

Newsletter 1

October 2020



About CICADA

An acronym, a project, an idea, a partnership, a quest!

CICADA is an acronym for a European project titled “Children’s life quality: participation, recreation and play”. CICADA was launched in October 2019 and will run for 24 months. The project is funded by the European Union under the Key Action 2 of Erasmus+ and is coordinated by the University of Cyprus. The partnership of the project consists of the Commissioner for Children’s Rights (Cyprus), the University of Crete (Greece), the Center for Social Innovation (Cyprus), the Sociedade Promotora de Estabelecimentos de Ensino LDA (Portugal) and the Observatory on Violence at School-Cyprus Pedagogical Institute. The project will develop training packages for teachers augmented by an online learning platform and a mobile app.

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The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)



CICADA draws on the principles of Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which, in short, posits that children have the right to play, rest and participate in cultural and recreational activities.

Quality of Life (Whoqol Group, 1995)

An individual’s perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person’s physical health, psychological state, personal beliefs, social relationships and their relationship to salient features of their environment



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1. The CICADA Curriculum and Open Resource Toolbox

Partners developed, during the period November 2019-August 2020, the CICADA Curriculum and Open Resource Toolbox. The CICADA Curriculum includes learning objectives, content and activities that teachers, parents and other stakeholders can utilize to promote an optimum quality of life for children. The summary of the



Picture courtesy of the Commissioner for Children's Rights (Illustrator: Lida Varvarousi)

chapters is presented below. Full chapters will soon be available in English, on the website of the project (<http://www.cicada-erasmus.eu>). Selected modules will be translated in the languages of all the partners. The curriculum will be accessible online, through an asynchronous learning environment (learning platform and mobile app) which will be developed in the next phase of the project. The content collection/development, beyond text will include images, interactive multimedia, mini games' narratives, visuals, videos, eBooks and a resource bank.

Chapter 1: Children's Wellbeing and Quality of Life: Conceptual Framework and Dimensions

The chapter is divided into two parts. The first one focuses on the concepts of wellbeing and quality of life, how they are studied by academics and researchers and how they influence law and policy-making, states, and international organizations with regards to children. The main conclusion from the theoretical framework is that Children's Quality of Life composes a major issue for many people around the world, from parents and educators to activists and politicians. Various indicators are used to evaluate the issue while laws and conventions are used as tools to ensure it. However, chronic problems as well as rapid changes pose obstacles in the process to the achievement of a good Quality of Life for Children around the world. Those need to be constantly monitored and effectively addressed. The second part includes 5 lesson plans that inform teacher trainers about wellbeing and quality of life. The aim of these lessons is to explain the aspects and help educators to be able to recognize the obstacles that children face, understand the importance of ensuring a good quality of life for all the children, while examine ways to improve the situation. These can be achieved through the development of knowledge, critical thinking, and empathy.

Prepared by the Center for Social Innovation

Chapter 2: A rights-based approach to children's quality of life

Quality of life is a multi-faceted concept, translated in pragmatic terms as a continuous effort in various domains to achieve adequate levels of well-being and prosperity for all human beings. As such, the second chapter titled "a rights-based approach to children's quality of life" analyses the concept through the lens of human rights and the provisions of relevant international treaties. Chapter 2 aims to familiarise teachers with the rights-based approach in education and to enable them to apply it in their everyday practices. Thus, the Chapter is intended to empower teachers to facilitate



Picture courtesy of the Commissioner for Children's Rights
(Illustrator: Lida Varvarousi)

opportunities for improving children's quality of life through the application of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The first part of Chapter 2 contains a theoretical background, providing a thorough description of CRC and its principles and how these relate to quality of life. It aims to provide knowledge for the historical path that led to the formation of the CRC and identify its basic features as a legal tool for the application of children's rights. The second part of Chapter 2 entails five lesson plans aiming to provide teacher trainers with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to understand children's quality of life from a rights-based perspective and to become able to apply that knowledge in real case scenarios. The lesson plans aim to familiarize teacher trainers with analysing the term 'quality of children's life' in reference to the four Principles of CRC and explain the links between Articles of CRC and the quality of children's life. Additionally, the lesson plans aim to develop skills regarding the methodology of human rights education in relation to quality of life for children and strengthen the significance attributed to children's quality of life from a rights-based approach in education.

