SYMPOSIUM: Can Social, Emotional and Intercultural Competencies play a Crucial Role in the era of Risk?

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Network: Research on Children’s Rights in Education & Inclusive education  
Alternative network: Children and Youth at Risk and Urban Education

SUMMARY

The symposium focuses on social, emotional and intercultural (SEI) competencies as an important tool for developing non-discriminative, inclusive learning environments and preserving children’s rights in intercultural and diverse societies. This way they can work as a shield in the era of risk. The symposium builds on the importance of SEI competencies for building inclusive societies and to prevent segregation and discriminative bullying by enhancing SEI competencies of all students (including students at risk, such as immigrant and refugee students).

According to scientific evidence, enhanced social and emotional competencies of students result in several positive outcomes: better educational outcomes, better mental health, decreased numbers of early school leavers, improvement in prosocial behaviour, decrease of physical aggression, positive self-image (Bierman, et al., 2008; Durlak et al., 2011; Sklad et al., 2012; Zins, et al., 2004). Teachers’ social and emotional competencies have been recognized as vital for the development of social and emotional competencies in students (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015), for students’ behavioural and academic achievement (Valiente, et al., 2008) and also for students’ learning and development in general as well as for teachers’ own well-being (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). These studies indicate teachers need to possess social and emotional competencies and to be equipped with the competencies to adopt inclusive and student-focused methods, including conflict resolution skills to promote a positive classroom climate. At the same time, the intercultural competencies and diversity awareness of teachers cannot be assumed and must be prepared at the systemic level (Downes & Cefai, 2016). The focus on SEI competencies thus offers feasible suggestions for individual and societal developments through education. In a globalising society, these issues must be addressed by an international/intercultural collaboration. The symposium addressed the recognized need for policy intervention across partner EU member states to combat discrimination (especially in relation to migrations). With the migration population by definition being on the move, it is of strategic importance for EU member states to adopt common policies in fostering their inclusion.

As an introduction to the symposium leading theme, we will present an Erasmus+ KA3 European policy experiment project HAND in HAND, which created and applied an innovative HAND in HAND program for SEI competencies development (two separate modules, one for students and one for school staff) as a whole school approach. The HAND in HAND programmes were evaluated using an experimental design with control groups across four EU countries (Slovenia, Croatia and Sweden). In the symposium, researches from
different EU member states (being part of the HAND in HAND project) will provide international research insights and discuss their research findings about developing SEI competencies as an important tool for positive change in the EU society. The symposium brings in the first findings on the effects of two modules (for students and for school staff) in the individual countries and across countries. Following introduction, the focus of our first presentation will be on the quality of implementation. The quality of implementation plays a crucial role and works and prerequisite for the evaluation of the effects. Then continuing with the first part of the symposium we will focus on the effects of HAND in HAND program for teachers on their social, emotional and intercultural competencies and the classroom climates. The second symposium will focus on the effects (and implementation) of the HAND in HAND program for students on their social, emotional and intercultural competencies and will finish with the analyses at the systemic and policy level.

The symposium is an answer to special call of Network: Research on Children’s Rights in Education & Inclusive education focusing on developing an inclusive educational environment that entails tackling any kind of barrier and discrimination that could protect the children’s right to education of high quality. As announced in the call it targets respecting and valuing diversity as an important resource for learning.

REFERENCES:


PART 1

PAPER 1: Implementation of the Hand in Hand program for school staff and students

