Promoting children’s social-emotional competence through "Paula and the pixies in the box” interactive story and materials of Papilio programme

*Merja Koivula, Marja-Leena Laakso

University of Jyväskylä, Finland

The study, as a part of a larger project, investigates the effectiveness of Papilio-programme in promoting young children’s social-emotional skills and in preventing problems in self-regulation. Papilio is a developmentally focused, research-based intervention program developed in Germany, and now being used and researched also in Finland. Social-emotional competence is an area of development in which already young children under the age of 7 exhibit many problems and need support. The ability to recognize one’s own and others’ emotions, regulate emotionally grounded behaviors, and to understand the ways of social interaction are essential, yet challenging skills for young children.

The aim of this sub-study is to explore, how do the implementation of interactive story and materials called "Paula and the pixies in the box” support children’s social-emotional competence. "Paula and the pixies in the box” focuses on learning basic emotions of sadness, fear, anger, and joy. The material set uses child-centered ways of learning, e.g. puppets, stories, and songs, in striving to assist children to advance in emotion recognition, self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship skills. The data of the study consists of interviews of children and teachers, and video observations. The data were analyzed by qualitative content analysis.

The results suggest "Paula and the pixies in the box” has increased children’s emotional awareness, emotional knowledge and contributed to the management of emotions. Talking about emotions in the child groups has increased, as well as empathy and understanding towards others’ feelings. For children, "Paula and the pixies in the box” story was motivating, and they particularly enjoyed hearing the pixies’ voices during the storytelling session. Moreover, the pixie characters served as an aid in increasing self-awareness and self-management of emotions: they helped children to identify their current emotions, and to manage their emotional reactions. According to the teachers, implementing Papilio measures also increased children’s socially responsible way of behaving. In this presentation, these findings and their implications will be discussed in detail.

Keywords: social-emotional competence, self-awareness, materials in supporting SEL, emotion recognition