Prepared by the Office of the Commissioner for Children's Rights

Chapter 3: Active listening: A model for teachers and parents to actively listen and act upon children's concerns

Listening is an integral and essential part of the communication process, and when conducted actively, it plays an important role in effective interpersonal communication, which in turn is a perspective for successful teaching and learning. Empathy is an important element of active listening as it refers to emotionally connecting with another person through identification, compassion, understanding, feeling, and insight. Listening to someone's concerns means hearing a person with an open mind, and not particularly have a solution for a problem. Active listening skills can help educators and parents build a relationship, based on trust, sincere interest and mutual respect. Improving teachers' and parents' communication skills is also effective for the children's learning process and the effective communication with them. This work focuses on cultivating both teachers and parents' active listening and empathic communication skills to actively respond and act upon children's concerns in terms of their perceptions of quality of life. Moreover, this chapter provides a flexible framework through which teachers and parents will be trained to demonstrate such listening behaviors that will help them communicate respect and empathy with children, regarding the following main aspects: a) Learning/explanation of the meaning of active listening through identical examples in educational/family settings, b) discussion on the consequences of active listening for students' quality of life, c) presentation/proposal of communication and active listening strategies, d) presentation/proposal of ways and means/canals through which teachers

can interact with their students' parents, and e) presentation of strategies through which their students' parents could become active listeners of their children's concerns. Conclusively, methods/tools are based on interactive lessons of theory feedback, discussions/interviews, role plays and proposal of further actions to reflect on the participants' lives, interests, and values to develop empathy for their children/students and practice active listening skills.

Prepared by the University of Crete

Chapter 4: Multiple Intelligences Theory as a framework for teaching to enhance children's active participation and social engagement

Chapter 4 explains how Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory can be used as a framework for teaching to enhance children's active participation and social engagement. The aim is to provide a holistic approach to professionals working with children to equip them with the skills, knowledge and tools based on children's subjective experiences, preferred choices and ways of learning. Part A draws on the theoretical foundations of MI theory, based on the explanations given about the value of recognizing complex mechanisms of learning through nine different intelligences. It also explains how MI framework enhances curriculum instruction and assessment through promoting students' active participation and social engagement. In Part B, the proposed teacher-training aims to inspire and guide teacher-trainers on how to promote MI framework and teaching aiming enhance children's development and well-being. It involves a series of workshops aiming to illustrate the application of MI framework at schools and to equip teacher trainers with knowledge and skills based on MI theory and its application and evaluation into educational settings. The Chapter concludes with a brief summary outlining the basic principles of MI theory and its application in the learning process that allows students to gain lifelong skills, preparing them for the real-life situations as citizens in the society they live.



Prepared by Cyprus Observatory on Violence at School– Pedagogical Institute

Chapter 5: Towards a pedagogy of free time

Free time is often underrated in a society that aims at productivity. Even though resting, relaxing, playing, and even daydreaming are necessary for every human being, for children free time is quintessential. It is through play that children thrive and develop fundamental cognitive functions, soft skills and personality traits that allow them to develop to their fullest potential. Chapter 5 aims to define the basic terms of free time pedagogy and explain the value of play and leisure for the psychosocial functioning of children. It analyses the importance of free time and its significance in children development and underlines the relevance of different types of play, and its specific benefits, as well as the involvement of the community and political actors in that objective. It aims to motivate educators to embrace free time as a prerequisite for children to learn and develop, through different play activities.

This chapter is divided into two parts: the first part illustrates the theoretical framework of the pedagogy of free time while the second part compiles five workshops that teachers and teacher trainers can utilize for this purpose.

Prepared by the Sociedade Promotora de Estabelecimentos de Ensino LDA

Chapter 6: Action Research in Schools and the Community for the promotion of a high-level quality of life for children.

Empowering teachers, students and parents in a joint venture

Achieving and sustaining a high quality of life for children is an ambitious endeavor that requires synergies. This chapter discusses the necessity for establishing a rights-based approach for the promotion of Children's Quality of Life (CQL) and proposes Participatory Action Research (PAR) as the optimum approach to bring all stakeholders together (children, teachers, parents and community agents) in a joint venture towards securing CQL in schools and the surrounding community. The chapter consists of two parts. The first part outlines the theory and the rationale of PAR in a rights-based context, while the second part illustrates five workshops that teachers, as community facilitators, will use to empower participants, within and around school as well as members of the broader community towards a joint action plan to promote CQL.

Prepared by the University of Cyprus

2. Mapping Children's Quality of Life in Cyprus, Greece and Portugal

During the period November 2019-January 2020, partners collected evidence regarding children's quality of life. Using a structured process, partners reviewed research literature along with court and Ombudsman decisions spanning across the last decade. In addition, partners studied various reports periodically published by European Commission or European Parliament, OECD, World Bank, IMF and UNICEF. Such reports are often based on large scale data for many countries aiming to conclude on the most valuable implications for policymaking.



