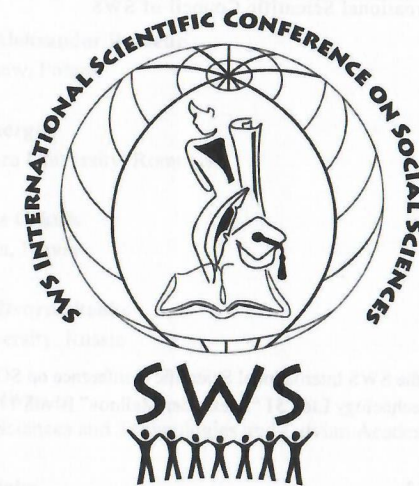


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PLAYING-2-GETHER: TEACHER SENSITIVITY AS A BASIS FOR INCLUSION IN PRESCHOOL - NEW CHALLENGE FOR PRESCHOOL TEACHERS IN SLOVAKIA

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ABSTRACT

High level of teacher training, as well as well-designed career development and long-life learning of teachers are considered to be very important standpoints for education from preschool to university settings. It is no doubt, that without professional competences of teachers, quality education of preschool children cannot be secured. European organizations explicitly argue for providing and securing high-quality early childhood education (e.g., European Commission, 2013; European Council, 2011). Several studies have provided compelling evidence that an investment in education and training benefiting young children produces the largest gains in terms of human capital, for both children (e.g., better job, higher income, better quality of life) and society. The P2G program is focused on teacher sensitivity in education in a kindergarten. The intention of the program is to help the teacher improve the environment with play activities in order to help children to better inclusion and socialization in kindergartens. Within the project, free and directed plays are defined based on the theories of Pianta [10], Hamre et al. [5], Vanraeyveldt [14] and others. Based on the above mentioned theoretical sources of the program, we apply individual principles in Slovak conditions. The program is implemented in a kindergarten with two teachers and two selected children, who have behavioural problems and problems with adaptation in the classroom environment. The paper deals with the description of child behaviour and teacher intervention through P2G. The analysis of realized video recordings shows the possibility to implement the program in Slovak kindergartens with regard to the socio-cultural context. At the same time, it will serve as a methodological source for pre-service and in-service teachers. The outputs of the project published on the web platform in MOOC will provide the possibility for sharing the mutual experience of kindergarten teachers at the European level, which is also the goal of the project and it contributes to the internationalization of pre-school education. The project will answer the challenge in supporting attractiveness of teacher profession: all categories of teachers involved in the project (in-service preschool teachers, university teachers/teacher trainers and pre-service preschool teachers) will get opportunity to enhance their skills in innovative methods of education, to use ICT in education, to present their creativity, sense of human understanding and believes that teacher profession is a way how to help in developing child individuality and personality as well as in supporting social/mankind development.

Keywords: playing together, preschool education, Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), teacher sensitivity, child behaviour

INTRODUCTION

Playing-2-gether: Teacher Sensitivity as a Basis for Inclusion in Preschool is the title of the project, that Department of Pedagogy at Faculty of Education, Constantine the Philosopher University Nitra applied successfully for the grant in cooperation with higher education institutions from Leuven, Belgium; Amsterdam and Leeuwarden, the Netherlands; and Porto, Portugal. European organizations explicitly argue for providing and securing high-quality early childhood education for all children (e.g., European Commission, 2013; European Council, 2011). This demand is aligned with international steering documents, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2006) that has been advocating for the right for education for all children. This means educating all children together in mainstream classrooms, regardless their abilities and disabilities, with teaching methods, materials and classroom environments that address the diversity of needs of all [4]. Furthermore, creating a school for all prompts societies to value diversity, to promote the respect for differences and to combat discrimination.

Currently, societies are facing new challenges of increasing diversity in Europe (e.g. the refugee crisis, exclusion of minorities). Within this context the need for adapted early childhood education is stringent. Several studies have provided compelling evidence that an investment in education and training benefiting young children produces the largest gains in terms of human capital, for both children (e.g., better job, higher income, better quality of life) and society (e.g., less crime, less unemployment). Following the refugee crisis and an increasing super diverse society, the project explicitly focuses on enhancing the quality of early childhood education for all children in general and for at risk children in particular, as was highlighted in the Paris declaration on education (2015). In this way, the project focuses on two Erasmus KA2+ Horizontal priorities: Enhancing the quality of early childhood education and inclusive education, training, and youth. Recent research has shown the importance of teacher sensitivity for young children's recent and later academic, behavioural and socio-emotional development [6], [12]. Moreover, teacher sensitivity has been found to have compensatory effects for the development of at-risk children [11]. Therefore, the Playing-2-gether project aims to improve teacher sensitivity for both pre-service and in-service teachers when playing with pre-schoolers in the classroom. By training both non-verbal and verbal teacher sensitivity skills, teachers are supported in dealing with diversified groups of learners (such as refugee children, migrants, socially disadvantaged...) and to adopt innovative practices from the start of their careers and during their careers. Doing so, the project is consistent with both the Erasmus KA2+ School education priority for high quality early childhood education and the Erasmus KA2+ Horizontal priority for social inclusion. More specific, the present project focuses on the youngest group (i.e. pre-schoolers of 2.5 to 6 years old) and on their teachers.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

