



## Teachers' views on students' social and emotional skills

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The importance of social and emotional skills in schools contexts can be seen both in research and in the National core curriculum for basic education in Finland. Considering the importance of social and emotional skills for students' social, personal and academic development as well as the recent emphasis on these skills in Finnish education, the purpose of this study is to explore teachers' experiences, views and practices in relation to students' social and emotional learning. Social and emotional skills have a great impact on child's development, success and future. How teachers view social and emotional skills have an effect on how they address them in their classrooms. Teachers' ability to implement social and emotional skills education in classroom culture daily affect students' social and emotional competence.

Considering the importance of social and emotional skills in students' learning and development and the importance of teachers' views in shaping their practices of addressing social and emotional skills, the following research questions were asked in this study: 1. What are teachers' views about students' social and emotional skills? 2. How do teachers address social and emotional skills for their students?

A survey design was employed as the research method in this study because it enables gathering the ideas of a large group of people about a topic or issue.

The study showed that social and emotional skills are considered to be important by participating teachers. Social and emotional skills were visible in classrooms and were addressed quite often in everyday life as well as with the help of different materials such as KiVa school -materials, Lions Quest and FRIENDS -materials for social and emotional education.

Key words: social and emotional skills, teachers' view, interaction, emotions, emotional education, social skills, emotional skills, social and emotional learning, teaching social and emotional skills

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## 1 Introduction

Processing one's own emotions and the emotions of others has a crucial role in interpersonal interaction (Goleman, 1997). Emotions provide information to a person of himself/herself and direct observations from the surrounding world. They also direct and motivate actions (Kokkonen, 1996). One example of these actions could be the interaction between teachers and students in schools. According to Pakarinen, Lerkkanen, Poikkeus and Rasku-Puttonen (2013), interaction inside the classroom consists of interaction and collective action between teacher and students. In that interaction, both sides have an influence on each other. They address that school is a place of encounters in which children build their identities and learn important knowledge and skills in interaction with each other and the teacher. Therefore, the interaction between teacher and his/her students and also between students is a significant factor in child's social and emotional development and academic learning. When students receive emotional support, guidance and clearly organized activities, their learning is positively affected (Pakarinen, Lerkkanen, Poikkeus, & Rasku-Puttonen, 2013). The quality of emotional support affects the classroom atmosphere and accordingly students' social and academic skills development such as reading, writing and mathematics. Indeed, strong emotional skills have proven to advance learning motivation, academic performances and social and emotional wellbeing as well as reduce social marginalization, loneliness, behavioral issues and mental health problems (Niemi, Junttila, Asanti, Clarke, & Seppinen, 2013).

Social and emotional skills have a great impact on children's development, success and future. These skills start to develop from birth and they do not develop automatically but rather in interaction with children's surroundings. Home environment has a significant role in teaching how to recognize, handle and control emotions and to practice interaction skills. It is important that children feel like they are in a safe environment where they can practice their social and emotional skills. Emotions strongly affect individuals' actions and they can often be felt physically. Strong emotions can lead to strong reactions that are, at worst, aggressive and violent (Pulkkinen, 2002). Hence, it is important that children learn how to handle different emotions, such as hate, and to solve conflicts in a positive manner because childhood experiences can affect individuals' emotional and

social skills even in their adulthood (Kokkonen, 1996; Pulkkinen, 2002). Social and emotional skills or lack thereof can affect children's learning and studying in many different ways. Controlling emotions and well-developed interaction skills that help learning with others affect child's studies positively (Greenberg, Kusché, & Riggs, 2004). On the other hand, not being able to control emotions can cause anxiety and complicate cognitive performances which negatively affect children (Goleman, 1997).

The importance of social and emotional skills in school contexts can also be seen in Finland's 2014 National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet (POPS), 2014). Social and emotional is a significant part of the curriculum and a part of general goals, operating models and basic education's function further learning and well-being of student's (POPS, 2014). There are several programs that provide materials and ways to develop them, such as Kiva -school-, and FRIENDS -material.

Social and emotional skills can be trained both at home and in school. Interaction in social relationships in school is organized by adults, hence their thinking and actions reflect on how those relationships are visible in students' lives (Rausku-Puttonen, 2006). Therefore, teachers' views on social and emotional learning are important because these views affect their practice and ultimately their students' social and emotional skills learning. How teachers see themselves and their teaching can influence the choices they make during classes and students' emotions. According to Schutz, Cross, Hong and Osbon (2007), when teachers go to classrooms they always bring their personal and cultural backgrounds with them. These personal and cultural backgrounds include teachers' views, beliefs and identity as well as their beliefs and values concerning education and learning. They also add that emotions that teachers consider to be pedagogically desired affect teachers' decisions. Emotional experiences inside the classroom are affected by teachers' beliefs and goals, and those affect teachers' personal judgements and motivation to achieve their goals.

Considering the importance of social and emotional skills for students' social, personal and academic development (Cohen, 2001; Goleman, 1997; Webster-Stratton, 2011) and the recent emphasis on these skills in Finnish education, the purpose of this study is to explore teachers' experiences, views and practices in relation to student's social and emotional learning. In this study, teachers' views are considered to include attitudes, beliefs and notions about social and emotional skills and learning. They are a way of thinking based on teachers' values, goals and knowledge.

### 1.2 Emotions and emotional skills

Defining emotions is difficult, because there are many different views on the nature of emotions and the ways they are expressed. According to Pulkkinen (2002), all these views have one thing in common that they address emotions as multileveled constructs taking place in multiple systems. For example, Pulkkinen addresses that heart rate, facial expressions and actions embody different emotions through autonomous nervous system, kinematic system and subjective experiences.

Kokkonen (1996) and Pulkkinen (2002) state that emotions can be specified in three different levels, one of which is reactions in *biological level* that are inherent and cause, for example, fluctuations in heart rate. *Behavioral level* emotions show themselves in different reactions such as crying or laughing. *Cognitive level* emotions, on the other hand, affect language and thinking. At the cognitive level, individuals verbalize their emotions and plan their actions accordingly. Therefore, they can direct their attention to a certain issue/action such as, mathematics assignment or away from it depending on their emotions at that moment and the emotions that the particular assignment evokes.

Emotions that that can be felt by everyone exist regardless of the individuals' traits and environmental factors such as culture (Kokkonen, 1996). These emotions are referred by Kokkonen (1996) as basic emotions and they are inherent. Although the extent of basic emotions is difficult to determine, it is a common understanding that they include emotions such as sadness, fear, anger, disgust, surprise and happiness (Kokkonen, 1996).

People use emotional skills instinctively or knowingly and they direct individuals' thoughts, decisions and actions (Goleman, 1997). Effective regulation of emotions positively affects persons' life in different ways such as, facilitating constructive behavior in conflict situations (Pulkkinen, 2002). Regulation of emotions differs from regulation of behavior because it is possible for a person to suppress their behavior and activate their emotions. Hence, a person can feel strongly in a situation but prevent showing it in external behavior (Pulkkinen, 2002).

In this study, emotional skills are defined as skills that include identifying your own emotions and emotions of others which help students manage and regulate their emotions and behavior.