Picture courtesy of the Commissioner for Children's Rights
(Illustrator: Lida Varvarousi)

Analysis revealed a limited number of Ombudsman decisions directly related to children's quality of life whereas court decisions seemed to focus on the rights of specific groups of children, such as migrants or children with disabilities. In terms of research literature, the majority of the available studies appear to relate to the topic indirectly, focusing on education, health issues or the investigation of specific groups of students that share some common characteristics, such as students with special educational needs or immigrant students.

Partners also collected evidence from interviews and focus groups with children, illuminating the perspective of children and their families. Results varied among Cypriot, Greek and Portuguese children. In Cyprus children argued that they have to cope with a big amount of homework activities not only assigned from school but also assigned from their private lessons. These aspects are addressed as factors that make them really unhappy and don't allow them to rest enough and enjoy some of their leisure time. Therefore, when asked what they would like to change, many children



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said that they would reduce private lessons and homework. In Greece, children agreed that there is not enough free time after school. Data also revealed that students' socio-economic status affects how children spend their leisure time: children from families of higher socio-economic background allocate their free time on activities directed by their parents, whereas children from families of lower socio-economic status spend their free time as they wish. In Portugal, interviewed children agreed that they have enough time and freedom to do what they want, and they cannot comment on something that affects the quality of their life in a negative way. All interviewees said that if there is something that could make them happier, that would be parents not being divorced, working less and have more free time to spend together. Children also asked for bigger houses, less homework, less time for studying and more vacation time. Brief summaries of the interviews with children in Cyprus, Greece and Portugal are presented below. The full reports will soon be available on the website of the project (<http://www.cicada-erasmus.eu>).

Mapping Children's Quality of Life in Cyprus



Children's interview data were discussed based on the findings from the research performed by the University of Cyprus, the Observatory on Violence at School (COVS), the Commissioner for Children's Rights office (CCR) and the Center for Social Innovation (CSI). A total sample of 42 children coming from the upper primary school grades, gymnasium and lyceum were interviewed. Each authority conducted the interviews in different periods, ensuring a representative sample covering different geographic areas of Cyprus along with different

demographical characteristics (e.g. natives, refugees, migrants, different socio-economic backgrounds). The majority of the children reported that a typical day after school includes attending private courses, studying for school and some limited free time, which mostly includes playing video games and watching TV. During the weekends, children reported that they consume most of their free time on video games. Nevertheless, some children reported that they visit other family members (i.e. grandparents and cousins). Teenagers reported that they enjoy visiting friends and family, going to the shopping malls, playing and watching football, listening to music, dancing and surfing on the internet. Both younger children and teenagers argued that have to cope with a big amount of homework (from school and from private lessons) and highlighted that they feel a lot of pressure. They therefore suggested less private lessons and homework, fewer tests and more time to play and enjoy with friends and family.

Summary prepared by the University of Cyprus

Mapping Children's Quality of Life in Greece

In accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 31, Greek schemes/reports identify that children's quality of life is a multi-dimensional dynamic concept that has developed from the need to estimate the psycho-social impact of several objectives such as economic welfare, characteristics of community and environment, and health status. It seems though, that most Greek educational schemes and action plans for the children's well-being and right to rest and leisure although theoretically pedagogical correct, are in danger of being canceled once again in practice either by various political parties or the contemporary government. This is due to the fact that these plans/actions are based on responses to



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surveys that do not adequately reflect how children really feel about their life and they just allegedly report how satisfied they are expected to be. Furthermore, research evidence shows high participation of students in extracurricular activities which are highly associated with school performance and the family's socio-economical background in comparison with children from immigrant families who seem to have more free time, but not necessarily a better quality of life. Interview data for Greece are also presented here, and more specifically from Rethymno district. During January and February of 2020, the University of Crete organized three focus groups of equal proportions of boys and girls- two focus groups with upper primary students, and one focus groups with gymnasium students (6 students in each group). Those three groups had a mixed socio-economic background and were consisted of immigrants and natives (18 children in total). Also, semi-structured interviews were conducted and covered the main questions suggested in the mapping tool about how children experience/evaluate the meaning and dimensions of their quality of life in and out the school settings. Data analysis revealed that all the students agreed that there is not enough free time after school which specifically in higher classes, is perceived as an obstacle that reduces their free time in the afternoons. Not though for the weekends, when most children have more time to rest, interact with their families and friends or go for a walk. For example, for younger children, spending more time with their family and friends is more important than older ones who seem to develop increased independence from parents and tend to explore and discover their larger community of influence through the Internet. Finally, data showed that most children's quality of life is adjusted/formed on the schemes/socio-economic status of their families, as children with higher socio-economic background allocate their free time on more activities that are actually directed by their parents' attitudes and their economic potential. Lower socio-economic status students tend to spend their free time as they like.

