2020; 2021a).

Preschools are voluntary and available from the age of 1. Municipalities are required to offer them, and like compulsory schools, independent owners may also establish preschools. Preschools are generally free for 15 hours a week, and a subsidized fee may be charged for families that need more hours. All preschools, regardless of owner, are required to follow the national preschool curriculum. In 2020, there were 517 405 children enrolled in 9 589 different preschools (Skolverket, n.d.).



Compulsory school is mandatory and begins at the age of 6 were children attend a reception class (also called preschool class, corresponding to kindergarten). Like any other grade, the reception class lasts for a standard academic year (starting with the autumn semester and ending with the spring semester), after which grade 1 starts and continues to grade 9. Compulsory school is divided into 3 sections, low (reception class to grade 3), middle (grade 4 to 6), and high (grade 7 to 9). In 2020, Sweden had 1 097 180 students enrolled in 4 803 compulsory schools (Skolverket, n.d.).

Parallel to compulsory school, from ages 6 to 13, children can attend the recreation centre, which also focuses on the development of the student and has its own curriculum. It can be seen as a mode of school, rather than a physical space. It is generally open for all during break and recess, during school hours, but is usually applied for outside school hours, when parents are working or studying along with other home situations that require it. A fee can be charged for enrolling to the recreation centre (outside of school hours, i.e., before and after school), the fee is based on income-level and all municipalities apply an upper-ceiling to the fee (Skolverket, 2021b).

All compulsory schools (or equivalent) must follow the national school curriculum and the corresponding course syllabus for the various subjects: Swedish (or Swedish as a second language), mathematics, English, practical-aesthetic subjects (such as arts, music and crafts), technology, social studies, science, modern languages and mother tongue. At the end of grade 6 and onwards, students receive grades on a scale of A to F, were A to E counts as passing grades and F counts as a failing result (Skolverket, 2021c).

Passing the core subjects (Swedish, mathematics and English) and an additional 5 subjects makes you eligible for a vocational programme in upper secondary school. To be eligible for a university-preparatory programme, the student needs to pass 9 subjects in addition to the core subjects. Students who are not eligible for either are given other opportunities to get passing grades, e.g. summer school or an introductory programme. For popular schools or programmes that have more applicants than spots, admittance is based on grades, were higher means more likely to get admitted. The number of students in upper secondary school for 2020 was 360 847 students, spread across 1 273 different schools (Skolverket, n.d.). There are 18 national programmes and all of them are 3 academic years. Despite their designations, both vocational and university-preparatory programmes lead to basic eligibility for higher education (e.g university). Though certain additional subjects may be required for eligibility, depending on what course or programme the student wants to attempt.

Higher education in Sweden was reformed in 2007 due to the Bologna process (Universitetskanslersämbetet, 2021a). Sweden currently houses about 50 universities (including "högskola", eng. university college). There is no tuition fee for Swedish, EU/EES or Swiss citizens. During the autumn semester of 2020, 384 495 students were registered on a basic (corresponding to the level of bachelor's degree) and advanced (corresponding to the level of master's degree) level (Universitetskanslersämbetet, 2021b).

Diagram of the structure

Age	1-6	6-16	16-19	-	
Education	Preschool	Compulsory school	Upper secondary school	University and university college	
	Other pedagogical activities			Higher vocational education	
ISCED	0	1-2	3	5	6-8

Diagram 8. Swedish educational system

Education and/or Care

Preschool is voluntary and municipalities are mandated to provide preschool from the age of 1 for parents who work or study. Also children from present for parents who are unemployed, on parental leave or for certain family situations (e.g. if the child has a disability) are accepted. Municipalities are required to offer, at minimum, 3 hours of preschool per day or 15 hours per week. At the age of 3 (counting from autumn the same year), the child has full rights to be enrolled in preschool irrespective of the family situation or parent vocational status. The municipality is required to offer 525 hours of preschool per year to the family without any fees, which in practice also equates to 15 hours a week, and again stated as a minimum requirement, that the municipality may choose to exceed. If the family requires more hours than this due to work, studies or other circumstances, the municipality may charge a fee. According to the education act (2010), the fee may not be unreasonably high. In practice, the fee is based on the family's income, but all municipalities also apply a ceiling for this fee (Skolverket, 2021d). Parents may also opt for other educational activities (e.g., educational care, open preschool or open recreational activities) that complement preschool, particularly if parents work outside of regular work hours.

Schools are publicly funded regardless whether the owner is independent or a municipality. In 2020, 29% of the preschools were counted as independent, though the form of ownership likely differs from compulsory schools, for example 25% of these preschools were run by parent cooperatives (Skolverket, 2021e).

Preschools are regulated in the education act. Public and independent preschools alike follow the national preschool curriculum. While the education act regulates rights and responsibilities of children and their parents, the curriculum describes the content and values of the preschools. The curriculum echoes the Education Act in many ways, and just like the regulations, it states that the purpose of preschool is for children to obtain and develop knowledge and values, to promote all children's development and learning and a lifelong desire to learn (Skollagen, 2010; Skolverket, 2018). The values are specified as human rights and democratic values, which should further permeate how education is formed in preschool.

While preschools are mostly organized on a municipal level, there are several national agencies that support the preschools in their mission. The National Agency for Education is the central administrative authority for publicly organised preschooling.



The agency supports preschools in carrying out their responsibilities through several activities, such as developing and continuously assessing the curriculum. The Swedish Schools Inspectorate are responsible for the supervision and auditing of preschools regarding quality and adherence to the education act. The Swedish Centre for Educational Research is commissioned to systematically compile research and disseminate it to schools. For issues regarding special education there is also the National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools. In 2020, there were 517 405 children enrolled in 9 589 different preschools (Skolverket, n.d.).

Education Laws and Regulations

From preschool to adult education, Sweden's educational system (not counting higher education and research) is regulated in the Education Act (Skollag 2010:800, 2021). There are several instances relevant to this. While the ultimate deciding power lies with the elected parliament, propositions are usually forwarded by the government and prepared by a committee. In this case the Committee on Education prepares decisions that concern the educational system. The groundwork for decision-making is also conducted by The Ministry of Education and Research. The Ministry also leads government agencies that are responsible for implementing the laws and regulations concerning the educational system. The most relevant agency for implementing the Education Act is the National Agency for Education which is the central administrative authority for publicly organised preschooling, but it is the Swedish Schools Inspectorate's responsibility to supervise and audit preschools regarding quality and adherence to the education act.

Preschool curriculum

Sweden's national curriculum is primarily developed by the National Agency for Education. The latest revision was ratified in 2018 and went into effect July 1 2019. While the agency may propose a revision to the curriculum, it is the Swedish government who is responsible for assigning such a revision. The agency then formulates a suggestion for the government to ratify. The agency will also be tasked in disseminating changes to the curriculum, but it is also a primary responsibility for preschools to follow the curriculum, from municipality to individual certified teacher.

The curriculum is extensive and is divided into two main parts. The first part is called 'The fundamental task and values of the preschool'. For values, this part emphasizes broad concepts such as democratic values, basic human rights, and equality. This is not only about imparting values but making sure that these values permeate the educational context. The curriculum's first part brings up several aspects of creating a safe and nurturing environment for the developing child to foster overall well-being, communicative abilities, and curiosity. The second part is called 'Goals and guidelines' which further specifies the tasks of preschools with more concrete descriptions of responsibilities for teachers, their work groups and leaders.

Preschool curriculum related to children's social and emotional skills

The curriculum doesn't necessarily refer to SES in explicit terminology, but much of the content aligns with the development of SES. Some of the content emphasizes the development of specific skills, such as empathy, which is emphasized in the subsection 'Understanding and compassion for others'. Some content describes

both the skills and method with which it can be accomplished, such as play developing collaboration and problem-solving.

The curriculum emphasizes goals and guidelines rather than specific concrete educational activities. As such, the development of SES is implied in the content but not necessarily prescribed in a direct fashion. An example of a goal is “The preschool should provide each child with the conditions to develop an ability to function individually and in a group, cooperate, manage conflicts and understand rights and obligations, and to assume responsibility for common rules”. An example of a guideline is “Preschool teachers are responsible for every child being challenged and stimulated in her or his motor, social, emotional and cognitive development”.

Quality assessment

Preschools have a relatively large degree of autonomy and much of the continuous assessment is reliant on the head of the preschool to organize. Nonetheless, the main responsibility for preschools quality lies on the owner or organizer, usually a municipality or an independent owner. On a federal level, it is the Swedish Schools Inspectorate that is the agency tasked with formally inspecting preschools in their efforts to uphold the standards of the Education Act. Consequently, this agency also has to supervise the municipalities and independent owners as well as the individual preschools (Skolinspektionen, 2020).

Staff Training

The National Agency for Education is tasked with processing and approving the teacher certificates. The default path to receiving certification and formal competency to teach in preschools is through earning a degree of Bachelor of Arts in Preschool Education. Foreign applicants will have to validate an equivalent degree in addition to meeting language requirements, which involve validating formal proficiency in Swedish as well as studies of early language development from a Swedish perspective (Skolverket, 2021f). It is the responsibility of the head of the preschool to provide opportunities for increasing competence among staff (Skolverket, 2018).

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Case studies

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Early childhood is a critical period in social and emotional development. By preschool, most children are starting to distinguish between positive and negative emotions and are also learning how to regulate their own emotions (Izard et al. 2004). Evidence suggests that emotional and behavioural problems during preschool often persist. A study, for example, showed that children's understanding of emotions at age five significantly predicted their academic competence at age nine, even after controlling for verbal ability and temperament (Izard et al. 2001). The social and emotional competencies of students need to be developed as early as possible as they provide the initial foundation so children to be emotionally and socially intelligent later in life. For that, teachers are required to be more creative in developing children's emotional social competence. For example, by looking for methods for learning and fun, with habituation, and through exciting games (Nurhafizah & Kosnin, 2016).

Many teachers, parents, educators, kindergarten principals, stakeholders do not have a clear understanding of what SES are, how to develop them, how to implement them in the educational curriculum. Parents of early and preschool children are usually oriented towards literacy and numeracy skills, but not SES. The EU-Self project aims at raising the awareness of the importance of SES, what SES are by analysing and providing information of best practices, sharing experience between experts from universities and kindergartens in partner countries. Case studies aim to provide a description and summary of practices and provide deeper view of purpose, activities that are included, achieved goals, difficulties, and suggestions for implementation in another context if any.

This document provides instructions for partner countries how to present their kindergarten practices and write their Case study. Only partners with applied practice took part in these descriptions. Below are the developed guidelines.

The final document needs to provide for different types of information about work and everyday practices in preschool institutions around partner countries in European Union.

Each Case study provides the following information: a summary of the document and practices, an introduction with extensive description about SES development related to the context, and practices of the kindergarten in the partner country.

Case study form

The case study will provide information of each partner country in 7 main parts.

Summary

The summary includes a short description with main information about: purpose, activities that are included, achieved goals, difficulties and suggestions for implementation in another context if any.

Description of the practice

1. Introduction

The introduction provides a glossary of terms used in the case study. . This part of the document needs to provide an overall description of preschool education in the partner country and kindergarten of the case study. We do not need to overlap the information. We already will have this description in the Educational Context document. We can mention it here and refer to the other document.

2. Description of context related to social and emotional skills development in the country

This part of the document describes policies and processes of involving SES learning in kindergartens at national/regional/local level.

Questions that need to be answer in this part of the document include:

- How does policy prioritize child development?
- When did this process start?
- What is the policy that puts this topic into practice ? What are the regulations?
- Is there a specific preschool curriculum related to children's social and emotional skills?
- What is the training of professionals?
- How does the professional community deal with the topic? - Are there trainings?, Is there continuous professional development?, Is it discussed in professional communities?, etc.

3. Description of context of kindergarten

This part describes the services, curriculum and programs (if any) and provides information about profile and number of children and parents, professionals (teachers, educators, etc.), administrative team, and main vision and methodology of your kindergarten.

4. Description of practice of kindergarten

This part of the document describes the practice of your kindergarten. This includes a description of the theoretical framework, aims, key terms, evaluation of effectiveness, etc. Also, a description of activities from your kindergarten's practice, including information about curriculum and methodologies (within/out of the curriculum, structured/ unstructured, etc.) related to SES learning, traditions of its use in the country.

5. Description of process of adapting/creating the practice in kindergarten

This part of the document provides a description of the process of adapting/creating the practice in your kindergarten.

Each partner kindergarten needs to answer to these questions:

- Who introduced the topic of social and emotional skills in your kindergarten? How and why did they introduce it?
- When and how started the kindergarten to develop the relevant practice? Is there a problem that the team wants to solve? Who decided to develop this practice?
- How do you inform children, parents, team workers on the implementation of this practice?
- How did children, parents and team workers accept this new practice in the beginning?
- How was it approved and why?
- What were the difficulties in its implementation? Are there ways you have overcome them?
- Are there other issues related to its improvement, overcoming difficulties, etc.?

6. Description of evaluation process

This part describes the monitoring of the process of effectiveness.

Each partner kindergarten needs to answer the following questions:

- Is there evidence for the practice of effectiveness?
- How do you collect them?
- Who collects them?
- Do you collect information using observation or other methods of assessment?
- How do you collect information from parents and children?

7. Discussion

This part contains a summary of what was described and formulates recommendations for improving the practice and its application in other contexts - national and/or international. For example, to undertake a comparative assessment. The case study ends with a conclusion.

Conclusion

The case study ends with a conclusion.

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Case study report of Montessori IQ Corner (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

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Summary

In terms of participation of children in preschool education, Bosnia and Herzegovina ranks last among European countries. Partly due to inconsistencies in legislation and partly due to the inaccessibility of many categories of society. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, preschool education even when mandatory, remains denied to a large number of children. In that environment, it is a great challenge to offer parents a different way of preschool education. This document will briefly provide information about the implementation of the Montessori pedagogy in Montessori IQ Corner in Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Description of the practice

The main problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina related to development and implementation of policy of preschool education is mutual non-compliance of individual laws of cantons and entities with the Framework Law on Preschool Education of Bosnia and Herzegovina and their non-implementation. The Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the Platform for the Development of Preschool Education (2017-2022). The document seeks to encourage all levels of government to take responsibility for education to align preschool education development policies with EU goals. By adopting this document, Bosnia and Herzegovina has expressed a truth commitment to continuous progress in preschool education. The Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina presents evaluation information showing that cantons who adopted their own laws and harmonized with the Framework law of Preschool education, mainly started with the implementation or preparations for implementation of certain activities envisaged by the Platform (Ministry of Civil Affairs, 2018)⁷.

