Media Education and ICT in Kindergarten Teacher Education

a Study on Finnish University Level Training Programmes' Curricula

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Introduction

Media and information and communications technology (ICT) are a part of children's everyday life. The need to provide media and ICT education in early childhood education (ECE) has been acknowledged. The new Finnish curriculum for pre-primary education[1] includes transversal competence areas "ICT" and "Multiliteracies", which include media literacy. The curriculum becomes effective in 2016 and is obligatory for education providers.

Finland has a 20 year history of university level kindergarten teacher training (bachelor degree). As the only Finnish training that is entirely targeted to young children's education, it can be seen essential to ECE's development and pedagogies. University level studies are also mandatory for working as a teacher in pre-primary education. This research examines, to what extent kindergarten teacher training curricula include media education (ME) and ICT.

Research Questions

- How are ME and ICT positioned in the curricula of Finnish kindergarten teacher training programmes?
- How the ME and ICT competencies presented in Finnish kindergarten teacher training programmes' curricula fall into the categories of common ECE professionalism[2, 3]?

Data and Method

Data consist of the curricular texts from seven Finnish kindergarten teacher training programmes. The curricula have been effectively applied during the 2014–2015 academic year. Only mandatory courses' descriptions were included in the data. The data were analysed by the means of systematic content analysis.

- The positions were formed by scrutinising to what extent ME and ICT were included in names, goals and contents of the analysed courses. The categories were built drawing on curriculum analysis[4].
- The analysing of targeted competencies was based on the central competence and knowledge areas of ECE[2,3].

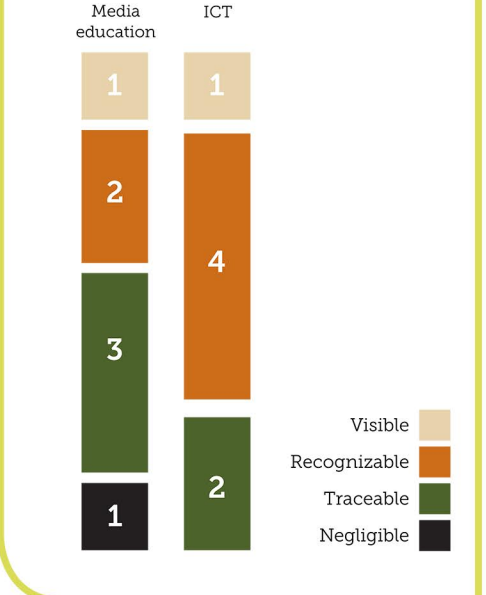
Findings

Positions of Media Education and ICT in Curricular Texts

Altogether, among all training programmes' 301 mandatory courses, 23 courses included ME or ICT themes. ME was included in 9 courses' goals, content or literature, ICT in 14 courses. Only one of the courses combined both ME and ICT goals and content.

The position of ME and ICT in kindergarten teacher training curricula is most often described as 'recognisable' type, clearly but not widely included [Chart 1]. The next most common position was 'traceable', in which the subjects are included only as minor contents in courses. The positions of ME and ICT were 'visible', clearly and widely noticed in one curriculum for both subjects. One curriculum held ME in 'negligible' position, in which the subject is practically non-existent.

CHART 1: The positions of media education and ICT in curricular texts

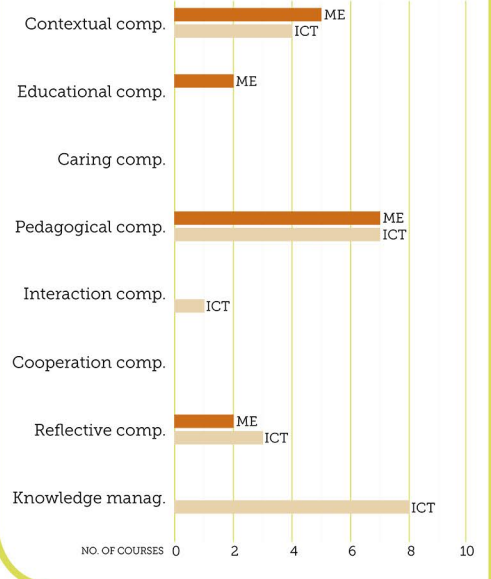


Competence Areas Targeted in Courses Including Media Education or ICT

Pedagogical competence was clearly emphasised with seven ME and seven ICT related courses addressing pedagogical questions [Chart 2]. However, the most common topic in ICT courses was knowledge management, which was found in eight courses. Contextual competencies were addressed in five ME and four ICT courses, reflective competencies in two ME and three ICT courses, educational competencies were addressed in two ME courses and interaction competencies were mentioned in one ICT course. Competencies in caring and cooperation were not a part of any of the course descriptions.

Since ME or ICT courses did not include practical training with children, the main goal appears to be promoting the development of such consciousness and knowledge that can later evolve into practical professional competence. However, there was no appointed literature in any of the ICT-courses.

CHART 2: Competence areas targeted in course descriptions including media education (ME) or ICT



Discussion

Media education and pedagogical use of ICT are marginal topics in Finnish kindergarten teacher training curricula, if compared to medias and ICTs role in children's everyday life. Only 3% of mandatory courses' descriptions included any ME content and 5% ICT. The position of ME and ICT in curricula is most often 'recognisable' or 'traceable' which means that they are not clearly and widely integrated. Our findings indicate that ME and ICT related educational, interactional and cooperative competencies are not dealt during the training. Also ME and ICT are taught mostly separate from each other which is contradictory to converged media culture outside the academia. However, it needs to be kept in mind, that these results of curriculum research only apply to the analysed texts. Additional research would be needed to reveal the actualised contents of teacher training.

References:

[1] Esiopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet (2014). Helsinki: Opetushallitus. [*National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education 2014*]

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[4] Korhonen, V., & Rantala, L. (2007). Opettajankoulutus – mediakasvatuksen autiomaa?: mediakasvatus opettajankoulutuksen opetussuunnitelmateksteissä. Kasvatus: Suomen kasvatustieteellinen aikakauskirja 38 (2007): 5. [*Teacher Training – a Desert of Media Education? Media Education in Teacher Training Curricular Texts*]