

[DOI: 10.20472/IAC.2015.018.107](https://doi.org/10.20472/IAC.2015.018.107)

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DEVELOPMENTAL FEARS, FRUSTRATIONS AND FANTASIES IN CHILDREN'S FANTASY NOVELS PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATIONAL LIFE SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAMS

Abstract:

Contemporary education programs for primary and secondary school education need to provide pupils with the opportunity to develop key competences and skills, and to become more relevant and tailored to the needs of children and their development. Life skills training programs represent relatively heterogeneous set of programs addressing variety of issues such as decision making, problem solving, creative and critical thinking, effective communication, intrapersonal relationship skills, self-awareness, empathy and coping with emotions and stress. As defined by the World Health Organization they fall under the category of psycho-social skills that are distinctly different from other types of skills such as perceptual/motor skills, livelihood or money management and entrepreneurial skills, although these skills can be complementary to life skills education.

Contrary to the obvious relevance of the life skills based education, methods for life skills development are not fully integrated in education programs, especially in some Central and Eastern - European countries. In addition to presenting current developments of the life skills program implementation in Croatia, this article will also present relatively novel approach to integration of life skills training in standard primary and secondary school programs. This approach relies on the use of children's fantasy novels in literature classes to target specific developmental fears, frustrations and fantasies. It presents pupils with opportunity to evocate, become aware of and work out different issues specifically related to coping with problems such as normative developmental fears and frustrations and their expressions in fantasies leading to conscious resolutions that can improve adaptive coping patterns, increase self-awareness, improve communication and relationships with others and inspire creativity in literary expressions. With methods relatively similar to bibliotherapy, this specific, methodical approach to using children's fantasy literature can archive a large portion of life skills training goals right within the framework of existing literature and literacy education programs. Analysis of the selected children fantasy literature texts that use developmental fears, frustrations and their resolution through fantasies will be presented, discussed and evaluated, opening a venue for novel methodical approaches to life skills development in primary and secondary education.

Keywords:

life skills training; education; fears; frustrations; fantasy novels; bibliotherapy

JEL Classification: I00, I20, I29