### 1.3 Social skills and interaction skills

Communication between people, which can be verbal or non-verbal, is referred to as social interaction (Laine, 2005). Social skills refer to the forms of behavior that are needed in interactions and situations where there is a need for collaboration. Social skills include interpreting situations and social norms and they are often learned through early attachments, even though person's inborn nature can also have some effect (Laine, 2005). Good interaction skills require recognizing different expectations and responsibilities and adapting your own actions to them. Individual's self-image, the way they relate to other people and their early childhood experiences of social interaction affect their development of interaction skills (Webster-Stratton, 2011).

Non-verbal communication includes facial expressions, gestures, posture and different non-verbal attributes such as voice emphasis or pauses in speech, and it can also be subconscious (Laine, 2005). Non-verbal communication is a crucial part of social interaction and it is often trusted more than verbal communication when they are in conflict (Webster-Stratton, 2011).



Kalliopuska (1995) addresses the difference between social skills and interaction skills by grouping self-control, avoiding conflict, developing alternative solutions, helping and managing conflicts to social skills and active listening, starting a conversation, accepting other's feelings, empathy and understanding as interaction skills. In this study, the term social skills include interaction skills as well.

### 1.4 Social and emotional skills learning

According to Cohen (2001), social and emotional skills refer to skills of understanding and values that enable a person to read themselves and other people as well as use that information to become a flexible problem solver and a creative learner. Social and emotional competence as a part of social and emotional skills refers to a person's ability to understand, process and express social and emotional aspects of life.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) organization (The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2018), states that social and emotional skills are formed by the ability to recognize and control emotions, and form meaningful relationships with other people as well as solve problems efficiently. Cohen (2001) states that there are hundreds of different programs for learning social and emotional skills and that those programs are called SEL –programs. The abbreviation SEL means learning social and emotional skills and it is a widely used concept especially in the United States. The concept of SEL was created to describe a process through which individuals learn to recognize, understand and control their emotions, care about other people, act ethically and responsibly as well as form and maintain positive human interactions (CASEL, 2018). According to McCombs (United Nations, 1989), learning social and emotional skills refers to learning such skills that concern self-esteem, motivation, regulating behavior and getting along with other people. It combines thinking, emotions, and behaviors that aim to fill personal and social needs and developing skills through which a person can be a fully-fledged member of society. These kinds of SEL-programs include KiVa -school and FRIENDS -programs, which are highly used in Finland. These programs aim to enforce social and emotional development as well as prevention of problems. They are designed to support children's social and emotional

development in different areas of competence such as interaction and emotional skills, empathy, attitude towards oneself and others as well as responsible decision making (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004).

### 1.5 Importance of teachers' views on social and emotional skills

How teachers see social and emotional skills has an effect on how they address them in their classrooms. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) state that when teachers are socially and emotionally competent, they can develop good relationships with their students, build on their strengths as well as implement behavioral guidelines that support motivation, cooperation and respectful interaction. Teachers' lack of resources concerning social and emotional skills results in unsupportive classroom climate and troublesome student behavior. On the other hand, teachers that are socially and emotionally competent are culturally sensitive, exhibit prosocial values and know how to manage their emotions and behavior (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Teachers can influence their students and their motivation, student achievement and how they solve peer conflicts. Teachers' ability to implement social and emotional skills education in classroom culture affects students' social and emotional competence. Research shows that teachers' social and emotional awareness affects student outcomes, students' personal, social and ethical attitudes as well as values and motives (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Finnish curriculum states that these skills are important and teachers should support their students. There are also available tools such as KiVa -schools and FRIENDS- materials. However, focusing on these skills and supporting students in developing them through either adopting tools or other means start with exploring how teachers consider these skills important. Their views about these skills and how they should be supported are the keys to students' development of social and emotional skills.

## 1.6 Research questions

Considering the importance of social and emotional skills in students' current and future learning and development, and the importance of teachers' views in shaping their practices of addressing social and emotional skills, the following research questions were asked in this study:

1. What are teachers' views about students' social and emotional skills?
2. How do teachers address social and emotional skills for their students?

These questions are sought through a survey asking teachers about their views and practices. Social skills in this study refer to interaction skills as well as interpreting situations and social norms. Emotional skills in this study refer to skills that include identifying and managing your own emotions and emotions of others in a way that helps students' regulate their behavior.

## 1.7 My motivation for studying social and emotional skills

Emotions and emotional skills or lack thereof has been visible in schools both in my childhood and now being a teacher and a classroom assistant. Many kids and young people need help and guidance to develop their emotional and social skills. Students need social and emotional skills in school while harmonizing their needs and the needs of others in a group. Emotions and controlling them affect child's well-being, adaptation and development. Having worked for a considerable time as a teacher in different levels of school, I have noticed that lack of emotional skills is visible in some students in every level. I consider the education for us teachers in teaching social and emotional skills to be insufficient in addressing social and emotional skills in the classroom. Students need more guidance to express and utilize their emotions in a productive way. They also need to learn more social skills in a more controlled way that gives them an opportunity to learn operating models that they can later use in real-life situations. Assigning students to different groups for every task is not efficient and it does not help children with their

social skills. It needs to be more than that. I believe that social skills should be taught with many different tools and helping students to be able to work constructively with other people should be the objective in every task.

In Finland, we have different programs and manuals for social and emotional education. For example, KiVa –school is an anti-bullying program that has spread widely throughout the country and it focuses on fighting bullying by improving students' social and emotional skills. The program includes a manual for teacher to use in class, in which there are different exercises for naming, recognizing and expressing emotions in a constructive way. There are also exercises for learning social skills through trust and discussions. I have been a part of KiVa –school program as a student in elementary school and I found it to be useful if used properly. Teachers may use such programs only if they want to support their students' development. Therefore, I want to know if teachers consider social and emotional skills to be important part of their teaching because I personally consider it an extremely important part of education. Therefore, I decided to conduct this study in order to learn more about social and emotional skills through the teachers' views.

## 2 Literature review

### 2.1 Social and emotional development

Goleman (1997) states that development of emotional skills starts before the birth and the child can examine humans' facial expressions and react to them as well as feel empathy towards others soon after birth. He adds that newborns have strong emotions, but their brains are still undeveloped, and every emotion emerges at a certain time based on the brain development. Therefore, the development of emotions is affected by biological development as well as changes in cognitive thinking.

Regulating emotions is not an inherent skill and it must be learned where such learning is affected by the individual's environment and developmental stage (Webster-Stratton, 2011). Pulkkinen (2002) states that regulation of emotions has an important task of keeping individual's functional ability as good as possible, regardless of emotions such as anger, fear or anxiety. Therefore, the objective is to control those emotions that are visible outwards. The abilities related to controlling emotions are developed at a very young age and social emotions, which have the capacity to compare oneself to others, such as humility, insecurity, jealousy, pride, self-confidence and envy can already be detected in daycare-ages (Goleman, 1997).