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ABSTRACT

There is strong empirical evidence supporting that the way a program is put into practice - the implementation - is deterrent for outcomes (Durlak, 2016). Therefore, assessment of implementation is a crucial element in research to evaluate how outcome data should be interpreted. Evaluating implementation is however not frequent in social-emotional learning (SEL) programs (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Both the program characteristics and the school context can be important, and a first issue often mentioned is the fidelity towards the active ingredients in a program. It has however been evidenced that adaptation to the national and/or local school context can be likewise important (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). The Hand in Hand project has addressed the call for more knowledge in this field by including research looking specifically into the implementation. The materials developed addresses implementation-issues by sharing reflections about adaptations etc. with the school staff, and by discussing the active ingredients under the headlines of 1) working with a variety of inner meditative exercises, more outer-going physical exercises and dialogue exercises, 2) by using "gearshifts" (e.g. between outer going and more inward going exercises), and by 3) working to establish close contact with school staff and students. Instead of the rather instrumental thinking in terms of success in transfer of a given knowledge from source, i.e. trainers/manuals, to recipients, i.e. schools, both translation theory (Røvik, 2016), and sociocultural theory about consequential transitions accentuate the complex co-construction processes taking place during implementation. These ways of thinking have informed the methodology in the present study collecting mainly qualitative data over time as structured reflection logs after each session at the schools, from introduction meetings to training sessions for school staff, leaders and counsellors, and students (the whole school approach: Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). The inputs (n=121) from May to December 2018, from trainers from Sweden, Croatia, and Slovenia have been analysed by thematic analysis of open reflections and cross-tabulations of the Likert scale answers, e.g. regarding the experiences of success in relation to the identified active ingredients. Findings show a complex picture with differences between countries and between schools, but with an overall theme of development over time e.g. in the experience of the social climate, and in the experiences of succeeding in establishing close contact with school staff/students. Furthermore, analysis of the open reflections illustrates a development over time in highlighting dynamic issues in these interpersonal relations.
**Key words:** implementation, assessment, teachers, students, HAND in HAND

**REFERENCES**


**PAPER 2: Do the Swedish teachers report any changes in their social, emotional, or intercultural competencies after participating in the Hand in Hand teacher programme? Experiences from the field trial of the teacher programme in Sweden.**

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**ABSTRACT**

The present study is a part of an international project “Hand in Hand - Social and Emotional Skills for Tolerant and Non-Discriminative Societies (A Whole School Approach)” – an EU-based universal Social, Emotional, and Intercultural (SEI) learning program. The project aims at promoting SEI competencies for students and school staff to prevent segregation and discrimination, and to promote an inclusive learning environment. A widely used theoretical model, Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been used to concretise the SEI competencies. It is comprised of five components: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2005, p. 5). In the project, we have added intercultural competencies to the social awareness component. These components have been processed in the Hand in Hand teacher programme.
A hypothesis is that an important prerequisite for an inclusive learning environment is the teachers’ compassion, empathy, cooperation, and cohesion. The teacher programme (Jensen, Gøetzsche, Andersen Réol, Dyrborg Laursen, & Lund Nielsen, 2018) emphasise these factors in both theoretical and practical ways. The present study investigates if the participating teachers have perceived improvements in their SEI competencies, classroom climate, relations or other factors related to SEI competencies. This is a quasi-experimental study with 12 participating schools in Sweden. We will look at the Swedish field trial as a case study. Teachers from six Swedish schools participated in the teacher programme, totally 35 teachers. The teachers have answered a questionnaire before and after the Hand in Hand teacher programme. They filled in written assessments in the end of each module and they been interviewed after the programme. The analysis of the quantitative data will be performed using e.g. t-tests to see if there are any differences between the measures before and after the programme. The qualitative data will be coded and categorised using the CASEL model. The preliminary results from the teachers indicate that they had a positive experience of the teacher programme. After the last training, the teachers made an assessment of the programme as a whole and the support was overwhelming. In total there were 23 answers by groups or by individual teachers an all 23 were satisfied with the programme. The teacher praised the combination of theory and exercises and the collaborative climate during the trainings. The teachers reported that they have used the programme to do exercises for themselves and also with the students.