There are no specific laws related to social and emotional skills (SEL) in preschool education. The importance of a holistic children development through preschool education and the prohibition of various forms of discrimination were

⁷ [http://mcp.gov.ba/attachments/bs_Migrirani_dokumenti/Sektor/Obrazovanje/Obrazovanje-zakoni/Informacija_o_izvr%C5%A1enju_Okvirnog_zakona_o_pred%C5%A1kolskom_odgoju_i_obrazovanju_u_BiH_bosanski_jezik_\(1\).pdf](http://mcp.gov.ba/attachments/bs_Migrirani_dokumenti/Sektor/Obrazovanje/Obrazovanje-zakoni/Informacija_o_izvr%C5%A1enju_Okvirnog_zakona_o_pred%C5%A1kolskom_odgoju_i_obrazovanju_u_BiH_bosanski_jezik_(1).pdf)

explicitly laid down in the Framework laws of Preschool education and other policies related to ECEC.

The professional staff working in preschool institutions (public or private) need to fulfil specific requirements relating to education and skills. Preschool teachers are required to have a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, and nurseries (who can work only with children 0-3 years old) are required to have degree of Medical High school. The skills that professional staff needs to have in everyday work with children include creativity, sensitivity, patience, consistency in work, etc. Preschool teachers and nurseries in MIQ need to have additional knowledge and certified education in field of the Montessori methodology. The Montessori teachers have developed the ability of indirect guidance, allowing the child to find their own rhythm, making its own decisions and becoming independent.

National laws related to preschool education and professional development do not prescribe specific, systematic and obligatory plans of professional development and therefore mostly depends on the subjective motivation and commitment of professionals.

Description of context of kindergarten

Montessori is a world-acknowledged pedagogical concept in education. The Montessori approach provides spontaneous and expansive education, designed in a way for the child to move and work in a carefully prepared surrounding. It is based on the philosophy of child's development, where a child gains operational knowledge of the life spheres they will participate in as adults. The Montessori presents a holistic and original educational system, which emphasizes the meaning of self-activity of a child and individual tempo of development, having, at the same time, a unique approach to the learning technique. The traditional approaches of pre-school institutions, where the transfer of knowledge is solely understood as a one-way process; teacher-to-child. Unlike that, the Montessori Method implies an approach directed to the child, where the teacher has a role of facilitator or consultant. It is based on an individual approach for each child, with the aim to stimulate the process of self-forming or self-education.

Private pre-school institution Montessori IQ Corner, based on the established pedagogy of Maria Montessori, is the first Montessori pre-school institution in the Tuzla Canton. The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Tuzla Canton authorized all curriculums. Unlike traditional pre-school institutions in the city, the Educational and Pedagogic Institution Montessori IQ Corner provides for a safe and stimulating environment for learning, work in small groups, individual dedication by teachers, effective learning methods and flexible curriculum. As a result, this leads to higher developmental achievements and intelligence of children

The Montessori IQ Corner offers a surrounding, which stimulates the development of your child, and provides for teachers trained in the Montessori method, who understand child development and have special competences to create children's learning in a natural and spontaneous manner.

The mission of the Private Pre-school Institution Montessori IQ Corner is to become an institution to raise children to be able to face the reality of our life today,

using the Montessori method where love is not a dependence, and discipline is not subordination. The kindergarten's vision is to become the centre of excellence for the Montessori method in Tuzla and Tuzla Canton, as an example of life in the wider community. The program includes the organisation of early education and care in three main groups of children and curriculum.

The Nursery program curriculum is specifically designed for children from six months to three years of age. The first three years in a child's life are considered be the most important period of their development. During this dynamic period of intellectual and physical development, we introduce children into the world of social interaction with other children, MIQ helps them to develop a large motor ability, fine movements and to improve their linguistic skills and gain independence.

For the Curriculum for Children of 3-6 Years, the kindergarten owns a space specifically created to stimulate the natural curiosity of a child. The children in this group have "absorbing" brains, which quickly and easily receive information from the surroundings. Continuously absorbing knowledge, the children expand their vocabulary, learn to write and read, solve problems, and increasingly understand their environment.

Finally, the Curriculum for Extended Stay for Children of 6-11 Years includes assistance in the children's formal education in primary school. Through the extended stay curriculum, the children are supported in completing and advancing their responsibilities in school⁸.

Description of practice of kindergarten

Private preschool institutions organize preschool education according to the principles of the Montessori methodology as well as goals and principles prescribed by national policies of preschool education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Organization areas of learning and materials of learning are based on Montessori methodology and curriculum of learning.

The Montessori classroom is comprised of the following five areas of learning: Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, Mathematics and Cosmic education, each having its own specific Montessori materials. Children are provided with a wide variety of materials, which are generally found at their home. They carry out familiar and meaningful activities focusing on Care for the Environment (e.g. sweeping, mopping, watering plants, cleaning tables and windows) and Care of Self (e.g. pouring a drink, washing self, dressing and food preparation). Children are offered the opportunity to learn about socialization through exercises of grace and courtesy.

Practical life exercises are fundamental to the whole program as they lay the foundations for the 3 year olds for their activities late in life and in other areas. These activities are not done only for their own sake, but also to develop inner discipline, organization, independence and orderliness of the classroom⁹.

Practical life exercises include life skills to help develop independence,

⁸ <https://montessorituzla.ba/en/#>

⁹ <http://www.avenuesmontessori.com.au/montessori/montessori-curriculum-areas-of-learning/>



coordination, concentration, self-control, self-awareness, confidence, more specifically:

- Care of Self (food preparation, dressing, washing);
- Care of Environment (cleaning, gardening, care of pets, environmentalism);
- Grace and Courtesy (greetings, manners, social interactions);
- Control of Movement (refining movements, walking the line, moving quietly).

Sensorial activities include specifically designed materials that isolate qualities such as colour, shape, order, dimension, distance, texture, temperature, volume, pitch, weight, taste, similarity and sequence. The child is supported in their learning and discovery of their surroundings. Refinement of fine motor skills, visual and auditory senses develop coordination and the ability to order and classify¹⁰.

Sensorial activities allow for the children to refine each of their senses:

- Sight (visual),
- Touch (tactile),
- Smell (olfactory),
- Taste (gustatory)
- Sound (auditory)
- Stereognostic (kinaesthetic).

Language is based on phonetic awareness. Children work through specific hands-on and tactile language materials, such as the sandpaper letters to the moveable alphabet. Language is not an isolated topic but runs throughout the whole curriculum. Spoken language is the foundation for writing and then reading. To build the foundations necessary for literacy, phonetic sounds are introduced through materials, called sandpaper letters, developing a child's fine motor and writing skills. Children's reading skills are developed using the moveable alphabet, where simple phonetic words extend to more complex words, sentence structure and grammar¹¹.

Mathematics is developed with the use of specific learning materials. The sensorial area is the preparation for mathematics. Hands-on materials are used such as number rods, sandpaper numbers, number boards, spindle box, number tiles, beads, and games. Each exercise builds upon another and the child gradually moves from concrete to abstract areas, such as place value, addition, subtraction, multiplication, and fractions.

Cosmic education is an all-inclusive education assisting children to learn about and understand the world around them.

The goal is to stimulate and develop the exploratory strength in a child and to arouse children's imagination and develop their abstract thinking. Cosmic education

¹⁰ <http://www.avenuesmontessori.com.au/montessori/montessori-curriculum-areas-of-learning/>

¹¹ <http://www.avenuesmontessori.com.au/montessori/montessori-curriculum-areas-of-learning/>

assists children in finding a way to assume the world around them, which initiates their curiosity and interest. At the same time, they learn to understand that people, animals, plants and objects are necessary parts of their surroundings. They slowly understand that they themselves are connected with the environment and natural phenomena and that they depend on, affect and need each other. This way children understand and become aware of their role in the world around them, and learn to assume responsibility and bring decisions. Cosmic education instructs children on natural and social sciences, art, culture, ecology, evolution, religion and other. The path on which the child is taken is a comprehension of a divine entirety (space, universe) and all its parts.

Cosmic education allows for the child to explore the natural world around them and includes:

- Geography (continents, landforms, earth layers, solar system),
- Zoology (classification, physiology of animals),
- Botany (ecology, classification, physiology of plants),
- History (time lines, using a calendar),
- Science.

Art and music could be considered as cultural activities and creativity is encouraged across all curriculum areas. The cultural area is clearly identifiable by globes, puzzle maps, flags and sometimes images or materials from other cultures¹².

Process description of adapting/creating the practice in kindergarten

Except that follows principles and curriculum of Montessori learning method, MIQ adopts an Annual curriculum and program of education based on learning outcomes prescribed by national laws and policies. This includes specific activities and the use of institutional documents prescribed by Preschool law of Tuzla Canton and Standards of Preschool education of Tuzla Canton.

Necessary documents developed at institutional level include information about the planning of preschool education and themes of learning (monthly and weekly), as well as other information about organisation of preschool education (groups of children, professionals, visits, excursions, health and food safety etc.) Annually the Council of experts and the director of the institution propose a curriculum and program of preschool education. A proposal of annual curriculum and program for preschool education has to be developed before the start of the new school year. MIQ submits both an annual work report and curriculum and program of education approved by the Board of the directors. After that, MIQ needs to submit these documents to the Ministry of Education and Science. The Ministry of Education and Science, Pedagogical Institute performs an evaluation and monitoring of the Annual curriculum and program of education during the school year. The MIQ preschool curriculum does not involve social and emotional learning (SEL) as a specific part of the curriculum, but rather activities related to developing SEL skills are present throughout the

¹² <https://www.howwemontessori.com/how-we-montessori/2016/07/the-five-curriculum-areas-of-montessori-.html>

whole curriculum. The MIQ curriculum represents themes of empathy, emotional skills recognition and management, behaviour and social skills management, peer interaction as well as learning cultural diversity and tolerance.

Description of evaluation process

Previous research shows positive results of Montessori preschool education. The results suggest that children who experienced Montessori education demonstrate stronger pre-academic skills at the end of preschool and perform better on standardized assessments of math and reading in third grade than children who did not¹³.

The MIQ director and coordinator monitor and evaluate the practice of the professional activities. The director and coordinator of the institution daily monitor the work of preschool teachers and nurseries as well as the implementation of the Annual curriculum of the institution. Related to these activities they submit quarterly reports and also an Annual report to the Board of directors and the Ministry of Education and Science of Tuzla Canton. The professional staff provide a weekly and daily lesson planning as well as an evaluation of their work and the skills improvement of the children. Each child has its own portfolio, containing important information on the assessment of skills development and observations relating to the child's behaviour and implementation of Montessori activities in the classroom. Every three months MIQ provides to parents a report on the child's behaviour and the implementation of the curriculum. In addition, MIQ provides pictures the parents and reports about the week theme and activities via email.

Discussion and Conclusion

This document overview presents the policy relating to SEL learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina and practices in MIQ relating to social and emotional skills development. MIQ represents a specific type of private preschool institution, which provides preschool education based on the Montessori pedagogy.

MIQ uses a comprehensive and child-centred educational model for learning. Respecting and implementing the principles of the Montessori pedagogy, MIQ fosters self-motivated growth for children and adolescents in all areas of their development (cognitive, emotional, social, and physical). Specific Montessori activities in five areas of learning both implement activities related to SEL, as well as evaluate them through observation and assessment. These activities are not mandatory nor prescribed by national policies and therefore cannot be considered as an established practice in preschool institutions at national level.

Recommendations for improving preschool education at national level in Bosnia and Herzegovina include:

- Developing clear and committed policies on non-formal education and professional development of preschool teachers and nurseries;

¹³ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10888691.2020.1781632>



- Developing systematic and unique assessment measures of children's development (including SES) at national level which can be implemented in public and private preschool institutions;
- Developing an approach related to SEL at national and institutional based level;
- Developing official and unique administrative documentation relating to the evaluation and monitoring of children's behaviour (portfolio, report for parents etc.),
- Increasing participation of preschool institutions in national and European projects in order to transfer good practices.

Case study report of 37 Kindergarten “Valshebstvo” (Bulgaria)

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Kindergarten 37 „Valshebstvo“, Sofia, Bulgaria

Introduction

Pre-school education provides the base for learning during the whole lifespan and provides physical, cognitive, language, spiritual, moral, social, emotional and creative development by taking into consideration the importance of play in the process of pedagogical interaction. The main mission of pre-school education is to ensure the child’s development through educational interaction. The main task of kindergarten as an institution is to provide the necessary conditions for developing the abilities of children, as well as to ensure their school readiness.

Pre-school education is organized in two stages and is based on approved programs. The system of pre-school education includes children from the age of 3 to 6/7 year.

With the changes in the pre-school and school education act of 18.09.2020 (The Act on Amendment to the Pre-school and School Education) pre-school education has become mandatory starting in the school year in which the child turns 4 years old. Parents can choose on the of the following options: full-day, half-day, hourly or bespoke organization. The state and municipalities are mandated to provide conditions for the children in kindergartens and pre-school education groups (Bulgaria. Early childhood education and care. Eurydice).

Pre-school preparation of children before they start school is mandatory. The mandatory pre-school education of children is 2 years and starts at the age of 5 years until the start of first grade. It ensures an equal start for every child at the beginning of school. This period is especially important for children, whose mother language is different from Bulgarian. Mandatory school preparation education is provided in third and fourth age groups.

The pre-school education is organized in the following age groups:

1. first age group – 3 – 4 y.o.;
2. second age group – 4 – 5 y.o.;
3. third age group – 5 – 6 y.o.;
4. fourth age group – 6 – 7 y.o.;

Pre-school education is provided by kindergartens, as well as other pre-school education institutions/schools that comply with the necessary conditions. Kindergartens may open nursery groups for bringing up children aged from ten months to three years. Children in nursery groups at kindergartens shall be raised, brought up, socialized and taught in compliance with the standards for early childhood development, laid down in an Ordinance of the Minister of Health and the Minister of Education and Science (Regulation № 5 / 03.06.2016 r. for pre-school education).

