

***Papilio - Preventing Behavioural Disorders
and Promoting Social-Emotional Competence
in Preschool Children in Germany***

by

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Papilio - Preventing Behavioural Disorders and Promoting Social-Emotional Competence in Preschool Children in Germany

Papilio (Mayer, Heim, & Scheithauer, 2007a, b; www.papilio.de) is a developmentally focused preventive intervention programme for preventing early-onset behavioural disorders (e.g. conduct disorder) and enhancing social-emotional competence in preschoolers (aged 3 to 7 years). This main prevention goal is pursued

- (a) by reducing the impact of important risk factors for negative development (especially children's behavioural problems, e.g. aggressive behaviour, social withdrawal),
- (b) by fostering those factors that are believed to protect children from maladaptation and to enhance their resilience, and
- (c) by helping children to complete the developmental tasks that are relevant at preschool age (e.g. emotional competence).

Preschool teachers are trained in the implementation of the intervention programme in the classroom. Teachers are also taught classroom management strategies to improve their interaction and communication with the children. The Papilio programme was developed as a universal classroom based intervention programme which provides preschool teachers with the structure and materials to address preschool children's emotional and behavioural problems and promote the children's prosocial skills development. The programme includes:

- (a) a classroom-component which is designed to enhance children's social skills as well as emotional competence and to reduce behaviour problems. In the child-focused intervention, preschool teachers regularly implement three educational procedures that are aimed at promoting children's social-emotional competence, group-oriented and prosocial behaviour, and integration into their peer group (see below). Those components are designed to become part of the daily and weekly routine within the classes long term;
- (b) a preschool teacher component which emphasizes positive reinforcement, appropriate use of negative consequences, clear communication and expectations, and strengthening of adult-child relations to support preschool teachers in their classroom management skills, and in their ability to interact and communicate positively with children (see below).

Child-Focused Intervention Components

“Paula and the chest kobolds”. Within an interactive story, divided into five learning units and presented within the group context, a child character named Paula is introduced to the children during the first lesson. Paula then gradually brings in four kobolds (kobold = small, dwarf-like house or natural spirits especially in German mythology, s. figure 1), each representing one of the basic emotions sadness, anger, fear, and happiness in the following lessons, each lasting about an hour.

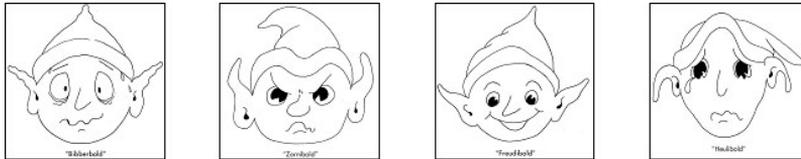


Figure 1: The four chest kobolds, representing the four basic emotions fear, anger, happiness, and sadness.

In each unit, after listening to the part of the story devoted to the corresponding emotion on CD, the children are asked some questions, for example, how they feel when they are sad, in which situations they feel sad, how they express both verbally and with gestures that they are sad, what they do to make themselves feel better, how they recognize that another person is sad and how they can help the other person to feel better. In this way, the children learn how to identify and express basic emotions by interpreting gestures, facial expressions and bodily reactions, and how to control and to communicate those emotions. Emotion related materials support the identification of emotions (e.g. pictures of the kobold’s faces, a CD with recordings of the kobold’s voices, songs referring to feelings, and a box in which the children can leave messages and presents for the kobolds). Furthermore dialogues about the children’s present feelings take place regularly (e.g. every morning). Pictures of the kobolds are permanently fixed on a wall in the classroom, and each child can pin his photograph under the picture of the kobold corresponding to the child’s present emotional state. This intervention component is aimed at enhancing social-emotional competence, by fostering the identification, communication and regulation of emotions. Thereby empathy is strengthened and helpful, prosocial behaviour is enhanced. We assume that social-emotional competencies result in prosocial behaviour (cf. Katz & McClellan, 1997).