An online Playing-2-gether course has already shown its positive effect on teacher sensitivity of Belgian preservice teachers [14], [15]. The P-2-G intervention was developed by colleagues from UC Leuven-Limburg and KU Leuven, Belgium, based on an attachment and learning theory that aims at improving the quality of teacher-child interactions and to decrease child externalizing problem behaviour. This type of

problem behaviour refers to disruptive and harmful behaviours for others (hurting other children, being disobedient, talking back..) and has been shown to be linked to future child maladjustment in several areas, such as peer rejection, social isolation, school failure, and mental disorders [7], [1]. Finally, this behaviour becomes not only a risk factor for the child's development, but also for class climate and for the teacher as well. Therefore it is inevitable to redirect this behavioural maladjustment in an early stage [1]. The P-2-G intervention was developed for pre-schoolers showing relatively high levels of externalizing problem behaviour and their teachers [15]. Teacher-child interactions are considered as environmental factors that influence pre-schooler behavioural adjustment. The growing number of observational studies has aimed at the link between the affective quality of the teacher-child relationship, teacher behaviour management and pre-schooler behavioural adjustment [9]. The interventions grounded in attachment and learning theory, aimed at improving pre-schooler behavioural adjustment by focusing on both enhancing the teacher-child relationship and teacher behaviour management are on the rise [14], [15].

According to attachment theory developing a secure attachment bond with primary caregivers is important to promote children's development and to prevent adjustment problems in general and externalizing problem behaviour in particular. (see meta-analysis by Fearon et al. 2010) [3]. Parents are the primary attachment figures for most children and relationships with teachers are time-limited and not exclusive. Children spend a lot of time with their teachers for at least one school year. Teachers can be temporarily considered as attachment figures playing the role of secure base and they may influence children's adjustment in preschool [2]. High-quality teacher-child relationships are considered important resources which may help children to maintain adequate behaviour or redirect externalizing problem behaviour in times of stress at school.

Learning theory focuses on importance of teacher-child interactions for children's behavioural development as well. More specifically, the operant conditioning model focuses on the importance of the antecedents and the consequences of behaviour as targets for behavioural change. Teacher should set up the conditions under which desired behaviour is likely to occur (stating clear rules), and if it occurs, the teacher should reinforce this behaviour (praising desired behaviour) [14].

Attachment and learning theories point at different aspects of teacher-child interactions which are considered to be complementary in improving child behavioural adjustment, and may be combined in two component interventions. The first component may be attachment-based and focused on improving the relationship quality. The improved relationship is, in turn, expected to act as an affective base, which facilitates the effectiveness of behaviour management techniques focused on in a second, learning theory based, intervention component [14].

In the parent-child literature, several authors have combined insights from attachment theory and learning theory in two component interventions, the first component aimed at promoting the quality of the caregiver-child relationship and the second at promoting the caregiver's behavioural management. The assumption underlying the combination of these intervention components is that behavioural management, shown to be effective in reducing externalizing problem behaviour - EPB will be most effective if it is applied in the context of a warm caregiver-child relationship. Therefore, these interventions

start with a child-directed interactive play time. This play time is viewed as a foundation upon which to build a high quality relationship that may promote improved caregiver-child communication, increased positive emotional experiences, and motivation to change within the child. [15]. This, in turn, is expected to facilitate the child's openness for, compliance with, and the efficacy of the behaviour management techniques based on learning theory which are practiced during the second intervention component.

METHODS

The project management methodology goes from preparatory activities to implementation, evaluation and dissemination. All activities are bundled into clearly defined outputs. The project itself is broken down into 4 outputs. Each output is assigned to a lead partner. By delegating authority to run activities for this output to each partner is ensured the inclusiveness of most of the partners in the project management and therefore ownership for the outputs. In doing so the special consideration of the profile of the institution was taken as well as, the qualifications and experience of people involved. The responsibility on the different intellectual outputs and multiplier events is taken by different partners, based on their specific expertise in this output.