A complete description of pre-school education in Bulgaria can be found in the part “Bulgaria. Educational context”.

Description of the context, related to the development of social and emotional skills in Bulgaria

Civic education is a specific type of education. The mission of civic education is to develop the person and to give justified answers to questions on the place and the role of a person in society, on his rights, freedoms and responsibilities as a citizen of a specific country and on society, as part of a specific political and social community.

The idea for civic education of children was developed in Bulgarian schools as well as under the influence of patriotic tradition in the national education and European experience of preparing children for being future citizens. The beginning of organized civic education in Bulgaria dates back to the end of the 19th century with the affirmation of the school subject “Civics teaching” as a mandatory studied discipline by students, finishing their primary education. Prominent Bulgarian teachers, such as D.Katsarov, M.Geraskov, D.Noykov, B.Shanov and others, contributed to the affirmation of the idea for civic education. School programs relating to the social and emotional development of children are part of Regulation No 13 of 21.09.2016 on the civic, health, environmental and intercultural education (CHEIE). The CHEIE is being carried out in schools, kindergartens and the centers for support of personal development in the pre-school and school education system. CHEIE is interconnected and forms a multidisciplinary complex, which aims at obtaining social, civic and intercultural competencies and competencies related to health and maintenance of a sustainable environment. Civic education intends to create a civic consciousness and civic virtues. It relates to knowledge about the structure of democratic society, rights and obligations of a citizen and to the abilities and readiness for a responsible civic behaviour.

The main mission of CHEIE is to build an autonomous and active person, who:

1. understands and defends main human values, values of democracy and human rights;
2. takes part in civil, political and social life in a responsible, creative and effective way for the self and the society;
3. knows the institutions, the structure and the procedures of a democratic society, the economic and political realities of a global world;
4. respects the meaning of every human being in the diversity of his identities admits the right and the value of differences and accepts the equality of everyone in the common social space;
5. realizes and values his own cultural identity;
6. interacts with his own family members, the community and other people in a constructive and respectful way and expresses his civic position;
7. takes independent decisions about his own development, demonstrates initiative and had the ability to set goals, to plan and to motivate his own actions;
8. takes responsibility for his own behaviour and appreciates the influence of his own actions on his own life and the life of other people;

9. selects adequate information, products and services regarding health improvement and maintains a healthy lifestyle for himself and others;
10. knows and adheres to the norms of ecological culture and behaviour considering nature protection and creating a sustainable environment;
11. knows the mechanisms of public institutions and civil community for applying shared responsibility for environmental protection and demonstrates readiness to participate in them;
12. is able to make connections between separate areas of public life and to understand the reasons for social inequalities, ecological and global challenges;

In pre-school education, the CHEIE is carried out in all age groups and is:

- implemented in the education process in the different educational areas;
- integrated in additional forms of pedagogical interaction;
- a separate educational area, when a copyrighted or an innovative program system foresees this.

The ways and forms of carrying out the CHEIE for different age groups are determined in the program system of the kindergarten or the school. It is developed in accordance with the state education standard for pre-school education (Regulation № 13/ 21.09.2016 r. on the civil, health, environmental and intercultural education).

Description of the context in Kindergarten 37 “Valshebstvo”

Kindergarten 37 „Valshebstvo“ is a municipal kindergarten, founded in 1977 for raising and educating children from nursery age till starting their first grade.

It is located on the territory of the “Vitosha” district, . The affirmation of the mandatory school preparation for 2 years prior to pupils’ school start has a strong educational effect with long-term benefits with regard to the socialization and the achievements of each child during the whole period of education. An intensive process of integrated education for pupils with special educational needs is also carried out.

Mission of the educational institution:

- Building the bases of personal development of the future citizens of Europe, who have saved their national, cultural and ancestral identity.
- Saving the uniqueness of childhood as a main value in our pedagogical work.
- Complying with the individual dynamic of the child’s development and through the search of unity and harmony in the physical, spiritual, moral, social and intellectual development
- Guaranteeing a complete readiness for school.

Vision:

- Development and establishment of the municipal kindergarten as a competitive and preferred partner through integration and protection of the national values, good traditions and through modernization of the processes through contemporary innovations, together with the family aiming to raise a young human being in a comprehensive modern cultural plan.
- To ensure a supportive environment through a personality development support team within the kindergarten.
 - o A speech therapist, psychologist and a resource teacher are employed.



- A cabinet for the specialists is equipped.
- Preventive, diagnostic, rehabilitative and correctional work with children is carried out, as well as pedagogical and psychological support is being provided.

Kindergarten 37 “Valshebstvo” follows its own program system. Each group develops its own program by using educational books from a specific publisher and different didactic materials. It includes:

1. Approaches and forms of pedagogical interaction;
 - Distribution of the forms of pedagogical interaction;
 - Thematic distribution for every age group;
 - A mechanism of interaction between the participants in pre-school education;

Kindergarten 37 „Valshebstvo“ is managed by a principal. The teaching staff board consists of the principal, the teachers and other specialists with pedagogical functions. Kindergarten 37 is financed by Sofia Municipality and the state budget.

Parents are offered additional educational activities that are not part of the kindergarten operations at an extra cost: football, applied arts, folklore dance, vocal singing and speech therapist.

At the parents’ request, we organize each year: excursions, winter and summer school trips, and sea camp. Every month theatrical plays are performed by professional actors, and also the initiative “Kids play for kids” is being organized. Moreover, parents are the partners of the teachers. Open doors days are organized for Christmas, 1st of March and Easter.

Kindergarten 37 „Valshebstvo“ aims to be:

- A place, where the child feels happy, protected, understood and supported.
- A preferred space for 3-7 years old children, where their mental, emotional, social and physical health development are guaranteed.
- A centre for parents, looking for and finding support, agreement, partnership, pedagogical information;
- A centre of people, who love children and their profession, who maintain their qualification on a contemporary level, who strive for high realization and are content with their job.

Throughout the years Kindergarten 37 „Valshebstvo“ has taken part in multiple projects, some of which are:

- “I learn and play safely” – a project, financed by the Program for Protection of the Life and Health of Children as Road users;
- “School fruit” – a national strategy for providing fruits and vegetables in Bulgarian educational institutions;
- “A glass of milk” – a national strategy for providing milk and milk products in Bulgarian educational institutions;
- “Happy and healthy” – a project of the National Programme for ‘Development of Physical Education and Sports’ 2013–2016; support for the initiative “Sofia – European capital of sport” – 2018;

- “Green Magic” – a project of the Association “Parental board of Kindergarten 37”, financed through the program Green Sofia, aiming to create an environment for children’s educators and parents for active learning and acquaintance with the surrounding world;
- “Health parade” – project, financed by the National Programme for “Development of Physical Education and Sports of Sofia Municipality” 2017;
- National programme “Information and communication technologies in the system of preschool and school education”-a project of the Ministry of Education and Science;
- Project “Health, movement and tolerance”;
- Pedagogical practice “Morning fairy-tale” – practice for cooperation of teachers and family representatives during the period of children’s admission in the kindergarten;
- Project “Active Inclusion in the pre-school education system” part of the operating program “Science and education for intelligent growth 2014-2020”;
- Project “Education for tomorrow” part of the operating program “Science and education for intelligent growth 2014-2020” (2022), „FINE! Project Food and Nutrition In ECEC” (2018)
- Ready to Read – READ project (2019-1-HU01-KA201-061099)
- EU-Self project – Social and Emotional Skills Development in Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe (2019)

Kindergarten 37 „Valshebstvo“ works on a five-day workweek basis from 7:00 a.m. till 7:00 p.m. 11 playgrounds for play and activities are located in the yard area. They consist of: sandboxes, grass and afforested areas, tiles and play equipment. There is also a football and a basketball field. All of the facilities in the yard area are made of high quality materials, the playgrounds surface material is soft and shock-absorbing.

In Kindergarten 37 303 children are raised and being educated. 61 of them are in the school preparation group (5 y.o.) and 55 of them in the school preparation group for 6 y.o. There are 11 groups, of which 9 are kindergarten and 2 nursery groups. In the 9 kindergarten groups children are taken care of by 2 teachers, working in 2 shifts, and an assistant-educator. The second age group consists of 84 children (3 groups of 28 children each) and the two first age groups consists of 55 children in. Children aged from 10 months to 3 years are brought up in nursery groups. They are being taken care of by 4 nurses, which are subordinated to the Ministry of Health and are working 2 shifts. During the school year of 2020-2021 a total of 47 children were taken care of in two nursery groups. Each group has the following: soft toys; constructors; puzzles; a play kitchen area; play workshop with tools; a toy medical kit; didactic games; balls in different sizes; dolls; books; toyshop and others. All of these toys are selected in accordance with the children’s age and are made out of durable high-quality materials. They all comply with Directive 2009/48/EC on the safety of toys. In addition, each group is being provided with multimedia, an interactive board and tablets, educational books for each child.

Description of kindergarten practices

The main goal of civic education in the kindergarten is to support the personal and social development of children through cooperation and interaction between all of the educational communities in the kindergarten and based on respect for the children's rights.

Tasks of the civic education in kindergarten:

Cognitive: orientation in some of the main children's rights (name, home, family, education, healthcare, protection against violence and others) and development of the intellectual operations of children in order for them to be able to evaluate and interpret events happening in their own community and closest circle.

Affective: building the bases for value-oriented civic behaviour: building a positive self-image; assertion of interests; desire and readiness for participation in the life of child community; stimulation of motivation and attitudes for active participation in conflict resolution in the children's group etc.

Behavioural: development of independence and initiative, self-criticism, organizational skills in educational and practical activities; development of communication and teamwork skills;

Substantially the content of civic education is multidisciplinary and integral - it includes knowledge, skills, abilities, values, relationships from different areas of social knowledge. Due to the essence of kindergarten work, in accordance with the educational tasks and the peculiarities of age of the children, the contents of education in civics education should include knowledge, skills, values and relationships, that guide and navigate children in the social environment in which they inhabit by showing and explaining to them the rules of life together with others, as well as by showing them possibilities for their practice.

As per Article 5 paragraph from the Regulation No 13 of 21.09.2016 on the CHEIE, the ways and forms of carrying out the CHEIE for the different age groups are being defined in the programme system of the kindergarten or school, which is being developed in accordance with the state education standard for pre-school education" (Regulation № 13/ 21.09.2016 г. on the civil, health, environmental and intercultural education).

In Kindergarten 37 „Valshebstvo“ each age group has a program in civics education. It includes the themes and expected results, related to them. The themes are in the educational field of Environmental studies. The educational sub-fields are “Self-affirmation and communication with others” (SACO), “Social and health environment” (SHE), “Cultural and national values” (CNV). The education plans for the school year 2020/2021 are presented in the tables below.

Civics education I age group

Theme	Educational sub-fields	Expected results
This I know!	SACO	Recognizes his or her own image and names his or her gender. Demonstrates preference for a place to play, toys and game partners.
My name is...	SACO	Describes himself by saying his name and names his closest friends, as well as preference for clothing and toys. Recognizes his or her own image and names his or her gender.
My home	SHE	Has an idea of the buildings and the road in front of his own home. Differentiates between the moving and the stationary things on the road.
I live here	SACO SHE	Differentiates between the buildings of the kindergarten and his or her own home.
Family	SACO	Demonstrates attachment to members of the family.
It is sunny	SCO SHE	In pictures of nature names the weather as sunny, rainy, snowy.
My toys	SACO	Knows the names of some vehicles and orientates in some of their parts. Recognizes play items and uses them accordingly.
Favorited toys	SHE	Names play items, roles and rules.
Let's play together	SACO SHE	Shares toys and tools with other children.
We play ... (game-based)	SHE	Participates in games and plays with fun and pleasure. Participates in games with other children.
Colours	SCO	Shows what he / she likes or does not like.
Fruits and vegetables	SACO SHE	Names fruits and vegetables. Shows what he / she likes or does not like.
Going on a walk with mom and dad	SACO	Holds an adult's hand when moving on the street. Recognizes the participants in the road traffic.
We are taken care for by ...	SHE	Recognize professions, related to child care in the kindergarten.
I recognize sound and colour	SHE	Forms sensory sensations and perceptions of sound and colour. Closely listens to different sounds and differentiates them by volume. Recognizes the traffic light colours - red, yellow and green.
In the car	SACO	Knows the rules for car travel and uses a child car seat.

I travel with mom and dad	SHE	Knows his / her place in an automobile and names safety features, used by children. Knows the purpose of car safety features.
Children's car (game-based)	SHE	Knows the rules for car travel and uses a child car seat.
Clean hands	SHE	Knows means of hygiene and the ways to use them.
In the bathroom	SHE	Knows means of hygiene and the ways to use them.
Bulgaria	CNV	Knows the name of the country.
Spring holiday	CNV	Demonstrates readiness and willingness to participate in folklore holidays and games.

Civics education II age group

Theme	Educational sub-fields	Expected results
This I know!	SACO	Describes himself / herself by saying his / her name and naming close friends, as well as preferences for clothes and toys.
I help at home	SACO	Names responsibilities of significant others towards him / her and his / her own responsibilities towards them. Has an idea of the different roles and responsibilities in the family.
We are family	SACO	Defines the gender role identities of his / her family members.
I have friends	SACO	Social skills for communication. Names game partners, while complying to the theme / idea; makes friends.
I come up with a game	SACO	Gives ideas for games. Combines means of plays and materials to achieve play goals.
Mothers and fathers	SHE	Builds skills for independent play. Combines means of plays and materials to achieve play goals.
I put clothes on, I put shoes on	SACO	Describes himself / herself by saying his / her name and naming close friends, as well as preferences for clothes and toys.
Rules for crossing the street	SACO	Names responsibilities of significant others towards him / her and his / her own responsibilities towards them. Has an idea of the different roles and responsibilities in the family.