“Toys-go-on-holiday-day”. Once a week, the toys, that are usually available in the classroom, are put away, and the children must think of joint and interactive activities (e.g. group and role-playing games). Teachers may stimulate the children’s creativity by offering different kinds of objects (e.g. clothes and leaves) and materials (e.g. tins and plastic bottles). By observing the class on “toys-go-on-holiday-day”, the teachers can detect and support children who have difficulties in becoming engaged in a group activity or in making contact with other children (e.g. shy children and children who

are rejected by their peers). This procedure is mainly aimed at promoting positive interactions and new relationships between the children, the children's integration into their peer group and their problem solving abilities.

“Mine-yoursyours-ours-game”. This intervention component is an adaptation of the “Good Behaviour Game” (GBG; Barrish, Saunders, & Wolf, 1969; cf. Embry, 2002) and is based on principles of learning theory. Within different activities, children must follow a social or group rule that they have agreed upon previously (e.g. “we speak to each other quietly” or “we remain sitting while we eat”). They are divided into small teams, each of which can win a group reward if the members have followed the rule during the activity for a specified time. The game can be made more complex by prolonging its duration (e.g. from 5 to, at most, 15 minutes) or by delaying the reward (e.g. at the end of the week instead of using an immediate reward). The winning team may choose the reward for the whole class (e.g. selecting a book that the teacher will read to the class). Thus positive behaviour e.g. following the rule is rewarded (unlike GBG, which rewards the absence of negative behaviour), while negative behaviour (e.g. infringing the rule) is not punished directly. The game is played regularly, once or twice a week. This procedure is aimed at promoting both children's group-orientated, prosocial and their concentrated, task-oriented behaviour, and at reducing impulsive, disruptive or deviant behaviour, as they are encouraged to propose rules for the whole group and to regulate their own behaviour according to the group rules. Additionally, this procedure helps children to concentrate their attention on the activity, thereby enhancing their task-orientated behaviour. Especially rejected or socially withdrawn children may improve peer acceptance and generate positive associations with the whole group.

Teacher-Focused Intervention and Implementation Structure

Preschool teachers play the central key role; they will be qualified through certified trainers to implement Papilio in the kindergartens and to communicate its contents to parents. The training consists of a 5-day “basic seminar”, a 2-day “advanced seminar” and supervisions (group counseling). In Germany, all classes are usually parented by two teachers. Preschool teachers are provided with information about topics relevant to the programme's goals, like the early prevention of behavioural problems, the principles underlying behaviour regulation, social interaction and interpersonal communication, as well as information about topics related to child development. In addition, teachers are trained in principles of learning theory to strengthen their classroom management skills: the effective use of clear commands, warnings and reminders; the use of praise to reinforce children's positive behaviour; and the use of limit setting, loss of privileges (e.g. the teacher's attention), and time out to handle misbehaviour. According to reinforcement theory (Dishion & Patterson, 2006), antisocial behaviour, like aggression, is learned and practiced within the child's social environment. Relationships and interactions with peers, teachers, parents etc. provide

children with opportunities to learn and practice prosocial but also antisocial behaviour. The teacher-focused intervention aims at improving the quality of the interaction and communication between the teachers and the children, and at strengthening the teachers' educational competence.

To assure the integrity of the intervention, teachers receive standardized materials comprising a manual detailing the programme content (Mayer et al., 2007a), a manual presenting concrete instructions for implementing the intervention procedures (Mayer et al., 2007b), and additional materials for the child-focused intervention. During the intervention, the teachers are observed implementing the procedures at least once by one of the programme trainers. On those occasions, trainers do not interact with the children themselves in order to account for possible intervening effects. Further supervision meetings of teacher groups with the trainers take place regularly. Consultation focuses on programme implementation to guide the teachers in administering the classroom-components correctly and fitting the needs of the specific classroom. In addition, the teachers are provided with documentation forms that they are asked to fill in, and to provide records of the implementation progress and any difficulties or deviations from the manual (for the child-focused intervention components and the teacher-focused intervention [self- and external monitoring]). Finally the teachers have to hand in a 4-week-documentation for their certification. The implementation process is summarized in Figure 2.

