Support provided to children’s social-emotional development – Recent Nordic research and programmes and practices applied in Finnish day care centres

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Practices used in supporting children’s development need not to be only experience-based but also research- and evidence-based. There is no good overall picture on what methods and materials are currently used in early education to support children’s social and emotional development. That view is important when considering the need to develop new methods, for education purposes in both basic and continuing education, and for spreading information to the field on the support resources available.

This presentation describes the results of a survey made in 2017 for Finnish National Agency for Education. The survey report (Support provided to the children’s social-emotional skills in early education. A survey) is available on-line at: http://oph.fi/julkaisut/2017/lasten,osioemotiaalanaitojen,aiotjen,ukeminen,arhaiskasvatuksessa

Firstly, results are summarized on recent Nordic research about children’s social and emotional competencies and how they are supported in early childhood education. References of 240 peer-reviewed research articles published during the five last years can be found as an attachment of the on-line report. Additionally, references of 123 Swedish and Finnish MA theses or theses prepared at Universities of Applied Sciences can also be found as a separate attachment of the survey report. Nordic researchers were also asked about the possible gaps they considered to exist in research. Information gathered on the basis of their views and on the published research reports helps to identify gaps in the current research base.

As a part of the same survey, it was also explored what kind of social and emotional learning programmes, materials and everyday practices are currently used in supporting children’s development in Finnish day care centres. Based on information given by 94 day care managers we were able to get an overview on materials and practices used, how systematically they were used, how big share of the personnel uses them and how useful they had been perceived to be in supporting children’s social-emotional development. Reference information and, for instance, web addresses of a large number of programmes and materials are attached in the survey report.

The results of the survey call for more education on the existing resources and intervention studies on the effectiveness of support methods.

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