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Ana Kozina (ed.)

Empowering Teachers Across Europe

to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity-Related Challenges

Volume 1

Experimentation Perspectives

WAXMANN

Ana Kozina (ed.)

Empowering Teachers Across Europe to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity-Related Challenges

Volume 1: Experimentation Perspectives

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Foreword

Helle Jensen[1]

Forty-five years ago, I became interested in how we could work towards a good learning and developmental environment in schools based on the teacher-student-relationship. At that time, we were a very small group in Denmark trying our best to promote the importance of the relationship between teacher and student. To focus on that, our experience was and remains that one of the teachers' most important tools is their personality. In those days, not much research had looked at the importance of the teachers' personal qualities, while the developmental psychological theories about the valuable role of the relationship for children's development were quite new and had not really gained ground in teacher education programmes. Having accumulated all of these experiences, it is a great pleasure to read this book and sense the considerable commitment shown for the work of the HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Across Europe to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity-Related Career Challenges ("HAND:ET") team's researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.

It is a pleasure because the theme is so important. We need children and young people who can take care of both themselves and each other, who have learned to stand on their own two feet and from there have a good outlook and a good heart with respect to other people. Schools have always had the task of teaching children what society needs and what they cannot adequately learn elsewhere. Learning to read, write, do maths, science and history was for a long time something that schools were pretty much alone in while teaching children. With the vast amounts of information available online, today such knowledge can also be learned elsewhere. Developing human qualities online is even more difficult. And, as seen in Europe, the Middle East and many other parts of the world right now, it is critical that we respect each other and each other's diversities and meet each other with empathy and interest. For us in Europe, that includes recognising the privileges we possess and have had and be ready to take responsibility for the negative impacts on the world they produce.

Social and emotional competencies, and diversity awareness (SEDA) are called for more than ever. We also need good programmes that work in such a way that allow them to be adapted to the requirements of individual schools. On top of that, we need teachers and school staff in schools who are equipped to create learning and developmental environments in which these qualities can

1 The Danish society for the pro-motion of life wisdom in children, Denmark.

be developed. It is about training teachers, school staff and leaders to develop their SEDA competencies. It is long known that the best learning environments are created with empathy, interest, respect and recognition between all school stakeholders. This makes it essential to meet the school's stakeholders with exactly these qualities. We also know what it takes to develop these qualities, so all that remains is to put them into practice.

This is where HAND:ET comes in. It is a pleasure to get to know the painstaking work done by the researchers from the participating countries. Although training social-emotional competencies is not new, starting with the teachers and not simply offering a programme to the children is new. Linking social-emotional competencies with diversity awareness is also new. The growing and entirely justified attention paid to diversities in the treatment of people based on their gender, ethnicity, status or other factors means it is incredibly important to develop a way of being and a readiness to act that enables a relationship to be created that is mainly based on common human qualities and not just on prejudices we hold about each other.

On an existential level, it requires access to the qualities we carry within that speak directly to our shared humanity. It can be difficult to address these in a professional setting. Being a teacher is often only associated with professionalism in the field, whereas the personal aspects important for the work are not focused on. In HAND:ET, it is precisely the personal aspects that are in the spotlight. The teacher is seen as a human being – of course, also with the essential professionalism – but also as a person who, through their personality and human qualities, can relate to other people in a way that allows both parties to experience development and learning.

Perhaps the fact that so many teachers experience their work as stressful and that many children do not thrive at school and in life generally means that HAND:ET was truly able to fulfil the need to work with well-being in schools. Well-being depends on SEDA competencies and, even though increased well-being is not the only goal of the initiative, working with the challenges in the SEDA area will also affect well-being generally in the classroom. After many years of experience, I know that SEDA competencies cannot be acquired by listening to lectures, no matter how good and interesting they may be. There is no way around getting started with practical exercises and taking a personal-professional approach to the topics being worked on. This requires a lot from the trainers as well as the participants.

It is not a form of teaching that is highly valued in the academic world, and trainers often encounter participants who are very sceptical and critical for a variety of reasons: Maybe because it is a completely new and different way, maybe because they only respect knowledge that speaks to the mind, maybe because they are afraid to put themselves out there, maybe because they don't trust that their openness will be treated properly, maybe because they think

'this kind of stuff' does not belong in a professional education programme, and maybe because they simply don't trust that anything good can come out of a continuing education programme. Or for many other reasons, although I note that I have heard the above examples frequently over the years while teaching the topic all around Europe.

As you see, there are many solid reasons why it can be difficult to introduce this work in schools. In my experience, the most important thing is to create a good and safe learning space where there is no requirement for everything to be perfect or right, where at best there is no 'right' or 'wrong', but where it is okay to show both your strengths and your deficiencies, and it is possible to be acknowledged as the professional you are and with the development opportunities you possess, which can be activated if there is a secure and trustworthy way of opening up to the inherent resources.

If these qualities are to spread to the classroom, they must permeate all relationships in the education system. This means that the trainers who train the teachers and school staff must have personally discovered the qualities of being acknowledged and trusted. It is important to realise that it's not about being right in any discussion, but about *seeing* each other and respecting different points of view. Holding this view also makes it easier for the trainer to relate to the participants when they make critical statements, which can often be seen as resistance which they have to defend themselves against. For many of us, becoming defensive is an old habit that starts automatically when we feel under attack. In addition, our education has taught us to argue in order to win a discussion, which is completely different from engaging in dialogue with the aim of learning more about yourself, the other person and the subject of the conversation. The trainers in HAND:ET were able to create this kind of inclusive learning space. In the feedback, it was described as an appreciative, trust-building and warm atmosphere that allowed the participants to go in-depth and establish more profound contact with themselves, in order to be able to later enter the classroom and form good and acknowledging contact with the students.

Some of the active ingredients in the HAND:ET programme are the work with mindfulness, empathy and compassion. The techniques and exercises used are rooted in ancient traditions shared by many different meditative schools of thought. Here, they were used with the aim of strengthening kindness, empathy and compassion, as well as clarity and presence in society. They also have this effect when put to use in the school system. In my recent work implementing the *Empathie macht Schule programme* in Berlin, like in HAND:ET, it was very valuable for the participants to work with themselves and to dare to recognise that self-care is important while working with people. Not just important, but absolutely required when you have to maintain work-life balance in a busy and demanding everyday schedule. It is necessary to have refuelled yourself when it

is your responsibility to create a constructive relationship and a good learning environment that provides solid foundations for well-being and growth. I have often heard statements like "It's the first time anyone has taken interest in how we're doing in our jobs. Usually it's always about the kids, parents and teaching and never about us". I found it touching that the participants were moved by this kind of acknowledgement and thought-provoking that the education system has so far not emphasised taking care of the most important resource the school has; namely, the people who work there.

If teachers and school staff are given the opportunity to take a few moments during the day to turn their awareness inwards and check in on how they are feeling, a really positive impact arises for both their well-being and performance. Here are a few ideas about what that might look like: For example, by taking an ultra-short journey through the body with awareness, just to feel the state and perhaps, if it feels right, to let go of some unnecessary tension that may have been stored. Then notice the breathing maybe over 10–15 seconds and then be ready to move on with the next task of the day. Or to sit for a while and notice the thoughts without judging them, just notice them and let them pass by like clouds in the sky; and any time the attention starts to associate and think and judge, just calmly, without criticism, guide the attention back to the role of observer.

It can also mean looking at oneself and one's working life with joy and gratitude. Paying recognition to oneself, even while experiencing difficult situations at work, and being aware that it is also necessary to recognise oneself and others when things are not going as wished for. Or, together with the children in the class, guide a short inner journey to the heart and heart feelings and remember one or more people that each person cares about. And perhaps after the exercise, but not always since time is often limited – talk to the children and acknowledge them for the feelings that arise, which can be anything from joy to sadness because a loved one is no longer there.

An important part of developing SEDA competencies is acknowledging that all emotions must be given space and also learning to be there when children express difficult emotions. This is essential as many children have difficult things in their backpack that they can't just leave it outside the school. But if the teacher can also face those difficult things, they can become easier for the child to bear in the moment, such that they can also have the energy to learn. It is thus wonderful to see that in HAND:ET it was possible to measure the increase in self-awareness and self-acceptance among the participants since this acted as a good starting point for being present and authentic in the classroom.

Presence, authenticity and inclusiveness are also strengthened through dialogue. Therefore, it is good to see how working with dialogues and listening empathetically has led to the development of the concept of *empathetic curiosity*. It emerges precisely in dialogue, which thereby becomes an important tool

in the work of strengthening contact and hence relationships between people. By working with the appreciative, equal and empathic qualities in dialogue, a unique opportunity can arise to get in touch with the empathy and compassion that lie within since birth and are just waiting for kind and caring relationships to unfold. Similarly, our innate ability to be in the present moment and to focus our awareness is bolstered when we are with empathetic listeners and attentive people. And the good thing is that these qualities can develop simultaneously on both sides of the relationship, for both the teacher and the student, when the teacher knows how to create space for them.

The development of social-emotional competencies is a good starting point for working with diversity awareness. In my experience, this aspect is a newer area than social-emotional competencies and, accordingly, even more important to address. Exactly in our time it is a joy to see how different minority groups are drawing attention to biases that many of us in the majority have not even noticed. And it is shocking for many to realise how they/we hold prejudices that we are not even aware of. It's about developing our awareness of these prejudices. That's the first step. Next, it is about showing empathetic curiosity, both towards our own prejudices and towards the people who are on the receiving end of those prejudices. This is the opportunity we have if we wish to reduce the polarisation in society that these inequalities generate.

Last but not least, HAND:ET's work on implementation must be highlighted. SEDA competencies are not developed overnight. It takes time because we are touching on the participants' attitudes, their basic assumptions and mental models. Some of these we mostly have out of habit, others have formed over time, and some just because we've never previously realised that there may be other ways of being a teacher, or other perspectives concerning the challenges that students may present to the teacher. The format of modules over the course of a school year and the opportunity for supervision is thus crucial for successful implementation. Similarly, the whole-school approach is valuable. It may be seen as an important step forward that it has been possible to spread the teaching over an entire school year and, in my experience, this type of competency is best institutionalised if there is regular supervision and follow-up courses for the teachers and school staff in the following years.

I would like to end by congratulating the HAND:ET team for the well-executed project in terms of both implementation and research. I recommend this highly readable book to anyone seeking to immerse themselves in and help develop this important area. There is still much to do, and new opportunities and aspects are still emerging that call for skilled and committed researchers and practitioners.

Introduction

Ana Kozina[1]

Teachers in Focus

The importance held by the teaching profession continues to be a topic of discussion in research, policy and practice in education. Nonetheless, the levels of teachers' stress, burnout, leaving the profession early and teacher shortages across Europe show that we have probably not been successful with communicating and implementing the message about the great value of the teaching profession in our society. It seems that we have taken teachers and their well-being for granted for far too long. This is reflected in the lack of support for teachers to develop social and emotional competencies, and diversity awareness (SEDA), leading to more relationally competent teachers. Teaching is fundamentally a relational profession, and many of the challenges teachers face concern different interpersonal dynamics, e.g., meeting the diverse needs of students, colleagues, parents, and school leaders. This leads to teachers being more prone to work-related stress and burnout than other professional groups (Johnson et al., 2005). Difficulties in meeting these challenges and needs are that, on one hand too few teachers are attracted to the profession and, on the other, too many teachers are leaving the profession early. In a very harsh way, COVID-19 has further challenged teachers. Therefore, to address the societal need to recruit and retain high-quality teachers understanding the mechanisms of positive teacher professional development is crucial.

Social and Emotional Competencies and Diversity Awareness in Focus

Despite social and emotional competencies, and diversity awareness (SEDA) having documented positive impacts on individual and school-level outcomes, substantial variations across countries and local jurisdictions remain in the availability of policies and programmes aimed at boosting these competencies. The lack of direct systemic support creates disparities in accessing SEDA competency support, which should be universally available and independent of the specific context (e.g., the classroom, school, region or country). The neglect

1 Educational Research Institute, Slovenia

of teacher SEDA competencies is evident in research (the vast majority of research in the field targets students, less so teachers), policy (lack of systemic support) and practice (lack of continuous professional support, especially long-term) (Roeser, 2016). For instance, attention has largely been given to curricula development, content standards and didactics and not to the relational process of teaching and learning. This process has resulted in teachers who know what and how to teach, but are not supported in navigating the complexities of the relationships in the classroom.

It is here that the HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Across Europe to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity-Related Career Challenges ("HAND:ET"[2]) steps in. The HAND:ET project, 2021–2024, builds on the lessons acquired and insights from the HAND IN HAND: Social and Emotional Skills for Tolerant and Non-discriminative Societies ("HAND"), 2017–2020, project. The HAND project was recognised as being one of the ten most relevant projects funded by the European Commission for teachers' and school leaders' more attractive career paths (Wisniewski & El-Nemr, 2019). The question we asked ourselves in the HAND project was not only what needs to be supported in order for the classroom to be more inclusive, but also how this can be accomplished. This led us to design a complex experimental design across countries in which we tested the effects of the HAND programme in schools under several conditions, such as where teachers received the support, students received the support, teachers and students both received the support, and the control condition. The evaluation process revealed the central role played by teachers in promoting social and emotional education, i.e., more positive outcomes for students and teachers were evident when teachers were supported than when only students were supported. The take-home message is that teachers are a starting point and absolutely necessary in the process of providing sustainable SEDA support in schools. Alongside putting teachers in the spotlight, in the HAND:ET project we are directly replying to the need expressed in multiple countries to provide constant support and monitoring throughout the school year on one side and to support the transfer to classroom activities on the other. In short, HAND:ET, in addition to HAND, offers whole-school-year continuous support for SEDA competencies and for implementing SEDA elements in the classroom for whole-school teams. The whole-year, whole-team approach places a strong focus on the collaborative contextualised development of the HAND:ET system (together with teachers) with the aim to assure both its sustainability and transferability.

2 The project is throughout the book addressed in its longer version, HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Across Europe to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity-Related Career Challenges, shorter version, HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers, and shortest version, HAND:ET.

In this book, we present the key ideas and findings of a 3-year project, integrating the insights of a wide range of stakeholders, including the perspectives of researchers, teachers, school leaders, trainers and policymakers. The book is our way of experimentally showing how the SEDA of teachers across Europe can be supported (Volume I) and how policy can support these processes (Volume II).

The Book in Focus

The book builds on four pillars: *Conceptualisation*, *Implementation*, *Evaluation* and *Policy*.

The starting position for the conceptualisation process is described by *Kozina* and *Vršnik Perše* in Chapter 1. The authors move from the importance of SEDA competencies for teachers' professional development to the way the SEDA competencies were understood in the HAND:ET project. The core elements of the mentioned project follow the complexity of educational processes within classrooms and schools and may be grouped into core concepts (SEDA competencies), tools (mindfulness, empathic curiosity, reflection) and outcomes (teachers' enhanced SEDA competencies reflected in less burnout and higher well-being). In Chapter 2 by *Matić Bojić, Pikić Jugović* and *Puzić,* the authors provide rich theoretical foundations of the SEDA competencies based on an extensive literature review. The baseline theory on social and emotional competencies, diversity awareness and related concepts is presented, with special emphasis paid to the importance of these competencies in the educational context. The authors also provide research evidence concerning the benefits of teacher professional development that integrates SEDA competencies for teachers as well as students' outcomes. The conceptualisation section concludes with Chapter 3 by *Dahlström* and *Gøtzsche* and the realisation of SEDA competencies in the HAND:ET programme's[3] development. The translation of the theoretical background and HAND:ET core concepts into the HAND:ET programme's core activities is presented together with sharing the developmental path and lessons learned in the process.

The apparent neglect of research on the implementation process compared to the actual content of interventions (Durlak, 2016) led to the implementation of the HAND:ET project and all of its nuances being given considerable attention in this book. We present the implementation of the HAND:ET system across five different countries in three interconnected chapters in which we

3 HAND:ET programme is together with supervision and monitoring a part of HAND:ET system.

examine the challenges in addressing the thin line between adaptation and fidelity in experimental intervention designs. In the section on implementation, the realisation of the HAND:ET system in the five countries is presented from several intertwining perspectives. First, in Chapter 4 *Oskarsson* and *Gøtzsche* focus on those delivering the HAND:ET system, namely, the trainers. Noting that trainers are vital for transforming the ideas from theory into the reality of schools, the process of supporting the trainers in five countries called Train-the-Trainers is described in detail along with their impressions while implementing the HAND:ET system in the countries. Chapter 5 by *Fredericks, Odescalchi, Fasching, Söllradl, Williere, Gasteiger-Klicpera* and *Paleczek* continues with a report on implementation of the timeline, process and framework in the participating countries, impressions and feedback from the partners, trainers and participants, and the lessons arising from the results of the quality assurance visits. The section rounds off with Chapter 6 by *Odescalchi, Fredericks, Riedner, Gasteiger-Klicpera* and *Paleczek* concentrating on the internal evaluation; that is, a comprehensive overview of the quality assurance processes and how they supported the HAND:ET implementation and outcomes. The chapter outlines the risks the project team identified along with strategies to deal with them.

In the evaluation section, the evaluation strategy and assessment development as a way for realising the external evaluation of HAND:ET's effectiveness across the countries is presented over three chapters. First, in Chapter 7 *Roczen, Rožman, Delgado-Osorio* and *Hartig* describe the evaluation strategy, including the use of self-report questionnaires and focus group interviews. A detailed list of all the self-report measures and their psychometric characteristics is provided as well. In Chapter 8 by *Rožman, Roczen* and *Hartig,* the authors focus on the findings of the quantitative evaluation to analyse whether the HAND:ET system had the expected effects on SEDA competencies by comparing the experimental groups with the control group in the pre and post measurements. Then, in Chapter 9, *Roczen, Rožman, Delgado-Osorio, Nguyen* and *Hartig* follow with the findings of the qualitative evaluation by analysing data from focus group interviews along with open-ended and closed questions in the post-test evaluation questionnaire. Together, all three chapters provide a multi-method, multi-perspective evaluation of the HAND:ET system.

The book concludes with the policy in focus. In Chapter 10, *Štremfel* explores how the HAND:ET project lays out policy-oriented research evidence to better understand the individual, school and system-level factors needed to help teachers develop stronger SEDA competencies. It does this by: (i) positioning the project in existing educational priorities with regard to teachers and their well-being on the EU level and in the national policies of the participating countries; (ii) describing how the project addresses the contemporary EU policy problems of the teacher profession; and (iii) listing possible policy recommen-

dations with a view to ensuring that the HAND:ET experimentation results are applied on the systemic level of the EU and the participating countries.

The Future in Focus

A quote by Mattson (2019) *"The classroom today is the society tomorrow"* has guided our core mission and provided us with an answer to *why* we, as a group of researchers, practitioners and policymakers across 11 institutions and 7 countries, have devoted 3 years of our time to support teachers in creating classrooms of tomorrow. Since teaching is an extremely social and emotional process where diversity, if recognised, is embraced at every step, we believe that giving support for teachers (and students) to develop SEDA competencies is the key to not simply shaping the positive relationships of living and learning together in classrooms but also in living and learning together in society. We believe that once SEDA competencies are supported, a positive switch can occur on the individual teacher, classroom, school and society level. This explains why we believe that this is only a beginning, a small step in the direction of *a better society of tomorrow*. We invite you to explore new opportunities and ideas that may arise as you delve deeper into this project and, in particular, into the book.

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Conceptualisation

Chapter 1
Conceptual Framework of the Project HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers

Ana Kozina[1] *& Tina Vršnik Perše*[1, 2]

Abstract

This chapter explores three key areas. The first one centres on the significance of social and emotional competencies along with diversity awareness (SEDA) for teachers. SEDA competencies play an important role in teachers' personal and professional development, promoting their growth and fostering students' progress in these areas. The second area provides an overview of the project HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Across Europe to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity-Related Career Challenges ("HAND:ET"). This project seeks to support teachers in developing SEDA competencies, equipping them to navigate the complexities of their daily work in ever more diverse classrooms and adapt to new challenges. The third area delves into the core concepts of the HAND:ET project, their interconnectedness, and the anticipated outcomes. The central elements of the HAND:ET project follow the complexity of educational processes within classrooms and schools and can be grouped into core concepts, tools and outcomes. The main concepts encompass social and emotional competencies (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making) as well as diversity awareness. These concepts are delivered through the tools of mindfulness, empathic curiosity, and reflection. The outcomes directly expected are teachers possessing enhanced SEDA competencies, with indirect effects expected to include positive relationships within classrooms and schools.

Keywords: HAND:ET Project, Teachers, Social and Emotional Competencies, Diversity Awareness, Core Concepts

Given that teachers are central to addressing a key challenge for schools in the 21st century, namely, to serve different students with a variety of abilities, motivations and backgrounds to succeed both at school and later on in life, the HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Across Europe to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity-Related Career Challenges ("HAND:ET") project places the well-being of teachers at the centre. This is accomplished by highlighting how developing social and emotional competencies as well as diversity awareness (SEDA) simultaneously fosters well-being for teachers and helps to build positive relationships in classrooms and schools.

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On the Importance of Social, Emotional and Diversity Awareness Competencies for Teachers' Professional Development

Teachers with a high level of SEDA have shown positive outcomes with respect to their well-being, their relationships with others, e.g., students and other teachers, and to have a wide range of educational and social impacts. Social and emotional competencies (SE) and diversity awareness (DA) are, as evident in the literature (for more, see Chapter 2), not often been addressed together. However, in the HAND:ET project we argue that they can and need to be supported simultaneously as they both contribute to teachers' and students' well-being, as well as to a positive classroom and school climate.

First, teachers' SE competencies strongly impact their personal and professional development. They have been defined as the effective combination of skills that allows teachers in the educational context to function in social and emotional, intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences assertively (Lozano-Peña et al., 2021). Studies regarding what constitutes high-quality teacher preparation and professional development have sought to determine which courses and experiences provide teachers with the skills, dispositions and knowledge they need to foster the success of all their students. The importance of teachers' SE competencies has recently been emphasised (Aldrup et al., 2022; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Further, one can argue that teachers' SE competencies are an important factor for improving educational quality since they affect the classroom, the teacher, and the student level as crucial stakeholders of the educational process (Conroy et al., 2019). On the classroom level, Dung and Zsolnai (2022) claim that the development of SE competencies is essential for teachers' improvement to effectively manage unplanned or challenging situations in the classroom and promote positive teacher–student relationships. SE competencies empower teachers to navigate professional challenges like student misbehaviour, disengagement, and learning difficulties, while fostering positive teacher–student relationships. This, in turn, enhances teachers' well-being and supports positive student development (Aldrup et al., 2020). The development of SE competencies gives teachers the ability to regulate their emotions, making them stronger in terms of decision-making in daily situations in the teaching environments. Through the support for the development of emotional competencies, levels of stress and anxiety are reduced, which thus decreases the feeling of frustration before they are professionally applied, which leads to improved teaching practices, and the well-being of teachers (Puertas Molero et al., 2019). Therefore, recommendations have been introduced to develop SE competencies with the professional development of teachers, along with the clear support of school leadership (Lozano-Peña et al., 2021). Evidence has been presented showing that: (1) the development of SE competencies should be systematically included in teachers' pre-service education (Corcoran & O'Flaherty,

2022); (2) the in-service SE programmes should be constantly available to the teachers (Murano et al. 2019); and (3) multilevel interventions should be developed to enable joint work between teacher training entities and school communities to develop and assess SE competencies for both in-service and preservice teachers (Corcoran et al., 2018).

Second, SE competencies are also considered to be firmly interconnected with the DA (Müller et al., 2020) since they both involve components of empathy, effective communication, conflict resolution, cultural responsiveness, bias awareness, relationship-building, and resilience. Together, they enable teachers to create inclusive, supportive, and culturally responsive classrooms, benefiting students from diverse backgrounds. This means the importance of DA for teachers' development is more of an upgrade to the importance of the SE competencies than anything else. Much like the importance of developing teachers' SE competencies, the development of teachers' DA is also considered crucial. This permits teachers to adeptly address the expanding diversity of students in their classrooms and should be an integral component of teachers' competencies for implementing inclusive teaching practices (EASNIE, 2015). DA is valuable for teachers' development not only in order to enable them to transfer this competency and knowledge to students, but also to gain and increase general cultural awareness, while also combating prejudice and building respect for diversity (Banks, 2007). Similarly, as with the need for SE competencies support, contents on the development of teachers' DA must be introduced during the pre-service and in-service programmes (Romijn et al., 2021) and, as Jeder (2022) emphasises, should be focused on knowledge, skills, attitudes, and ethical values. The HAND:ET project is an attempt to foster both SE and DA in teachers to support them in their central position in creating more supportive and inclusive classrooms (and schools).

HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Across Europe to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity-Related Career Challenges – Erasmus K3 Policy Experimentation Project

The HAND:ET project is a policy experimentation project bringing 11 partners from 7 countries together: the Educational Research Institute, Slovenia (ERI), Mid Sweden University, Sweden (MIUN), Aarhus University, Denmark (AU), Institute for Social Research – Zagreb, Croatia (ISRZ), University of Graz, Austria (Uni Graz), Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal (ULisboa), Leibniz Institute for Research and Information in Education, Germany (DIPF), Ministry of Education, Slovenia (MES), Ministry of Science and Education, Croatia (MSE), Board of Education of Styria, Austria (BES), and Network of Education Policy Centers

(NEPC). The experiment is led by the ERI and a delegation of public authorities in all countries conducting the field trial experiment (Slovenia, Croatia, Sweden, Austria, Portugal) with knowledge-based support from AU (Denmark) and MIUN (Sweden). The project's innovative approach is closely aligned with the state of the art and supported by empirical data in the field, ensuring its relevance and potential for ground-breaking advancements. It has been subject to strict evaluation procedures and assessment development by DIPF (for more, see Chapters 7, 8 and 9). The NEPC network has broadened the dissemination and communication process while together with the MSE and BES the MES has contributed to the effective exploitation and upscaling of its results (for more, see Chapter 10). For overall quality assurance, the University of Graz (Austria) has carefully monitored all the procedures and outputs according to the project timeframe (for more, see Chapter 6). The HAND:ET project, 2021–2024, builds on the lessons learned and insights arising from the HAND in HAND: Social and Emotional Skills for Tolerant and Non-discriminative Societies ("HAND"), 2017–2020, project.

As a solid policy experiment, the HAND:ET project aims to provide policy-oriented research evidence to better understand the individual, school and system-level factors needed to support the enhancement of teachers' SEDA competencies as key factors for supporting and navigating teachers' professional careers. Accordingly, the HAND:ET project seeks to importantly contribute to the formation of a comprehensive EU teacher policy, spanning all stages of their professional careers. The project focuses on in-service teachers by supporting their development of SEDA competencies to empower them to deal with the complexity of everyday working life with ever more diverse classrooms and enable them to deal flexibly with new challenges by offering the HAND:ET programme as a set of innovative participatory activities and learning experiences that – together with regular/continuous supervision, monitoring and support – form the HAND:ET system (see Figure 1).

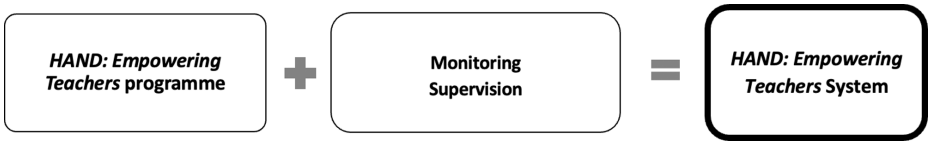

Figure 1: The HAND:ET system: whole-school-whole-year support system

The HAND:ET project hypothesises that the professional development programme to empower teachers in an innovative holistic HAND:ET system will lead to an improvement of teachers' SEDA competencies. This HAND:ET system represents an innovative solution that equips teachers to help them navigate the challenges of their day-to-day work in ever more diverse classrooms, with a simultaneous focus on highlighting the importance of teachers' well-

being and self-care. By innovatively integrating the DA with the SE competencies, the HAND:ET programme provides teachers with competencies to meet the challenges of teaching in diverse societies, preventing them from leaving the profession too early, empowering them to monitor and plan their career and supporting their own well-being as well as that of their students. The innovation of the HAND:ET system lies in five elements: (1) the content, by bringing together and interconnecting SE competencies and DA; (2) the process: ongoing support in the form of supervision and monitoring; (3) the form: the process spanning the entire school year; (4) the participatory development: the participants are actively involved in developing the programme and system; and (5) the whole-team approach: apart from teachers at the same school, principals and school counsellors are involved in the HAND:ET system with a shorter version of the HAND:ET programme.

The project's timeline followed three stages: conceptualisation, the field trial experiment, and evaluation. In the conceptualisation phase, the core concepts, the HAND:ET programme, and the assessment (selection of suitable measures) were developed. Attention was paid to ensuring the alignment of all three. Development of the core concepts was the result of two processes: a) research team expertise (as summarised in this chapter); and b) literature reviews (for more, see Chapter 2). The development of the HAND:ET programme (activities to support the SEDA competencies in school staff) was intertwined with a Train-the-Trainers process. This was training to prepare the trainers to deliver the HAND:ET programme to the school staff. It supported trainers' SEDA competencies and clarified details about the implementation process (see Chapter 4). The assessment concentrated on a comprehensive overview of existing SEDA measures and a careful selection of those covering the core concept addressed by the HAND:ET system (see Chapter 7). All three processes in the conceptualisation phase supported the creation of the HAND:ET system that was tested in the field trial experiments. In the mentioned experiments, all countries implementing them (Austria, Croatia, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden) invited schools to participate. The schools participating in the experiment were randomly allocated to either the experimental or the control group. Central to the experiment's design, schools had to agree on their participation in either condition (experimental or control). This design enables us to test the effectiveness of the HAND:ET system in promoting SEDA competencies. Namely, to compare the changes in the same competencies from before implementing the HAND:ET system (pre-test) to after implementing the system (post-test) in a group of teachers (and other school staff) who took part in the experiment (experimental group) with a group of teachers (and other school staff) who did not participate (the control group). In the last (evaluation) stage, the project is focussed on the evaluation on one hand and the development of policy guidelines on the other (see Figure 2).

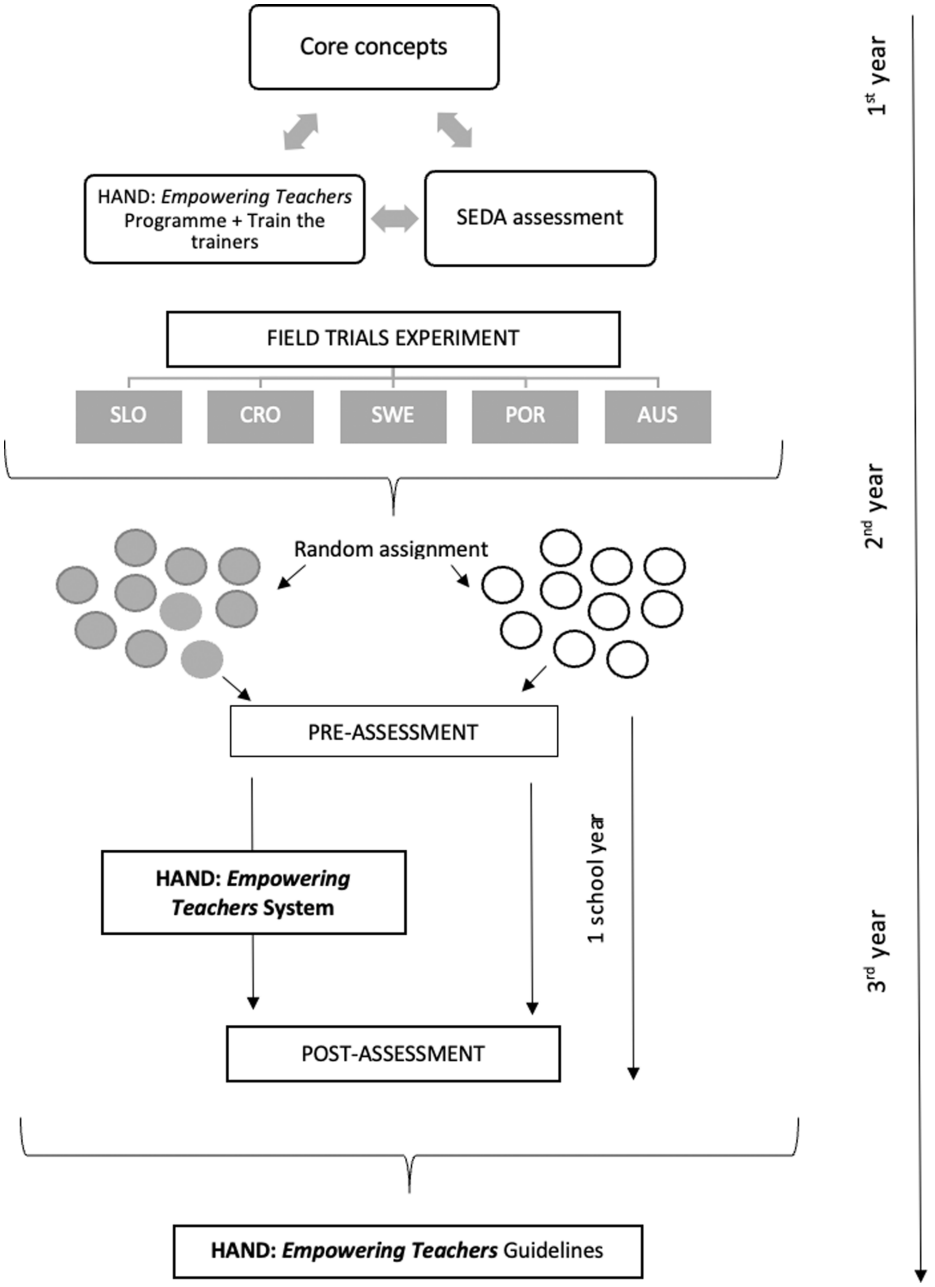

Figure 2: HAND:ET experimental design

Based on its solid policy experimentation results, the project intends to provide European Union (EU) and country-specific recommendations addressing contemporary structural problems of the teaching profession in an evidence-based way (for more, see Chapter 10).

Conceptual Framework of the HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Across Europe to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity-Related Career Challenges Project

The fundamental elements of the HAND:ET project are based on the complexity of educational, social and emotional processes in classrooms and schools, and may be grouped into: (i) the core concepts; (ii) tools; and (iii) outcomes. As the conceptual framework of the HAND:ET project builds upon the HAND project, the initial idea of the latter was revisited and upgraded with further conceptual exploration undertaken by the whole project group.

The Core Concepts

The core concepts of the HAND:ET project are teachers' SE competencies as well as DA.

Social and Emotional Competencies

The backbone of the conceptual framework is provided by the CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2003) definition of social and emotional learning. Social and emotional learning encompasses the processes through which individuals attain and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to identify and manage their emotions, understand others' perspectives and show empathy to others, set and achieve positive goals, develop and sustain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2003). Defined as five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective and behavioural competencies, SE competencies are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The first two competencies are referred to as emotional competencies and the last three as social competencies (Lawlor, 2016). Based on the understanding of social and emotional processes and their contextual embeddedness from the experiences of the HAND project (Kozina, 2020), the definitions in the HAND:ET project were upgraded to:

Self-awareness is the ability to recognise one's emotions, bodily sensations and thoughts and their influence on how we respond. This includes having a sober, accepting/recognising way of looking at oneself; and the will and continuing wish to work on establishing all of it. Self-awareness is reflected in being present in your body, thoughts and feelings in a non-judgmental manner, e.g., being mindful.

Self-management is the ability to regulate one's emotions, bodily sensations, and thoughts and their influence on how we react. As stated, one must first be self-aware and aware of the connection between how we are and how we feel, and with how we react, before these very domains can be regulated (Galla et al., 2012; Greco et al., 2011).

Social awareness is the ability to take on the perspective of and to have empathy and compassion for others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand, accept and recognise social and ethical norms of behaviour, to be aware of cultural synergies overcoming the self/other binary and making space for different points of view, also recognising the influence and importance of the family, school and community.

Relationship skills are the ability to establish and maintain constructive relationships and the will to persist, even when it seems impossible to maintain them. It is important to stress the will to persist because these skills are especially challenged and needed in difficult times. This includes the ability to accept personal and social responsibility and go into a relationship with personal presence, aware that in a constructive relationship individuals need to establish a synergy between taking care of their integrity and taking care of the group (Juul & Jensen, 2002). Since the project targets teachers in their hierarchical relationship with students, the concept of relational competencies was included. Relational competencies are defined as professionals' ability to 'see' the individual child on its own terms and attune their (teachers') behaviour accordingly without giving up leadership, as well as the ability to be authentic in their (teachers') contact with the student. They are also defined as professionals' ability and will to take full responsibility for the quality of the relationship (Juul & Jensen, 2002).

Responsible decision-making is the ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behaviour and social interactions based on a consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, a realistic evaluation of the consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2003). In addition, both the HAND and the HAND:ET projects emphasise the importance of the knowledge of social groups and their products and practices beyond self/other, and knowledge about asymmetrical and global cultural processes (e.g., unequal positions).

It is also vital to comprehend and excel in all of the aforementioned areas in the context of DA.

Diversity Awareness

DA was conceptualised in the HAND:ET project in line with the concepts of intersectionality, critical consciousness and social justice. DA in this sense is the first and a necessary step towards social justice.

As a multidimensional competence, DA encompasses cognition, affect and behaviour. It assumes a combination of the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to prepare teachers and students to live in socio-culturally diverse societies (Auernheimer, 2003; Pikić-Jugović et al., 2023). It can be defined as a person's acknowledgment of culture and social context variables (socially constructed variables) like class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, and religion (Mosley-Howard et al., 2011) and the role they play in lives with regard to opportunities and life outcomes (Fraser, 1997). In the HAND:ET project, DA has been conceptualised together with critical consciousness as competencies that can be learned and can hold transformative potential for social justice in education. More specifically, diversity and equality as two principles of social justice are reflected in two competencies of teachers – DA and critical consciousness – that lead to social justice in schools (Pikić-Jugović et al., 2023).

In addition to DA, *intersectionality* has been emphasised. The educational process is considered a context in which inequalities or differences based on various factors often surface. These factors represent various social categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, but it is most often a matter of explaining differences based on a single factor alone. Intersectionality, on the other hand, takes a different approach, arguing that the different life chances of individuals are collectively influenced by multiple social categories, which are therefore co-constituted and interrelated. The multiple interconnectedness of different traits or social categories allows people to hold multiple identities at once. These can further help or hinder us in terms of creating life opportunities (Mladenović, 2016). Intersectionality also shows how the interplay and interaction of identity dimensions creates specific forms of discrimination that are overlooked (Crenshaw, 1991). This allows us to understand real inequalities in greater depth and not just as individual experiences. It is not enough to justify differences based on three basic potential sources of (non)power – race, class and gender – because there are many different combinations of sources of (non)power. For example, gender does not exist by itself, but always interacts with other dimensions and only in this way creates a certain identity of an individual (Mladenović, 2016). The aim of the activities in the HAND:ET project was for

the teachers to become aware of the differences reflected in various positions in relation to social power in classrooms, in schools and in society as a whole.

The Interconnectedness of the Core Concepts

In the HAND:ET project, a further step was taken while discussing the interconnectedness of the core concepts, with particular focus being paid to the interconnectedness of SE competencies and DA. This step was made based solely on theoretical considerations and project group discussion and has not (yet) been tested empirically. Our understanding of the core concepts and their interconnectedness rests on two premises:

a) Hierarchical structure with self-awareness as a starting point: Self-awareness at the same time fuels social awareness and self-management. Further, self-management and social awareness together lead to relationship skills. In turn, social awareness and relationship skills together lead to DA. Finally, DA leads to responsible decision-making. In short, self-awareness and self-management are a starting point that leads to DA (and responsible decision-making) via social awareness and relationship skills. Emotional competencies, self-awareness and self-management are also recognised in the literature as a foundation for social competencies, social-awareness and relationship skills (Lawlor, 2016). Moreover, from a practical point of view, activities that promote self-awareness, e.g., sustained attention, also benefit self-management (Lawlor, 2016).
b) The two dimensional structure with SE competencies on one level (practical consciousness, classroom level) and DA (associated with the processes of identity and intersectionality, out of classroom level) being on a higher level of reflectivity. This also means that SE competencies (the first level) are a prerequisite for DA (the second level). We can also label the two levels as levels of awareness: self-awareness, social awareness, DA (what) and the level of behaving: relationship skills, responsible decision-making (how).

The two premises fed the two integration models developed by the HAND:ET project group, one conceptual model (based on the first premise) and one process model (based on the second premise). The conceptual model represents the interconnectedness of emotional competencies (a starting point), social competencies (as a mediator) and DA in such a way that progress in any of these triggers progress in the other two. The process model divides the level of awareness (what) and the level of acting (how). The overall goal or an output is responsible decision-making and subsequently social justice.

The Tools

Through the conceptualisation process aligned with development of the HAND:ET programme, three central tools have been identified: mindfulness, empathic curiosity, and reflection. These tools are used to support the above-mentioned core concepts.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is unbiased present-centred awareness accompanied by states of clarity and compassion (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Maloney et al., 2016). It incorporates self-awareness with a core characteristic of being open, receptive and non-judgmental (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Brown & Ryan, 2003). Mindfulness practices are hence in line with the processes of social and emotional learning and teaching in schools (Lawlor, 2016). A state of mindfulness can be cultivated by practising moment-to-moment awareness of objects, body sensations and emotions, and accepting them as they are, without judging or trying to change them (Maloney et al., 2016). Mindfulness techniques most frequently focus on the awareness of breathing or physical sensations in the body (e.g., body scan), 'inner' or meditation-based exercises, and sometimes on greater awareness of the body in movement (e.g., yoga, walking meditation) (Kabat-Zinn, 1990), 'body' or yoga-based exercises. There are documented benefits of mindfulness for one's own well-being as well as for relationships with others (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

In the HAND:ET project, we are focused on the role mindfulness plays in teaching, more specifically, mindfulness as the ability of a teacher to focus and stabilise awareness of the present moment and to be aware of their patterns of behaviour and reactions while under pressure. It can be understood as a tool for: a) fostering SE competencies on one side; and b) DA on the other.

Mindfulness and SE competencies

Greenberg (2014) proposed a conceptual framework concerning how mindfulness can promote the development of SE competencies in the following way. Self-awareness involves understanding the nature of the mind, especially its transient quality, focusing attention, and establishing mental space to delve into present-moment emotions, values and motivation. Self-management encompasses emotional regulation where the acceptance of negative emotions promotes reflective rather than reactive emotional control, alongside inhibitory control and the purposeful deployment of attention to achieve goals. Social awareness entails empathy and compassion since focusing attention not only attunes oneself but also extends to others, creating the necessary conditions for adopting the perspective of others. Relationship skills cover a sequence

of mindful listening, thoughtful dialogue, and effective conflict management. Responsible decision-making involves presenting facts objectively, devoid of judgment, and making ethical choices rooted in awareness and compassion. Mindfulness disengages individuals from automatic thoughts, habits and unhealthy behaviours and can thus play a significant role in fostering self-determined behaviour regulation. In addition, it directly contributes to well-being and satisfaction by the higher quality or moment-to-moment experiences.

Mindfulness and DA

Much of the work in diversity research has looked at training multiculturally competent teachers and transforming the curriculum to embody multiculturalism. Nevertheless, a gap remains between conceptual understandings of diversity and teachers' actual abilities to respond to challenging encounters with respect to diversity. One possible support mechanism available for teachers in challenging situations is mindfulness (Roeser et al., 2012). In the HAND:ET project, we have used mindfulness as a tool as well as a starting point for mindful teaching (Frank et al., 2016). Mindfulness in teaching may be described by two components: intrapersonal and interpersonal. The intrapersonal dimension of mindfulness taps mindfulness directed to one's own experience. The interpersonal dimension considers one's own awareness and behaviour towards others. More specifically, it is described as: a) listening with full awareness; b) present-centred awareness of emotions experienced by the self and others in interaction; c) openness, acceptance and receptivity to others' thoughts and feelings; d) self-regulation that includes low emotional and behavioural reactivity and low automaticity in responses to the everyday behaviour of others; and e) compassion to self and to others (Duncan et al., 2009; Frank et al., 2016). As such, the interpersonal dimension is reflected in the second tool used in the programme: empathic curiosity.

Empathic Curiosity

Empathic curiosity is underpinned by the core skills of empathetic listening and maintaining a curious attitude (McEvoy et al., 2014). As we engage in empathic curiosity, we try to actively tune into the experiences of people as they are experiencing them in the here and now. The value of this empathic curiosity may be reinforced when speaking to people about their current concerns, as they perceive them in the present flow of their thoughts, emotions, feelings and sensations (McEvoy et al., 2014). Naturally, empathic curiosity (empathy, as well as compassion to the self and to others) is supported by mindfulness (Greenberg, 2014; Sahdra et al., 2011; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015).

In the project group we have established that empathic curiosity consists of three interrelated skills: (1) to express; (2) to share; and (3) to listen. These are the three skills with which the dialogue can be trained and conducted. As such, in the HAND:ET programme empathic curiosity was practised through dialogue exercises and the practice and use of personal language. In the initial conceptual understanding of HAND:ET, empathic curiosity was described as a bridge or tool connecting emotional competencies (self-awareness, self-management) with social competencies (social awareness, relationship skills) on one hand and simultaneously representing an umbrella concept for social competencies (for social awareness, social management and diversity awareness). Nevertheless, progressing through the HAND:ET Train-the-Trainers programme we found that empathic curiosity is a tool that fosters all social and emotional competencies as well as diversity awareness since it is equally important to practise empathic curiosity toward oneself as it is towards others (see Chapter 3 for more details). The value of empathic curiosity is that it opens up spaces to support both SE competencies and DA, for the individual that experiences it (e.g., receiving it in the form of being listened to with empathy and curiosity) as well as for the one practising it (e.g., listening to the other with openness, curiosity and empathy).

Reflection, Monitoring and Supervision

A high level of reflection is not only essential for preparing teacher candidates but also for in-service teachers, enabling them to make effective instructional decisions and fostering self-awareness regarding their teaching perspectives and attitudes (Slade et al., 2019). All activities in the HAND:ET project were followed by different types of questions for reflection in order to support the development of personal language and self-awareness on one hand as well as to support social and diversity awareness in the groups on the other. While practising mindfulness and empathic curiosity, reflection was the one tool that facilitated individual change through the use of personal language. When an individual uses personal language, they speak from their own perspective, without judgment of their experience. While talking in personal language, self-awareness and self-management are supported and when being listened to while talking in personal language one feels that they are being valued more. In the safety of being accepted as you are as a talker and as a listener, a space is created in which social-awareness and relationship skills can be practised together with the practising of diversity awareness. Shapiro et al. (2019) describe personal language for the inner experience as one of the bridges between mindfulness and empathic curiosity. With teachers broadening personal language through their own experience, they model the use in the interpersonal relationship (with either students or colleagues). In this sense, the personal

experience (and supervision process) of the trainer (and teachers) is crucial (for more, see Chapter 4). The importance of reflection is also highlighted in research on obstacles to the successful development of DA among teachers (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). For example, with regard to practising DA, teachers report feeling shame or guilt over past (non-personal) oppressions or injustice or even denying that problems exist with inequality/race/marginalisation in society (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). The use of reflection and personal language can create a bridge in initially identifying these feelings along with by being approached by others with empathy while expressing them. Reflection was also used in the monitoring/supervision process and formed an important part of the HAND:ET system in terms of helping the trainers/teachers to recognise the prejudices, preconceptions and behavioural patterns that become activated while under pressure.

The Expected Outcomes

Developing teachers' SEDA competencies has proven to be important for both the teachers themselves and those with whom they are in close contact. Several theoretical models address the interconnectedness of the processes in schools with a focus on the change in teachers, such as the Prosocial classroom model of Jennings and Greenberg (2009), the Theory of change model of Roeser et al. (2012) or the Harvey and Evans model (Harvey et al., 2012). All three models provide a theoretical foundation for our hypothesis in the HAND:ET project.

The Prosocial classroom model (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009) connects teachers' SE competencies and outcomes on the classroom and student levels and therefore is an overarching model. The model also explains how teachers' SE competencies are important for their well-being and the well-being of their students. Research shows that when teachers have developed their SE competencies, they are better at implementing social and emotional learning in classrooms (Jones et al. 2013). How teachers develop their SE competencies is explained further on in the theory of change model.

While the Prosocial classroom model deals with a broader process of social and emotional learning and teaching, Roeser and colleagues (2012), for instance, underscore the role of mindfulness training in teachers' professional development in their Theory of change model. Here it is suggested that mindfulness training, when high in quality and characterised by teacher engagement, triggers teachers' skills, such as emotional regulation, mindfulness and self-compassion, that subsequently cause increases in their own well-being and, in turn, more positive and constructive processes in the classroom, e.g., classroom organisation, emotional support. This makes the model particularly relevant for the HAND:ET project. The Roeser model is supported by research revealing

that mindfulness training shows an improvement in mindfulness and a reduction in stress and burnout (Benn et al., 2012; Dave et al., 2020; Jennings et al., 2017; Roeser et al., 2013), as well as an improvement in teachers' competencies (Roeser et al., 2013). Self-awareness and self-management are the starting point for coping with and responding to stress (Powell & Enright, 2015). The processes that lead to stress reduction are: a) lowered stress reactivity by cultivating self-regulatory processes and coping mechanisms; and b) non-judgement and compassion in stressful situations (Roeser, 2016).

A step further (and beyond the scope of the HAND:ET project) is made in research tracking the effects of teachers' mindfulness training on students' outcomes showing an improvement in the emotional and behavioural regulation of students (Singh et al., 2013). The latter is reflected in the Harvey and Evans model that connects teachers' SE competencies with emotional benefits for students (Harvey et al., 2012). The model connects two intrapersonal emotional competencies (emotional awareness and emotional beliefs) and two interpersonal emotional competencies (emotional management, emotional guidelines) into emotional relationships and views emotional relationships in the classroom are vital for students' emotional development.

