



SEDIN



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Final Evaluation Report – Executive Summary

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572727-EPP-1-2016-1-EL-
EPPKA3-SUP-APPREN

SEDIN – Creative methods for
successful inclusion in
multicultural schools

Early childhood education and care participation can be an effective tool to achieve educational equity for children in a disadvantaged situation, such as some migrant or minority groups (for example Roma) and refugee children, children with special needs including disabilities, children in alternative care and street children, children of imprisoned parents, as well as children within households at particular risk of poverty and social exclusion, such as single-parent or large households. Refugee children, due to their vulnerable situation, need enforced support. Poverty, physical and emotional stressors, traumas and missing language skills can hinder their future educational prospects and successful integration into a new society. Participation in early childhood education and care can help to mitigate these risk factors.

Council recommendation on high-quality early childhood education and care systems. Commission document number: 9246/18 + ADD 1 – COM (2018) 271 final (May 2019)

Background

Between December 2017 and May 2020 the SEDIN project was implemented in order to equip teaching professionals at scale with techniques and underlying philosophy of Montessori and Creative Learning methods to support the integration of refugee, migrant and minority (RMM) children into mainstream schooling.

The partnership consisted of:

- Action Synergy, Greece, project lead
- Universitat de Girona, Spain,
- Karşıyaka İlçe Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü (KMEM), Turkey
- Center for Creative Training Association (CCTA), Bulgaria
- ELORIS, Greece
- Cooperazione Internazionale Sud Sud (CISS), Italy
- Centre of Higher Education in Theatre Studies (Centredu), Greece
- Waterpark Montessori International (WMI), Ireland
- Haute Ecole Galilee (IHECS), Belgium

The Montessori method provides a child-centred approach, where pupils make choices for what learning activities to engage in and when. WMI provided the specialist input for this model. Creative Learning has been developed by Centredu. Creative Learning comprises drama techniques and activities, which enable communication and learning beyond traditional approaches. Both GP models enable communication and learning to occur, even when a child is in a learning environment where the dominant language is not their home language, and so are deemed particularly appropriate for the target audience of SEDIN, namely pupils and professionals in areas with a large number of migrant families.

The project used a cascading approach consisting of trainers, multipliers and teachers, and sought through its training model to enable teachers to implement the two practices with fidelity.

The external evaluation

The external evaluation collected and analysed data to assess the extent to which the SEDIN project meets its stated objectives:

General Objective

'Facilitate the improvement of the educational performance of refugee children and children with a migrant/minority background'

Specific Objectives

SO1 – Enhance the ability of teachers to include refugee / migrant / minority children

SO2 – Mainstreaming Montessori and Creative Learning methods in teacher training

SO3 – Children improve their educational performance

SO4 – Children from migrant/minority backgrounds are better included in school life

SO5 - Creating an inspiring, creative and stimulating learning environment for teachers and all their pupils

The external evaluation also provided formative feedback to partners to support them in the design, implementation, and taking to scale of the two GP models.

Summary of the achievements of the SEDIN project against the project objectives

Broadly speaking, the objectives of the SEDIN project focussed on two areas: the impact its implementation would have on the teachers and pupils engaging in SEDIN during the funding period; and the project's sustainability.

In terms of the impact on teachers and pupils, the evidence from the project suggests several benefits described below. But beyond the specific objectives of stimulating learning, improving educational performance, and integration of RMM pupils, for all of which the outcomes were generally positive, SEDIN also set the parameters generally for a good learning experience. Importantly, teacher after teacher noted the way application of the methods promoted behaviour conducive to learning. This is something that was anticipated in the analysis of the methods against the evidence-base (section 4.1), and something that has been borne out by the testimony of teachers on the SEDIN project.

Against its specific objectives, SEDIN's achievements are as follows:

Enhance the ability of teachers to include refugee / migrant / minority children

- Montessori and Creative Learning are evidence-based approaches which support teachers to apply essential elements of effective teaching and learning.
- Teachers implemented a wide range of Creative Learning and Montessori activities with a generally good degree of fidelity.
- The methods enabled teachers to develop pupils' social and learning skills as well as curriculum content in ways which pupils found engaging.
- Group work and collaboration were a common feature across SEDIN classrooms.

Mainstreaming Montessori and Creative Learning methods in teacher training

- Montessori and Creative Learning methods were appropriate for mixed indigenous and RMM classes, and also for classes with high proportions of RMM pupils.
- The methods also proved helpful in integrating SEND pupils in learning activities.
- Teachers believed the methods had particularly helped them address issues around pupil engagement and pupil behaviour. There was a

certain consensus that the methods helped promote cultural diversity and language barriers, but these were less marked.

- The training model for SEDIN incorporated features of effective transfer and continuing professional development and learning (CPDL), including a combination of specialist input and coaching, sustained coaching over time, collaborative activities which promoted reflective dialogue and de-privatisation of practice, and, to a certain degree, integrated leadership.
- Professional development and learning activities were sustained beyond the training sessions and incorporated in 92 schools over the course of the project. SEDIN training has been embedded in the professional development provision of one university, four NGOs, the training offer of another project, two regional authorities, and one governmental education department.
- 54 out of 58 participating professionals who responded to the post-implementation survey state that their pupils engaged better with SEDIN lessons than usual classroom activities – four stated it was about the same. There was general endorsement of SEDIN by organisations which engaged with the project.
- Policy makers across the countries represented by SEDIN partners endorsed SEDIN as an appropriate and valuable methodology in schools.

