

Germany

Country Overview

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Country name

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Introduction

The Federal Republic of Germany comprises sixteen federal states (Bundesländer), with each state having its own constitution, and is largely autonomous to its early childhood educational policy. However, in each state there is a local authority in the field of preschool education which ensures preschool education at all levels.

In the German-speaking area, several socio-emotional learning (SEL) programmes have already been developed and scientifically evaluated. The most interesting programmes to be mentioned are as follows: "Papilio" (Mayer et al., 2007), "Lubo aus dem All" (Hillenbrand et al., 2009) and "Verhaltenstraining im Kindergarten" (Koglin & Petermann, 2009). All three programmes are available as a manual in which the concept and materials used are explained, and implementation instructions are described. The programmes are designed to be suitable for children, by using movement games, musical and creative elements.

In sum, Germany has a high level of awareness for the importance of social and emotional development in early childhood education. This is due to the fact that interventions in early childhood are very effective and produce less costs for the society compared to interventions in adolescents.

Development

In Germany, children under 3 years of age attend the Kinderkrippen crèche groups, typically in mixed age groups. Children from 3 years of age and up to 6 years of age attend Kindergarten. If the child does not reach the level of development required for entry into the school, they have the option to attend a Special Class or Special School, Förderklasse, to receive the special education they need. The attendance in early childhood services is voluntary, although in some cases, the state is entitled to make the attendance compulsory.

In 2008, the UN Convention defined a legal right concerning day care and kindergarten, which has changed the profile of the early childhood education system definitively. Therefore, the local authorities increased the number of day care centres for children under 3 years of age. (Eurydice, 2021)

According to the Act, Social Security Code VIII (Achstes Buch Sozialgesetzbuch – Kinder- und Jugendhilfe – R61), all children from 1 year of age have the right to receive Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services. Under certain circumstances, if the parents are employed or looking for work, children under 1 year of age can be granted the legal right to attend a day-care centre (Eurydice, 2021).

The Social Security Code VIII prefers the ECEC institutions to be run by non-public bodies, as opposed to local maintaining bodies, to ensure there is a diverse range of services provided. In 2017, around 67% of services were run by non-public bodies (Dossier, 2017).

In each federal state the responsible and supervisory authority for ECEC services is the local youth welfare office, Landesjugendamt.

The range of services offered should be based on the needs of the children and their families. According to the above mentioned law, the day-care centres for children have to ensure and

encourage the children develop into responsible/functioning members of society. Furthermore, a role of the day-care centres is to supplement the child's upbringing in the family, as well as to assist the parents in better reconciling, employment and child rearing. These duties focus on the child's social, emotional, physical and mental development. Moreover, education and care is adjusted to the individual child's age and developmental stage, as well as by taking into account the child's life experiences, interests, and other capabilities, such as linguistics in regards to the child's ethnic origin.

The Joint Framework of the Länder for Early Education in Day-Care Institutions for Children (Gemeinsamer Rahmen der Länder für die frühe Bildung in Kindertageseinrichtungen), mentions educational objectives in early childhood education. This includes things such as developing and strengthening personal resources, the development of basic skills, holistic personal development to play a responsible part in society and to be open to lifelong learning.

As of November 2009, the Land Youth Welfare Services (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Landesjugendämter) declared that early childcare must attend to the basic needs of young children. The specific needs of children are as follows: loving attention; sensitive care based on stable relationships; sympathetic support appropriate for the development stage; empathy and support in stressful situations; unconditional acceptance; safety and security. Educational support at this stage in life is primarily understood as shaping relationships with the child and as holistic support complementing development. The accompanying educational partnership with parents is essential.

The early intervention and support of children at risk and children with disabilities were redefined as a complex service in SGB IX in July 2001. In addition, in 2003, the so-called early support ordinance (FrühV) came into force, which completes the framework of SGB IX.

In each state there is a system and well organised centres for Early Childhood Intervention and Development (Frühförderstellen). A well prepared early intervention centre offers complex services such as psychological, medical-therapeutic and holistic support for the child and family.

Assessment

There are different programmes, which develop children's social and emotional competences. (Papilio, Lubo aus dem All, Verhaltenstraining).

The scientific background of the Papilio programme was based on the work of Prof. Dr. Herbert Scheithauser of Freie Universität Berlin, who partook in the long-term study by Webster-Stratton & Taylor, U.S. American research team. The effect of the programme has been proven successful by the data of 700 children, 1200 parents and 100 kindergarten teachers.

Lubo aus dem All! [English: Lubo from outer space] In order to test the effects of the programme, a summative assessment was conducted with a group of 225 children. Pre-, post- and follow-up measurements were collected for three groups: treatment with full implementation, treatment with partial implementation, and treatment without implementation, or the control group. The results of this comparison between the control group and the experimental group with full treatment implementation showed mean effect sizes of $d=0.53$ (post) and $d=0.62$ (Hillenbrand et al., 2009).

"Verhaltenstraining im Kindergarten" scientifically evaluated programme from Prof. Dr. Ute Koglin and Prof. Dr. phil. Franz Petermann.

Intervention

One of the most popular intervention programmes is EFFEKT (Entwicklungsförderung in Familien: Eltern-und Kinder Training), which promotes parenting skills and children's social skills. EFFEKT consists of a parenting course "Promotion of parenting skills", and a course for children "I can solve problems". The parenting courses contain 6 group sessions of 90 to 120 minutes each, which take place in the kindergarten of the respective institution. The content is conveyed by the course leaders in lectures, group discussions, with an exchange of experience, role plays, homework etc.

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