Key words: teachers, social, emotional, intercultural competencies, classroom climate

REFERENCES


PAPER 3: The relationship between social and emotional competencies, job satisfaction and classroom climate among teachers in Slovenia: Implications of the HAND in HAND social, emotional and intercultural learning program

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ABSTRACT

Teachers play an important role in promoting and implementing social and emotional learning and in creating positive classroom environments, which is necessary for the students’ beneficial social, emotional and academic outcomes (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). The implementation
of social and emotional learning program is helpful for students, but it can also have a great impact directly on teachers. Studies showed that when teachers were involved in the social and emotional competencies training, it influenced the teaching and learning in the classroom and teachers’ promotion of a positive classroom climate (Alvarez, 2007). Improvement of teachers’ social and emotional competencies was not only related to boosting their teaching performance, but their social and emotional learning skills were also found to be positively associated with their job satisfaction (Brackett, Palomera, Mojsa-Kaja, Reyes, & Salovey, 2010). Furthermore, job satisfaction was positively associated with classroom climate (Aldridge et al., 2016). Therefore, teachers with higher social and emotional competencies are more efficient in classroom management, are more proactive, establish consistent classroom interactions, can successfully cope with the demands of the classroom, preserve a positive classroom climate, are more competent in using their emotions and also enjoy teaching (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Jennings et al., 2017). Our focus will be put on the comparisons of the relationships between social and emotional competencies, job satisfaction and classroom climate of Slovenian teachers before and after the implementation of the HAND in HAND program. The sample consists of teachers from 12 elementary schools in Slovenia who teach in the classes of 8th grade students, which also participated in the HAND in HAND project. Teachers in the experimental groups took part in the HAND in HAND social, emotional and intercultural learning program and were invited to answer the questionnaire before and after the program, teachers from the control group were only asked to answer the questionnaire. Data from the following scales from the questionnaire will be used: Kentucky Mindfulness Scale (Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004), Emotional self-efficacy (Muris, 2001), adapted version of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman & Scott, 2012), Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1980), Teacher’s Relational Competence Scale (Vidmar & Kerman, 2016), adapted version of Delaware School Survey-Teacher/Staff (Bear, Yang, Harris, Mantz, Hearn, & Boyer, 2016), The BaSS Teacher Survey: Unproductive student behaviors (Sullivan, Johnson, Conway, Owens, & Taddeo, 2012), Job Satisfaction Scale, TALIS (OECD, 2014). Based on the results the implications for practice and further research will be discussed.

Keywords: social and emotional competencies, job satisfaction, classroom climate

REFERENCES:


PAPER 4: Examining the role of teachers’ social and emotional competencies for students’ experiences of recognition in schools

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ABSTRACT

Normative recognition theories (e.g. Honneth, 1995) refer to recognition as a form of acknowledgement or respect for another being, which is considered key to the development of a positive relation-to-self and individual autonomy. Honneth (1995) distinguishes three modes of recognition: (1) Emotional support: unconditional affection and care, (2) Cognitive respect: equal treatment in law, and (3) Social esteem: being valued for individual particular characteristics, which are judged positively in light of shared practices. These three modes are needed to develop self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem. For children recognition in the family is crucial for identity development, but as their development progresses,
experiences with teachers and classmates also gain in significance. However, empirical data from previous studies show that some students experience disregard in schools (Prengel, 2013; Vieluf & Sauerwein, 2018), which violates their identity. The present paper aims at examining whether such experiences are more frequent in some schools than in others and which role the social and emotional competencies of the teacher body at these schools play in this context. To this end, we analyse associations between student reports of the recognition received from teachers with (a) these teachers’ self-reports of their self-awareness, self-management, and their social awareness and with (b) a vignette-based measure of these teachers’ social perspective taking. Data was collected in 36 schools in Croatia, Slovenia, and Sweden in the context of the longitudinal intervention study “HAND in HAND”. Students in one class within each of the 36 schools answered a student questionnaire including two questions to measure the recognition received from their teachers. All teachers teaching this particular class at that school were invited to answer a teacher questionnaire including self-report scales on their self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness as well as a vignette-based measure of their social perspective taking. The resulting data will be analysed using multilevel regression models. In the presentation, results of analyses will be presented and discussed. Theoretical, as well as practical conclusions, will be drawn.