Clean is healthy. We wash our hands.	SHE	Names and adheres to simple hygiene rules and a healthy regime during the day.
I want. If I had a magic wand...	SACO	Attempts to emotionally connect own wishes with other people's abilities to fulfil them (toys, clothing, fun).
Magical words. I greet.	SACO	Makes friends. Builds an idea of culture and behaviour.
Magical words „please“ and „thank you“	SACO	Makes friends. Builds an idea of culture and behaviour.
Koledarche	SACO	Compares items that are part of the festive folklore field and greets appropriately when using them (Martenitsa, wreaths, masks and others).
Santa Claus is coming	SACO	Compares items that are part of the festive folklore field and greets appropriately when using them.
Let's play!	SACO SHE	Gives ideas for games. Combines means of play and materials to achieve play goals.
We all are friends	SCO	Has specific ideas for kids with differences and cooperates with others in the process of self-affirmation.
Imagine	SACO	Has specific ideas for kids with differences and cooperates with others in the process of self-affirmation.
My favourite thing to do	SACO	Expresses reasons for what he / she likes and does not like. Describes own experiences and doings.
They are working	SACO	Has an idea about the professions of own parents and the fact that they work so that they are helpful and able to take care of their families.
My safety	SHE	Demonstrates knowledge of the rules to cross the street. Assimilation of rules and norms for safe behaviour in a close social circle. Foresees dangers when crossing a street.
I follow the rules	SHE	Knows the main rules for riding a bicycle. Knows the rules for safe play with rollerblades, scooters, and three-wheeler. Knows where it is unsafe to play outside and why.
Holidays in my fatherland	CNV	Defines own nationality. Recognizes domestic and holiday environments and compares items that are part of the festive folklore field and greets appropriately when using them (Martenitsa, wreaths, masks and others).

My dear mommy	SACO	Names responsibilities of significant others towards him / her and his / her own responsibilities towards them. Expresses reasons for what he / she likes and does not like.
I love you so much	SACO	Names responsibilities of significant others towards him / her and his / her own responsibilities towards them. Assessment of behaviour models and models of communication with significant others.
The purpose of labour for people	SHE	The child has knowledge of different professions. The child has respect for the purpose of work and the work of others with different professions.
Norms of hygiene	SHE	The child can differentiate hygiene norms according to their purpose in the everyday social and domestic environment.
How I eat	SHE	The child can differentiate healthy food for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The child has a positive attitude towards and a desire for eating healthy.
Tsvetnitsa	CNV	Recognises domestic and festive environment and demonstrates readiness and abilities to participate in the preparation of the celebration of significant official holidays.
Easter is coming	CNV	Compares items part of the festive folklore and greets appropriately when using them.
In the kindergarten	SHE	Understands the functions and purpose of items that he/she uses daily. Expansion of the ideas for the purposes of everyday objects.
My bicycle	SHE	Knows the main rules for riding a bicycle. Knows the rules for safe play with rollerblades, scooters, and three-wheelers. Knows where it is unsafe to play outside and why.
At home	SHE	Understands the functions and purposes of items that he / she uses daily.
I am part of the holiday	CNV	Getting to know national values and traditions. Recognises the domestic and festive environment and demonstrates readiness and ability to participate in the preparation of the celebration of the National holiday and significant official holidays.
The heroes come to life	CNV	Getting to know national values and traditions. Recognises the domestic and festive environment and demonstrates readiness and ability to participate in the preparation of the celebration of the National holiday and significant official holidays.

Now I can	SACO SHE	Defines the gender role identities of his / her family members. Expresses reasons for what he / she likes and does not like. Understands the function and purpose of items that he / she uses daily (for playing, hygiene, clothing, accessories). Demonstrates knowledge of the rules for crossing the street (traffic lights, crosswalk).
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Civics education III age group

Theme	Educational sub-fields	Expected results
Family walk	SACO SHE	Defines the gender role identities of his / her family members. Expresses reasons for what he / she likes and does not like. Understands the function and purpose of items that he / she uses daily (for playing, hygiene, clothing, accessories). Demonstrates knowledge of the rules for crossing the street.
We all love each other	SACO	Demonstrates attachment towards children and adults within the family and close circle. Has awareness about different feelings.
How do I feel?	SACO	Has awareness about different feelings.
Our games	SACO SHE	Demonstrates mutual assistance when playing in pairs or in a small group. Compares own actions with the actions of others and actively interacts with adults and other children. Supports game interest.
Can we meet?	SACO SHE	Demonstrates attachment towards children and adults in the family and close circle. Explains adequate norms of behaviour towards strangers and acquaintances.
Different, but friends	SCO SHE	Has specific ideas for expressing trust and tolerance towards others.
The ripped book	SCO	Demonstrates attachment towards children and adults in the family and close circle. Has awareness about different feelings.

Civics education IV age group

Theme	Educational sub-fields	Expected results
I am moving safely	SHE	Understands and demonstrates the needed difference in behaviour and adherence to rules when on the street, in a restaurant, at a place for recreation, on a playground.
The street has its rules	SHE	Understands and demonstrates the needed difference in behaviour and adherence to rules when on the street, in a restaurant, at a place for recreation, on a playground.
Sport and games	SHE	Compares the state of health and of sickness. Expresses his / her own freedom of choice and initiative amongst others.
Healthy and tasty	SHE	Compares the state of health and of sickness. Expresses his / her own freedom of choice and initiative amongst others.
Sick and healthy	SHE	Compares the state of health and of sickness.
Help for the health	SHE	Recognizes professions from different fields and their meaning for the life of people - constructions, security, public transportation and others.
It's cold!	SACO	Demonstrates more independence and confidence. On a nature calendar shows the weather and compares changes in the time of the year / landscape.
We play together	SACO	Partners with his / her teacher and cooperates with other children. Interacts with adults and other children, while recognising their mood and linking this mood with the reasons that are causing it.
We all help each other	SHE	Demonstrates tolerance towards children and adults with differences. Chooses their type of playing in accordance to the toys, play items and game situation.
Preparation for the holiday	SACO	Partners with his / her teacher and cooperates with other children. Names personal, official and national holidays, local customs and traditions.
Snowy games	SACO	Interacts with adults and other children, while recognising their mood and linking this mood with the reasons that are causing it.
The places I love	SACO SHE	Interacts with adults and other children, while recognising their mood and linking this mood with the reasons that are causing it.

In the kids club	SCO SHE	Expresses his / her own freedom of choice and initiative amongst others. Chooses their type of playing in accordance to the toys, play items and game situation. Avoids conflicts and resolves them when (if) needed.
I know about these professions	SACO SHE	Recognises professions from different fields and their meaning for the life of people - constructions, security, public transportation and others.
On land, air or water	SACO SHE	Understands the difference between role play and real relationships. Chooses type of playing in accordance to the toys, play items and game situation.
I celebrate today	SACO	Names personal, official and national holidays, local customs and traditions. Demonstrates tolerance towards children and adults with differences.
We play together	SACO SHE	Chooses type of playing in accordance to the toys, play items and game situation.
Games have rules	SACO SHE	Expresses own thoughts in a clear and specific manner and takes other people's ideas into consideration.
In the park	SACO SHE	Understands and demonstrates the needed difference in behaviour and adherence to rules when on the street, in a restaurant, at a place for recreation, on a playground.
At school	SACO SHE	Has a specific idea of the social role of a student. Has ideas of school - classrooms, furnishings and teaching aids that a pupil needs.

In Kindergarten 37, “Valshebstvo”, a personality development support team is provided. Inclusive education - real access to quality education for all children.

Practically the system addresses every difference and need. Inclusive education was adopted with the regulation № 232 on 20th October 2017, is defined as a process of realisation, acceptance and support of every child's individuality through activation and inclusion of resources aimed at the removal of obstacles to learning and towards creating possibilities for development and participation of children in all aspects of life and community.

Children in the preschool education system are provided with general and additional personality development support, ensuring suitable physical, psychological and social fields for skills development. The personality development support is carried out by every child's personal and educational needs. For personality development support, a psychologist, a speech therapist, a resource teacher, and other specialists are employed at the kindergarten, depending on the children's needs.

The general personality development support is provided by the teachers and other pedagogical specialists in the kindergarten. General personality development support starts with the child's admission to kindergarten and aims to develop every

child's potential. General personality development support consists of teamwork between teachers and other pedagogical specialists; interests-based activities; health care; early assessment of personal needs and prevention of learning difficulties; encouragement with material and moral incentives; activities to prevent violence and overcome problematic behaviour therapy.

The additional personality development support is provided depending on the support plan for the child, which determines the specific additional personality development support actions, the period and the specialists that are needed to offer the support.

The additional personality development support is provided based on assessing the children's personal needs. The assessment is carried out by a personality development support team approved with an order of the kindergarten director. The assessment of a child's individual needs is a process of collecting and analysing specific information about the child's functioning - strong sides, difficulties, the potential for optimal development, participation in the education process, and abilities for realisation. Based on a discussion of the information, the children whose personal needs shall be assessed are being specified to receive additional personality development support.

For the assessment, the parent presents the following papers: an application to the principal; results from previous assessments and consultations, when such are available - psychological, speech therapist, medical, as well as a standpoint from a special pedagogue; all types of paperwork, that contain information about the health and social status of the child; a protocol from a medical advisory committee specialised in the specific disease profile and/or a territorial expert medical commission, and/or a National expert medical commission with attached personal patient booklet containing information about tests, consultations, medical documents and others that are verifying the disease - for children with chronic illnesses.

During the assessment, considerations are also taken: the results from the early assessment of the child's development and learning difficulties risk; materials from the child's portfolio; other paperwork when needed based on the team's judgement.

The assessment of the personal needs of children, for which indications are present for having special educational needs, is carried out by the personality development support team, which consists of a psychologist, speech therapist, resource teacher, and children with impaired eyesight or hearing - also a hearing or a speech rehabilitator or a teacher for children with visual impairments. Cognitive development, communication and social skills, physical development, adaptive behaviour, mental reactions, and family functioning are assessed. The assessment of children's personal needs, for which indications are present for special educational needs, is carried out up to 3 months after the start of the school year. The assessment duration is at least 14 days. When assessing the personal needs of children, the specialists from the team use standardised Bulgaria **tools, for example:**

Denver II – the screening test for child assessment. Denver II is a test examining early childhood development for 0-6 years. Four different areas are assessed: gross motor skills, language, fine motor-adaptive skills, personal-social skills;

DESK 3-6 R for detection and prevention of early developmental deviations.

CARS 2: rating scale that helps identify autism in children.

Developmental Profile 3, DP – 3: A rating scale examining child development.

It can be administered as a structured interview with a parent or a questionnaire that the parent completes. Developmental Profile 3 allows for creating a whole personality profile for the child as it assesses his development in all developmental areas: physical development, adaptive abilities, social and emotional development, cognitive development, and communication. The screening method allows the identification of the strong traits of the child as well as the undeveloped abilities, developmental delays and needs for referrals to other specialists.

The assessment of children is carried out individually by every specialist in the team. The time needed for the personal assessment is estimated by each specialist in the team depending on each child's characteristics and needs and adheres to the respective maximum periods. Children are assessed based on an Assessment card for the child's personal needs. Every specialist from the support team fills out a part of the assessment card that corresponds with his competencies; the separate parts undergo a discussion between the team members and a collective standpoint about the child's functioning. The necessary additional support is added. In the Assessment card, the parent expresses in written agreement or disagreement with assessing the child's personal needs and the decision to offer additional support for the child's personal development.

The additional support for personal development is carried out in the kindergarten according to a support plan prepared for the child. The parent must cooperate in the process of realisation of the support plan. Working with a child based on a case study is a method that aims to secure an individual approach in offering additional support for the child's personal development. The personal development support team realises the case study work by coordinating its actions with the person leading the case. Whoever leads the case coordinates his work with the personality development support team specialists. Case study work includes a case formulation, an assessment of the child's personal needs, a definition of goals and actions towards the child; a support plan; interaction, and facilitation of the supportive environment. The goals and tasks part of the plan is assessed twice a year. The paperwork for every child is stored in the cabinet of the psychologist and speech therapist. For organisation and coordination of the process of carrying out general and additional development support of the children in the kindergarten, at the start of every school year, with a director's order, the director names a coordinator who coordinates the work of the personal development support teams and the actions of pedagogical specialists, as well as the parents in regards to the personal development support of their children.

The coordinator has the following main functions:

- Discusses with the teachers in the group at the kindergarten their observations and analyses in regards to the education, development and participation of children in the group;
- Coordinates the activity of the personal development support teams as well as their work with the parents;
- Coordinates the process of granting general and additional personal development support for children in the kindergarten;
- Organizes and coordinates the actions related to discussion and directing the child to a particular preschool group of the mandatory preschool education.

The personal development support team in the kindergarten is formed with a director's order every school year for a specific child - with special learning needs, at-risk, outstanding talent, and chronic diseases. A psychologist and a speech therapist must be part of the team. According to the child's individual needs, a resource teacher and other specialists may be part of the team. The parent is also part of the work of their child's support team. The team organises meetings at least three times - at the beginning of the school year and the end of the first and second school term. The parent is informed about the dates of the meetings. When needed, an extraordinary meeting can be arranged. All members of the team are present at the three mandatory meetings. A protocol should be made for every personal development support team meeting. Apart from the mentioned tasks, the team also fulfils the following functions: specifies the needed instruments to assess the individual personal needs of the child; discusses the assessment and observations of every member of the team and forms a group decision for granting additional personal development support in a meeting protocol; informs the kindergarten director of the decision that is made to give extra support; defines the way and format of the education for the specific child based on the assessment of its personal needs; within one month after the personal needs assessment develops personal plans for the children with special learning needs and with many disabilities; follows the progress in the development of the child twice a year and when needed makes changes in the support plan and in the personal curricula after obtaining a written agreement from the parent, who must cooperate in the process of realization of the support plan; carries out consultative work with children, teachers and parents aimed at acceptance and inclusion of children with special learning needs, at risk, with outstanding talent, with chronic diseases in the kindergarten; prepares team-activity reports in digital format to the director of the kindergarten within 7 days after the end of the first school term and within 10 days after the end of the second school term.

In Kindergarten 37, "Valshebstvo" early assessment of the needs is carried out by the pedagogic specialists in the kindergarten, and it includes:

- Early child development assessment and assessment of the learning difficulties risk;
- Assessing the necessity of additional modules for children that do not know the Bulgarian language;

Rating the need for an assessment of personal needs from a personal support development team for offering additional support for personal development to the child in the following cases:

- difficulties in the physical, cognitive, language, social, sensory, emotional and creative development of the child compared to other children in the same age group;
- when risk factors and circumstances are present in the child's environment;
- when chronic diseases that are hindering education and inclusion of the child in the kindergarten activities are present;
- when the child demonstrates strong sides in arts and sports.