Summary prepared by the University of Crete

Mapping Children's Quality of Life in Portugal



In Portugal, 16 children were interviewed. Generally, these children are happy with their lives. They perceive quality of life as having enough time to do what they wish and being together with their peers and families. Almost all of them state that time is not a problem. School is perceived as something they need to do, not specifically good nor bad. As for routines, during weekdays, most kids wake up early, have breakfast at home and lunch at the school canteen. After school, most of them return home or go to a study center, to do their homework and other school tasks. Some of them have extracurricular activities, mostly sports. In their spare time, children enjoy playing games, play with their pets and friends, read, spend time with their parents, watch TV after dinner, play cards and simply be on their mobile phones. They all have dinner at home and go to bed at around 10 pm. Almost all kids are unable to identify obstacles-problems towards an optimum quality of life, stating they have time and freedom to do anything they want. All interviewees said they are happy with their lives, but if there is something that could make them happier, that would be mostly more spare time to play.

Summary prepared by the Sociedade Promotora de Estabelecimentos de Ensino LDA

3. Meet the CICADA consortium

The CICADA consortium consists of 6 partners from 3 European countries: two universities, one public authority, one independent human rights institution and two research centers. Partners have a pan-European outreach in their activities and cover a wide range of expertise related to the scope and the aims of the project. The diversity within the partnership facilitates the exchange of good practices and peer learning.

University of Cyprus



The University of Cyprus (UCY) was established in 1989 and admitted its first students in 1992. Despite its brief history, the University of Cyprus has earned the respect of the international academic community and the appreciation of Cypriot society. There are 8 faculties, 22 departments and 11 research units at UCY. Research is promoted and funded in all departments for its contribution to scholarship in general and for its local and international applications. In 2008, UCY received the EFQM "Committed to Excellence" Award. UCY has a significant involvement in the implementation of European grants. The University has established cooperation with both European and Middle East universities. Opportunities for establishing affiliations with universities worldwide are being expected. The University of Cyprus has received great amounts of funding for research by national and European funding programmes during the last years. The Department of Education in particular has been a coordinator and a partner in many national and European research projects, including those that have been funded by ERASMUS+.

Commissioner for Children's Rights



The Commissioner for Children's Rights (CCR), is an independent National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) established by the Commissioner of the Rights of the Child Laws 2007 and 2014 [Laws 74(I)/2007), 44(I)/2014] and governed by the Paris Principles of the independent human rights bodies, in order to monitor the respect and protection of the rights of the child in the Republic of Cyprus. The Commissioner's mission is to protect and promote the rights of the child, to represent children and their interest at all levels, to promote public awareness and sensitivity so that children's rights in the family, at school and in the community be safeguarded, to identify and promote the views of children, to monitor legislation relating to children and to submit proposals aiming at harmonization with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to carry out public awareness campaigns and to represent children in judicial proceedings. To carry out her competences the Commissioner: meets and talks with children in multiple settings, provides information on the rights of the child through various means, cooperates with public bodies, NGOs, international bodies engaged with the protection and promotion of

the rights of the child, follows the course of the investigation of complaints by other authorities and evaluates their outcome concerning violations of children's rights cooperates with equivalent bodies and authorities of other states with regards, to issues relating to the exercise of her competences, studies complaints submitted by citizens with the aim of evaluating the existing legislation, policies, procedures and practices on whether these violate the rights of the child.

University of Crete (Greece)



The University of Crete (UOC) was founded in 1977 in two cities, Heraklio and Rethymno and is consisted of about 18,500 students. The department of Philosophy and Social Studies was established in the city of Rethymno in 1983. Its fundamental purpose is to promote the study of Philosophy and the Social Sciences both on their own right and in their interconnections, through high-level research and teaching in both academic fields. The Department consists of two Divisions: a) The Division of Philosophy, and b) The Division of Theory and Methodology of Social Sciences. The Division of Philosophy administers teaching and research in the field of Philosophy, equally promoting historical as well as systematic approaches, with a constant focus on contemporary philosophical issues and concerns. The curriculum has been designed so as to grant its students broad knowledge in the humanities and the social sciences, as well as to acquaint them with a range of different research methodologies and equip them with strong research skills. This cause is further

promoted through a lively program of research events, including seminars and colloquia throughout the academic year as well as frequent international workshops and conferences. Graduates of the Department can find employment in: a) secondary Education, b) libraries and archives, c) publishing houses and organizations, d) the media, e) the public sector, f) as teachers of Greek as a foreign language, g) as teachers/trainers in educational institutions, and h) in research centers.

