

Editorial

Special issue: Social and Emotional Learning in Different Contexts

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This special edition draws on the range of papers presented at the Fifth European Network for Social and Emotional Competence (ENSEC) Conference hosted by the Faculty of Human Kinetics, at the University of Lisbon, Portugal in July 2015. The Conference focused on Social and Emotional Learning and Culture, and attracted participants from 40 countries. It is our great pleasure to present here a selection of articles on various aspects of social and emotional education by authors coming from a range of disciplines in education, health and social care

Margarida Gaspar de Matos and Celeste Simões (Portugal) step back and provide a chronology of work in the area of social and emotional learning in a Portuguese setting; their discussion of the effect of economic crisis on social and emotional development is very pertinent to many national contexts. They contextualise the development of concepts such self-efficacy, resilience and self-regulation to youth engagement and participation drawing on studies such as the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HSBC) Study, the RESCUR Project and the Dream Teens Study. The paper provides a useful reminder of how much this area of work has developed over the last century and should be useful to researchers and practitioners with an interest in social and emotional learning.

Patrícia Arriaga and Catarina Pacheco's (Portugal) research focuses on the use of clown doctors to reduce child and caregiver anxiety in a particular hospitalization moment: the entrance to surgery. As the authors mention, the hospitalization of children for surgical interventions can be a very stressful event and these patients often experience high levels of negative emotions. The results of the study demonstrate no significant effect on child anxiety, but a positive effect on caregivers that could indirectly have a positive

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impact on child well-being. The authors conclude that more research on this type of intervention is needed to analyse the multiple variables involved that can influence the impact of clown doctors on child wellbeing.

Diego Gomez-Baya, Ramon Mendoza, and Susana Paino (Spain) focus on the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and depressive symptoms in an adolescent sample. Their longitudinal study demonstrates some interesting differences relating to gender and confirms a negative correlation between perceived EI and depressive symptoms in adolescence that was consistent at follow-up. Again the authors suggest implications for practice where the promotion of EI might be a key area of prevention work with adolescents in schools.

Guida Veiga, Carlos Neto and Carolien Rieffe (Portugal) explore the importance of free play, as an experiential context for the development, practice and master of social and emotional competences. The research presented here tested two alternative models, the first one in which free play has a direct impact on social functioning and the second where the relationship between free play and social functioning is mediated by children's emotional competence. The study suggests that free play is negatively related to disruptive behaviour in preschool children; however certain emotional competences influence these behaviours independently of the amount of time that children have for free play. This study is particularly important as a reflection opportunity in a time where free play is substituted by structured activities and excessive involvement in computerised activities.

Bénédicte Gendron, Eleni-Sofia Kourmenou and Carmen Rusu's (France) article describes an experimental study that investigated the development of emotional capital in first year undergraduate trainee teachers. Emotional capital (Gendron 2004) describes the emotional competencies that trainee teachers need, in addition to knowledge and skills that have potential to have a significant impact on personal development and health. During the programme trainee teachers followed a programme which drew on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). The study's results demonstrate that emotional capital has the potential to contribute to a sustainable and holistic personal development.

Nina Dolev and Shosh Leshem's study (Israel) investigated the impact of a two year intervention with teachers in Israel, which sought to develop teachers' social and emotional competencies, such as self-awareness, emotional regulation and assertiveness, using the Bar-On model of emotional intelligence (EI). The study used a mixed method experimental methodology and clearly shows an improvement in teachers' EI and its applicability in both personal and professional contexts.

Natalie Mikhaylov's (Turkey) work also explores social and emotional learning in Higher Education. Her study takes a constructivist grounded theory approach to explore the concept of cultural curiosity with students and staff amongst four undergraduate management and business administration programmes. The author explores the factors that might impact on cultural curiosity, including cultural usefulness, cultural distance, 'cool' cultures and the affective dimension of cultural engagement. Mikhaylov argues that an increased understanding of cultural curiosity has implications for how we encourage the cultural curiosity of learners.

Carrie-Anne Myers and Helen Cowie (UK) present a review of the international literature on the nature and incidence of bullying in Higher Education (HE), which includes considerations of cyber-bullying and bullying related to gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability. The authors highlight the need for more awareness of bullying in HE, and underline the importance for anti-bullying policies and interventions to prevent and reduce bullying in this context, such as peer support programmes.

Olivia Kuan-Ling (Australia) presents a short research report, describing a case study on the development to of resilience in a five year old Taiwanese girl. The author uses Bronfenbrenner's Process-Person-Context-Time model to analyse the risk and protective factors associated with resilience during the story-telling intervention, which took place in her school. The analysis of the collected material revealed that the intervention impacted positively on the child. Case studies are particularly important in resilience research as they allow an indepth exploration of the factors and processes that impact significantly positive adaptation.