Social and emotional development is affected from the start by the child's attachment to an adult because secure attachment creates a solid foundation to identifying and regulating emotions (Kokkonen, 1996). Pulkkinen (2002) states that the assessments of parents and other people as well as the discussions about the child affect the child's self-awareness where development of self-awareness affects his/her emotional development. Children develop an awareness in a young age about the fact that they can affect their environment and this self-awareness develops as they develop language skills (Pulkkinen, 2002). This development of self-awareness is connected to their early nurture experiences, such as adult's reaction to their needs and emotions. Close adults can help a child to analyze and remember things (Pulkkinen, 2002). Pulkkinen (2002) states that the expectations set by parents and their reactions to child's action prepare the child to new

situations and help the child to develop their self-control. The presence and expectations of siblings, peers and other adults, such as teachers, also enhance child's ability to regulate their emotions (Kokkonen, 1996).

According to Pulkkinen (2002), at around three-months age, the child directs his/her attention to different things and regulates his/her emotions volitionally by for example turning his/her head. Within a few months child develops an internal regulation system due to neuropsychological growing (Pulkkinen, 2002). Means of regulation change during the development of the child and the child can affect the duration and magnitude of their emotional reactions during the first-year. At this time, reacting to child's needs is particularly important since early care and nurture affect the development of self-regulation (Pulkkinen, 2002).

## 2.2 Social and emotional education

Nummenmaa (2006) states that education is action conducted by humans, in which the educator and the student are in interaction with each other. She adds that ultimately education is always about the student growing as a human being. Teaching is based on interaction and emotions and teachers have to be able to control their own emotions and express them even more than usual (Virtanen, 2015). According to Puolimatka (1999), social and emotional development is tied to experiences and other humans. He adds that a child cannot develop his/her social and emotional skills without being constantly in contact with other people. Learning how to interact with others requires knowledge of social norms which is one of the things that is included in social and emotional education.

Puolimatka (1999) states that emotional education has multiple goals such as expressing positive and negative emotions, learning how to interpret emotions and control them as well as learning to name and recognize emotions. The main goal of emotional education is that a child would develop a balanced and diverse emotional life and that the child would learn how to assess their emotions and through that assessment influence his/her emotions (Puolimatka, 1999).

According to Rasku-Puttonen (2006), it is important that every child feels like he/she belongs to a group and a relationship network. The encounters children have during the first semester at school are meaningful in constructing their relationships with other students. Therefore, teachers should understand group dynamics and steer them in a direction that supports students' development (Rasku-Puttonen, 2006). She also adds that building a community in the class requires teachers to support student participation as well as discuss rules and justification for those rules with children in order for students to understand them and commit to them better. Ikonen (2006) states that teachers can support students' peer-relationships and social contacts by using their own interaction skills as well as giving positive feedback to them. She adds that social skills develop through different experiences and these experiences are made possible and enriched by teachers. Emotional competence is vital in a teaching job and teachers should consider it the basis of all teaching and education (Virtanen, 2015).

### 2.3 Supporting social and emotional skills learning at home and in school

The foundation of social and emotional skills is created at home, but school has an important function of developing and maintaining these skills (Pulkkinen, 2002). Webster-Stratton (2011) states that involvement of parents in children's studies and education affects children's social and emotional skills and school success positively. She suggests that teachers should encourage parents to take part in their children's education and should work closely with their students' parents. Teachers must take into consideration student's cultural background, economic circumstances, as well as family's structure and changes that can affect children's emotional states and social behavior. According to Puolimatka (2004), education can improve children's ability to feel their emotions in a socially accepted way and teach them to assess their own emotions as well as strengthen the effect of constructive emotions in children's lives. Accordingly, parents have a major role in children's social and emotional skill development but children also spend a large portion of their life in school, therefore, school's role is also very significant to the social and emotional skill development.

In school, it is important that students feel that they are in a safe environment in which they are understood and taken care of. Positive relationships between the teacher and students create a foundation for student collaboration and increase motivation, leading to advances in learning (Webster-Stratton, 2011). According to Pulkkinen (2002), the most important thing for a teacher in building positive teacher-student relations is to learn to know the students as individuals and to show genuine interest in their lives. Pulkkinen (2002) also states that students' different social and economic backgrounds as well as cultural backgrounds affect their resources. Thus, it is important to learn about the students' families since those circumstances often affect children's behavior, social and emotional skills and studies (Webster-Stratton, 2011). According to Lopes and Salovey (2004), it is possible for a teacher to help students develop their emotional skills, cognitive skills and motivation via different learning environments, constructive feedback and providing example. Therefore, it is important that schools have teachers that are well trained and give good examples so that students can develop their own social and emotional skills (Lopes & Salovey, 2004).

In its entirety, the environment in which children grow and develop affects their self-image and identity. Different means and actions are learned in social interaction with others and these means and actions for one become a part of individual's personality (Kronqvist & Kumpulainen, 2011). Emotions and how to express them are learned socially; therefore, social development cannot be separated from emotional development. Pulkkinen (2002) states that children learn to understand and control their emotions and emotions of others as well as adjust their needs to others' needs through interaction. Therefore, children should learn how to operate if they want to do something together with someone in social context. According to Kronqvist and Kumpulainen (2011), the quality of interaction in different situations and environments affects children's learning and development because learning has a social nature and it often happens in interaction with others. It is important that teachers recognize this social nature of learning and consider it while planning their teaching.

As mentioned earlier, family has a considerable role in children's social and emotional development since early interactions affect children's understanding of emotional



expressions, regulation of emotions and self-image. Kronqvist and Kumpulainen (2011) state that parents' ability to identify and regulate their own emotions affects the development of children's abilities to do so. However, parents rarely see their children as a part of a bigger group that consists of their peers and children's behavior in this group can differ from the behavior seen at home. It is important for teachers to discuss with the parents about the social skills and social needs of their child (Kronqvist & Kumpulainen, 2011).

## 2.4 Social and Emotional Skills in National Curricula

Emotional skills education in Finnish comprehensive schools is emphasized in the National core curriculum for basic education (POPS, 2014) and it contains different obligations and objectives regarding social and emotional education. It states that emotional skills education starts in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade and continues throughout comprehensive school. Every student has the right to a safe learning environment and in order to ensure that to everyone, it is important to integrate emotional and social education into teaching. Constitution, Non-Discrimination Act and Equality law bind learning institutions to take care of students' equal chances to education, regardless of the individual's traits. The National core curriculum (POPS, 2014) addresses that Finland has engaged in multiple international conventions on human rights, one of which is the Rights of the Child that ensures a foundation to basic education (United Nations, 1989). According to this covenant, every child has the right to have a good life as well as individual, physical, spiritual, moral and social development (POPS, 2014).

One of the foundations of the values in basic education is to further well-being, democracy and child's active agency in a society. It is also the role of basic education to accumulate social and humane capital, which consists of knowledge, interaction and trust. Students need to be encouraged to take care of themselves and others. Emotional skills education is important to improve these (POPS, 2014).

Developing emotional skills is also mentioned in the curriculum for pre-primary education (Esiopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet (EOPS), 2014). The role of pre-

primary education is to support child's self-image as well as social growth and development in addition to physical and mental growth. It is also strongly reflected in the curriculum for pre-primary education that a child has the right to build their own self-image and to become acknowledged in a personal capacity as they are. Pre-primary education must support children's equality and their experience as a member of a group and society. Fields in transversal competence such as cultural competence, interaction and expression also cover managing interaction skills, establishing positive human relationships and co-operative skills.