Output 1: Animated videos - the goal is to give an attractive summary of the state-of-the-art on two important elements of the project: teacher sensitivity and inclusive preschools. However, to date, an attractive animated video that explains the exact meaning of teacher sensitivity in inclusive preschools is not yet available. Such informative video will help teachers to understand the importance and the essence of these concepts in layman terms and inspire them to implement more teacher sensitivity in their inclusive classrooms.

Output 2: Good practice videos – are made by the pre-service and in-service teachers in the national professional learning communities. They show the examples of teacher sensitivity and inclusive classrooms. They also show examples where teacher sensitivity and inclusive classrooms are less easy to attain. These videos will be put on the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on Playing -2-gether. Videos of strong moments or troublesome areas have been made by the pre-service and in-service teachers of the participating schools in every country except Belgium. The teams of teachers are in the position of detecting and anticipating the “hard parts” of teacher sensitivity. The “hard parts” are these areas where improvement is not so easy to access. Singling out the “hard parts” for special attention, practicing them on the side, developing strategies to deal with them better, ultimately, make it easier to recall the information and reintegrate later into daily practice.

Output 3: Developing of a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on Playing-2-gether that will include the following items: a general introduction, the animated videos which provide the state-of-the-art on teacher sensitivity and inclusive preschools in layman terms, good practice videos on high quality teacher-child relationships with moment-to-moment description of the shown interactions. Moreover there will be included discussion forum where pre- and in-service teachers can post their comments on the good practice videos of other countries (as part of an assignment for the professional learning communities). In the discussion forum, new issues on specific topics related teacher sensitivity in inclusive classrooms (innovation problems, good practices) can be

raised. Playing-2-gether coaching manual will be also part of it. The MOOC is based on the principle of Observational Learning in which it is shown that the observation of good examples has positive effect on the self-designing products. The tool will be open access and thus will be able to be consulted and used by all EU pre-service teachers, in-service teachers and teacher trainers.

Output 4: Playing-2-gether coaching manual. In the final phase of the project participating teachers will be trained as coaches for other pre-service and in-service teachers. Therefore the coaching manual will be developed which may be used complementary to the MOOC. Complementing the MOOC by a coaching trajectory has demonstrated more effective teacher-child interactions in comparison to only implementing the MOOC. The coaching manual will be based on the four components of the 4C/ID model for complexing learning: learning tasks, supportive information, procedural information and part-task practice (Merriënboer and Kirschner, 2013) [15]. The coaching manual will be available in English, Slovak, Dutch, Portuguese and French, so that many European teachers can consult it. The try-out version of the coaching manual will be presented at the national multiplier events and will be tested in the following months by the participating teachers.

RESULTS

Playing-2-gether intervention consists of two six week components during which one-on-one play sessions with the target child take place outside the classroom. These play sessions are held twice a week, for approximately 15 – 20 minutes per session. During these sessions, the teacher is given the opportunity to practice skills to improve the teacher-child relationship quality - TCR (1st component) and the teacher's behaviour management (2nd component) in a safe learning environment, and the teachers are encouraged to apply these skills to the classroom. In the 1st component, Relationship-Game, the play sessions are child-centred. The child can choose the activity or the game and the teacher has to follow the child's lead. The teacher practices skills that improve teacher sensitivity and that focus on making a strong connection with the child. For example, the teacher observes the child during the game, imitates his play, describes his actions and labels his feelings and also pays attention to the children's relational needs and tries to respond to them in an adequate manner (“developing relational themes” in Banking Time) [2],[8]. When the teacher feels comfortable with these basic techniques, he or she can take the child's relational needs into account and let them guide his/her actions. In case the teacher feels like the child has difficulty expressing his/her emotions, the teacher can label his/her feelings more frequently to give a voice to the child's emotions. In the 2nd component, Rule-Game, the sessions are teacher centred. The teacher chooses the activity or the game, and the child has to follow the teacher's lead. Moreover, the teacher practices skills to improve child behavioural adjustment and reduce externalizing problem behaviour - EPB, such as giving clear commands, introducing rules. If the child disruptive behaviour persists, the teacher can make use of time-out, but it is important that the sessions remain a positive time spent together [13], [14].

During the period of 2018 – 2019 in every participating country were recruited preschools and chosen the children with EPB. In every class of pre-school group parental

consent to participate in the intervention part was requested for the selected pre-schooler.