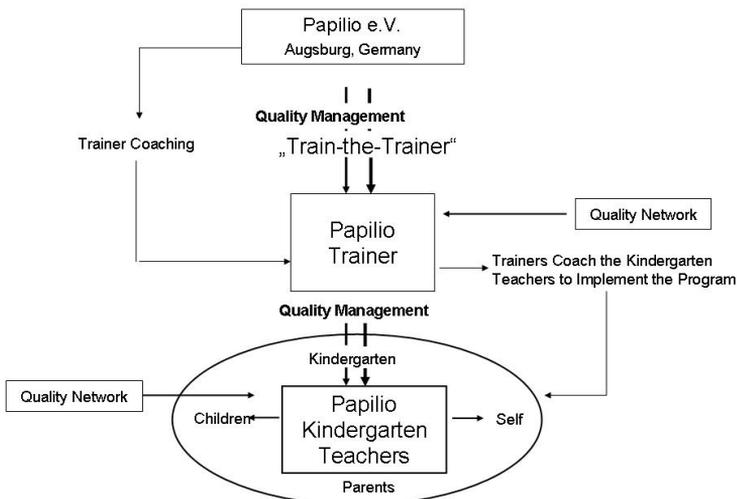


Figure 2: Implementation process.

Parent-Focused Intervention

The parent intervention component consists of regular sessions at the preschool centre in which teachers introduce parents to the educational procedures of child-focused interventions and aims at supporting parents in their educational skills, thus promoting positive changes in children's behaviour at home after being implemented.

Evaluation

The effectiveness of the programme was evaluated by means of a randomized controlled trial with three assessment phases and a sample of 3- to 6-year-olds ($n = 645$) receiving preschool education in Germany (e.g. Scheithauer, Bondü, & Mayer, 2008; Scheithauer, Bondü, Niebank, & Mayer, 2007). This trial is part of the Augsburg Longitudinal Evaluation Study of the Programme Papilio (ALEPP).

In comparison to the control group, children in the intervention group showed a greater decrease in their overall problem behaviour, a greater increase in prosocial behaviour and better social-emotional skills as rated by their teachers. However, the parent ratings of children's behaviour and skills did not provide evidence for the intervention effects. The positive changes were observed not only 4 months after the beginning of programme implementation (second assessment), but also at the end of the eight to nine month intervention period (posttreatment), as indicated by the significant better scores obtained by the intervention group children on those measures at both assessment phases in comparison to the control group children. In addition, a similar superiority of the intervention group over the control group was found posttreatment in terms of teacher-rated social-emotional competence also when controlled for their prosocial behaviour at baseline especially considering the children's skills at solving conflicts appropriately. These positive changes were observed not only 4 months after the beginning of the programme implementation, but also at the end of the 1-year intervention period. Finally, Papilio kindergarten teachers reported less stress, higher self efficacy, and demonstrated higher job satisfaction. These results provide some preliminary support for the effectiveness of the programme on children's social skills and behaviour problems.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, Papilio constitutes a comprehensive prevention programme for preschool children that can be used to reduce the impact of early risk factors for conduct disorders and to enhance protective factors, as indicated by the moderate effects found on reducing child behavioural problems, and on fostering prosocial behaviour and conflict-solving skills. A particular strength of the programme is the prominent role of preschool teachers as primary preventive service providers, as they implement the child-focused intervention procedures in their classrooms, introduce parents to the procedures and support them in their educational skills. In this way, the programme can also contribute to establishing a strong relationship between the preschool centre

and the families, and can help to extend the improvements in child behaviour obtained at school to the family setting. In addition, teachers are also supported in their classroom management skills and in establishing a positive relationship with the children. In this way, Papilio can contribute to fostering preschool teachers' educational competencies and to enhancing the quality of the services provided by the preschool centre. For all these reasons, Papilio is an intervention programme that is not only useful for prevention purposes, but is also suitable for attaining the goals of public policy on preschool education in Germany. In this sense, meanwhile (in January 2010) about 3,100 preschool teachers in 10 of the German Federal States already have participated in the training courses and the programme has already received about 56,000 preschool children and their parents.

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