As per Article 8, paragraph 3, section 1 from the Regulation for inclusive education (Regulation for inclusive education / 20.10.2017), early assessment is done for children between 3 years and three years and six months upon their admission to kindergarten. As per paragraph 1 is carried out with a screening that determines

the risk of learning development difficulties. As per paragraph 1, the assessment is personally carried out for every child with the parent's written agreement after he is informed about how the screening is conducted. After the screening is admitted, the parents are provided with its results. Depending on the assessment results, the coordinator and the parent specify each child's activities from the general and/or additional personal development support. The results from the assessment are only used to specify activities to support the development of the child, and they are accessible only to the teachers in the group and those the pedagogical specialists in the kindergarten that carried out the assessment are working with the child, as well as the child's parents. Children of age 5 and 6 years in the school preparation groups in kindergartens or schools, who were not assessed between the age of 3 years and three years and six months, are being assessed for learning difficulties risks.

The early development assessment and the assessment of learning difficulties risks as per Article 8, paragraph 3 section 1 from the Regulation for inclusive education are carried out after training the pedagogical specialists that will assess the children in kindergartens. The training is organised and/or led by specialists from the National speech therapy centre and the Regional centre for inclusive education support.

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Case study report of CSS (Portugal)

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Summary

Although it is not mandatory, preschool education in Portugal is recognised as the first stage of primary education throughout life. Its importance in terms of the success of future learning is emphasised. From a perspective of education for citizenship, the intention is to insert the child into society as an autonomous, free, and solidary being. This document intends to make known Centro Social de Soutelo (CSS), specifically the Kindergarten context, through a description and contextualisation of the guiding principles of the professionals' performance and the concrete practices adopted by them. The preparation of this document focused essentially on practices in terms of the development of the SES, promoting a reflection about them, the current needs and the obstacles that the educational team faces.

Description of the practice

1. Introduction

Centro Social de Soutelo (CSS) is a Private Social Solidarity Institution (IPSS), which develops its activity in several areas. Focusing on childhood and youth, it offers day-care, preschool and extra-school occupational programmes for children aged four months and 14 years. The educational service aggregates these responses, constituting an integrated reality rather than the sum of several groups, social/scholarly responses or cycles isolated from each other. The educators, teachers, supervisory, and auxiliary staff form an experienced and coherent team, the engine of the whole operation through shared and imparted objectives and methodologies put into practice throughout the institution. The educational team develops projects based on the child's natural curiosity and stimulates their development to become happy, fulfilled, and educated human beings. This being a service that is attentive to the needs of families, it seeks to accompany them in the challenge of caring, caring with ethics, and supporting the education of their children, allowing their children a sustained and healthy growth allied to a complete and enriching cognitive, social, and cultural development.

In particular, at the Kindergarten level, CSS follows the national guidelines, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (ME), addressed in detail in the

document that characterises the Portuguese educational context. Even so, we chose to present, in a concise way, how Preschool Education is organised in our country. The Preschool Education Framework Law (Law no. 5/97) advocates preschool education as “the first stage of basic education in the process of lifelong education, being complementary to the educational practice of the family, with which it must establish close cooperation, promoting the training and balanced development of the child, and aiming for their full integration into society as an autonomous, free, and caring being” (Article 2, p. 670). Preschool education refers to children aged three years old until they enter compulsory schooling and is provided in preschool education establishments. Its attendance is optional, recognising the family’s primary role in their children’s education, consecrating its universality for five-year-old children.

Preschool education is organised in a National Network composed of public and private networks. In any of these networks, children and families are ensured the teaching component, which includes five daily hours of teaching activities guided by the responsible educator, and the animation and family support activities, which include the welcoming, the lunch service, the socio-educational activities and the school break periods.

There are compulsory Curriculum Guidelines for Preschool Education (OCEPE) in preschool education, which guide and support the early childhood educator in constructing and managing the curriculum of their group of children. The curriculum is understood as “the set of interactions, experiences, activities, routines, and planned and unplanned events that occur in an inclusive educational environment, organised to promote children’s well-being, development, and learning” (ME/DGE, 2016; p.106). The educator’s work is intentional, planned, and evaluated and is accomplished by implementing diversified activities with the group of children, providing them with significant learning. Children learn to learn, relate, and be part of a group, formulate their opinions, and accept those of others, developing a democratic spirit in a climate of participation and sharing.

2. Description of context related to social and emotional skills development in the country

Preschool education is distinct from the other study cycles in Portugal. Throughout the school year, the preschool curriculum holds guidelines and orientations of the areas to be developed: Personal and Social Training, Expression and Communication, and World Knowledge. However, it is the responsibility of educators to promote experiences that allow the achievement of these acquisitions and other knowledge and skills. Concerning the socioemotional domain, there are no specific guidelines in the OCEPE; however, with the recognition that has been given to this domain over the years, it is clear that underlying and transversally to the development of the areas established in the preschool curriculum, there is the need to promote SEL. This is a conceptual framework of reference for the promotion of social skills through interpersonal development and promotion of positive relationships with others; emotional skills through the advancement of intrapersonal development such as self-knowledge and self-regulation; and, also, academic skills as knowledge learning associated with social and emotional growth (Leite, 2018). Thus, the school emerges as the privileged context for the teaching and practice of social-emotional skills (Durlak



et al., 2011) as a way to reduce the risk of developing academic, behavioural and social problems, which tend to start when children enter school with underdeveloped social and self-regulation skills (Leite, 2018). Therefore, the promotion of these skills should be activated early, in the family and preschool context, which should interact in an articulated and positive way to provide this learning, which is learned through observation (of good examples), instruction, practice, and feedback (Merrell & Gueldner, 2010; Pinto & Raimundo, 2016). In the Portuguese context, specifically regarding SEL, there are some support manuals and activity booklets for preschool children, available on online platforms and bookstores, accessible to all individuals who are curious or feel the need to implement activities in this area (e.g. parents, educators, assistants). There are also workshops - some for all individuals in the community who show interest in the subject and others specifically for educational agents - which aim to give suggestions and provide different alternatives on how to approach this issue. Besides this, evidence-based programmes are developed in the scope of socioemotional competencies that are gaining more adherence. Examples of these are the “Incredible Years” programme, translated, implemented, and researched in 2003. The DROPI will be dealt with in section 5 as a tool adopted at the CSS kindergarten. Previous training is required to implement this type of programme where the theoretical contents are covered, accompanied by a practical component. A major limitation in this area is that these programmes are costly in financial terms, making it impossible for many professionals to attend. As socioemotional development is essential for children’s integral development and success, there is a need to support this training, and others of a similar nature, as they are an added value for educators. This training allows for the recycling of knowledge and innovation in work tools, widening the range of options, enabling the educator to be more flexible and responsive to children and their specificities, making them more competent in terms of management and emotional regulation, and allowing the maximising of their development and healthy growth.

3. Description of the context of kindergarten

Centro Social de Soutelo is a non-governmental organisation formally founded on the 25th of April, 1976 and created by a local group of residents in Lugar de Soutelo, Rio Tinto, which aimed to make a change in the community, especially in the educational and family support responses that were available for local young children. Initially, it was called Centro Infantil de Soutelo (Soutelo Children’s Center). Childhood education was its first area of intervention in the community. In 1977 its name was changed to Centro Social de Soutelo (Soutelo Social Center). In 1987, already with the status of a “Legal Person of Public Utility” and having obtained the status of IPSS, the first agreements of cooperation and funding were signed with the Portuguese State.

At present, CSS develops its activity in the Porto district (Gondomar, Porto and Matosinhos) in early childhood/youth education, the elderly, and social and community intervention. Its mission is to “Meet the legitimate needs and expectations of the community, promoting equality, participation, cooperation and solidarity.” Thus, the CSS has statutory objectives to support the family in the education and protection of children, promote the well-being of the elderly, and respond to the community’s needs through typical social responses and social intervention projects. It has 110 permanent



workers and, adding to this number, several people who benefit from occupational programs to support the professional insertion and various professional and academic internships. Table 3 shows the distribution of workers by services.

Table 3: *Distribution of workers by services (N = 110)*

Services	Workers (n)
Educational service	42
Elderly Service	17
Community intervention projects	23
Administrative services	6
General services	22

Early childhood and youth education are one of the core areas of intervention. Of the 42 workers who integrate the educational services, ten are in the nursery, 18 in the kindergarten, and 14 in the extra-school occupational programs, as shown in Table 4. It should be noted that a technical director coordinates the educational service, and the pedagogical direction is assumed by the educators of the five-year-old preschool groups. The teaching staff that makes up the pedagogical team has remained stable over the last few years.

Table 4: *Distribution of workers in educational service (n = 42)*

Educational Service	Workers (n)	
	Teaching staff	Non-teaching staff
Nursery	2	8
Kindergarten	6	11
Extra-school occupational programs	8	6
Technical coordination	1	

CSS supports 298 children and young people in the nursery (35), kindergarten (134), and extra-school occupational responses (129). Table 5 shows the distribution of children by social and educational responses/services.

Table 5: *Distribution of children by social and educational responses/services (N = 298)*

Social/educational services	Groups	n/age	n/responses
Nursery	Age 4 to 12 months	8	35
	Age 12 to 24 months	12	
	Age 24 to 36 months	15	
Kindergarten	Age 3 to 4 years old	22	43
		21	
	Age 4 to 5 years old	25	134
		24	
	Age 5 to 6 years old	22	
	20	42	
Extra - school occupational programs	1 st cycle (6-9 years old)	87	129
	2 nd cycle (10-11 years old)	21	
	3 rd cycle (12-14 years old)	21	

As far as parental figures are concerned, most mothers (60.7%) and fathers (54.3%) are aged 31-40 and have completed secondary education (47.2% mothers and 43.3% fathers); 82.5% of mothers and 85.6% of fathers are integrated into the formal labour market.

CSS sees itself as a reference institution in terms of the quality and diversity of its services, intending to be open to the community's challenges, changes, and needs. It underlines the fundamental role of education in the global development of the child/young person by creating different learning situations which allow the construction of knowledge. Educational practice is not limited to adopting a single educational model. Instead, it is based on the use of methodological procedures that are in turn based on the construction of knowledge and the development of the teaching-learning process. The educational process is built through a close relationship between families, children/youth, and the educational team, in which the child/youth assumes the leading role. Based on these concepts, the educational team of CSS seeks to provide children and youth with discovery and problem-solving activities, aiming at their personal and social development, in a perspective of education for values and citizenship and the promotion of inclusion. From the perspective of integrated educational policies aimed at ensuring equal access and success for all, it promotes the possibility and opportunity to develop a lifelong learning path. It seeks to fill in, in a complementary role, the gaps in the family environment, namely affective, relational, nutritional, and cultural, fostering social cohesion, training within the democratic values, and the culture of peace. It also advocates a model of a reflective and critical educator who questions their practices and, together with their peers, creates opportunities for professional development and moments of shared reflection, seeking answers to daily challenges.



4. Description of the practice of kindergarten

CSS is an institution at the forefront thanks to the quality and diversity of the services provided in a perspective of openness to the challenges, changes, and needs of the community, specifically the Educational Service, which aims to promote the involvement and participation of the educational community in the educational and institutional path; to train for democratic citizenship and to adapt the training to real interests and needs of educational agents. In the functioning of the services, and specifically in the educational service, CSS privileges its action in a project logic, instead of planning ritualised routines, promoting synergies and knowledge shared between the various groups and teams. With planning and evaluation of participatory processes, the project work methodologies introduce efficacy and a sense of action, knowledge of those involved about the mechanisms of change intended to operate, and transparency about the interests involved (Capucha, 2008). Therefore, CSS identifies itself with the guidelines in the practical guide for Project Planning and Evaluation, published by the Directorate-General for Innovation and Curriculum Development (DGICD).

The changes that take place in society, where economic and social crises generate and are generated by crises of values, force the school to renew itself in innovative and participative processes to create contexts of development, cognitive and emotional, guided by the values of the mission: equality, participation, cooperation, and solidarity. To this end, project methodology-oriented management is promoted.

These participatory planning processes incorporate a critical look at the institutional, local and national reality, which interacts with our work, evaluating internal and external coherence, effectiveness and efficiency, the realities of the community, the objectives and goals, and the means necessary to achieve them. The pedagogical action is contextualised in the enacted document of the OCEPE (ME/DGE, 2016). In this document, the pedagogical objectives are defined, of which we highlight: a) to promote the personal and social development of the child, based on democratic life experiences, in a perspective of education for citizenship; b) to foster the insertion of the child in diverse social groups, with respect for the plurality of cultures, encouraging a progressive awareness of their role as a member of society; c) to contribute to equal opportunities in access to school and successful learning; d) to stimulate the global development of each child, to respect their characteristics, instilling behaviour that favours significant and diversified learning; e) to promote curiosity and critical thinking; f) to encourage the participation of families in the educational process and, g) to establish relationships of effective collaboration with the community. Although there are guidelines for the construction and management of the preschool curriculum, the teaching process is seen as a flexible and open process, in the sense that the educator has a crucial role in the planning of activities (choice of materials, the adaptation of activities, necessary resources), in their implementation and individual evaluation, considering the OCEPE and the expected skills to be developed by children in this age group.