Building on the conceptualisations and the theoretical models, the expected outcomes of the HAND:ET project and programme are enhanced SEDA competencies of teachers and their well-being on the assumption that this will also be reflected in their classroom and in their relationships with students. Even though the student outcomes were not a focus of the HAND:ET project, we assume that by supporting teachers to develop SEDA competencies for students this means being in an inclusive classroom, being heard, and being able to express being in better relationships with teachers and with each other.

Conclusion

The need to support teachers is growing every day as the shortage of teachers becomes an acute problem across Europe. One reason that teachers are leaving the profession is increased levels of stress and burnout (Madigan & Kim, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011; Wang et al., 2015). Stress influences processes crucial for successful teaching and learning, such as attention (MacKenzie et al., 2007), decision-making (Shanafelt et al., 2003) and the quality of relationships (Durtschi et al., 2017). The increase in reported emotional difficulties shown in increased levels of stress and burnout in teachers across Europe (Roeser et al., 2012) adds to the importance of a conceptual understanding of the underlying processes as well as mechanisms to support teachers' well-being. SEDA competencies provide an obvious answer. The promotion of SEDA competencies through a curious attitude, combined with mindful attention, leads to

better adaptation and psychological flexibility (Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010) and consequently builds feelings of connection, mutuality and trust for all involved (Bruneau, 1989). In addition, the majority of research in social and emotional learning has concentrated on students and less on teachers, despite research showing that students' SE competencies are significantly associated with teachers' SE competencies (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009) and that better student–teacher relationships are possible when teachers possess stronger SE competencies (Frank et al., 2013; Jennings et al., 2017). Further, teaching within a multicultural setting calls for teachers to maintain an elevated level of DA. In the HAND:ET project, our mission is to showcase how both SE and DA in teachers can be supported across Europe in a joint mission of seven countries, all with the wish for this type of SEDA support to become a reality for all teachers in all classrooms and all schools in Europe (and globally).

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Chapter 2

"Why Didn't Anyone Tell us this Before?!" Integrating Social, Emotional and Diversity Awareness Competencies into Teacher Professional Development

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Abstract

Greater diversity in the classroom and different sources of threat to students' and teachers' well-being have made the teaching profession even more demanding. To support teachers in meeting their everyday responsibilities, without detriment to themselves, their students or their colleagues, it is important to provide teachers with competencies with regard to how to deal with social, emotional and diversity-related career challenges. Today's teacher professional development should by no means neglect the topics of well-being and diversity. Thus, in this chapter we focus on teachers' social, emotional and diversity awareness competencies and the possibilities for improving them through teacher professional development. More specifically, we outline the baseline theory on social and emotional competencies, diversity awareness and related concepts, with emphasis put on the importance of these competencies in the educational context. We also summarise the evidence on the benefits of teacher professional development that integrates social, emotional and diversity awareness competencies. In the conclusion, we briefly point out the theory- and evidence-based features of the programme developed within the project HAND in HAND: Empowering teachers across Europe to deal with social, emotional and diversity-related career challenges ("HAND:ET").

Keywords: Teachers, Teacher Professional Development, Social and Emotional Competencies, Well-Being, Diversity Awareness, Critical Consciousness

Introduction

It was somewhat unsettling to hear a Swedish teacher, who was very eager to use almost every opportunity for professional development in her 30-year-long career, to demonstratively declare "Why didn't anyone tell us this before?!" in

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one of the HAND:ET training's evaluation sessions. Even in educational contexts that offer a wide array of teacher professional development programmes, trainings tailored to foster social, emotional and diversity awareness competencies of teachers seem to be rare, resulting in teachers' feelings of reluctance and lack of support for their own and their students' social and emotional learning (see, e.g., Buchanan et al., 2009; Collie et al., 2011).

Teachers are strong advocates of introducing social and emotional learning in schools. They believe that social and emotional competencies can be taught, and see them as related to many positive outcomes like the school attendance, good academic results, graduation success, workforce readiness and citizenship skills of students (Bridgeland et al., 2013).

Nevertheless, teachers are not born as role models for the social and emotional learning of their students, nor are they naturally equipped with full capacity to handle the social, emotional and diversity-related challenges that often appear before them (Jones et al., 2013; Oliveira et al., 2021a). Their competencies, just like everyone else's, can and should be fostered through continuing efforts in diverse settings, whether specific interventions or everyday school encounters (Jones et al., 2013; Rodriguez et al., 2020). Considerable stress in the teaching profession stems from the social and emotional domains (Oliveira et al., 2021b); for example, when teachers have to handle disruptive student behaviours or when they strive to maintain a positive relationship with a student, a parent or a colleague with whom they previously had a conflict. Social and emotional competencies also play an important role in teachers' ability to adequately respond to challenges to social justice in today's diversified societies. In order to promote social justice via their teaching, teachers are presupposed to possess awareness, understanding and, ideally, appreciation for the diversity in their classrooms.

In this chapter, we outline the baseline theory and evidence behind the social, emotional and diversity awareness (SEDA) competencies. We describe the core concepts of teachers' social and emotional competencies, and teachers' diversity awareness competencies, as envisaged within the HAND:ET project. In addition, we look into the benefits of teacher professional development that integrates SEDA competencies.

Teachers' Social and Emotional Competencies

There is abundant evidence and recognition of the importance of social and emotional learning in schools (e.g., Cavioni et al., 2020; EU, 2017; Odak et al., 2023; OECD, 2019a). Practitioners, researchers and policymakers view it as a building block of students' development in several domains (Domitrovich et al., 2017; Greenberg et al., 2017). However, alongside students' social and emotional

learning, any discussion of social and emotional learning in schools should also take account of the quality of the learning context and teachers' social and emotional learning (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), one of the most prominent actors in the field, defines social and emotional learning as the process through which a person acquires and applies the knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to develop healthy identities, manage emotions, pursue goals, feel empathy, form supportive relationships and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2020a; 2020b). The CASEL model consists of five interconnected areas of social and emotional (SE) competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020b; see the previous chapter for more details of each competency). Relying on the CASEL conceptualisation, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) described teachers who possess high SE competencies as self-aware, successful in recognising their own emotions, and able to use them positively to encourage others to learn. At the same time, such teachers are realistic while judging their own capacities, strengths and weaknesses. They can manage their emotions and behaviours in a way that ensures a positive classroom climate, even in difficult situations. Further, teachers with high SE competencies are socially aware, empathetic, eager to establish and maintain quality relationships, and care about how their decisions can affect the well-being of others. They are also mindful about other people's perspectives, particularly when they are different from their own (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). The above-mentioned competencies of a SE competent teacher also hold great significance for teachers' intercultural communication and the quality of support that teachers are able to provide to diverse students. Along these lines, Jagers et al. (2019) further expanded the CASEL definition of SE competencies, introducing transformative SE competencies that can address inequities and promote social justice. These are closely related to teachers' diversity awareness competencies, as described in the next section of this chapter. Finally, the domain of teachers' SE competencies is also closely connected to more generic constructs, such as teachers' empathy or broader-level self-efficacy beliefs (Cooper, 2004).

Recently, the issue of teacher well-being and related phenomena (e.g., teacher enthusiasm, on the positive side, and teacher burnout, on the negative side) has gained more prominence in policy documents and the scientific community. As we elaborate in more detail in a related paper (Odak et al., 2023), teacher well-being has been recognised as a critical factor affecting teachers' work motivation and the quality of their teaching (European Commission, 2021), as well as a key element of the whole-school approach to the promotion of mental health (Cavioni et al., 2020). Challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic also brought this issue to the top of schools' priorities, making school

leaders especially sensitive to the need for teacher professional development in this area. Yet, as illustrated by our opening example, the offer of teacher professional development programmes seems to be lagging behind in many countries. Most interventions focusing on social and emotional learning are intended for students, while teachers usually receive little training for supporting students' social and emotional development, and little or no training for developing their own SE competencies (Jones et al., 2013). A recent qualitative study revealed that teachers themselves can neglect their own development in the social and emotional domain and focus on their students' respective development instead (Rodriguez et al., 2020). However, teachers' commitment to professional development in the social and emotional domain appears to be a critical factor in the effective implementation of related programmes in schools (Brackett et al., 2012). Hence, in order to support students' social and emotional development, further social and emotional growth of teachers must be encouraged and supported. Greater insight into teachers' perception of the policy support for developing SEDA competencies across the HAND:ET countries can be found in the last chapter of this volume.

As demands on the teacher profession grow (Admiraal & Kittelsen Røberg, 2023), overlooking teachers' social and emotional learning can produce unfavourable outcomes in both the professional and personal lives of teachers, e.g., stress (Collie et al., 2012), burnout (Oliveira et al., 2021b) and poor job satisfaction (Vršnik Perše et al., 2020). Recently, a meta-analysis by Oliveira et al. (2021b) revealed promising results of the social and emotional learning interventions with teachers, especially in reducing their psychological distress and increasing well-being. Along these lines, Collie et al. (2011; 2012) found that the support and promotion of social and emotional learning in schools, as well as its regular implementation in the classroom, are related to greater teacher commitment, teaching efficacy and job satisfaction, and lower stress regarding students' behaviour and discipline. This can be substantial for beginning teachers who are prone to epistemological challenges and emotional exhaustion (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019) and whose SE competencies have been found to be important determinants of early-career adaptation and occupational well-being (Carstensen & Klusmann, 2021). In an era of high teacher attrition across educational contexts, any path warranting teachers' decision to stay in the profession should be systemically supported.

Teachers' Diversity Awareness Competencies

In this section, we focus on teachers' diversity awareness (DA) and related constructs that provide the basis for teachers' advancement of social justice in schools. The social justice dimension is underlined as an important aspect

of teaching (Pikić Jugović et al., 2023). According to Bell (2016), social justice in education should enable students to develop critical analytical tools that are crucial for understanding the structural features of oppression and considering their own socialisation within related systems. As we argue in greater detail in our previous paper on teachers' DA (Pikić Jugović et al., 2023), inequality and diversity are two inseparable dimensions of social justice. Acknowledging inequality is a necessary precondition for an effective approach to the issue of diversity and vice versa (Fraser, 1997). Although the diversity and inequality aspects of social justice cannot be considered in mutual isolation, their focus is notably different. While the diversity dimension aims at gaining genuine knowledge and respect for all and especially for marginalised social groups, the focus of the inequality dimension is on understanding the practices (both individual and institutional) that structure social relations unequally, as well as the willingness to act against practices that generate inequalities (Bell, 2016).

Understanding inequality and diversity may lead to teachers and students being committed to support social justice in schools and society. Such transformative potential could be achieved by developing teachers' diversity awareness (focusing on diversity) and the related competency of critical consciousness (focusing on inequality; Pikić Jugović et al., 2023). DA assumes one's acknowledgement of culture and social context variables, such as class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, and religion (Mosley-Howard et al., 2011), as well as an understanding of how these variables are connected to different educational outcomes. The development of DA includes factors like intercultural connection and interaction, the value and appreciation of others, general knowledge and learning, and the acceptance of a social justice ethos (Mosley-Howard et al., 2011). Moreover, the adoption of DA implies a critical perspective that permits teachers to understand culture in relation to differences in power and social status (Jugović et al., 2020). The critical perspective is also essential for the development of critical consciousness, a concept that leads teachers and students to question common assumptions and taken-for-granted ideologies (Leal, 2021). Along these lines, Freire (2005) points to the need to understand the social, political and economic contradictions, as well as to implement changes against oppressive tendencies in society. The development of critical consciousness encourages teachers to reflect on social, economic, cultural and political processes within a social justice framework and to address the importance of these processes for their own and their students' lives (Leal, 2021). From this perspective, teachers need to adopt a commitment to anti-discriminatory practices towards different groups of students, while also developing understanding of how social inequalities become embodied within the school setting (Achilleos et al., 2021; Ek et al., 2013).

The social justice dimension of education largely depends on how teachers perceive and react to diversity (the primary focus of diversity awareness)

and inequality (the primary focus of critical consciousness) in their classrooms (Pikić Jugović et al., 2023). One example of this is the fact that teachers hold different expectations of students depending on their socio-cultural background. Different studies showed that ethnic minority students or students with lower socio-economic status were more likely to experience low expectations or underestimations by their teachers (Muntoni & Retelsdorf, 2018; Ready & Chu, 2015). In contrast, students from socio-economically privileged families and those belonging to the ethnic majority are often met with higher expectations or even overestimations of their academic potential. These differences in teachers' perceptions and expectations may harm disadvantaged students and negatively influence their academic achievement and well-being (Herppich et al., 2017). Given that this self-fulfilling prophecy mechanism (Darling-Hammond, 2006) is often in place in classrooms characterised by greater socio-cultural diversity, its overall result may be described as unintended discrimination of students from disadvantaged social groups.

Teachers' biased beliefs regarding students from disadvantaged groups can originate from different perspectives. These perspectives may relate to deficit views about students perceived as 'Other' than middle class, white, heterosexual or able-bodied, or from a colour-blind or colour-evasive perspective that ignores institutionalised racism and other intersectional identities (e.g., class or gender; Bagget, 2020). In addition, teachers' biased beliefs may stem from a naive egalitarianism perspective and a one-size-fits-all approach, or a perspective that views education as meritocratic where achievement depends chiefly on individual effort and competence (Bagget, 2020). The fact that teachers' biased beliefs may take these forms sheds light on the importance of understanding the ways in which teaching practices can marginalise or privilege students along the identity domains (Pikić Jugović et al., 2023). Still, many teachers decide to stay 'neutral' in this domain as they often feel unprepared or unmotivated to address these issues, justifying this avoidance by offering different excuses related to the students, parents, school leadership or policy (Baggett, 2020).

Unwillingness to tackle issues of identity and discrimination is clearly at odds with empirical findings that confirm the importance of teachers' understanding of diversity and inequality issues (Pikić Jugović et al., 2023). Namely, teachers holding more negative attitudes to minority students were less likely to tackle interethnic conflicts and advocate respect among ethnic groups (Hornstra et al., 2010; van de Bergh et al., 2010). In contrast, teachers with an ethnic minority background and those teaching in ethnically diverse settings showed less biased attitudes to ethnic minority students than those from the majority group or those working in ethnically homogenous educational contexts (Glock & Kleen, 2019; Glock et al., 2019). This means that in order to avoid discrimination against ethnic minorities or other disadvantaged students, it is important to promote teachers' competencies through which they can improve their un-

derstanding of diversity, inequality and social justice in school settings, such as DA and critical consciousness competencies (Pikić Jugović et al., 2023).

In this respect, Freire (2021) highlights the importance of teachers' critical consciousness, denoting the ability of being aware of one's own privileges and empathising with the socially marginalised. In so doing, he uses the concept of "conscientization calls" for lessons that one learns related to injustice and inequity affecting marginalised populations. The author describes conscientization calls as stepping stones in the development of critical consciousness which can be linked to race, class, language, citizenship and disability. This relates to an awareness of critical perspectives on inequalities on the micro (e.g., observing that students are categorised as immigrants based on their appearance) and macro level (e.g., noticing the unequal distribution of wealth in society), and involves recognition of the structural forces that oppress marginalised social groups (Freire, 2021). Further, the development of critical consciousness requires that teachers can stand up to the structures that otherwise benefit them.

However, despite the growing importance of teachers' sensitivity to diversity and social justice issues, diversity courses for teachers often place limited attention on exploring cultural identities (e.g., with regard to learned value beliefs and past experiences) or the ways in which differences in teachers' and students' socio-cultural backgrounds can impact their relationships and thus their learning experience (Chou, 2007; Rodríguez, 2005). With a view to broadening these aspects of teacher training, Chou (2007) suggested that teachers should develop awareness of their own cultural perspectives and gain understanding of their own expectations, beliefs and behaviours (become *reflective*); understand the relationships between diversity, power and inequality and how they influence students' lives (appreciate the value of *diversity*); be able to evaluate their own teaching and become sensitive to students' needs and learning styles (*examine* the nature of teaching); improve their understanding of various cultures among students and incorporate these cultures and languages into the curriculum (*learn* the significance of language and culture of students); and, finally, develop a better understanding of the lives of students and teacher–student relationships (*embrace* opportunities to deepen and broaden understanding).

Finally, there is empirical evidence that strengthening teachers' DA and critical consciousness competencies can lead to more equitable teaching practices, e.g., through role play and perspective taking with respect to difference, equity and inclusion (Bukko & Liu, 2021; Christopher & Taylor, 2011; García & Guerra, 2004). More details may be found in the following section.

Teacher Professional Development in the Areas of Social, Emotional, and Diversity Awareness Competencies

This section provides a brief overview of the process of teacher professional development. It touches on teachers' needs for professional development in the areas of SEDA competencies, and reviews the evidence on benefits of these programmes for teachers' well-being and work.

Teacher professional development includes activities that develop the skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics of a teacher (OECD, 2009). Studies show that teacher professional development has a positive impact on teacher skills, beliefs, and classroom practices, as well as their students' development (Christoforidou & Kyriakides, 2021; Fischer et al., 2018; Garet et al., 2016; Hattie, 2009; OECD, 2019b). Moreover, it can help build professional learning communities and prevent teacher burnout (Ansley et al., 2021; Prenger et al., 2017). Teacher professional development can span across different stages of teachers' careers, with a wide variety of empirical studies showing that teachers have different professional needs depending on their career stage. Years ago, several authors (e.g., Burden, 1990) noticed how professional needs had changed with teachers' experience, from needs for support with technical skills, to those referring to teaching more creatively etc. Huberman (1989) proposed the concept of career trajectories and described a series of phases that appear during a teacher's career. He stated that teacher professional development must be aligned with these different trajectories. Further, he stressed that early on in their career teachers are concerned about survival and discovery, after which they move into a period of stabilisation, followed by various possible pathways shaped by teacher experiences and responses to changing environmental factors. According to Fessler and Rice (2010), newer generations of teachers expect a challenging, collaborative and creative workplace that provides opportunities for advancement and financial rewards, yet also emphasises inclusiveness, diversity and social justice.

Teachers' participation in continuous professional development is compulsory in many countries either to maintain employment or for promotion and a higher salary. International data show that more than 90 % of teachers had participated in at least one type of professional development activity in the previous year (OECD, 2019b). Still, "teaching in a multicultural or multilingual setting" and "communicating with people from different cultures or countries" were topics that were the least likely to be part of teachers' professional development (OECD, 2019b). This should be put in the context of the fact that over 50 % of teachers reported not being well prepared to teach in a multicultural/multilingual setting and that teaching in a multicultural/multilingual setting was one of the most preferred topics for professional development, as reported in the TALIS study (OECD, 2019b). Teachers were also critical of the opportu-

nities for professional development in the social and emotional domains. Over one-third of teachers reported not being satisfied with their current knowledge and skills related to social and emotional learning, while nearly half of them were only partly satisfied (Buchanan et al., 2009). Evidently, teachers are aware of diversity and multicultural issues in their classrooms, as well as of the importance of social and emotional learning in schools, and express their need to develop competencies in these areas.

Evidence concerning the benefits of programmes specifically targeting teachers' SEDA competencies has been accumulating in recent years. Teachers reported that the professional development programmes for developing their SE competencies were highly beneficial to them, even more than the subject-related and instruction-related trainings (Dorman, 2015). Professional development programmes designed to strengthen teachers' SE competencies can be placed in four categories: emotion-focused training, relationship-building interventions, mindfulness and stress reduction, and social and emotional learning routines (Jones et al., 2013). Emotion-focused training aims to support teachers' emotional regulation in order to help them to cope with the stress, frustration and challenges of the teaching profession. Relationship-building interventions are intended to foster positive teacher–student interactions. Mindfulness and stress-reduction approaches are conducted with the purpose of helping teachers to be more focused, aware of the present moment, non-judgmental, and flexible. They usually include activities such as secular meditation, yoga and deep breathing. Finally, social and emotional learning routines are activities and exercises (e.g., breathing techniques and "I-messages") that continuously remind and lead teachers in using social and emotional learning skills in an everyday school context (Jones et al., 2013). The goals shared by these interventions are to build emotional awareness, promote reflection as part of daily practice, and address teachers' stress (Jones et al., 2013). Research shows that teachers who participated in trainings aimed at the development of SE competencies possess stronger SE competencies, better mental health and better relationships with students (Bonde et al., 2022; Oliveira et al., 2021a). For example, Oliveira et al. (2021a) recently conducted a meta-analysis of empirical studies which evaluated the efficacy of school-based interventions on social and emotional learning for teachers. The results revealed that these trainings enhanced teachers' SE competencies and well-being and reduced their psychological distress. Mindfulness-based teacher training has also proven to be beneficial for teachers' well-being. Several studies found that teachers who had participated in the training programmes based on mindfulness techniques reported enhanced well-being, reduced stress and fewer symptoms of psychological burnout (e.g., Beshai et al., 2016; Bonde et al., 2022; Harris et al., 2016). In addition, the quality of their interactions with students and their classroom

management practices also improved after completing the programme, compared to the teachers in the control group.

There is also empirical evidence showing that strengthening teachers' DA and critical consciousness can lead to more equitable teaching practices. García and Guerra (2004) analysed data from their staff development work, which challenged teachers' deficit thinking about students from culturally/linguistically diverse communities. Drawing on the results of these staff development efforts, the authors described how the teachers' training experience led to cognitive dissonance between their beliefs and the assumptions of the culturally responsive pedagogy reflected in the training programme. Teachers who were part of this process were able to question and even reject their negative views, demonstrated an improved awareness of culture in educational settings, and were more likely to acknowledge their role in students' learning and achievement. Bukko and Liu (2021) pointed to the development of teachers' equity-based dispositions following participation in a training that supported teachers' critical consciousness. Stewart et al. (2021) established that teachers who had participated in a critical consciousness development training revealed various levels of growth, spanning from knowledge acquisition to engaging in social justice issues in their schools. In addition, Christopher and Taylor (2011) showed that teachers' participation in 2-year social-justice-oriented workshops had increased their understanding of social justice education, as well as their openness to contribute to more just schools and classrooms. Finally, according to TALIS 2018, in most countries teachers who had participated in professional development in terms of multicultural teaching reported higher self-efficacy to teach in multicultural environments (OECD, 2019b).

In planning and conducting effective teacher training for SEDA competencies, two factors emerged as particularly important: (1) teachers who appeared as positive role models for others have a great influence on sustaining schools' commitment and motivation; and (2) programmes that were integrated into the entire school and its daily practices have a stronger likelihood of continuing compared to those programmes only implemented in some classrooms (Durlak, 2016; Lund Nielsen et al., 2019). Regular support and constructive feedback by other experts are also vital for teachers to successfully implement a social and emotional learning programme (Buchanan et al., 2009). Finally, the OECD (2019b) listed content focus, active learning and collaboration, sustained length, and school-embeddedness as four characteristics of the most effective professional development activities.

Continuous professional development programmes can come in many formats. Mere attendance at courses and seminars has been subject to criticism since such programmes treat teachers as passive recipients rather than co-constructors of their personal and professional development (Avalos, 2011; Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002). Although courses and seminars are necessary and have

been found to be effective for equipping teachers with content and subject knowledge (Hoban & Erickson, 2004), they are often disconnected from the day-to-day reality of teachers' workplace (Borko, 2004). A school-embedded approach to continuous professional development that incorporates the teaching experience, the school context and teachers' collegiality seems to be a more preferable and more cost-efficient path for improving teachers' instruction (Kraft et al., 2018; Opfer, 2016). Recommendations have been made concerning some specific types of activities that can help foster SEDA competencies. For example, Kang and Zinger (2019) suggested very practical activities to support teacher competencies for addressing diversity and enhancing social justice, e.g., discussing articles that provide critical perspectives, conducting critical ethnographies, participating in critical book clubs etc. Similarly, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) listed professional dialogues, education in social and emotional development and emotional responses, as well as mindfulness meditation as tools for the professional development of SE competencies.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we reviewed the background theory and empirical evidence with respect to the development of SEDA competencies; namely, the focus of the HAND:ET project. The HAND:ET system and programme for teachers' professional development have been designed with careful consideration of the needs assessment (i.e., empirical data) and the recommendations of practitioners, scholars and policymakers (i.e., the field's state of the art). The HAND:ET programme is in harmony with the features of effective professional development activities recognised by the OECD (2019b). It was developed and implemented with five characteristics: (1) it has a strong content focus, but at the same time it insists on the quality of the process; (2) it relies on the active involvement and collaborative work of teachers, encouraging their interaction and exchange; (3) it spans throughout the school year, thereby ensuring the sustained length and distribution of the learning experience over time; (4) it involves a critical mass of teachers from the same school to assure commitment, sustainability and the spill-over effect; and (5) it assumes the involvement of school leaders, an important element for creating a network of support and successful social and emotional learning in schools (Baroody et al., 2014; Tan et al., 2021). For more information about the programme and its implementation, see Chapters 3–6 of this volume.

Nevertheless, despite the significance of this and other similar individual undertakings, if the development of SEDA competencies is to be expanded to a wider level, the further sensitisation and efforts of researchers, practitioners and, especially, decision-makers are called for. We strongly believe that arriv-

ing at a systemic solution for including SEDA competencies in both the initial and continuous professional development of teachers would make a change for individuals today and the society of tomorrow.

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Chapter 3

The Process of Developing the HAND:ET Programme to Foster Social and Emotional Competencies and Diversity Awareness

Helene Dahlström[1] *& Katinka Gøtzsche*[2]

Abstract

This chapter aims to describe the process of developing a learning programme fostering social and emotional competencies together with diversity awareness (SEDA) for teachers and other school staff in the HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Across Europe to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity-Related Career Challenges project ("HAND:ET"). Teachers across Europe face an increasing workload and are experiencing high levels of work-related stress. Structural and societal changes like digitalisation and human social mobility together with new administrative tasks are considered as contributing factors. Teachers express that they have not been empowered to deal with the new era of diverse classrooms or to handle their heavier workloads. The HAND:ET programme seeks to introduce theory and exercises to empower European teachers. The theoretical framework for the programme is based on the CASEL framework combined with relational competence, theory on stress, and the concepts of mindfulness and diversity awareness. In the chapter, the theories are presented along with how they are operationalised in practice through the HAND:ET programme. The main conclusion drawn is that empathic curiosity has become crucial for developing teachers' SEDA competencies within the programme.

Keywords: Diversity Awareness, Empathic Curiosity, Mindfulness, Programme Development, Relational Competence

Why Teachers in Europe Need to be Empowered

Teachers are an endangered species. Everybody has an opinion on teachers, and everybody knows what it is like to go to school and to have a teacher, which can add to teachers' already stressful working conditions, thereby contributing to teachers leaving the profession. Digitalisation and human social mobility are

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among factors in today's changing societies that bring both new possibilities and challenges for schools and teachers. Many of societies' challenges are seen in the classroom as a microcosm mirroring society at large. The classroom of today can be seen as the society of tomorrow (Mattson, 2019).

European societies are these days characterised by human diversity, as also reflected in classrooms. Diversity refers to differences in cultural or ethnic communities and other life experiences, such as gender, sexual orientation, functionality or age (UNESCO, 2021). To handle students in such diverse classrooms, teachers should be prepared to interact and include all students (Council of the European Union, 2017). However, TALIS results (OECD, 2019) show that teachers across the EU do not feel sufficiently prepared to teach in diverse settings. There is a pressing urge to ensure that teachers are more prepared to deal with and teach in increasingly diverse classrooms. Another important factor to consider regarding the need to empower teachers is the 'health crisis'. Many teachers are stressed, thus affecting their overall health. Repeated surveys show that children and adolescents in Europe and the Western world are facing serious mental health problems (European Commission, 2021). Teachers encounter these problems every day and are also often expected to solve them without funds, capacity-building or acknowledgement of the effort they are making.Teachers are stressed and it is difficult to find people who want to be teachers (European Commission, 2021).

One way of preparing teachers is increasing teachers' well-being by working on their social, emotional and diversity awareness (SEDA) (Kozina et al., 2020). It is well documented in research and scientific work that social and emotional learning (SEL) has a positive effect on children's social, emotional and cognitive development (Durlak et al., 2011; Greenberg et al., 2003; Payton et al., 2008). Most SEL studies are concerned with the effect of specific programmes on student competencies. However, some studies deal with the teacher's social and emotional (SE) competencies (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015) and several focus on the role of the teacher in dissemination of an SEL programme and how that is decisive for the programme's effect (Abry et al., 2013; Durlak, 2016; Durlak & DuPre, 2008). There is also a growing focus on the teacher's own SE concerning the effect on the well-being of teachers (Cornelius-White, 2007; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Nielsen et al., 2019).

Developing the HAND in HAND:Empowering Teachers Programme

The HAND:ET programme is a training programme to develop SEDA competencies in teachers and other school staff and intends to build the capacity of teachers to cope with the challenges they meet in their professional lives. The programme forms a vital part of the HAND:ET system as whole-year-whole-

school support system (for more, see Chapter 1). The mentioned programme has been developed in collaboration with colleagues from a number of universities and research institutes, representing various scientific disciplines and seven different countries (see Chapter 1). Overall responsibility is assumed by the University of Aarhus and Mid Sweden University, which have worked together closely to develop the HAND:ET programme.

Inspiration came from the results of the previous project HAND in HAND: Social and Emotional Skills for Tolerant and Non-discriminative Societies ("HAND"), 2017–2020 (Educational Research Institute, 2023), guidelines for policy and practice (Štremfel et al., 2020) and feedback from teachers who participated in those earlier endeavours (e.g., Vieluf et al., 2020). In alignment with the guidelines offered by Štremfel et al. (2020), the programme aims to address several critical aspects, including: 1) establishing clear European and national definitions and approaches to SEDA learning; 2) articulating the political and policy objectives related to SEDA learning; 3) developing SEDA learning programmes that are both theoretically sound and adaptable to local contexts; 4) encouraging the cultivation of SEDA competencies among students within national curricula; 5) providing support to teachers and school staff in enhancing their own and their students' SEDA competencies; and 6) promoting a comprehensive, whole-school approach to SEDA learning.

The programme also adheres to the recommendations of Durlak (2011, 2015) for effective social and emotional learning, focused on four key elements:

1. Sequenced activities that are interconnected and coordinated to foster skill development.
2. Active learning methods that engage participants in the learning process.
3. A focus on developing personal and social skills as a central component.
4. The explicit targeting of specific SE skills.

This comprehensive approach underscores the commitment to enhancing the quality and impact of SEDA education for teachers and students alike. The most significant finding from the previous project was that teachers indicated the importance of developing SE learning with particular emphasis on learning to manage and understand the stress in their daily lives. Teachers who participated in the HAND project were mainly positive about the programme (Vieluf et al., 2020), especially with the focus on self-awareness and personal growth that is useful in stressful situations at school (Jensen & Gøtzsche, 2020). Based on these results and their implications by way of improvements, together with the teachers' situation described above, we decided that the focus of the HAND:ET project would be to empower teachers to develop SE learning and to develop diversity awareness (DA). Namely, this development programme

would focus entirely on teachers in the hope that teacher empowerment and development will also benefit the students they are working with.

Theoretical Framework Used in the HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Programme

We found it important to include different approaches and theories that can encompass the complexity and factors found in the profession of being a teacher. As described in Chapter 1, the core concepts for the programme are the SE competencies presented by CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2003), defined as the interaction of five different competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relational skills and responsible decision-making (Durlak et al., 2015) and DA (UNESCO, 2021). The tools for developing these competencies are mindfulness, empathic curiosity and reflection (see Chapter 1).

The framework is an elaborated version of the core concepts and the tools, going deeper into a more specific understanding of how the core concepts have unfolded in the HAND:ET project. Relational skills are extended with knowledge concerning how to define and develop relational competence (Nielsen, 2017; Juul & Jensen, 2017) and mindfulness practices include theory on stress (Porges, 2017; Stubberup, 2019). The use of multiple approaches in professional development programmes can improve the capacity to develop each component and, when combined, to take advantage of their complementary functions (Huber, 2013).

We developed the HAND:ET programme building on lessons emerging from the HAND programme "HAND in HAND School Staff Training – Teachers" elaborated in the previous HAND project (Jensen et al., 2018). In the HAND:ET programme, we have replaced the concept of intercultural competence with use of the broader perspective of DA.

An important premise for developing the HAND:ET programme is that the different competencies are developed in the experiential learning tradition originally introduced by Dewey (1916) and labelled "learning by doing". Jugović et al. (2020) stress in the chapter: "Development of the social, emotional and intercultural learning programme for students" that "developing intercultural competencies cannot be reduced to 'learning about other cultures'" (ibid. p. 69). In other words, it is not merely a cognitive process, but the insights must also be embodied. Contemporary formal education often relies on the assumption that learners should sit still without interacting with others or using their body and take in the information that is supposed to be learned. However, by so doing, important learning resources can be seen as missed, such as learning by

interacting with others and involving the body in the learning process (Danish et al., 2020). Thus, all cognition is embodied, meaning that all learning can be seen as embodied (Gallagher & Lindgren, 2015), which was a basic assumption while creating the HAND:ET programme. When teaching a mindfulness-based intervention (MBI), the embodiment of mindfulness is essential for the quality and outcome of the programme (Piet et al., 2016). The embodiment is seen as a specific domain in teacher assessment criteria called MBI:TAC that were developed to assess mindfulness-based programmes for adherence and competence and, as such, a competence that needed to be trained while qualifying to become a mindfulness teacher (Crane et al., 2020). In HAND:ET, we are additionally considering different frameworks that have a practical approach embedded in theory. We are also using activities that can emphasise the insights from theory.

A Theoretical Approach to Social and Emotional Competencies

In the former HAND project, CASEL's definition of SE competencies was used and transformed into an elaborated definition that contained perspectives and nuances from other theories that were used to develop the programme (Jensen & Gøtzsche, 2020). SE competencies were thus defined as self-awareness – the ability to feel oneself, one's impulses and sensations, to know one's emotions, personal values and goals; self-management – the ability to regulate oneself, set and pursue goals; social awareness – the ability to familiarise yourself with and understand the perspective and point of view of others, understand other cultural backgrounds and have empathy and understanding for differences; relational skills – communicating clearly and empathetically, resolving conflicts and asking for help when necessary; responsible decision-making being able to make decisions based on one's own needs and what is possible in the context one is in (Nielsen et al., 2019; Durlak et al., 2015) (see Chapter 1).

We approached the different competencies with tools and theory from different backgrounds. We kept in mind that while each competency should be addressed one by one in practice it was clear that developing SE competencies as well as DA is an interaction and that the competencies are closely connected and woven together. We designed the HAND:ET programme so that each competency was approached as either the main objective or part of an interaction with others.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is seen in the HAND:ET programme as the point of departure, a tool for developing both SE competencies and DA and, as such, involved in de-

veloping all of the SEDA competencies. It is defined as being aware and awake in the present moment with acceptance and without judgment. Further, it is containing and being aware and present with pleasure and discomfort without escaping and without becoming self-forgetful (Kabat-Zinn, 1996; Goleman & Davidsson, 2017). Mindfulness is a way of being present and bringing awareness into the situations and relationships that life consists of and through different approaches and methods to become able to regulate oneself in stressful situations and thereby create the opportunity to respond more consciously and engage in relational interactions in more constructive and appropriate ways (Goldin & Gross, 2010; Peters et al., 2011).

Mindfulness is also used as an approach and a practice to regulate the nervous system and to be aware of signs of stress responses coming from the body and emotions. It is a method for reducing the experience of stress and by that to diminish the automatic stress responses. Several studies show a tendency for mindfulness, in particular the mindfulness programme Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), to show positive effects by way of reducing teachers' and teacher students' experience of stress and increasing their well-being and mental health (Beshai et al., 2016; Bonde et al., 2022; Juul et al., 2021a; Lomas et al., 2017; Zarate et al., 2019; Emerson et al., 2017; Hwang et al., 2017). Mindfulness training also appears to have an impact on the professional's social capacities and educational practice (Weare, 2014; Weare & Bethune, 2021). The connection between the teacher's well-being and their professional and pedagogical work is supported by several studies. They show how training mindfulness enhances greater emotional and mental resources for the individual teacher, which results in the teacher taking more care for and giving more attention to the students, and providing more emotional support (Elreda et al., 2019; Jennings et al., 2017).

In the process of developing the HAND:ET programme, we built on earlier experiences of using mindfulness practices in the process of developing relational as well as SEDA competencies, e.g., the HAND project. In a Danish context, studies in recent years have focused on the link between relational competency and mindfulness and how mindfulness can enhance the well-being of teachers and student teachers in projects and studies with student teachers and teachers (Juul et al., 2021a; Nielsen et al., 2022; Bonde et al., 2022; Juul et al., 2021b). In these projects, the mindfulness programme MBSR was used to cover the mindfulness part. In the HAND:ET programme, the mindfulness practices were taken out of the MBSR structure and put together with other activities. We retained key practices like a body scan, focusing on the breath, yoga and training the capacity to feel empathy and compassion for others. Compared to MBSR, the practices are shorter and concentrated on that part of life which is work-oriented, being a teacher, and working with children.

Developing Self-Awareness

In the process of developing self-awareness and self-management, mindfulness practices were used as the main tool both in the sense of classic mindfulness practices and in combination with other exercises where mindfulness was used as an element of the exercise.

A body scan is an example of a classic mindfulness exercise where the main objective is self-awareness. In a body scan, the participants are guided to place their attention on different parts of their body, e.g., starting with the feet, then moving from the feet to the rest of the body step by step. It is emphasised that being aware of something means noticing with curiosity and kindness what is felt in the body at this moment. It is not necessary to change anything or to feel or sense anything in a specific way. The point is to accurately sense the body as clearly as possible – no better or no worse. An important point aspect that you cannot do a body scan wrongly.

Developing Self-Management

Having self-awareness is required for regulating oneself, which is an element of the competence of self-management. Exercises with the objective of developing self-awareness are normally practised in a calm and safe environment. By becoming familiar with turning one's attention inwards to the body or, in other practices, the breath, while feeling calm and safe, it is easier to allow oneself to turn the attention inwards when under pressure. The self-awareness in such situations acts as a foundation for being aware of what is happening to oneself while under pressure and creates the possibility of regulating oneself.

While under pressure or experiencing a stressful situation, the normal reactions are automatically stress responses: fight, flight or freeze. Since these responses are automatic and occur without awareness, they can be inadequate to the situation and sometimes complicate and make a stressful situation even worse.

This is addressed in the HAND:ET programme with exercises that induce a stressful response. The participants are exposed to something that is stressful. The first step is to notice what is happening: what are the responses in the body? In the breath? What are their impulses? Any fight, flight or freeze responses? The second step is to move the attention inwards to the body or the breath and observe what effect it has on the responses to the stress. This is a way of developing self-management by embodying the competency. It entails creating a situation in which stress responses are real and introducing a way of regulating these responses in the heat of the moment.

Another way of developing self-management is using the concept of "Gearshift". The concept describes a process in a number of exercises. The

objective for making a "Gearshift" is to regulate oneself either from a passive to a more active level or the opposite way round, namely, calming down. The mindfulness exercises bringing the attention inwards are useful for calming down. Yoga and other physical exercises are performed to activate and regulate in the opposite direction towards greater energy and activity.

A Theoretical Approach to Diversity Awareness

The need for the HAND:ET programme to include an approach to diversity is motivated by the increasing globalisation in Europe where large numbers of people have moved across national borders, which means that societies as well as schools consist of a plurality of people with different cultures and backgrounds. We see the increasing diversity in societies and schools as possible resources to create more inclusive communities and schools. It is also recognised that this work can be challenging for teachers as well, and accordingly a focus on possible strategies for dealing with classrooms characterised by diversity is needed. We have defined some key arguments as to why increased diversity awareness is important for teachers and, by extension, why diversity work is important in European schools. First, the argument of justice and democracy as access to education should not be limited by students' background, affiliation or identity. Second, the argument of anti-discrimination, in other words, to work against discrimination regarding gender, ethnicity, religion or other belief systems, disability or sexuality. Third, we have the argument of quality. If students' different backgrounds and experiences are incoporated the school can become important for a bigger number of students, while at the same time access to several different perspectives adds to students' ability to understand different contexts. Namely, working with diversity awareness can help make us smarter (Phillips, 2014). Finally, we emphasise the argument of power, which is related to the argument of justice and democracy but focuses more on diversity awareness as a tool for social change. Diversity awareness pedagogy can help to make norms visible and problematise them to change exclusionary norms in school as part of society (Wickström, 2011). Diversity and inequality may be seen as two inseparable dimensions of social justice (Pikić Jugović et al., 2023). However, the two dimensions have a separate focus where the diversity dimension addresses knowledge and understanding of all people, whereas the inequality dimension focuses on individual and institutional practices, thereby taking action against practices that generate inequalities (see Chapter 2).

Further, UNESCO states as an argument for embracing diversity in society that human cultural diversity as a source of exchange, new ideas, and creativity is as essential to humanity as biological diversity is to nature (UNESCO, 2001). DA in the HAND:ET programme refers to differences in cultural or ethnic com-

munities and other life experiences, such as gender, sexual orientation, functionality, or age, and dimensions of diversity that are intertwined (UNESCO, 2021). While talking about diversity, it is necessary to move away from constructs that merely consider people's characteristics in isolation from each other; intersectionality is one aspect that requires attention (Bešić et al., 2020; Messiou et al., 2020). No one is simply a woman or a man, we are also always people with a skin colour, a sexual orientation, a class affiliation, a degree of functionality and so on (Crenshaw, 1991). DA also includes developing critical consciousness and being aware of and understanding norms and privileges in society and how they are reflected in the classroom. Increased understanding of diversity and critical consciousness for teachers hold the potential to lead to increased social justice in schools and society (Pikić Jugović et al., 2023). Through greater awareness of diversity, we believe that teachers can choose more consciously how to deal with and promote diversity in the classroom. The ideas within this programme should therefore be understood as tools for teachers when reflecting on their teaching from the DA perspective.

Developing Social and Diversity Awareness

As explained, DA in the HAND:ET programme refers to several dimensions of diversity. Initially, we presented the teachers with theoretical aspects of diversity and why DA is important for them as persons and in their working lives. After the theoretical introduction, teachers were given a chance to reflect individually on their own thoughts and positions regarding what diversity is, what or who influences their view of diversity, and how they had acted in different situations characterised by diversity. How teachers perceive and react to diversity and inequality matters for social justice in the classroom as, for example, teachers may have different expectations of students depending on their background (Pikić Jugović et al., 2023; Chapter 2 of this volume). During the first self-reflection exercise, there was no pressure to share the thoughts with anyone else as the exercise was aimed at self-reflection based on the assumption that we can only understand others when we understand ourselves (Jensen & Gøtzsche, 2020). After the individual reflection, we included activities that concentrated on reflecting and sharing experiences and thoughts about diversity in the teacher's classroom. These exercises were characterised by dialogue exercises where the teachers first reflected individually on given questions, followed by a two-by-two dialogue where the teachers in a structured way (see the description of the dialogue exercises later in this chapter) shared with each other what diversity in their classrooms looked like and how they perceived both the benefits and challenges in their classrooms.

Finally, we processed diversity awareness through group exercises such as, for instance, *The Societal Ladder.* The purpose of *The Societal Ladder* exercise,

for which we found inspiration from Åkerlund (2011), is to discover, discuss and develop understanding concerning power, privilege and personal prejudices in society, as well in school. The ranking of individuals due to social class, ethnicity, gender and so on are constantly happening explicitly and implicitly among people and in society (Kraus et al., 2013). The exercise further considers how positions of power and influence in society are related to dimensions of diversity like ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, functionality and class. Very briefly, the exercise is performed in steps, using photographs of people that could be ranked on a social ladder in terms of who in society that has the most power to the least power. After doing the ranking in groups on a social level, the teachers were encouraged to discuss whether the ranking would be different in certain settings such as in their schools or in any more informal settings. The exercise ends with a joint reflection where all groups describe their rankings and which conversations led to the ranking. The instructor then summarises the exercise and reminds that the exercise aims to make society's norms visible, not the values of the individual teachers who participated in the exercise.

Once diversity has been processed as an umbrella term for different dimensions of diversity, the HAND:ET programme addresses particular dimensions of diversity with the aim to increase understanding of what specific dimensions individually and collectively can mean for the individual, the classroom and society. The different dimensions we chose to include are: sex and gender, ethnicity and cultural background, and socio-economic background. The teaching content consisted of an initial presentation of a theoretical background such as, for example, socio-economic background followed by dialogue exercises and group exercises in order to transform theory into practice. To give an illustration of how we approached the way we carried out the process for the individual dimensions of diversity, the dimension of socio-economic status can act as an example of the process.

Initially, we presented the theoretical background for how socio-economic background influences students' conditions at school. The theoretical presentation was adjusted in each country to suit specific country contexts as we presented research showing the situations pertaining to, for instance, the correlation of student results and socio-economic background. Further, the importance of socio-economics on the level of society was presented. Following the theoretical presentation of the socio-economic background, a dialogue exercise was performed, discussing questions like how this had been reflected in teachers' classrooms and how they had addressed the question of possible unequal conditions in their classrooms due to socio-economic factors.

The group exercise that came after these dialogues involved critical analysis of newspapers and school textbooks aiming at visualising who in society and the school are represented. The inclusion of people from various socio-

economic and socio-cultural backgrounds in students' textbooks makes more students relate to the learning content, thus acting as a motivating factor for students (Ena, 2013). According to Johnsson Harrie (2016), the textbook can be seen as a mirror image of society's values and attitudes; therefore, who in society is represented in the media and in the school context is important for how individuals perceive themselves. This exercise not only focuses on socio-economic background but other dimensions of diversity as well, like most of the exercises in the HAND:ET programme. Moreover, the exercise includes several steps where a group of teachers together should analyse textbooks and newspapers looking for who is represented. The first step is about statistics, meaning that the teachers should count how many with a foreign background, how many from a low socioeconomic background or how many young men were represented. After that, a reflection took place concerning how the participants had decided who to include in their search, who the participants found easiest to detect and who were hard to find or not represented at all. The last step concerned a joint reflection in the group and questions about upon which grounds we judge people in society was proposed.

Developing Relational Skills

Relational skills are seen as crucial for developing SE competencies as well as DA. We accordingly further elaborate on this competence with the concept of relational competence.

The concept and the theory of relational competence are a way of clarifying how good relations can be described and, most importantly, how it is possible to train the ability to create and be in good relationships. The developing of relational skills in HAND:ET is done by practical exercises as dialogues, reflections, empathic listening and mindfulness practices and, in addition, theoretical presentations on the importance of good relations and how we can understand and define relational competence.

A Theoretical Approach to Relational Competence

A large body of research shows the importance of good relations for a child to develop, learn and for their well-being. The teacher's ability to establish good relationships with the students is paramount for the students' well-being, development and learning (Aspelin & Jonsson, 2019; Durlak et al., 2015; Juul & Jensen, 2005; Klinge 2017; 2018; Nordenbo et al., 2008). Spilt et al. (2011) stress that good relations between teacher and student are equally important for the teacher's well-being and for them to be satisfied working as a teacher.

Juul and Jensen were the first to offer a definition of relational competence (Juul & Jensen 2005; 2017; Nielsen et al., 2022), namely: "The professional's ability to 'see' the individual child on its terms and attune her behavior accordingly without giving up leadership, as well as the ability to be authentic in her contact with the child. And as the professional's ability and will to take full responsibility for the quality of the relationship" (Juul & Jensen, 2005; Jensen et al., 2018, p. 16).

To unfold this definition in practice, it is important to see each human being as a subject. A relationship is created by the subjects in the relationship and can be changed by each participant. This means that every relationship is unique. To 'see' each child is to be curious about the individual – knowing that every child has a different personality and history. In a professional context, while people working with children the professional is a representative of society and as such possesses greater power in the relationship with a student. This means the professional also has more responsibility. To have responsibility for a relationship means:

- being aware of what you bring into the relationship of emotions, personal issues, prejudices, biases, behavioural patterns etc.;
- taking responsibility for whatever is brought into the relationship and not blame one's issues on the other;
- being able to regulate oneself and attune one's behaviour in a manner that can help the child/student to regulate themself and move in the direction of development; and
- being curious about the other person's perspective.

Considerable research shows that the teacher's relational competency depends on the extent to which the teacher is aware of their emotional state, their position and influence on the quality of the relationship. Further, whether the teacher can regulate their feelings and reactions. This may prove especially difficult when the teacher is under pressure. In stressful situations, people typically react with learned and automatic reaction patterns and emotions that are unconscious (Klinge, 2017; 2018; Vilain & Munkholm, 2016).

Developing Relational Competence

Developing relational competence depends on both self-awareness and self-regulation, which means that doing the mindfulness exercises also develops relationship skills. As described in the previous paragraph, this unfolds in the mindfulness exercises where the teachers are practising having awareness of their body, their breath and of their senses, impulses, and responses. Other mindfulness exercises involve a focus on being aware of habitual reactions and patterns while under pressure and finding the resources to change reac-

tions when that is more equivalent and helpful for the situation. This includes exercises that help to regulate oneself to provide a better starting point for relationships in the classroom.

Relational skills are inherently not only about self-awareness and self-management. They involve other people and entail empathy and compassion for others, being able to respect others and care for others. This is addressed by doing mindfulness exercises that nourish and concentrate on empathic feelings for others. In the exercise *Someone I Care About*, the participants are invited to think of someone they care for and with their attention and senses explore what it means to care for someone. The exercise also has a focus on allowing whichever feelings that arise. The objectives are to build capacity for containing more vulnerable feelings and to create space for caring for other people.

