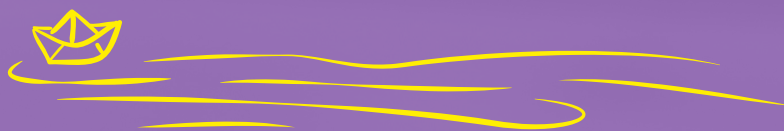


Policy Recommendations

2019



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This publication is prepared in the frames of the international project “Early Childhood Education – building sustainable motivation and value paradigm for life” (MOV-UP) with the financial support of the European Commission under Erasmus+ Program, Key Action 3: Social Inclusion through Education, Training and Youth (ref. No 580339-EPP-1-2016-1-BG-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN). The content of the publication reflects the views only of its authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use, which may be made of the information contained therein.

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Qualification of the teacher

in Early Childhood Education

The basic pillars of the initial training and professional development of the specialists in education should be built on those principles we expect them to use in their practice. It is advisable to change the approach in qualification to more experiential, problem-based, centred on the concept of continued professional development as a systematic, innovative and dynamic process.

A special emphasis must be put on learning through experience within diverse contexts and with different approaches. The experiential approach however does not mean that professional development sessions should be used for the promotion of a specific agenda – telling and showing practitioners what to do. On the contrary, training should be intended to sensibilise them on the important aspects of learning, to support them to become critically reflective, to teach them how to use their insights from children's development and to ensure that meaningful, relevant learning is taking place.

The importance of experiential learning does not diminish with the progress of the professional career. Practical classroom implementations should become integral part of any in-service teacher training, however short it might be. Such implementation phases (after or in-between the theoretical sessions) will allow teachers to test the use of new methodologies and materials, to prepare

their own activities, adapted to their classroom and context. For best results, such practical implementations should be carried out under the supervision and advice of training mentors.

Practical implementations and mentoring will greatly benefit the training outcomes, for it will be a bridge between theory and practice. Expert guidance will boost efficiency, making teachers more confident in implementing new practices in their work and receiving immediate feedback. Ultimately, independent expert supervision will bring added value for the organisations by ensuring the security and well-being of the children involved - it will guarantee that methods are implemented adequately and appropriately.



The non-pedagogical (medical and support) staff in Early Childhood Education should be addressed by training for professional development on a regular basis as well as the pedagogical staff.

The training of all types of specialists in Early Childhood Education should include opportunities for work on their own biases and prejudices, as well as on mastering healthy pedagogical distance while remaining empathic and supportive.

The management of the structures in Early Childhood Education (ECE) should become more horizontal and less vertical, in order to foster empowerment and contextualization of both professional development and learning processes.

More autonomy should be given to the headmasters to initiate pedagogical and administrative innovations as

well as to address continued professional development issues proactively and align training with long-term priorities of each educational establishment.

It is advisable for educational institutions and supervisory bodies to provide regular opportunities for discussion, collaboration, and interaction between teachers and educators in early childhood education. These could include meetings; open door events at kindergartens / schools / care centres; collaboration between teachers on local, regional, national and international level. These forums for collaboration, discussion and sharing should take on a regular character.



Recommendations:

- Delivery of practice-oriented teacher trainings for ECE teachers and other staff at any stage of their career and irrespectively of their job placement in public or private educational establishments;
- Hands-on learning and activities should be emphasised and actively implemented within teacher trainings;
- Provision of expert guidance and mentoring at all levels of teacher training when mastering and implementing new methods
- Support to bottom-up approach in decision-making regarding professional development in ECE, involving the entire school community in an appropriate and comprehensive manner;
- Organisation of regular and structured forums for discussion, collaboration and exchange of good practices between practitioners.



Children

and Early Childhood Education

Systematic efforts should be implemented towards creating sustainable classroom practices that are child-centered rather than adult-driven and adult-focused. Enabling psychological and physical spaces are necessary for children to spend more time moving, playing and learning by doing rather than following instructions, replicating and repeating.

ECE environments should give more space to children to be themselves, to discover the world at their own pace. It is counterproductive to instill ideas and models into their minds, to “pour” ready-made knowledge, ultimately shaping identical individuals with a similar skillset. A greater value needs to be placed on individuality and each child should be supported to learn in its own particular way.



Recommendations:

- Pursue of consistent efforts for implementation of child-centered pedagogy;
- Promote respect towards the child as a “learning entity”, capable of choice;
- Promote the value of individuality and diversity within the classroom, treating it as an educational opportunity, not as an obstacle to the learning process.



Parents' involvement

in Early Childhood Education

The active involvement of parents in their children's learning process is proved to be greatly beneficial for the overall educational outcomes. To this end, it is recommended to make classrooms more open to parents, in order to foster consistent parental involvement in the study process. Regular child-parent events organized by the educational establishment, communicated to the parents with enough prior notice, could become a welcoming involvement in the month-to-month learning process.

This process should be twofold: on one hand, parents should be able to observe children in their natural learning environment, which is very different from the one at home, calls for a different set of skills and fosters children's behaviors that might be new to parents.

On the other hand, parents should be active participants in collective activities, planned in a way that allow children and parents learning from each other and cooperate to achieve a common goal. Important aspect in such children-parents' activities would be interaction of parents with the whole child community, not just with their own children.

Parents' involvement can be a great way to promote meaningful and relevant learning, professional orientation of children and knowledge applicable in real-life situations.

Parents could play an important role in recognizing and celebrating the value of diversity. Each family is unique, and the interaction with parents can greatly expand the cultural specter with traditions and knowledge, coming from varied environments and backgrounds. That is especially beneficial for multicultural communities. It leads to better understanding and, ultimately, acceptance of differences.



Recommendations:

- Encourage and facilitate greater parental involvement in the classroom and the learning process as a whole;
- Encourage both observation of the learning process and participation in it by the parents;
- Encourage parents to share with children who are not their own, bring forth their own family "mythology", which in turn encourages respect, viewing diversity as a value and expanding children's view of the world around them.



Social and emotional learning

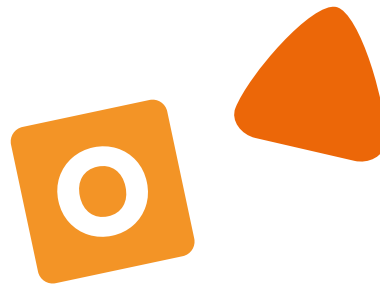
It is paramount to recognise the importance of social and emotional learning (SEL) for improving the climate in the classroom for both educators and children.

A SEL approach should be connected to every aspect of the work in an educational establishment. Instead of being regarded as peripheral, SEL should be increasingly prioritised also at all levels of the teacher training.

Educators' social and emotional competences inform the quality of their practice, especially in terms of relational, emotional and intercultural skills. Stronger relationships mean a great learning process, inclusive pedagogy and meaningful education for all children. It is crucially important that educational leaders at all levels

are aware and convinced about the beneficial role of SEL.

A change of paradigm is required in order to place the value of diversity at the center of positive relationships and interactions in the educational environment, creating value within the learning community. Children build a stronger sense of identity and wellbeing, and have better education and career outcomes when their diverse strengths, abilities, interests and perspectives are understood and supported.



Recommendations:

- Integrate SEL approaches and tools at all levels of teacher training, and in the practices at all educational stages;
- Provide means of measuring the major benefits of SEL for the learning environment;
- Prioritise SEL-related skills and their development and training;
- Emphasise the value of diversity and how SEL helps to realise and foster it in educational institutions.
- Fostering sustainable continuity of SEL between educational phases.



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