Focus on underprivileged children during international intensive programme in Lithuania

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Sustainable Collaboration

Cultural Awareness

Empowerment
Main Topics

• Underprivileged children in Lithuania
• Impact of institutionalization on child’s development
• Intensive international course „Sensory Processing Disorders“
Underprivileged children in Lithuania

A lot of families with children in Lithuania live at poverty risk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of the family*</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One adult with one and more children</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two adults with 3 and more children</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
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* According Statistic Lithuania
Children in institutions in Lithuania

Parents poverty and/or alcohol/drugs consumption are the main causes why children have to fall in state custody.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008 *</th>
<th>2017*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children in institutions</td>
<td>5603</td>
<td>2964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of institutions for children’s care</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*According Statistic Lithuania
Environmental barriers for children in institutions

1. Lack of stimulation in physical environment:
   • not enough age appropriate toys,
   • limited possibilities to play

2. Lack of support and relationships:
   • poor social-emotional interactions
   • lack of sensory – emotional stimulation (hugs, individual attention..),
   • children who live in institution get 18 % of vestibular, touch and proprioceptive stimuli comparing with children grown up in families.
Impact of institutionalization on child’s development

• Delays in physical growth, neural atrophy, and abnormal brain maturation.
• Poor social-emotional interactions play a role in attachment problems and general behavioral and mental deficits.
• Lack of sensory stimulation leads to sensory processing deficits
• Evidence indicates that infants who are placed in institutional care will suffer harm to their development if they are not moved to family-based care by the age of 6 months.

Impact of deprived sensory environment

• Longer lengths of institutionalization are associated with more atypical sensory discrimination, praxis, and sensory modulation.
• More vulnerable areas of sensory processing to deprived conditions in early childhood are vestibular-proprioceptive, tactile, visual, auditory, and praxis.
• Adopted children with lengthy periods of institutionalization may benefit from occupational therapy for early screenings of sensory processing.

International intensive programme „Sensory Processing Disorders“

• The programme was conducted by Klaipėda University (Lithuania) in close collaboration with Erasmus partners from PXL (Belgium) and Coventry (UK) universities also social partner - Klaipeda Baby Home.
• Carried out from 2014 – 2018 annually for one week (5 times already)
Study methods

• PBL approach was applied to analyze real life cases identified through practical sessions in the baby home.

A variety of study methods:

- case study,
- role play,
- group work,
- practical observation of children
- academic debates

were used to facilitate active engagement, professional and critical reasoning of the participants.
International programme „Sensory Processing Disorders“

Number of students in the programme (Total - 115)

- **PXL**
- **Coventry**
- **KU/LUHS/VU**

Year | PXL | Coventry | KU/LUHS/VU |
--- | --- | --- | --- |
2014 | 7 | 0 | 8 |
2015 | 2 | 6 | 11 |
2016 | 7 | 7 | 10 |
2017 | 12 | 8 | 10 |
2018 | 9 | 9 | 9 |
Main goals of the course

• to enhance understanding and use of ICF language (Hasselt Occupational Performance Profile)
• to acquire knowledge about the impact of Sensory processing difficulties to child’s participation
• to get insight of the impact of environmental factors on child’s development (workshops in Baby Home)
• to stimulate creativity and innovative thinking (workshops for creating an app for persons with SPD difficulties)
• to develop intercultural competencies
BENEFITS of the programme (1)

• **For foreign students** – the unique intercultural (international) experience, possibility to get vivid view of impact of environment on child’s development and participation.

• **For Lithuanian students** – international experience at their home country.

• Emerging themes regarding the value of the programme *from students* - practical experience with babies; working with students from different cultures; good balance between learning activities to stimulate engagement.
BENEFITS of the programme (2)

• **For local teachers** – empowerment by Erasmus partners to organize the first international intensive programme in Lithuania.

• The variety of active study methods used by foreign lecturers help to improve teaching competences.

• Foreign tutors valued - rich learning environment in which professional reasoning as well as intercultural thinking and competence were enhanced
BENEFITS of the programme (3)

For babies – an education of Baby home staff – another focus to the children’s development

• Staff got recommendations from the students groups how to create more sensory stimulating environment, to enhance children’s participation.

• The impact of occupational therapist was highlighted

As a result of the recommendations and discussions with staff children got possibility to be engaged in different activities.
Feedback for the staff – an example from one group – Sensory Passport

SENSORY PASSPORT MAKSIMAS
INTRODUCING MYSELF

My name is Maksimas, I'm 8 years old.
I am a boy with special sensory needs, so in this passport I will show and tell you what I need and how you can see how I feel.
I live in Baby Home from my birth.

I can't talk to you with words through my mouth, but my body language can tell you a lot about myself.

I have autism, a developmental disorder and cerebral palsy. Because of that, I like quiet things and places. I don't like a lot of people in one room (so don't take it personally!). I can't walk so I'm sitting in (wheel)chair.
SENSORY PASSPORT OF MAKSIMAS (4)
THINGS I LIKE AND DON’T LIKE

When you see me exhibiting “distressed behaviours” try using the things I like to calm me...

**Do’s**

- I like listening to soft **music** when I’m alone.
- When people want to learn, play or do something with me, I like it more when there is just **one person (like one on one)**.
- I like it when people **massage** my hands, legs and arms. Also my chin and neck loves to be massaged.
- I like to feel hands **holding and stimulating my hands** or running through my fingers.

**Don’ts**

- I don’t like **loud noises** around me. This can be noises like a lot of people talking, drilling, loud music, banging.
- If you are going to touch me, I would like to know because I don’t like **unexpected touch**. It makes me feel distressed and scared.
- Like I already told you, I don’t like **much people in one room**. Don’t take it personally, but it feels too busy and overcrowded!
- I don’t like playing with **too much toys**.
PASSPORT MAKSIMAS
WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP ME?

- When you want to play with me or you want me to learn something, I can do better work when I’m relaxed!

- Give me a more structured day schedule including time to relax before and after an important activity.

- You can help me relax by massaging my hands, arms or legs. Also making some movements with my arms can help.

- Sometimes I will slap myself or put my fingers in my mouth.

- I make a lot of movements with my hands and fingers (like pinching with my thumb and fingers, clap in my hands or grab things).

- To help me not do this, give me time to relax (like massages and music).

- Keep me away from loud sound. They make me distressed.
In conclusion

• IP helps OT students to understand the influence of the environment on participation.
• The immersive nature of the course necessitates the development of cultural competence to ensure successful outcomes for the underprivileged children.
Thank you for your attention