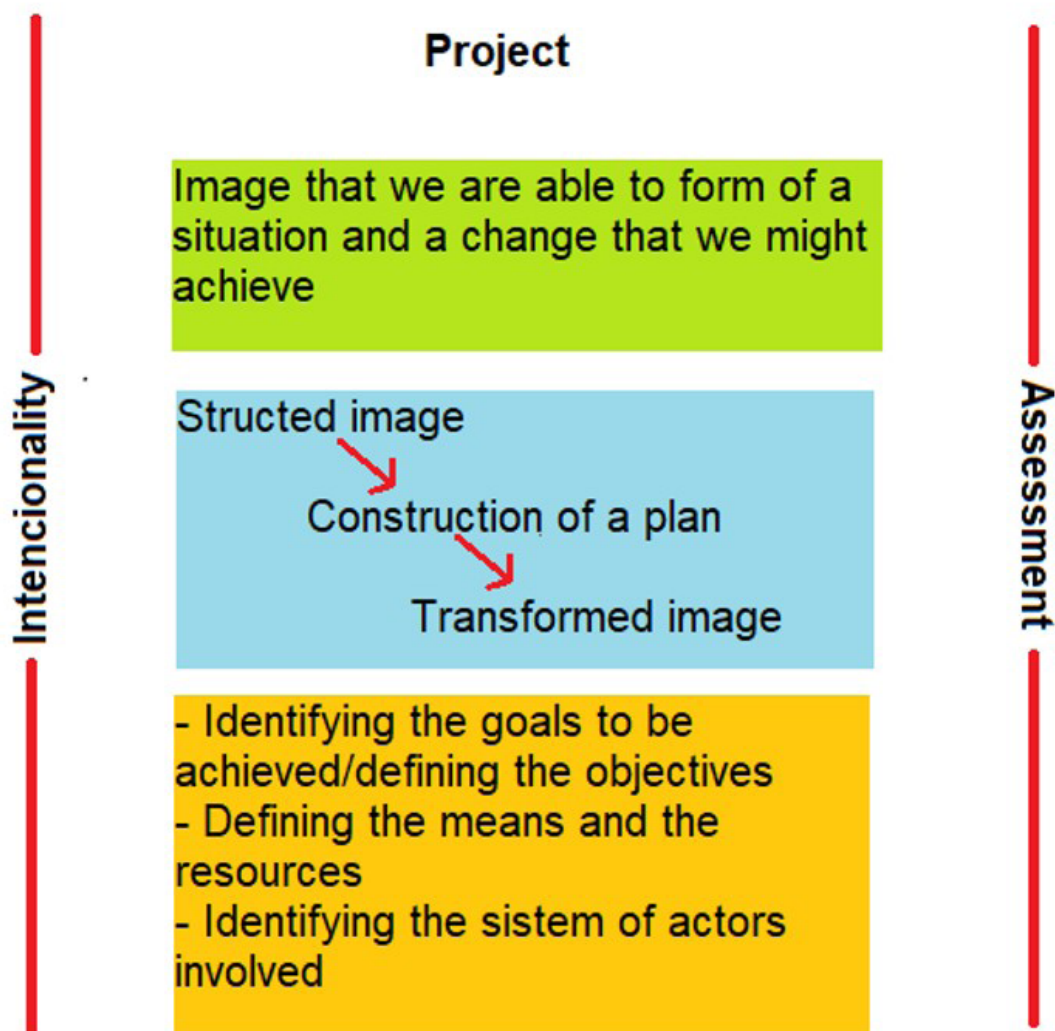


Diagram 9. Scheme for project work methodologies: Copyright, Capucha, 2008

At CSS, development is valued as a function of the person-environment interaction in evolution, in which the environment has more immediate contexts (family and school) that directly influence the processes that involve the developing person; and more distant contexts (community) that indirectly affect the same processes (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). Furthermore, it is considered that every educator should be aware of the various models of conception for Preschool/Pedagogical Education and be able to extract from each of them the information and methods they consider most useful and enriching for their pedagogical practices. This knowledge and adaptation to their pedagogical practice is a continuous process that should be flexible and open to the educational community. This permeability of practices and knowledge allows the sharing of experiences, successes, and difficulties and the discussion of possible alternatives for more specific cases, thus acting in a perspective of cooperation and

teamwork with the other teaching staff of the institution. From the point of view of the educational team, the various existing pedagogical models complement each other and, therefore, they try not to limit the pedagogical practice to just one, seeking instead to diversify it to correspond to the aspects with which they identify and that best meet the needs of each child and group with whom they work.

Therefore, it is based essentially on socio-constructivist and participatory pedagogical models such as:

- High Scope: this model sees the child as an active learner who gets the most out of the activities they plan, develop, and reflect upon. Active learning - the fundamental pillar of the model - is defined as learning in which the child, through its action on objects and its interaction with people, comes to understand the world. The High Scope model is based on four critical pillars: direct action on objects, reflection on actions, intrinsic motivation, and the spirit of experimentation (“web planning” based on a problem, whereby the children find the solutions in close cooperation with the teacher, which leads to joint implementation forms) (Hohmann et al. 2008);
- Reggio Emilia: argues that children learn through their five senses and all possible tools (body, word, and thought). All this influences how the child constructs identity and knowledge, allowing them to interpret the environment around them. In this way, children are encouraged to explore what is around them and express themselves through their hundred natural languages or forms of expression. The physical environment is considered the third educator (Hewett, 2001).
- Project Methodology: the development of the project is based on a conversation between the educator’s suggestions and the children’s suggestions. This methodology, based on social constructivism, is based on a pathway in which the educator manages and organises the interconnected phases (Formosinho et al., 2011).

All of these models value children’s active learning, during which the child’s interests and preferences are the guiding thread and basis for the work developed by the educator. This aims to provide a stimulating environment, a set of significant experiences that arouse curiosity, promote the acquisition of knowledge, develop various skills (cognitive, socioemotional, motor), and simultaneously meet the preferences and needs of each child. At CSS, we cultivate a pedagogy of participation that values the children’s knowledge, experience, culture, and families. We try to listen, involve, and make each child an active learning agent with a voice in the planning of activities and the organisation of the educational environment. The educator is a mediator who appreciates each actor in the process and tries to harmonise their practices to respond to the individual and collective needs of the children. In this way, the educational team is fully aware of the requirement and importance of its role in the children’s learning path in constructing their journey towards acquiring knowledge. They are also aware that negotiation is inherent to the whole learning process. The advances and setbacks derived from all the experiences provided by trial and error will lead the child to full and participatory learning. Besides the relevance of the work developed in the classroom context with the children, the importance of involving the child’s immediate contexts, more specifically their families, should also

be highlighted. A close relationship with them allows us to attend to and facilitate the detection of the children's potential difficulties, disabilities and/or delays is favoured. The articulated work between home-school allows, in these cases, to intervene early on, in a preventive way to overcome the aggravation of certain difficulties or needs that have been recognised, promoting the planning of an early, careful intervention adequate for the child. In this respect, CSS has an initiative called "Come spend a day with us", in which the children's parents, throughout the year, can spend a day in the institution and get to know the routines and work done with their children. In addition to the strategies described above, the whole community's involvement where children and families live is valued as much as possible. The participation of multiple contexts is essential not only for the child's development but also for the integration of the families themselves in the community, allowing the creation of bonds between individuals. In the institution, this involvement is achieved through events, participation in activities, festivities, and projects promoted by the local municipality (e.g., food collection, "Solidary Christmas Tree"), visits to other institutions, and trans-generational exchanges.

The Group Curriculum Project - which is adapted to the characteristics of the group - is articulated with the Educational Project of the establishment and the Institution's Annual Activity Plan, which, following the OCEPE, includes the educational options and intentions of the educator and how they plan to guide the development and learning opportunities of a group (ME/DGE, 2016). Therefore, the work developed by the educational team seeks, above all, to establish warmth relationships, essential in this age group, to promote autonomy and raise children's awareness of certain attitudes and values across curriculum areas: Personal and Social Development, Expression and Communication and World Knowledge. Inherent to these areas, work is simultaneously carried out at the level of socioemotional skills, crucial for fully integrating the child, young person, and future adult into society. In this way, the emphasis is placed on managing emotions, maintaining positive social relationships, promoting sharing values and positive attitudes, and more precisely in, the promotion of attitudes of respect towards others.

Because of the above, the educational team tries to develop playful and appealing pedagogical activities with diversified materials daily, in order to cover all the development areas. The group dynamics (sense of sharing and mutual help, respect for the other and difference), the fulfilment of rules established together in the classrooms, and the individual activities that allow the response to the needs of each child and promote the development and potentiate skills in the various areas are highlighted. The evaluation of the practices, more detailed in point 6, is the educator's responsibility. To this end, we seek to include all stakeholders from the educators themselves, the team, the children, and the parents, using naturalistic observation, photographic and self-evaluation records, and construction of portfolios produced with the children, among others.

5. Description of the process of adapting/creating the practice in kindergarten

SEL is transversal to all curricular areas designated in the OCEPE . Therefore, it is an area developed daily and throughout the school year, through specific and isolated activities, and in spontaneous day-to-day situations. Given the importance and recognition of SES in the global development of children, the educational team felt the need to implement new approaches with children for the school context. Since 2015, CSS has been practising yoga weekly, on an optional basis, in a small group, of children aged 0 to 6 years. There are also some large group practice sessions in each classroom with all the children during the school year. Breathing and relaxation techniques and techniques of expression [e.g. dance, art, music, and asanas (postures) that connect the body to the mind and heart] are worked on in groups and individually, providing the experience of moments of belonging and group sharing. Besides, in 2019, the invitation and opportunity arose for the CSS to integrate into its educational services and community intervention projects the implementation of the DROPI Programme, which brings together a set of advantages, namely the fact that it is a structured programme, with theoretical and evidence-based basis, with a large body of results that show its effectiveness. This program is a universal prevention tool for all children. DROPI is based on promoting socio-emotional competencies and guiding objectives for success in preventing risky behaviour in the areas of education and health to promote healthy and happy growth. Besides, it's based on cooperative learning, participation and learning through experience. Further, this program is based on the children's story "Take the leap with DROPI!" where the protagonist is a kangaroo who intends to influence others through his body, language, history, and way of life to be healthier, more positive and more balanced. DROPI feeds on feelings. The more DROPI identifies and expresses its feelings, the stronger and more energetic it becomes when others share his feelings with him, the stronger and more energetic DROPI becomes. This program promotes dialogue, interaction, and personal and social development using a variety of active participation methodologies, and different non-formal education tools (e.g. group dynamics, games, debates between children, role-plays, individual reflection exercises). These children are expected to become more competent in overcoming challenges and goals throughout their development and more aware of their skills and strengths, exploring their potential (Associação Unificar, 2019).



Quadro I: DROPI – Session 1

Session 1 Presentation and group cohesion	N° of children present: 18 Date: 07/02/2020 Duration: 1 hour
Methodologies	Welcome (presentation); Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “<u>Carousel game</u>” – Children sit on the floor in a circle. A scenery paper and markers/pencils are placed in the circle’s centre. Each child must draw on paper something they like. Then the facilitator asks one child to present their drawing and indicate their name. Next, the child will choose the drawing of another child they identify with, and a line is drawn between the two drawings. The child chosen will also present their drawing and indicate their name, and so on. • <u>Introduction to the DROPI Programme</u> – Explanation of what Dropi is and distribution of cardboard ears, one for each child. The ears are painted and then used in each Dropi session. • Relaxation (Lying abdominal breathing).
Objectives/Skills	To work on self-knowledge and other knowledge; To work on group cohesion; To improve the capacity for concentration and abstraction (relaxation).
Material Resources	Scenery paper; Markers/pencils; DROPI Ears.

It should be noted that the programme is intended for children aged between 6 and 12 years. However, it was implemented in preschool, in the classrooms of children aged five years, given their transition to the 1st cycle, considering this period as particularly important for the social and emotional development of all children. The work developed in this context aims to prepare the children for a new context in which a different methodology to the one they are used to is in force. They face a structured, regulated, and responsible education, where the competitive and individualistic spirit often emerges. In addition, there are obstacles and difficulties in learning, integration, and socialisation, which also make it impossible for the child to succeed. Thus, to minimise the side effects of the transition and of the need to promote a successful school career, the implementation of DROPI in the 5-year-olds’ classrooms was considered relevant, working on the themes included in the programme: resilience; self-knowledge; self-esteem; communication; emotional management; critical thinking; and empathy. The order of the sessions is designed in progressive learning and skills training. So, the skills are gradually complementing each other. As an example, session 1, implemented in preschool, is described in more detail (Table I). A major limitation in the implementation and evaluation of the effectiveness of the DROPI programme was the emergence of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19), which forced



the interruption of the programme. Thus, the children only enjoyed six sessions and the intervention ended on 12 March 2020, when the Government decreed the closure of the schools.

6. Description of the evaluation process

Assessment, as an integral element and regulator of educational practice, allows a systematic collection of information that, once analysed and interpreted, supports appropriate decision-making and promotes the quality of learning. It is based on guiding principles that aim at the contextualisation and holistic perspective of the child development and learning process, under the indicators of the organisation and management of the curriculum and the promotion of equal opportunities and equity. It is up to the educator, as the person responsible for curriculum management, to assess the educational environment, the functionality of the contexts that he or she organises (spaces and materials), the methodology and strategies adopted, and their interaction with educational intentionality. Moreover, the assessment procedure follows the legislation guidelines concerning the Curriculum Guidelines for Preschool Education (considered in Dispatch no. 9180/2016) and in the DGIDC Circular no. 17/DSDC/DEPEB/2007, of 17 October (Curriculum Management in Preschool Education). The guidelines contained therein are articulated with the Decree-Law no. 241/2001 of 30 August (Specific Profile of Professional Performance of the Childhood Educator), detailed in the Circular no. 4/DGIDC/DSDC/2011, where it states that “the assessment in Preschool Education assumes a markedly formative dimension, developing into a continuous and interpretative process that seeks to make the child the protagonist of his learning so that he becomes aware of what he has achieved, the difficulties he is having and how he is overcoming them”. In this way, at the CSS kindergarten, teachers try to focus on the learning process, in which the child is an active agent, instead of focusing on the results. Thus, in this context, evaluation is seen as a monitoring procedure of the children’s learning processes that allows, besides a better knowledge of each child, their difficulties and potentials, a better understanding of the way each one perceives the world around them interacts with it.

