Materials and methods to support children’s social-emotional development

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Due to family and societal factors and factors related to an individual child, there is considerable variance in social-emotional skills among typically developing children. Additionally, the prevalence of children’s diagnosed difficulties in attention, communication and learning is relatively high, and social-emotional skills are known to be intertwined with linguistic and attention abilities in many ways. Consequently, there is a burning need for good materials and effective programmes and practices in helping children to improve their skills in emotion recognition, self-awareness, social awareness, self-management and relationship skills, and in responsible decision making.

Especially during the recent years, our research-based knowledge has notably increased about the effects of children’s social-emotional challenges on their well-being, educational attainments and also on success later in life. This has, from its part, increased the awareness on children’s needs, and it has also led to development of many kinds of materials and programmes to support children’s social and emotional development.

In this symposium, the first presentation introduces the summary of research on children’s social-emotional development and support provided to it conducted in the Nordic countries during the last five years. Overcast will also be presented regarding a recent national review on contemporary use of different social and emotional learning programmes, materials and everyday practices in supporting children’s development in Finnish day care centres.

The second presentation of the symposium highlights the features of children’s interaction in pair play situations when they were playing The Emotion Detectives Game (http://tunneetsivat3.oph.oodles.fi/), a Finnish freeware developed to support social-emotional development and emotion recognition. Gamification is one option to conceive educational and support materials for children. This study produces knowledge about the different interactional features and play types identified in children’s pair play, as well as the usability of the ED game as an intervention tool.

The third presentation discusses the Papilio programme developed in Germany to support social-emotional development of 3- to 7-year-old children and to prevent problems in self-management skills. This presentation focuses on the effectiveness of an interactive story and material called ”Paula and the pixies in a box” in improving children’s emotion recognition and self-management skills.

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