Relational skills cannot be developed simply by turning one's awareness inwards. It is also necessary to be aware of the other person in a given relationship (in the teacher's case, the children in the classroom) and to attune their behaviour in a helpful direction. In the HAND:ET programme, we introduce a number of exercises falling under the headline 60:40. The common denominator of this group of exercises is that focus is given to split the attention between oneself 60 % and the other person(s) 40 %. The numbers can, of course, not be measured and are only a guideline to persist on keeping more of the attention on oneself because that is against normal habits for attention. Our attention is normally caught by impulses coming from the surroundings and that can make it difficult to be aware of oneself. If the attention is only engaged with, e.g., solving a problem in the classroom and not at all on what is going on in the individual teacher, it will be difficult for that teacher to regulate and to attune themself to the situation, and to take responsibility for whatever the teacher brings into the relationship. The exercises are developed to start with directing the attention inwards and then in various ways doing something with other people, e.g., working around the room while making eye contact with the other participants and simultaneously keeping some of the attention on the feet. All the exercises end with a reflection where the participants are given the possibility to share their own experiences and listen to the others. This is an important part of the programme and a way of training relational competence by talking and listening to each other.

For each teacher, developing relational competence is to be more aware of their mental models and biases, e.g., their values and how these values can blur the relationship with a child and make it difficult to see the child on their own terms. In the programme, this is for example addressed by dialogue exercises between two people. One person investigates their values and how they are shown in the classroom. The other person listens and asks questions to help the investigation. It can be questions that clarify and elaborate on a concept like: what does it mean for you to be kind to other people? How does this value

show in the classroom? What happens when you, other people or children live up to your standards or values? What happens when you, yourself do not live up to your own standards or values? How is that revealed in the classroom?

An important element in developing relational competence is to build capacity to react adequately while under pressure. It is easy to have good relations when everything is calm, and you feel safe surrounded by people who share the same values and standards as yourself. It is much more difficult when one is under pressure. This is addressed in the programme by introducing theory on stress and stress responses and by performing exercises to embody this knowledge. What does stress do to the way human beings behave and relate? And how does this manifest in each teacher? It is a process for the individual teacher to recognise their stress responses and, when recognising stress, to make conscious choices on having to respond and relate in the classroom.

Understanding Stress and Stress Responses

Teachers need good relations (Spilt, 2011), while they also need to feel valuabled (Juul & Jensen, 2005; 2017). It can prove challenging to create the necessary relationships, to meet and understand students from new cultures or unfamiliar backgrounds. This can cause the feeling of not being able to do one's job in a fulfilling way, not feeling valued for one's performance. Some teachers can feel powerless when faced with the challenges they encounter at work, which can be a stress factor.

According to Lazarus (1991), stress is an individual and subjective interpretation of a given situation. Stress is both a bodily and an emotional response. It refers foremost to situations where the individual experiences something incongruent with their goals, values or needs, in turn triggering an emotional response and inducing stress (Spilt, 2011). Juul and Jensen (2005; 2017) describe how human beings have two existential needs: to feel valued and to feel that one has integrity. These two needs are opposites at first sight, yet upon looking closer there is not so much opposition but a question of balance. We are a social species, which means we need each other, are loyal to the group that offers us a sense of belonging, and we cooperate with that group to ensure this existential is fulfilled. This also occurs with respect to the need to be regarded as an individual with integrity. The need to belong is so strong that the cooperation with the group offered can act to benefit the well-being of the individual. Juul and Jensen (ibid.) emphasise that when the balance is tipping towards imbalance, symptoms will occur in the behaviour and the emotional life imbalance like irritability, frustration, anger, hate, longing, sorrow or stress responses.

The Polyvagal Theory was developed by Porges, a neuroscientist. It helps explain how our autonomic nervous system influences our behaviour, emo-

tions, and social interactions. It is useful in this context because the theory addresses how stress influences behaviour in terms of the individual's ability and quality to engage with others and how the capability to build relationships diminishes (Porges, 2017). This theory sheds light on the difficulties of having diversity awareness while under pressure. It explains the need to feel safe for having relationships based on respect for other people. While under pressure, other people can become a threat and it becomes difficult to keep seeing others as subjects and human beings in their own right. In extreme circumstances, they become the enemy. It also highlights why it is important to not only learn *about* diversity awareness but also to learn *how to deal with* situations where diversity may be interpreted as dangerous.

How Stress was Addressed in the HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Programme

One way of translating theory into practice so as to develop understanding of and possibilities for changing unhealthy behaviour patterns is to recognise stress responses and signals before reacting. This was addressed in the HAND:ET programme with a mindfulness exercise where the participants were asked to think of an unpleasant situation. It may be a situation where they felt pressure, a situation they would characterise as stressful or simply a situation where they felt uncomfortable. With this situation in mind, the participants are guided into the situation by recalling: What did it feel like? What were the senses in the body and the breath? Which feelings arose? How did they sense the atmosphere? Were there any thoughts? After the guidance, the participants share and reflect with a partner in the group. This exercise develops self-awareness as a foundation for self-management and relational skills.

Developing Responsible Decision-Making

Responsible decision-making can be seen as a synthesis of the other competencies. To make good decisions, it is necessary to be aware of one's own needs and wishes and simultaneously be aware of the context and other people involved in the consequences of the decision. Responsible decision-making is the outcome of responding adequately to a situation while under pressure. The process may be described as starting by being aware of the signs showing that you are under pressure. Being aware provides an opportunity to regulate oneself and attune one's behaviour in an appropriate way so that the teacher can deal with the student as best as possible in the given situation. This process is addressed in dialogue exercises exploring what happens when the teacher is under pressure in their profession. The participants are divided into small groups of three. One explores their personal version of the theme, another is a dialogue partner

while the third is an observer. The dialogue partner asks questions to help elaborate and clarify. The primary function of the dialogue partner is to listen and ask questions to expand the perspective. It is not to solve problems or to give advice to the speaker. The third person is observing the dialogue and keeping the time. Following the dialogue, the observer can share whether any theme in the dialogue resonated for them. The focus is placed on what resonated in the observer, not them giving advice or solving problems. This exercise gives the teacher a possibility to reflect on a problem, look at it from different perspectives and perhaps decide how to approach a similar situation should one arise.

Developing Empathic Curiosity

The concept of empathic curiosity proved to be a concept that could unite the various approaches and theories. Namely, a gathering point that can be used as a method to develop the different competencies, yet also an important independent ingredient that has to be developed by some of the other approaches, e.g., mindfulness and relational competence.

Being curious about others by listening and asking questions is a way of increasing such understanding and can be called empathic curiosity (Mattson, 2019; Phillips, 2016). However, focusing on empathic curiosity, including listening emphatically, must also take inequality among groups into consideration and acknowledge that power and levels of privilege in people's personal lives influence how they understand and interpret the experiences and lives of others (Mirra, 2018). Further, we argue that the growing diversity in schools also calls for diversity and critical consciousness to be included as crucial subjects in teacher training programmes (Robinson, 2017; Pikić Jugović et al., 2023). For programmes aimed at embracing diversity to be successful, perspective-taking and empathic concern should be included (Miklikowska, 2018). Classrooms can be good places for building environments focused on understanding each other instead of having debates or conflicts. If we cannot handle the disagreements of students in the classroom, it will be challenging to deal with the contradictions arising in tomorrow's society (Mattson, 2019). With this approach, we believe the HAND:ET programme can support teachers in shaping inclusive classrooms of the future.

As mentioned in the paragraph on relational competence, the view of the human being is that we are subjects in our own right. This applies to everybody. Empathic curiosity is an approach and an attitude towards others where the underlying premise is that you are truly interested in the other person and that person's perspective on life. Empathic curiosity is hence also an element for developing relational competence. A definition of it says: "The professional's ability to 'see' the individual child on its terms…" (Nielsen et al., 2022). To that

end, one needs empathy, the ability to take on other people's perspectives, and an interest and curiosity in other people.

In the HAND:ET programme, the concept of empathic curiosity is used not only to increase understanding of others but also to develop understanding of oneself, building on the assumption that you cannot meet people more fully than you have met yourself (Jensen & Gøtzsche, 2020). Diversity awareness is also about understanding oneself, what prejudices one holds, and the source of these prejudices. To understand and meet other people, you must first understand and meet yourself, your values and your preconceived notions. We believe that being empathetically curious about yourself and others and being willing to work to develop this curiosity is crucial for the programme to have an effect.

Empathic curiosity in the HAND:ET programme unfolds and can be described as a combination of empathic dialogue and empathic listening (Gøtzsche et al., 2022). Listening means to listen to others and to listen to yourself. This combination of both listening and being in dialogue is the essence of how CASEL defines SEL. To develop SEL, one needs to listen and be aware of one's self-awareness and self-management and one needs to have relational skills, social competencies, and diversity awareness. In the process, *empathic curiosity* has grown to be a key concept in the HAND:ET programme. When we started creating the programme, we perceived it more as one concept among important others. Through discussions, reading literature and implementing the HAND:ET programme in schools across Europe, we have found that the concept encompasses most of what we see as important in the project. With our openness and curiosity, we are more and more understanding that empathic curiosity can act as a tool in terms of understanding ourselves as human beings through mindfulness and awareness of our body, and that via empathic curiosity we can create genuine relationships with ourselves, our environment and the people around us. Empathic curiosity also allows us to better understand other people regardless of their culture, socio-economic background, functionality, sexual orientation etc., thereby acquiring a greater understanding of the world we live in. Increasing diversity awareness through empathic curiosity should also include critical consciousness (Pikić Jugović et al., 2023).

Developing Empathic Listening

The HAND:ET programme contains several elements where empathic curiosity is practised. Examples of such elements are empathic dialogue exercises where empathic listening and the empathic asking of questions to each other are practised. A series of exercises is entailed, all with the purpose of training the capacity to listen with presence and empathy and, at the same time, to share

something in a personal language, which means having a focus on expressing the individual experience. It is not about analysing or lecturing, but describing the subjective way the world is perceived. The exercises are done in pairs. The descriptions are simple: one person talks about a given subject in a specific time frame, e.g., 5 minutes, while the other person listens. The person who is talking is free to talk or to be silent. A possibility is thus provided to explore something verbally, having a person to listen and witness what is being said. The person who is listening is simply listening, with awareness and empathy and without interfering. The subjects can be: Think of a teacher who made an impact on you. What was the teacher like? How did they impact you? Alternatively, the exercises can follow a mindfulness session describing what was present in the practice.

Structure of the HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Programme

Chapter 1 in this volume describes how the HAND:ET project is "an innovative tool to empower teachers for the complexity of everyday working life in increasingly diverse classrooms" and that the project's innovation lies in different areas, e.g., bringing SE competencies and DA together, and the form, with the process spanning the entire school year. These areas were prerequisites for developing the HAND:ET programme. We decided that the teachers should meet face-to-face for 6 days spread out over the school year and hold online meetings in between. New content would be presented and practised at the face-to-face meetings while the online meetings were intended as a space for practising and together reflecting on the content and the exercises presented on the face-to-face days. The online meetings gave an opportunity to meet more often, maintaining the insights from the face-to-face meetings and the atmosphere and the feeling of being a group.

The content of the HAND:ET programme and how we could bring the different core concepts together started out as a raw calculation with one-third addressing DA and two-thirds addressing SE competencies. Working with the HAND:ET programme it became clear that the tools we were using to unfold and develop the competencies entailed a considerable deal of overlapping. Mindfulness exercises, empathic listening and reflections were used to develop all of the competencies. Nevertheless, the programme was constructed following this calculation in terms of which concepts were primarily addressed and at the same time knowing the side effect of the interconnectedness of the competencies.

We choose to make the days recognisable by doing a number of exercises at every face-to-face group meeting. It was not precisely the same exercises but in the same category of tools: On each day of the training, a single DA dimension

was focused on, the day started with a session for doing different mindfulness exercises, there would be different kinds of exercises training empathic curiosity and listening every day, while the gearshift exercises were also performed every time the teachers met face-to-face.

On the first two days, all core concepts were introduced theoretically along with the main tools for developing the SEDA competencies. The teachers were introduced to the body scan, yoga/movement, gearshift, reflection, empathic listening and dialogue exercises. The first part of the third day concentrated on practising mindfulness, introducing a new theme addressing empathic feelings and nourishing joyfulness as a way of regulating oneself and being in relationships. The second part of the day was dedicated to moving deeper into specific aspects of diversity awareness. The tools introduced on the initial two days were trained continuously. On the fourth day, stress was introduced as a theme, together with other aspects of relational competence. The day was largely dedicated to developing SE competencies, apart from a single exercise that entailed a reflection on a different dimension of diversity tuned in the direction of what is perceived as stressful. The fifth day introduced another perspective on stress and the impact it holds for relational competence. Finally, the third part of the day was for specifically addressing aspects of DA. On the sixth day, yet a new dimension of DA was presented. Apart from that, the day mostly involved repeating the previous exercises and insights.

The Process of HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Content Development

Initially, we started to develop the content separately. Aarhus University had a focus on SE competencies, emotional and relational learning whereas Mid Sweden University considered DA. In Sweden, the team had several literature seminars on diversity and experts on socioeconomic background, gender and intersectionality were invited to discuss the content. In the team, we also arranged one webinar for the whole HAND:ET consortium featuring a presentation of how we understood the content concerning diversity in the HAND:ET programme. At international meetings, we presented the content and ideas to the partners to obtain their feedback on the content.

The Danish team consists of members from the Danish Centre for Mindfulness, Aarhus University who were not part of the first HAND project along with members who were part of it and responsible for developing the programme in the previous HAND project. The Danish Centre for Mindfulness has great experience with developing mindfulness-based programmes for different target groups. This knowledge was supplemented with knowledge regarding how to develop relational competence as well as SE competencies.

The process of development took one year and required close cooperation between both research teams. This cooperation proved to be fruitful as we moved closer and closer in our conversations, and realised that the concept of empathic curiosity was shared by our separate focuses. The concept could capture personal and professional development in the form of self-awareness and relations competence and act as a tool to increase teachers' diversity awareness. As the main creators of the programme, when we discovered that we had done as much as we could, it was time to try the programme with the people who were supposed to conduct the actual teacher training in the different countries as well as the other members of the HAND:ET trainers. This was the Train-the-Trainers part. Aarhus University, which was responsible for most of the Train-the-Trainers programme, conducted 4 full days of training while Mid Sweden University conducted 2 days of Train-the-Trainers. After these Train-the-Trainers sessions, we received feedback and development suggestions from all partners and revised the development HAND:ET programme. The procedure of sending out the HAND:ET programme for review and revision was repeated until the HAND:ET training programme was completed following the actual implementation, at which point we also came to know how the different parts had worked in practice. The process is presented in Figure 1.

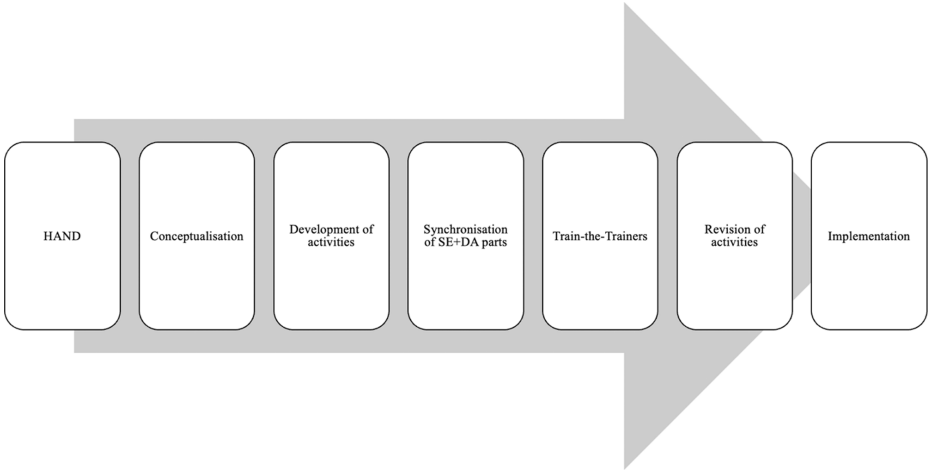

Figure 1: The Process of Developing the HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Programme

Train-the-Trainers

The training of the HAND:ET trainers consisted of the modules described above plus an 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction course. We engaged in many considerations regarding how to deliver the training in the best possible way in the specific circumstances of that time. Some of the content in

the programme presented, especially the mindfulness part, was new for some trainers and COVID-19 was still a reality that we had to deal with. As a result of COVID-19, it was agreed to do the Train-the-Trainers online. We gained a lot of experience during this period with respect to online teaching. How could we teach to develop relational competence while not being together physically? How could we facilitate exercises that involved several people engaging actively with each other? And how could we perceive the personal responses of the trainers, in particular while they were challenged by the exercises and the approaches? We devised a hybrid solution where the national teams were physically together, being able to do the exercises together and joining online with the other national teams and the teams that were conducting the training (more information from the Train-the-Trainers and trainers' perspectives may be found in Chapter 4).

Development of the HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Manual – Adaptation and Fidelity

The feedback we obtained after the Train-the-Trainers training from the prospective trainers showed they would need precise descriptions of both the exercises and objectives for each exercise. This led us to prepare a very detailed HAND:ET manual (available at www.handinhand.si). We provided very thorough descriptions and examples on how to guide the different exercises and every module is set up as a timetable with specific exercises and time slots. This is very unlike the Scandinavian educational tradition, which is based on the teacher's ability to teach a given content in her or his way based on individual didactic thoughts building on contexts and the teacher's professional knowledge.

We chose to prepare the specific descriptions due to the factors mentioned earlier. While the online training was shown to work, at the same time it revealed limited possibilities for more informal follow-up and elaborating together on the process and the content. The fact the content was new to some of the trainers was another reason for preparing the specific descriptions. Optimally, learning new content should be digested over a longer period with an option to obtain feedback, and it needs to be repeated.

Nonetheless, it is important to have other traditions in mind, especially while devising a programme that targets five different countries and cultures. During the implementation period, we obtained different feedback from the countries implementing the field trial regarding exercises that were difficult to execute in the way outlined in the manual. We also received feedback on specific words that might be understood with other connotations than we had initially thought of. This is important feedback and shows the dialectic between adaptation and fidelity. These concepts were treated thoroughly in the HAND

project where the same kind of difficulties were encountered (Nielsen, 2020). Durlak emphasises that the implementation is crucial. He writes: "We should not think about SEL programs as being effective; it is well-implemented SEL programs that are effective" (Durlak et al., 2015, p. 12). Every programme has to be adapted in a way that is appropriate for the group and the culture where it is being taught. It is through the person who teaches the programme and that person's relation competence that the programme comes to life and can have the possibility of making a change. That is part of the content of the HAND:ET programme and this must be clear and embodied in the persons who teach the programme. More details about the process of implementation may be found in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Conclusion

In summary, we believe that the 3-year process led to many lessons being learned. These lessons are the outcome of our conversations, reading and discussions, as well as the reflections we received in the entire HAND:ET project group, not least by implementing the development programme with the teachers and the conversations we had with the teachers over a year. We see our main conclusion as about utilising the concept of empathic curiosity as a tool to create more inclusive classrooms and communities by being able to understand oneself and others better. By directing empathic curiosity inwards through practices like mindfulness, teachers can increase their self-awareness and self-acceptance. This in turn can increase the teacher's ability to be authentically curious about others through dialogue to understand the people near them and others who are still unknown. Our belief is that teachers who have achieved these insights will create inclusive classroom climates based on empathic curiosity. We conclude the chapter by arguing for the importance of including SEDA in teacher education and in-service training for practising teachers. We consider empathic curiosity as described in this chapter to be an excellent tool in efforts to empower teachers.

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Implementation

Chapter 4

Train-the-Trainers and Implementation of the HAND:ET System in Five Countries from the Trainers' Perspective

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Abstract

This chapter describes the Train-the-Trainers (TTT) process along with the implementation of the HAND in HAND: Empowering Teacher Across Europe to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity Awareness Career Challenges ("HAND:ET") programme in five different countries from the perspective of trainers. Before HAND:ET was implemented in the field trials, all trainers participated in TTT preparations consisting of a full 6 days of training and an 8-week online course in Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction ("MBSR"). The field trial consisted of 6 days with teachers and other school staff on-site and 5 online meetings. Throughout the implementation, the trainers were given supervision as a way of supporting them in the process. The TTT process followed the methodology of mindfulness-based intervention teaching assessment criteria ("MBI:TAC"). To follow the progress and stay informed about difficulties in the field, the trainers completed a trainer questionnaire after each session. The results show that they were prepared, flexible and had succeeded in creating a supportive and adaptable training environment that addresses teachers' unique needs and challenges. Despite some challenges and varying opportunities for teachers in the different countries to participate, nearly all of the sessions worked well or very well according to the trainers. The work atmosphere was reported to be good or very good at almost every session. It is concluded that the trainers in the HAND:ET project were well prepared both theoretically and practically, with this constituting an important reason for the implementation's success.

Keywords: Train-the-Trainers, Implementation, Mindfulness-Based Interventions, Relational Competence

Introduction

The HAND in HAND: Empowering Teacher Across Europe to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity Awareness Career Challenges (HAND:ET) system and

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programme were implemented in five countries. The field trial countries were Portugal (ULisboa), Croatia (ISRZ), Slovenia (ERI), Austria (Uni Graz) and Sweden (MIUN) (see Chapter 1 in this volume). In this chapter, we first describe the process of preparing the HAND:ET trainers before looking at their impressions while implementing HAND:ET in schools.

The experimental approach (for more, see Chapter 1) taken by HAND:ET makes it important to ensure that the HAND:ET programme and implementation of the HAND:ET system were as similar as possible in the participating countries. Namely, the content had to be the same, which called for a manual that describes the framework, core concepts, methods, and tools (see Chapter 3). It was also important that the process of introducing the content was as similar as possible.

Research shows that intellectual and pedagogical change requires ongoing regular support for an extended period going beyond the time when the innovations or change were first introduced (Durlak, 2016). Change relies on professional development activities being of sufficient duration, including both the time over which the activity is spread, and the number of hours spent on the activity (Cohen & Hill, 2001; Desimone, 2009; Supovitz & Turner, 2000). Similarly, teachers report greater success after completing longer-lasting programmes or interventions (Timperley et al., 2007). As shown in Chapter 3 (this volume), the HAND:ET system was designed to accommodate this by making a HAND:ET programme lasting one school year featuring ongoing regular activities and supervision spread out from beginning to end of the school year. The HAND:ET system also uses a whole-team approach and, besides teachers at the same school, involves principals and school counsellors. Here again, research confirms that a critical point in teacher professional development is collective participation, i.e., the participation of teachers from the same school, grade or department (Desimone, 2009).

It is not only the content itself that matters, but how it is understood in the first step by the trainers and in the second step by the participating teachers. It is not enough to simply possess a manual. It is just as important to develop competencies that enable the programme to be conducted with quality. A necessary element in the implementation process was accordingly to train the trainers.

Train-the-Trainers

Preparing the HAND:ET trainers was an important step in the HAND:ET project. The HAND:ET programme's content for the teachers entails a combination of mindfulness practices, e.g., body scan and yoga, dialogue exercises, reflections, and playful exercises, with the purpose of shifting gear and the atmosphere in the group and to build a group connection.

The HAND:ET programme aims to develop social and emotional competencies and diversity awareness (SEDA competencies). We selected CASEL's definition of social and emotional competencies as part of our core concepts (see Chapter 1). Mindfulness is an important element as a tool for developing the SEDA competencies and HAND:ET as such can be defined as a mindfulness-based intervention (Cullen, 2011). We used knowledge and the research concerning what is important while practising mindfulness as a guideline for how to train the trainers who later conducted the HAND:ET programme for groups of teachers, principals, and school counsellors. Piet et al. (2016) point out a major risk while conducting mindfulness-based interventions; namely, that the quality and integrity in the programme could be lost if the trainers were not properly trained. Crane and Kuyken (2019) stress that the teacher or trainer is the key in delivering mindfulness-based programmes. Mindfulness-based interventions have grown rapidly to become a worldwide phenomenon (Piet et al., 2016). In this period of upscaling and to secure quality implementations of the programmes, a teaching assessment criteria tool called Mindfulness based intervention teaching assessment criteria (MBI:TAC) has been developed (Crane & Kuyken, 2019).

Even though the HAND:ET programme can be defined as a mindfulness-based intervention (MBI), it also contains other elements like dialogues, reflections and group activities. Nevertheless, we found the MIB:TAC assessment tool to be useful as a guideline covering the whole HAND:ET programme because it consists of domains that may be seen as important teacher competencies beyond simply addressing MBI.

The tool covers six domains and competencies that are important for being a good teacher/trainer and to deliver good quality in the interventions:

1. Coverage, pacing and organisation of the session curriculum – knowing the content of a programme and the capacity to have an overview of the content of a programme and being able to keep a common thread running through the programme, preparing the group for the next step and referring back to what was presented in the previous sessions. This domain also covers the ability to present content and do exercises with a sense of timing and pace that suits the group.
2. Relational skills – the competence to relate to all participants in a way that is constructive for the participants' development and their understanding of the programme. It also means being able to respond to any reluctance and resistance from the participants in a way that is helpful, not defensive.
3. Guiding mindfulness practices – addresses how to guide a practice or an exercise. This concerns being able to guide the participants into the present moment and doing the practice at the same time as with the participants.

4. Embodiment of mindfulness – to embody mindfulness means to be what is being taught. It is knowing the exercises because the teacher/trainer has done them him/herself. It is recognising different experiences and how the exercises can have different impacts on the teacher/trainers' own experience with the exercises.
5. Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching – this domain addresses a certain way of summing up after completing an exercise. It is a way of using the participants' experiences as gateways leading to the programme's framework and insights.
6. Holding of a group, learning environment (ibid., p. 7) – this domain can be translated as classroom management. It covers the ability to create a safe and developing learning environment and lead the group in a way that makes it possible to unfold the programme's content through exercises, practices and other activities.

The Trainers

The trainers involved in the HAND:ET project had experience and theoretical knowledge in either psychology, education or the broader social sciences area and held suitable teacher competencies. There were eight trainers in Slovenia with a background in psychology or pedagogy. In Croatia, there were eight trainers with a background in psychology or sociology. In Austria, there were seven trainers, all with a master's degree in topics related to the HAND:ET programme. There were nine trainers in Portugal, mainly having passed exams in psychology. In Sweden, there were six trainers, all with a background in teacher education. Two of the Swedish trainers left the HAND:ET project and two new ones were thus contracted. Additional training days were provided for these two.

The trainers already held competencies in the areas of organising a curriculum (1), holding a group (6) and knew about the importance of relational skills in practice and theory (2) from their initial education and from other training and experiences. In the TTT, we chose to focus on domains 3, 4 and 5 and included domain 2 as well since relational skills also formed part of the HAND:ET programme content.

The Process

The Programme for the Trainers

The HAND:ET TTT programme consists of:

- 2 days of training focusing on social and emotional competencies (Module 1);
- a Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course (led by Aarhus University, 2023) (Module 2);
- 2 days of training focusing on social and emotional competencies (Module 3); and
- 2 days of training focusing on diversity awareness (Module 4).

The training was conducted prior to the HAND:ET system and programme being implemented. During the implementation, the HAND:ET system consisted of regular supervision of the trainers.

Module 1

The content of the first two days was to learn and be acquainted with the framework of social and emotional learning. These days covered CASEL's description and definition of social and emotional competencies. This was conducted both theoretically and practically. The competencies needed to be both understood on a cognitive level and be embodied.

Module 2

The next part of the training was the MBSR course. MBSR is an eight-week programme (Kabat-Zinn, 1996) with a session lasting 2.5-3 hours every week and one full day in the middle. Between the sessions, the participants practise 1 hour of various mindfulness practices every day. We chose to make this part of the training programme to allow the trainers to obtain an embodied experience of mindfulness, getting to know the challenges and resources in the mindfulness practices from their own experience. The MBSR course was conducted by trainers from Aarhus University who had been trained to teach MBSR.

The first two modules chiefly focused on numbers 1 and 4 of the MBI:TAC: acquiring knowledge regarding the content of the HAND:ET programme as the background needed for *Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum* and *Embodiment of mindfulness*. No. 2, Relational *skills*, is indirectly addressed because relational skills are part of the content of the programme. No. 5: *Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching* is also indirectly addressed since it is an element in the MBSR course. The future

trainers get to know this way of interactive communication and sharing in the group by trying it themselves.

Module 3

The next two days of TTT continued the lessons of the previous modules, now with a focus on domain no. 3: *How to guide a mindfulness practice* – and other activities in the HAND:ET programme. Included in this training is a focus on how to end an exercise and how to collect and sum up the experiences of the group after completing an exercise in reflection. This part addressed the competency: *Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching*.

Relational skills and *Embodiment of mindfulness* were also trained on these days since these competencies are embedded in and necessary for guiding the practice of mindfulness. The trainers were presented with the 60:40 concept; namely, an important element in training relational skills or relational competency (see Chapter 3). The definition of relational competency used in the HAND:ET system emphasises the importance of a teacher taking responsibility for whatever they bring into a relationship, e.g., emotions, values, or preconceptions of other people (Juul & Jensen, 2005; 2017). Before being able to take responsibility for, e.g., one's own emotions, it is necessary to know that they are there and how we react to specific situations and events. The 60:40 concept describes an attitude where one's attention is divided between oneself and the surroundings (other or the situation) with the arbitrary figures of 60 percent attention to oneself, more specifically one's body or breath, and 40 percent to the surroundings, especially other people. The training contained both awareness of the body or breath and at the same time developing a sense and understanding of other people. The importance of self-awareness as part of a relationship is underscored by increasing the percentage of attention paid to oneself. While the numbers cannot of course be measured, they have an educational intention. When leading a group of people as a trainer, it is important to have self-awareness. Being unaware of your own state emotionally as well as physically can generate reactions that are not suitable for the situation or in tune with the other person or the group. This means that being aware of oneself is an essential starting point for self-management.

This practice contains several of the MBI:TAC domains. Some of these have already been mentioned: *Guiding mindfulness practices* and *Embodiment of mindfulness*. *Relational skills* are at least equally important. Being aware of oneself in a relationship with others gives trainers the possibility to attune themselves to the group participants. Being aware of one's impact on a relationship provides an opportunity to change one's reactions to help and direct the participants in the best possible way. Attention to the body and breathing also

helps remain present and focused and thereby being able to sense any impulses when they occur; not only to control them, but also to sense the energy in the impulses and to harness this energy in a creative way in both the relationship and personal development. This refers to relational skills.

Module 4

The last two days of the training concentrated on diversity awareness. Important concepts around intersectionality were discussed. This was followed by discussions on gender, ethnicity, social class, disability and other grounds for disadvantages and discrimination. Questions about who holds power and what the situation is in each classroom were raised. A clear connection to the first four days of training was established. To understand discrimination and structures and cultures that make a difference between pupils in school and people in society, you must understand your own role in this.

The Format

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated restrictions (e.g., bans on international travel) led to the decision that all the TTT modules would be conducted as live online training. Only the MBSR course was initially planned to be online, with all the other modules planned to be in face-to-face format. In the process of transiting to the online setting, different challenges and resources were experienced.

We learned that the format and the online structure worked well with the theoretical presentations and with the MBI:TAC competencies *Guiding a mindfulness practice* and the *Embodiment of mindfulness*. Looking at CASEL's definition of the social and emotional competencies, it was particularly the training in self-awareness that was fruitful and meaningful training online. *Relational skills* proved more difficult. Many of the practices and exercises targeting this domain had been constructed as meetings and interactions between participants in the same room. Some of these activities could be done online, or at least it was possible to adapt them, e.g., activities where the focus was on listening to another person's experience or perspective in a situation. It was also possible to train with regard to the 60:40 concept while listening to another person.

We continuously worked with the online format to explore what was possible. We adapted to the situation with a hybrid setting where the national teams of trainers met face-to-face and all the different teams met online, including the trainers of trainers. Various learning material was created to optimise the hybrid process, e.g., filmed instructions concerning exercises in movement that showed how to do the activities.

The Supervision

The last part of the Train-the-Trainers programme for the trainers was supervision, which was occurring while they were implementing the HAND:ET system and programme with teachers in their countries. The supervision was led by the partners from Aarhus University who together with MIUN had developed the HAND:ET programme (see Chapter 3 in this volume) and who had conducted the MBSR course. Supervision was both mandatory and optional. Every national team was to have at least two supervision sessions in their teams and on top of that every trainer could ask for individual supervisions if they encountered challenges or just wanted to share and reflect on their teaching practice.

The structure of the supervisions followed the form developed by Jensen and used in the previous HAND programme as a way of developing social and emotional competencies as well as relational competence (Jensen et al., 2018, p. 105). The supervision entails four steps:

1) Describe a challenging situation (in a relationship with someone), as precisely as possible.
2) What happens to you in this situation? Your feelings? Thoughts? Bodily sensations? How do you react? (self-awareness)
3) How can you understand the other participant in the situation and his/her reactions? (social-awareness and relational skills)
4) What can you do to make the situation more developing and good for all participants? (social awareness, self-management, relational skills, responsible decision-making)

One person is being supervised; the rest of the team is listening. The supervisor listens and asks questions and responds as appropriately and empathically as possible.

Supervision is an important part of the HAND:ET system in terms of helping the trainers to recognise the prejudices, preconceptions and behavioural patterns that are activated while under pressure and, as such, also a way of training the MBI:TAC competencies, notably *Relational skills*. It is a way of bringing awareness to the trainer's part of any given relationship and to assist the trainer to find the best way of meeting a participant and creating a good relationship with the single teacher and retaining awareness of what is necessary for the whole group of teachers. The supervision also worked as a way of adjusting and attuning the HAND:ET system and programme in a way such that it could be adapted in the best possible way for each different group while at the same time keeping the fidelity of the HAND:ET programme in mind.

The Implementation of HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers from the Trainers' Perspective

Preparations for the HAND:ET field trial intervention in schools began at the end of 2021 by identifying schools willing to participate in the HAND:ET project. A random selection of schools was made in terms of being implementation schools or control schools. The field trial implementation of HAND:ET took place in all of the countries during the 2022/2023 school year. For teachers, there were six full days onsite and five online meetings. School leaders had two days onsite and one online meeting. More information regarding the implementation is provided in Chapter 5. Table 1 describes the positioning of the TTT within the timeframe of HAND:ET implementation, namely, the schedule for the onsite training days and supporting online meetings.

Table 1: The Placement of the TTT and the Implementation of HAND:ET in the Schools

	2021	2022	2023
Q1		Train-the-Trainers	HAND:ET Implementation
Q2			
Q3	Train-the-Trainers MBSR course	HAND:ET Implementation	
Q4			

All the countries followed the same schedule with a minor variation concerning the full day training in spring 2023. A detailed schedule may be found in Chapter 5.

Research Aim

The aim of this section is to describe and analyse the implementation of HAND:ET from the trainers' perspective. The implementation lasted the whole school year in Austria, Croatia, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden. The school year is long and there might have been differences between countries, along with variations in the pace or timing of the implementation. The implementation was planned as a mix of online and face-to-face meetings and in this section, we focus on a comparison of these two formats and across the countries from the trainers' perspective.

Method

The trainers completed a questionnaire (containing a set of closed answers as well as open-ended questions) developed in the HAND:ET project after each session. Questions were: How did the trainers perceive the sessions? What was the atmosphere like during the training? Was it possible to transfer the HAND:ET programme to local training according to the plan and timing? A total of 563 answers was provided (78 from Austria, 87 from Croatia, 242 from Portugal, 85 from Slovenia, 71 from Sweden).

Findings

The answers are to be compared in terms of mean values for the closed questions and combined with the open-ended questions. The observed differences are only illustrative and must be observed together with the open questions since they were not statistically tested. Results arising from the HAND:ET Trainer Questionnaire are given below with figures showing the means of the closed question followed by a summary of the answers to the open-ended questions on the same theme.

Table 2: Trainers' views on how the HAND:ET training was perceived across the countries. Means (and standard deviation) from four questions in the trainer questionnaire.

Country	What was the work atmosphere like during the training session? 1. Very poor 2. Poor 3. Okay 4. Good 5. Very good	Regarding the content taught, how far was it possible to run the training session according to the plan? 1. Totally 2. For the most part 3. Partly 4. A little 5. Not at all	Regarding the timing, how far was it possible to run the training session according to the schedule? 1. Absolutely 2. Mostly 3. Partly 4. A little 5. Not at all	Overall, how was the session received? 1. Very well 2. Well 3. So-so 4. Not so well 5. Not well at all
Austria	4.33 (0.75)	1.62 (0.49)	1.59 (0.52)	1.60 (0.63)
Croatia	4.52 (0.64)	1.68 (0.00)	1.70 (0.61)	1.47 (0.55)
Portugal	4.29 (0.46)	2.00 (0.44)	2.01 (0.09)	2.04 (0.19)
Slovenia	4.35 (0.91)	1.25 (0.44)	1.38 (0.54)	1.58 (0.56)
Sweden	4.41 (0.58)	1.60 (0.49)	1.66 (0.51)	1.55 (0.53)
Total	4.36 (0.63)	1.74 (0.46)	1.77 (0.48)	1.76 (0.51)

An overall pattern emerged with positive answers for all questions (e.g., near 5 for question one), and around 2 or lower for the other three questions (e.g., between mostly and absolutely on question three). Answers from Portugal are nevertheless a little different, with a lower mean for the work atmosphere and higher for the rest. There is small or no variation in results over the implementation phase, with positive statements seen throughout the whole period. In the analyses, descriptive country comparison and comparisons between online and onsite modes are made.

Overall Perception of the Implementation of the HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Programme – Trainers' Perspective

Figure 1 shows that most responses indicated the sessions were received *very well* or *well.*

In Portugal, the answers mostly indicated *well* for almost all sessions. In the other countries, there were almost the same numbers of answers *very well* and *well.* It is interesting that there was only one session in a single country that the trainers reported had been received *not so well.* The trainers answered the open-ended questions and a summary of the answers is provided below.

The first open question was: *What are the most important insights that you as a trainer take with you from this session*? Most sessions were successful, with the trainers reporting that the teachers' feedback was generally positive. The trainers emphasised the importance of flexibility, adaptability and maintaining a positive atmosphere throughout the HAND:ET training programme. They highlighted the importance of being prepared yet also being flexible, creating a supportive and adaptable learning environment, addressing teachers' unique needs and challenges. The trainers reported participants as having shown interest in understanding the connection between emotions and memory in the context of brain functioning. They reported that preparation for various situations was essential since unexpected emotional triggers arise during certain training exercises. It was important to patiently wait for participants to share their views and thoughts rather than immediately starting to talk. It was also important to accept participants for who they are, even if they were initially negative, which can lead to positive conversions within the group. Face-to-face training was preferred by the teachers as it fostered their greater involvement and motivation. The online sessions posed challenges, including teacher absences and technical issues, yet also had benefits, such as providing reminders of the programme principles. The mindfulness exercises were effective, even in the online settings.

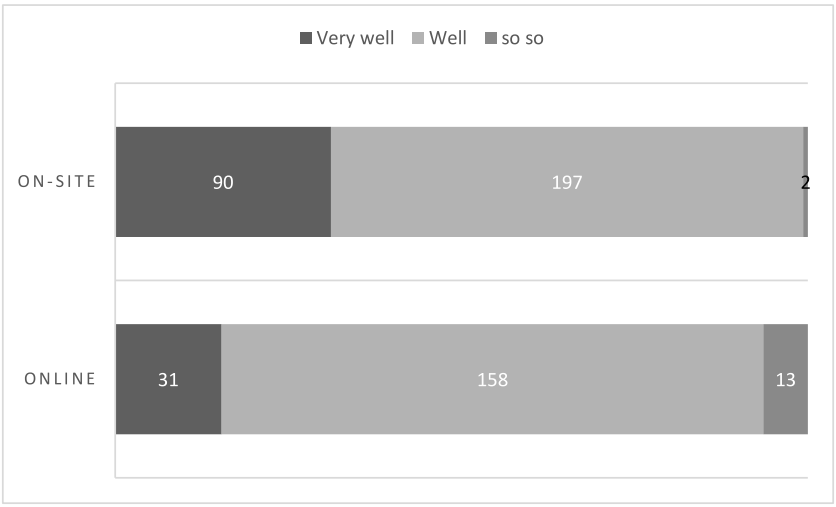

Figure 1: Trainers' views after each session concerning *How was the session received? A comparison of online / onsite settings*

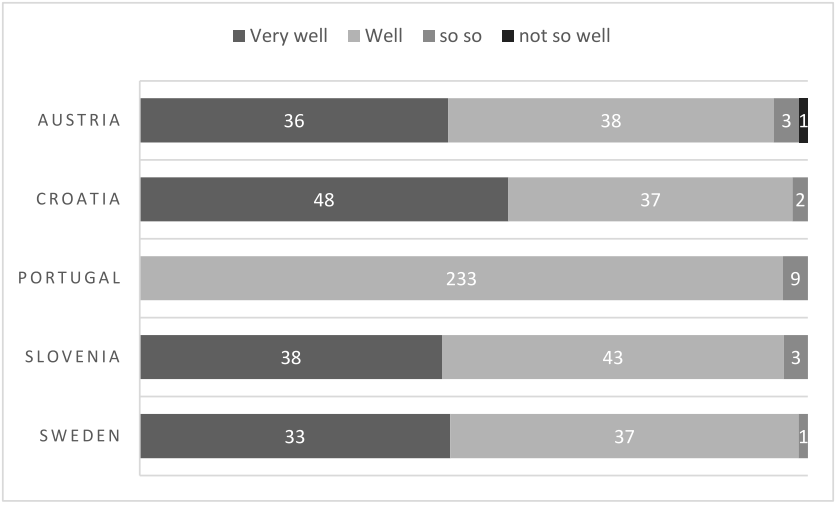

Figure 2: Trainers' views after each session concerning *How was the session received across the countries*

The Work Atmosphere during HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Implementation – From the Perspective of Trainers

Most of the trainings had a good or very good work atmosphere according to the trainers. There was a slightly better result for the on-site-training.

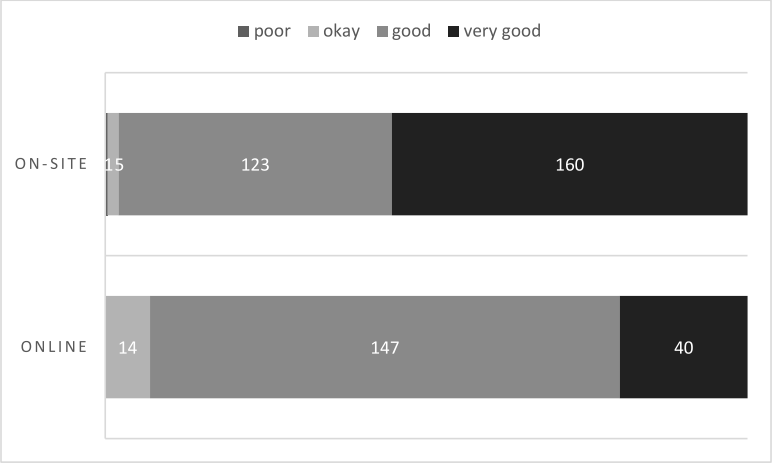

Figure 3: The trainers' views after each session concerning *What was the work atmosphere like during the training sessions when comparing the on-site / online settings*

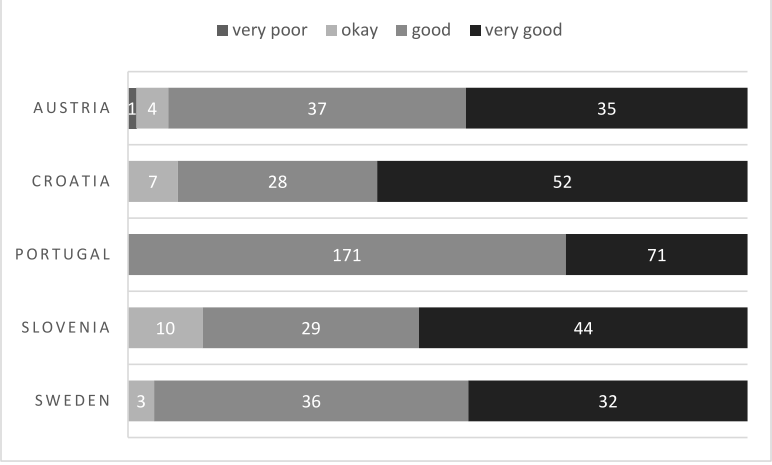

Figure 4: The trainers' views after each session concerning *What was the work atmosphere like during the training sessions across the countries*

Most of the training had a good or very good work atmosphere in all the countries, according to the trainers. In addition, *What worked well and what were the challenges?* was asked as an open-ended question. We now report a

summary of the answers. The trainers stressed that it was important to create an atmosphere of trust and authenticity to encourage open discussions among the participants.

Positive aspects of the HAND:ET programme as reported by the trainers included:

- Participants engaging in the discussion and working well as a group, especially in the second half of the day.
- Many openness and diversity awareness reflections.
- Participants expressing their gratitude for and enjoyment of the programme.
- Teachers being motivated and actively participating in the discussions.

Trainers reported challenges and negative aspects of the HAND:ET programme, including:

- Some participants were tired in the morning sessions.
- Minor technical issues and disruptions, largely related to Internet connectivity.
- Resistance and fatigue during certain exercises, particularly long reflection tasks.
- Some participants left early or did not fully engage in the exercises.
- The need for clearer communication about the programme's content and expectations.

Despite these challenges, there was an overall sense of positive feedback and a harmonious atmosphere in the group, with participants appreciating the opportunity to develop their SEDA competencies.

The Timing of the HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Programme – From the Trainers' Perspective

In general, the HAND:ET programme sessions could overall be run according to the planned content and timing. There were only minor variations among the countries, and all followed the schedule with six full days on site and five online meetings. More details are given in Chapter 5.

The planned content could be taught totally or for the most part in both the on-site and online settings.

The planned content could be taught totally or for the most part in all countries. The trainers in Portugal were a little more reluctant yet still positive regarding the possibility of running most of the training according to the plan.

According to the open-ended question about the appropriateness of the content for the participants and the need for adaptations during the HAND:ET training, various insights emerged concerning the appropriateness of the con-

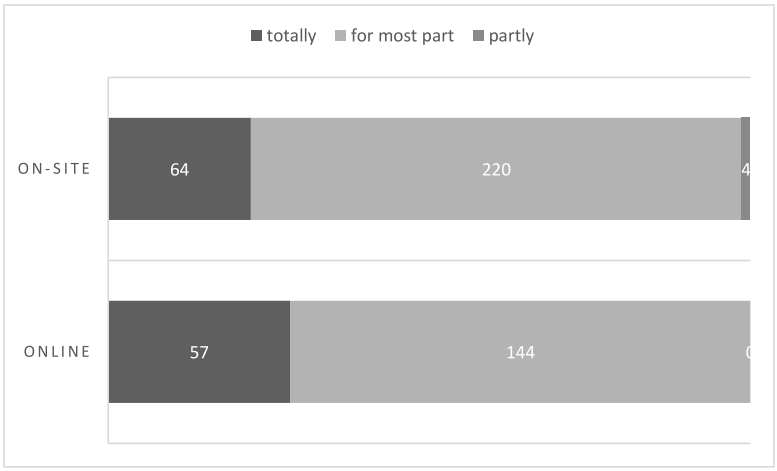

Figure 5: The trainers' views after each session concerning *Regarding the taught content, to what extent was it far was it possible to run the sessions according to the plan? A comparison between the on-site / online settings*

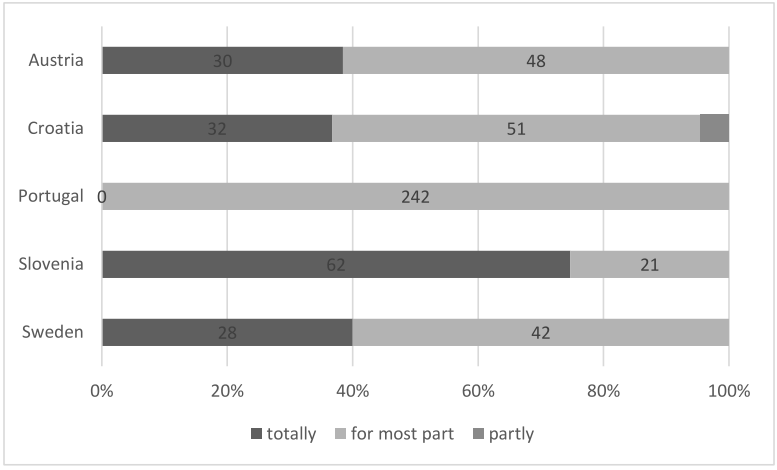

Figure 6: The trainers' views after each session *Regarding the taught content, to what extent was was it possible to run the sessions according to the plan across the countries*

tent and the need for adaptations during the HAND:ET programme training. Below is a summary of the answers.

- Overall, the programme was well structured, allowing participants to connect the theory with the practical exercises. Many participants reported a positive change in their mindset after each session.
- The training content was adapted to suit the mood and needs of the group. For example, the type of exercise was determined by the group's mood and

size. Some exercises needed slight changes to account for cultural differences and to ensure they were culturally sensitive.
– The online training sometimes lacked variety and involved repetitive structures. As a result, trainers made small modifications to keep the participants engaged.
– Some participants felt the need for more content directly linked to their everyday practice to keep them motivated. Trainers often modified the yoga and mindfulness exercises to maintain engagement and prevent boredom. Participants appreciated the additional theory and practical insights related to teachers and schools in the diversity awareness section.

Overall, the answers highlight the need for flexibility and adaptation in HAND:ET programmes to meet the specific needs and preferences of the participants. The trainers aimed to strike a balance between theory and the practical exercises and make the content engaging and relevant.

In only a few sessions was the schedule followed only partly in terms of timing. All the other sessions followed most or all the schedule.