Children improve their educational performance

- Children acquired knowledge and skills in a range of subject areas during SEDIN lessons.
- Children developed social and learning skills during SEDIN lessons, including critical thinking, giving and reflecting on feedback, respect for others, and how to collaborate.
- SEDIN lessons enabled overt discussions about emotions, their role in learning and how to manage them.

Children from migrant/minority backgrounds are better included in school life

- Pupils in SEDIN classes, which were a mixture in varying proportions of RMM and indigenous children, were more likely to engage in activities.
- The key mechanisms which SEDIN entailed to facilitate this were choice – children could decide what roles to take and when to contribute – and the opportunities SEDIN provided for communication and self-expression which did not rely on proficiency in the dominant language of the classroom.

Create an inspiring, creative and stimulating learning environment for teachers and all their pupils

- Pupils' enthusiasm for SEDIN learning activities was based on the fact that they were enjoyable in themselves, but also because they removed barriers to learning
- Enthusiasm expressed itself in pupils' approval of the activities, and also in improved behaviour.

Recommendations

The following recommendations draw on the lessons from the SEDIN project, and are offered as a guide to partners, school leaders, and policy makers seeking to embed and implement in new settings the SEDIN good practice models.

Implementation of SEDIN

As well as the successes they enjoyed implementing SEDIN, teachers also highlighted the additional work that was required in organising lessons and resources, and that pupils' engagement could sometimes be messy and inconsistent.

When organising the implementation of SEDIN ensure teachers have the support they need to prepare for and trial the approach, and learn from when things don't go to plan. Coaching in schools, and debrief with peers were two appropriate support mechanisms partners on SEDIN organised. The training model described in this report provides a reliable guide for the features which will help the process.

The inclusion of leaders in the training and professional development programme helped them fulfil the 'instructional leadership' part of their role, but because school leaders do not always conceive engaging in continuing professional development and learning (CPDL) a necessity or priority for them, it was not a consistent feature across partners.

For any initiative involve school leaders from the outset. SEDIN provides examples of practice which speak to a range of agendas, whether that is numeracy, literacy, learning skills or integration, and so there should be something among any school's priorities where SEDIN can provide an answer. Share also the international evidence^{1 2} on the benefits of instructional leadership and school leaders' engagement with CPDL.

Embedding SEDIN

Many teachers were attracted to the SEDIN project because they had heard of Montessori and were intrigued to find out more. The Montessori specialists on the project have adapted the method for the first time for mainstream schools,

¹ https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/school-leadership-for-learning_9789264258341-en

² <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2515/5959>

whereas previously they had only worked in Montessori specialist schools. In addition, Creative Learning worked well as a complementary method.

In order to attract teachers to taking up SEDIN, exploit the stepping-stone into Montessori the project has created, and market workshops as such. Liaise and collaborate with local Montessori schools to share expertise and to help extend the reach of their good practices.

Where schools have introduced the method as part of the project, support them to sustain implementation, by keeping it on the agenda at school leader meetings, and training and CPD workshops. Extend the pool of local SEDIN trainers by including teachers who have implemented the intervention well during the period of the project.

Promoting teaching as an evidence-based profession

Partners on SEDIN implemented elements of CPDL which ensured teachers engaged with the evidence of their classroom. Two tools in particular were effective in generating data through which practice could be analysed – the teacher log and observation schedule, the latter promoting collaborative professional learning.

Consider teachers' capacity and opportunities to review their teaching and their pupils' learning in the contexts you work in (team meetings, course reviews etc), and the evidence they draw on to do so. Where this is not part of a continuous learning culture, consider introducing teacher logs as a regular activity. This could be done in a way that is not overly burdensome, for example, even once a term would help establish the habit. In addition, data generated here could serve other quality and audit purposes. Where a continuous learning culture already exists, seek ways to promote peer observation and debrief to generate more detailed data and a more critically engaging approach.

Greater inclusion – parental involvement

The promotion of parental involvement had relatively low resonance in the SEDIN project, and yet the evidence for its value in supporting children's learning is strong. The cultural inertia against parental involvement, both within schools and among parents themselves, should not be a barrier to promoting it, and the SEDIN approach offers subtle ways to achieve this.

Review the activities which teachers are implementing in your schools. Where there are opportunities for pupils to collect stories, information, or artefacts from home, set these as tasks, so that pupils bring these back into the classroom, and make a stronger connection between home and school. SEDIN activities which

lend themselves to such exchange of knowledge include Letters to the World, Needs of human beings, and Telling stories.

RMM children's L1 as an asset

The issue of language and communication was generally perceived during the SEDIN project as one where children who did not have the dominant language as their L1 needed to acquire proficiency in the dominant language. However, children's home languages are an asset, a resource for all children's language learning in the classroom, and also a fragile skill which can easily be lost if it is not promoted. Maintaining and exploiting the languages RMM pupils bring with them for the learning of all pupils, also contributes to European policy to 'improve the teaching and learning of languages to ensure that more young people become proficient in foreign languages'³

Consider ways that activities can actively promote the use of RMM children's L1 at home and at school. Through home-school activities, such as storytelling, this may be encouraging book reading in the child's L1 if family members are literate, or visiting websites in the home language to glean information for the classroom. Review foreign language learning in the school in the light of the languages present in the classrooms – can linguistic skills and knowledge, such as sentence construction, be taught by using these languages as illustrations, for example?

³ Proposal for a COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems - <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52018DC0271>

Final report by Isham Education and Community Ltd

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