Children’s perspective in ECEC pedagogical documents

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ABSTRACT

Pedagogical documentation is often presented as a practical tool to enhance children’s involvement in early childhood education and care (ECEC). Also the Finnish core curriculum for ECEC emphasizes the participation of children in planning of their support and compiling of pedagogical documents irrespective of special educational needs (SEN). However, previous research has shown that children’s perspective is often left aside when pedagogical documents are drafted. In addition, when children have had a say, the documented involvement of children with SEN is found to be different compared to children without SEN.

In our research, we are interested in how children’s perspective is expressed and used in the documents. The study is based on the linguistic analysis of pedagogical documents (N = 143) of 29 children with SEN in ECEC. The data was collected from four Finnish municipalities in pre-school year 2015 – 2016. The data collection followed the ethical rules and principles of social scientific investigation.

In the analysis, all the sections of the data that included referring to child’s perspective, saying or other forms of involvement were investigated. This contained both direct and indirect references as well as other mentions reflecting child’s viewpoint. In the first stage of the analysis the concept of intertextuality was applied to investigate the interconnection between children’s and professional perspectives in the documents. Then, the concept of linguistic function was applied to study how the children’s voice was used and what kinds of purposes it served in the text.

The findings indicate the dominance of professional perspective in pedagogical documents, which is in line with the previous research results. The conventions of including child’s perspective into pedagogical documents as well as the ways of utilizing it are discussed.

Keywords: child perspective, pedagogical documentation, disability, early childhood education and care (ECEC), special educational needs (SEN)