The trainers in Portugal were more reluctant also regarding this question. They nevertheless reported that the schedule had mostly been followed. According to the last open-ended question about the content's appropriateness for the participants and the need for adaptations during the training, the trainers pointed out that the reflections took longer after the participants had become more familiar with each other. The theoretical content about competencies took longer than planned, and sometimes there was too little time for pairs to make reflections. The online sessions faced time constraints due to technical issues

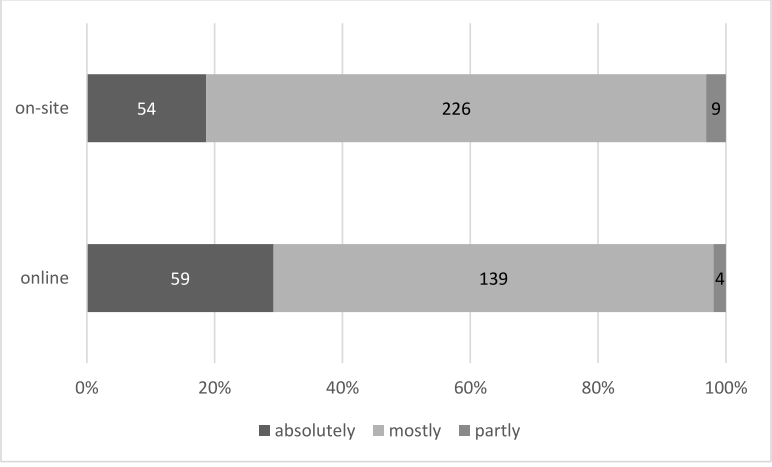

Figure 7: The trainers' view after each session *Regarding the timing, to what extent was it possible to run the session according to the schedule, comparisons of the on-site and online settings*

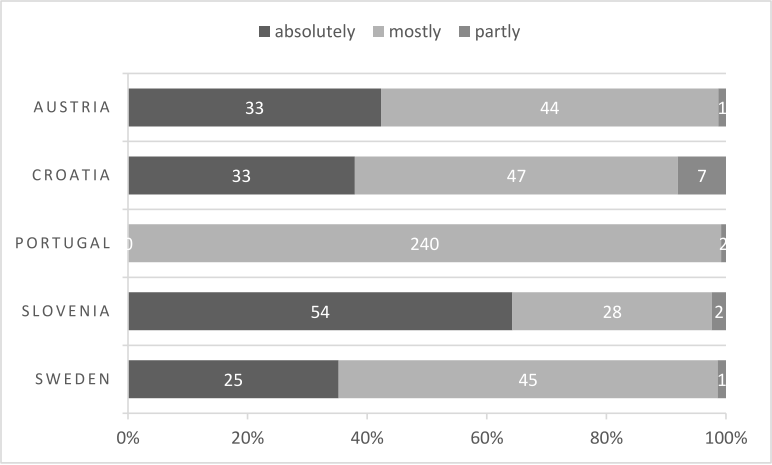

Figure 8: The trainers' view after each session *Regarding the timing, to what extent was it possible to run the session according to the schedule across the countries*

and the need for the initial setup. In general, the TTT training programme seemed to require some adjustments in timing to accommodate the needs and engagement of the participants. Some exercises had more discussion and reflection than anticipated, which impacted the overall schedule.

Conclusion

Before the HAND:ET field trials commenced, there had been 1.5 years of preparation. This included the selection of theory and development of the theoretical parts together with the development of the activities and other HAND:ET contents (see also Chapter 3 in this volume). It also included practical training with all HAND:ET trainers in the programme, while in countries where a change in trainers had occurred extra practical and theoretical training was arranged with the new trainers. In summary, the implementation of the HAND:ET system and programme was successful in every participating country. Despite some challenges and varying opportunities for teachers in different countries to participate, nearly all the sessions worked well or very well, according to the HAND:ET trainers. The trainers underscored the importance of being prepared and flexible, creating a supportive and adaptable training environment, and addressing teachers' unique needs and challenges. This is in line with research about the need for teachers and trainers to be adequately trained and the need for preparation as well as flexibility (Piet et al. 2016). Important lessons that arose are that it is important to be patient and wait for a teacher who is hesitat-

ing. The work atmosphere was reported to be good or very good at almost all sessions. Most sessions could also be run according to the planned content as well as the timing. The online sessions were reported to be more challenging, albeit most of these also ran smoothly. Especially the mindfulness and self-awareness exercises worked well online. The HAND:ET programme was well based on theories, practices and methods, while the trainers were well prepared before the HAND:ET programme started. This together provided the grounds for the successful implementation of the HAND:ET programme in each of the five countries.

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Chapter 5

Implementation of the HAND:ET System in Five Countries

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Abstract

The aim of this chapter is to describe how the HAND: Empowering Teachers ("HAND:ET") system was implemented in five countries – Austria, Croatia, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden – based on quality assurance visits conducted at about the halfway point of the project by the University of Graz as part of the internal quality monitoring for the HAND:ET project. Both the implementation and evaluation of the HAND:ET system were viewed as central and highly important within the project. Quality assurance and risk management measures were thus also regarded as crucial for preserving and enhancing the quality of these processes in the project and the project outcomes. The main objectives of the quality assurance visits, which were conducted online as guideline-based interviews and qualitatively analysed, were (1) to shed light on general and country-specific implemental challenges along with positive experiences; (2) to ensure the process was proceeding as intended; and (3) to ensure comparability of the evaluation results across the participating countries. In this chapter, we report on the implementation timeline, process, and framework in the participating countries, along with impressions and feedback from partners, trainers and participants, and the lessons learned following the quality assurance visits. In addition, success factors and possible challenges for future implementation of the HAND:ET system are highlighted. The results show that the different implementation steps generally went according to plan in all participating countries. Potential risks that had been identified by the project partners before the implementation started often did not occur and those challenges that did arise were mostly able to be dealt with efficiently. However, some deviations and differences appeared in the participating countries, typically due to country-specific reasons like different school and education systems, holiday times, etc. These reasons should still be explored in greater detail and must be considered while interpreting the evaluation results and future implementations.

Keywords: Programme Implementation, Quality Assurance, Quality Assurance Visits, Risk Management, Monitoring, Teacher Training

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Introduction

This chapter describes the implementation of the Hand: Empowering Teachers ("HAND:ET") system in the context of field trials ("FTs") during the 2022/2023 school year in the five consortium countries Austria, Croatia, Portugal, Slovenia, and Sweden (the "FT countries") as part of *HAND IN HAND: Empowering Teachers Across Europe to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity-Related Career Challenges* (HAND:ET). The HAND:ET system consists of an onsite training programme ("HAND:ET programme") and online meetings that are held between training days to provide continuous monitoring and support to the participants. The project followed a whole-school, whole-year approach. While teachers were the prime target group and were offered more comprehensive training (consisting of 6 full onsite training days and five online meetings during 1 entire school year), school leaders and other school staff were also addressed and offered shorter training made up of 2 onsite training days (1 day per school semester) and one online meeting in between.

Implementing a training programme simultaneously across multiple countries is a topic that implementation science has addressed in more depth as it concentrates on how evidence-based interventions can be put into practice to have a positive impact on the patient or participant (in a clinical or, in our case, pedagogical setting), or society (in a community setting). Effectiveness research, in comparison, although it overlaps significantly with implementation science, places greater emphasis on testing and adapting interventions in real-world environments and diverse groups to check whether they are meeting their intended goals and objectives (Goldstein & Olswang, 2017). Both approaches were relevant for implementation of the HAND:ET system since the aim was not simply to implement a training programme to foster teachers' social and emotional ("SE") competencies and their diversity awareness ("DA"), but to evaluate its effectiveness as well. Hence, possible effects of the HAND:ET system were investigated in an evaluation study using a quasi-experimental design (see also Chapters 1 and 7). Moreover, an additional objective of the implementation process was to generate insights to enable and facilitate future implementation of the HAND:ET system in other European countries.

Therefore, beside pre- and post-test analyses, the team needed to identify potential obstacles in the ongoing, further, or future implementation. Given that the FT countries vary in several aspects (education system, teacher education, etc.), monitoring the process of implementation closely was a major concern of quality assurance ("QA") in the project.[3] A qualitative approach was

3 As the Austrian project partner, the University of Graz was responsible for QA in the HAND:ET project throughout the entire project period. For a detailed description of QA during the project and its results, see Chapter 6.

taken to gain insight into the FT countries' specific experiences associated with implementing the HAND:ET system, and to facilitate comparisons among them. Hence, the team at the Uni Graz conducted online QA visits with all FT partners about halfway through the implementation process to record the status of the implementation. In this chapter, we describe the background, execution, objectives, and results of these QA visits in the context of implementing the HAND:ET system in the FT countries.

Implementation of the HAND:ET System

The HAND:ET system was developed within the project to support teachers, school leaders and other school staff by providing them with tools that make it easier to deal with the challenges and stressful situations in their professional lives. Each FT country sent five to nine future trainers to complete the Train-the-Trainers ("TTT") programme. The mentioned programme consisted of a certified 8-week course in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction ("MBSR") (Kabat-Zinn, 2013) and a 6-day training programme and additional online meetings as developed during the project and subsequently implemented as the HAND:ET system. The unified training was intended to not only teach the trainers the programme content but also help ensure that the HAND:ET system was implemented as similarly as possible in all participating countries. This would in turn assist with identifying and justifying different results that could be attributed to national background variables like differences in school and education systems, working conditions, or participants' general attitudes.

Timeline

The implementation followed the same timeframe in all FT countries: (1) participant acquisition; (2) random assignment of participating schools to national intervention groups ("IGs") and control groups ("CGs"); (3) pre-assessment in all groups; (4) implementation of the HAND:ET system in the IGs; and (5) post-assessment in all groups.

The acquisition of participants was planned to start in November 2021. Each FT country was asked to identify a total of 12–20 schools (more if needed) willing to participate in the HAND:ET project. Each school was expected to have 10–15 participants, resulting in a total of 200–300 participants per country. The German project partner *Leibniz Institute for Research and Information in Education* (DIPF) was then assigned with the task of randomly placing the participants in each FT country into an IG and a CG. This was scheduled for May 2022, giving both the FT partners and the participants sufficient time to prepare

and clarify all modalities of their participation before the implementation process began. The pre-assessment was scheduled for August or September 2022, depending on the different holidays and school start times in the FT countries. An online questionnaire was used as part of the pre-assessment that all participants as well as the trainers were to complete before the implementation started. Implementation of the HAND:ET system was to take place in all FT countries during the 2022/2023 school year. Table 1 shows the agreed schedule for the individual training days and supportive online meetings[4].

Table 1: HAND:ET System Implementation Schedule as Initially Planned

Timeline		Teachers	School Leaders*
August/September	2022	2 days onsite training	1 day onsite training
October	2022	online meeting (2 h)	
November	2022	online meeting (2 h)	
December	2022	1 day onsite training	
January	2023	online meeting (2 h)	online meeting (2 h)
February	2023	online meeting (2 h)	
March	2023	1 day onsite training	1 day onsite training**
April	2023	online meeting (2 h)	(1 day onsite training**)
May	2023	2 days onsite training	
		6 days of training + 5 × supervision/ monitoring	2 days of training + 1 × supervision/ monitoring

*and other school staff **the second training day was to be conducted in either March or April

The post-assessment entailed several parts. Within 2 weeks of the last day of training, all participants and trainers were to complete the online questionnaire. Further, within 4 weeks of the training having ended, focus group discussions were to be conducted with randomly selected participants from the individual training groups of the IG whereas assigned school coordinators from the schools in the CG had to complete an additional short questionnaire. Figure 1 displays the timeline planned for each implementation phase.

4 In the second half of the implementation process, there were some deviations from the agreed schedule in a few countries that were unforeseeable at the time of the QA visits. In response, the schedule was adjusted. The 2 final training days – originally planned to be held on consecutive days – were separated. The conduct of onsite training days 4 to 6 is now recommended to take place from February to May on individual days, with online meetings held in between (see also Chapter 3).

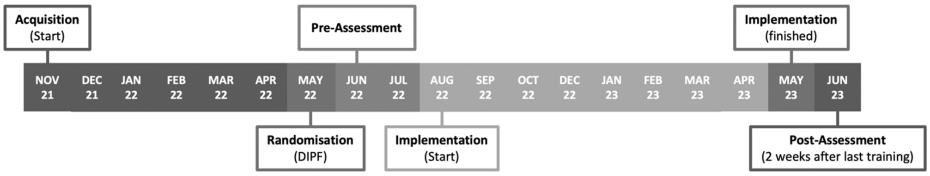

Figure 1: Planned Timeline of the HAND:ET Implementation Process

Quality Assurance Visits

Since challenges were expected in the implementation, monitoring the process played a prominent role in the QA. This was realised by conducting online QA visits with all FT partners.

Each FT country had to independently organise the participant acquisition, pre- and post-assessments as well as implementation of the HAND:ET system itself, coordinating a process that lasted about 1.5 years. This process involved the cooperation of all project partners and, for each FT country, the coordination of six to nine national trainers and 200 to 300 participants from various schools. To secure later comparability of the evaluation results, it was necessary to make sure that the implementation process in each country closely adhered to the specified timeline and other predetermined conditions.

Accordingly, "implementation" was a fixed agenda item for all regular project meetings during which the FT partners provided updates regarding the implementation status in their respective countries. Moreover, all FT partners were obliged to create an implementation plan in advance and to then continuously document the actual process in a report on implementation. Still, these reports were meant to capture only the key details and the project meetings could only provide a timeframe for each FT partner to briefly report on the implementation and to decide in the consortium on the next steps to be taken. This made it difficult to delve into emerging aspects, discuss them in detail, compare differences observed in various countries, and comprehend them. The QA visits acted as a way to: (1) shed more light on the implementation in terms of its country-specific and general challenges; and (2) assure that no major difficulties jeopardised the intended process and, consequently, the comparability of the evaluation results for the various FT countries.

QA visits are not precisely defined in the literature. The term is frequently used to describe visits by lecturers, trainers or instructors in the trainees' practical field (Hays, 2009). In essence, what is involved is a qualitative approach that can be utilised effectively as part of QA to examine what occurs during an implementation process, how the implementation is being carried out, why deviations are occurring and how they are being addressed, or for what reasons adaptations are being made. "Qualitative methods add value to implementation

science by helping to describe what is happening and why. Qualitative methods in implementation research are also increasingly oriented toward supporting practice and problem-solving" (Hamilton & Finley, 2020, p. 2). In the HAND:ET project, the QA visits provided insight into the challenges of the implementation plan and the deviations that had been experienced, so that necessary adjustments could then be made and the challenges and success factors for future implementation could be predicted.

Education Systems in the Field Trial Countries

Alongside evaluating the training programme's effectiveness, the future implementation and establishment of the HAND:ET system not only in the partner countries but in other European countries as well was a clear project objective. Basic country-specific circumstances must be considered while discussing evaluation results and when planning to implement the HAND:ET system in the future. These differences also played a critical role in the process of planning the implementation phase.

One topic that arose early on was the question of which target group should be addressed. The FT countries had to decide whether to include teachers from levels ISCED 1[5] and ISCED 2 in their participant recruitment or limit it to ISCED 1 teachers. Except for Austria, all FT countries have a single structure for these levels in their education system, which means there is no transition for students between primary and lower secondary education. In Austria, this transition occurs when students, after completing primary school, move to other school types upon entering lower secondary education (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2022). Due to this variation in organisation of the education system, the Austrian team decided to only include primary school teachers in their sample for the FT. All the other FT countries included teachers from both levels: ISCED 1 and ISCED 2.

Aims and Research Questions

While preparing and conducting the online QA visits, we focused on three areas: (1) expected and unexpected risks and challenges in the implementation process and how they were being addressed in the project; (2) both positive and negative experiences and insights gained from the implementation process;

5 ISCED is a globally recognised system for categorising educational programmes and associated qualifications based on their levels and subject areas. ISCED 1 stands for primary education and ISCED 2 for lower secondary education level (European Commission, 2023).

and (3) success factors that can be derived from it, together with challenges for further or future implementation of the HAND:ET programme in different countries.

For that purpose, we formulated the research questions below:

- Which deviations from the plan had occurred by the halfway point of implementing the HAND:ET system in the FT countries and which consequences did they hold?
- Which challenges or successes were being faced by the FT countries halfway through implementation of the HAND:ET system and how had they dealt with them?
- Which challenges and success factors for further and future implementation in the partner countries and elsewhere in Europe can be deduced?

Procedures and Instruments

Besides the QA visits conducted by the Uni Graz team, the current status of implementation in all FT countries was also discussed in the regularly held project meetings. In addition, all FT partners were required to prepare an implementation plan in advance and document the actual process in their respective countries in an implementation report. These processes and materials yielded additional valuable country-specific information and insights.

Quality Assurance Visits

Between December 2022 and January 2023, about halfway through the implementation process of the FT, Uni Graz conducted online QA visits to consult with members of the national teams overseeing the implementation.

The method chosen most closely resembles a guideline-based interview, as often used in qualitative research as a social science data collection method. The use of interview guiding questions ensures that, on one hand, various perspectives of the interviewees regarding a strict, predetermined theme are captured and, on the other, important information on other topics can be obtained through open conversation (Niebert & Gropengießer, 2014).

Given that the primary objective of the QA visits was to actively monitor implementation of the HAND:ET system within the FT countries, we developed a set of guiding questions structured around three key areas: (1) the current status of the implementation; (2) risk management strategies; and (3) lessons arising from the implementation process:

Current Status of the Implementation

1. How is implementation of the HAND:ET system going in your country?
2. To what extent has implementation of the HAND:ET system so far been according to plan?
    a. Have there been any deviations?
        i. If so, which?
        ii. If so, how did you deal with them?
3. What went/has been going well?
4. What was/has been perceived as difficult/challenging?
    a. How have you dealt with that?
5. Is there anything different in your country compared to the other countries where the HAND:ET system is being implemented?

Risk Management

6. Do you remember which risks you identified?
7. Which of these have come true?
8. How have you solved the issues?
9. Have there been any additional risks/challenges that you did not anticipate? Which?
    a. If so, how have you dealt with them?

Lessons Learned

10. What would you do differently next time?
11. Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

These questions were distributed to all partners in advance and formed the basis of the discussion during the QA visits.

In total, five online QA visits were held. We interviewed one to two members of four FT partner organisations: Educational Research Institute, Slovenia (ERI); Institute for Social Research Zagreb, Croatia (ISRZ); University of Lisbon, Portugal (ULisboa); and Mid Sweden University, Sweden (MIUN). These visits were video recorded. The QA visit with the Uni Graz team was conducted by the ERI, the project coordinator. Technical issues unfortunately meant that no recording was available. The Uni Graz team thus prepared a written summary of the points discussed. Table 2 shows the countries and partner institutions that were interviewed, the number of members in attendance as well as the dates and durations of the QA visits.

Table 2: National Teams, Dates, No. of Members Attending, and Durations of the QA Visits

National team	Date	Members in attendance	Duration
Croatia (ISRZ)	12.12.2022	2	1 h 17 min
Sweden (MIUN)	11.01.2023	2	56 min
Slovenia (ERI)	13.01.2023	2	55 min
Austria (Uni Graz)	24.01.2023	2	no recording/technical issues
Portugal (ULisboa)	25.01.2023	1	57 min

Qualitative Analysis. The recordings of the QA visits were transcribed, analysed and assessed utilising MAXQDA software in line with the qualitative content analysis method outlined by Rädiker and Kuckartz (2019). For greater clarity, we developed categories and codes (both deductively and inductively) within the dataset. Text segments from transcripts of the sessions were linked to their respective codes following the approach described by Heimgartner (2016). The following categories were then employed for the qualitative assessment of our research questions: (1) framework; (2) implementation process; (3) impressions/feedback; and (4) lessons learned.

The "framework" category refers to information concerning the framework conditions of the HAND:ET system where the following subcodes were formed: (1) trainers; (2) location and time; and (3) group information (IG/CG).

The "implementation process" category describes the actual implementation status, any deviations from the implementation plan, the risks that had been identified in advance as well as challenges that had arisen unexpectedly, and the measures taken to deal with them. In addition, positive developments could be reported. Three subcodes were developed for this purpose: (1) risks and risk management; (2) challenges and challenge management; and (3) positive experiences.

The category "impressions/feedback" refers to impressions and feedback from participants, trainers, and partners regarding implementation of the HAND:ET system. Two subcodes were formed: (1) participant motivation; and (2) general impressions and feedback.

The last category "lessons learned" summarises information about experiences with the implementation process and offers an outlook concerning what needs to be considered in future trainings.

Project Meetings

As mentioned, the topic of implementation was a fixed agenda item for all five project meetings ("PMs") that had already been held by the time the QA visits were being made. Under this agenda item, the FT partners regularly presented the current status of the implementation in their countries. The essence of

these presentations was captured in the corresponding minutes of the meetings, which were then circulated to all partners promptly after the meetings to allow anyone not able to attend to also be informed. This documentation provided valuable insights in advance with respect to possible questions and discussion points for the QA visits.

In September 2022, there was an additional online partner meeting dedicated to the implementation that had either recently started or was about to start in the FT countries. All FT partners had an opportunity to report on the present status of the implementation in their countries in a more detailed way than in the regular PMs. The information the FT partners provided in the partner meeting also served as a basis for preparing the QA visits.

National Documentation of Implementation

As described, all FT partners were required to document the implementation in their country in a report focused in particular on capturing deviations from the implementation plan. For this chapter, the information given in these reports was utilised to deepen or substantiate the results arising from the QA visits. In addition, data needed to create a timeline for the actual implementation process (see the subsection *Timeline*), including the second half of the implementation (the period between the QA visits and the end of the implementation) were obtained from the reports.

Results

In this section, the results of the QA visits are presented. To create the timeline, the results were cross-referenced and supplemented with information taken from the national implementation documentations.

Timeline

Overall, the different steps of the implementation ran according to plan.

Even though the participants were meant to be acquired between September 2021 and January 2022, in most FT countries it took longer to achieve the desired sample size. Therefore, the randomisations also took place at different times. Figure 2 presents the acquisition and randomisation details for the participating countries.

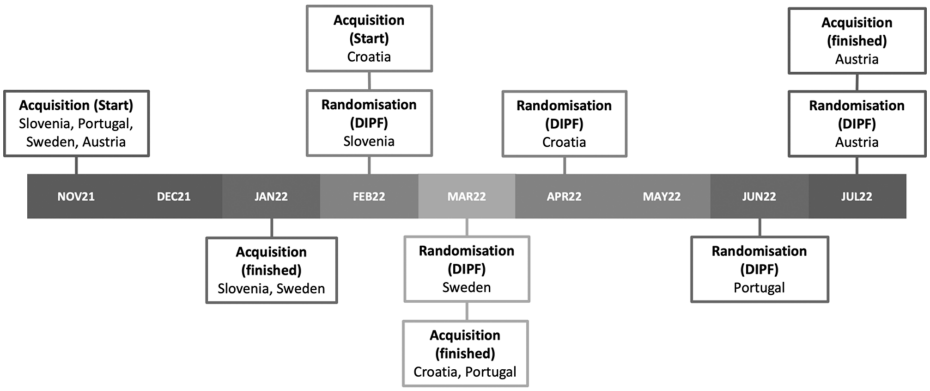

Figure 2: Acquisition and Randomisation Details of the FT Countries

As required, all FT countries started the pre-assessment prior to implementing the training. All partners made sure that the participants of the IG had completed the questionnaire before the first training day in their respective training group. Since the timeframe for the CG participants was not as strict, partners repeatedly reminded the respective school coordinators when answers from participants were still missing until all the answers had been collected. As planned, the implementation took place in the 2022/2023 school year. The times of the start and finish of the implementation varied slightly in the FT countries because of the different holiday and teaching periods. Overall, the post-assessment ran according to plan and took place in the scheduled period in all the FT countries. Depending on the individual dates on which the groups completed the last training day, the IG participants had to complete the questionnaire for post-assessment within 2 weeks. The timeframe for the CG participants was again not so strict, allowing the partners to gather as much data as possible within the longer timeframe. Further, the focus group interviews were conducted with randomly selected participants of all training groups within 4 weeks of their last training and the questionnaire for the school coordinators of the schools in the CG was also sent out within this timeframe. Figure 3 presents the actual time periods starting and completing the programme implementation and the pre- and post-assessments in the participating countries.

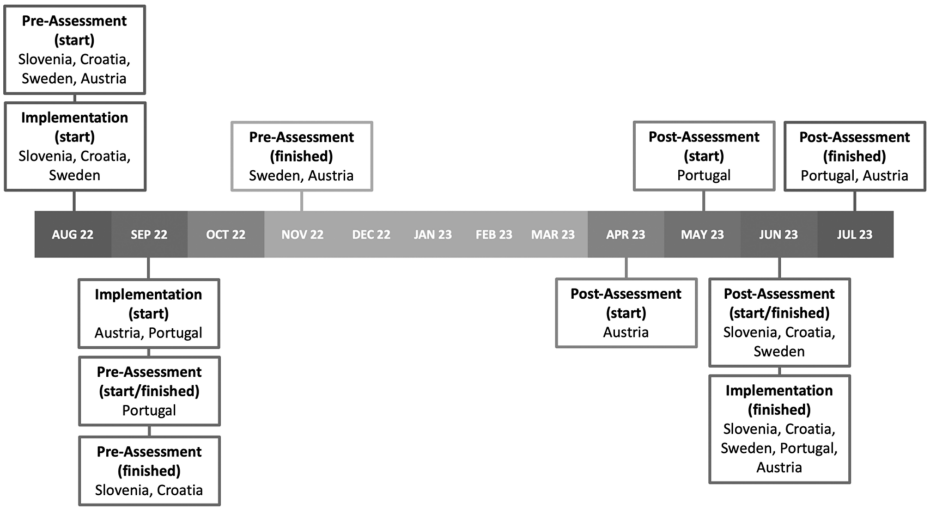

Figure 3: Pre-Assessment, Implementation and Post-Assessment in the FT Countries

Framework Conditions of the Training

All partners initially planned to maintain the same trainers for each group throughout the implementation because it had been agreed that this would be necessary to deliver the training programme contents in the best possible way. Slovenia had eight trainers in total, two trainers per training group. One pair of trainers led a teacher group and, in addition, the school leaders' group. The Slovenian team also noted that the trainers had already collaborated before the onsite trainings and provided mutual support to each other. The Croatian trainer team also consisted of eight trainers at the beginning of the implementation. The Portuguese team trained seven trainers who met once a month to promote exchange among each other. The Swedish trainer team was made up of six, and the Austrian trainer team of nine trainers during the TTT.

Regarding the temporal and spatial framework conditions, the Slovenian, Croatian, and Swedish partners budgeted for onsite trainings to be held in pleasant locations. The Slovenian team also invited the participants to have meals with the trainers, assuming that this would have a positive impact on the training. They held the trainings for the different training groups on consecutive days. When 2 training days for one training group were being held in a row, the teachers could stay overnight but, in this case, they had to pay for accommodation themselves.

The Portuguese team had set all the training dates before the implementation began and the participants had to attend the trainings in their free time (e.g., on Saturdays). In Sweden, the training dates were established by

the school leadership and participants were able to complete the training in their working hours. The onsite sessions were held at a conference venue. The Austrian participants met at the premises of Uni Graz. Since teachers had to attend the trainings in their free (or at least non-teaching) time, the onsite training sessions needed to be held on weekends, public holidays, or in the form of half training days on Thursday or Friday evenings from 4 to 8 p.m. While participants were offered the chance to spend the last 2 training days abroad, this was only to be realised if all participants agreed or expressed the wish to do so. In the end, this was the case for just one training group.

In Slovenia, the online meetings were held after school hours. At this point, some participants were at home while others were still at school. The Croatian participants met online from 7 to 9 p.m. The Swedish team scheduled online meetings on Mondays between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m., with the participants attending during their conference time at school. The Austrian participants had their online meetings scheduled in line with their wishes.

Regarding group information on the national IGs and CGs at the time the QA visits were being made, the Slovenian team trained four groups of about 25 teachers and one group of 27 school leaders and school counsellors. The CG contained about 100 teachers. The group of Croatian participants consisted of teachers and school leaders from 18 schools. Nine schools, with 95 teachers and 29 school leaders and counsellors, were assigned to the IG, which was divided into four training groups. Before the implementation began, eight participants had dropped out of the programme. Nine schools had been assigned to the CG, involving a total of 149 participants.

All Portuguese participants belonged to one school cluster where different schools work together, and the teachers know each other. The Portuguese intervention group comprised 15 groups of 11–12 teachers each. The CG consisted of 100 teachers in total. The trainers in Sweden worked with five schools that covered primary and lower secondary grades. The Swedish team reported 118 teachers in the IG and 120 teachers in the CG. They also had a separate group for school leaders and counsellors. They worked with large training groups of about 30–40 teachers each who were then divided into smaller workgroups according to the activities during the training sessions. The Austrian IG contained 45 teachers and 8 principals, while the CG included 81 participants. In Austria, participants of the IG were divided into three teacher and one school leader training groups at that time.

Implementation Process

At the time of the QA visits, the Slovenian and Croatian partners had held the third onsite training session and two online meetings for all groups. The Portuguese team needed to reschedule the dates for the upcoming third onsite

training due to strikes by Portuguese teachers. Austria had held three onsite trainings and two or three online meetings, depending on the training group. Sweden did not provide detailed information concerning how many trainings had already been held by the time of the QA visit.

Four of the five international partners (Slovenia, Croatia, Portugal, Sweden) reported that the implementation had thus far gone according to plan. In general, the HAND:ET programme had been received well by the participants.

> […] And in general, uh, the programme has been received very // well // by the participants and in particular by the, the principals and school leaders. (QA_visit_MIUN, Pos. 5)

Austria reported difficulties starting with the participant acquisition and continuing during implementation of the training. The team encountered numerous dropouts for various reasons, as further described below. However, the Uni Graz team emphasised that the training was very well received by those participants who had continued to attend it.

Concerning risks and risk management, although difficulties concerning school recruitment had been identified as a risk by all partners beforehand, for most of them they did not occur. The Slovenian team had contacted schools and promoted the project on its social media channels. In Croatia, the team chose to offer the training to schools which normally received little or no offers of continuing professional development (CPD) since most CPD offers in Croatia take place in Zagreb and not in the surrounding areas. This turned out to be a good strategy.

> So, to offer the programme also to schools that, really have less chance to participate. (QA_Visit_ISRZ, Pos. 225)

In fact, so many schools in Slovenia and Croatia had requested to participate that waiting lists were created, allowing interested teachers to step in if other participants dropped out.

In Portugal, no recruiting difficulties occurred since the project partners contacted whole school clusters and were thus able to reach many teachers at once. The Swedish partners reported having used existing connections and networks with schools in the recruitment process, but they had to convince the school leaders of the programme's benefits because it was them who decided whether their teachers participated in the training or not.

> I think, maybe also it differs at least from your country, that we decided this with the principals, the school leaders. And then they just said all of the teachers are coming because we do this as the whole school. So, we don't have to ask each of the teachers if they want to do this, because they are supposed to do it. It's in their work. (QA_visit_MIUN, Pos. 258)

The Austrian team experienced some problems with recruitment. Some primary schools in the country only consist of a single school leader and one or two teachers. Therefore, many schools had to participate to reach enough participants (in the end, five schools from the capital city of Graz, and 12 schools from rural areas participated in the IG). With support from the associated project partner Board of Education Styria (BES), the Uni Graz reached out to all (approximately 450) primary schools in their home federal state of Styria multiple times and invited them to participate. Nonetheless, many of the school leaders contacted stated that due to the increased workload caused by the COVID 19-pandemic they did not possess resources for additional trainings. The Austrian team tried to involve potential participants in the planning of the onsite training dates to make them as suitable to their needs as possible, but the effort was still too much for many of them. Even though the team extended the period of school recruitment, contacted many schools several times and offered participation not just to teachers of the federal state of Styria but to teachers of two neighbouring federal states as well, their sample was already by far the smallest among all the FT countries at the beginning of the implementation.

The Croatian and the Portuguese teams had to leave it up to the teachers to decide whether to participate in HAND:ET or not. The Slovenian team could not determine whether their teachers chose to participate in the training or whether school leaders obliged them to do so. In Austria, most teachers were invited by their school leaders, but they could decide on their participation in the project themselves. Some participants told the team that their school leaders had determined their participation. In Slovenia, Croatia, Portugal and Austria, participation in the HAND:ET training was counted as CPD, and participants received credits for attending.

Participants dropping out was another risk identified in advance by all the partners. However, this problem did not arise to the same extent in every country. The Slovenian and Croatian partners had been concerned that whole schools might drop out during the implementation. During the time of the QA visits, this had not occurred. In Slovenia, three teachers had dropped out after the first training and just before the QA visit one participant from the group of principals went on maternity leave. The Croatian team had expected more dropouts in the suburban areas, but only recorded seven before the implementation commenced. Three more teachers were no longer interested in participating in the training because the programme did not meet their needs.

> […] turns out that uh, they, they were quite OK with the, with the delivery of the training. But the content of the training itself, didn't meet their expectations. They said that there was nothing new for them and nothing that they could apply in their classrooms. […]. (QA_Visit_ISRZ, Pos. 54)

The Portuguese partners had also expected a higher attrition rate yet recorded only ten dropouts before the start of the implementation. The Austrian partners faced a higher attrition rate. Problems started already during the randomisation phase. Some schools were unhappy with the group they had been assigned to (both IG and CG) and halted their participation. To prevent even more schools from withdrawing, the Austrian team had to allow some schools to switch from the IG to the CG, and vice versa. Since even more (approximately 30) participants dropped out after the implementation had begun, two training groups had to be merged after the first 2 onsite training days. The reasons provided by the participants for withdrawing were, apart from illness or personal reasons, the significant effort associated with the training or the content and exercises with which some could not identify.

Another risk that had been foreseen was the possible dropout of trainers. The Slovenian team lost one trainer who took long-term sick leave and another who went on maternity leave. The Croatian and Austria teams also each had a team member going on maternity leave. In addition, when Austria had to merge two training groups, one trainer who was no longer needed dropped out because of a lack of time resources.

The dropping out of trainers was a tough challenge for the Swedish partners as they lost three out of six trainers and had not initially considered this as a risk. This called for fast and flexible handling, and they managed to find substitute trainers in time. However, the three new trainers had not completed the TTT themselves. Therefore, the Swedish team made sure that each training group had at least one trainer who had completed the TTT and found this to be a good solution.

The Swedish partners also reported that it was challenging for some schools since the online meetings had to be held on Monday evenings, which may have contributed to the teachers being tired and less motivated. Yet, they noted that, on the other hand, the training was designed exactly for this purpose.

> […] Because they ARE of course, they are tired they are, but, but again, our program is meant to BE something, you can USE when you are. (QA_visit_MIUN, Pos. 112)

The Swedish, Slovenian, Croatian and Austrian teams also mentioned the impact of the COVID 19-pandemic as an anticipated risk. Both the Slovenian and the Austrian partners reported that at the time of recruiting the schools, communication was challenging because the COVID 19 measures meant they could not enter schools as external individuals.

Regarding the foreseen risk of budget and organisational issues, the Slovenian, Croatian and Swedish partners indicated that the overall budget was tight, even though they had planned ahead.

> We would also really love to have more financial support but that's like internal our issue. We are struggling with that, and I don't have the confidence and don't feel really confident that we have everything, that we have enough capacities to cover the financial documentations of everybody. (QA_visit_ERI, Pos. 191)

The Portuguese team had initially expected less motivation and involvement from their participants, attributing this to teachers' dissatisfaction with their work conditions in general. This expectation was partly materialised due to a teachers' strike held during the implementation phase. Hence, some of the training dates had to be rescheduled.

Table 3 shows the risks anticipated by the FT partners that had actually occurred by the halfway point of the implementation process.

Table 3: Risks that Had Occurred in the FT Countries by the Halfway Point of the HAND:ET Implementation Process

FT Countries	Risks that Occurred during the HAND:ET Implementation
SLO, CRO, SWE, AUT	trainer dropouts
SLO, CRO, SWE	budget issues
SLO, AUT	communication issues with schools due to COVID-19
CRO	participants' motivation issues with the online meetings
PRT	issues because of teachers' dissatisfaction with work conditions, a teachers' strike
AUT	difficulties with school recruitment, participant dropouts

Regarding challenges and challenge management, the Slovenian team stated that location played an important role. The team had first selected a location that later proved to be unsuitable for the training, but they could handle this issue that did not disturb the participants. It was not easy to find a suitable location that was conducive to providing the training. Further, prices had increased, which might have resulted in the budget exceeding the original plan.

The Croatian team reported prevailing issues in schools, such as violence, that frequently distracted teachers, especially during the online meetings. Another challenge they mentioned was an online meeting at which some of the group did not show up due to a scheduling conflict but had not notified the trainers in advance. The currency change from the Croatian kuna to the European euro that caused unexpected costs due to higher prices was also perceived as challenging by the Croation partners. They also referred to the higher-than-expected workload and additional working hours for the team members in order to deliver the training and other project-related activities in time.

The Swedish partners mentioned being challenged by the fact that they had taken in more participants than initially planned, leading to higher costs for the onsite meetings than originally budgeted. They also mentioned that they were

running out of financial resources for accommodation, which they needed to pay for participants who lived approximately 200 kilometres away from the training location.

The Austrian team had encountered challenges related to scheduling dates with the participants for both the onsite trainings and online meetings. The team also faced issues with the motivation of some teachers, particularly with a group of teachers from one school that seemed disinterested in participating in the training. These participants had been obliged by their school leader to participate in the project. They were quite open with their feedback and consistently expressed their concerns, which had an impact on the overall atmosphere within the training group. Despite the trainers' efforts to involve them in various group activities, it was challenging as they were not keen on participating in those exercises. In response, the Austrian team held a separate online meeting with them. Following this discussion, the participants collectively decided that it would be best for them to withdraw from the project as they did not see any further value in continuing to participate. This proved to be positive for the remaining teachers in the group because the general mood improved significantly.

The Portuguese team found that their team of trainers had to cover many different training groups, which was difficult given the time available for the project.

In Austria and Sweden, some trainers and participants could not attend all training sessions due to illness or some other absence. This was challenging because the programme did not provide a solution or possibility for the participants to make up for the content they had missed.

Table 4 presents a summary of the challenges that had occurred in the FT countries by the halfway point of the implementation process.

Table 4: Challenges that Had Occurred in the FT Countries by the Halfway Point of the HAND:ET Implementation Process

FT Countries	Challenges that Had Occurred
SWE, AUT	training sessions missed by trainers/participants (due to illness etc.)
SLO	finding a suitable training location
CRO	school issues (e.g., violence) higher prices due to the change in currency higher workload than expected, additional work hours
PRT	time management issues, difficulties in covering all training groups
SWE	more participants than expected, leading to higher costs (accommodation)
AUT	scheduling training dates motivation issues affecting some participants

Regarding positive experiences, all partners stated that there had been a good atmosphere in the national teams and good cooperation among the trainers which, according to the Austrian partners, made it easier to deal with upcoming difficulties.

The Slovenian team was confident that they were on schedule because all the training processes and tasks were clearly defined and the processes regarding the assessments were also straightforward.

> [...] We are quite okay for the next few months to finish with the, with the, with the programme. Delaying outcomes haven't happened. (QA_visit_ERI, Pos. 170)

The Swedish team reported that the implementation had been very well received by their participants who appreciated that the training was focused on their well-being.

> And I think really the whole core of the programme is working very well in Sweden. They are about THEM, the teachers, about you. (QA_visit_MIUN, Pos. 222)

Impressions and Feedback

Regarding the motivation of the participants, all partners mentioned in their QA visits that the participants seemed to enjoy the exchange with other teachers and school leaders.

The Slovenian participants and trainers consistently showed high levels of motivation. Some were generally motivated, whereas others were motivated by the prospect of CPD credits. As HAND:ET is an international project, it is worth more credits in Slovenia. Participants were also motivated during the online meetings. They turned their cameras on and participated in the discussions. Another motivating factor was the external location where the onsite meetings took place and there was an opportunity to have meals together with the trainers.

The Croatian team also reported a consistently high level of motivation from the outset. The onsite training sessions were characterised by a remarkable degree of enjoyment and positive feedback. These factors added significantly to the sustained motivation of the trainers. Participants' motivation was already visible during the school recruiting process: within 24 hours of distributing the invitations (accompanied by information sheets) to participate in the project, the Croatian team had already received ten positive responses.

In Portugal, the motivation and level of participation had exceeded the team's expectations. They had also received many follow up questions via email. Some Portuguese teachers were so enthusiastic about the training that they established a special room in their school for the exercises.

> […] The teachers have been motivated and participating. Most teachers are interested in working on activities in their schools and they have organised a space to do something connected to the activities. So, I think it is going very well. […]. (QA_visit_ULisboa, Pos. 2)

The Swedish trainer team was motivated by the positive feedback provided by the participants. Moreover, similar to the situation in Slovenia, the pleasant location and shared meals during the onsite trainings had contributed to the high level of motivation and the positive atmosphere.

The Austrian team observed a lack of commitment and motivation among some participants from the beginning. These participants dropped out from the programme, as was described above. However, most of the remaining participants became more motivated with each training session. The fact the training was recognised as CPD in Austria had also contributed to the participating teachers' motivation.

Reporting on general impressions and feedback, the Slovenian team said that their teachers had actively chosen to participate and there would have been even more teachers interested in participating, but this had to be rejected to prevent the Slovenian sample from becoming too large. The trainers had the impression that these circumstances made the participants feel they had been chosen. Many participants were already familiar with the topic of mindfulness. The Slovenian team referred to the first mindfulness exercise as an icebreaker. The online meetings were also well received, and the Slovenian partners noted that they were, for example, advantageous for teachers with mobility issues.

> […] Or, we have some with broken legs. And things like that. They cannot participate in face-to-face meetings, and they were really happy with the online meetings […]. (QA_visit_ERI, Pos. 118)

The team found the teachers to be generally open to communication, which helped ensure smooth interactions.

The Croatian team reported a good atmosphere in the training groups, but felt the online meetings were not well received by the participants. They preferred meeting onsite since there were too many distractions online. Further, they expressed concerns that some participants had admitted to planning their absences during the online meetings while still aiming to be credited for attending them. On the other hand, during the online meetings the teachers were very open regarding the stresses they had been exposed to in their work, which led schools to report that the project's timing was quite opportune.

> […] all of them are actually reaching out and saying – they are not okay, and they shouldn't be around their pupils and that's why the timing couldn't be more perfect, and they were really happy when we offered this type of programme to them. They said, "This is what we needed". Uh, because the schools

> don't get much funding for the professional development of their teachers and especially not to be able to send 10 or 15 of their teachers to the same type of professional development course. (QA_visit_ISRZ, Pos. 288)

The Croatian team added that participants would have preferred it had the onsite days not been scheduled back-to-back as that had caused stress for the teachers during lecture time. Some participants mentioned that the online setting had worked better for them during the theoretical part of the programme because it had resulted in less background noise from the other participants.

The Portuguese participants seemed to be content with the training. They provided positive feedback, expressing their strong satisfaction with the programme. Further, they expressed a desire for a joint conclusion alongside the other training groups. The partners felt the HAND:ET programme was different from the other programmes in Portugal, which they found refreshing.

The Swedish participants generally seemed to appreciate Monday evenings as the time for the online meetings. However, the Swedish team had the impression that some participants actually wanted to go home urgently. At times, the participants also appeared to be nervous as they had to, e.g., pick up their children from childcare. The partners felt the online meetings complemented the implementation well. Especially breakout rooms made it easier for participants to engage in discussions with each other. School leaders appeared to truly appreciate the programme.

> Because THEY are the ones who are really into this. They like it, the content very much. (QA_visit_MIUN, Pos. 214)

According to the partners from Sweden, some teachers enjoyed the inner exercises during online meetings, while those not particularly interested in mindfulness found the theoretical input more appealing.

The Austrian team explained that a few teachers were not fond of the concept of mindfulness, especially when it came to the meditation and body exercises. In addition, some participants felt they had received insufficient information in advance about the training's thematic focus. Overall, the participants enjoyed the programme and appreciated the combination of onsite and online sessions. Most of the remaining teachers and principals provided positive feedback.

Table 5 summarises the impressions and feedback obtained from the FT partners, trainers, and participants at the halfway point of the implementation process.

Table 5: Impressions of the FT Partners and Feedback from the Partners, Trainers, and Participants at the Halfway Point of the HAND:ET Implementation

FT Countries	Impressions and Feedback
all countries	participants enjoy the exchange with peers
SLO, SWE	high motivation of participants and trainers onsite and online external training location as an additional motivational factor
CRO, PRT	high motivation of participants and trainers onsite
SLO	participants felt "chosen" many participants familiar with the topic of mindfulness online meetings as benefitting individuals with limited mobility
CRO	online meetings not well received, too many distractions for the participants the theoretical part works well online (because of less background noise)
SWE	some participants tired/distracted in the online meetings
AUT	a lack of motivation in some participants in the beginning, resulting in dropout some participants not fond of the concept of mindfulness, felt insufficiently informed beforehand the remaining participants enjoyed the programme, gave positive feedback

Lessons Learned

According to the Slovenian partners, precise budgeting is crucial. Maintaining a pleasant atmosphere during the trainings is also important. They expressed a desire for approximately four to six additional trainers or replacement trainers. Further, they believed it would boost the trainers' self-esteem if they could prepare all together on an international level. This would enhance international group dynamics and contribute to networking for collaboration on future projects, helping everyone to stay connected.

The Croatian team suggested skipping or shortening the initial part of the online meetings since it repeated constantly. They also stated that through the trainings they had come to realise even more strongly how schools are like living organisms that are influenced by their environment. This underscores the importance of being able to act spontaneously and flexibly in collaboration with teachers or schools in general so that individual needs can be met. Moreover, they expressed a firm desire to continue offering the programme in the future, although they mentioned that the budget funding needed for that is currently unavailable.

The partners from Portugal said that in the future they would consider forming several smaller training groups rather than large ones. The Swedish team indicated that it was easier to work with small groups for the dialogues

and the diversity awareness exercises. They suggested that the mindfulness exercises should be shortened slightly to ease the time pressure.

The Austrian partners expressed their intention to plan longer acquisition periods and reflect on how they can better reach participants through different approaches. They felt there was a need for a bigger target population and a better understanding of what Austrian teachers want and need. In addition, they mentioned that they would limit the effort put into certain activities and no longer attempt to fulfil every wish of the participants.

> Experience has shown that in the end only those who are motivated by themselves will stay. Many of those who we were only able to motivate to participate with a great deal of effort then dropped out again. (QA_visit_UniGraz, Pos. 75)

Table 6 summarises the lessons obtained by the FT partners by the halfway point of the implementation process.

Table 6: Statements by the FT Partners on Lessons Learned by the Halfway Point of the HAND:ET Implementation

FT Countries	Lessons Learned
SLO	need for precise budgeting and a pleasant training atmosphere additional trainers should be scheduled to be able to replace absences TTT altogether on an international level would boost trainers' self esteem
CRO	suggestion to skip or shorten repetitive parts of the online meetings
PRT, SWE	several small training groups are preferable to one large group
SWE	suggestion to shorten the mindfulness exercises (due to time constraints)
AUT	a long acquisition period with a clear deadline is needed a large target population and different approaches to the recruitment process should be aimed for

Discussion

Overall, implementation of the HAND:ET system proceeded as planned in all of the FT countries. Some deviations regarding the timeframe for the acquisition period occurred, resulting in different points in time of the group randomisations. Still, all countries were able to commence the onsite trainings on time at the beginning of the 2022/2023 school year. The pre- and post-assessments also took place as scheduled.

However, there were some deviations that caused differences among the countries regarding the framework conditions of the onsite trainings and online meetings implemented. In several countries, there were trainer dropouts. During the implementation, training sessions were held at different times and loca-

tions in all countries, depending on holiday periods, school schedules, and the participants' professional duties and obligations. Further, participant counts in the training groups as well as in the IGs and CGs in total varied by country. At the time of the QA visits, Portugal had trained the biggest group of participants (approximately 170 IG participants in 15 training groups), while the Austrian partners were struggling with school recruitment and had the lowest attendance (53 participants in the IG across four training groups). Sweden reported having worked with training groups of 30–40 individuals, whereas in Austria the smallest training group had seven participants.

In general, the HAND:ET programme had been received well by the participants. Nevertheless, some challenges arose during the implementation process that had to be overcome by the FT partners. While the recruitment of the schools had been identified as a potential risk beforehand, it was managed well in most countries.

Possible dropouts had been defined in advance as a potential risk, with varying impacts across the countries. The most affected was Austria as the team encountered differences with scheduling and participant motivation issues from the outset. With hindsight, the Austrian partners believe that during the acquisition phase they were too accommodating to schools that were showing hesitation and set the conditions for their participation (such as being in a specific group or attending training sessions at certain times) to convince them to participate. Participants from these schools were also less willing to engage in the training and, in a few cases, dropped out as a result.

Other challenges included the selection of a suitable location and increased prices in Slovenia. Budget constraints were noted in Croatia and Sweden. In Austria and Sweden, some trainers and participants could not attend all of the training sessions due to illness or some other absence. This proved challenging because the programme did not provide a solution for the participants to make up for the content they had missed.

Regarding their participants, the Slovenian and Croatian teams reported sustained high motivation from the start, with the Croatian team highlighting a good atmosphere in the training groups. Portuguese participants were also highly motivated and expressed strong satisfaction with the training programme. The Austrian team observed an initial lack of commitment among some participants but noted that motivation increased as the training proceeded. All partners noted the participants had enjoyed the interaction with their peers. The Swedish participants particularly appreciated the programme's focus on their well-being.

In terms of positive experiences and future success factors, all FT partners stressed the good team collaboration, especially within the national trainer teams. The overall positive training atmosphere was also highlighted. Further, the partners appreciated the clarity of the project processes and task definitions.