In addition, emotional skills education is mentioned in the curriculum (EOPS, 2014) in connection with many different subjects. The objectives and contents of emotional education are visible in for example, Mother Tongue through the objectives of diverse communication, own identity and building self-esteem. Environmental Studies also mentions practicing emotional skills and the objective is to learn how to recognize, name and control emotions. Teaching emotional skills and taking other people in to consideration are also visible in Health Education. Emotions and self-expression are also emphasized in artistic and practical subjects via different techniques and methods. In religion and ethics, emotional skills are reflected throughout ethical reflection and the concept of charity.

Curriculum for pre-primary education defines operational culture that contains conditions related to social and emotional skills such as safe day-to-day life that includes respect towards a child, attending the child and caring. Encouraging children and guiding them to recognize, regulate and express different emotions are also parts of this operational culture. Children need to be encouraged to express themselves and those skills need to be developed through means of music, arts, craft, oral and bodily expression. In addition, pupil welfare also includes forwarding child's physical and social well-being in both pre-primary and primary education curriculums (EOPS, 2014; POPS, 2014). Every child has the right to be in a safe environment and in order to secure a child from different forms of violence and bullying, there needs to be a school welfare plan in place. Pupil welfare contains different healthcare services, psychologist and social workers as well as multiprofessional pupil welfare concerning different specialists.

## 2.5 Problems that lack of social and emotional skills can cause

Bullying in school is sadly a big phenomenon in schools across the world. There are many ways to try to eliminate the problem from schools such as KiVa -school project mentioned earlier. Bullying means harmful behavior that is intentionally and continuously directed to the same student (Pulkkinen, 2002). Webster-Stratton (2011) states that as early as five years old children can form a negative self-image that can lead to a reputation of a bully or a difficult child in school. This causes a so called "snowball effect" in which a child's reputation spreads to the parents, other students and to the whole school, which further causes the whole class' social cohesion to reduce. To stop this snowball effect, the school must have clear rules regarding bullying and the possibility to anonymity when reporting about being bullied. In addition, it is important to provide information to the parents about bullying in school and guidance for talking about it at home (Webstert-Stratton, 2011). Education in schools should enforce social skills, problem solving, empathy and students' self-esteem in order to prevent bullying and to positively affect the whole school community (Webstert-Stratton, 2011).

Intellectual development first requires emotional development since all learning comes from interest in the matter and emotions direct our observations and influence our understanding of surrounding world and reality. Emotions can disrupt or ease learning and success in school and quality of relationships as well as emotional connection between students affects their social and emotional learning (Puolimatka, 2004). According to Goleman (2006), social fears affect students' brain activity because stress related to social fears has the potential limit cognitive abilities especially for people that do not endure stress well. He also presents that positive relationships between students as well as staff and students are associated with fewer absences and less dropping out of school. Those positive relationships also correlate to more goal-orientation, responsibility and desire to solve problems as well as motivation and sustainability.

Positive social relationships with peers at elementary school positively affect academic achievements later in school (Greenberg, Kusché, & Riggs, 2004). Unsocial behaviour

often presents together with poor academical performance (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004). Students' ability to endure disappointments, listen and focus as well as control their impulses support their success in school (Goleman, 1997). Social and emotional skills affect individual's psychological health, which affects studying and academic success (Johnson & Johnson, 2004). Goleman (1997) states that concerns and anxiety affect all cognitive performances negatively. When individuals try to prepare themselves to an expected threat, there is a good possibility that they completely focus on that threat, which makes it difficult to focus on other things such as studying. Hence, anxiety deteriorates intellectual performances such as performing well on an examination. People who are inclined to worry often have negative thoughts during a cognitive assignment and feel that they are not able to meet the requirements that the assignment requires. On the other hand, people who are good at harnessing their emotions are able to anticipate their anxiety and use it to motivate themselves to prepare for the task properly (Goleman, 1997). Goleman (1997) also states that self-confidence and enthusiasm affect motivation positively. The amount of concerns on the other hand, correlates to poor academic success since all the resources are used to worrying. Negative emotions complicate focus which affects working memory, ability to keep in mind information correlating to the task at hand. Individuals, who can turn these emotions of concern to their advantage by motivating themselves, achieve better results on cognitive tasks. When emotions of anxiety are dominant, they cannot think clearly anymore and their working memory does not function properly (Goleman, 1997).

Strong negative emotions affect power of observation and prevent focus (Greenberg, Kusché, & Riggs, 2004). Lack of emotional skills can also cause social issues, depression and anxiety, problems in thinking process, aggression and drifting to crime (Goleman, 1997). According to Pulkkinen (2002), aggression, low ability to focus, weak study motivation and school success as well as poor relationships with peers predict crime. These things on the other hand, relate to lack of social and emotional skills. Experiences relating to parents' sensitivity to react to children's emotions and needs affect individuals' social and emotional skills long into adulthood (Kokkonen, 1996; Pulkkinen, 2002). Self-control, communication skills as well as practicing the use of cognitive skills especially in stress related situations and situations where emotions are powerful lead to better

cooperation between individuals and enhance academic performances (Greenberg, Kusché & Riggs, 2004).

## 2.6 Summary of major findings in the literature

Teachers' actions relating to social and emotional skills in the classroom are guided by National core curriculum of Basic Education in Finland (POPS, 2014) as well as his/her own views on social and emotional skills. Students' development of social and emotional skills can be affected by teachers' actions and conscious choices to address them as well as the actions of parents and peers. Addressing social and emotional skills sufficiently at school can affect students' lives both now and in the future. Lack of social and emotional skills has negative effects that include bullying, depression, anxiety, problems of thinking process, aggression and drifting to crime later in life. Research says that emotions and social skills have an effect on students' learning abilities. It is important for teachers to work towards building students' social and emotional skills by providing example, different learning environments and constructive feedback. There are different kinds of materials created for teachers to use for this exact purpose.

Social and emotional skills are considered important for the development and welfare of a student. School and teachers have a significant meaning when it comes to supporting students' social and emotional skills alongside with family and peers. Education has the possibility to help children grow up to be well-balanced and socially competent with good social skills and different ways to deal with various emotions constructively. How teachers view students' social and emotional skills become important in effectively addressing these skills at school. However, not much is known about their views especially in Finland.

## 3 Methods

### 3.1 Design

A survey design was employed as the research method in this study because survey designs enable gathering the ideas of a large group of people about a topic or issue (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2011). Data were collected via a survey consisting of both closed and open-ended questions. Survey was executed via email and respondents answered the survey anonymously. Closed and open-ended questions were analysed in different ways as explained below.

### 3.2 Participants

A total of 90 teachers responded to the survey. Among those, 16 of the responses were not complete; therefore, they were removed from the data set. Consequently, responses of 74 teachers were used as the data of the study. A total of 69 (93.2%) of the teachers who responded were females and 5 (6.8 %) were males. The distribution of teachers based on gender, experience in teaching in terms of years, grade level, age and whether the participant is class teacher or subject teacher are given in Table 1. Participants were mostly from schools located in southwest Finland. Table 1 shows that more than half of the participants had more than five years of teaching experience and the majority of all participants were teaching at primary grades (grades 1-6).