Key-words: recognition, identity, school, teachers, SEI competencies

REFERENCES

PART 2

PAPER 5: The relationship between empathy and aggressive behaviour: Does implementation of a social, emotional and intercultural learning program make a difference

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ABSTRACT

Aggressive behaviour has a negative impact on students who are exposed to aggressive behaviour as well as on pupils and students who are aggressive (Schwartz, Gorman, Nakamoto, McKay, 2006). In schools, aggressive behaviour disrupts the process of learning and affects the school climate. It is also related to students having negative attitudes towards school and school subjects and lead to lower educational achievements. The methods of preventing and reducing aggressive behaviour at school level that prove to be successful often include activities related to emotional learning and empathy (empathic care, perspective taking) (Batanova, Cance & Loukas, 2016; Roberton, Daffern, & Bucks, 2012). Empathy includes cognitive and emotional components and is associated with positive effects on relationships and behaviour, while the lack of it is associated with negative effects, including aggressive behaviour. Concerning the relationship between empathy and aggressiveness, the most basic assumption would be that people who show highly aggressive behaviour lack empathy. It is also easy to speculate that presumably very empathic people do not tend to exhibit aggressive response. In accordance with this hypothesis, Miller and Eisenberg (1988) discovered that empathy buffers aggressive behaviour, whereas it promotes prosocial behaviour (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). In the presentation we will focus on the relationship between aggression and empathy in the period of adolescence. Research shows that the relationship between aggression and empathy is negative, that is, individuals who are more aggressive show lower levels of empathy (Lovett & Sheffield, 2007). More precisely, the cognitive component of empathy (the perspective taking) and the emotional part (empathic concern) are negative predictors of aggression (van Hazebroek, Olthof, & Goossens, 2017). We will analyse the associations between aggression (measured with LA aggression scale, Kozina, 2014) and empathy (measured with IRI, Davis, 1980) in the samples of Slovenian 8th-grade students (from 12 schools) involved in HAND in HAND project. We will look at the: (i) associations between empathy and aggression before and after implementation of HAND in HAND social, emotional and intercultural learning program; change in empathy before and after implementation of the HAND in HAND program; change in aggression before and after implementation of the HAND in HAND program. On the basis of the findings, the guidelines for practice and further research will be developed.
Key words: empathy, aggression, school, HAND in HAND

REFERENCES:


PAPER 6: The role of students’ social and emotional competencies in predicting anti-immigrant attitudes

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, Croatia, like other EU countries, has been facing increasing numbers of migrants and asylum seekers. At the same time current research indicates predominantly negative attitudes towards immigrants in Croatia (Franc, Šakić, & Kaliterna-Lipovčan, 2010; Čačić Kumpes, Kumpes, & Gregurović, 2012; Gregurović, Kuti, & Župarić-Ilijić, 2016; Matić, Löw & Bratko, 2018). In such social context, it is particularly important to explore young peoples' attitudes towards immigrants, i.e. towards a group that may differ from the domicile population with regard to ethno-cultural and other characteristics. As for the young peoples' behaviour and attitudes towards others, research suggests the relevance of social and emotional competencies (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017). These can be described as core competencies to recognize and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, respect the perspectives of others, establish and maintain positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle interpersonal situations constructively (Elias et al., 1997). According to the CASEL model, social and emotional competencies include the following dimensions: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making (Bridgeland, Bruce, & Harihara, 2013). The aim of the paper is to examine the relationship between attitudes towards immigrants and selected dimensions of students' social and emotional competencies. It is assumed that more developed social and emotional competencies are associated with more positive attitudes towards immigrants. The analysis draws on data collected during the school year 2018/2019 on a sample of 267 8th-grade students from 12 elementary schools in the city of Zagreb, Croatia. The questionnaire assessed attitudes towards immigrants, as well as mindfulness, self-control, empathy, caring and aggressiveness as indicators of social and emotional competencies. The results of the hierarchical regression analysis revealed higher caring and lower aggressiveness as the key predictors of positive attitudes towards immigrants. Empathic concern was also a significant predictor, but it lost its predictive power after caring and aggressiveness were added in the last step of the regression analysis. Mindfulness and self-control did not contribute to the explanation of the attitudes towards immigrants at all. The results of this research point to the importance of social competencies in the reduction of negative attitudes towards immigrants.