One aspect that could be significant for further development of the HAND:ET system is the potential adaptation of online meetings, which were perceived and evaluated differently by participants from various countries.

Thinking of future implementation of the HAND:ET system, the Slovenian team proposed having four to six additional or replacement trainers for international collaboration, enhancing the group dynamics, and future networking. The Portuguese partners suggested forming smaller training groups in the future. The Swedish team found small groups effective for dialogues and proposed a slight shortening of the mindfulness exercises to manage time. The Austrian partners planned longer acquisition periods and were seeking better participant engagement strategies.

As expected, some of the differences and challenges mentioned may be attributed to country-specific features. For instance, the guidelines for the CPD of teachers vary among the partner countries, resulting in different conditions regarding whether teachers could attend the training during their regular teaching hours and be released for it, or whether they could only attend during their non-teaching hours or free time (European Commission/Eurydice, 2022a, 2022b, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c). It may be assumed that the fact the Austrian teachers could only participate during their free time or non-teaching hours was at least one reason for the particularly challenging recruitment process in the country. However, Portugal, where teachers also had to dedicate their free time to the training, did not face comparable issues.

Also concerning the dropout rate and participant motivation, Austria's experiences varied the most from those of the other FT countries. Interestingly, there was a group of Austrian teachers who stood out from the beginning of the training by showing no motivation and little interest and mentioned being having been obliged by their school leader to participate. At first glance, it is understandable that a lack of motivation might be expected from participants who were not attending the training voluntarily. Yet, in Sweden, where all participants were in this situation, they still exhibited very high motivation, and problems like those in Austria did not arise. This could be due to a different school culture in the two countries. Whereas in Austria an obligation to participate is seen very critically by the teachers, in Sweden the responsibility to provide CPD opportunities lies mainly with the schools or the school leaders. Participation in training programmes the school selects for their teachers is mandatory for them (European Commission/Eurydice, 2022b). In addition, Swedish participants were able to complete the HAND:ET trainings during the week and in their working hours and it may be presumed that these circumstances, in turn, positively impact the participants' motivation or at least make them more open to content they might otherwise not have been interested in.

Conclusion

What has become clear is that it was consistently the flexibility and spontaneity of the FT partners that enabled a smooth implementation process. As the Croatian team noted, it must always be considered when working with schools that they are not rigid systems whose reactions can be easily predicted. In each partner country, specific needs and attitudes of the participants emerged that had to be accounted for during the implementation. Three topics, each of which affected several FT partners, are the dropout of trainers during the implementation, dealing with any training sessions missed, and planning and designing the online meetings.

Already at the beginning of the implementation there must be awareness that one or two trainers might drop out. To be prepared for this eventuality, more trainers have to be trained from the outset, or one or two trainers must have the willingness and time resources to take over another training group if needed. For participants as well as trainers, opportunities should also be provided to make up for missed training sessions in a way that enables them to smoothly rejoin their training group afterwards. The online meetings were received differently in the FT countries. On one side, different advantages of the format became apparent but, on the other, they were also perceived as burdensome, too long, or too repetitive in content. Accordingly, this topic should be closely examined during the evaluation.

In general, the results illustrate that probably no monocausal explanations can be provided regarding why some processes worked out better in certain FT countries and worse in others. This makes it important while interpreting the results of the evaluation and planning future implementation of the HAND:ET system to take these differences into account and shed light on possible underlying reasons from all perspectives.

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Chapter 6

Realising Quality Assurance in the HAND:ET Project

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Abstract

This chapter considers quality assurance and risk management as a tool of internal evaluation in the HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Across Europe to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity-Related Career Challenges ("HAND:ET") project. Quality assurance ("QA") is viewed as crucial for transnational projects in the educational context to preserve or enhance the quality of processes and project outcomes. QA thus also played a vital role in the HAND:ET project. The main objective of the QA measures was to ensure precise and continuous monitoring in three broad areas: (a) planning and goal setting; (b) organisation and execution; as well as (c) the final deliverables of the project. In this chapter, we report the risks identified by the project team together with the strategies to deal with these risks. To maintain high-quality communication, the project team completed a questionnaire after each project meeting. The analysis of the questionnaire responses showed a high level of satisfaction with and participation in the project meetings. Moreover, implementation of the HAND:ET system in five countries was monitored through online QA visits. Although the project partners reported a few challenges associated with implementing the HAND:ET system, it proceeded well in the participating countries. The chapter also presents the final deliverables of the HAND:ET project that have thus far been delivered as planned.

Keywords: Quality Assurance, Risk Management, Quality Indicators, Monitoring, Project Implementation

Introduction

Quality assurance (QA) is, as Karakhanyan and Stensaker (2020) describe it, "an essential element of higher education" (p. 11). Processes involving QA are also linked to broader quality development processes in schools. Therefore, it is also critical for projects in the context of: (a) schools; and (b) higher education (cooperation between higher education institutions), where for the HAND in

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HAND: Empowering Teachers Across Europe to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity-Related Career Challenges ("HAND:ET") project both of these contexts are equally important. QA defines ongoing endeavours to preserve or enhance the quality of products and/or processes (Ditton, 2018; Stensaker & Karakhanyan, 2023). In projects with a larger consortium, QA also aims at supporting the project partners, for example, in coordinating the project outcomes, assuring the quality of project outputs and recognising their responsibilities within the project (Huuhka & Pakarinen, 2021). Thus, QA measures must form an integral part of transnational projects like HAND:ET. In HAND:ET, the team from the University of Graz ("Uni Graz"), Austria, has taken responsibility for QA as a project partner.

Throughout the HAND:ET project, internal evaluation in the form of quality assurance was used to make sure the partners achieve the main objectives on time, on budget and with high quality. This monitoring process also allowed for appropriate actions to be taken early on when issues occurred that deviated from the project plan. In order to determine whether the project implementation was running according to plan, the QA focussed on three broad areas: (a) planning and goal setting, and (b) organisation and execution with particular emphasis on (c) the final deliverables of the project as a measurable outcome. To establish the quality of these areas during the project period, we adapted and employed procedures and instruments that proved to be useful in the previous HAND in HAND project "*Social and Emotional Skills for Tolerant and Non-discriminative Societies. A Whole School Approach*" ("HAND") (Educational Research Institute, 2023). They consisted of: (a) the early development of a risk management plan, including strategies for how to react in the event of risks occurring; (b) the preparation of an online checklist, including all work packages with related responsibilities, tasks and deadlines; (c) the use of an online questionnaire to measure and monitor the overall quality of the project meetings and participant satisfaction with them; and (d) engaging all partners that were implementing the HAND:ET system (Austria, Croatia, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden) in online QA visits to monitor the implementation of the HAND:ET system and to detect possible difficulties at time.

A detailed description of these measures is provided in this chapter along with the outcomes of QA in the HAND:ET project. Nevertheless, the QA visits are only referred to in passing because the results of those visits are presented in the previous chapter in this book. The following part first provides a brief overview of the definition and purpose of QA, before the main aims and research questions of this study are presented together with its methods and results.

Theoretical Background

Defining Quality Assurance

Historically, quality control became an essential issue with industrialisation and the associated mass production. Workers in large-scale manufacturing only created small parts of a product and had less control over the process as a whole. In contrast to craftsmen, who previously produced goods on their own and as a whole, these workers displayed less interest in and felt less accountable and responsible for the quality of the final outcome. To still ensure a quality product, factories implemented quality control measures such as by introducing quality inspectors who examined samples of finished items (Allais, 2009).

In more recent history, the focus shifted from merely analysing the final product to also examining the different steps in the production process. This led to the introduction of quality management in other areas, such as in organisations like governments. The objective of QA is not only to control products during and after production, but also to establish and apply QA standards before and during the production processes (Allais, 2009).

In the area of school development, QA processes are often linked to broader quality development processes because teachers are very critical of and reluctant with regard to quality assessment strategies. Previous experiences of quality development in schools have shown that when working with teachers it is essential that the immediate purpose and the benefit for themselves are made evident. Moreover, in the governing perspective, the process must be supported by a trustful relationship between individual persons. Since the process of developing quality can only be successful when all the people involved support it, it is inevitable that everyone contributes with their abilities (Kempfert & Rolff, 2005). This approach was also applied in the present project.

In terms of defining QA, it is generally agreed that the term describes a continuous effort to secure or enhance the quality of a product or service. In contrast, evaluation is often implemented at a certain time rather than accompanying the process. Still, the discussion on summative vs. formative evaluation must also be considered. Evaluation is often associated with the idea and aim of gaining information in order to reach a decision or judgement rather than being interested in the ongoing process of preserving or increasing the quality of an item/system. Depending on how an evaluation is designed, this perspective is relevant and an evaluative approach can form part of the QA process (Ditton, 2018). In the HAND:ET project, we have used both an external (summative and formative) evaluation (for more, see Chapters 8 and 9) and an internal evaluation (quality assurance) to ensure continuous monitoring.

The Importance of Quality Assurance

In the educational domain, the quality of products like student learning outcomes is just as important as the quality of processes such as, for example, the fulfilment of teaching responsibilities (Ditton, 2018). According to the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (2015), QA procedures play a crucial role in the development and improvement of higher education. The expectations surrounding higher education are diverse and can change. Therefore, QA plays a vital part in being attentive and responding accordingly to these expectations and demands, while also ensuring that the products such as the qualifications achieved by students remain at a high standard.

Especially in projects based on the cooperation of various countries with different expectations, historically evolved structures, political situations, bureaucracy, cultures etc., QA has proven to be extremely important. Huuhka and Pakarinen (2021) stressed the importance of QA measures in transnational projects to coordinate the project outcomes, to guide the leadership in providing for the quality of outputs and to help the partners recognise their responsibility for the quality of different project processes and project outcomes. In this context, the preparing of QA plans helps project partners identify tasks that are necessary to provide high-quality outputs. Further, these plans promote the provision of sufficient communication with relevant partners during the project. QA processes can be used to monitor progress with the project and to foresee and therefore prevent potential difficulties (Huuhka & Pakarinen, 2021).

Given that HAND:ET is a cooperation project involving seven countries (Austria, Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden) where five of them (all except Denmark and Germany) have implemented the HAND:ET system in the form of teacher training, QA has been particularly relevant. The circumstances with respect to schools and teachers (teacher education and training, responsibilities, challenges faced, classes taught, etc.) varied between countries. This may have led to different risks and possibilities and different ways of reacting and dealing with them throughout the project. QA served as a basis for anticipating and preventing risks as well as maintaining high-quality communication between the project partners.

Aims and Research Questions

The main goal of the QA in the HAND:ET project was precise and continuous monitoring. aimed at three broad areas: (a) planning and goal setting; (b) organisation and execution; as well as (c) the final deliverables of the project.

At the time of preparing this chapter, QA has been an integral part of the HAND:ET project. To ensure the project objectives were achieved on time, on budget and with high quality, QA procedures were active since day 1 of the project. Before the project began, QA also played an important role in the conceptualisation and planning and also while preparing the project application.

With respect to the area *planning and goal setting*, the project team aimed to identify potential risks of the HAND:ET project (e.g., implementation of the HAND:ET system, the dissemination, the deliverables). First, these risks were summarised in a list already during the application process. As soon as the project commenced, the project partners revised the list and added potential risk situations and risk management measures to assure that appropriate actions to handle these risks could be taken as needed. Therefore, our first research question concerns the risks: *Which risks and risk measures were identified in the HAND:ET project?*

In terms of *organisation and execution*, a key component of a functioning project is high-quality communication among the team members. Therefore, the QA aimed at monitoring the quality of communication along with the partners' satisfaction with the project. This leads to the second research question: *To what extent were the partners satisfied with the communication and meetings?*

Another objective in the area of organisation and execution was to monitor how the field trials were implemented to assure that everything was running according to plan (as described in detail in the project application). This was accomplished by inviting all the partners that were being implemented the HAND:ET system in their countries to participate in an online quality visit. Even though these QA visits constitute the focus of a separate chapter in this book, our third research question was as follows: *How did the partners experience the implementation of the HAND:ET system in their countries?*

Further, already during the application process attention was paid to arranging for a precise and transparent distribution of tasks among the partners. This was reflected in specifying and scheduling work products ("*deliverables*"), which is our third area of interest. To deliver these on time, the partners needed to comply with the time schedule. Therefore, the QA continuously monitored the partners' adherence using an online tool. Our fourth and last research question was thus: *What were the final deliverables of the HAND:ET project and were they been delivered on time?*

Procedures and Instruments

The QA in the HAND:ET project was based on the experiences of the earlier project (HAND). Procedures and instruments that proved to be helpful in that

project (Rasmusson et al., 2020) were also applied in the current HAND:ET project and adapted as necessary.

To make the three broad QA areas (planning and goal setting, organisation and execution, final deliverables) visible and measurable, indicators focusing on three domains were defined: (1) process; (2) performance; and (3) outcomes. These indicators helped us monitor whether the realisation of the three broad QA areas was meeting the specifications in the project application. (1) *Process indicators* included the degree of implementing the activities, their conformity with the provisions of the project proposal, compliance with the time frame and schedule as well as the dissemination channels. (2) *Performance indicators* covered the level of team spirit and collaboration as well as the number of target-group representatives involved. (3) Finally, *outcome indicators* focused on the type, content and quality of the outputs and their conformity with the parameters set out in the project proposal.

The procedures and instruments are described in detail below.

Risk Management Strategy

As an essential part of QA, a risk management strategy was developed within the first 6 months of the project in order to identify possible risks early on and to consider appropriate actions to overcome difficulties. In the first step, each partner reflected on and preventively identified possible risks and difficulties that might occur during the project period and considered strategies for dealing with such risks and challenges should they arise. In addition, the probability of occurrence and its severity were estimated for each risk on a scale from 1 to 3 (1=low, 2=medium, 3=high). Subsequently, at the second project meeting the project consortium discussed the risks that had been frequently identified by the project partners. All project members reflected on possible risks once again and revised/complemented the list of existing and/or potential risks. Again, for each risk identified, the project members estimated its severity, the likelihood of its occurrence, and actions to prevent or manage the risk. All risks were summarised in a document that was made available to all partners. The severe risks most frequently mentioned by the partners are presented in Table 1.

Meeting Questionnaires

To ensure high-quality collaboration and communication among the project members, all international project meetings were evaluated using an online questionnaire. After every meeting, a link providing access to a questionnaire was given to all participants who were requested to complete it. This served to measure and monitor the overall quality of the meetings and enabled the

project leader as well as the project members to adapt later meetings in line with the participants' feedback and to react to any doubts or disagreements.

The questionnaire was based on the questionnaire used in the previous HAND in HAND project (Educational Research Institute, 2023) and adapted by the QA team. It was divided into three sections relating to aspects before, during and after the meeting. It consisted of a total of 19 items, among which 17 were closed questions and 2 were open-ended questions. The questionnaire was implemented in *LimeSurvey* and contained:

- questions concerning situations/actions prior to the meeting (e.g., "The agenda was sent out in time"; "I prepared my own contributions in time");
- questions referring to aspects of the meeting
  - situations/actions (e.g., "I was active in the discussions during the meeting"; "We had the opportunity to ask the questions we had about the project and these were discussed at the meeting");
  - collaboration and communication (e.g., "There was a sound mutual exchange"; "The collaboration was characterised by sensitivity, responsiveness and trust"); and
- questions related to the outcomes of the meeting (e.g., "It was clear what the partners decided in the meeting"; "It is clear which next steps I have to take in the project").

The aim of this procedure was to provide high-quality communication between all partners during the online and/or face-to-face meetings. Therefore, the QA team continuously analysed the data and reported it to the project management as well as the consortium members, including suggestions for improvement if needed. The results of all project meetings are described in the section *Results of the online questionnaire concerning the project communication and meetings*.

Project Meetings and QA Visits

The status of implementation of the HAND:ET system in the consortium countries was continuously reported at the project meetings. After the pre-assessment (T1) had been conducted and the trainings in the schools had begun to be implemented (the starting times of the trainings varied from August to September 2022 across countries due to the different school holiday periods), an online meeting was convened in September 2022 by the Educational Research Institute (ERI), Slovenia, in its role as project manager. All partners that were implementing the HAND:ET system reported on the progress, risks and drawbacks in their countries. It was generally decided that all changes and deviations from the project plan had to be documented in detail in order to be able to trace them in the best possible way. This information provided by the partners was also reflected in the QA visits that were held later.

As schools were accompanied over the whole school year as part of the project (the HAND:ET system for the teachers comprised six onsite training days and five online meetings, the training for the principals included two onsite training days and one online meeting), it seemed appropriate to consult with some members of national teams responsible for implementing the field trials in five consortium countries (Austria, Croatia, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden). Therefore, QA visits were conducted around the halfway point of the implementation process. This was done in order to document the quality of the implementation and related challenges as well as any examples of good practice at this stage. Due to a lack of budget funding, all of the QA visits with the respective partners were arranged as online meetings and took place between December 2022 and January 2023. The aim of these QA visits was to monitor how the HAND:ET system was being implemented in the countries performing the field trials. For more details about this, see the previous chapter.

Online Checklist and Monthly News

In addition to other instruments, we developed an online checklist that included all of the tasks and deadlines. The checklist was based on the project application. All work packages with related tasks and deadlines were set out together with the main responsibility of each partner. The checklist was accessible to all partners as an online tool and provided an ongoing adequate overview of the project's current state: tasks that had already been completed were marked in green, ongoing tasks were marked in yellow and tasks that had not been completed in time were marked in red. All partners were continuously asked by the QA team to indicate whether they had completed the tasks they were responsible for within the allotted time. The deliverables registered in the checklist served as indicators for monitoring progress on both the level of individual work packages and the projects' overall development.

An additional instrument used to document project developments and progress, as well as a risk management tool to identify and track any deviations from the project plan, overcome related challenges and minimise time delays is the "Monthly News". These took the form of reports completed and submitted to the ERI as the project coordinator by all partner institutions by the end of each month. They included information provided by every project partner regarding tasks that had been completed in the previous month or were still in progress. A document template structured according to individual work packages was hence created and made available to all of the partners.

Results

The section below describes the results concerning our four research questions. This section is divided into the three broad QA areas: (1) project planning and goal setting; (2) organisation and execution; and (3) the final deliverables.

Risks and Risk Measures while Planning the Project and Setting the Goals

As explained above, the project team developed a risk management strategy as a QA measure. Potential risks were identified beforehand and rated in terms of the likelihood of their occurrence and their severity. To enable reacting to risky occurrences, the consortium developed strategies for each risk. Table 1 shows the possible risks and corresponding actions that could be taken to either prevent the risk or manage it should it occur. The list summarises the severe risks mentioned by the partners.

Table 1: Severe risks most frequently mentioned by the HAND:ET partners

Potential risk	Actions to prevent or manage the risk
Difficulties with acquiring schools	1) Starting invitation procedures on time and following several steps: (1) an open invitation to all of them; (2) targeted invitations; and (3) direct communication with schools 2) Considering well-thought incentives for schools to participate 3) Adhering closely to the dissemination plan and analysing feedback received from schools/teachers
Schools dropping out of the programme	1) Signing an agreement on participation 2) Defining clear responsibilities and handing out information from the outset (in written form) 3) Providing clear communication with schools and regular updates 4) Providing well-considered incentives for schools to participate 5) Starting with a larger sample (selecting 1–2 schools in addition) 6) Acquiring replacement schools (a waiting list)
The dropping out of trainers or team members (e.g., they quit their job, long-term sickness or maternity leave, other absences)	1) Training more trainers to avoid a shortage of resources 2) Increasing the flexibility of the trainers (e.g., one can replace another in the case of short leave) 3) Planning the timely training of a substitute person to support the team
Online project meetings or Train-the-Trainers might cause a lack of connection and communication between partners or trainers	1) Holding more bilateral and multilateral meetings to assure one-on-one communication 2) Creating more “break out rooms” for big project meetings with small groups 3) Keeping enough time for questions

Delay in outcomes (e.g., manuals, sampling, data collection, assessment)	1) Stressing that, due to sequencing, it is important for everything to be on time 2) Monthly progress reports from all partners 3) Preparing in advance a syntax for analysis 4) Ensuring the good cooperation of all project partners involved
Difficulties with planning and implementing the HAND:ET system in schools (due to COVID-19-related restrictions)	1) Considering multiple options for the planning and implementation of trainings 2) Cooperating closely with the participating schools 3) Providing sufficient online trainings, monitoring and supervision
A low response rate with the questionnaire for teachers	1) Developing a strategy for incentives for teachers in countries where this is more likely 2) Completing the questionnaire onsite in groups 3) Keeping the questionnaires as short as possible 4) Developing a strategy for how to deal with missing values for the analyses
The unresponsiveness of 22 EU member states to complete the HAND:ET policy questionnaire	1) Accurate planning and conducting of a policy study 2) Defining the sample of respondents in 22 EU member states 3) Strengthening the cooperation of public bodies involved in the project 4) Preparing a shorter version of the policy questionnaire 5) Partially completing and forwarding the questionnaire to the member states should there be no feedback 6) Starting to contact the member states again and keep on doing so if not getting responses in time

Most of the potential risks established by the partners in advance related to implementation of the HAND:ET system and the accompanying research demanded by the project (e.g., acquisition and sampling of schools, response rate of the questionnaire, drop outs of participants/trainers). A more detailed overview of which of these risks were actually realised in the countries participating in the field trials and the measures taken to solve issues may be found in the previous chapter. Thus, in this chapter the QA visits are only discussed briefly in the results section.

Some risks that concerned the policy questionnaire also transpired and the team responsible reacted according to the proposed measures. More details about this topic are given in Chapter 10.

QA while Organising and Carrying out the Project

In terms of project organisation and execution, we posed two research questions:

To what extent were the partners satisfied with the communication and the meetings?

How had the partners experienced the implementation of the HAND:ET system in their countries?

Results of the Online Questionnaire Concerning the Project Communication and Meetings

To answer the research question about the partner communication and satisfaction, we used an online questionnaire after each project meeting. The first project meeting (May 2021) was introductory in nature and held online due to travel restrictions in some countries. Table 2 shows how many partners had completed the questionnaire after the various meetings.

Table 2: Number of participants who completed the questionnaire after each project meeting

PM1 (25.-27.05.2021, online)	*N* = 19 out of 31 attendants
PM2 (15.-17.09.2021, Graz (Austria))	*N* = 22 out of 22 attendants
PM3 (17.-19.01.2022, Zagreb (Croatia))	*N* = 24 out of 27 attendants
PM4 (17.-19.05.2022, Sundsval (Sweden))	*N* = 16 out of 18 attendants
PM5 (30.11.-02.12.2022, Aarhus (Denmark))	*N* = 17 out of 18 attendants
PM6 (06.11.-08.11.2023, Lisbon (Portugal))	*N* = 26 out of 26 attendants

The fact it was impossible for all partners to attend the project meetings in person due to COVID-19-related restrictions and other circumstances mean that four meetings took place in a hybrid format (onsite and online). Only the first project meeting was held entirely online since there was a lockdown in most of the participating countries at the time. The last project meeting only took place onsite as all partners were able to participate in person. The number of completed questionnaires (see Table 2) does not necessarily correspond to the number of people present at a meeting given that the partners did not always fill in the questionnaire.

One part of the questionnaire related to preparations made prior to the meeting. Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations of participants' answers to three statements about the meeting preparations. On average, the responses indicate that the purpose of the meetings was clear to all participants. The partners reported having prepared everything accordingly and being able to contact the project leader if questions arose before the meeting.

Table 3: Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of three statements relating to preparations prior to the meetings

	How did you perceive the main purpose of the meeting? (Unclear 1 – Clear 5) M (SD)	I prepared my own contributions in time (No 1, Partly 2, Yes 3) M (SD)	Questions prior to the meeting were answered (No 1, Partly 2, Yes 3) M (SD)
PM1	5 (0)	2.60 (.89)	2.78 (.67)
PM2	4.95 (.21)	2.82 (.39)	3 (0)
PM3	5 (0)	2.95 (.23)	2.95 (.23)
PM4	5 (0)	2.50 (.52)	2.92 (.29)
PM5	4.94 (.24)	2.88 (.33)	2.93 (.26)
PM6	4.81 (.49)	2.88 (.33)	3 (0)

Table 4: Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of four statements relating to discussions during the meetings

	I was active in the discussions at the meeting (Strongly disagree 1 – Strongly agree 6) M (SD)	All partners were active in the discussions at the meeting (Strongly disagree 1 – Strongly agree 6) M (SD)	I was comfortable with the fact that the meeting was held in English (Strongly disagree 1 – Strongly agree 6) M (SD)	We had the opportunity to ask questions we had about the project and these were discussed at the meeting (Strongly disagree 1 – Strongly agree 6) M (SD)
PM1	4.32 (1.37)	4.42 (1.01)	5.58 (.51)	5.84 (.38)
PM2	4.77 (1.27)	4.68 (1.28)	5.36 (1.25)	5.50 (1.14)
PM3	5.08 (.72)	5.21 (.51)		5.75 (.44)
PM4	5 (.97)	4.88 (.72)		5.88 (.34)
PM5	5.24 (1.30)	4.82 (1.13)		5.59 (1.00)
PM6	5.12 (.77)	4.81 (1.17)	5.69 (.55)	5.77 (.59)

The second part of the questionnaire referred to discussions during the meetings. Table 4 presents the means and standard deviations of four statements in this part. On average, the partners rated themselves and others as active during discussions and were comfortable with the fact that the meeting was held in English (this item was only used in PM1, PM2 and PM6 because it was assumed that the answer patterns would not change as the project progressed). There was also strong agreement that the partners' questions about the project had been considered and discussed at the meetings.

Table 5 presents the participants' satisfaction with the collaboration at the project meetings. A high level of partner satisfaction in terms of working with each other at each of the six project meetings is clearly visible. Accordingly, the partners strongly agreed that there had been solid mutual exchange and collaboration characterised by sensitivity, responsiveness and trust. Moreover, all the partners indicated that participation and interaction, further collaboration, and mutual understanding had been promoted at the project meetings.

Table 5: Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of five statements relating to collaboration during the meetings

	There was a sound mutual exchange (Strongly disagree 1 – Strongly agree 6) M (SD)	Participation and interaction were encouraged (Strongly disagree 1 – Strongly agree 6) M (SD)	Further collaboration was encouraged (Strongly disagree 1 – Strongly agree 6) M (SD)	Reciprocal understanding was fostered (Strongly disagree 1 – Strongly agree 6) M (SD)	The collaboration was characterised by sensitivity, responsiveness and trust (Strongly disagree 1 – Strongly agree 6) M (SD)
PM1	5.74 (.45)	5.84 (.50)	5.84 (.50)	5.79 (.54)	5.63 (.60)
PM2	5.50 (.51)	5.68 (.48)	5.59 (.67)	5.55 (.67)	5.68 (.57)
PM3	5.67 (.48)	5.63 (.50)	5.71 (.46)	5.67 (.48)	5.79 (.42)
PM4	5.31 (1.70)	5.38 (1.71)	5.31 (1.54)	5.38 (1.54)	5.31 (1.70)
PM5	5.53 (1.23)	5.65 (1.00)	5.59 (.80)	5.53 (.72)	5.82 (.39)
PM6	5.46 (1.10)	5.50 (1.07)	5.38 (1.10)	5.50 (1.11)	5.50 (1.11)

Questions in the last part of the questionnaire related to meeting outcomes. The partners' responses illustrate a high level of clarity with respect to the outcomes of all meetings. Accordingly, it was very clear to them what had been decided at the meetings, the next steps they had to take in the project and in what time frame certain tasks had to be completed. In contrast, the responses from the first meeting indicated a lack of clarity among partners regarding the meeting outcomes (see Table 6). This might be because the first project meeting was mainly about giving an overview of the project and its work packages and for the (new) partners to get to know each other, whereas further steps and responsibilities for each partner had not been specified at this point.

The two open-ended questions of the QA questionnaire referred to suggestions for improving the meetings and aspects the partners found particularly important, relevant or inspiring at the meetings.

Table 6: Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of three statements regarding the clarity of meeting outcomes

	It is clear what the partners decided in the meeting (No, very unclear 1 – Yes, very clear 3) M (SD)	It is clear which next steps I have to take in the project (No, very unclear 1 – Yes, very clear 3) M (SD)	The timeline concerning the tasks after the meeting is clear (No, very unclear 1 – Yes, very clear 3) M (SD)
PM1	1.05 (.23)	1 (0)	1 (0)
PM2	2.85 (.37)	3 (0)	3 (0)
PM3	3 (0)	3 (0)	2.96 (.21)
PM4	2.94 (.25)	3 (0)	3 (0)
PM5	2.81 (.54)	2.94 (.25)	3 (0)
PM6	2.92 (.27)	2.88 (.33)	2.92 (.27)

Suggestions for improving the meetings generally related to the desire for the project meetings to be held onsite. Other remarks were wishes for more group works and breaks (e.g., including small breaks with stretching or short mindfulness exercises), shorter meetings per day (e.g., ending 1 hour earlier) and a stronger focus on technical equipment so that those partners who were participating online could follow the meeting appropriately. All of the suggestions were taken up by ERI as project coordinator and implemented as best as possible at the next meeting.

Aspects the partners found particularly important, relevant or inspiring at the meetings also mainly referred to the opportunity of meeting in person and connecting with the others. Other comments most frequently mentioned by the partners included:

- open-minded discussions with all partners;
- group activities;
- better insight into the project objectives and the link between all of the work packages;
- the meetings were well managed by the ERI and well organised by the hosts;
- pleasant interaction and collaboration among the partners and an overall atmosphere of mutual respect and support;
- the clarifying of unsettled questions and sharing of experiences;
- managing to work efficiently in a hybrid format (combining onsite and online attendances); and
- creating mutual understanding of the challenges and advantages faced by the consortium partners while implementing the project.

Overview of the Results Concerning the QA Visits: Implementation of the Field Trials in the Different Countries

The results of the QA visits with the partners that implemented the HAND:ET system (Austria, Croatia, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden) are described in detail in the previous chapter. This chapter therefore provides a brief overview of the field trial implementation in the participating countries by considering the data collected while conducting the QA visits and outlines the main aspects that refer to the third research question: *How did the partners experience the implementation of the HAND:ET system in their countries?*

Overall, the different steps of the implementation had proceeded according to plan: the sampling procedure, randomisation, the translation of the manual for teachers, principals and school counsellors as well as of the questionnaire into the national languages, and preparing materials for the trainings (slides, audio recordings of body scans and exercises for mindful movement). The sample size targeted in the project was reached or exceeded in every country, except Austria where despite considerable efforts made by the Uni Graz team and the Board of Education of Styria (BES) as an associated project partner the desired sample size could not be achieved due to numerous dropouts.

In most countries, introductory visits were made with interested people from the control and intervention groups prior to the implementation process starting. In Slovenia, these could be attended online or in person and were held separately for the intervention and control schools.

Supervision was provided before, during and after the implementation by the Danish team, which had led the Train-the-Trainers (TTT) training concerning the mindfulness-based approaches and content that referred to relational competence. All national trainers had supervision either before the start of the training and/or during the implementation process. Supervision was generally used to clarify concerns and difficulties with regard to the content and aims of the training, the tasks and responsibilities of the trainers as well as the collaboration with the teachers, and to share these with the rest of the national team and the supervisor.

The training commenced implementation in August 2022 (Slovenia, Croatia, Sweden) and September 2022 (Portugal, Austria) while all of the data (pre-assessment: T1) had been collected prior to the start of the field trials (FTs). Overall, the implementation of the HAND:ET system went very well in Slovenia, Croatia, Portugal and Sweden. The teachers showed a high level of motivation to participate in the trainings and appreciated that the focus of the trainings directly addressed their needs and well-being.

Alongside the onsite meetings, online meetings were held in the times between. On one hand, participants viewed these online meetings as helpful in order to get to know each other better (Slovenia). In line with this positive

view, the Swedish team reported that the online meetings offered a space to repeat the exercises since most teachers did not do this on their own in their free time. In comparison, the online meetings were perceived as challenging. The Croatian team reported that implementing the online meetings had been difficult due to technical issues and other disturbances (e.g., family members or children interrupting). In Croatia, Sweden and Austria, the online meetings always took place relatively late in the afternoon and many teachers were thus tired and had troubles remaining focused.

In contrast to the other countries, the Austrian team found the implementation challenging and the cooperation with certain schools had become difficult. This was chiefly due to the numerous dropouts in the intervention group before (about 40 participants) and during (about 30 participants) the training (e.g., teachers were busy due to the COVID-19 measures, the training did not meet expectations, teachers were unhappy with the randomised allocation to the intervention or control group). However, the remaining participants were perceived as very motivated and most provided positive feedback on the training.

All national teams encountered a few difficulties and challenges. Particularly difficult was the replacement of trainers for various reasons in many countries (e.g., due to long sick leave, maternity leave, change of employment).

Moreover, in Portugal the strike in January 2023 was also seen as challenging by the team since it created difficulties in carrying out the training. The trainers dealt with it by remaining as flexible as possible. They constantly changed the dates for the training sessions and adapted them to the participants' needs.

Other challenges related to some teachers with special needs for whom the materials and exercises had to be adapted (Sweden). In addition, organisational issues were noted by the Croatian team because the project required more working time and costs than originally anticipated, leading to a lack of staff resources.

The Final Deliverables of the Project

Online Checklist

In this section, by considering the results of the online checklist we answer the fourth and last research question: *What were the final deliverables of the HAND:ET project and were they been delivered on time?*

The checklist, which included all of the work packages with the corresponding responsibilities, tasks and deadlines, provided a good overview of the status of progress with the project and the achievement of its deliverables. The fact that all project partners had access to the checklist meant they were able to

continuously indicate whether tasks had been completed in time, were still in progress or delayed and mark them in the suitable colour (green, yellow or red). This worked very well and allowed for the quick and flexible handling of difficulties that arose during the project period.

In sum, the project team completed the main deliverables on time. Some tasks were completed with a slight delay (e.g., due to a lack of time resources of partners, work overload, a lack of cooperation on the part of the schools). Given that this had no negative impact on the project's overall timeframe and objectives, it was not considered a serious issue.

The main deliverables of the HAND:ET project were:

1. HAND:ET Assessment: A multi-method set of instruments (questionnaires containing different types of measures, semi-structured interviews) was selected to assess the social and emotional competencies and diversity awareness (SEDA) as well as the related attitudes and experiences of teachers, principals and school counsellors. At the time of writing this chapter, this deliverable had already been completed.
2. HAND:ET: Social and Emotional (SE) Programme for Teachers: A programme for school staff was developed with particular emphasis on social and emotional learning (SEL), including relational competence and mindfulness. This programme is described in an English manual that combines social and emotional (SE) and diversity awareness (DA) related contents. The manual was translated into the languages of the countries where the field trials were being conducted and facilitated the programme implementation for the trainers. Besides theoretical background information on SEDA competencies, the manual provides a variety of exercises and activities to be done with school staff to enable them to transfer the theoretical input into practice. At the time of preparing this chapter, this deliverable had been completed in the English version and the national translations were about to be finished.
3. HAND:ET: Diversity Awareness (DA) Programme for Teachers: A programme focusing on diversity awareness and related concepts was developed for school staff trainings. As described above, the comprehensive manual that combines various aspects of SEDA competencies and implications for teacher practice provided a well-structured foundation for implementing the programme. At the time of writing this chapter, this deliverable had been completed in the English version and in most of the translations.
4. HAND:ET: SEDA Programme for School Principals and School Leadership Teams: This programme includes different SEDA aspects and represents a shortened version of the SE and DA programmes for teachers. At the end of the mentioned manual, the structure and lesson flow of the SEDA Pro-

gramme for School Principals and School Leadership Teams are outlined. At the time of writing this chapter, this deliverable had been completed in the English version and the national translations were about to be finished. For sustainability reasons and to facilitate the handling of the training during the implementation process, the Austrian team described the programme for principals and school leadership teams in a separate manual, whereas the other national teams (Croatia, Slovenia, Portugal, Sweden) worked with a single manual that included both the SEDA programme for teachers and the SEDA programme for school principals and school leadership teams.

5. HAND:ET Guidelines for Policy and Practice: The central aim of the *HAND:ET* guidelines is to model the system-level solutions to support SEDA education across the EU. This deliverable is to be finalised by the end of the project in 2024.

Discussion

The reported results generally show that the HAND:ET project met the quality criteria established in advance. To guarantee the quality of the project as a whole (including the deliverables), the QA needed to be more than a "tick-the-box-exercise" (Jung et al., 2013). We conducted the QA with regard to three broad areas; namely, the project's (a) planning and goal setting, (b) organisation and execution as well as (c) final deliverables. Nonetheless, the results of these three areas are intertwined and must be discussed accordingly.

In the first broad area, risk management was in the centre of attention. In accordance with Huuhka and Pakarinen (2021), QA and risk management play a significant part in transnational projects when it comes to identifying and dealing with potential risk and difficulties. In the HAND:ET project, the consortium was made up of institutions from various European countries, each with its own context as concerns schools, curricula, teachers and teacher education, or training formats. In cases like this, it is important to consider the cultural perspectives and the contexts the project partners are working in (Flavian, 2020). Ever since the HAND:ET project application was drafted, risk management has been a main concern.

Our first focus referred to the question of w*hich risks and risk measures had been identified in the HAND:ET project.* At an early stage of the project, potential risks were identified before they could even occur. The risks identified were rated in terms of the probability of their occurrence and their severity. Coping strategies were later developed for each risk to be able to respond to any challenges and difficulties occurring in a fast and adequate way. The aim of the risk management measures set throughout the QA in the HAND:ET project

has been to minimise the possible risks, while ensuring that the project's goals and objectives are achieved on time, on budget as well as with high quality, hence, to monitor the quality of the project in general. With the secure basis of the risk analyses being conducted beforehand, some of the developments which had occurred during the project period had already been identified in advance. In these cases, the responses to these risks were planned beforehand and the risk management was simply according to the measures defined.

However, it is also important to recall that risks can change over time and this can affect a project lasting 3 years. At the time when the risk management plan was being developed, fear and insecurity about COVID-19 measures were considerable between the project members as well as teachers. In the meantime, these measures receded into the background in each country, with concerns about the war in Ukraine currently dominating. Even though the partner countries are not directly affected, teachers are indirectly affected by students who come from Ukraine and are included in the classrooms as well as by increased living costs that may be observed in many European countries due to commodity prices or transport difficulties. In a few countries, implementation of the project partly had proved to be especially difficult (e.g., due to the low interest of school staff in participating in the training (Austria), a teachers' strike as a reaction to insufficient societal conditions associated with the teaching profession (Portugal)). Despite the thoroughly planned risk management and risk management strategy, this could not have been foreseen.

This made it very important to develop general strategies that would be effective for all cases. In general, the project consortium decided that any changes and deviations from the project plan had to be documented in detail in order to be able to trace them in the optimal way. QA plans can support the project partners in recognising tasks that are relevant for ensuring high-quality outputs. These plans that introduce ongoing measures also lead to sufficient communication between the different partners (Huuhka & Pakarinen, 2021). If something unforeseen happened, the ERI as the project manager and all the partners affected by the occurrence were contacted as soon as possible in order to jointly decide on possible solutions (e.g., sample sizes in Austria). The success of this approach was also visible while analysing the quality of the communication between the project partners.

Our second research question aimed to investigate the communication and satisfaction of the partners and was implemented as follows: *To what extent were the partners satisfied with the communication and meetings?* In order to answer this question, an online questionnaire was sent out after each project meeting and completed by the partners. As the results clearly showed, there was a high level of partner satisfaction in terms of working with each other. This applies to all six project meetings. Accordingly, there was a strong agreement that there had been a solid mutual exchange and collaboration charac-

terised by sensitivity, responsiveness and trust. As all partners indicated participation and interaction, further collaboration and mutual understanding were promoted at the project meetings. On average, the data showed that the purpose of the meetings was clear to all of the participants. The project partners stated that they had prepared everything accordingly and were able to contact the project leader when they had questions before the meeting. The partners described themselves and the other participants as active during the discussions and stated that they were comfortable with the meetings being held in English. The partners also strongly agreed that partners' questions about the project had been considered and discussed at the meetings.

The third research question we considered was: *How did the partners experience the implementation of the HAND:ET system in their countries?* As our results show, in the course of the project different views on certain details as well as various difficulties and risks occurred. What was viewed as a challenge varied depending on the country. For example, teachers in the participating countries perceived the value of the online meetings held between the onsite training sessions differently. While the trainers in Slovenia and Sweden reported that their teachers had assessed these meetings as helpful, the partners from Austria and Croatia stated that the online meetings were difficult for the teachers. Reliant on the country in which the participants took part in the HAND:ET trainings, they were either able to attend the training sessions during their work time or had to complete the trainings in their free time. This led to different perceptions of the trainings as well. Likewise, interest in the trainings and in the topic of mindfulness itself varied from country to country. In the case of Austria, where teachers were participating in their spare time, many dropouts had been detected. Yet, in other countries, there was not a significant number of dropouts. In addition, changes in the training staff were reported, which did not come as a surprise (given the project's duration). Still, every country managed to find a solution.

Our last research question focused on another relevant topic: *What were the final deliverables of the HAND:ET project and were they been delivered on time?* As stated in the results section, most of the final deliverables of the HAND:ET project were completed on time. While some tasks were completed with a slight delay, this did not negatively affect the project's overall timeframe and objectives. Hence, it was not regarded as a serious issue.

Although there were some unforeseen events and challenges that led to deviations from the project plan, it was still possible to meet the overarching schedule and associated deliverables. The project management made an effort to keep the processes in order as well as to ensure that all partners were meeting their responsibilities and completing their tasks in time. As may be concluded from the results of the QA questionnaire, partners perceived the project meetings as very positive. It was stated that the meetings were characterised by an

atmosphere of mutual respect and support. A high level of satisfaction with working with each other was also shown throughout the project.

Conclusion

Even though unpredictable difficulties arose during the project period (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic), the HAND:ET project team managed to ensure that the project's goals and objectives were achieved on time, on budget and with high quality. Challenges encountered during the project period mostly related to implementation of the HAND:ET system in the participating countries (Austria, Croatia, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden) and varied from country to country (e.g., many school dropouts, a lack of staff resources, teacher strike). These challenges were dealt with by documenting any changes and deviations from the project plan in detail to be able to trace them in the best way possible. Overall, all final deliverables of the HAND:ET project could be completed so far. Although some tasks were completed with a slight delay, this was not seen as a serious issue since it did not affect the project's overall timeframe. The project management made an effort to ensure that all partners were meeting their responsibilities and completing their tasks on time. As may be concluded from the results of the QA questionnaire, the partners found the project meetings to be very positive and there was a high level of partner satisfaction in terms of working with each other during the project.

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Evaluation

Chapter 7

Developing the Assessment for the External Evaluation of the HAND:ET System

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Abstract

This chapter outlines the strategy used for the external evaluation of the HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Across Europe to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity-Related Career Challenges (HAND:ET) system. We describe the measures targeting socio-emotional competencies and diversity awareness (SEDA) that were selected for the evaluation process. Our evaluation strategy includes the use of self-report questionnaires and focus group interviews to measure and explain the impact of the HAND:ET system. In addition, we explore participants' perceptions of the training sessions and identify areas for improving the HAND:ET system. In this chapter, we also present the results of analysis of the pre-test data, with a focus on examining the quality of the questionnaire scales. Finally, we describe the final selection of the self-report scales used in the evaluation of the HAND:ET system, which will help us to assess the HAND:ET system's outcomes.

Keywords: Assessment Development, External Evaluation, Formative Evaluation, Summative Evaluation, Questionnaire Scales, Focus Group Interviews

This chapter presents the assessment strategy used for the external evaluation of the HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Across Europe to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity-Related Career Challenges System ("HAND:ET") and the self-report measures (targeting socio-emotional competencies and diversity awareness – SEDA) that were selected for the evaluation.

Assessment Strategy for the External Evaluation of the HAND:ET System

A formal evaluation is described as "the systematic application of social research procedures in assessing the conceptualization and design, implementation, and utility of social intervention programs" (Rossi & Freeman, 1993).

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Scriven (1967) introduced the distinction between formative and summative evaluation according to the function of the evaluation. In his definition, formative evaluation focuses on improvement and is typically carried out during implementation of the programme, whereas summative evaluation aims to assess the overall effectiveness and outcomes and is thus mostly carried out at the end of a programme. However, this conceptualisation does not capture the full range of evaluation approaches. For example, summative evaluation focused on potential effects can be conducted at earlier stages of a programme, and a formative approach can be applied at the end of a programme with the intention of improving further development. Chen (1996; 2015) therefore proposed a classification system that crosses two evaluation criteria, formative ("improvement") and summative ("assessment") with the programme phases "process" and "outcome", resulting in four fundamental evaluation categories.

Traditionally, evaluation approaches put a strong emphasis on rigorous experimental designs (Alkin, 2004; Mertens, 2008) and therewith on summative outcome evaluations. However, this approach attracted criticism for its narrow perspective (e.g., Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Stake, 1975). Stake (1975; 1980), for example, stressed the importance of considering participants' perspectives to improve the communication with them and for a deeper understanding of an intervention's effects (see also Vieluf et al., 2020). In the evaluation of the HAND:ET system we accordingly did not exclusively focus on an experimental approach, but also wanted to give room for the subjective perspective of the participants (i.e., teachers, principals, other school staff) and consider formative aspects, taking both quantitative and qualitative approaches into account. Regarding Chen's (1996, 2015) classification, our approach combines a summative and formative outcome evaluation. Specifically, it combines the following elements: (1) a randomised control group experiment with a pre and a post measurement was established to determine if the HAND:ET system had been effective in achieving its purpose, namely enhancing the SEDA competencies (quantitative approach). Alongside the experimental aspect, (2) semi-structured focus group interviews were held with participants. These interviews were complemented with questions in the evaluation questionnaire that directly asked for the participants' experiences and views with respect to the HAND:ET system (predominantly a qualitative approach).

The use of multiple methods has another advantage apart from covering different perspectives and goals of evaluation (formative vs. summative). There are different levels of teacher training success, as outlined in Lipowsky's (2010) model. The first level describes participants' reactions such as acceptance or satisfaction. The second level refers to learning gains, e.g., in terms of knowledge and competencies. The third level describes the effects on classroom behaviour and the fourth level the effects on students. The HAND:ET system is clearly focused on teacher competencies, levels 3 and 4 are not the core of the

evaluation. Nonetheless, the combination of different methods might allow us to detect effects on different levels and possibly also to uncover more subtle effects that would remain undetected in a purely experimental-based evaluation.

Summative Outcome Evaluation

We used self-report questionnaire scales to measure the relevant constructs and understand the HAND:ET system's effects on SEDA competencies in the summative outcome evaluation. Self-report measures hold several advantages, such as time efficiency, ease of administration, objectivity and comparability (Paulhus & Vazire, 2007). A further argument for using self-report scales was the availability of validated and established measures for the Core Constructs we are aiming at in the HAND:ET system (see Chapter 1). Still, these self-report measures also have disadvantages, such as susceptibility to unconscious or conscious manipulation (i.e., social desirability bias, acquiescence bias, extreme responding, central tendency bias; see Bogner & Landrock, 2015). For this reason, some of the self-report scales were to be supplemented by scales where selected SEDA competencies of participants are rated by colleagues (i.e., other-reports) and sociometric measures to look at the structures among colleagues in terms of teacher cooperation. However, this ultimately did not proceed due to data protection concerns in some countries.

We not only relied on the questionnaires to assess the participants' perception of their own SEDA competencies, but also had the participants evaluate the HAND:ET system to complement the experimental results (see Chapter 9) with the participants' perspective on the programme. On top of the post-test questionnaire, the focus group interviews were an important source of information about how the participants evaluated the programme and had experienced the training. This should also give us some indication for understanding the results concerning effectiveness (see Chapter 8).

Formative Outcome Evaluation

The focus group interviews referred to in the paragraph above served several purposes. In addition to better understanding the results related to effectiveness and gaining insight into the participants' experiences, we used them formatively to identify levers for possible improvements of the HAND:ET system in the future.

The post-test questionnaire was a further source of information for the formative outcome evaluation. In the questionnaire, we also asked participants how they thought the HAND:ET system could be improved. In contrast to the

focus group interviews, we expected less comprehensive and detailed information from the questionnaire. Nevertheless, at the same time, we would be able to obtain data from a larger number of participants, whereas the focus group interviews could only be conducted with a smaller subgroup.

Measures for the Evaluation

In the section below, we first present the assessment instruments we compiled to measure the impact of the HAND:ET system on SEDA competencies as part of the summative outcome evaluation. These instruments also provide insights into the participants' subjective evaluation of the programme and offer potential levers for improving the HAND:ET programme. Finally, we present the focus group interviews, which hold a dual purpose: first, to complement the summative outcome evaluation with participants' views and, second, to provide information to assist with the refinement of the HAND:ET programmes, thereby contributing to the formative outcome evaluation.

Development of the HAND:ET Pre- and Post-Test Questionnaires

Self-report scales are a set of statements or questions that respondents are asked to rate themselves on a selected characteristic such as the personal ability to recognise one's own emotions and bodily sensations, or the ability to adopt the perspective of others.

In selecting the questionnaire scales for assessing the programme's effectiveness, we followed the Core Concepts defined in the HAND:ET project (see Chapters 1 and 2 for a detailed description of the Core Concepts). According to the Core Concepts, all HAND:ET partners proposed self-report scales to measure SEDA competencies. One requirement was that only instruments which had already been validated and established in the literature should be used, and that preference should be given to instruments already available in several language versions relevant to HAND:ET. The resulting set of instruments was then ranked by all partners with regard to priority for the evaluation of the HAND:ET project. With the help of this ranking and the requirement that the complete questionnaire should take no more than 30 minutes to complete, the scales listed in Table 2 were selected for the pre- and post-test survey to experimentally test the effectiveness of the HAND:ET system. With these specifications and procedures, it was possible to capture several important subaspects for each competence area, but not to comprehensively cover the SEDA competencies. The partner ranking and further discussions in the project consortium stressed the importance of mindfulness as a tool for fostering SEDA competencies. Therefore, constructs like self-awareness or mindfulness in the

classroom which are particularly close to the training content and techniques were given more attention.