*Table 1. The distribution of participants' characteristics in terms of gender, years of experience, grade level taught, age and occupation*

Characteristics	Distribution	
Gender	Females	69
	Males	5
Years of experience in teaching	1-3 years	17
	3-5 years	11
	5-10 years	13
	> 10 years	33
Grade levels teachers teach at the time of the study	Grades 1-2	20
	Grades 3-4	22
	Grades 5-6	12
	Grades 7-9	20
Age	Ages 25 - 35	33
	Ages 35 - 45	20
	Ages 45 - 55	13
	Ages 55 - 65	8
Occupation*	Class teacher	58
	Subject teacher	35

\* Teachers were allowed to choose more than one option because they could be both class teachers and subject teachers at the same time.

### 3.3 Data collection instrument

A survey targeting all teachers who were teaching in comprehensive school grades 1-9 was prepared as the data collection instrument of the study. The survey was composed of 4-Likert and 6-Likert type questions, close-ended questions, open-ended questions depending on the answers to the close-ended questions and open-ended question.

The survey was constructed based on the research questions and previous studies. I also benefitted from my own experiences as a teacher. Definition of social and emotional skills was used in the construction of the survey. CASEL-organizations' (CASEL, 2018) definition of social and emotional skills were employed in creating questions for the survey. Different aspects of social and emotional skills were used to form questions which together formed a clear picture of social and emotional skills. Survey was designed to investigate whether or not teachers introduce social and emotional skills to their students and how important teachers consider social and emotional skills. Inspiration for some of the questions was drawn from a previous research (Piispanen, 2011). The survey was prepared in Finnish.

The first part of the survey was designed to reveal underlying variables such as gender, years of working as a teacher and the grade levels the respondents were teaching at the time of the study. The first part included six close-ended questions about demographic information. The second and third part of the survey were designed to map teachers' views on teaching social and emotional skills. They consisted of 24 4-Likert type and 12 6-Likert type questions, two close-ended questions and two open-ended questions depending on the answers to the close-ended questions. The third part was constructed to map what kind of materials teachers had in their disposal and implemented in their teaching. It included two close-ended questions and one open-ended question. The examples for questions in each section are given in Table 2. The Finnish and English versions of the survey are in Appendix A and Appendix B respectively. The construction of the instrument was monitored by another researcher through several discussions and reviews of the instrument.



Table 2: Sample questions

Parts of the Survey	Sample questions
Part 1	Gender Age
Part 2	How often do you address the following things with your students? -Identifying and naming emotions -Accepting students' own emotions and emotion of others -Bullying How important do you consider the following things? -Student is able to identify and name emotions -Student respects other people's opinions -Student is able to work in collaboration with other students
Part 3	Do you use any of the following materials in your teaching? -KiVa school material -FRIENDS material -Viitottu rakkaus -Mannerheimin Lastensuojeluliiton materiaalit -Tunne-etsivät -other, what? You can pick more than one option. Feedback from the survey and thoughts on teaching social and emotional skills

The survey was designed as an online survey. Webropol was used to host the survey. Teachers' names and schools were not asked in order not to violate anonymity of the participants.

### 3.4 Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted to test and improve the instrument. A total of 16 conveniently accessed student teachers answered the pilot version of the survey. The feedback was given through Webropol in an open-ended question at the end of the pilot survey. Nine of the responses were not complete. Pilot study participants stated that the survey addressed social and emotional skills comprehensively. They stated that the survey took around 7-10 minutes to respond where two respondents deemed it to be a long time period. However, it was decided that there was no need to shorten the survey since it would not be covering the issue comprehensively if some items were deleted. The survey was revised once more and one question was divided in to two different questions for clarity purposes.

### 3.5 Data collection Process

The data of the study were collected between October and November in 2019. I contacted the principals of 7 comprehensive schools in three cities in Southwest Finland where I had previous involvement via e-mail. I asked if they would like to help me in my research by sending the survey link to the teachers at the school. Out of seven schools five answered either via email or face-to-face that they have forwarded the survey link to my study to their teachers. All of the participating schools were chosen because I had personal connections to them and potential participant teachers might be paying attention to the survey because they knew me and they would want to support me in my study. The survey was also distributed in a closed Facebook group Alakoulun Aarreaitta, which is a group of elementary school teachers, in order to increase number of participants. Survey was directed at all teachers who are currently teaching in comprehensive school grades 1-9 at the time of the study. The emails sent to the principals are presented in the Appendix C. The survey was open for responses between September 19<sup>th</sup> and November 18<sup>th</sup> 2019.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

Data of the study were analysed by using descriptive statistics for Likert-type questions and content analysis for open-ended questions. Teachers' views on students' social and emotional skills were explored by the frequency of the responses they provided for the survey items and the mean score for each item. SPSS Statistics 25 was used for descriptive and reliability analysis.

#### 3.6.1 Reliability

The reliability of the scales were calculated separately and reported in Table 3. All the subscales except for opinion on statements related to social and emotional skills have Cronbach's Alfa values bigger than 0.7 which showed us that the subscales were reliable. Opinions on social and emotional skills subscale had 0.523 Alpha value, which can be considered as acceptable value. All of the scales can be found in the Appendix A and B.

*Table 3: Cronbach's Alfa on all subscales*

Subscale	Addressing emotional skills (Question 8)	Addressing social skills (Question 9)	Importance of social and emotional skills (Question 10)	Opinions on social and emotional skills (Question 11)
Cronbach's Alfa	,833	,738	,756	,523

#### 3.6.2 Internal Validity

The major threats to internal validity in this study were location and instrumentation (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2011). I had no control over the location that participants had responded the survey. However, it is possible that participants responded to the

survey in a convenient place as the survey was accessible from any device connected to the Internet. The survey was distributed in schools where most of the teachers knew me by the school administrators to teachers via e-mail. Therefore, teachers might have felt obligated to answer. It was clearly stated that this was an anonymous survey and participants were ensured that the data would be only used for academic purposes. The fact that I knew some of the participants had both negative and positive sides. It might have brought an advantage of gaining teachers' attention to the survey. However, it might have affected teachers' responses to the survey questions towards the responses teachers might thought as desirable, even when it was clearly stated that the survey was anonymous.

### 3.6.3 Limitations and Assumptions

The findings are limited by the content of the survey. There were very few answers from male teachers in this survey (6.8%). Finnish National Board of Education (Opetushallitus, 2017) stated that 77% of teachers and principals in Finnish basic education are female. Therefore, the lack of male respondents in the study somehow reflected the general situation in the Finnish education system. Yet, the lack of answers from male teachers was a major limitation for the findings of this study.

It is assumed that the participants of the study are familiar with the concept of social and emotional skills and have answered the survey truthfully and honestly.

## 4 Findings

The research questions sought in the study were

1. What are teachers' views about students' social and emotional skills?
2. How do teachers address social and emotional skills for their students?

The findings were presented accordingly below. Likert-type survey items and participants' responses to the open-ended items were translated to English by the researcher.