According to the OCEPE (2016, p.13), “planning and evaluating the educational process according to what the educator observes, records, and documents about the group and each child, as well as their family and social context, is a condition for preschool education to provide a stimulating environment and promote significant and diverse learning, which contribute to greater equality of opportunities.” Considering the guidelines, a more complete collection of information about each child and the group allows adjusted planning of the individual and collective needs, interests, and curiosities. Therefore, for the development and implementation of a coherent, responsive and effective work, the Kindergarten at CSS uses (i) diversified techniques and materials (e.g. drawing, painting, cut-outs and collages, and plasticine); (ii) pedagogical instruments of observation that can be centred in different areas of the day (morning, afternoon), in different spaces (e.g. classroom, outside spaces, dining room) or in different areas of the classroom, in order to assess how the children use the different areas [e.g. library, symbolic play (play house and mishmash chest), constructions (Legos, wood, garage), plastic expressions (easels, paints, watercolours, chalk board, magazines, scissors, glues, pencils, markers, plasticine), board games (individual and collective; puzzles, didactic games) and discoveries (magnifying

glasses, microscope, natural elements); and (iii) various types of records, in particular records to support the organisation of the group (e. g. attendance table, record of rules agreed in group, task table); the work done individually by the children which is subsequently displayed on the walls of the room and filed in an individual folder, for three periods, in order to show the progress of learning; the records of projects carried out by the group; and audio-visual records (e.g. photographs, videos, video recordings) which document relevant moments for the group. In addition to these, the educator also uses other documents to guide his work and reflect on his intervention. Among them are (i) the diagnostic evaluation carried out in the construction of the Group Curriculum Project; (ii) evaluation reports of the Group Curriculum Project, carried out at the end of each period that allow adapting the curriculum to the changing dynamics of the group and the needs of each child in constant evolution; (iii) weekly reflection record of the group and each child, facilitating the planning of learning opportunities; (iv) individual observation records that provide the necessary evidence for the educator to plan, taking into account the child's progress; (v) summaries of each child's learning that are shared with families at the end of each period; and (vi) weekly planning, as a result of the observations made, the evidence of each child's learning progress, which allows foreseeing a set of proposals for activities that meet the interests of children and the group. These records allow daily reflection on the plans already carried out and support future pedagogical decisions.

Although the educator is the main authority in the group of children and the management of the assessment, other stakeholders are involved in this process and have an equally fundamental role, namely:

- Children, whose evaluation is integrated into the planning, where at a certain moment of the day, a balance is made on what they have learnt, the difficulties they have experienced and how they would like to do; the educational team, through team meetings with educators or room team meetings with assistants, where information is shared and joint reflections are made on the children and their learning;
- Special Education Teachers are professionals who tend to children with more specific educational needs, and thus, they tend to take part in the creation and implementation of the Individual Child's Plan and accompany them in areas such as speech, occupational, and sensory therapy, and early intervention;
- Parents and Guardians, where there is an exchange of information and sharing of strategies with families to foster educational continuity and greater knowledge about the child's life. This communication is established daily, in person or electronically (email and closed groups on different digital platforms). In the first stage, a diagnostic interview is requested by the educator with the families, and essential information about the child is transmitted (e.g. eating habits, health, behavioural and emotional issues, interests). During the school year, three collective meetings are held with the parents of the children's group and individual meetings to share the assessment and make the pedagogical process and the child's progress visible. This sharing allows the parents to understand the child's learning and contribute to this assessment by sharing what they observe at home.



We, therefore, consider that preschool education does not involve classification of the child's learning or attribute value judgements about the child's way of being but values the child's learning, progress and active participation in the planning and assessment of the curriculum.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

This document intends to make known Centro Social de Soutelo, specifically the context of the Kindergarten, through a description and contextualisation of the guiding principles of the professionals' performance and the concrete practices adopted by them. The preparation of this document focused essentially on practices in terms of the development of the SES, promoting a reflection about them, the current needs and the obstacles that the educational team faces. The CSS defines itself as an open institution, promoting direct and daily contact with the families, which allows knowing and respecting the family culture of each child, an integral part of its individuality. In this sense, the educational team believes that SEL is based on a systemic perspective; that is, the promotion of socioemotional skills occurs not only in the context of the different groups but also at the level of the institution, the families and the whole school community. From a "whole school" perspective, it considers that programmes working specifically on these competencies should be integrated into the existing ones, encouraging networking partnerships with structures within the community. There is no closed curriculum in preschool education in Portugal but a set of compulsory guidelines from which the educator directs their practice. There is no area that specifically works with the SES, recognising that they are transversal to all the developed work. However, it seems important to us the development of curricular goals that include SEL, in a longitudinal logic, from Preschool to Secondary School, providing a frame of reference and guidance regarding the knowledge children and young people should have and what they should be able to do in the domain of socioemotional skills. The flexibility of the preschool curriculum and the autonomy given to educators are an asset. They allow the development of work based on a close and affectionate relationship, which benefits the practice with children. They facilitate the knowledge of children and families (e.g. family dynamics and routines), the planning and selection of stimulating activities and also facilitate the implementation of activities. This proximity allows us to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each child, to understand who will carry out the outlined tasks with greater autonomy and those who will need more support, and to facilitate the organisation of the group for their execution. Furthermore, this relationship allows the development of responsive work, which meets the needs and interests of each child and the group. However, and although this flexibility and autonomy are advantageous for the practice, we consider, as already mentioned, that SEL is a "discovery" area, making more specific guidelines and directives necessary to complement the work developed. These guidelines may include, similarly to what happens with other areas, the construction of a dossier with documentation, proposals for organised and structured activities, and strategies that promote the development of socio-emotional skills. In this area, the training of adults – nursery, educators, teachers, assistants, and families - is also insufficient and essential for the work carried out to be as complete as possible. It is important that professionals from the educational service receive training at this level and parents carry out structured, organised, and continuous work (e.g. sharing strategies, tools,



activities) concerning the development of socio-emotional skills. The added value of the training is the access to fundamental tools and strategies to manage adults' emotions and behaviour and children's; reflecting and becoming aware of practices and how they influence child development. It is highlighted that access to this training is quite limited, which is considered a major barrier to the practice of educational agents in Portugal. The need for universal access to training is important. This is the only way to develop a truly comprehensive work involving the whole educational community, from children to adults, to construct a more solidary, fair, and inclusive society. For CSS and the whole solidarity network of preschools, the technical autonomy of the educational team from the institutional management is important. Leaders may emerge in the institutions who wish to interfere in the work processes, namely by placing reservations about the number of meetings of the educational teams, considering them as too many. The lack of external training mentioned above has been overcome with periodic moments of training-action, in which the pedagogical and educational issues of the various educators are deepened and constitute acquired knowledge. The periodic meetings of the class teams, evaluating the planning and development of the activities, with the participation of the educational assistants, besides being training moments, allow better monitoring of the children during the absences of the educator. Finally, perhaps the most differentiating characteristic of the solidarity network preschool, namely the CSS, and the public network, is a greater sense of community, by the involvement of parents and guardians in multiple cultural and leisure activities, of the children of a class or all classes and in leisure time. For example, the acceptance of parents to spend a day in the child's room, building and participating in the same activities, creates emotional relationships of belonging. All are important for the development of children.

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Observational Criteria

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One of the main aims of the EU-Self Project is learning from experience, focusing on “how practice stimulates the social and emotional development of children in early and preschool years”. The described practices will be observed during short-term joint staff training events. The other option for the observation of preschool children will be a joint online observation of video recorded material by the participants and the staff of the kindergarten.

Prior to the visits, the participants should read the two documents described previously:

- Educational context
- Case study

During the visits, observations of the practice, discussions and reflections on the observed practice will take place. The kindergarten’s team that will provide the visit may think and answer questions they would like to discuss with the visiting participants in advance. These additional questions may focus on improving the practice, providing ideas for further development, sharing difficulties in implementing the practice, etc. Both parties can benefit and learn from the experience – the visitors and the visited.

This document contains a form with criteria for classroom observation, video observation and an evaluation scale for participant satisfaction. Observation criteria include two parts of an assessment. The first part contains a survey for observation in the kindergarten classroom, and the second part consists of a manual for video observation. The classroom observation includes an assessment, which will be used during the study visit in kindergarten. That includes guide tour and form carried out by children, teacher and environment observation and collection of important information for further discussion and reflection between partners.

Observation criteria for classroom observation include four parts of the assessment. The first part of the assessment is observing activities in kindergarten related to SES learning. The second part of observation includes observations related to materials in the classroom, which means an evaluation of the environment and materials used with the children. The third part of the assessment consists of observing the teacher’s behaviour, i.e. the observation of the teacher’s interaction with the children and the behaviour of the classroom management. The final part of the assessment includes an important question for partners related to discussions and reflections on observed actions (see Annex I).

The observation criteria for video observation include additional information and topics about video materials and further questions for kindergarten staff and partner participants. A participant can use a form for classroom observation and another for video observation (see Annex II).

The final part of the document includes an evaluation scale of satisfaction for partners that can be used in observation situations (online discussion of video materials/study visit in kindergarten) (see Annex III).



Annex I

Observation criteria for classroom observation

COUNTRY OF CLASSROOM OBSERVATION:

.....

DATE:

.....

HOST ORGANISATION OF CLASSROOM OBSERVATION:

.....

HOST PARTNER ORGANISATION:

.....

PARTICIPANT:

.....

DATE:

.....

1-Strongly disagree; 2-Disagree; 3-Undecided; 4-Agree; 5-Strongly agree

Observation criteria of ACTIVITIES	1	2	3	4	5
Children demonstrate enjoy and happiness in classroom or like and unlike some activities during the day					
Children follow transition and daily routines					
During the play children shares and cooperates with other children					
Children expresses feelings through appropriate gestures and actions					
Children express independence (during dressing or meat)					
Children can wait their turn					
Children participates as a member of a group/ activity					

Comments



Observation criteria of MATERIALS	1	2	3	4	5
Classroom has “time out corner” with a variety of accessible activities for behaviour management (timers, picture for relaxing, stress free balls...)					
Classroom has visible print materials on the wall combined with pictures related to SES learning (Classroom rules, Posters with feelings and good/bad behaviour, Check in and check out posters...)					
During the learning of specific themes materials include part of SES learning (for example drawing and creating bad/good characters of story, drawing and creating silly emotions related to themes...)					
Children use specific materials related to SES leaning (cards, games, drawings...)					

Comments

Observation criteria of TEACHERS BAHAVIOUR	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers respond to children’s negative emotions (hurt, fear, anger) by offering developmentally appropriate comfort, support and assistance.					
Infant teachers and nurseries talk, coo, and sing to infants and repeat infants’ sounds.					
Teachers give children a chance to resolve their own conflicts without immediate teacher intervention.					
Teacher use picture and cards to identify non-adaptive behaviour and resolve conflict (flags with different type of “smileys”, cards with good/bad behaviour, bells...)					

Comments

Questions for DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION	Answers
Describe strengths of classroom observation	
Describe weakness of classroom observation	
How kindergarten can improve practices?	
What are the biggest challenges that kindergarten faces?	
Specify new knowledge and experience related to classroom observation	
Describe opportunities and new ideas for next classroom observations	



Annex II

Observation criteria for video observation

Information about institution of video observation	
Country	
Name of institution (kindergarten)	
Number of children (recorded)	
Ages of children (recorded)	

Information about content of video observation	
Length of video	
Topic of video (choose)	Morning circle/meeting Group play of children Group activities with teacher Individual work of children Storytelling/Role play/Other:
Describe topic of video and important points of video	
Describe children activities (behaviour and reactions)	
Describe interaction between children	
Describe interaction child-teacher	
Describe teacher behaviour	
Comments about strengthens and weakness of methodology, ideas for future planning etc.	



Annex III

Observation criteria for satisfaction of participant

1-Strongly disagree; 2-Disagree; 3-Undecided; 4-Agree; 5-Strongly agree

Items of satisfaction	1	2	3	4
The study visits and observation provide quality learning content				
The study visits and observation provide good design of materials				
The study visits and observation provide presentation of innovative idea				
Participant have good and flexible communication				
Discussion of participant provide useful and clear structure of next activities of the project				
The observation improve my knowledge about SEL				
The study visits provide innovative and specific strategies for SEL in preschool education				

Comments

Glossary

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Probably many experts know that SES are crucial for children's future prospects. Nevertheless, they generally lack information on the specific types of skills that need to be nurtured, how best to promote them, how to adapt them into the educational context, so young children to be able to benefit. That is why we think that it is really important to have clear articulated, structured, user-friendly information. We still lack a common understanding of the concepts and terms used. With this regard, another output in our project is the glossary.

Concept and Objectives

It is a common professional glossary, a summary of the main concepts regarding SES, agreed by project partners, useful to have common understanding of terms and concepts, and to avoid misunderstandings during the project implementation, and in the realization of the project outputs.

Therefore, the glossary is an added resource to supplement the content and will serve as a guide for our beneficiaries and can help to have a better connect with the content.

The Glossary is also helpful for the understanding of the outputs by people who are interested in the topics of the project but are not accustomed to the professional language of SES, such as parents, or novice students.

The Glossary does not aim at completeness, but rather at synthesis.

The goal of the Glossary is not to create new definitions, but to select, collect and share a common vocabulary, considered valid by the project partners, which can be used by all, guaranteeing a common understanding. This is more valid considering that the project partners belong to 5 different European countries.

Target group

All the information and resources created for the project will be available to a wide range of stakeholders, such as Universities and their researchers, teachers, and students; schools, preschools, ECEC providers and all educational institutions; all education professionals; parents; public institutions and decision-making bodies; researchers and experts; association involved in education and pedagogy; EU institutions, and other people with relevance to the project's aims and objectives.

Implementation

The Glossary of SES will be published in the Intellectual Output 3, but it is transversal to all Intellectual Outputs of EU-Self project.

After preparing a SES keywords list, including around 100/150 items, all project partners are asked to vote the main word that should be included. Keywords that receive at least 80% of the votes will be included.

The keywords that have been chosen are divided among the project researcher' partners, who identify the most appropriate definition for each word assigned to them and share it with the partners.

The proposed definitions will be approved by the partnership, then the final version will be finalized and published in the Intellectual Output 3.

Criteria

The criteria for the definitions of the keywords are few and simple and have the aim of creating a tool easy to use, synthetic, accessible even to non-professionals. The goal is to identify definitions that are accredited and accepted by the international scientific community.

Technical criteria:

- the definitions must be in English,
- Authors need to use uniform way of citation literature in paper and that mean using APA-Standard of citation.
- when possible, definitions from internationally accredited sources should be preferred (E.G. European Institutions as EU Commission, World Organizations as UN, internationally recognized academic and research institutes).

