

Navigating ADHD in Education: Insights from Parents and Teachers

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As part of an Erasmus+ strategic partnership comprising six European institutions – National Center for Scientific Research Demokritos, in Greece, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, in Poland, ADHD Cyprus, in Cyprus, Regional Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education of Rhodes, in Greece, A & A Emphasys Interactive Solutions Ltd, in Cyprus, and Agrupamento de Escolas José Estêvão, in Portugal –, the KIDSWELL project was developed to address the multifaceted challenges faced by children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Among its key initiatives, the consortium conducted focus groups with parents and educators to gather qualitative data that would inform the project's objectives—namely, the development of a Reference Framework for essential competencies in the growth and education of children with ADHD, and the design of a targeted training programme for both caregivers and teaching professionals.

This article offers a synthesized account of the findings derived from focus group discussions, based on a comparative analysis conducted across the national contexts of each participating partner institution. The results reflect diverse yet converging perspectives from parents

and educators, contributing to a broader understanding of ADHD-related challenges and informing the development of inclusive educational strategies.

Being ADHD, a neurodevelopmental condition characterized by persistent patterns of inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity that can significantly impact a child's academic, emotional, and social development, it is a topic that concerns society at large, particularly those who are educators and caregivers. Children with ADHD often struggle with executive functions such as planning, emotional regulation, and task completion, which may lead to frustration, low self-esteem, and difficulty maintaining peer relationships. However, with structured support, positive reinforcement, and inclusive educational strategies, many children with ADHD can thrive and demonstrate remarkable creativity, focus, and resilience in environments that recognize and adapt to their unique needs.

Nonetheless, ADHD continues to pose complex challenges in educational settings, affecting not only children's academic performance but also their emotional and social development. A recent focus group involving parents and

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teachers provided a rich comparative perspective on the lived experiences of those supporting children with ADHD. Their accounts reveal overlapping concerns and complementary strategies, painting a nuanced picture of the realities faced in classrooms and homes.

Emotional Regulation and Personal Competences

Parents consistently emphasized the emotional intensity their children experience. Many described amplified reactions to rejection, frustration, and disappointment—sometimes escalating to aggression or panic attacks. Teachers echoed these observations, noting frequent emotional outbursts, impulsivity, and difficulty with frustration tolerance. Both groups agreed that these behaviours stem from challenges in executive functioning.

To counter these difficulties, teachers stressed the importance of building trust and using emotionally supportive strategies. Reward systems that recognize effort—not just outcomes—were highlighted as essential tools for boosting self-esteem and motivation. Parents, meanwhile, reported success with structured activities like karate or scouting, which help children develop resilience and emotional stability.

Social Competencies and Peer Relationships

Social integration emerged as a shared concern. Parents noted that children with ADHD often struggle to interpret social cues and maintain friendships, though many thrive in structured group settings. Teachers observed similar patterns, with added emphasis on the role of undiagnosed comorbidities such as

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in complicating social interactions.

Educators employ a variety of strategies to foster inclusion, including role-play, peer mentoring, and therapeutic tools like “Zones of Regulation.” Structured group work and modelling prosocial behaviour were seen as effective in promoting empathy and reducing impulsive interactions. Parents also found value in extracurricular activities like dance and robotics, which offer low-pressure environments for social growth.

Learning Competencies and Academic Engagement

Academic challenges were a central theme. Parents reported difficulties with sustained attention, task completion, and organization—especially around homework. Teachers observed similar issues in the classroom, noting that students with ADHD often struggle to follow instructions, stay focused during lectures, and complete lengthy assignments.

To address these challenges, educators use gamified platforms, visual aids, and movement breaks to maintain engagement. Individualized feedback and curriculum adaptation were considered vital, along with collaboration with specialists. Parents also highlighted the role of technology—such as interactive apps and digital games—in enhancing learning and concentration.

Shared Strategies and Future Needs

Both parents and teachers underscored the importance of positive reinforcement, structured routines, and emotionally sensitive feedback. Teachers emphasized the need for discreet feedback to avoid embarrassment, while parents advocated for drawing parallels

with adult experiences to build understanding.

Despite their efforts, many educators expressed a need for more specialized training to better support students with ADHD. Parents, too, called for increased psychological support and broader awareness of ADHD's impact on emotional and social development.

This focus group revealed a shared commitment to nurturing children with ADHD through empathy, structure, and innovation. While the challenges are significant, the collaborative spirit between families and educators offers a hopeful path forward—one that prioritizes inclusion, emotional well-being, and personalized learning.