### 4.1 Teachers' views on students' social and emotional skills

Teachers' views on students' social and emotional skills were investigated in the survey in sections 2, 3 and 4. Those sections covered teachers' views about social and emotional skills and the importance of these skills for the participants.

Teachers were asked to respond to what extent they agree with statements relating to social and emotional skills on a 6-Likert scale ranging from "totally disagree" (1) to "totally agree" (6). The distribution of teachers' agreement responses about social and emotional skills was given on Table 4.

Table 4: Distribution of teachers' agreement responses for the statements about social and emotional skills

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Totally agree	Item Mean	Total
There is not enough time in school to teach social and emotional skills.	3 (4.03%)	11 (14.87%)	14 (18.92%)	21 (28.38%)	15 (20.27%)	10 (13.51%)	3.9	74
It is difficult to teach social and emotional skills.	6 (8.11%)	19 (25.67%)	21 (28.38%)	22 (29.73%)	5 (6.76%)	1 (1.35%)	3.1	74
Social and emotional skills should be taught at home.	1 (1.35%)	7 (9.46%)	11 (14.86%)	35 (47.3%)	16 (21.62%)	4 (5.41%)	3.9	74
Creating a good work environment to the class is important, even if it takes time from teaching subject matters.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (4.06%)	25 (33.78%)	46 (62.16%)	5.6	74
Teacher's own ability to recognize and control their emotions is important in emotion education.	0 (0%)	1 (1.35%)	2 (2.7%)	3 (4.06%)	30 (40.54%)	38 (51.35%)	5.4	74
Students who do not possess sufficient social and emotional skills cause trouble in class.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (2.7%)	25 (33.78%)	26 (35.14%)	21 (28.38%)	4.9	74

Teachers' views on students' social and emotional skills

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Totally agree	Item Mean	Total
If student does not learn social and emotional skills at home, I cannot help him/her.	21 (28.38%)	29 (39.19%)	20 (27.03%)	3 (4.05%)	1 (1.35%)	0 (0%)	2.1	74
Teachers should be trained to help students with social and emotional skills.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (2.7%)	17 (22.97%)	30 (40.54%)	25 (33.79%)	5.1	74
Student's social and emotional skills affect considerably to his/her ability to learn.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (8.11%)	26 (35.13%)	27 (36.49%)	15 (20.27%)	4.7	74
If students can control their emotions, they learn better.	0 (0%)	2 (2.7%)	2 (2.7%)	26 (35.14%)	29 (39.19%)	15 (20.27%)	4.7	74
It is difficult for a teacher to teach social and emotional skills to students that come from different background.	7 (9.46%)	21 (28.38%)	28 (37.84%)	15 (20.28%)	1 (1.35%)	2 (2.7%)	2.8	74
It is difficult to understand and control social and emotional skills of students if they come from different backgrounds.	4 (5.41%)	22 (29.73%)	22 (29.73%)	22 (29.73%)	2 (2.7%)	2 (2.7%)	3.0	74

Table 4 showed that although teachers mostly believed that there was not enough time to teach social and emotional skills at school, they addressed that it was not that difficult to teach them. They also tended to assign more responsibility to schools to teach these skills. In this sense, they disagreed that teachers cannot help students without social and emotional skills. Teachers agreed the least with the view that if a student did not learn social and emotional skills at home, then the teacher could not help him/her. They also tended to disagree that teaching those skills to students from different backgrounds and understanding their social and emotional skills was difficult.

Most of the participating teachers agreed to a great extent that creating a good atmosphere in the class was important, even if it took time away from teaching subject matters. This seemed to align with their views that students without social and emotional skills would cause trouble in the class. Accordingly, teachers' controlling of their own emotions was also important for them.

In part 3 of the survey teachers were asked how important they deem different student skills relating to social and emotional skills to be. They were asked to answer on a 4-Likert scale as to how important they considered different aspects of social and emotional skills education. The answer-choices in this part of the survey were given values from 1 to 4 in a way that "not important" got the value of 1 and "very important" got the value of 4. The distribution of answers based on how important teachers deemed different student skills relating to social and emotional skills was given in Table 5.



*Table 5: Distribution of answers based on how important teachers deem student skills relating to social and emotional skills*

	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Item Mean	Total
Student is able to name and identify emotions.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	19 (25.68%)	55 (74.32%)	3.74	74
Student is able to work collaboratively with others.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	18 (24.32%)	56 (75.68%)	3.89	74
Student is able to express his/her emotions.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	18 (24.32%)	56 (75.68%)	3.76	74
Student respects other people's opinions.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	12 (16.22%)	62 (83.78%)	3.84	74
Student can express his/her emotions during class.	0 (0%)	5 (6.76%)	25 (33.78%)	44 (59.46%)	3.53	74
Student is considerate for other people's feelings.	0 (0%)	1 (1.35%)	22 (29.73%)	51 (68.92%)	3.68	74
Student can solve conflicts.	0 (0%)	7 (1.35%)	28 (37.84%)	39 (52.7%)	3.43	74
If necessary, student has access to mental health professionals such as school social worker, psychologist and/or psychiatrist.	0 (0%)	3 (4.05%)	12 (16.22%)	59 (79.73%)	3.76	74

Table 5 showed that teachers mostly deemed being able to work collaboratively with others is an important skill. They also deemed important for students to have access to mental health professionals such as school social worker, psychologist and/or

psychiatrist. However, some of the participants did not agree fully that solving conflicts is that important of a skill for students to have comparing to other skills presented in the survey.

#### 4.2 The ways teachers address students' social and emotional skills

Teachers were asked to respond to how often they address given emotional skills on a 4-Likert scale ranging from "never" to "often". The distribution of answers based on the frequency they address these skills were given in Table 6.

*Table 6: Distribution of answers based on how often teachers' address different emotional skills*

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Item Mean	Total
Identifying emotions and naming them.	0 (0%)	4 (5.41%)	33 (44.59%)	37 (50%)	3.4	74
Showing students' own emotions.	0 (0%)	4 (5.4%)	29 (39.19%)	41 (55.41%)	3.5	74
Accepting students' own emotions and the emotions of others.	1 (1.35%)	4 (5.41%)	29 (39.19%)	40 (54.05%)	3.5	74
Self-control and controlling emotions.	0 (0%)	1 (1.35%)	19 (25.68%)	54 (72.97%)	3.7	74
Consideration for other people's feelings.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	16 (21.62%)	58 (78.38%)	3.8	74

Most of the participating teachers answered to address consideration for other people's feelings as well as self-control and controlling emotions to a great extent. Identifying and naming emotions was the least frequent addressed item, but it still had a very high item mean. As Table 6 shows, all of the emotional skills mentioned in the survey were fairly often addressed by the participants.

Teachers' views on students' social and emotional skills

Teachers were also asked to respond to how often they address given social skills on a 4-Likers scale ranging from “never” to “often”. The distribution of answers based on the frequency they address these skills were given in Table 7.

