

# Responding to Covid 19 Impact: Social and emotional education as a key multi-dimensional resource for inclusive holistic systems in education

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## A review of non-formal learning projects

A recent EU Commission JRC review (Downes, Carretero & Naiperala 2021) on education and training for non-cognitive skills identified and reviewed a total of 1,388 projects from EU programmes which promote non-cognitive skills, with 1058 Erasmus+ or Lifelong Learning programme projects, and 303 Youth projects, mainly in English language.

Additionally, a literature review with use of the Web of Science and ERIC search engines was carried out, It found 821 articles covering topics of social and emotional education, soft skills, personal development education, non-cognitive skills in the context of non-formal learning.

Relevant policy, scientific and technical reports not included in Web of Science search were also examined. Finally relevant projects were also sought from leading EU networks in this broad area, namely the Lifelong Learning Platform, ENSEC (European Network for Social and Emotional Competence), NESET (Network of Experts on Social Aspects of Education and Training), EAEA (European Association for the Education of Adults) and the Learning for Wellbeing Foundation.

Eventually these research activities led to the creation of the database of 154 examples of promising practices for Personal and Social Skills in non-formal learning in Europe.



## **Outdoor education brings multidimensional benefits for learning social and emotional skills**

There is strong research evidence, mainly from outside the EU, showing multidimensional benefits of outdoor education, which among others include increased social connection and leadership skills (Richmond et al 2018).

For example, children's participation in dinghy sailing confirms benefits of outdoor education in enhancing social and emotional skills, in particular in developing problem solving and communication, providing social support, and controlling emotions and personal feelings (Cotterill & Brown 2018).

Outdoor programmes can help address the problem of the negative health impacts from young people's excessive screen time (Mutz et al 2019).

Activities such as canoeing, rock-climbing and hiking could improve mental health and wellbeing including personal development and team building skills (Ibidem).

Moreover, outdoor activities such as backpacking, canoeing and kayaking could help reduce psychological stress (Chang et al 2019).

Participation in forest schools could also play a role in promotion of resilience, independence and wellbeing ((Murphy 2018).

Another study reveals that outdoor education contributed to promotion of resilience and a growth mindset (O'Brien & Lomas 2017)

Not only young people benefit from outdoor education. For older people a positive relation between their participation in microadventures close to home and individual well-being and maintenance of skills is observed (Hickman & Stokes 2019).

Outdoor education can play a role in an area based focus and strategy for education

- Including areas of high socioeconomic exclusion to foster active participation and pride in the local area
- Future leaders in the local area, activity based learning
- Area based initiatives including cooperation across schools and between schools and local community agencies

# Enrolment in music education boosts young people conscientiousness and openness

There is a widespread recognition that artistic disciplines, including music, have a positive effect on children's and adolescents' social and emotional development. For example, The German Socio-Economic Panel data brings evidence on causality between the participating in a music training outside of school and developing of personal and social skills. Based on this study, learning a musical instrument leads to higher performance in and engagement with school as well as higher conscientiousness, openness, and ambition (Hille & Schupp 2013).

The outcomes of another project highlights the clear benefits for personal and social development of participating in a music group (Ros-Morente et al 2019).

The multidimensional benefits offered by such participation as well as the ease in which such a project can be expanded and scaled up for wider contexts, combined with the universality of the appeal of music across diverse cultures, make this a clear candidate for further skill development.

## **Volunteering strengthens the development of leadership skills**

Volunteering is another component of non-formal learning whose beneficial effects on health outcomes have been well documented (Yeung, Zhang, & Kim 2017).

The participation in voluntary services is proved to be a significant predictor of better mental and physical health (Piliavin & Siegl 2007) and has positive influence on self-esteem (Thoits & Hewitt 2001) or level of happiness (Borgonovi 2008).

Volunteering may also contribute to the development of leadership skills by fostering the growth of emotional intelligence (Szasz & Bailey 2018).



And the importance of promoting leadership skills has been emphasised with regard to future roles in the workplaces. Early signals of leadership qualities during school can be valid predictors of labour market outcomes during adulthood; individuals with leadership positions in high school earn between 4 to 24% higher wages about 10 years later(Brunello & Scholter 2011).

The EU Commission is working to improve and promote volunteering among people, particularly young ones via various established programmes e.g. Erasmus+, The European Voluntary Service

## **Restorative practice by developing social and emotional skills brings positive results to programme participants**

Restorative practice is *“the science of restoring and developing social capital, social discipline, emotional well-being and civic participation through participatory learning and decision-making”* (Wachtel 2013).

The application of such practices aims to improve and repair relationships between people and communities. This strategy can be applied across a wide range of age groups from young children to adults. Restorative practice is based on observation that teaching students the ability to navigate challenging experiences and effective communication can be easily paired with development of their social and emotional skills. Learners become conscious and aware of their feelings and learn how to proactively address them (Carter 2013; Kane et al 2009; Gray & Drewery 2011; Kane et al 2008).

Restorative practice programmes offer strategies also for engaging alienated students (Wearmouth and Berryman 2012).

The restorative practice could also play a strategic role in building relational competences of teacher's who resolve conflicts and learn classroom management skills, particularly for teachers in initial education. The results of assessment of Restorative Practice (RP) Programme carried out in Tallaght, a highly vulnerable and socio-economically excluded area in Ireland (Fives et al 2013) shows that the programme participation improved social contacts and reduced conflicts by developing social and emotional skills such as empathy, perspective taking, conflict resolution, relationship and listening skills.

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