

Program for child's emotional competences training in Lithuania (VEIK - Vaiko emocijų išraiškos kontrolės ugdymo programa)

1. Need/challenge addressed

Deteriorating basic competences of students and ESL remain open problems. There is evidence that the emotional competence influences the student's successful adjustment and academic achievements.

According to research, children lacking emotional competence have a poorer capacity for academic adaptation (lower education achievements, skipping school). They have trouble in recognising peers and managing their own emotions, which encourages them to behave aggressively. While schools attempt in various ways to solve these problems, the VEIK programme is innovative in that over a fairly long period of time, it educates children: to recognise and name their emotions; to communicate and utilise other social skills; to manage strong feelings; and, to problem-solve in everyday life.

2. Level of intervention

- Universal (addressed to all pupils)

3. Intensity of the intervention

The VEIK programme is focused on the continued emotional development of children. Based on the Institute of Family Relations children's day-care centre practice, the proposed duration of the VEIK programme is 33 sessions for children (3 times per week) and 3 classes for parents. The duration of one children session is 90 minutes while parent sessions are 180 minutes.

School stakeholders (administration staff and teachers) are provided training of the basics of the VEIK programme during 360 minutes.

4. Target group and age group

The target group is intended to be children and youngsters aged 8-18 years old, who are lacking social emotional competencies and skills. The programme also targets their parents and teachers.

5. Conditions and different steps necessary for the implementation of the measure

- 1 First, the school decides the need for the programme.
- 2 Second, school psychologists and social educators (two from each school) acquire the skills to lead the children VEIK group. The duration of VEIK trainer-training program is 96 hours of training and 20 hours of supervisions.
- 3 After the training, VEIK trainers are responsible for selecting the group of children at school.
Children selection criteria of VEIK group are a lack of emotional and social skills in the child. The children in the VEIK group participate voluntarily and through recommendation by school social pedagogues, psychologists and educators. A child's motivation to participate in the programme is one of the most important parts of VEIK.
- 4 VEIK group activities for children take place 3 times per week for around 3 months. The activities for teachers and parents take place in parallel.

It is important for children to create an informal, quiet and comfortable environment: protection from the hubbub, adequate lighting and comfortable chairs (it helps to keep individual boundaries). If it is possible, the space could be divided into two parts: one for discussions, role-play and problem solving, while the other for games, drawing, etc.

Each school decides the exact time of activities: it can take place after classes or before the classes (if the child starts school in afternoon).

6. Decision makers on the type of support and possible adaptations

VEIK trainers, together with school professionals (psychologists, social pedagogues and teachers) decide a child's need for the VEIK programme. The agreement between child and VEIK trainer and between parent of the child and VEIK trainer are made. The role of the child is active participation in the programme (role-playing during session, involvement in discussions, home assignment and etc.)

7. Delivery of the measure and stakeholders

The copyright holder of the programme is the Institute of Family Relations (Kaunas, Lithuania). Staff of this institution (psychotherapists, psychologists, social workers) provides training, supervisions, manuals for VEIK trainers and examples for children's home assignments.

The VEIK programme is implemented within the school community in a systemic way: parents, children, educators, administration, NGO.

The VEIK trainers have various roles, including: children group selection and formation; trainings for other school stakeholders; parents group and individual work with parents and children; evaluations of children competences; and, VEIK group maintenance and programme continuity.

8. Overall responsibility for implementation

The program copyright holders have responsibility for the implementation of the measure and the schools implementing the programme.

9. Obstacles in introducing the measure

Difficulties in implementing the program:

- 1 The VEIK programme is quite long (about 3 months) and it is the responsibility of the children and parents to attend the whole program.
- 2 Children participating in a programme before or after classes sometimes provide difficulties for teachers and parents in organising activities for the whole day.
- 3 The funding of the programme implementation.

Problem Solving:

- 1 Pre-interviews with parents. After one-month attendance of VEIK group, parents usually notice positive changes in the child participant's behaviour. It motivates parents to maintain their child's participation in the programme and to motivate themselves to change their own behaviour.
- 2 It takes some time and discussion, but the school and teacher is motivated to arrange everything, because they see changes not only in children's behaviour but in the culture of school communication as well.

- 3 The school does not always have sufficient funding. Sometimes they use assignments in the student's basket allocated for teachers' professional development, sometimes the programme copyright holder receives funding from various funds.

10. Monitoring and assessing the measure

The monitoring and assessment of the VEIK programme is organised by VEIK trainers and The Institute of Family Relations. Before and after the group, each child, parents of the child and class teacher complete the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).

11. Results of the measure

The results show that after implementing the VEIK programme, children who were involved in such classes have less physical and emotional complaints. They complain less frequently of headaches, abdominal pain and also appear less worried and less afraid while also demonstrating less frequent bursts of anger, etc. The children seem to have less behavioural problems (the more often obey the rules, fight less with other children and also lie and steal less often) and are more confident and popular with peers, etc.

12. Resources and funding

EU funds and state budget.

The cost for one school is around EUR 3800, which goes towards cost of material and trainings for VEIK teachers, school administration and other school educators.

13. Current status of the measure

The VEIK programme is ongoing within 25 schools in Lithuania.