*Table 7: Distribution of answers based on how often teachers' address different social skills*

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Item Mean	Total
Treating others fairly	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (9.46%)	67 (90.54%)	3.9	74
Respecting other's opinion	0 (0%)	2 (2.7%)	10 (13.51%)	62 (83.79%)	3.8	74
Conversation skills	0 (0%)	2 (2.7%)	21 (28.38%)	51 (68.92%)	3.7	74
Teamwork skills	0 (0%)	2 (2.7%)	20 (27.03%)	52 (70.27%)	3.7	74
Taking responsibility of yourself and others	0 (0%)	2 (2.7%)	19 (25.68%)	53 (71.62%)	3.7	74
Managing conflicts	0 (0%)	1 (1.35%)	18 (24.32%)	55 (74.33%)	3.7	74
Different social situations such as work search or shopping	2 (2.7%)	35 (47.3%)	33 (44.59%)	4 (5.41%)	2.5	74
Managing different social situations such as work search or shopping	2 (2.7%)	335 (47.3%)	33 (44.59%)	4 (5.41%)	2.5	74
Bullying	0 (0%)	2 (2.7%)	31 (41.89%)	41 (55.41%)	3.5	74
How to work in collaboration with others	0 (0%)	1 (1.35%)	16 (21.62%)	57 (77.03%)	3.8	74

Table 7 shows that being respectful and thoughtful of others is considered to be more important for participants than self-control of one's own feelings and collaboration with others.

### 4.3 Addressing students' social and emotional skills in education

In the survey, teachers were also asked to indicate which subjects were easier for them to integrate social and emotional skills education and what kind of materials they used while teaching social and emotional skills to their students. Finnish and literature (N=67, 90.54%), Physical Education (N=58, 78.38%) and Religion (N=58, 78.38%) were the subjects that were the most associated with social and emotional skills. Out of the materials listed on the survey the highest percentage of answers was received by KiVa - school materials with 77.67% (N=46). In the open-ended part of the question, other answers included Huomaa hyvä -materials, Lions Quest and Yhteispeli.

The responses for setting goals for emotional or social skills in the lessons showed that 83.78% (N=62) of participating teachers set goals for lessons. The analysis relating to goals that teachers set for their classes including social and emotional skills showed that working as a part of a group or being considerate of others was mentioned 29 times and expressing one's opinion was mentioned 5 times. Teachers indicated these by expressions, such as

*“Group project skills...”*

*“..., working as a part of a group, ...”*

*“... in a group project, consideration of everyone's opinion...”*

*“..., collaboration and working in a group, ...”*

*“... and being considerate of others always rises as a priority.”*

In the survey, participants also answered whether or not they intentionally built teaching situations that focused on expressing and contemplating emotions and how to regulate them. About 2/3 of participating teachers intentionally built teaching situations that focused on expressing emotions and regulating them. Fifteen of these teachers mentioned drama education in the open-ended question and 4 teachers addressed drama education by mentioning different drama exercises, such as

*“Drama classes, especially in process drama”*

*“In drama class, acting emotions”*

*“...Practicing emotional skills with the help of stories/art/drama”*

*“In drama and in music, assignments related to identifying emotions”*

*“Drama exercises in Finnish and literature, ...”*

*“...Acting emotions via pantomime in drama class...”*

Content analysis showed that everyday situations such as waiting for your own turn or managing conflicts during recess were mentioned 14 times and the use of materials or programs created for social and emotional education were mentioned 9 times.

*“It is best done during schoolday...”*

*“...during situations in class...”*

*“Maybe something that would guide to these things in everyday-life at school...”*

*“In KiVa – and FRIENDS classes we have addressed emotions...”*

Content analysis also showed that there was a concern about the fact that teaching social and emotional skills was not systematic in basic education and many of the participants addressed the need for additional training in teaching social and emotional skills.

*"This issue is important in my opinion and it is not addressed enough in teacher education..."*

*"I would need a lot of extra training in teaching emotional skills..."*

*"There is a need for supplemental training..."*

*"One has to spend time on this matter and that takes away from teaching subject matter"*

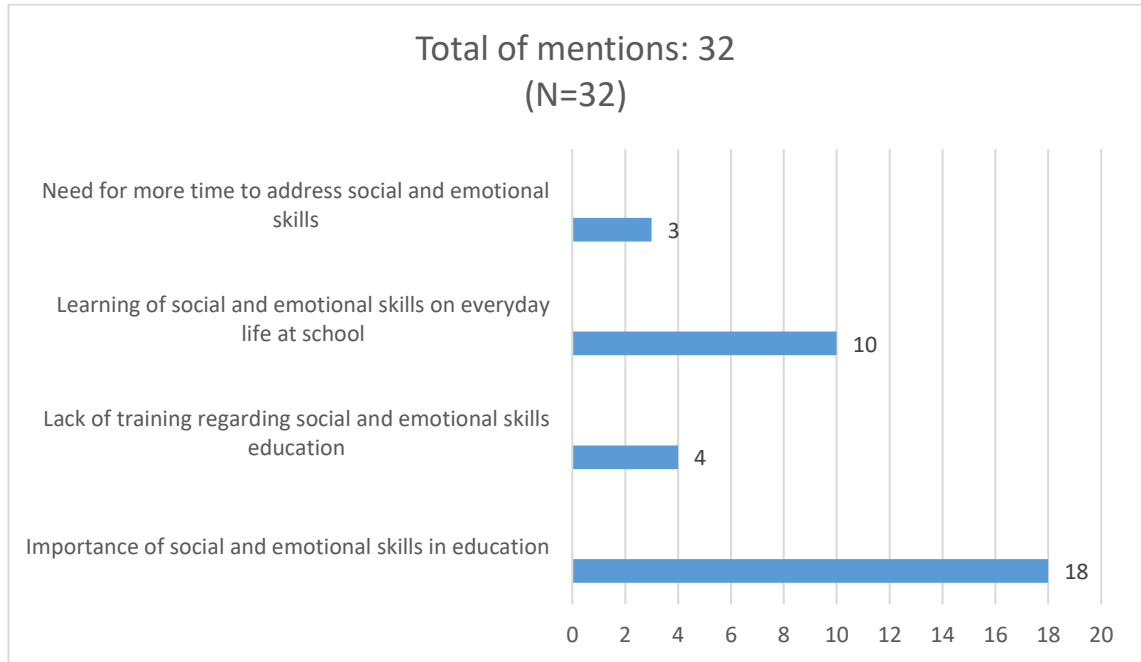
#### 4.4 Summary of the findings

The mean values of major social and emotional skills including collaboration with others, consideration of other people's feelings, self-control and treating others fairly were high, which in this study indicated that teachers see them as a very important part of education. 97.3% of teachers in this study agreed to an extent that teachers should be trained to help students with social and emotional skills. Teachers seemed to attribute responsibility to the school and themselves in teaching social and emotional skills. In line with this, teachers tried to address social and emotional skills in different subjects such as Physical Education, Finnish and literature and Religion. They also employed tools such as KiVa school, Lions Quest and FRIENDS -material to address these skills.

The survey ended with an open-ended question about thoughts on social and emotional skills. In most of the answers in this part, teachers brought up different themes on things related to social and emotional skills. Repeating themes of those answers were the importance of social and emotional skills, lack of training on social and emotional skills

and the lack of time to teach those important skills. The most mentioned items can be found in Figure 1 below.