Although we considered that as many relevant translations as possible should be available while selecting the instruments, most of the questionnaire scales that were chosen had to be translated for some and, in many cases, for all countries. The translation process followed this procedure: The partners responsible for conducting the field trials translated the instruments into the required language and then had them translated back into English by translators. The evaluation team then systematically compared the two English versions and reported any potentially problematic translations back to the field trial partners so that the translation could be adapted accordingly.

In addition to the self-report scales on SEDA competencies (pre- and post-test questionnaire), we included questions on teacher training and professional development in SEDA competencies, as well as professional experience and previous experience with mindfulness in the pre-test questionnaire for purposes of implementation control. In the post-test questionnaire, we included questions on the use of elements of the HAND:ET training in personal and professional daily life during the project and a question on the intention to use the HAND:ET elements in the future. The post-test questionnaire also included questions on the perceived effects of the programme and a subjective evaluation of the quality of the HAND:ET system as a whole and of different aspects such as the exercises or the theoretical content. Finally, the questionnaire contained two open-ended questions about positive aspects of the HAND:ET system and possibilities for improving it.

Focus Group Interviews

We used the focus group interview method in which participants engage in guided discussions, responding to questions as they interact with each other and their contributions are interrelated (e.g., Vaughn et al., 1996). For the focus group interviews, structured guidelines were developed to interview six participants from each training group in each of the five field trial countries. These interviews took place after the post-test survey and the responsible partners could decide whether to conduct them face-to-face (Croatia, Sweden) or online (Austria, Portugal, Slovenia). For participants in the control groups, we performed an online survey with open-ended questions instead of interviews since only a few aspects were to be collected, such as whether SEDA support measures were implemented in the duration of the HAND:ET system or whether there had been any extraordinary incidents/changes at the school (results of the survey of the control schools are presented in the HAND:ET evaluation report: Rožman et al., 2024). Participants were asked, among other things, what they liked, what they found problematic and what ideas they had for improving

the face-to-face and online training sessions. They were also asked what they had learned from the programme and whether they had used the HAND:ET exercises or techniques outside of the training sessions (see Chapter 9 for a presentation of the results of the focus group interviews).

The Quality of the Self-report Questionnaire Scales scales – Results from the HAND:ET Pre-Test Data Collection

The pre-test pursued two consecutive goals. First, the quality of the questionnaire scales measuring SEDA competencies was to be evaluated, and then in a second step only the measurement instruments that had worked well across all five field trial countries were used to determine the efficacy of the HAND:ET system (see Chapter 8 for a description of the results of the experimental evaluation).

Research Questions for the Pre-Test Data Analysis

In order to assess the quality of the self-report scales used to evaluate HAND:ET's effectiveness, we investigated whether (1) *the scales used are sufficiently reliable* (i.e., >.60) and whether (2) *the dimensional structure in all five countries corresponds to the dimensionality described in the literature.*

Methods

Participants. In total, we collected data from N = 1207 teachers, principals, other school staff and trainers from the five participating countries (see Table 1). The participants' average age was 44 years overall and female participants accounted for 90 % of the full sample.

Measures. The Pre-test (T1) Questionnaire encompassed 14 scales measuring SEDA competencies (see Table 2). The different groups of participants (i.e., teachers, principals, other school staff, HAND:ET trainers) were each given only those scales appropriate for their context. Consequently, teachers were presented with all scales, while the other participant groups were provided with a sub-sample of them (see Table 2).

For the evaluation of *emotional competencies*, we focused strongly on the *self-awareness* aspect and instruments that directly target mindfulness. First, we employed the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (Brown & Ryan, 2003), which contains 15 items. An example item is, "I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until sometime later". We also used the Observe subscale from the Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (Baer et al., 2004),

Table 1: Pre-test (T1) sample sizes and demographic characteristics of the participants

		Overall	Austria	Croatia	Portugal	Slovenia	Sweden
Sample Size	*N*	1207	168	255	276	264	244
	Teachers	910	132	198	207	205	168
	Principals	69	25	9	4	22	9
	Other School Staff	193	4	40	57	29	63
	HAND:ET Trainers	35	7	8	8	8	4
Age	*M (SD)*	44(9)	42(11)	43(9)	50(8)	42(8)	45(11)
Gender	*% female*	90	90	95	92	93	78

Note. M = Mean, *SD* = standard deviation

which comprises seven items. For example, participants were asked to respond to statements such as, "I pay attention to how my emotions affect my thoughts and behaviour". To cover self-awareness and mindfulness in our participants' daily school experience, we used the Mindfulness in Teaching Scale (Rank et al., 2016), which measures intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of mindfulness in the classroom. The Intrapersonal subscale consists of nine items, including statements like, "When I am in the classroom, I have difficulty staying focused on what is happening in the present". The Interpersonal subscale comprises five items, such as, "I am aware of how my moods affect the way I treat my students".

As regards *self-management*, we employed the subscale Emotional Self-Efficacy from the Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (Muris, 2001), comprising eight items. An example question is, "How well do you succeed in cheering yourself up when an unpleasant event has happened?". Next to emotional self-efficacy we addressed well-being, burnout and work-related strain that, while not competencies themselves, are very crucial indicators of insufficient self-management capacities. To assess overall well-being, we incorporated the WHO-5 Well-Being Index (Topp et al., 2015), made up of five items, such as "I have felt calm and relaxed".

To address burnout, we used the Shirom-Melamed Burnout Questionnaire (Shirom & Melamed, 2006), which includes three subscales: Physical Fatigue (6 items; e.g., "I felt physically drained"), Cognitive Weariness (5 items; e.g., "I had difficulty concentrating") and Emotional Exhaustion (3 items; e.g., "I felt I am unable to be sensitive to the needs of the students").

Finally, we employed the Psychological Strain in Work Contexts Scale (Mohr et al., 2006), comprising two dimensions: Cognitive Strain (3 items, e.g., "Even at home I often think of my problems at work") and Emotional Strain (4 items, e.g., "When I come home tired after work, I feel rather irritable").

Moving on to *social competencies*, we utilised measures for empathy and the teachers' relational competence[3]. To assess empathy, we selected four out of five subscales from the Empathy Assessment Inventory (Gerdes et al., 2010): Affective Response (e.g., "I feel happy myself when I see someone receive a gift that makes them happy"; 5 items), Affective Mentalising (e.g., "I can accurately describe what someone is feeling when they experience strong emotions"; 4 items), Perspective Taking (e.g., "I consider other people's points of view in discussions"; 5 items) and Self-Other Awareness (e.g., "I can tell the difference between someone else's feelings and my own"; 4 items).

We also employed the Teacher's Relational Competence Scale (Vidmar & Kerman, 2016) in an adapted version, as used in the HAND:ET predecessor project (see Roczen et al., 2020), made up of nine items such as, "When a student behaves or expresses in an inappropriate or unsuitable way, I try to understand what lies under his/her behaviour or words".

Consisting of eight items, the Teacher Cooperation Scale (OECD, 2017) was used to address collaboration among teachers. For instance, participants were asked, "On average, how often do you observe other teachers' classes and provide feedback in this school?".

To assess *diversity awareness*, we included measures covering the teachers' self-efficacy for and their beliefs regarding dealing with classroom diversity, their self-assessed flexibility and openness to diversity and their views on social hierarchy. The Self-Efficacy for Classroom Diversity scale (OECD, 2019) contains five items such as "I can adapt my teaching to the diversity of students".

We further used the Beliefs regarding Dealing with Classroom Diversity scale (OECD, 2019; adapted from Hachfeld et al., 2011), comprising nine items. We decided on this shortened version that was employed in PISA 2018 where it was modelled as one-dimensional. In that version, the original sub-dimensions Multicultural Beliefs (6 items; "It is important for students to learn that people from other cultures can have different values") and Egalitarian Beliefs (3 items "In the classroom, it is important that students of different origins recognise the similarities that exist between them") were regarded as two facets of a one-dimensional construct.

We also employed an adapted scale from the ICU Teacher Tool (Denson et al., 2017), Flexibility/Openness to Cultural Diversity, which combines items addressing adaptability/flexibility and openness to cultural diversity with four

3 We also included a one-item graphical scale addressing participants' connectedness with their colleagues as an indicator of relationship competence and teacher cooperation. This scale was adapted from the Inclusion of Other in the Self scale (Aron et al., 1992). This one-item instrument is not part of the pre-test analyses as item quality, especially reliability, cannot be assessed with a one-point measurement. The instrument is used for the experimental evaluation described later in Chapter 8.

items. An example statement is, "I feel comfortable around people with diverse backgrounds".

To capture participants' perspectives on social hierarchy and group dominance, we used the short version of the Social Dominance Orientation Scale (Pratto et al., 1994), consisting of four items. An example item from this scale is, "In setting priorities, we must consider all groups".

Procedure. The pre-test questionnaire was answered online by the participants (in both the experimental and control group) in the week prior to the start of the HAND:ET programme.

Analyses. We performed the following analyses: On the item level, we analysed descriptive statistics such as frequencies and missing values for the purposes of data cleaning. We used the internal consistency of scales (Cronbach's alpha) as a reliability measure. We further computed descriptive statistics for the scales, i.e., scale means[4] and standard deviations. These analyses were performed with R (version 4.3.1; R Core Team, 2023) and the R-package psych (Revelle, 2023).

Regarding the dimensionality structure of the scales, we first inspected Scree Plots from exploratory factor analyses (EFAs). Principal axis factor analysis was used as the extraction method. For most scales, we used EFA for continuous indicators – if the number of response categories was less than five, EFA for categorical indicators was employed. These analyses were performed with the R-package psych (Revelle, 2023). We further conducted confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) to examine whether the composition of the scales was consistent with that described in the literature. Therefore, we initially defined the respective model based on the dimensions reported in the literature. If necessary, modification indices were used to identify the best fitting models in the five participating countries. As with EFA, we specified CFA models for continuous indicators (using the MLR estimator) – if the number of response categories was less than five, CFA for categorical indicators was used (with the WLSMW estimator). CFA analyses were carried out with the Mplus Software (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2022).

Results

The scale and subscale distributions and percentages of missing values from all 14 self-report scales, as well as the scales' internal consistency and exploratory factor analysis results, are presented in Table 2.

The number of missing values for the scales is very low in all countries (see Table 2), ranging from 0 to 5.4%. As regards the scale distributions, the mean

4 We calculated scale values by computing mean values from the items belonging to the scale. We only generated a scale value for a person if at least half the corresponding items had been answered.

values of positively worded scales are generally relatively high. The scales with the highest mean values (relative to the maximum possible value) are Beliefs regarding Dealing with Classroom Diversity ($M = 3.41–3.71$) and Flexibility/Openness to Diversity ($M = 4.65–5.18$). Hence, the distributions for positively worded scales – especially the latter – are skewed.

Overall, the internal consistencies of the self-reported questionnaire scales are reasonable (DeVellis, 2003; Taber, 2018), showing a Cronbach's alpha above .60 in most scales for all countries. There were two exceptions, namely the Social Dominance Orientation scale, which reveals the lowest internal consistency of all scales across the countries, with internal consistencies below .60 in Austria ($\alpha = .54$) and in Portugal ($\alpha = .49$). Similarly, the subscale Interpersonal Mindfulness from the scale Mindfulness in Teaching also shows internal consistencies below .60 in Austria ($\alpha = .53$) and Portugal ($\alpha = .57$).

Regarding the structure of the scales, the results of the exploratory factor analyses (see Table 2) confirm that all of the scales' dimensionality corresponded to the structure described in the relevant literature.

The results of the confirmatory factor analyses, fit indices and corresponding modifications of the models are presented in Table 3. The CFA models for the scales Burnout, Teacher Self-Efficacy for Classroom Diversity, and Social Dominance Orientation showed an acceptable fit across countries without needing further adjustments. For the remaining scales, however, a model modification was required to achieve a satisfactory fit in all countries. In most cases, this entailed that residual covariances be allowed, specifically in the scales of Mindfulness – Observe, Mindful Attention Awareness, Mindfulness in Teaching, Wellbeing, Emotional Self-Efficacy, Empathy, Flexibility/Openness to Diversity, and Teacher Cooperation. The Beliefs regarding Dealing with Classroom Diversity scale, which had been anticipated to be unidimensional according to the version used in PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019), showed a much better fit for a two-dimensional model, as is consistent with the structure of the original scale (Hachfeld et al., 2011). The respective subdimensions are Multicultural Beliefs and Egalitarian Beliefs. Finally, the models for the scales Strain in Work Contexts and Relational Competence were optimised by removing one item each.

Overall, after the model was adjusted as described, the final models show an adequate fit in the majority of countries for most fit indices[5] (Table 3). Specifically, most of the *emotional competencies* scales (i.e., Mindfulness – Observe, Mindful Attention Awareness, Mindfulness in Teaching, Wellbeing, and Emotional Self-Efficacy) show a good fit in all or most countries. The remaining *emotional competencies* scales, the *social competencies* scales and the *diversity awareness* scales have an adequate fit in most countries, albeit for several scales

5 CFI $\geq .90$; TLI $\geq .90$; RMSEA $\leq .08$; SRMR $\leq .08$ (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

the RMSEA often indicates an unsatisfactory fit in most or all countries, i.e., Burnout, Strain in Work Contexts, Relational Competence, Teacher Self-Efficacy for Classroom Diversity, Beliefs regarding Dealing with Classroom Diversity, and Social Dominance Orientation. With regard to the latter, an unsatisfactory fit is also indicated by the CFI and TLI.

Table 2: Overview of self-report questionnaire scales used in the Pre- and Post-test Questionnaires

Measures	Subscale	# Items	Teachers	Principals	Other school staff	HAND:ET trainers	EFA	Range	Cronbach's α	Missing Values (%)	Distribution *M* (*SD*)
Emotional Competencies											
Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004)	Observe	7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1–5	.81 –.85	0.00 (AUT, CRO, SVN, SWE) – 0.01 (PRT)	3.73 (0.62) – 3.93 (0.58)
Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (Brown & Ryan, 2003)		15	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1–6	.88 –.90	0.00 (AUT, CRO, PRT, SVN) – 0.01 (SWE)	2.86 (0.73) – 3.07 (0.77)
Mindfulness in Teaching Scale (Rank, Jennings, & Greenberg, 2016)	Intrapersonal	9	✓	–	–	–	✓	1–5	.81 –.87	0.00 (CRO, PRT, SVN) – 0.03 (SWE)	3.88 (0.53) – 4.16 (0.51)
	Interpersonal	5	✓	–	–	–	✓	1–5	.53 –.71	0.00 (CRO, PRT, SVN) – 0.03 (SWE)	3.70 (0.62) – 4.16 (0.54)
WHO-5 Well-Being Index (Topp et al., 2015)		5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1–6	.86 –.91	0.00 (AUT, SVN) – 0.01 (CRO, PRT, SWE)	3.42 (1.07) – 4.11 (0.99)
Shirom-Melamed Burnout Questionnaire (Shirom & Melamed, 2006)	Physical fatigue	6	✓	–	✓	–	✓	1–7	.94 –.97	0.00 (AUT, PRT, SVN) – 0.03 (SWE)	3.04 (1.25) – 3.88 (1.27)
	Cognitive weariness	5	✓	–	✓	–	✓	1–7	.90 –.95	0.00 (AUT, CRO, SVN) – 0.04 (SWE)	3.14 (1.41) – 3.59 (1.37)
	Emotional exhaustion	3	✓	–	✓	–	✓	1–7	.87 –.95	0.00 (AUT, CRO, PRT, SVN) – 0.04 (SWE)	2.12 (1.12) – 2.59 (1.19)

Measures	Subscale	# Items	Teachers	Principals	Other school staff	HAND:ET trainers	EFA	Range	Cronbach's α	Missing Values (%)	Distribution *M* (*SD*)
Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (Muris, 2001)	Emotional Self-Efficacy	8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1–5	.81 –.88	0.00 (CRO, PRT, SVN) – 0.01 (AUT, SWE)	3.19 (0.61) – 3.32 (0.66)
Psychological Strain in Work Contexts Scale (Mohr et al., 2006)	Cognitive strain	3 (4)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1–6	.74 –.86	0.00 (CRO) – 1.79 (SWE)	3.81 (1.52) – 4.48 (1.46)
	Emotional strain	4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1–6	.77 –.87	0.00 (CRO) – 1.79 (SWE)	2.76 (1.17) – 3.66 (1.21)
Social Competencies											
Empathy Assessment Inventory (Gerdes, Segal, & Lietz, 2010)	Affective response	5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1–6	.63 –.72	0.00 (CRO, PRT, SVN) – 0.01 (AUT, SWE)	4.52 (0.74) – 5.14 (0.62)
	Affective mentalizing	4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1–6	.72 –.84	0.00 (CRO, PRT, SVN) – 0.01 (AUT, SWE)	4.31 (0.82) – 4.67 (0.57)
	Perspective Taking	5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1–6	.67 –.82	0.00 (CRO, PRT, SVN) – 0.01 (AUT, SWE)	4.50 (0.73) – 4.65 (0.69)
	Self-Other Awareness	4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1–6	.63 –.97	0.00 (CRO, PRT, SVN) – 0.01 (AUT, SWE)	4.32 (0.70) – 4.50 (0.70)
Teacher's Relational Competence Scale (adapted from Vidmar & Kerman, 2016)		6 (7)	✓	–	–	–	✓	1–5	.79 –.88	0.00 (CRO, PRT, SVN) – 0.02 (SWE)	3.83 (0.54) – 4.00 (0.59)
Teacher Cooperation (OECD, 2017)		8	✓	–	–	–	✓	1–6	.72 –.81	0.00 (CRO) – 5.36 (SWE)	3.38 (0.86) – 4.33 (0.82)

Measures	Subscale	# Items	Teachers	Principals	Other school staff	HAND:ET trainers	EFA	Range	Cronbach's α	Missing Values (%)	Distribution *M* (*SD*)
Diversity Awareness											
Teacher Self-Efficacy for Classroom Diversity (OECD, 2019)		5	✓	–	–	–	✓	1–4	.81 –.91	0.00 (CRO) – 1.79 (SWE)	3.17 (0.38) – 3.32 (0.44)
Beliefs regarding dealing with classroom diversity (adapted from Hachfeld et al., 2011; OECD 2019)	Multicultural Beliefs	6	✓	–	–	–	✓	1–4	.83 –.89	0.00 (CRO) – 1.79 (SWE)	3.43 (0.41) – 3.71 (0.34)
	Egalitarian Beliefs	3	✓	–	–	–	✓	1–4	.83 –.91	0.00 (CRO) – 1.79 (SWE)	3.38 (0.51) – 3.72 (0.40)
ICU Teacher Tool (adapted from Denson et al., 2017)	Flexibility/Openness to Diversity	4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1–6	.78 –.86	0.00 (CRO, SVN) – 0.01 (AUT, PRT, SWE)	4.65 (0.91) – 5.18 (0.68)
Social Dominance Orientation (short version; Pratto et al., 1994)		4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1–10	.49 –.66	0.00 (CRO, PRT, SVN) – 0.02 (SWE)	2.25 (1.33) – 4.60 (1.41)

Notes: We refer to the literature on the original scales and do not provide any further references, e.g., for validation studies. Where we used adaptations of the original scales, we additionally cite the reference to the corresponding adaptation. In the "range" column, the possible response range for each scale is displayed so that the mean values in the "distribution *M* (*SD*)" columns can be interpreted relative to it. The values in the column "Missings" are based on the respective teacher samples since the samples for the other participant groups are in some cases very small. In Austria, the online survey was implemented in a way that a question could only be answered if the previous one had been completed – therefore, there are no omissions in the Austrian sample, only drop-outs. AUT = Austria, CRO = Croatia, PRT = Portugal, SVN = Slovenia, SWE = Sweden. If items were removed as part of the CFA modelling process, the "Items" column lists the number of items for the revised scale, the initial number of items is presented in brackets. The descriptives provided in this table refer to the revised versions of the scales that will be used in the experimental outcome evaluation.

Table 3: Confirmatory factor analysis results for the self-report questionnaire scales

Measures	Model dimensions	Modifications	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Emotional Competencies						
Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills – Subscale Observe (Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004)	1	Allowing for residual covariances	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (Brown & Ryan, 2003)	1	Allowing for residual covariances	✓	.88 (SVN)	✓	✓
Mindfulness in Teaching Scale (Rank, Jennings, & Greenberg, 2016)	2	Allowing for residual covariances (AUT, CRO)	✓	✓	✓	✓
WHO-5 Well-Being Index (Topp et al., 2015)	1	Allowing for residual covariances (PRT, SVN, CRO)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Shirom-Melamed Burnout Questionnaire – Subscale Emotional Self-Efficacy (Shirom & Melamed, 2006)	3	No modifications	✓	✓	.09 (CRO); 09 (SVN)	✓
Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (Muris, 2001)	1	Allowing for residual covariances	✓	✓	.09 (PRT)	✓
Psychological Strain in Work Contexts Scale (Mohr et al., 2006)	2	Item 6 removed	.88 (CRO)	.80 (CRO)	.14 (CRO); .10 (PRT)	✓
Social Competencies						
Empathy Assessment Inventory (Gerdes, Segal, & Lietz, 2010)	4	Allowing for residual covariances	.88 (AUT)	.85 (AUT); .88 (CRO); .87 (PRT); .88 (SVN); .87 (SWE)	✓	✓
Teacher's Relational Competence Scale (adapted from Vidmar & Kerman, 2016)	1	Item 5 removed	✓	.87 (SWE)	.09 (AUT); .10 (SWE)	✓
Teacher cooperation (OECD, 2017)	1	Allowing for residual covariances (residual covariances that were allowed for vary by country)	.84 (SVN)	.88 (AUT); .76 (SVN)	.11 (SVN)	✓

Measures	Model dimensions	Modifications	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Diversity Awareness						
Teacher self-efficacy for classroom diversity (OECD, 2019)	2	No modifications	✓	✓	.25 (AUT); .15 (CRO); .25 (PRT); .18 (SVN); .21 (SWE)	.09 (PRT)
Beliefs regarding dealing with classroom diversity (OECD, 2019; adapted from Hachfeld et al., 2011)	2	Two dimensions instead of one (consistent with the original scale)	✓	✓	.10 (CRO); .12 (PRT); .12 (SVN); .21 (SWE)	✓
ICU Teacher Tool – Subscale Flexibility/Openness to Diversity (adapted from Denson et al., 2017)	1	Allowing for residual covariances (residual covariances that were allowed for vary by country)	✓	.88 (AUT) .76 (SVN)	.11 (SVN)	✓
Social dominance orientation (short version; Pratto et al., 1994)	1	No modifications	.85 (AUT); .85 (PRT); .77 (SVN)	.55 (AUT); .56 (PRT); .31 (SVN)	.20 (AUT); .12 (PRT); .22 (SVN)	✓

Notes: The ✓ indicates good fit indices in all countries following the cut-off values: CFI $\geq$ .90; TLI $\geq$ .90; RMSEA $\leq$ .08; SRMR $\leq$ .08. The countries that did not meet the cut-off values are noted in parentheses with their corresponding values. AUT = Austria, CRO = Croatia, PRT = Portugal, SVN = Slovenia, SWE = Sweden.

Discussion

The aim of the second part of the chapter was to assess the quality of the self-report scales chosen for the experimental outcome evaluation with respect to reliability and dimensionality.

We found the reliability of the scales was generally acceptable or good, with a threshold above 0.6, in all participating countries and for almost every subscale, except two. Regarding the structure of the instruments, we aimed to confirm whether the dimensionality described in the literature was consistent for all of the constructs across the five language versions. As concerns the majority of constructs and all five language versions, we established that the mentioned dimensionality may indeed be confirmed. Minor adaptations to national contexts were required for many of the scales. This highlights the importance of considering cultural and linguistic differences in the development and use of measurement instruments. It is worth noting that some of the model fit indices, particularly the RMSEA, exceeded the threshold for acceptable values for a number of scales and countries. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that our samples were relatively small, which according to prior research (Kenny et al., 2015) can have a negative impact on the RMSEA.

Considering the findings on reliability and structure together, some scales had to be revised as a consequence of the analyses: Instead of measuring Beliefs regarding Dealing with Classroom Diversity as a one-dimensional construct (OECD, 2019), we now distinguish two sub-dimensions, like in the original instrument (Hachfeld et al., 2011). The scales Psychological Strain in Work Contexts (subscale Cognitive Strain) and Relational Competence were shortened by one item, each as a result of the CFA modelling. The Mindfulness in Teaching – Interpersonal Mindfulness subscale had insufficient reliabilities in two countries. However, we decided to retain the scale due to its generally good reliability in the remaining countries and good CFA model fit across the countries. The only instrument that will not be employed in the experimental outcome evaluation is the Social Dominance Orientation scale, which exhibited low internal consistency in all countries (notably in Austria and Portugal) and an unsatisfactory CFA model fit.

In relation to the psychometric test of the instruments, we conclude that the self-report scales we chose to measure SEDA competencies generally performed well in all five language versions, making them – when taking the adaptations and limitations described above into account – well-suited to the experiment-based evaluation of the HAND:ET system.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we initially presented the assessment strategy pursued in the evaluation of the HAND:ET system, which encompassed both a summative and a formative outcome evaluation combining quantitative and qualitative methods. We then presented the results of the analysis of the pre-test data, with a focus on examining the quality of the questionnaire scales to be used in the experimental outcome evaluation. Overall, we found the instruments employed measure SEDA competencies reliably and that the structure of the respective constructs is comparable across the five HAND:ET field trial countries. Only a few questionnaire scales had to be adapted following the analyses and just one scale did not meet the quality requirements and is hence not considered in further analyses. Use of the remaining scales in the experimental evaluation and complementing them with information arising from the focus group interviews and questionnaire data concerning the participants' views and evaluation of the programme will permit us to assess the HAND:ET system's effects on various levels and from different perspectives and provide us with insight into the processes and levers for improving any follow-up programmes. Such a varied set of instruments that performs well across different countries will hopefully also be useful in other contexts in the area of socio-emotional learning and diversity awareness.

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Chapter 8

Evaluation of the HAND:ET System – Results of the Questionnaire Scales

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Abstract

A principal focus of the evaluation of the HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Across Europe to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity Awareness Career Challenges ("HAND:ET") system is tracing back the causal effects of the HAND:ET teacher programme. We investigate whether the HAND:ET system had the expected effects on social, emotional competencies and diversity awareness. In this chapter, we present results regarding the programme's effectiveness that are based on questionnaire scales in the evaluation instrument for teachers. The results are part of the experimental outcome evaluation. We compare the experimental group with the control group in the pre- and post-measurements. Our analyses confirmed several of the effects we had hypothesised, especially with respect to emotional competencies. However, the effects vary widely from country to country. The HAND:ET system may therefore be judged as effective, even though its effects are complex, appear to vary across countries, and depend on the particular outcome being examined.

Keywords: Summative Evaluation, Outcome Evaluation, Quantitative Data, Programme Effects

Introduction

The HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Across Europe to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity Awareness Career Challenges ("HAND:ET") system helps teachers develop social and emotional competencies as well as their diversity awareness (hereinafter: SEDA competencies) to empower them for the complexity of everyday working life in today's ever more diverse classrooms. In addition, it enables teachers to flexibly deal with new challenges in their work by focusing on their well-being and stress reduction. This focus was chosen

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given the large body of research pointing to a range of positive outcomes associated with the enhancement of teachers' SEDA competencies, increased well-being, teacher cooperation as well as stress reduction (Caena, 2019; Cefai et al., 2018; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015; see Chapter 1 in this volume).

The HAND:ET system, including support for implementing the SEDA competencies in everyday experiences as a teacher, was developed and implemented and its effects were tested using an experimental design. The evaluation has the primary aim of determining whether the HAND:ET system had the expected effects on SEDA (summative evaluation). Also addressed in the evaluation is the participants' subjective evaluation of the programme, its effects and suggestions for improving it (formative evaluation, see Chapter 9). For a discussion of our evaluation strategy, see Chapter 7 in this volume.

Below, we outline: (1) the aims of the evaluation; (2) the evaluation questions; (3) the steps required to implement the evaluation, including the evaluation methods (study design, target population, sample size, allocation to experimental/control groups, and analysis); and (4) the results of the evaluation.

In this chapter, we concentrate on the changes in the teachers'[3] self-reported measures from the evaluation questionnaire between two measurement points – one prior to implementing the HAND:ET system (T1) and the other after it was implemented (T2). For detailed information concerning how the assessment was developed, see Chapter 7 in this volume.

The Evaluation Strategy and Research Questions

The literature on evaluation research (e.g., Chen, 1996) distinguishes kinds of evaluation depending on whether the process or the outcome of a programme is being evaluated, and whether the focus is on improvement or (evaluative) assessment (see Chapter 7 in this volume). One focus of evaluating the HAND:ET system may be categorised as a summative outcome evaluation; that is, tracing back the causal effects of the HAND:ET system (see Widmer, 2012; also Chapter 9 in which – to complement this approach – the participants' view on the programme, its effects and suggestions for improvement is presented).

To estimate the HAND:ET system's causal effects, the study used an experimental design with two groups: (A) a control group without an intervention; and (B) a group where teachers, principals and other school staff participated in

3 A separate programme was carried out for principals and other school staff, but the programme was shorter and the sample sizes were smaller. This Chapter focuses only on teachers.

the training. The full scope of the system was applied to teachers, whereas principals and other schools staff participated in a shorter version of the training. For details of the HAND:ET system, see Chapters 1 and 3 in this volume. In the control and experimental group, a pre-measurement was conducted. This data was also used to confirm the quality of the scales to be used in the experimental evaluation (see Chapter 7 in this volume), next to estimating the HAND:ET system's effects. The experimental groups of teachers, principals and school staff then participated in the HAND:ET system, followed by a post-measurement after they finished the HAND:ET programme. A post-measurement was also conducted in the control group with a similar distance to the pre-measurement as for the experimental groups. The programme was implemented in five different countries, and we have a 2 (groups) x 2 (time points) design within each country.

The central intention of the evaluation described in this chapter was to examine the effectiveness of the HAND:ET system. We looked at how far the HAND:ET system had helped foster the SEDA competencies of teachers. In this chapter, a quantitative analysis of the differences between the control and experimental groups is presented with regard to changes in measured SEDA competencies between T1 and T2. Our main research question is: Do the changes in SEDA competencies and teacher cooperation between T1 and T2 differ significantly between the control and experimental groups? Specifically, we are interested in the following: Do we observe a bigger increase in the SEDA competencies of teachers between the two measurement points in the experimental group than in the control group in all countries involved in the experiment (Austria, Croatia, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden)?

Methods[4]

School Selection and Condition Assignment

At the commencement of the HAND:ET project, the target population was established as primary and lower secondary schools. Nevertheless, varying contexts require adaptations and flexibility to make practical implementation of the HAND:ET system feasible. The inclusion of specific features of different education systems led to a focus on particular target groups in each country. In Austria, the focus was on schools with students in grades 1 to 4, in Croatia

4 The study's design, desired sample size, constructs measured, hypothesised effects, and planned analyses were preregistered on Open Science Framework prior to any data being collected (https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/TRNFX).

on those with students in grades 1 to 8, in Portugal on those with students in grades 1 to 12, in Slovenia on those with students in grades 1 to 9 while in Sweden on those with students in grades 4 to 9.

The school recruitment process started with a presentation of the HAND:ET project through various channels. This included sending project descriptions to schools, presenting the HAND:ET project at several events, contacting schools which the project teams had previously been in contact with. Schools then contacted the HAND:ET partners in charge of the implementation if they were interested in participating. An information meeting was held for all interested schools to explain the content of the HAND:ET project, the objectives and implementation of the HAND:ET programme, and the schools' tasks related to participation. The schools were also informed that, if they agreed to participate, they would have to follow the random allocation to experimental/control conditions. No group changes were allowed after the randomisation. The recruitment process was more difficult in some countries, creating some challenges to the regular procedures and leading to a smaller sample size than expected in Austria.

The random allocation to conditions was conducted consistently in all five countries: Austria, Croatia, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden. For this purpose, each country gave the evaluation team a list of schools that had agreed to participate. This list also contained the number of teachers and other school staff who were willing to participate. Schools were randomly assigned to the two groups based on this list, taking the number of teachers in each group into account. The evaluation team tried to balance the number of teachers in the control and experimental groups as they formed the basis for evaluating the programme. The groups of principals and other school staff were too diverse across countries, yet also too small to be statistically analysed. Therefore, this chapter concentrates solely on teacher effects.

Description of the Sample

Overall, 959 teachers responded to the questionnaires. In the text below, participants refer to respondents of the questionnaire. Further, the number of schools included varied by country. In Austria, 32 schools participated with 1–18 participants per school, in Croatia 18 schools with 7–24 participants per school, in Portugal 16 schools with 4–27 participants per school, in Slovenia 21 schools with 4–15 participants per school, and in Sweden 9 schools with 14–56 participants per school.

A detailed presentation of the participants is provided in Table 1. In general, we see a fall in responding to the questionnaire between T1 and T2 in each country. It is most pronounced in Sweden and the least so in Slovenia.

We also observe a larger drop-out rate in responding to the questionnaire in the experimental group across the countries. Given that we are interested in the differences between T1 and T2 concerning selected constructs, only those who participated at both points in time were included in the analyses. This led to a total sample size of 667 teachers across the countries. The control group is bigger than the experimental group in Austria and Croatia, and vice versa in Portugal and Sweden. In Slovenia, the sample sizes of the two groups are balanced.

Table 1: Number of participants by role, group, time point and country

	Austria		Croatia		Portugal		Slovenia		Sweden	
	Control	Experimental	Control	Experimental	Control	Experimental	Control	Experimental	Control	Experimental
					Teachers					
T1 only	16	22	19	21	19	29	12	8	54	37
T1 and T2	53	41	84	74	66	93	92	93	36	41
T2 only	2	2	9	3	3	1	2	1	6	14
					Principals					
T1 only	1	6	1	1	0	1	0	0	3	2
T1 and T2	12	6	2	5	2	1	8	14	2	2
T2 only	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
					Other school staff					
T1 only	0	1	10	4	6	17	0	0	15	23
T1 and T2	3	0	11	15	7	27	14	15	3	22
T2 only	0	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	1	3
Total	87	78	140	123	105	169	128	131	121	146

In addition, Table 2 shows the characteristics of the teachers who participated at both time points by country.

Table 2: Characteristics of the teachers participating at both time points by group and country

	Austria		Croatia		Portugal		Slovenia		Sweden	
	Control	Experimental	Control	Experimental	Control	Experimental	Control	Experimental	Control	Experimental
Age (*M*)	39.8	40.2	41.4	44.4	49.3	50.7	41.1	42.3	46.9	44.6
Age (*SD*)	9.5	10.7	9.0	8.6	6.2	6.4	7.4	7.6	11.1	10.7
Gender (% female)	96	88	95	96	97	92	92	96	86	87
Years of teaching experience (*M*)	9.6	11.3	14.6	17.8	25.2	26.0	14.8	15.7	17.0	14.7
Years of teaching experience (*SD*)	9.9	11.2	9.5	9.5	6.6	7.1	9.2	8.6	12.0	9.0

Instruments

The assessment instruments, item examples and scale properties are detailed in Chapter 7. In the summative outcome evaluation, we considered the following constructs as indicators of the different SEDA competencies:

Emotional Competencies – Self Awareness

- Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills, Subscale Observe
- Mindful Attention Awareness Scale
- Mindfulness in Teaching Scale, Subscale Intrapersonal Mindfulness
- Mindfulness in Teaching Scale, Subscale Interpersonal Mindfulness

Emotional Competencies – Self Management

- WHO-5 Well-Being Index
- Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children, Subscale Emotional Self-Efficacy
- Shirom-Melamed Burnout Questionnaire, Subscale Physical Fatigue
- Shirom-Melamed Burnout Questionnaire, Subscale Cognitive Weariness
- Shirom-Melamed Burnout Questionnaire, Subscale Emotional Exhaustion
- Psychological Strain in Work Contexts Scale, Subscale Cognitive Strain
- Psychological Strain in Work Contexts Scale, Subscale Emotional Strain

Social Competencies – Social Awareness

- Empathy Assessment Inventory, Subscale Affective Response
- Empathy Assessment Inventory, Subscale Affective Mentalising
- Empathy Assessment Inventory, Subscale Perspective Taking
- Empathy Assessment Inventory, Subscale Self-Other Awareness

Social Competencies – Relational Competence

- Teacher's Relational Competence Scale (adapted)
- Teacher Cooperation
- Alongside these scales, teachers' feeling of closeness with their colleagues was measured using one item. The item had a graphical response format in the form of two circles, representing different intensities of closeness. One circle represented the respondent and the other his/her colleagues. The circles ranged from no overlap to almost complete overlap. Teachers had to choose one of the seven diagrams that best represents their closeness to their colleagues. The same item was also used to measure their closeness with their students.

Diversity Awareness

- Teacher Self-Efficacy for Classroom Diversity
- Beliefs Regarding Dealing with Classroom Diversity (adapted), Subscale Multicultural Beliefs
- Beliefs Regarding Dealing with Classroom Diversity (adapted), Subscale Egalitarian Beliefs
- ICU Teacher Tool (adapted), Subscale Flexibility/Openness to Diversity

The scales' psychometric characteristics were evaluated based on results for T1. We checked the dimensionality, internal consistency and validity. The results of the scales included in the questionnaires are shown in Chapter 7. The scale *Social Dominance Orientation* was excluded based on its poor psychometric properties in T1. The reliability was also checked for the same scales in T2. Most scales exhibited good reliability, higher than $\alpha = 0.70$ (DeVellis, 2003; Taber, 2018). The exceptions were three (sub)scales in Austria, one in Croatia, two in Slovenia, and four in Sweden where the reliability ranged between $\alpha = 0.60$ and 0.70. Only two scales in Portugal exhibited poor reliability at T2 below $\alpha = 0.60$.

Data Collection, Cleaning and Analysis

The data at both time points were collected online using LimeSurvey (https://www.limesurvey.org/). After the data had been downloaded, duplicate cases needed to be removed. Unless there were special instructions from the countries, the more complete or later entry was usually retained. The data cleaning is described in greater detail in the evaluation report (Rožman et al., 2024).

The scale score for each participant at each point in time was computed as the arithmetic mean of responses to the items of a scale measuring a SEDA construct. A scale value was only computed if responses for at least half the items of a scale were available. No overall scale score was computed for multidimensional constructs. Subscales were treated as separate scales in the analysis.

To assess the effects of the HAND:ET system, we compared changes in the SEDA constructs across groups of individuals. For this, we calculated the difference score for each participant in a certain outcome variable before and after the treatment (i.e., the scale score at T2 minus the scale score at T1). This difference was used as a dependent variable in the regression analysis. The independent variable reflected the condition to which the individuals had been assigned. The control group served as the reference group.

The data collected for the HAND:ET project have a multilevel structure with teachers being nested within schools, and schools being nested within education systems or countries. This is important to consider in our methodology because teachers within the same school share unobserved characteristics which might influence our statistical analysis. Correcting standard errors for clustering is advised if either the sampling or treatment assignment is performed on the level of the clusters. This was the case with HAND:ET as the assignment to conditions was implemented on the school level. In practice, however, we faced some challenges in accounting for clustering. The varying number of groups (schools) in countries (i.e., between 9 and 32 schools) meant it was impossible to use multi-level modelling[5]. In addition, the number of teachers varied greatly from school to school. We had schools with 1 to 56 participants. Therefore, we solely analysed effects on the individual level. The results using corrected standard errors are provided in the evaluation report (Rožman et al., 2024). Accordingly, we used linear regression analyses to allow us to predict changes in outcome variables with treatment assignment on the individual level. Apart from the regressing results, we provide information on effect sizes of the differences between the groups. The effect sizes were calculated as Cohen's *d* effect size measure (for more information on effect sizes, see Lakens, 2013).

5 According to Maas and Hox (2005), multilevel modelling requires at least about 20 cases on the highest level.

The hypothesis testing was one-sided since we were testing for the expected effects. In some cases, we expected scale values to increase (e.g., mindfulness, empathy, cooperation), while in others we anticipated them to decrease (e.g., burnout, psychological strain). The results using multiple imputation for cases who participated at only one time point are provided in the evaluation report (see Rožman et al., 2024).

Descriptive analyses and analyses for scale construction were carried out with IBM SPSS Statistics Version 24 for Windows (IBM Corporation, 2016). We performed all regression analyses using the R statistical programming environment (R Core Team, 2022). Since the national contexts differ and the trainings were implemented by national trainers, all analyses were conducted separately for each country and the effects exhibited considerable heterogeneity among the countries.

Results

In this section, we present results of quantitative analysis of the questionnaire scales regarding the HAND:ET system's effectiveness. We present the effect size of the difference between the groups. The effect size is based on the changes we observed in the control and experimental groups. In short, we present the effect size of the difference in the change scores between the groups. A table providing complete information on all the differences between the conditions and the average changes in the scale scores in groups for all countries can be found in the appendix (see *Table A.1*). The scales are grouped by overarching SEDA constituents. We first outline the results for emotional competencies, those for social competencies and, finally, those for diversity awareness.

Results for Emotional Competencies

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness was measured using four scales. The effect sizes are presented in Figure 1.

We find only one significant effect among these scales, namely for *Mindfulness Skills-Observe* in Austria ($t = 2.07$, $p = 0.021$, $d = 0.44$), Croatia ($t = 1.95$, $p = 0.027$, $d = 0.31$) and Sweden ($t = 3.28$, $p = 0.001$, $d = 0.74$). In these countries, the increase in scores between T2 and T1 for *Mindfulness Skills-Observe* was significantly higher in the experimental group than in the control group. The size of the effect is small in Croatia and Austria, and medium in Sweden.

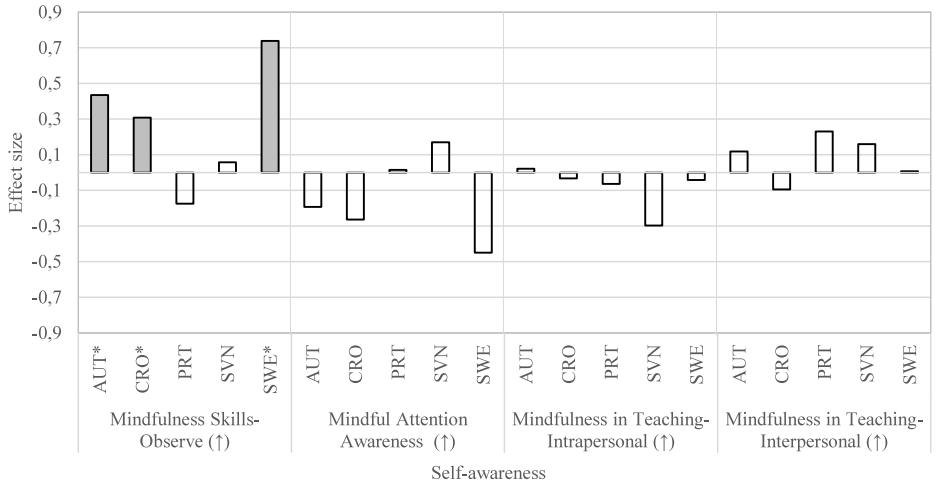

Figure 1: Effect sizes (Cohen's d) of the differences between the groups over time for the scales measuring self-awareness.

Note: the sign (↑) following the scale name on the x-axis points in the direction of the hypothesised effect. * next to the country abbreviation and grey bars indicate a significant difference. AUT=Austria, CRO=Croatia, PRT=Portugal, SVN=Slovenia, SWE=Sweden.

Self-Management

We have seven indicators for self-management as one component of emotional competencies. In the first two, the *WHO-5 Well-Being Index* and *Emotional Self-Efficacy* scales, the expected effect represents an increase in the scale. The remaining two constructs, *Burnout*, and *Psychological Strain in the Work Context* are represented by three and two subscales, respectively. For these five subscales, we expected a decrease in the scale scores. The results are presented in Figure 2.

We find an effect for *Well-Being* with the experimental group exhibiting a significantly stronger increase in the scale scores compared to the control group in Slovenia ($t = 3.60$, $p = 0.000$, $d = 0.53$) and Sweden ($t = 1.68$, $p = 0.049$, $d = 0.38$). The effect sizes were medium and small, respectively.

For all subscales of *Burnout,* we establish significant effects in Croatia, Slovenia and Sweden. *Burnout-Physical Fatigue* decreased significantly more in the experimental compared to the control group in Croatia ($t = -2.11$, $p = 0.018$, $d = -0.34$) and Slovenia ($t = -3.96$, $p = 0.000$, $d = -0.58$).

Burnout-Cognitive Weariness exhibited an effect in line with the hypotheses in Slovenia ($t = -3.22$, $p = 0.001$, $d = -0.47$) and *Burnout-Emotional Exhaustion* in Slovenia ($t = -3.31$, $p = 0.001$, $d = -0.49$) and Sweden ($t = -2.53$, $p = 0.007$, $d = -0.58$). The effects on *Burnout-Physical Fatigue* in Slovenia and *Burnout-Emotional Exhaustion* in Sweden are medium, while the other effects were small.

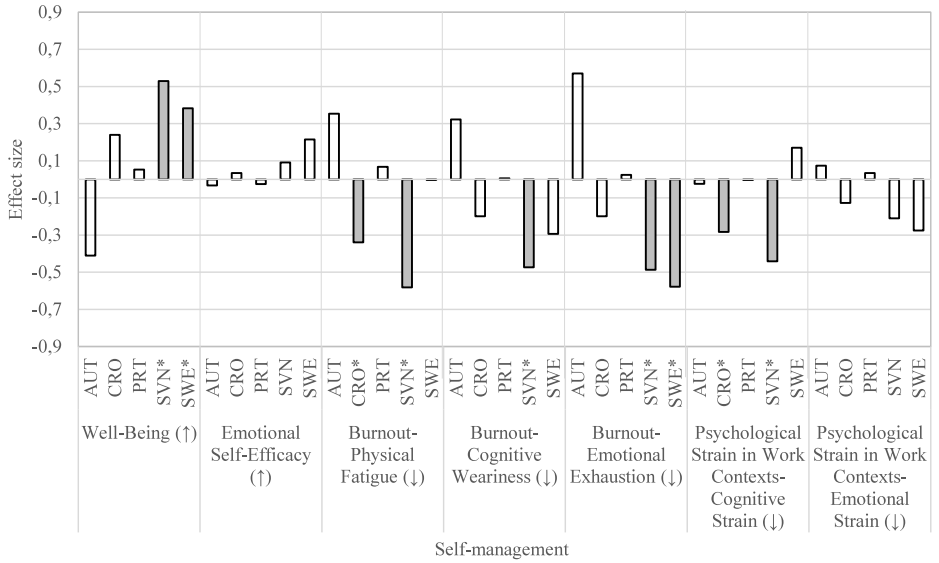

Figure 2: Effect sizes (Cohen's d) of the differences between the groups over time for scales assessing self-management

Note: the sign (↑) or (↓) following the scale name on the x-axis points in the direction of the hypothesised effect. * next to the country abbreviation and grey bars indicate a significant difference. AUT=Austria, CRO=Croatia, PRT=Portugal, SVN=Slovenia, SWE=Sweden.

In addition, we find a significant effect in the *Psychological Strain in Work Contexts* subscales. The *Cognitive Strain* subscale showed a significant effect in Croatia ($t = -1.78$, $p = 0.039$, $d = -0.28$) and Slovenia ($t = -3.00$, $p = 0.002$, $d = -0.44$), and the *Emotional Strain* subscale a significant effect in Sweden ($t = -1.72$, $p = 0.041$, $d = -0.45$). All effects were small.

Results for Social Competencies

Social Awareness and Relationship Skills

Social awareness is represented by scales measuring a teacher's social awareness and relationship skills. The results are presented in Figure 3.

For social awareness and relationship skills we establish at least one significant effect in each (sub)scale for at least one country with the exception of the *Empathy-Perspective Taking* subscale. Significant effects are observed in the subscales measuring *Empathy*. The *Affective Response* and the *Affective Mentalising* subscales revealed a significant effect in line with our hypotheses in Sweden (*Empathy-Affective Response*: $t = 2.07$, $p = 0.021$, $d = 0.48$; *Empathy-Affective Mentalising*: $t = 1.89$, $p = 0.032$, $d = 0.43$) and the later also in Portugal ($t = 2.02$, $p = 0.022$, $d = 0.33$). Another significant effect in line with the hypotheses was exhibited by

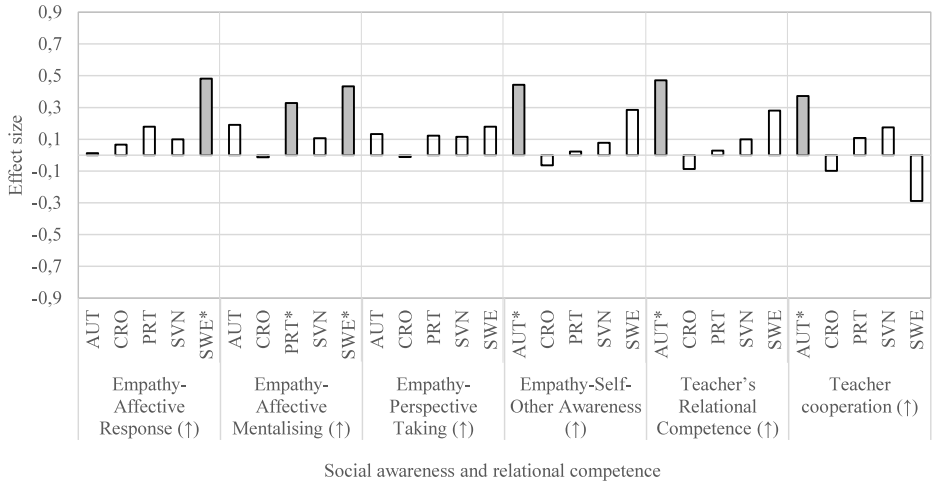

Figure 3: Effect sizes (Cohen's d) of the differences between the groups over time for scales assessing a teacher's social awareness and relationship skills

Note: the sign (↑) following the scale name on the x-axis points in the direction of the hypothesised effect. * next to the country abbreviation and grey bars indicate a significant difference. AUT=Austria, CRO=Croatia, PRT=Portugal, SVN=Slovenia, SWE=Sweden.

the *Empathy* subscales *Self-Other Awareness*, *Teacher's Relational Competence* and *Teacher Cooperation* in Austria (*Empathy-Self-Other Awareness*: $t = 2.15$, $p = 0.017$, $d = 0.44$; *Teacher's Relational Competence*: $t = 2.22$, $p = 0.015$, $d = 0.47$; *Teacher Co-operation*: $t = 1.77$, $p = 0.040$, $d = 0.34$). All the effects are small in size.

