

Developing support methodologies for the social integration of children with autism spectrum disorder and their families

HAS-ELTE ‘Autism in Education’ Research Group (MASZK)

RESEARCH PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1 September 2018 – 31 August 2020

(A translation of the corresponding document in Hungarian, with minor adjustments in format.)

28 October 2018

I) Research plan / work plan for the academic year 2018/19

Our research plan for the academic year 2018/19 takes the initial 2016-2020 work plan as its basis. Data collection phases both in our quantitative and qualitative studies have been completed (see the accompanying document *Accomplishment Report*), as well as data recording and pre-processing. In the coming two academic years (and, expectedly, for a longer period), our major tasks within these studies are running more detailed analyses and preparing publications. Therefore, in the table below, we present our tasks related to the third major element of our research-and-development programme, the ‘Star-bus’ educational intervention programme. This is the central element of our research activities, aimed at enhancing school inclusion.

time period	research activity
1 Sept 2018 - 30 Sept 2018	Submission of the application for research ethical approval. Amendments on the collection of activities (of the intervention programme).

time period	research activity
1 Oct 2018 - 31 Dec 2018	After receiving the research ethical approval: recruiting schools; gaining consents from schools, teachers, parents, establishing cooperation with all partners. Further development of other elements of the intervention package (elaboration of teacher manual, teacher training methods and materials, developing tools and illustration image set). Establishing the complete teacher team. Detailed development of work protocol, including measurements within the evaluation study.
1 Jan 2019 - 15 Feb 2019	Short trainings for all teacher staff members in all schools. Detailed trainings for test class teachers, in Budapest. <i>'Pre-intervention' measurements</i> (in 10 test and 10 control schools, in 2 nd / 3 rd / 4 th grade classes with a pupil with autism integrated; questionnaires and interviews with pupils, parents, teachers).
1 Feb 2019 - 31 May 2019	Implementing the 'Star-bus' method in the test schools (intervention). Continuous data recording, pre-processing and supervision.
1 May 2019 - 15 June 2019	<i>'Post-intervention' measurements</i> (again, in 10 test and 10 control schools, in 2 nd / 3 rd / 4 th grade classes with a pupil with autism integrated; questionnaires and interviews with pupils, parents, teachers)
15 June 2019 - 31 Aug 2019	Data recording, first analyses, preparations for publications.

Main hypotheses of the 'Star-bus' validation study:

- 1) In classes receiving the intervention supporting inclusion (test classes), the well-being of the pupils with autism increases significantly (also as compared to control classes).
- 2) In test classes, the neurotypical peers' attitudes towards autism and knowledge of autism improve significantly (also as compared to control classes).
- 3) In those test classes where bullying the pupil with autism occurred before the intervention, significant positive change is expected on the victimisation scale.
- 4) The position of the pupil with autism within the community network of the class ('socio-metric status') improves in the test classes.
- 5) The interactions of the pupils with autism towards others show significant increase in occurrence/duration, in the test classes.
- 6) Teachers working in test classes show significant increase in their attitudes towards autism and knowledge of autism (also as compared to control classes).

Tools and methods:

- Questionnaires and interviews will be administered with all pupils of the 20 classes participating the validation study. These will take place in maximum 2+2 teaching classes (2 pre-intervention, 2 post-intervention). The most important questionnaires/interviews to be administered:
 - socio-metrics by the SMETRY innovative digital tool (Horváth, Szekeres, 2016);

- the CATCH scale on attitudes towards autism (Rosenbaum, Armstrong, & King, 1987);
- knowledge about autism;
- integration from the point of view of the pupil with autism;
- the 'Aggression and victimisation scale' (Gerevich, Bácskai, 2012) to collect data on abuse;
- interviews for collecting detailed information, partly on the quality and quantity of social interactions.

II) Research plan / work plan outline for the academic year 2019/20; plan of publication and dissemination

In the fourth and final academic year of our present research-and-development programme, we intend to focus on the publication, wider dissemination and social expedience aspects of all the three of our main research activities (studies), including the promotion of the use of the methodologies developed in the programme. (This is in line with the initial work plan.) Accordingly, we do not plan any novel data collecting in the 2019/2020 academic year.

As the main outcome of our programme, we publish our 'Star-bus' educational methodology for enhancing inclusion and make it available in digital format for Hungarian public education and other relevant service-providing institutions. Parallel to this, we compile and publish an easy-to-understand information booklet (cca. 20-25 pages) on our results in quality of life and its relationships with educational and other services. We intend to create it so that it will be informative for the wider public and will be able to strengthen advocacy and to help decision-making which is susceptible to evidence.

We plan to disseminate our results at the following conferences in the 2019/20 academic year:

- National Conference in Education Research (ONK) (we have a symposium accepted for the 2018 conference; in 2019, we intend to submit one together with our researching teacher colleagues);
- Annual Scientific Meeting of the Hungarian Psychological Society (2019);
- National Professional Conference of the Association of the Hungarian Special Needs Education Teachers (2019);
- 12th Autism-Europe International Congress (A new dynamic for change and inclusion) (2019);
- International Meeting for Autism Research (IMFAR 2020);
- International Conference on Inclusive and Special Education.

Similarly to previous stages of our work, we plan to have various public appearances to disseminate our research results (e.g., at various fora for public education, events of the Hungarian Autistic Society, in the LINK Magazine of the Autism-Europe, etc.). We strongly

intend to publish our results in peer-reviewed journals of education, health sciences, special education, and autism.

We intend to enhance further our international connections and cooperation, especially with the Autism Centre for Education and Research at the School of Education of the University of Birmingham (Prof. Karen Guldborg), and the Co-operative Research Centre for Autism and the University of New South Wales, Australia (Prof. Valsamma Eapen).

Several more BA/MA theses and Scientific Students' Association papers, closely linked to our research, are expected for the 2018-2020 period. See at our website, at <http://maszk.elte.hu/index.php/projektek/szinergikus-projektek/> (in Hungarian).

III) Group development plans (personal developments and changes in members)

According to our current agenda, 2 PhD dissertations by our group members will be submitted by the end of our current research programme (Ágnes Havasi in 2019, Zsófia Borsos in 2020). From 2018/2019, Dorottya Fazekas is going to join the research group as a PhD student, and is going to take part actively in the research activities of the forthcoming two years.

In the academic year of 2017/18, Anett Horhi, an MA student member of our research group has won a grant within the New National Excellence Programme. She worked in our quantitative quality of life study, and successfully completed her work within the excellence scheme. In 2018, she became the professional lead (coordinator) in our new project with the Hungarian Autistic Society, the *Digital Autonomy Support in Autism*.

Vivien Németh (currently an MA student) has worked as a research assistant in our qualitative quality of life study. She intends to apply to a PhD programme in the spring of 2019. Endre Horváth, who has also been a research assistant at us, plans to do so, too.

As described in the *Accomplishment Report*, too, our researching teacher network will, expectedly, expand further, as well as we'll have novel student and advocacy contributors (see *Appendices* no. 4 and 5 for the Hungarian versions of this document, in Hungarian, too).

Dr Krisztina Stefanik, one of our lead researchers, plans to submit her habilitation thesis based on the 'Star-bus' research-and-development project.

Dr Márta Vargáné Molnár, another lead researcher of ours and also the vice group lead, has been promoted to senior research fellow recently, and plans to undertake PhD supervision role in connection to our research.

Dr Miklos Gyori, lead researcher and group lead, has been offered a promotion to a professor rank in the coming two years.

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