At the start of each intervention component, the consultant provided training to the teacher. These training sessions were designed to (a) introduce the teachers to the Playing-2-together skills, (b) help solving practical problems, such as finding a teacher for supervision of the other children during the sessions, finding a place and time for the sessions during the school day, and (c) inspire teachers to apply the Playing-2-together skills in the sessions and in the classroom. In the fourth week of each of the intervention components, a consultation took place, including a recorded observation of a Playing-2-together session, followed by a video-feedback session with the teacher. Consultation and performance feedback have been shown to improve the outcomes of school-based interventions beyond those achieved through instructional workshops.

Beyond the results the project generates following results:

Better outcomes for pre-schoolers. Recent research has shown the importance of the teacher sensitivity for young children's current and later academic, behavioural and socio-emotional development [13]. Moreover, teacher sensitivity has been found to have compensatory effect for the development of at-risk children (e.g., children from disadvantaged home backgrounds [11]). This project aimed to improve recognisability of effective teacher-child interactions as a basis for inclusion for all preschool teachers also for teachers who focus on teaching at-risk children.

Offering pre-service and in-service preschool teachers possibilities for professional development in matters relating to teacher sensitivity as a basis for inclusion in the classroom, which are fundamental basics for providing high quality early childhood education. By practicing in co-teaching and video feedback, teachers are professionalized to take the role of Playing-2-together ambassador for other teachers.

Professionalization of the participating staff within and beyond the partnership – offer to experience intense international cooperation, to overcome intercultural and language differences (e.g., clarification of the concepts “teacher sensitivity”, “inclusion” in different educational systems) and to improve their skills in distance teaching and learning via MOOC [4]. Moreover there is an opportunity to integrate the Playing-2-together MOOC into the own curriculum, as the MOOC is open access. The staff of the partner pre-schools and other participating pre-schools gets unique opportunities to professionalize with the whole team via a broad supportive international network, which fits within the priority of “intercultural education and lifelong learning.” Current challenges in European education (e.g., refugee crisis, super diversity) will be tackled better when European countries cooperate, think together and learn from each other on how to provide high quality early childhood education for all.

Strengthening of existing cooperation and relationship among the partner university colleges of teacher training and teachers of the participating schools. Teacher trainers will coach both pre-service and in-service teachers in the professional learning communities.

CONCLUSION

The project activities showed that the Playing-2-together intervention reduced teacher-child conflict and child externalizing behaviour, and thereby contributes to the empirical evidence on two component interventions targeting teacher-child interactions to decrease child externalizing problem behaviour. Additionally, it is also an approach to shed some light on the (differential) contribution of a relationship-focused and a behaviour management-focused intervention component in the effects of two-component teacher-child interventions. The results showed that a first, relationship-focused intervention component, in itself, produced positive effects on child externalizing problem behaviour, closeness, and conflict. To further disentangle the unique effects of both components, future research should reverse the order of the intervention components and/or compare the effects of two-component-interventions with one-component-interventions. Moreover, future studies are strongly recommended to include intermediate assessments to gain more insight in what happens during the intervention.

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POSSIBILITIES OF IMPLEMENTATION OF ONCOLOGICAL PREVENTION IN HEALTH EDUCATION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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ABSTRACT

Neoplastic diseases are among the most frequent chronic non-communicable diseases. In the Czech Republic, every year over 95,000 malignant tumours are diagnosed and over 25,000 patients die as a result of oncological diseases despite the fact that their onset is largely affected by lifestyle. After cardiovascular diseases, neoplastic diseases represent the most frequent cause of death. For this reason, it is very important to know the basic information about this issue in order to prevent the disease and reduce the number of oncological patients. The family and the school play a major role in primary prevention of oncological diseases. Health education is a key subject that can have a major impact on health literacy among the population and reduction of the prevalence of oncological diseases susceptible to lifestyle. The text presents the results of an analysis of a health education textbook and the Framework educational programme for elementary education. It also describes materials that can be used in teaching oncological prevention, but these are designed only for primary school or contain only some topics. The key message of the paper is the presentation of a methodological material aimed at teaching of oncological prevention in lower secondary schools and the partial results of its practical verification.

Keywords: Oncological diseases, prevention, Framework educational programme for elementary education, textbooks, health education, methodological material

INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The most frequent neoplastic diseases in Czech Republic include the following [8]: skin cancer, prostate cancer in men, breast cancer in women, colon and rectal cancer, and lung cancer.

In the Czech Republic, the three following screening programmes are in place that focus on oncological diseases: breast cancer screening (from 45 to 69 years mammography examination once every two years), cervical cancer screening (from 15 years cytological and colposcopic examination of the cervix), colon and rectal cancer screening (from 50 to 54 occult bleeding test once a year, from 55 years once every two years or once every 10 years colonoscopy screening).