The mean change in the closeness of relationships with other teachers (as measured by the graphic scale) reveals that the felt connectedness increased more in the experimental group than in the control group in each country. Still, the change was only significant in Austria ($t = 1.79$, $p = 0.038$, $d = 0.37$). Further, the closeness of the relationship was also measured in the same graphic way for students. The teachers indicated how close they felt to their students. Here, we observe an increase in connectedness as well in all countries but Croatia, albeit the changes between groups are not significant.

Results for Diversity Awareness

Diversity awareness was measured with four (sub)scales. The results are presented in Figure 4.

There are no significant effects in line with our hypotheses for the *Teacher Self-Efficacy for Classroom Diversity* scale and *Beliefs Classroom Diversity-Multicultural*. Significant effects in the subscale *Beliefs Classroom Diversity-Egalitarian* are manifested in Slovenia, where the beliefs of the experimental group increased significantly more than in the control group ($t = 2.19$, $p = 0.015$, $d = 0.32$).

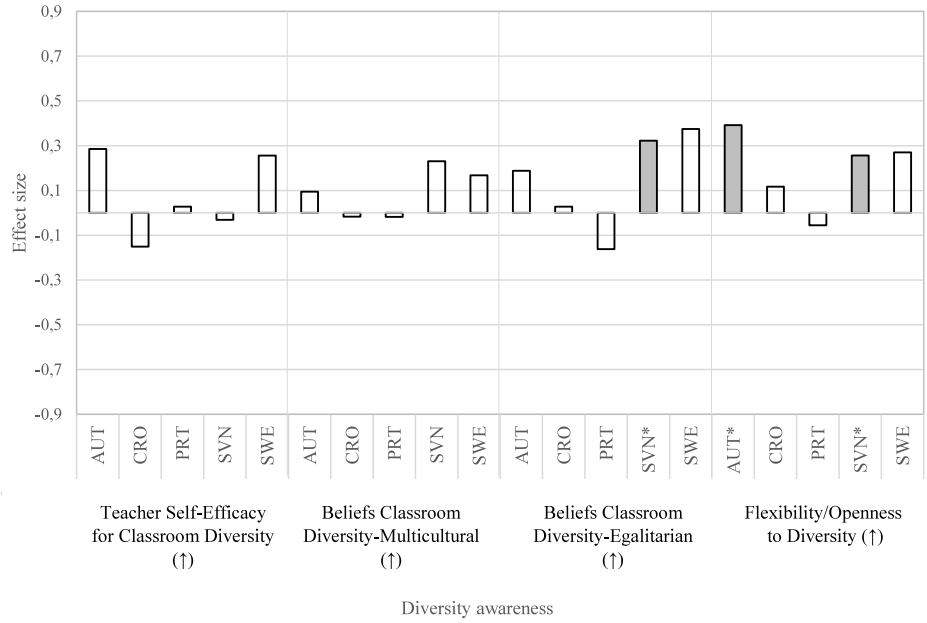

Figure 4: Effect sizes (Cohen's d) of the differences between the groups over time for scales assessing a teacher's diversity awareness

Note: the sign (↑) following the scale name on the x-axis points in the direction of the hypothesised effect. * next to the country abbreviation and grey bars indicate a significant difference. AUT=Austria, CRO=Croatia, PRT=Portugal, SVN=Slovenia, SWE=Sweden.

The *Flexibility/Openness to Diversity* scale exhibited significant effects conforming with our expectations in Austria ($t = 1.86$, $p = 0.033$, $d = 0.39$) and Slovenia ($t = 1.74$, $p = 0.041$, $d = 0.26$). All the significant effects are small in size.

Discussion

The HAND:ET system was implemented in five countries with the goal of empowering teachers to deal with the challenges they encounter at work by helping them improve their SEDA competencies. Whether this goal was accomplished was evaluated using an experimental design comparing two groups, an experimental and a control group. This chapter presents the results of the comparisons of changes in the SEDA outcomes as measured with questionnaire scales related to teachers in the control and experimental groups.

The results showed varying effects between the countries and we thus start by summarising them on the country level. In Austria, we find single effects in the social, emotional and diversity awareness scales. In the emotional component, the only significant effect was found in the scale *Mindfulness Skills-*

Observe, that forms part of self-awareness. We find no significant effects for the self-management scales. In the social component, we find significant effects in the *Self-Other Awareness* subscale of empathy, *Teacher's Relational Competence* and *Teacher Cooperation* scales. For diversity awareness, we observe positive effects of the system in the scale *Flexibility/Openness to Diversity*. In total, there are five significant effects, all the effect sizes are small, yet many of them are close to medium. To sum up, the most significant effects in Austria are seen in the constructs of social competencies.

In Croatia, we find three significant effects of the HAND:ET system. The first one is in the self-awareness part of the emotional competencies and relates to the scale *Mindfulness Skills-Observe*. The second and third form part of self-management. The *Burnout* subscale of *Physical Fatigue* and the *Cognitive Strain* part of *Psychological Strain in Work Contexts* showed significant positive effects in the experimental group compared to the control group. In conclusion, in Croatia all the effects are in the emotional competencies constructs and the effect size is small.

In Portugal, there was only one significant effect. *Affective Mentalising,* which is a subscale of *Empathy*, increased significantly more in the experimental than in the control group. The effect size is small.

In Slovenia, the HAND:ET system had the most positive effects for teachers' SEDA competencies. Seven scales showed a significant increase/decrease between the experimental and control groups. Most of the significant effects relate to the self-management component of emotional competencies. Significant effects were present in the *Well-Being* scale, all three subscales of *Burnout*, and the *Cognitive Strain* component of *Psychological Strain in Work Contexts* scale. In addition, the other two scales were from diversity awareness, namely *Beliefs Classroom Diversity-Egalitarian* and *Flexibility/Openness to Diversity*. All the effects in self-management are around the cut-off for medium size and for diversity awareness the effects are small.

In Sweden the most significant effects were found for the self-management component of emotional competencies and social awareness with relational competence. They pertain to *Well-Being*, a subscale of *Burnout* (*Emotional exhaustion*), and two subscales of *Empathy* (*Affective Response and Mentalising*). Moreover, the results showed a significant effect in one scale (*Mindfulness Skills-Observe)* representing self-awareness constructs. The effect sizes are around the cut-off to be medium.

The results show that the effects vary substantially across the five countries, suggesting effect-heterogeneity on the system level. The heterogeneity may partly be explained by the fact that different trainers implemented the programme in different school systems. Although the trainers underwent the same Train-the-Trainer education (see Chapter 4), each person brings in their own individual characteristics. For example, the trainers had varying previous

experience with such training. Some were very experienced with the type and content, while others were completely new. In addition, in a few countries dropouts occurred in the group of trainers and the trainers had to be replaced without extensive training (see Chapter 6).

The countries also applied different school recruiting process and the target population was not identical. The characteristics of the five school systems as well as specific school characteristics may have played an additional role. The school samples were small and unrepresentative of the target population for each country.

The data arising from the HAND:ET system have some technical limitations linked to the small sample size. In intervention studies of this type, a lot of effort and resources are needed to implement the training, especially as a whole-year process, and support the teachers to use the material in their daily routine and while teaching. This is why they cannot be implemented on a large scale. There is a trade-off between the sample size and the implementation possibilities. In our case, it could be that smaller effects could not be detected because of the small sample size. Related to this, the non responding to the questionnaires in both time points played an important role in some countries too as it further reduced the sample size.

Yet, it is very important that the trainings are to a certain extent implemented equally in each country. Even though the trainers have some flexibility to alter and adjust some parts of the exercises, emphasis is given to fidelity to the programme (Lund Nielsen, 2020). The 'active ingredients' of the system need to remain the same. The most consistent result across the countries, the scale where we find an effect in three countries, is the self-awareness scale *Mindfulness Skills-Observe*. This scale measures a particular aspect of mindfulness. More specifically, the items in the questionnaire ask whether participants commonly observe, notice or attend to various stimuli, including internal phenomena (cognitions, bodily sensations) and external phenomena (sounds, smells). Practising this kind of unjudgmental observing is a central element of the HAND:ET training. It seems that the HAND:ET training succeeded in supporting the development of this aspect of mindfulness.

Further, we find positive effects in aspects of emotional and social competencies, and diversity awareness. The HAND:ET system showed positive effects especially in the self-management component of emotional competencies. Also in terms of size, the effects found in emotional competencies were the largest. There were some effect sizes that were small, but failed to be detected as significant in each of the construct categories. These would most probably be detected in larger samples. Even though no consistent large effects were found for any construct, we still find the HAND:ET system was responsible for meaningful positive effects.

Research on the effectiveness of trainings (more precisely, trainings in the field of teacher professional development, e.g., Guskey, 2000) has shown that the first and most basic stage of change is reached when participants are satisfied with and experience the relevance of the training. This is the case with the HAND:ET system. During the semi-structured focus group interviews and in additional items in the evaluation questionnaire (T2), many participants stated that they liked the HAND:ET programme and had found it useful (see Chapter 9 in this book). The first stage provides the basis and motivation for building knowledge and changing convictions in a second stage. Results of the analysis of the participants' perspective suggest that the HAND:ET programme has also triggered second-stage changes.

Finally, the results presented here should be complemented by country-specific information. We thus suggest that all the conclusions should be seen within a national context, while noting that some more analyses can be found in the Evaluation report (Rožman et al., 2024). An even more thorough embeddedness of SEDA competencies in the country context is forthcoming in volume II of this book.

Conclusion

The HAND:ET system aims to empower teachers to deal with increased challenges in their work. The system's effects described in this chapter were assessed using self-reported measures addressing different SEDA components. After analysing the programme effects, we find effects in line with our hypotheses on self-reported SEDA competencies in all five participating countries. While the positive effects vary greatly among countries, the effects are observed especially for the self-management component of emotional competencies. It should be noted that schools are complex systems and that introducing change in these complex systems might depend on many contextual factors that are impossible to control for in small experimental studies. The data obtained in this study provide initial insights into the effects of the HAND:ET system, although the effects should be studied in greater detail and complemented with information from other available sources (e.g., qualitative data).

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Appendix

Table: A.1 Mean change score (*M*) by group (ex=experimental, con=control), the t-statistic (*t*) its significance (*p*), and Cohen's *d* (*d*) by country

	AUT					CRO					PRT					SVN					SWE				
Scale	*M(ex)*	*M(con)*	*t*	*p*	*d*	*M(ex)*	*M(con)*	*t*	*p*	*d*	*M(ex)*	*M(con)*	*t*	*p*	*d*	*M(ex)*	*M(con)*	*t*	*p*	*d*	*M(ex)*	*M(con)*	*t*	*p*	*d*
Mindfulness Skills-Observe	0.10	−0.21	2.07	0.021	0.44	0.09	−0.09	1.95	0.027	0.31	0.00	0.11	−1.09	0.861	−0.17	0.09	0.06	0.39	0.348	0.06	0.04	−0.37	3.28	0.001	0.74
Mindful Attention Awareness	−0.14	−0.02	−0.92	0.821	−0.19	0.01	0.17	−1.66	0.951	−0.26	0.23	0.22	0.09	0.464	0.01	0.14	0.04	1.15	0.125	0.17	0.05	0.28	−1.96	0.973	−0.45
Mindfulness in Teaching-Intrapersonal	0.03	0.02	0.10	0.460	0.02	−0.09	−0.08	−0.20	0.579	−0.03	0.04	0.07	−0.39	0.651	−0.06	−0.09	0.05	−2.01	0.977	−0.30	−0.09	−0.07	−0.18	0.570	−0.04
Mindfulness in Teaching-Interpersonal	0.05	−0.03	0.58	0.281	0.12	−0.09	−0.04	−0.59	0.722	−0.09	0.15	0.01	1.41	0.080	0.23	−0.01	−0.09	1.08	0.141	0.16	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.488	0.01
Well-Being	0.22	0.66	−1.93	0.972	−0.41	0.15	−0.08	1.48	0.071	0.24	0.15	0.10	0.32	0.374	0.05	0.19	−0.32	3.60	0.000	0.53	−0.51	−0.90	1.68	0.049	0.38
Emotional Self-Efficacy	0.15	0.17	−0.16	0.563	−0.03	0.09	0.07	0.21	0.415	0.03	0.11	0.13	−0.16	0.564	−0.03	0.07	0.03	0.62	0.269	0.09	0.02	−0.09	0.93	0.178	0.22
Burnout-Physical Fatigue	−0.08	−0.59	1.70	0.953	0.35	−0.06	0.33	−2.11	0.018	−0.34	0.11	0.03	0.42	0.661	0.07	−0.27	0.38	−3.96	0.000	−0.58	0.27	0.28	−0.02	0.494	0.00
Burnout-Cognitive Weariness	−0.01	−0.45	1.54	0.937	0.32	−0.11	0.11	−1.25	0.106	−0.20	−0.09	−0.10	0.04	0.514	0.01	−0.20	0.32	−3.22	0.001	−0.47	0.04	0.33	−1.27	0.104	−0.29
Burnout-Emotional Exhaustion	0.33	−0.46	2.77	0.997	0.57	−0.16	0.04	−1.25	0.107	−0.20	0.02	−0.01	0.15	0.560	0.02	−0.22	0.37	−3.31	0.001	−0.49	−0.19	0.39	−2.53	0.007	−0.58

	AUT					CRO					PRT					SVN					SWE				
Scale	*M(ex)*	*M(con)*	*t*	*p*	*d*	*M(ex)*	*M(con)*	*t*	*p*	*d*	*M(ex)*	*M(con)*	*t*	*p*	*d*	*M(ex)*	*M(con)*	*t*	*p*	*d*	*M(ex)*	*M(con)*	*t*	*p*	*d*
Psychological Strain in Work Contexts-Cognitive Strain	−0.38	−0.35	−0.12	0.454	−0.02	−0.14	0.17	−1.78	0.039	−0.28	−0.14	−0.14	−0.02	0.491	0.00	−0.40	0.14	−3.00	0.002	−0.44	−0.06	−0.27	0.74	0.769	0.17
Psychological Strain in Work Contexts-Emotional Strain	−0.23	−0.33	0.36	0.640	0.07	−0.11	0.02	−0.80	0.213	−0.13	−0.16	−0.20	0.21	0.584	0.03	0.01	0.24	−1.43	0.078	−0.21	0.10	0.38	−1.18	0.120	−0.28
Empathy-Affective Response	0.02	0.02	0.06	0.477	0.01	0.02	−0.01	0.41	0.340	0.07	0.14	0.03	1.10	0.138	0.18	0.02	−0.05	0.68	0.249	0.10	0.23	−0.09	2.07	0.021	0.48
Empathy-Affective Mentalising	0.15	0.04	0.91	0.182	0.19	−0.02	−0.01	−0.08	0.532	−0.01	0.30	0.09	2.02	0.022	0.33	0.05	−0.01	0.73	0.234	0.11	0.28	0.01	1.89	0.032	0.43
Empathy-Perspective Taking	0.13	0.05	0.63	0.264	0.13	0.00	0.01	−0.07	0.529	−0.01	0.21	0.13	0.75	0.226	0.12	0.04	−0.04	0.79	0.216	0.12	0.02	−0.11	0.77	0.223	0.18
Empathy-Self-Other Awareness	0.34	0.08	2.15	0.017	0.44	0.07	0.11	−0.40	0.655	−0.06	0.20	0.19	0.14	0.444	0.02	0.06	0.01	0.53	0.299	0.08	0.18	−0.02	1.25	0.108	0.28
Teacher's Relational Competence	0.21	−0.02	2.22	0.015	0.47	−0.06	−0.02	−0.55	0.707	−0.09	0.07	0.05	0.17	0.431	0.03	0.01	−0.04	0.68	0.250	0.10	0.08	−0.07	1.20	0.117	0.28
Teacher cooperation	0.28	−0.01	1.77	0.040	0.37	−0.09	−0.02	−0.62	0.732	−0.10	0.15	0.07	0.67	0.252	0.11	0.10	−0.01	1.18	0.119	0.17	−0.25	−0.07	−1.21	0.885	−0.29

	AUT					CRO					PRT					SVN					SWE				
Scale	*M(ex)*	*M(con)*	*t*	*p*	*d*	*M(ex)*	*M(con)*	*t*	*p*	*d*	*M(ex)*	*M(con)*	*t*	*p*	*d*	*M(ex)*	*M(con)*	*t*	*p*	*d*	*M(ex)*	*M(con)*	*t*	*p*	*d*
Teacher Self-Efficacy for Classroom Diversity	0.18	0.05	1.35	0.091	0.29	−0.01	0.06	−0.94	0.826	−0.15	0.06	0.04	0.17	0.432	0.03	−0.04	−0.02	−0.21	0.585	−0.03	0.11	0.01	1.10	0.137	0.26
Beliefs Classroom Diversity-Multicultural	−0.04	−0.07	0.45	0.327	0.09	−0.04	−0.03	−0.11	0.542	−0.02	0.03	0.03	−0.11	0.543	−0.02	0.03	−0.11	1.56	0.060	0.23	0.00	−0.06	0.72	0.237	0.17
Beliefs Classroom Diversity-Egalitarian	0.08	−0.01	0.88	0.190	0.19	−0.04	−0.05	0.17	0.433	0.03	−0.03	0.05	−1.00	0.841	−0.16	0.09	−0.10	2.19	0.015	0.32	0.09	−0.09	1.61	0.056	0.37
Flexibility / Openness to Diversity	0.27	0.00	1.86	0.033	0.39	−0.02	−0.09	0.73	0.233	0.12	−0.01	0.03	−0.34	0.634	−0.06	0.10	−0.19	1.74	0.041	0.26	0.09	−0.09	1.16	0.124	0.27
Feeling of closeness to colleagues	−0.06	0.46	1.79	0.038	0.37	−0.01	−0.18	−0.78	0.220	−0.12	−0.08	0.05	0.64	0.263	0.10	−0.02	0.19	0.94	0.175	0.14	0.21	−0.21	1.13	0.131	0.27
Feeling of closeness to students	−0.08	0.15	0.89	0.188	0.19	0.15	−0.21	−2.11	0.982	−0.34	−0.02	0.14	0.85	0.198	0.14	−0.17	0.06	1.26	0.105	0.19	−0.10	−0.34	0.84	0.201	0.19

Note: AUT=Austria, CRO=Croatia, PRT=Portugal, SVN=Slovenia, SWE=Sweden.

Chapter 9

Evaluation of the HAND:ET System – Findings from the Participants' Perspective

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Abstract

This chapter summarises and discusses the ways participants evaluated the HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Across Europe to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity Awareness Career Challenges ("HAND:ET") system. The evaluation is based on data from open-ended and closed questions in the post-test evaluation questionnaire and from focus group interviews. While the findings complement the experimental outcome evaluation described by Rožman and colleagues (Chapter 8 of this volume), they also serve a formative purpose: they help to identify starting points for improving the HAND:ET system. In terms of the summative outcome evaluation, the results show that the participants rate the programme very positively and see it as useful and effective. They report a variety of learning effects in the area of socio-emotional competencies and diversity awareness (SEDA) as well as changes in their lifestyle. Suggestions for improvement were given in the area of content and exercises, implementation of the programme, and the modality.

Keywords: Evaluation, Summative, Formative, Semi-structured Focus Groups Interviews, Questionnaire, Intervention Study

Introduction

The goal of the HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Across Europe to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity Awareness Career Challenges ("HAND:ET") system was to support teachers' development of social and emotional competencies as well as their diversity awareness (SEDA) to empower them for the complexity of everyday working life, including increasingly diverse classrooms and to improve their well-being (see Chapter 1 of this volume). The evaluation of HAND:ET was centred on the experimental testing

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of hypothesised HAND:ET system effects, specifically whether the HAND:ET system leads to an improvement in SEDA competencies. This experimental summative outcome evaluation (see Chapter 8) should be complemented by different methodological approaches to include participants' experiences and perceptions in the summative outcome evaluation and for formative purposes (see Chapter 7). Specifically, participants' subjective assessments can give us information about their acceptance of the programme, their subjective perception of the programme's effects, possibly explain experimentally found effects, and help to further improve this and similar programmes. The aim of this chapter is to describe this complementary part of the HAND:ET evaluation. With a view to providing a comprehensive overview of the participants' perspectives, we collected and analysed data from the closed and open-ended questions in the post-test evaluation questionnaire that was completed after the HAND:ET programme had ended. The questions addressed the evaluation of the HAND:ET system, subjectively perceived changes and suggestions for improvement. In addition, we analysed the responses obtained through focus group interviews concerning what participants said they had learned from the HAND:ET system.

Method

Below, the procedure, sample and methods of analysis are described for the data from both the post-test evaluation questionnaire and the focus group interviews.

Questions from the Evaluation Questionnaire

Participants

Among the participants who took the programme, N = 422 answered at least one of the closed-ended questions included in the post-test evaluation questionnaire (AUT[3]: N = 50, CRO: N = 77, PRT: N = 113, SVN: N = 123, SWE: N = 59). The vast majority of participants were women (92%). The mean age of the participants was 45.6 years (SD = 9.38). Concerning the open-ended questions, N = 527 participants answered at least one of them (AUT: N =44, CRO: N = 84, PRT: N = 60, SVN: N = 265, SWE: N = 74).

3 (AUT=Austria, CRO=Croatia, PRT=Portugal, SVN=Slovenia, SWE=Sweden)

Instruments

In the post-test evaluation questionnaire, we included two types of questions referring to evaluation of the HAND:ET system from the participants' perspective. We first directly asked for an assessment of different quality aspects of the HAND:ET system. Second, we asked participants about changes during the HAND:ET system as an indication of the subjective effectiveness of HAND:ET. Finally, we targeted the participants' suggestions for ways to improve the HAND:ET programme.

To assess the *perceived quality of the HAND:ET system*, we used the following questions already used in the evaluation of the predecessor project of HAND:ET (see Vieluf et al., 2020). One question concentrated on the usefulness of the HAND:ET system, allowing participants to rate it on a 4-point scale ranging from "very useful" to "not useful". We included another question asking for an overall rating of the HAND:ET system using a 4-point scale ranging from "poor" to "very good". To explore the participants' feedback in greater depth, another question asked them to rate different aspects of the programme, including elements like the presentation of theory during the training sessions. The rating options here were "poor", "fair", "good" and "excellent". Finally, we asked participants to identify up to three positive aspects of the HAND:ET system.

To assess *subjectively perceived changes that might have occurred during the programme,* we employed the following questions adapted from Singer and colleagues (2016). One question asked participants about changes in their lifestyle (e.g., regarding their physical activity, diet, or drug use) throughout the duration of the HAND:ET system, using five response options ranging from "much less" to "much more". Another question inquired about whether the programme had changed the person with regard to relationships with their colleagues and the relationships with their students. The answer categories were "yes" and "no".[4]

Regarding *participants' suggestions for programme improvements*, participants were afforded the opportunity to describe up to three aspects in an open-answer format.

4 The questionnaire contained two further questions: (1) A question using opposing statements from which the participants had to choose one (e.g., "more optimistic" or "more pessimistic") to describe themselves now in comparison with the period before the HAND:ET system (adapted from Singer et al., 2016); and (2) a question exploring participants' intentions to use specific programme elements in the future, such as "physical exercises/mindful movement". The results for these two questions are to be presented in the HAND:ET evaluation report (Rožman et al., 2024).

Procedure

The questions described above were used in the post-test evaluation questionnaire. This questionnaire was completed by all participants (from both the experimental and control groups) after the HAND:ET system had been completed, whereby the questions about the perceived quality of the programme, possible changes, and suggestions for improvement were only presented to the participants in the experimental group. The survey was conducted online (see Chapter 8).

Analysis

The closed questions from the post-test evaluation questionnaire described above were analysed descriptively with the statistical software R (R Core Team, 2023).

The examination of the open responses followed a thematic qualitative content analysis approach, as outlined by Kuckartz (2016). Inductive coding was used, whereby codes were derived directly from the interview material. These codes were then grouped into thematic categories. For further clarity, the occurrences within these thematic categories were counted and selected quotes from the interviews were included to illustrate each theme.

Focus Group Interviews

Focus group interviews were used to gain insight into the school staff's perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes regarding the HAND:ET system. The interview procedure, sample and methods of analysis are described below.

Procedure

Teachers, principals and school counsellors who participated in the HAND:ET system were group-interviewed by two representatives of the HAND:ET national partners (but not by those who had served as trainers). The partners also decided whether the focus group interviews were to take place online (AUT, PRT, SVN) or face to face (CRO, SWE). All of the focus group interviews took place 1 to 2 weeks after the last day of training.

Following the focus group approach (Vaughn et al., 1996), the participants were guided by a specific set of questions that encouraged them to interact and exchange ideas. These questions ensured that the interviews remained programme-focused while still offering flexibility for interviewees to express their viewpoints. The interview guidelines consisted of seven open questions with various sub-questions. In the framework of this chapter, only answers to the

question "What did you learn from the HAND:ET programme?" (with the follow-up questions "What did you learn from the HAND:ET programme in your professional life?" and "What did you learn from the HAND:ET programme for your personal life?") were analysed to complement the analyses of the open-ended questions from the post-test evaluation questionnaire.

The interviewers gave the participants room to answer this and all the other questions. To document the participants' responses, the focus group interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. We used a "smooth verbatim transcript" as the transcribing method, which included a transfer word by word but without utterances and decorating words. Short-cut expressions as well as dialects were translated into standard language (Mayring, 2014). After that, the transcriptions were translated into English for further analysis.

Participants

The groups for the interviews were built according to the training groups such that persons who were trained together were also interviewed together. In this chapter, we are only analysing the teachers' answers.[5] Therefore, below we merely describe the focus groups made up of teachers.

In Austria, a total of 11 participants took part in the focus group interviews, organised into 5 groups. Group 1 consisted of three teachers, group 2 of two teachers, group 3 of four teachers, and group 4 of two teachers.

In Croatia, the focus group interviews involved 15 participants in three groups. Group 1 contained four teachers, Group 2 six teachers and Group 3 five teachers.

In Portugal, the focus group interviews involved a total of 19 participants in 5 groups. Group 1 had four teachers, Group 2 had two teachers and a school psychologist, Group 3 had two teachers, Group 4 had six teachers while Group 5 had two teachers and two school psychologists.

In Slovenia, focus group interviews were conducted with a total of 21 participants in four groups. Group 1 consisted of six teachers and Group 2 of five teachers, whereas Groups 3 and 4 had five teachers each.

In Sweden, the focus group interviews involved a total of 27 participants in 5 groups. The first three groups consisted of five teachers each, while Groups 4 and 5 had six teachers each.

5 In Portugal, teachers and other school staff were mixed, meaning that the answers of other school staff are included, but not separately analysed.

Analysis

Similar to the analysis of the open-ended questions in the evaluation questionnaire, the analysis of the responses to the semi-structured focus group interviews followed a thematic qualitative content analysis approach based on Kuckartz (2016). We used inductive coding, i.e., codes were developed from the material. Subsequently, the codes were summarised to form thematic categories. Finally, we counted the interviews in which the thematic categories appeared and selected quotes to illustrate the various themes. In this chapter, only results concerning the interviews with teachers of the experimental group are reported. Results from the principals' and other school staff's answers and analysis of the control group questionnaires can be found in the HAND:ET evaluation report (Rožman et al., 2024).

Results

In this part, we present all of the results concerning the participants' view on the HAND:ET system. The first section outlines results from the closed and open questions in the post-test evaluation questionnaire. The second section describes the results concerning the focus group interviews conducted with participants of the training groups after the programme had been completed.

Results of the Evaluation Questionnaire

In this section, we first report the results arising from the closed questions on evaluation of the programme and perceived changes in the post-test evaluation questionnaire. We then present the findings of our analysis of the open-ended questions concerned with the programme's positive aspects and suggestions for further improvement.

Results of the Closed Questions in the Post-Test Evaluation Questionnaire

To explore participants' views on the HAND:ET system, we included closed-ended questions addressing two main areas. On one hand, we asked participants to rate the quality of the HAND:ET system and how useful they had found it. On the other hand, we inquired about possible changes participants had perceived in their lives and work after they had participated in the programme.[6]

6 The participants' evaluation of the entire HAND:ET system was analysed for the overall sample and on the country level. To keep the text concise, the results for all other closed questions are reported exclusively for the overall sample in the framework of this chapter.

Participants' assessment of the quality of the programme

We asked participants to assess the quality of the HAND:ET system by looking at their overall perception of the programme and its perceived usefulness. Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations overall and by country. For both aspects, participants mostly reported positive perceptions. Regarding the overall evaluation of the programme, the participants perceived the programme as good. Specifically, 43 % of participants assessed the programme as very good, 32 % as good, 22 % as fair and 3 % as poor. Participants in Slovenia evaluated the programme more positively (M = 3.79) than participants in Austria (M = 2.66). In addition, most participants held a positive view regarding the programme's usefulness (47 % found it very useful, 36 % quite useful, 14 % somewhat useful, and 3 % not useful). Participants from Portugal (M = 3.49) and Slovenia (M = 3.47) perceived the usefulness of the programme more positively than participants from Austria (M = 2.37).

Table 1: Mean and standard deviations of participants' overall evaluation of the HAND:ET system and its usefulness

Question	Levels	Overall *M(SD)*	AUT *M(SD)*	CRO *M(SD)*	PRT *M(SD)*	SVN *M(SD)*	SWE *M(SD)*
Overall, I would evaluate the HAND:ET programme as…	1: poor 4: very good	3.28 (.80)	2.66 (.92)	3.17 (.79)	3.32 (.72)	3.79 (.45)	2.80 (.74)
To what extent did you find the HAND:ET programme useful for your work?	1: not useful 4: very useful	3.15 (.87)	2.37 (.86)	2.93 (.85)	3.49 (.75)	3.47 (.71)	2.74 (.78)

Participants were also asked to rate various aspects of the HAND:ET system from "poor" to "excellent". Figure 1 shows the percentage of responses for each aspect rated. Overall, most participants reported positive perceptions of the different aspects of the programme, with the percentage of "good" or "excellent" responses ranging from 73 % to 94 %. The aspects rated most highly by participants referred to the trainers' ability and the atmosphere: the ability to relate positively to participants (M = 3.65, SD = .58), the ability to lead the practical activities (M = 3.58, SD = .64), the ability to lead the discussion and reflection of the training (M = 3.52, SD = .67) and the atmosphere during the training (M = 3.45, SD = .69). The aspects that were rated comparatively lower by the participants (although still predominantly positive) were the support for the implementation of the programme elements in the school (M = 3.03, SD = .85), the support for the implementation in daily life (M = 3.13, SD = .82)

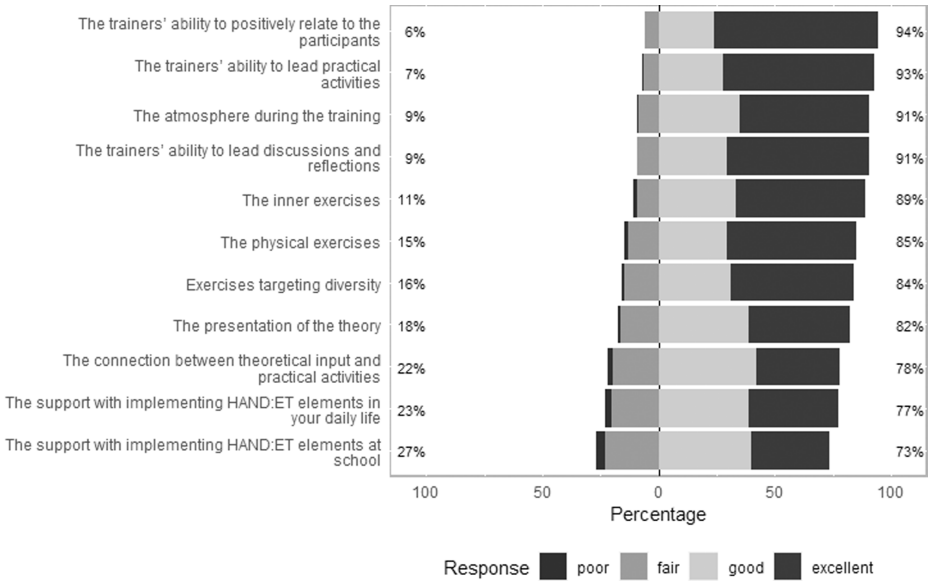

Figure 1: Percentage of responses from participants' assessments of various aspects of the HAND:ET programme

and the connection between the theoretical input and the practical activities during the training (M = 3.12, SD = .80).

Changes perceived by participants during the programme

We asked participants how they thought the HAND:ET system had affected aspects of their life and work. First, we asked participants whether they had perceived changes regarding certain aspects of their lives compared to before taking part in the programme. Figure 2 shows the percentage of responses for each aspect of participants' lives from "doing it much less" to "doing it much more". In each case, the majority of participants reported that there had been no change in the specific area. However, while looking at the answers indicating change the aspects in which participants reported a tendency of them doing "somewhat more" or "much more" were spending time with people they care about (40 %, $M = 3.40$, $SD = .74$), self-care (38 %, $M = 3.31$, $SD = .73$), feeling cheerful (37 %, $M = 3.32$, $SD = .74$) and helping others (33 %, $M = 3.35$, $SD = .62$). On the contrary, the aspects where participants reported that they tend to do "somewhat less" or "much less" were arguing with other people (36 %, $M = 2.60$, $SD = .76$), smoking (19 %, $M = 2.67$, $SD = .82$), and consuming drugs or alcohol (23 %, $M = 2.60$, $SD = .80$).

Finally, we also asked participants whether they believed that the HAND:ET system had changed the way they relate to others, specifically their colleagues and students. About 45 % of the participants ($N = 193$) reported that the pro-

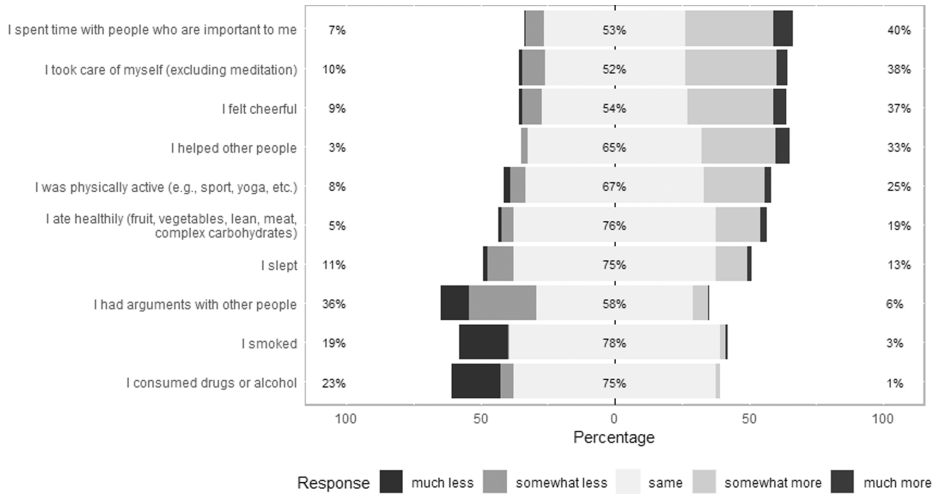

Figure 2: Percentage of responses about possible changes in the participants' way of life during the HAND:ET system compared to before

gramme had changed the way they relate to their colleagues (AUT: $N = 18$, CRO: $N = 41$, PRT: $N = 47$, SVN: $N = 59$, SWE: $N = 28$), while 45.9 % ($N = 194$) reported it had changed the way they relate to the students (AUT: $N = 14$, CRO: $N = 38$, PRT: $N = 60$, SVN: $N = 63$, SWE: $N = 19$).

Results of the Open-Ended Questions in the Post-Test Evaluation Questionnaire

The open questions were used to learn more about the participants' own thinking concerning the HAND:ET system. We especially looked at what the teachers, school staff and principals mentioned as positive aspects and which improvements they had in mind for the whole programme.

Positive characteristics of the HAND:ET system from the participants' perspective

Overall, 1,065 statements from 365 different participants regarding positive aspects of the HAND:ET system were given (AUT: 110, CRO: 234, PRT: 163, SVN: 361, SWE: 207; statements with insufficient information for interpretation had been excluded before). The analysis resulted in 1,160 coded segments (some statements were classified in more than one category).

The participants liked the focus on and development of their *socio-emotional competencies* (AUT: 34[7], CRO: 64, PRT: 44, SVN: 113, SWE: 31). The positive

7 For each theme, we indicate in brackets how often they were mentioned in each country.

aspects the participants mentioned in this area may be summarised in four categories, with the first two relating to emotional competencies and the latter two to social competencies according to the CASEL model (2013).

(1) Self-awareness (n = 95): This included general statements on self-awareness ("improved self-awareness", SWE), awareness of the body and bodily reactions ("attention to changes in the body", SVN), awareness of inner processes like emotions and thoughts and reflecting on them, or "listening to myself" (CRO).
(2) Self-management (n = 95): The participants also liked dealing with the topics of regulating emotions and stress management (e.g., "*emotional control*", CRO).
(3) Social awareness/empathy (n = 26): The participants liked or recognised developments in the field of empathy as well, such as "*seeing things from others' perspectives*" (CRO).
(4) Relationship and communication skills (n = 36): Participants also commented on (the improvement of) communicative skills (e.g., "*better communication*", SVN).

Another topic was *Mindfulness* (AUT: 6, CRO: 33, PRT: 11, SVN: 42, SWE: 5). Next to the concrete exercises and techniques used in the training, participants appreciated the focus given to general attitudes and competencies related to mindfulness. These included general statements on mindfulness (n = 25, e.g., "*mindfulness*"), on awareness (n = 16, e.g., "*learning to be aware of my surroundings*", PRT), statements about acceptance (n = 17, e.g., "*acceptance of self and others*", SVN), about focusing on the present moment (n = 17, "*That we are here and now*", PRT), about gratefulness as well as positivity (n = 13, "*to be grateful for your body and your senses*", SWE), about openness (n = 6, e.g., "*openness towards all aspects of life and work*", CRO) and on withholding judgement (n = 3, e.g., "*raised awareness about the importance of not judging*", CRO).

Although the participants also mentioned learning about *diversity awareness* as a positive aspect (AUT: 3, CRO: 12, PRT: 1, SVN: 6, SWE: 3; e.g., "*understanding diversity*", CRO), far fewer statements addressed this area of competency compared to socio-emotional competencies.

Looking directly at the *exercises and techniques* that were taught, many participants mentioned these as positive aspects of the HAND:ET programme (AUT: 24, CRO: 37, PRT: 15, SVN: 42, SWE: 51). Some statements addressed the specific exercises on a general level (n = 24; for example, just "*the mindfulness exercises*", AUT). Participants liked the dialogue exercises (n = 71). In particular, empathetic/active listening was often mentioned (n = 67). The inner exercises were also stated as positive (n = 46), including the body scans (n = 17). Finally, the physical and movement exercises were appreciated by some as well (n = 11).

Participants also liked the *practical applicability of the HAND:ET system* (AUT: 2, CRO: 11, PRT: 23, SVN: 16, SWE: 16). First, many statements (n = 34) addressed its general practical applicability (e.g., "*we can practise with family, friends, personally and professionally*", PRT). Another 34 statements showed that the practical applicability in the school context was appreciated (e.g., "*practical exercises I can apply in class*", CRO; "*techniques to help students*", PRT).

The *context and the atmosphere of the training sessions* was also mentioned as a positive aspect of the whole programme (AUT: 5, CRO: 10, PRT: 2, SVN: 22, SWE: 13). There were more general statements (n = 36, e.g., "*a very pleasant atmosphere*", AUT) and more specific answers pointing out that a safe space had been created during the sessions (n = 16). Participants stated, for example, that in the sessions they "*[were] allowed to say [their] opinion and allowed to be who [they] really are*" (AUT).

Adding to that, several *organisational aspects* were seen as positive (AUT: 1, CRO: 2, PRT: 5, SVN: 9, SWE: 17). For instance, the "*provision of documents/ books with ideas for practice*" (PRT) was appreciated, but also the "*[b]eautiful choice of location and the good food*" (SVN). Many statements (n = 27) were generally positive concerning the trainers who ran the sessions (AUT: 5, CRO: 9, PRT: 4, SVN: 7, SWE: 2; e.g., "*great trainers*", CRO).

The participants appreciated the *community, connectedness and improved relationships* brought about by the programme (AUT: 20, CRO: 38, PRT: 14, SVN: 61, SWE: 54). Most of the statements were directed at the participants' colleagues (from their own schools; n = 62). Specifically, they mentioned improved relationships with colleagues including getting to know new colleagues, a feeling of connectedness and closeness among the own colleagues (e.g., *"better connection with my colleagues"*, CRO) including appreciating spending time with them and having time to communicate with them due to the programme as well as teamwork and cooperation among colleagues. Next to improved relationships and connectedness with fellow teachers (and other school staff), the participants saw the possibility to socialize, network and get to know colleagues from other schools as a positive aspect of the programme (n = 36; e.g., *"to meet participants from other schools in the project"*, SWE) and some also stated a general improvement of relationships (n = 10; e.g., *"it contributes to improving interpersonal, intergroup and other relationships"*, PRT). The participants liked that the HAND:ET system gave them the possibility for sharing experiences, ideas, information and feelings (n = 52) and they valued the experience of connectedness and community in their training groups (n = 27).

Further, the participants appreciated the training's *focus on self-care, personal well-being and teacher empowerment* (AUT: 9, CRO: 24, PRT: 24, SVN: 47, SWE: 17). Sixteen answers generally addressed these topics (e.g., "*empowering*", CRO). Several statements (n = 14) were appreciative of the focus on the self (e.g., "*focusing on oneself*", CRO). In 28 statements, self-development was pointed out

as something positive (e.g., "*personal growth*", SVN). The focus on "*taking care of yourself*" or "*self-care*" was appreciated in 22 statements. Similarly, 12 statements addressed "*taking time for yourself*" (AUT) as positive. The focus on teacher empowerment was additionally expressed as a positive characteristic (n = 29, "*caring about feelings and problems of teachers*", CRO).

Finally, some statements expressed a general appraisal of the HAND:ET system (AUT: 4, CRO: 22, PRT: 31, SVN: 34, SWE: 24) in the fields of theory and knowledge (n = 24), exercises in general (n = 20), learning something new (n = 13), the mixture of theory and exercises (n = 8), the relevance of the content (n = 8), and other general positive aspects (n = 14, e.g., "*a new perspective of working with students*", CRO).

Possibilities for Improving the HAND:ET system from the Participants' Perspective

When participants were asked which aspects of the HAND:ET system could be improved, we obtained 736 suggestions (AUT: 83, CRO: 168, PRT: 122, SVN: 209, SWE: 154). Among all the answers, 36 fragments were excluded either because they did not contain suggestions but more of a general positive evaluation (e.g., "*it was great!*", SVN; "*think it was fine as it is*", SWE; n = 20), or because they contained insufficient information to interpret them (e.g., "*mindset*", SWE; "*technology*", SWE; n = 17). The coded responses refer mainly to three aspects: the sessions' content and exercises, the overall programme implementation, and the sessions' modality.

Most suggestions referred to the *sessions' content and exercises* (AUT: 41, CRO: 84, PRT: 67, SVN: 55, SWE: 64). Here, the exercises were the most frequently mentioned aspect (AUT: 25, CRO: 31, PRT: 33, SVN: 28, SWE: 25). Concretely, the main comment was that more practical / mindfulness exercises could be included in the programme (n = 85; e.g., "*implementation of more practical exercises, for example, more practical sessions*", PRT), particularly more meditation and relaxation (n = 11), physical activities (n = 5), reflections (n = 3), emotional awareness (n = 2), focus attention (n = 1), listening (n = 1) and body scan (n = 1). Moreover, some participants mentioned they would like greater variety in the exercises as it sometimes felt repetitive (n = 42; "*more variety in the different exercises*", SWE). On the contrary, fewer participants mentioned that they would like shorter or fewer exercises (n = 15; e.g., "*keeping the exercises shorter*", AUT), specifically less empathic listening (n = 5), reflections (n = 2), body scan (n = 2), discussions (n = 2) and meditation (n = 1). The second-most mentioned aspect regarding the sessions' content and exercises was the lack of transfer or integration of the content into the school context or their daily lives (AUT: 9, CRO: 22, PRT:17, SVN: 9, SWE: 14; e.g., "*the link between education*

and usefulness in the profession", SWE; "*an action plan on how to apply what you have learned in practice*", SVN).

Concerning the content of the sessions apart from the concrete exercises, aspects that were mentioned included: (1) more exchange of experience (n = 24; e.g., "more opportunities to exchange concrete experiences", CRO), for example by taking advantage of the project's international dimension (n = 9; e.g., "to hear about how it is in the other countries", SWE); (2) more access to the materials (n = 18; e.g., "printed manual that contains all of the exercises and explanations", CRO); (3) shorter sessions (n = 16; e.g., "for my own part, it would have been better with shorter sessions", SWE); (4) more theoretical input (n = 14; "a more in-depth theory", SVN) or (5) less of it (n = 13; "less theory", PRT); (6) more information on specific topics (n = 9), particularly about diversity (n = 6; e.g., "go deeper into the area of diversity", SWE); (7) the alignment of concepts (n = 2; e.g., "term alignment", SVN); (8) more video materials (n = 1); and (9) the lack of a connection between theory and practice (n = 1).

The second main topic drawing recommendations was the *overall programme implementation* (AUT: 30, CRO: 47, PRT: 35, SVN: 104, SWE: 49). Here, the most frequent suggestions concerned the programme's length (AUT: 3, CRO: 16, PRT: 22, SVN: 76, SWE: 11). Specifically, participants expressed that they would like to have a more extended programme or a continuous pro- gramme (n = 99), either by continuing it as a long-term offer in schools (n = 56; e.g., "*continuing the project as lifelong education*", CRO), or having more meetings (n = 15) or greater time (n = 11; e.g., "*make the training more extended in time to promote more regular practice*", PRT), as well as providing for the programme's greater dissemination in the educational context (n = 15; e.g., "*continuation of the programme and extending it to more clusters and schools*", PRT). In comparison, fewer participants expressed that they would have liked a shorter programme or fewer sessions (n = 18; e.g., "*a shorter, but more intense programme, for example, the whole weekend*", CRO; "*perhaps the training could be compressed into a few days less*", SWE).

Regarding other aspects of the overall programme implementation, participants also mentioned things such as: (1) inconvenient scheduling (n = 43), due to incompatibility with school work (n = 15), daily schedule (n = 7) or private life (n = 5; e.g., "*place the training days during times when you are less stressed, for example NOT the first days before the start of the semester*", SWE; "*whole days and not afternoons where you have to rush somewhere to relax*", AUT); (2) better choice of the training place (n = 31), for example, in nature / outdoors (n = 11) or a remote location (n = 9) where they could focus better (e.g., "*carrying out exercises in nature and not in a closed space*" SVN; "*a change of location, the university room is impractical, especially for the meditation and mindfulness exercises*", AUT; "*organise the programme on weekends in some spa, mountains or at the sea*", CRO); (3) improvement of trainers' skills (n = 19), for example,

receiving greater instruction/guidance (n = 7; e.g., "*guidance from the face-to-face trainer*", PRT), creating a fun and safe space (n = 5; e.g., "*more sensitive use of empathetic listening*", AUT), or more fun training (n = 4; e.g., "*more fun*" and "*more interesting PowerPoints*", SWE); (4) forming better groups (n = 18), by increasing rotation among the groups (n = 7; e.g., "*rotate and blend groups more*", SWE), reducing their size (n = 5; e.g., "*working in smaller groups*", CRO), or creating more diverse groups (n = 5; e.g., "*more people from different areas*", CRO); (5) the lack of clarity about the programme's goals (n = 9; e.g., "*a clearer explanation of what the purpose of this education was in the first place; it seems to me that because it was never really stated why we were there, that everyone created a different picture of the purpose of this education*", SVN); (6) better planning and structure (n = 9; e.g., "*a clear schedule for when the meetings will be, so that it is easier to plan the semester*", SWE); (7) better adaption to the context (n = 4; e.g., "*adjustment to the Croatian social and educational context*", CRO); (8) the lack of attendance (n = 3); and (9) a trial session before commencing the programme (n = 1).