Key words: attitudes towards immigrants, social and emotional competencies, elementary school students, Croatia

REFERENCES:


PAPER 7: Experiences from the field trial of the Hand in Hand Programme for students in Sweden

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ABSTRACT

The HAND in HAND project aims to provide a systemic tool in a form of Social, Emotional and Intercultural (SEI) competence development program for students as well as for school staff. A student program including five different modules that in different ways address (SEI) competencies is under development within the Hand in Hand project (Marušić, Puzić, Jugović, Košutić, Matić, & Mornar). A successful implementation of a social and emotional learning program is crucial for its effectiveness and thus the purpose of the present study is to identify key aspects in the implementation of the Hand in Hand Program for students in Sweden. Research (Durlak, 2015, p 397) has identified multiple factors important for successful implementation of programs in order to be effective. Factors studied here are fidelity to the program, adaptations of the program to a local context, participants responsiveness and the quality of program delivery. Data collected from surveys compiled by the two teams of trainers directly after each of the 30 school visits are analysed qualitatively
in order to examine how the implementation of the student program respond to the factors mentioned. In addition, data from the trainers own descriptions of the meetings will be used. Preliminary results indicates that class teachers’ attitude to the values of the program were important for how well the program were received. Moreover, the instructors’ ability to keep a structure as well as being flexible in adjusting the program according to the student group’s need was shown to be crucial. Also, the access to a room with the possibility of having both physical activities as well as discussions in groups in different ways, were of importance. These and additional results need to be further analysed in relation to the factors studied and will, together with other results within the project, be crucial to the final design of the Swedish version of the Programme for students.

REFERENCES


**PAPER 8: Understanding social, emotional and intercultural learning in the European education area**

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**ABSTRACT**

Although research evidence (e.g. Durlak et al., 2011) and international institutions (e.g. OECD and EU) has recognized the benefits of social, emotional and intercultural (SEI) learning on an individual, classroom and school level, OECD (2015) recognized that these are so far not systematically included in national educational policies across Europe. In addition Cefai et al. (2018) recognised that research on effectiveness of SEI learning policy approaches has been rather limited. Several initiatives, including policy experimentation projects like HiH, has thus been initiated at the EU level in order to recognize, how SEI learning is implemented in EU member states and how existing and newly developed effective policy approaches could be mainstreamed across the EU in order to support achieving EU goals in the field. The paper will focus on the analysis of the existence, importance and understanding of SEI learning in European education area in the last almost two decades (2000-2019). It will demonstrate how SEI learning has been defined at the EU level and how these (and other) understandings are
reflected in SEI learning policies in selected EU member states participating in the HiH project. As such it will address the following research question: Which policy environment seems to best promote and support the development of SEI competences of students and school staff and therefore achieve common EU goals in the field? The paper is based on 1) Analysis of documents of EU institutions in the field (e.g. European Commission Communications, Council Conclusions); 2) Preliminary analyses of the results of the HiH policy experimentation; 3) Policy questionnaire developed and administered in five member states involved in the HiH policy experimentation (Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Slovenia, Sweden) analysing: a) national and regional policies regarding SEI learning; b) policy-research literature on policy initiatives regarding SEI learning and its impact; c) evidence-based evaluations and their implementations in the field of school education. Answers to policy questionnaire are based on national reviews of formal national / regional policy documents, basic legislative documents and operational documents, statistical information, formal national reports to international networks and organisations and policy-oriented research studies.

**Key words:** policy experimentation, EU, impact, social, emotional, intercultural competencies

**REFERENCES:**


HAND in HAND policy questionnaire. Unpublished material.