

Finland

Country Overview

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Country name

Finland

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Introduction

This literature search gives a brief overview of initiatives and practices related to social and emotional learning (SEL) in Finland. There are a multitude of initiatives that can be categorised as assessments and interventions regarding SEL in early childhood education and care (ECEC), stemming from different types of organisations. This overview gives just a few examples of SEL in ECEC and should not be considered exhaustive in describing the subject.

Development

Finland has a multitude of initiatives regarding SEL. ECEC providers follow the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (540/2018), along with the National core curriculum for ECEC (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2019). While this provides extensive guidelines that include SEL-related terms, ECEC providers (read: or i.e., primarily municipalities) also need to populate local practices in a concrete manner. The need for such practices can be considered a driver of development for SEL in Finland. Overall, the need for practices, as well as the support available, seems to have produced several examples of practices regarding SEL in Finland. Although The Ministry of Education and Culture and The Finnish National Agency for Education enact and execute the relevant policies and the national curriculum, they do not necessarily develop these practices in a direct manner. However, they do have several means of providing support, such as funding for universities or other organisations to develop such practices.

Assessment

The overall assessment of ECEC in Finland falls under the responsibility of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC). Even though the focus of the assessment and evaluation of the preschools concern overall quality, some factors are related to SEL, such as interactions in a child group and children's peer relationships. Evaluations are used on a national level, but also to support ECEC providers on a local level (Finnish Education Evaluation Centre, 2019).

In addition to systematic evaluation on a national level, there are tools available for more specialist uses, such as a Finnish version of the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (Borg, Kaukonen, Joukamaa, Tamminen, 2014). Another example is the Brief Infant Toddler Social-Emotional Assessment (BITSEA) that has been translated and studied in Finland (Haapsamo et al., 2012). There are also commercially available tools for SEL assessment, one example that also includes intervention strategies is School day (School Day, n.d.). Finland, specifically the capital Helsinki, was also part of an international survey of social- and emotional skills conducted by OECD (2021a; 2021b).

Intervention

There are several SEL-related interventions available or undergoing development in Finland, though many of them are designed for school-aged children rather than ECEC. Some examples of school aged SEL interventions are Together at School (Björklund et al., 2014; Kiviruusu et al., 2016), the anti-bullying programme KiVa (KiVa Antibullying Program, n.d.), and a Finnish version of Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (PBIS) called ProKoulu (Savolainen, 2020). Though the latter has also seen use in ECEC (Prokoulu, n.d.).

There are also examples of interventions more strictly focused on the ECEC context. One example is the German SEL programme Papilio that has been adapted to a Finnish context (Koivula et al., 2020). Another example is a universal SEL programme called The Roundies (Moazami-Goodarzi, Zarra-Nezhad, Hytti, Heiskanen & Sajaniemi, 2021). There is also a commercial application based on the animated series Pikkuli™ that is designed for SEL in ECEC (Aittokoski Experience, 2016).

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Citation

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