EU-Self Project Glossary

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EU-Self Project Glossary. List of terms

Adaptation	Problem behaviour
Attachment	Problem solving
Behaviour management	Prosocial behaviour
Competences	Resilience
Cooperation	Self-awareness
Coping	Self-confidence
Early intervention	Self-esteem
Early childhood intervention	Self-management Self-regulation Self-control
Early childhood education and care (ECEC)	Social-emotional assessment
Emotion	Social and emotional learning (SEL)
Emotional intelligence	Social and emotional skills (SES)
Emotional competences	Social competences
Emotional awareness	Social environment
Emotional skills	Social intelligence
Evidence-based Practice	Social interaction
Friendship	Social relationship
Impulse controls	Social skills
Interpersonal skills	Social skills training
Mindfulness	
Perspective taking	

EU-Self Project Glossary. Definitions

Adaptation

1. adjustment of a sense organ to the intensity or quality of stimulation, resulting in a temporary change in sensory or perceptual experience, as in visual adaptation when the pupil of the eye adjusts to dim or bright light.

2. reduced responsiveness in a sensory receptor or sensory system caused by prolonged or repeated stimulation. The adaptation may be specific, for example, to the orientation of a particular stimulus. Also called sensory adaptation.

3. modification to suit different or changing circumstances. In this sense, the term often refers to behaviour that enables an individual to adjust to the environment effectively and function optimally in various domains, such as coping with daily stressors. It is also applied more widely, for example, in ergonomics, to denote a system that alters information presentation, interface design, or output according to the capabilities or characteristics of the user, system, or environmental state. Compare maladaptation.

4. adjustments to the demands, restrictions, and mores of society, including the ability to live and work harmoniously with others and to engage in satisfying social interactions and relationships. Also called social adaptation.

5. the modification of an organism in structure or function that increases its ability to reproduce successfully and its offspring's ability to survive and reproduce successfully.

6. in Piagetian theory, the process of adjusting one's cognitive structures to meet environmental demands, which involves the complementary processes of assimilation and accommodation. —adapt vb. — adaptational adj. —adaptive adj. (APA, 2021)

Attachment

The emotional bond between a human infant or a young non-human animal and its parent figure or caregiver; it is developed as a step in establishing a feeling of security and demonstrated by calmness while in the parent's or caregiver's presence. Attachment also denotes the tendency to form such bonds with certain other individuals in infancy as well as the tendency in adulthood to seek emotionally supportive social relationships (APA, 2021).

Behaviour management

Behaviour management includes all of the actions and conscious inactions to enhance the probability people, individually and in groups, choose behaviours, which are personally fulfilling, productive, and socially acceptable (Walker, 2007).

Competences

For the purposes of this Recommendation, competences are defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes, where:

- knowledge is composed of the facts and figures, concepts, ideas and theories which are already established and support the understanding of a certain area or subject;
- skills are defined as the ability and capacity to carry out processes and use the existing knowledge to achieve results;

- attitudes describe the disposition and mind-sets to act or react to ideas, persons or situations.

“Key competences are those which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, employability, social inclusion, sustainable lifestyle, successful life in peaceful societies, health-conscious life management and active citizenship. They are developed in a lifelong learning perspective, from early childhood throughout adult life, and through formal, non-formal and informal learning in all contexts, including family, school, workplace, neighbourhood, and other communities.” (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2018).

Cooperation

A process whereby two or more individuals work together toward the attainment of a mutual goal or complementary goals (APA, 2021).

Coping

The use of cognitive and behavioural strategies to manage the demands of a situation when these are appraised as taxing or exceeding one’s resources or to reduce the negative emotions and conflict caused by stress (APA, 2021).

Early intervention

Early intervention means identifying and providing effective early support to children and young people who are at risk of poor outcomes (Early Intervention Foundation, n.d.).

Early childhood intervention

Early childhood intervention refers to the field concerned with services for infants and young children that are intended to prevent or minimize developmental disabilities or delays and to provide support and promote fulfilment of potential and general well-being (Britannica, n.d.).

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

Early childhood education and care refers to „any regulated arrangement that provides education and care for children from birth to compulsory primary school age, which may vary across the EU. “ It includes centre and family-day care, privately and publicly funded provision, pre-school and pre-primary provision. „Quality early childhood education and care can lay the foundations for later success in life in terms of education, well-being, employability, and social integration, and is especially important for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. High quality early childhood education and care is therefore an efficient and effective investment in education and training.“ (Commission, 2021).

Emotion

Although emotion is an everyday concept, there is no consensus on the scientific definition of the concept of emotion. (Widen & Russell, 2010). Research on emotions has expanded into many fields, providing a wide range of perspectives. A commonly used definition describes emotions as mental and physiological states associated with a wide variety of feelings. (Wisniewski, Edward & Jing, 2019).

According to Izard (2010), basic emotion feelings help organize and motivate rapid actions that are critical for adaptive responses to immediate challenges to survival or wellbeing. Basic emotions can be divided in three categories:

- Basic positive emotions: interest, joy
- Basic negative emotions: sadness, anger, disgust, fear
- Fundamental (social/self-conscious) emotions: shame, guilt, contempt

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence is a concept that has been developed by Mayer and Salovey and refers to “the ability to recognise, understand and manage one’s own and others’ emotions. (Cefai et al, 2018). Emotional Intelligence integrates aspects of emotion identification, emotion regulation and effective behavioural responses to emotional stimuli (Raz & Zysberg, 2014).

Emotional Competences

Emotional Competence (EC), refers to individual differences in the identification, understanding, expression, regulation and use of one’s own emotions and those of others. (Brasseur et al, 2013). Lahaye et al (2010) describe EC as an umbrella term as it includes all different aspects of emotional functioning.

Emotional awareness

Emotional awareness consists of individual differences in the way people differentiate, express, analyse, and pay attention to their own and others’ emotions. Emotional awareness appears as an important feature of emotional competence (EC) (Lahaye et al, 2010).

Emotional Regulation | Emotional Control

Emotion regulation or emotional control refers to all conscious and non-conscious regulatory strategies by which the physiological, behavioural, or subjective component of an emotional response is altered or controlled (Ochsner & Gross, 2005).

Denham, Bassett & Zinsler (2021) distinct two different abilities in emotional regulation: (1) handle emotions in productive ways: being aware of feelings, monitoring them, and modifying them, when necessary, so that they aid rather than impede coping in varying situations; and (2) expressing emotions appropriately.

Emotional Skills

Emotional competence is the education of the subject formed in the process of emotional activity, representing set of properties of the identity of the person, and also emotional knowledge; skills of emotional activity; the abilities which are shown in this activity, including emotional intelligence (Tolegenova et al, 2015).

Evidence-based Practice

EBP as a problem-solving approach to the delivery of health care that integrates the best evidence from well-designed studies and patient care data and combines it with patient preferences and values and nurse expertise. Research studies show that evidence-based practice (EBP) leads to higher quality care, improved patient

outcomes, reduced costs, and greater nurse satisfaction than traditional approaches to care (Melnik, Fineout-Overholt, Stillwell and Williamson, 2010).

Friendship

Friendships are voluntary personal relationships based on affection, companionship, trust, understanding, and reciprocity (Blieszner, 2015).

Friendship is important type of social relationships. Friendship is the single most important factor influencing our health, well-being, and happiness (Dunbar, 2018).

Impulse controls

The degree to which a person can control the desire for immediate gratification or other; IC may be the single most important indicator of a person's future adaptation in terms of number of friends, school performance and future employment (McGraw-Hill, 2002).

Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal skills are an umbrella term that refers to „goal directed behaviours, including communication and relationship-building competencies, employed in interpersonal interaction episodes characterized by complex perceptual and cognitive processes, dynamic verbal and nonverbal interaction exchanges, diverse roles, motivations, and expectancies.” (Klein, DeRouin, and Salas, 2006).

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a moment-to-moment awareness of one's experience without judgment. In this sense, mindfulness is a state and not a trait. While it might be promoted by certain practices or activities, such as meditation, it is not equivalent to or synonymous with them (Davis and Hayes, 2011).

Perspective taking

Perspective taking refers to a core competency of social awareness, involving the ability to understand other's emotions and thoughts as well as recognizing other's strengths and limitations (CASEL, 2017). Taking the perspective of others implies identifying and acknowledging experiences, feelings, and points of views of others with diverse backgrounds, cultures, and from/in different contexts (CASEL, 2017; Harvard University, n.d.).

Problem behaviour

Jessor & Jessor (1977, p. 33) described problem behaviour as “behaviour that is socially defined as a problem, a source of concern, or as undesirable by the norms of conventional society ... and its occurrence usually elicits some kind of social control response”.

Problem solving

Problem solving is cognitive processing directed at finding solutions to well-defined problems (Colman, 2015).

Prosocial Behaviour

Helping behaviour, altruism, or more generally any behaviour that is positive and calculated to promote the interests of society (Colman, 2015).

Resilience

“The process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress (para. 4).”

Self-awareness

Self-awareness refers to the ability to accurately recognize one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behaviour across contexts, as well as the ability to accurately recognize one’s strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, self-efficacy, self-determination, optimism about one’s learning and life in general, and a “growth mindset” (CASEL, 2020; Cefai et al., 2018).

Self-confidence

Self-confidence refers to an internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy. It includes beliefs and feelings about one’s abilities, overall and in specific contexts, as well each person’s trust on their own judgments (Harvard University, n.d.).

Self-esteem

Self-esteem refers to the overall sense of self-worth or personal value that each person attributes to him/herself (Harvard University, n.d.). It has an evaluation component that relates to the disposition that each person has to experience oneself as competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and as worthy of happiness (Baumeister et al., 2003).

Self-management | Self-regulation | Self-control

Self-management, self-regulation, and self-control are often used interchangeably (e.g., Deham & Brown, 2010; Halle et al., 2016). These concepts refer to the abilities to successfully manage one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviours in different situations, as well as the abilities to set and work toward personal and academic goals. It implies skills such as emotion regulation, identification and use of stress-management strategies, self-discipline and self-motivation, goal setting, problem solving, and decision making (CASEL, 2020; Cefai et al., 2018).

Social-Emotional Assessment

This type of assessment focuses on social and emotional developmental milestones, level of development or developmental dynamics, set of skills or competences. It might be applied to typically developing children as well as to children facing various difficulties in everyday interactions with peers and adults (parents, teachers) and/or children with various developmental delays or disorders. It can be a starting point for various interventions (universal social skills training programme, therapy, etc.). It can be for various purposes (formative assessment, program evaluation, program monitoring, standards-based assessment etc.) in different formats (direct assessment, rating forms by teachers/parents) and can be and

can be administered by different experts (psychologist, teacher, etc.) (McKown, 2017; Denham, et. al., 2009).

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

‘SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions’ (CASEL, 2020).

Social and Emotional Skills (SES)

Social and Emotional Skills (SES) “refer to the abilities to regulate one’s thoughts, emotions and behaviour.” They mainly concern how people manage their emotions, perceive themselves and engage with others. They are dependent on situational factors and responsive to change and development through formal and informal learning experiences. They skills influence a wide range of personal and societal outcomes throughout one’s life (OECD, 2018). The term “social and emotional skills” is increasingly used in policy settings as it emphasises their importance and highlights their malleability and their potential to intervene and effect improvements (Chernyshenko, et. al., 2018).

Social Competences

Social Competences is the effectiveness of a person in interpersonal relations and social situations. It depends on the evaluation of the other, the social goals of the actor, and the needs and norms of the particular social situation (Grovera, et al, 2020). Also, contextual factors and diversity factors may influence the competent social behaviours.

Social Environment

Social Environment (social context / sociocultural context) – “refers to the immediate physical and social setting in which people live or in which something happens or develops.” (Definitions for social environment, 2021)). It includes the culture background of the individual and the people and institutions with whom he/she interacts. Some authors view it as a much broader concept (Barnett & Casper, 2001). They also include labour market, social and economic processes, power relations, race relations, religion institutions, governments, social and health services, social inequalities, etc.

Social Intelligence

Social Intelligence in general it refers to “the ability to understand people and effectively relate to them.” (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2021). It is a concept with a long history. Over the years there are multiple definitions emphasising different components (cognitive or behavioural) (Silvera, et. al. 2001) but experts agree that it is a multifaceted construct (Kihlstrom, & Cantor, 2011).

Social Interaction

Any process that involves reciprocal stimulation or response between two or more individuals. These can range from the first encounters between parent and offspring to complex interactions with multiple individuals in adult life. Social interaction includes the development of cooperation and competition, the influence of status and social roles, and the dynamics of group behaviour, leadership, and conformity. Persistent social interaction between specific individuals leads to the formation of social relationships. (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2021).

Social Relationship

In general, it refers to a number of the social interactions between individuals over a period of time. K. August & K. Rook, (2013) refer social relationship to “the connections that exist between people who have recurring interactions that are perceived by the participants to have personal meaning.” This definition includes relationships between family members, friends, neighbours, co-workers, and other associates, i.e., the informal social relationships that are important in a person’s life or the person’s social network.

Social Skills

There are numerous definitions of social skills depending on the theoretical model. They can be viewed as a multidimensional construct that can be defined as learned behaviours that predict adaptive outcomes in social situations (Gresham and Elliot, 1987). According to the APA Dictionary of Psychology, they are “a set of learned abilities that enable an individual to interact competently and appropriately in a given social context.” (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2021). The latest models expand the definition and include variety of factors. Spence (2003) proposed a model that incorporates behavioural, cognitive, emotional, and environmental factors. Milligan et al. also incorporate the neuropsychological factors that influence social skills (for ex. attention control, executive functioning, processing speed, etc.).

Social Skills Training

Mooij et. al. (2020) define social skills training programs as programs that aim to teach and improve children’s appropriate, adaptive social behaviours. They are numerous, developed for both clinical and nonclinical target populations, various age groups (from young children till adults), generally are multifaceted and target multiple outcomes. They vary widely in content, design (school-based or self-contained) and effectiveness. Gresham (2002) views the social skills training as having four fundamental objectives: (a) promoting skill acquisition, (b) enhancing skill performance, (c) removing or reducing competing problem behaviours, and (d) facilitating generalization and maintenance of prosocial behaviours.

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