Center for Social Innovation (Cyprus)



Center for Social Innovation (CSI) is a Research and Development organization, which focuses on fostering social innovation that can bring about a positive change to local, national, regional, and global contexts. CSI is working closely to address social, economic, and cultural challenges with governments, local administrative agencies, non-for-profit agencies, commercial entities, and educational institutions. We identify and address systemic challenges through evidence-based research, state of the art investigation of global, national, regional, and local solutions, and we develop solutions by taking into consideration the local ecosystem and cultural dynamics. We strive to meet the stakeholders needs and implement those solutions as we keep constant vigilance to ensure continuous feedback and adjustments. The feedback mechanisms and processes we employ allow us certainty in keeping in touch with our stakeholders and continually updating our social propositions. The CSI team is composed of open-minded, fully equipped researchers, educators, social workers, social entrepreneurs, project managers, trainers and Information Technology professionals. CSI encompasses the capability

and capacity to identify social needs, design, and implement adjusted initiatives, as well as project and provide the fertile ground for sustainable growth. Our areas of expertise are in the fields of social justice, labor market, education and e-learning, social entrepreneurship, project management, project evaluation services, product validation, and training.

**Sociedade Promotora de
Estabelecimentos de Ensino LDA
(Portugal)**



Founded in 1990, SPEL means "Society for the Promotion of School Establishments". It was constituted by a group of experienced teachers, who wanted to create schools that would not only teach the students but also assist them psychologically and socially. Therefore, they created a school for VET and they strategically located it in a region of high unemployment and social problems. In its 30 years of existence, SPEL expanded its good practices by acquiring participations in other schools located in problematic areas. These schools are now administered by a team with experience in working with youngsters and adults of difficult backgrounds and the principle-of-action is the engagement of all the school staff in providing case-to case solutions to the problems of the students.

**Observatory on School Violence- Cyprus
Pedagogical Institute**



The mission of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (C.P.I.) is to cater for the continuous training of teachers at all levels so as to assist them in their efforts for professional and personal development. The Cyprus Observatory on Violence at School (C.O.V.S.) is part of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute. It consists of 6 experts in the field of school violence. The responsibilities of C.O.V.S. are to Conduct research on school violence, disseminate Good Practices for preventing and responding to school violence, make policy on preventing and responding to school violence on a national level, empower teachers and students on preventing and responding to school violence, support schools on making their own policies for preventing and responding to school violence and collaborate with all stakeholders involved in preventing and responding to school violence. The C.O.V.S. designed, in 2017, the National Strategy for Preventing and Responding to School Violence. The National Strategy was approved by the Committee of Ministers and is currently being implemented. One of the actions included in the National Strategy is to "Develop a framework and tools to ensure that the person or the committee making a decision affecting a student is evaluating correctly the best interest of the child and giving to it primary consideration."



4. Partners meetings

There are 8 partner meetings scheduled, comprising of four face-to-face (F2F) transnational meetings and four online meetings, over the 24-month duration of the project. These will be the main forums for partner interaction, exchange of best practices and reflection on activities and results at each key stages of development.

Kick-off Meeting in Cyprus

The Kick off meeting of the CICADA project took place on 16 and 17 December 2019, at the Center for Social Innovation-CSI in Nicosia, Cyprus. During the meeting the research, quality assurance, valorisation and technology frameworks were established for successful project implementation. This meeting also ensured that all partners clearly understood their role and function in the project and that the reporting and recording responsibilities were outlined and agreed. Partners also discussed the establishment of stakeholder forums in each partner country to support development work at a local level. A thank you to all the partners who contributed to making the meeting a success and to the CSI for the warm welcome.



Second meeting-Online

The second partners' meeting took place on September 16, 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting took place online, instead of the programmed face-to-face meeting in Crete. Despite the difficulties, all partners worked hard and made the best out of a difficult situation. The consortium concluded the mapping of Children's Quality of life in Cyprus, Greece and Portugal and overviewed the production of the chapters, in English, of

the CICADA Curriculum and Open Resource Toolbox. Partners also discussed the next steps about the Digital Learning Environment, which will support the delivery of all online learning components. During the meeting, partners set in motion the development of the Training Adaptation and Policy Package. The Training and Policy Adaptation Guide will be developed in the form of an Interactive eBook (including multimedia content and visuals) and will provide specific guidelines to the project's stakeholders, multipliers and policy makers.





The best way to make children good is to make them happy.

Oscar Wilde



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