Finally, the third main theme was the *modality of the sessions* (AUT: 12, CRO: 37, PRT: 20, SVN: 50, SWE: 42). Here, most suggestions referred to having more in-person meetings instead of online meetings (n = 151). Some participants explicitly mentioned that the type of content meant the online meetings did not fit the goal of the sessions, for example, due to possible distractions (e.g., "*more in-person trainings – it's not possible to concentrate on relaxation exercises in online sessions*", CRO). On the contrary, fewer participants said they would like more online sessions (n = 3; e.g., "*online is better*", AUT), and a few believed the online sessions could be improved (n = 6), for instance by shortening them (e.g., "*the online sessions could be shorter and serve as a reminder of what we did in person*", CRO), or making them more interesting (e.g., "*more programmes in remote meetings. It was always the same*", SVN).

Results of the Interviews Regarding Perceived Learning Outcomes

A large part (over 80 %) of the learning outcomes described by the teachers may be summarised under SEDA competencies. Among the SEDA competencies, over 95 % of the learning outcomes mentioned relate to socio-emotional competencies and only a small proportion to diversity awareness. In addition to the competencies, when asked about what they had learned, the participants reported using the HAND:ET elements in different areas of their professional life, but chiefly for work with students.

About half the statements in the focus group interviews referred to general learning effects without reference to a specific area of life. When interviewers explicitly asked about learning in individual areas, or the participants specified

this themselves, about 70 % of the answers pertained to the professional and 30 % to the private sphere.

Socio-Emotional Competencies

In terms of socio-emotional competencies as described in the CASEL model (2013), participants reported having learned almost twice as much in the area of emotional competencies (self-awareness and self-management) than in the area of social competencies (social awareness and relationship skills).

Emotional Competencies

With respect to emotional competencies, participants reported learning effects for self-management about three times as often as for self-awareness.

Self-awareness. Learning outcomes that can be attributed to self-awareness were mentioned in almost every focus group in every country (AUT: 3/4[8], CRO: 3/3, PRT: 3/5, SVN: 4/4, SWE: 4/5). In some interviews, especially those in Portugal, a generally increased self-awareness was described. Further, participants stated that after having completed the HAND:ET system they were more aware of their emotions (e.g., "*I learned to ask myself how I feel, how certain things are affecting me*", SVN), of the body, and also to feel emotions or stress in the body (e.g., "*Ok, alright. I feel that now. That the stress, yes, that I feel it inside. Ok, either, I don't know, I'm getting red in the face, or, or, I start to, I don't know, snort or something*", AUT). Linked to this, some teachers also mentioned greater awareness of when breaks are needed. According to CASEL, recognising one's own strengths and being confident also pertains to a person's self-awareness. Participants in several focus groups (CRO: 2/3, PRT: 1/5, SVN: 1/4) expressed that they felt "*more confident*" and stronger, as illustrated by one Croatian teacher's statement: "*I actually feel stronger in certain situations, when I encounter some new situations or problems, I feel as if I can face them more calmly*".

Self-management. Learning outcomes related to self-management were highlighted in all the countries and nearly all the focus groups (AUT: 3/4, CRO: 2/3, PRT: 5/5, SVN: 4/4, SWE: 5/5).

The most important theme within self-management was relaxing or calming down. Teachers described how the HAND:ET system had helped them to relax (e.g., "in those moments when I need it, I can quickly use techniques to ease the situation, not requiring three days to relax, but rather using techniques

8 This notation means that the respective theme was mentioned in three out of the four focus groups in Austria.

that I have learned to help me in that moment", SVN) or to stay calm in challenging situations. In individual focus groups from Austria (1/4) and Portugal (1/5), participants reported that they now consciously take time for themselves; similarly, in Swedish focus groups (2/5), teachers mentioned having used the strategy "*take it easy*" to calm down in challenging situations. Similarly, in certain focus groups teachers mentioned having learned to "*prioritise our well-being*" (AUT: 1/4, CRO: 1/3, SVN: 1/4). Moreover, in Swedish focus groups (3/5) teachers reported having successfully used the body scan exercises to help them sleep better. Individual participants from Sweden (1/5) also described how techniques from the HAND:ET programme had assisted them to "*become more alert*", "*replenish*" and obtain "*new energy*".

Teachers not only described which self-management goals they had achieved, i.e., becoming calmer and relaxed but also which self-management skills they had learned, namely different aspects of mindfulness. The aspect most often described in this context is "*to be present in the moment*" (AUT: 2/4, CRO: 2/3, SVN: 3/4, SWE: 2/5). Some participants specified concentrating on breathing to achieve this focus ("*and now, you just breathe for example, and I just breathe and nothing else*", AUT). Further, the importance of focusing attention on the self was stressed in the Slovenian (4/4) and Croatian (2/3) focus groups. Several teachers explained how the focus on the self is the basis for other aspects, for example constructive relationships or communication, as illustrated in a statement by a Slovenian teacher: "*It was interesting that we were guided to think about how we feel and to consider ourselves. For example, if you're agitated, you need rest. Normally, we only focus on what the students need. It never occurs to us to realise that we may also be agitated, and that's why the students might be too*". Similarly, the participants reflected on how to balance focusing on oneself and on aspects outside the self, for instance "*In the rush of things, that I don't forget about myself and always keep a portion of my attention on my feelings and how I'm doing. […] Not forgetting about myself while doing other things*" (SVN). Teachers also reported that they had learned to judge less (e.g., "*not to judge immediately. Not even myself, because I can be very critical of myself as well*", SVN) and accept things as they are (e.g., "*In our work, you can't be everywhere all the time, and to actually be on everything and solve everything. So that's the way it is, but I think all of us who have become teachers know that you know that you can do more if you want to, but to also feel that you have done enough. That's good*", SWE). Individual participants also mentioned "*empathic curiosity*" and being "*more open*" as well as a stronger focus on the positive side of things.

Social Competencies

In the CASEL framework (2013), social competencies are composed of social awareness and relationship skills. While social awareness primarily refers to empathy, relationship skills address establishing and maintaining constructive relationships, including communicative and conflict resolving competencies. According to CASEL, the model's components overlap and shape each other – this is also shown in the participants' responses: the specific term most frequently mentioned as a learning outcome across all SEDA competency areas was "*empathic listening*", and thereby connect the two areas of social competencies.

Social awareness. "Empathy" or "empathetic" as the core of social awareness was very often mentioned as a learning outcome, albeit in the vast majority of cases in combination with "*listening*" (see the next section on relationship skills). Beyond this combination, in a few focus groups in Portugal (2/5) and Slovenia (2/4) individual participants reported now putting themselves more in the perspective of their students, for example, a Slovenian participant stated "*I often think about how the child felt in that situation*" and a Portuguese participant explained "*I have become more alert to situations within the classroom, observing my students and trying to understand the motive of some behaviours and go beyond academic teaching*".

Relationship Skills. In the area of relationship skills, about 70% of the answers can be classified as learning effects in the area of (empathetic) listening. The other two topics in this area were (1) conflict resolution, and (2) the exchange and connectedness among teachers.

"*Empathetic listening*" or just "*listening*" as the most frequently mentioned learning outcome was described in most focus groups and also by several teachers in each group (AUT: 3/4, CRO: 2/3, SVN: 4/4, SWE: 5/5). Interestingly, and in contrast, listening and also other aspects of communication were not mentioned in the Portuguese focus groups. Teachers stated that they had learned "*to simply listen and not make any comments*" (AUT) and "*to listen, pay attention, truly hear*" (SVN). Participants explained that they had refrained from always trying to directly provide solutions. In many cases, it was also described how this mere listening and realisation that one's counterpart wishes to be heard and understood is perceived as disburdening. For example, a teacher from Austria expressed "*you save yourself a lot*"; "*it feels good*" is how one Swedish teacher referred to it. Further, for some teachers giving up interposed questions and comments also means giving up control over the course of the conversation. A Slovenian teacher described it as follows: "*previously, I wanted to achieve that they tell me what I wanted to hear, but now I was a bit disappointed when they didn't say exactly that. However, I managed to lead them to talk and express what they wanted to say. Listening has been the most significant improvement for*

me". Individual teachers also noted the other side of listening; namely, heightened awareness of "*being heard*" by others, such as what an Austrian teacher described "*And where I also notice (…), well, if I talk now and every time someone interrupts me or tries. Where I think to myself: let me finish for once*".

Teachers in the focus groups in Croatia (2/3), Slovenia (3/4) and Sweden (2/5) reported having learned to deal with conflicts better. The importance of listening was also repeatedly mentioned in this context. Specifically, participants mentioned listening and withholding reaction, "*let it cool down a bit*" (SWE). Further, listening instead of "*go in and control the situation and feeling a need to defend*". The technique of empathetic listening was also used as a tool in conflict mediation between students (see the section on application below). Finally, empathetic listening additionally seemed to help resolve conflicts in private relationships, as illustrated by one Swedish teacher's statement: "*I forced myself to really listen, then I could hear what she was saying. But then we talked about what empathetic listening is so she can also think about it now. Most often, the conflicts do not become so great when you really listen*". Another repeatedly mentioned aspect in the area of conflict resolution was an improved capacity to "*say no*" (SVN).

Moreover, teachers in the Austrian focus groups (2/4) pointed out as learnings outcomes that they had now more exchange: "*sometimes, I just go to a colleague for a moment and say, "Wow, are they also like this with you today?*". Individual teachers also referred to a better climate and improved connectedness among teachers.

Diversity Awareness

Participants in multiple focus groups from four countries (CRO: 2/3, PRT: 1/5, SVN: 1/4, SWE: 1/5) reported learning effects in the area of diversity awareness. Although in Croatia a number of participants in several focus groups described what they had learned in this area, in the other countries there are only statements from a single person in just one interview each. In the focus group interviews held in Croatia and Slovenia, participants reported having learned about diversity and being prepared for the growing diversity in schools. For example, one teacher from Croatia stated, "*So we meet more and more different people. From different cultures, from different professions, with different attitudes and opinions. We also know all that, of course, but this allowed us to look at it differently, somehow deeper*". In a Portuguese focus group, a participant mentioned that they had learned how to use HAND:ET exercises to address diversity with the students: "*We have a lot of culturalism in our school, we have kids coming from different countries and we were able to work with the students on the importance of difference*". In the focus group with Swedish participants, a teacher described how the diversity exercises during the HAND:ET system had

led to increased self-awareness regarding prejudice against groups of people: "*But then I probably also learned a little about myself when we reflected on these walks […], so I still realise that I hold prejudices*".

Application of the HAND:ET Elements in Professional Life

When the participants were asked what they had learned from the HAND:ET system, practical application was mentioned in several focus groups in four countries (AUT: 1/4, PRT: 4/5, SVN: 2/4, SWE: 3/5). Teachers in Portugal and Sweden made comparatively high numbers of statements about its practical application.

As regards areas of life where the HAND:ET elements had been used, use with students was mentioned more often than the other aspects combined (AUT: 1/4, PRT: 4/5, SVN: 2/4, SWE: 2/5). In a few focus groups, teachers expressed surprise at the effectiveness and acceptance of these exercises. One teacher from Austria, for example, shared their initial scepticism, saying, "*When I did it, I then noticed that the children also accepted it very well. Although at the beginning, my opinion was that the quietness would never work, especially not with this group, or especially not with so many. But it worked very well, so, yes*".

The use with students was very diverse. Teachers mainly reported having worked with mindfulness exercises and empathetic listening techniques, albeit the use of diversity awareness exercises and materials was also mentioned once. The exercises were used, for instance, to calm down the class. They were also successfully used with students with special needs, as a participant from Portugal described, "*I have learnt that even with children with special educational needs it is also possible to work and slowly reach them*".

Further, conflict mediation between students via use of empathetic listening was reported. For example, a teacher from Sweden elaborated, "*So, it's often in those conflict management situations partly to kind of get the children to listen to each other. To calm down before they explain what has happened and then use empathetic listening to sort of find out what has happened and how. You can see how to solve it so that you can act in the right way as well*".

Empathetic listening was also reported from another perspective, namely that teachers were listening better instead of trying to control the situation with questions and solutions, as a Slovenian participant explained: "*I feel that I've become better at listening. As a class teacher, if something happens in the class, I used to proactively ask a thousand questions to the students involved, not even letting them tell their whole story. Now, I handle such situations differently; I listen first, and then if something isn't clear, I ask additional questions*". In the focus group interviews in Portugal, attention was paid to the use of meditation exercises to promote socio-emotional competencies and assist with calming down, also for students with special needs. The use of listening techniques

was not reported here. In the Slovenian and Swedish focus group interviews the focus was in contrast on these (in the Austrian interview only the general success and acceptance of unspecified exercises was mentioned).

In one group in Portugal and another group in Sweden, participants noted that they had used insights and techniques from HAND:ET with parents. While most attention in the first was on providing activities that parents were invited to join, in the second it was on applying active listening techniques in meetings with parents.

In several focus group interviews, the practical use of HAND:ET elements with colleagues was mentioned (PRT: 2/5, SWE: 1/5). Participants from Portuguese focus groups described having organised activities among colleagues, for example: "*We also worked with the rest of the teachers and other staff, we created a space to do meditation once a week in the school and I noticed a difference in people's attitude in terms of being calmer and more patient. It was a fantastic experience*". The main theme in the Swedish focus group was listening in meetings with colleagues.

Discussion

One aim of this chapter was to present analyses to complement the experimental outcome evaluation outlined by Rožman et al. (see Chapter 8 in this volume) as a basis for drawing conclusions about the overall quality of the HAND:ET programme and its elements. More specifically, the summative outcome evaluation should be complemented by the participants' assessment of the quality of the programme (e.g., by judging its usefulness, the quality of the overall programme as well as individual aspects, and by describing characteristics viewed as positive) and the programme's effectiveness (by assessing subjectively perceived changes brought about by the programme).

A second aim was to add a formative perspective to the summative one: by asking the participants if they had any suggestions for improving the HAND:ET system, we can derive recommendations for optimising future programmes for promoting SEDA competencies. Results with respect to these aims are discussed below before we present some limitations. Finally, conclusions are made in relation to the HAND:ET system.

The participants' evaluation of the quality of the HAND:ET system. Analysis of the closed questions from the post-test evaluation questionnaire shows the HAND:ET system was evaluated very positively by the participants. The programme was rated as (very) good or (very) useful by the vast majority of participants. Individual aspects of the programme were all rated as good or excellent by a very clear majority, with the trainers and the atmosphere being rated particularly positively and the combination of theoretical input and prac-

tical activities as well as the support in implementing the HAND:ET elements being rated somewhat less positively (the rating of specific exercises was in between). A deeper insight into what the participants saw as positive in the HAND:ET system can be gained by analysing the positive aspects they specified in the questionnaire. Participants liked (and most frequently mentioned) the programme's focus on different aspects of socio-emotional competencies. In comparison, diversity awareness and related aspects were rarely mentioned. Participants also appreciated the sense of community, connectedness and opportunity for exchange that the programme provided. Participants liked the different exercises of the programme, notably those related to listening. They also appreciated the focus on teacher well-being and empowerment, the practical applicability, the trainers, the atmosphere and the organisation of the training sessions.

The effectiveness of the HAND:ET system from the participants' perspective – perceived changes and learning outcomes. In both the closed questions of the post-test evaluation questionnaire and in the interviews, participants reported having perceived changes due to HAND:ET and a wide range of learning outcomes. When asked whether their relationships with colleagues or students had changed following the programme, about half the participants indicated "yes" (details of the ways relationships had changed are analysed in the evaluation report, see Rožman et al., 2024). Further, among participants who reported changes in their lifestyle as compared to before, there was a perceived increase in spending time with loved ones, practising self-care, feeling cheerful, and helping others. Conversely, participants reported doing activities like arguing with others, smoking, and consuming drugs or alcohol less frequently after having participated in the HAND:ET system.

In the focus group interviews, the participants reported which learning effects they perceived. A large part of these learning effects could be classified in the area of SEDA competencies and a smaller part in the area of application of the HAND:ET elements in school. While almost all perceived SEDA learning effects could be categorised under socio-emotional competencies, only a few statements fell into the area of diversity awareness. In many focus groups, participants reported increased self-awareness, e.g., in relation to body sensations or emotions. In the area of self-management, learning effects such as the ability to calm down and relax were described. Various aspects of mindfulness, especially focusing on the present moment and focusing (partly) on the self, as a self-management technique were also mentioned. In the area of social skills, the central focus was on communication, particularly empathetic listening, which was the most frequently mentioned learning outcome overall. Interestingly, this was not mentioned in the Portuguese focus groups. The practical application in school, e.g., in conflict resolution, to calm the class down or

in conversations with students, on the other hand, was mentioned quite often in the Portuguese (and also Swedish) focus groups.

Possibilities to improve the HAND:ET system from the participants' perspective. As far as recommendations for improving the programme are concerned, the participants attributed a positive value to the programme and accordingly suggested that it should be expanded and widely disseminated in the educational context. On the other hand, the participants' suggestions highlight the importance of considering different aspects of the programme implementation to make it more convenient for them, such as taking the school workload and schedule into account, and making it more exciting and attractive, for example, by implementing the training in an appealing location. Moreover, participants expressed that they appreciated the practical exercises and would like to learn a greater variety of practical techniques, which is in line with the need that they expressed for better integration of the learned content into their school work and personal life. Finally, there was a notable preference for delivering the programme through in-person meetings.

Limitations. First, we found a clear imbalance between socio-emotional competencies on one hand and diversity awareness on the other. Among aspects perceived as positive as well as among the reported learning effects, the vast majority of competencies or topics are attributed to socio-emotional competencies and only very few to diversity awareness aspects. Yet, the aim of the programme was to promote these areas of competency to a similar extent. One possible explanation could be that the project team's expertise and experience in promoting socio-emotional competencies and conducting mindfulness-based trainings is more pronounced than with the diversity awareness content.

Another limitation revealed by the results refers to some clear differences between the countries, which especially became apparent in the interview analysis. Overall, the results for the closed and open questions in the questionnaire and from the interviews are comparable and show great similarities across the countries. Nevertheless, some clear differences also emerged. For example, "*(empathetic) listening*" was the most often described learning affect in all countries except for Portugal where, in contrast, no communication-related learning outcomes were described at all. Further, diversity awareness, which was hardly mentioned at all, was described comparatively often as a learning outcome in Croatia. Differences between the countries should be expected as the education systems differ and in part the target populations do as well (see Chapter 8 in this volume). The differences may indicate that the trainings were successfully adapted to different needs, but might also show that in some places the programme's "active ingredients" or key elements (see Nielsen, 2020) were not implemented in a comparable way in every country. A contributing factor may have been that the Train-the-Trainers education had to take place online instead of in-person as planned due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This may have

led to the trainers engaging less intensively with the content than would have happened with face-to-face training.

Finally, a limitation concerns our choice of instruments – we deliberately only considered subjective reports and statements of the participants in order to bring their perspective more strongly into the evaluation. Still, it is important to point out that these assessments are affected by biases such as social desirability or expectancy effects (cf. Bogner & Landrock, 2015), especially with regard to perceived changes. In addition, the questions analysed for this book chapter were more focused on positive aspects and only gave an opportunity to report on problems and difficulties to a limited extent[9].

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to summarise results concerning the participants' perspective on the quality and effectiveness of the HAND:ET system, and to thereby complement the summative outcome evaluation (see also Chapter 8 in this volume). At the same time, the participants provided us with suggestions that can be used to improve similar programmes in the future and hence adds a formative perspective on the evaluation.

In evaluating the HAND:ET system, it became clear that the participants valued the programme highly. The participants' assessment of the programme's quality, usefulness, and individual aspects were overwhelmingly positive. Apart from the focus being on socio-emotional competencies, the participants liked the exercises, the atmosphere, the focus on teachers and their well-being, and appreciated that an exchange among teachers had been facilitated. The HAND:ET system was subjectively perceived as effective in bringing about changes and various learning outcomes, particularly in the realm of socio-emotional competencies. Notably, participants reported improved self-awareness, self-management skills, especially with respect to reducing stress and enhancing well-being. Mindfulness techniques were reported as having been used as a means to achieve the latter. Regarding social competencies, empathetic listening proved to be a standout learning outcome. Further, they also reported having successfully used the HAND:ET elements in different areas of life, especially at school and with students.

Despite the programme's strengths, there are several areas for improvement and consideration in future iterations of the HAND:ET system or similar programmes. These stem from both the limitations we identified, namely possible

9 A more in-depth analysis of challenges and problems is to be included in the evaluation report (Rožman et al., 2024).

differences between countries in implementation of the programme and an imbalance between the promotion of socio-emotional competencies and diversity awareness, and the participants' suggestions for improvement. We offer the following specific recommendations to improve future programmes:

- For this kind of intervention study, the HAND:ET system was a comparatively comprehensive intervention. Yet, to ensure sustainable effects and meet the needs of teachers the programme should be anchored in schools on a long-term basis and implemented on a wider scale. Such long-term implementation should include providing teachers with ongoing supervision to successfully implement what they have learned in school. This would require even more comprehensive trainer education, complemented by continuous supervision.
- Similar programmes should be designed to be flexible and adapted to contexts to accommodate specific needs, school workloads and schedules.
- In-person training is clearly preferable to online sessions, ideally in attractive training locations that allow teachers to fully concentrate on the training and to be able to distance themselves from their daily school routine.
- The socio-emotional and diversity-related approaches should be more strongly integrated with each other, also by implementing a greater variety of practical exercises.

It is essential to acknowledge that the results presented in this chapter relied on subjective reports from participants. In order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the quality of the HAND:ET system, the results must be considered together with the results from the experimental outcome evaluation presented in Chapter 8 of this volume.

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Policy

Chapter 10

Teachers Social, Emotional, and Diversity Awareness Competencies

From Policy Experimentation to Policy Recommendations

Urška Štremfel[1]

Abstract

This chapter aims to explain the HAND in HAND: Empowering Teachers Across Europe to Deal with Social, Emotional and Diversity-Related Career Challenges ("HAND:ET") project from a policy perspective. Basic theoretical insights into the relationship between social science experimentation and policymaking are provided. The chapter explores how the HAND:ET policy experiment is positioned with respect to existing educational priorities concerning teachers and their well-being on the EU level and in the national policies in the countries participating in the policy experimentation (Austria, Croatia, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden). The chapter describes the manner in which the HAND:ET policy experiment, by focusing on teachers' SEDA competencies addresses the recent European Union policy problems of the teacher profession (e.g., teacher shortages) and, based on the literature review, seeks to identify possible policy recommendations that would ensure that the results of the HAND:ET policy experiment are applied on the systemic level of the EU and the participating countries. It thus elaborates on the conditions for the scalability, transferability and therefore sustainability of the HAND:ET policy experimentation outcomes in the wider field of teacher policy.

Keywords: Teachers' Social, Emotional and Diversity Awareness Competencies, Policy Experiment, Policy Problem, Policy Development, Policy Recommendations

Introduction

A policy experiment is defined as "a temporary, controlled field trial of a policy-relevant innovation that produces evidence for subsequent policy decisions" (Huitema et al., 2018). It is accordingly closely embedded in policy development, meaning that certain steps must be followed (European Commission, 2011).

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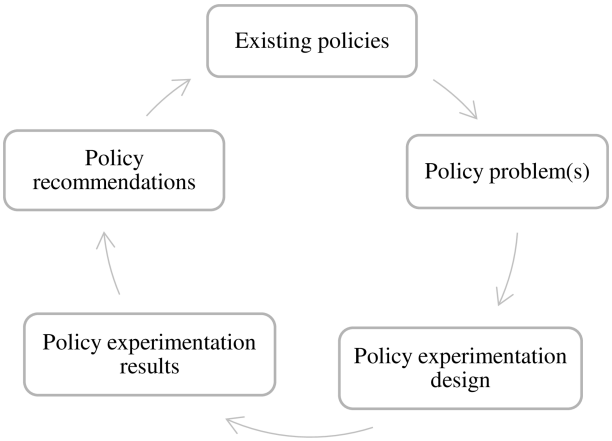

Figure 1: Embeddedness of policy experimentation in the development of policy

These involve: (a) a description of the policy problem/social need the policy experiment seeks to address; (b) a description of existing policies and their features related to the policy problem; (c) designing a policy intervention based on an evaluation of prior (successful) interventions in the field; (d) considering the results of the policy experiment; and (e) translating the mentioned results into (new) policies by providing policy recommendations (Figure 1).

The chapter aims to explain how the HAND:ET policy experimentation is embedded in recent policy developments concerning teacher policy on the EU level by providing basic theoretical insights and demonstrating the steps the HAND:ET policy experimentation followed with a view to contributing to the development of policy in the field.

In accomplishing its aim, the chapter consists of four parts. The first one presents the introduction describing the aims and methodological framework of the chapter. In the second part, theoretical insights into the relationship between social science experiments and policy are outlined. In part three, the HAND:ET policy experimentation is introduced, followed by the embeddedness of the experiment in the policy development cycle shown in Figure 1. Existing policies and priorities on the EU and national level(s), the policy problem(s) in the teacher profession today, the design of the HAND:ET policy experimentation in response to the perceived policy problem(s) and the possible ways of translating the HAND:ET project results into policy recommendations are thus presented. The conclusion summarises the main findings.

Methodological Framework

The chapter is qualitatively oriented and draws on theoretical and empirical evidence collected using the following research methods: (a) analysis of the relevant literature and secondary sources (examining the role of social science experiments in policymaking); (b) analysis of formal documents and legal sources on the European Union (EU) level (Council of the EU Resolutions, Conclusions, and Recommendations, European Commission Communications); (c) a review of existing statistical data (e.g., Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS 2018), Eurydice reports); and (d) an examination of the data collected through policy questionnaires. These policy questionnaires consisted of 15 open-ended questions with sub-questions in 4 subsections: data on teachers and teachers' initial and continuing education (3 questions); national, regional, local and school policies supporting teachers' SEDA competencies (8 questions); evidence-based policymaking (1 question); policy-research evidence (3 questions). National representatives (researchers and policymakers) from Austria, Croatia, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden completed the questionnaire in 2022 based on a review of formal national/regional/local/school policy documents (legislation, strategies, operational documents), formal national reports, and policy-oriented research studies. To shed light on the qualitative data presented, the chapter also uses some quantitative data gathered for evaluation of the policy experiment.

Theoretical Understanding of Policy Experimentation

Huitema et al. (2018) report that policy experimentation has become an important scientific research method and a distinct approach to governing in the last two decades. Policy experimentations are based on a rationalist approach to policymaking, arguing that political and policy decisions should be based on scientific analysis of the various issues at stake. However, several authors (e.g., Brodkin & Kaufman, 2000) exposed that policy experiments cannot be seen as a politically neutral scientific activity. They are always implemented in certain policy context(s) and hence influenced by political ideas and values. Taking the interrelatedness of policy experimentation and governance into consideration, Ansell and Bartenberger (2016, p. 64) explain that policy experimentation presents "the design and evaluation of institutional arrangements, the encouragement of social and political learning, and triggering of innovations and transitions". Huitema et al. (2018) state that the idea behind policy experiments is to consciously change the existing situation with some novelty and therefore lead to changed policy. Dewey (in Huitema et al., 2018) understands policy experiments as a governance approach which, by trying

new approaches in practice (probing, trial and error), contributes to solving public policy problems.[2] Lasswell (1951) identified three functions of policy experiments; namely, improving policy-making practices, generating scientific knowledge, and building capacity to implement novel ways of doing policies. Parsons (1995) argued that these three functions presume policy learning and the translation of the policy experiment results into policy.

Ansell and Bartenberger (2016) state that in this framework two types of policy learning are evident and important: epistemic, related to the scientific results of the experiment, and political, related to how the policy experimentation results are received by policymakers, as seen in changes in their preferences, goals and commitments. In this regard, it is crucial to understand that the utilisation of the results of a policy experiment in policies is not self-evident. The results of policy experiments are only one source of data in a complex policymaking process. Certain endeavours are thus needed to make policy experimentation results understandable, and visible to policymakers (Huitema et al., 2018). Such results need to be seen by policymakers as salient (responsive to their needs), credible (perceived as valid) and legitimate (unbiased in its emergence) (Huitema et al., 2018; McFadgen & Huitema, 2018).

In transferring the policy experimentation results into policy, not only is bilateral communication between science and policy critical but so too is ensuring that wider stakeholders acknowledge the results to achieve the change needed in the perceptions in society and the critical mass required to advocate the change. Since policy experiment results often not only require certain policy small-scale measures to be accepted but wider shifts in ideas and paradigms[3], their effect on policy is hard to measure and identify.

HAND:ET as European Policy Experimentation in the Field of Education

HAND:ET is a European policy experiment, a transnational cooperation project under Erasmus+ Key Action 3, supporting the implementation of the EU policy agendas on Education and Training. The EACEA (2019) states, that as relevant

2 In this framework, Ansell and Bartenberger (2016) distinguish "Darwinian experimentalism" in which several diverging approaches are tried out from "generative experimentation", which tries out one specific innovation. The European policy experimentations, which through a public call of the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA, 2019) selected several projects that address the identified problem (teacher professional development) can thus be denoted as Darwinian experimentalism.

3 Taking the models of knowledge utilisation into consideration, Greenberg et al. (2003) distinguish between a conceptual and a concrete influence on decision-makers.

and reliable evidence is essential for underpinning policy action, these projects should aim to support evidence-informed policy by testing theoretical assumptions in real-life situations and assessing the potential for promising measures to be implemented, replicated or scaled up. By combining strong institutional leadership, sound evidence and a clear European dimension, they should pursue sustainable systemic improvement and innovation. In cooperation with responsible public authorities, researchers interpret the policy experiment findings and provide suggestions or recommendations concerning a possible follow-up.[4]

The Existing Teacher Policies

Supporting Teachers' SEDA Competencies on the EU Level

In recent years, several policy documents have been accepted on the EU level that focussed on teachers' competencies and professional development. The Council Conclusions on European Teachers and Trainers for the Future (Council of the EU, 2020) stresses that the nature of teachers' work may lead to physical and emotional exhaustion, stress and burnout, affecting their mental and physical health. On the highest political level, the Council Resolution on a Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021–2030) (Council of the EU, 2021) establishes Enhancing competencies and motivation of the education profession as one of the five strategic goals.[5] It exposes that attention needs to be paid to the well-being of teachers, trainers and educational staff more than ever. The Council of the EU (2021) locates teacher well-being as one of 12 priority areas in the field of teachers and trainers in the period 2021–2025, referring to the need for "developing measures and establishing mechanisms to improve working conditions and to address occupational stress, in order to foster the well-being of teachers, trainers and pedagogical and education staff". Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success (2022) as a preventive measure against students leaving school early mentions support for teachers' well-being, by increasing "the attractiveness of the teaching profession, including by ensuring adequate working conditions, professional autonomy and active involvement of teachers and trainers in school management, high-quality

4 For special features of policy experimentation in education, see also Bouguen & Gurgand (2012).

5 The other four strategic goals are: Improving quality, equity, inclusion and success for all in education and training, Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality for all, Reinforcing European Higher Education, and Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training.

initial education and continuous professional development, access to support and mental health professionals and services, collaboration and peer support" (Council of the EU, 2022, p. 28).[6]

Supporting Teachers' SEDA Competencies on the National Level(s)

The review of existing policies in the countries participating in the HAND:ET project (Austria, Croatia, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden) reveals a gap as concerns the national and international comparative data of teachers' SEDA competencies and the wider field of teacher well-being. Not one of the countries systematically collects these data, with such data usually being limited to the TALIS 2018 reports (OECD 2019a, b). The same situation is seen in the field of policy-oriented research, which do not systematically monitor the impact of different (national) policies on teachers' SEDA competencies.

No clear definition of SEDA competencies can be found in the policy documents of the participating countries. These competencies are not explicitly defined in core educational legislation, albeit they are implicitly defined in educational and other sectoral policy documents. For example, they are implicitly defined in terms of health promotion in Croatia and a safe and supportive school environment in Slovenia. When mentioned, they are mainly defined in terms of supporting the development of students' SEDA competencies. Some authors (e.g., Hascher & Waber, 2021) even show the complexity of the SEDA competencies and related difficulties in establishing a single definition of SEDA competencies. Further, from the perspective of policy studies (e.g., Hogwood & Gunn, 1984), a clear statement of the goals and definitions of SEDA competencies in policy documents would make them more visible and enhance their implementation.

The teachers' perception of policy and social support has been recognised as an important factor of their own well-being (e.g., Casely-Hayford et al., 2022). In the HAND:ET project, we therefore questioned participating teachers with respect to how supported they felt they had been in developing their SEDA competencies by the national and school policies, and the initial and continuous professional development. The results point to huge differences among the participating countries concerning how participating teachers responded to the statement "The development of teachers' SEDA competencies is an important part of education policies in my country". Strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement were 87 % of teachers in Sweden, 69 % of teachers in Slovenia, 60 % in Croatia, 51 % in Portugal and 33 % in Austria (Figure 2).

6 For policy measures to improve the attractiveness of the teaching profession, see also European Commission (2013).

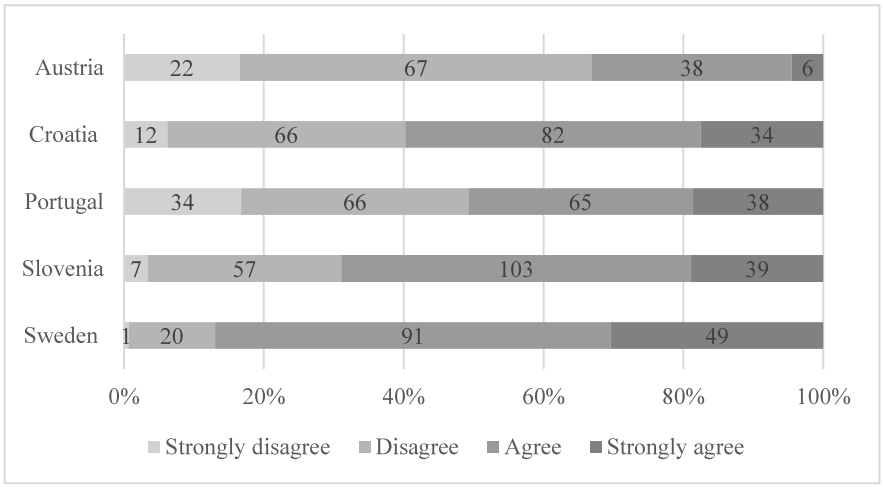

Figure 2: Teachers' views on how important part of national education policies in their countries is the development of teachers' SEDA competencies

Different policy and school-level initiatives for supporting SEDA competencies were identified in the participating countries. The existence of these measures further shapes the way the participating teachers perceive school-level support for the development of their SEDA competencies. Most teachers in the participating countries strongly agree or agree with the statement "The development of teachers' SEDA competencies is an important part of the policy of my school", ranging from 88% of teachers in Sweden, 80% of teachers in Slovenia, 69% in Croatia, 66% in Portugal and 62% in Austria (Figure 3).

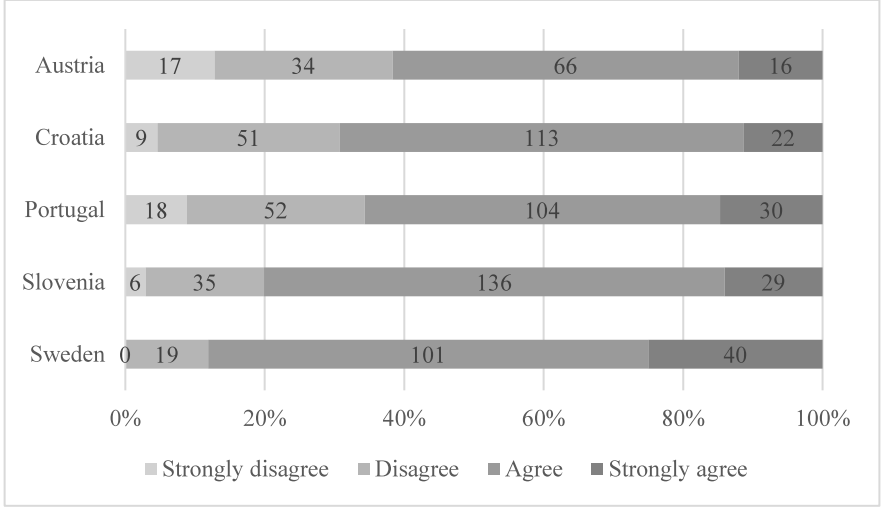

Figure 3: Teachers' views on how important part of school policies of their schools is the development of teachers' SEDA competencies

The development of SEDA competencies in *initial teacher education* in the participating countries is not systematically supported. These competencies are not explicitly defined in graduate competency profiles, the criteria for programme accreditation etc. Similar to national policy documents, in initial training programmes teachers' SEDA competencies are mostly focused on developing students' SEDA competencies. However, good practices for supporting teachers' SEDA competencies at particular faculties (e.g., elective courses etc.) can be identified. In Austria, admission procedures for teacher faculties include a computed-based aptitude assessment of emotional competencies.

The data collected in the public policy questionnaires are consistent with the ways teachers see the opportunities to develop their SEDA competencies in their initial education. In response to the statement, "I had an opportunity to develop SEDA competencies in my initial teacher education", less than half the teachers in the participating countries agree or strongly agree; namely, 47 % of teachers in Sweden, 44 % of teachers in Croatia, 29 % in Austria, 24 % in Portugal and 20 % in Slovenia (Figure 4).

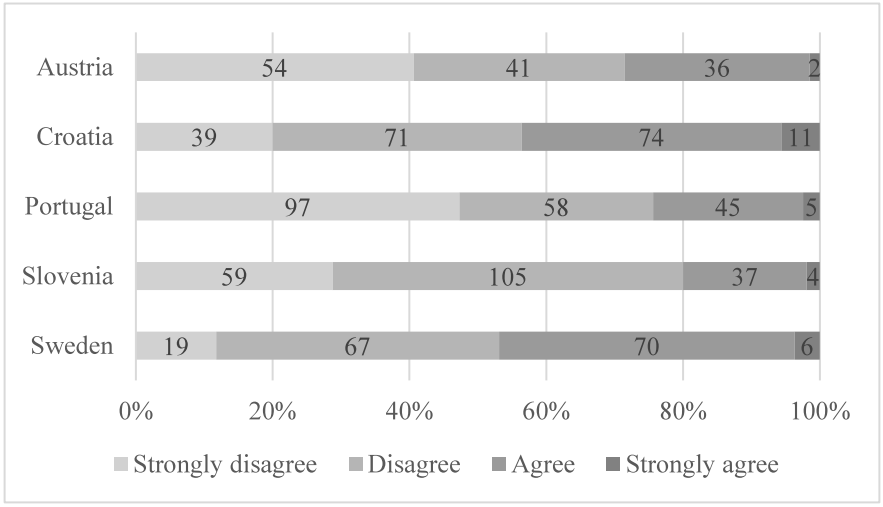

Figure 4: Teachers' views on opportunities to develop SEDA competencies in initial teacher education

In the framework of *teacher continuous professional development*, forms of more systematic support for teachers' SEDA competencies can be identified in Slovenia while examples of good practices are found in Austria and Croatia. As a support measure, Handbooks on Health Promotion and Burnout Prevention for teachers have been published in Austria. As regards continuing professional development, 86 % of teachers in Slovenia, 65 % of teachers in Austria and Croatia, 50 % in Portugal and 46 % in Sweden agree or strongly agree with the statement

"I have an opportunity to develop SEDA competencies in programmes of continuing professional development" (Figure 5).

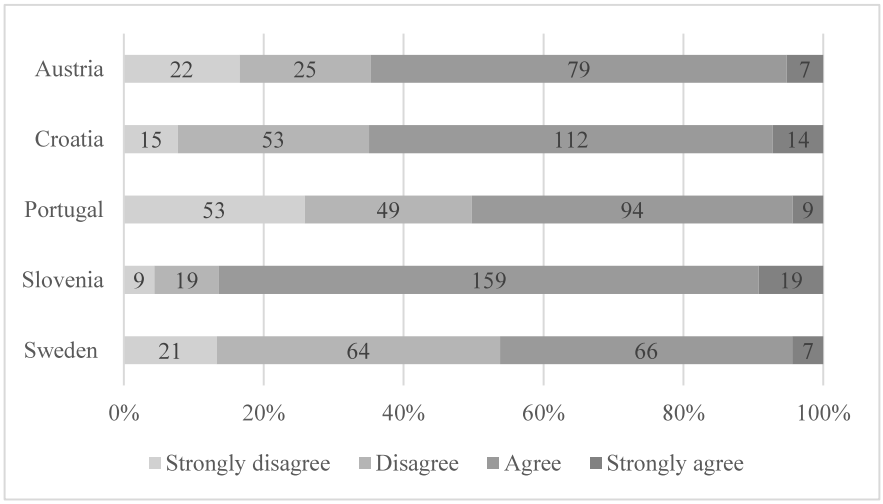

Figure 5: Teachers' views on opportunities to develop SEDA competencies in initial teacher education

The Policy Problem(s) in the Teacher Profession Today

A policy experimentation is initiated in response to an identified policy problem(s) and need(s). It should therefore be based on a rigorous investigation of need(s) to address them effectively (European Commission, 2011). As regards policy experimentation in the field of education, this need can be identified on the national or European level and set as a priority in the strategic framework of EU cooperation (EACEA, 2019, p. 4). European reports (Eurydice, 2019; European Commission, 2020) highlight the following challenges within education systems concerning teachers' careers: a shortage of teachers in certain subjects and particular geographical areas, an ageing teacher population, a shortage of students enrolling in initial teacher education, high drop-out rates from the profession and deficiencies in the area of teacher regeneration (the notion that teachers continue to develop themselves, for themselves and their pupils, and nurture their peers as a professional community). These challenges may be summarised by the recognised considerable shortage of teachers due to too few teachers being attracted to the profession and too many teachers leaving it early.

The OECD (2020) explains that this tense situation may reflect the perceived low value of the profession on one hand, and the ever more challenging

working conditions on the other (OECD, 2020). These circumstances call for new skill requirements, rapid technological development, and cultural diversity. The Council of the EU (2020) states that these continuous innovations and challenges impact not only the competencies required, but also teachers' and trainers' well-being (Council of the EU, 2020). The TALIS 2018 survey (OECD, 2019b) shows that an average of 1 out of 6 teachers in primary and secondary schools reported feeling "a lot" of stress in their work. On average across the OECD, only 9% of teachers report not experiencing stress in their profession. According to Eurydice (2021) data, in 12 education systems in the EU over 50% of teachers report a high level of stress. In the countries participating in the HAND:ET project, 87.3% of teachers in Portugal, 46.4% of teachers in Slovenia, 45.4% in Sweden, 41.9% in Austria and 31.1% in Croatia report quite a little or a lot of stress (OECD, 2019b). The OECD (2020) exposes that teachers who are stressed are more likely to want to leave the profession.[7]

Designing the HAND:ET Project as a Response to an Identified Policy Problem(s)

To address an identified policy problem, the measure to be tested in policy experiments should be well considered. The European Commission (2011) suggests it should be supported by a thorough search for examples of similar policy interventions and other supplementary evidence that the measure is likely to address the identified social need. The OECD (2021) states that in a situation of considerable teacher shortages, "there is an urgent need to better understand the well-being of teachers and its implications on the teaching and learning nexus". The HAND:ET project aimed to address the policy problems identified above as follows.

By innovatively integrating diversity awareness with social and emotional competencies, the HAND:ET system intended to equip teachers with the competencies to meet the challenges of teaching in diverse societies, preventing them from leaving the profession too early, empowering them to monitor and plan their career and supporting their own as well as their students' well-being.

SEDA competencies of school staff have demonstrated positive outcomes for teachers' well-being (Kozina, 2020), their relationships with others, e.g., students and other teachers (successful teachers' cross-disciplinary and collaborative approaches (Collie, 2017; Council of the EU, 2014)) and have a broad

7 McCallum and Price (2010) and den Brok et al. (2017) state that teacher attrition is especially salient for early career teachers, within the first 5 years in the profession. These results could be explained by the particular working conditions that novice teachers face (OECD, 2020) as well as the lack of opportunities to develop their SEDA competencies in their initial education, as indicated in the previous section of this chapter.

range of educational and social impacts (e.g., better learning and job performance, increased inclusive orientation). Teachers' professional identity and career development and their underpinning constructs – such as emotions, job satisfaction, professional commitment, autonomy and confidence – are constantly being challenged within the changing educational setting. The SEDA competencies can help teachers take greater ownership of their career, learning and development needs, and manage their professional learning and their careers more efficiently (Goleman et al., 2002; Vorhaus, 2010; Zins et al., 2007). By building on the SEDA competencies, individuals can make more appropriate career-related choices within their career management, recognise their needs better, manage their work–life balance more effectively, balance between professional autonomy and accountability better (Council of the EU, 2017), remain motivated for continuous professional development and be able to maintain their well-being and prevent burnout (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Further, diversity awareness supports teachers' capacities to meet the needs of diverse classrooms and schools and to create more inclusive classrooms.

Translating Policy Experimentation Results into Policy Recommendations

While designing the policy implications of the HAND:ET policy experiment outcomes, considerations need to be made of existing recommendations that proved (in)effective in supporting teachers' SEDA competencies. The OECD (2020) reports that some countries have already adopted some policy measures to address teacher shortages. These responses include lowering the qualification requirements to enter the profession, assigning teachers to teach in subject areas in which they are not fully qualified, increasing the number of classes allocated to teachers, and increasing class sizes. The OECD states that these measures do not prevent teacher shortages and attrition and negatively impact the quality of education. In this regard, the OECD recognised the improving of working conditions as an important way to retain and even attract teachers to the profession (OECD, 2020).

Favourable working conditions for teachers could be supported on the national and school policy level. On a system level, the institutional settings that regulate the teaching profession frame the quality of working conditions for teachers, notably in terms of working hours, job stability, earnings, the recruitment process to enter the profession, and professional development opportunities. On the school level, the quality of the relationships with the school staff, the physical learning environment, the classroom composition and the degree of work autonomy possessed by teachers are some working conditions that may improve – or hinder – teachers' well-being (OECD, 2019b, pp. 19–20).

Eurydice (2021) suggests that policies aimed at *enhancing teacher well-being* should "reinforce the role of teamwork and collaboration within schools, sup-

port teachers in developing social and interpersonal competencies, and develop teachers' sense of autonomy in their work". In their recommendations for developing teachers' social and emotional competencies as a way to contribute to educational quality, Lozano-Peña et al. (2021) propose three policy measures: (a) the evaluation of social and emotional competencies on the school and public policy levels; (b) teacher training in social and emotional competencies; and (c) the leadership of educational institutions. The European Education Policy Network on Teachers and School Leaders (2022) lists five recommendations: (a) taking the complexity and context of teachers' well-being into consideration; (b) regularly studying the status of teachers' well-being; (c) applying research and policy measures; (d) school-level support to teachers' well-being; and e) a systemic approach.

Alongside the recommendations of researchers and international organisations concerning how to support teachers' SEDA competencies and well-being, the OECD (2020) reports that some countries have already adopted national reforms to cope with the high attrition rates. For instance, the United Kingdom has developed a national strategy (the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy) to recruit teachers and retain them in the profession. The strategy also attempts to reduce teacher workload with a series of measures, including by encouraging flexible working hours. In addition, the strategy introduces an Early Career Framework, which will underpin an entitlement to a 2-year package of structured support for all early-career teachers.

Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to show that policy experiments are related to policy in several ways. Supported by theoretical insights, the chapter demonstrates that the HAND:ET policy experiment addresses the current EU strategic priorities in the field of teacher well-being and professional development, which is important and necessary in times when teacher shortages in the EU are acknowledged to be a serious policy issue. The results of the HAND:ET policy experiment indicate that teachers' SEDA competencies can be improved successfully when they are systematically supported on the whole-school level for the whole school year. The chapter reveals that the interplay of national and school-level measures is necessary for teachers' long-term professional development and longer-term inner and outer outcomes. As such, the chapter referred to several important topics that are to be, by considering in-depth the policy experiment results in discussion with respective public authorities, presented in detail in Volume II of this book.

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Contemporary Challenges in Education

Paradoxes and Illuminations

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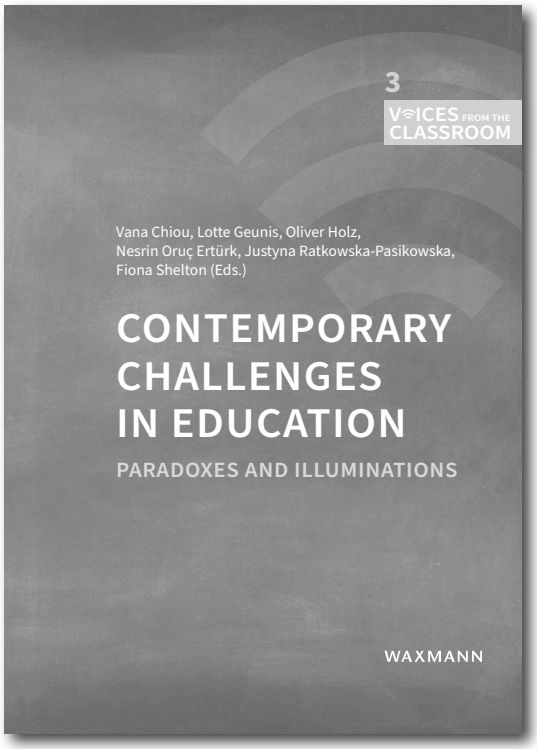

In this volume of *Voices from the Classroom*, an international team of authors explores paradoxes, shares illuminations and invites you to reflect on educational practices to enhance pedagogy, scaffold learning and keep pace with educational advancements. This collection written by students, teachers, researchers and higher education instructors discusses education across all phases of learning. It explores issues such as instructional scaffolding in kindergarten, understanding transition through children's voices, youth participation in curriculum development of sex education, delivering crisis assistance to university students and staff in times of conflict in Ukraine, using augmented reality for transformative learning, co-creating university practices with staff and students, and how inclusive practices can help meet the needs of international postgraduate students. This comprehensive and diverse collection will have wide appeal for teachers, headmasters, stakeholders in the area of education and all those working in different educational contexts.

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