*Figure 1: Most commonly mentioned items regarding social and emotional skills*



## 5 Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' views on social and emotional skills and how they address those skills with students because these skills affect teaching and learning environment and consequently students' learning to great extent (Puolimatka, 2004). The findings showed that social and emotional skills were considered important for a positive classroom environment by the participating teachers.

Previous studies (e.g. Virtanen, 2015; Lopes & Salovey, 2004; Goleman, 1997; Kronqvist & Kumpulainen, 2011) have shown that social and emotional skills are an important part of child's development and well-being. Findings of the study showed that participating teachers were aware of this importance and they also deemed practicing social and emotional skills to be important.

Teachers in this study attributed responsibility to school and teachers in supporting students' social and emotional skills. They addressed the importance of teacher's ability to identify and control their own emotions. This is in line with the literature (e.g. Virtanen, 2015; Ikonen, 2006; Lopes & Salovey, 2004; Kronqvist & Kumpulainen, 2011) that has stated the schools' importance in learning social and emotional skills. The view of responsibility included supporting children's social and emotional skills when they did not come from a supportive home environment and when they have different background. It can be said that participating teachers had a strong sense of responsibility for their students' social and emotional skills development when students might have certain disadvantages.

Although teachers had the view that social and emotional skills were important in general, they considered some of them more important. Their responses to items about respecting others and others' ideas were mostly very important or that they tried to address these skills more frequently in the class, which seemed to be in line with their sense of responsibility. They also employed different materials such as KiVa school -material, FRIENDS -material or Lions Quest -material. Participants stated that social and



emotional skills were mostly addressed in situations that involve conflict, bullying and during different subject matters such as Finnish and literature, Physical Education and Religion.

The open answers for this study suggest that social and emotional skills are addressed by teachers mostly in everyday life and they are related to situations that arise from students.

Most of the teachers who participated in my study agreed to an extent that teachers should be trained to help students with social and emotional skills, which was in line with their views of responsibility. Indeed, about one third of the participating teachers agreed to an extent that social and emotional skills are hard to teach. It might be the case that teachers find it more difficult to address students' social and emotional skills within more diverse classrooms. Yet, this conclusion would be limited because there was no information on how diverse participating teachers' classrooms were.

What can be done in order to train teachers on how to address social and emotional skills with their students? More training could be done in schools and in teacher education and the results of this survey show that teachers consider different materials and teaching methods to be the most effective way to teach social and emotional skills along with reacting to everyday situation that rise from the students' interactions. Teacher training could take more time to focus on reacting to those everyday situations in a constructive way to introduce the most common materials used for social and emotional skills education in Finland such as KiVa school -materials, Huomaa hyvä -materials and Lions Quest.

The National core curriculum of basic education in Finland (POPS, 2016) calls for social and emotional education but does not assign a specific time frame for it, which can lead teachers towards focusing on subject matter that has a defined distribution of lesson hours. In this study, some of the teachers raised a concern about how teaching social and emotional skills is not systematic in basic education and that it takes time from the subject matters. On the other hand, many of the teachers who participated in this study addressed

the fact that social and emotional skills are mostly learned in everyday life and it is easier to teach them when emotions and conflicts arise, which is almost daily.

Based on this study, there is a need for national guidelines regarding social and emotional education, since participants of this study raised a concern about social and emotional skills education taking time from the subject matter. One of the most important things for participants in this study was creating a good study environment in the classroom and they agreed to an extent that students who did not possess sufficient social and emotional skills could cause trouble in class.

Teacher training and teacher education should focus on how to address social and emotional skills in the classroom and how to employ classroom activities and materials in supporting the development of these skills in classrooms. An important issue that might come up in the future is the diversity in the classrooms. Therefore, while future studies might investigate actual training of inservice and preservice teachers and the effectiveness of such training in the classrooms, they should also consider how diversity in the classroom affects teachers' efforts in supporting students' social and emotional skills. Future studies should also focus on teachers' views on students' social and emotional skills with a variety of data collection tools to address their views in detail.

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# Appendix A

## Finnish Version of the Survey

### Sosioemotionaaliset taidot

Hei!

Olen viidennen vuoden luokanopettajaopiskelija Turun yliopistosta ja teen pro gradu-tutkielmaani opettajien näkemyksistä sosioemotionaalisten taitojen merkityksestä ja opettamisesta. Pyydän teitä vastaamaan tähän kyselyyn, joka on kehitetty tutkimusta varten. Kysely täytetään anonyymisti ja yksityisyytesi on turvassa. Vastauksia käsittelee vain tutkimuksen teossa mukana olevat, minä ja ohjaajani, eikä vastauksia jaeta muille ihmisille tai instituutioille. Jokainen vastaus on tutkimuksen kannalta tärkeä. Tutkimukseen osallistuminen on täysin vapaaehtoista ja sen täyttämiseen kuluu noin 10-15 minuuttia. Kiitos jo etukäteen vastauksestasi!

Perustiedot

1. Saako vastauksiasi käyttää opinnäytetyössä tai akateemisessa tutkimuksessa? \*

- kyllä  
 ei

2. Sukupuoli \*

- nainen  
 mies

3. Ikä \*

Ikä vuosina

4. Työskentelyvuotesi opettajana \*

- 1-3 vuotta  
 3-5 vuotta  
 5-10 vuotta  
 yli 10 vuotta

5. Mitä luokka-asteita olet opettanut työurasi aikana? Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon. \*

- 1.-2.luokka  
 3.-4. luokka  
 5.-6.luokka  
 7.-9.luokka

6. Mitä luokka-astetta opetat tällä hetkellä pääasiallisesti? \*

- 1.-2.luokka  
 3.-4.luokka  
 5.-6.luokka  
 7.-9.luokka

7. Oletko luokanopettaja vai aineenopettaja? Voit valita myös molemmat vaihtoehdot. \*

- luokanopettaja  
 aineenopettaja

Sosioemotionaaliset taidot muodostuvat yksilön kyvystä tunnistaa ja hallita tunteita sekä muodostaa merkityksellisiä ihmissuhteita toisiin. Sosioemotionaalisten taitojen oppimisella viitataan sellaisten taitojen oppimiseen, jotka liittyvät itsetuntoon, motivaatioon, käyttäytymisen säätelyyn sekä muiden kanssa toimeentulemiseen.

Vastaa seuraaviin kysymyksiin ylläolevan määritelmän perusteella.

8. Kuinka usein käsittelet seuraavia asioita oppilaiden kanssa? \*

	en koskaan	harvoin	joskus	usein
Tunteiden tunnistaminen ja nimeäminen				
Oppilaan omien tunteiden esiin tuominen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oppilaan omien ja muiden tunteiden hyväksyminen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Itsehillintä ja tunteiden hallinta	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Toisten tunteiden huomioon ottaminen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Kuinka usein käsittelet seuraavia asioita oppilaiden kanssa? \*

	en koskaan	harvoin	joskus	usein
Muiden kohtelemine reilusti	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Toisen mielipiteen kunnioittaminen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Keskustelun taidot	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ryhmätyötaidot	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vastuunottaminen itsestä ja muista	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ristiriitatilanteiden käsittely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Erilaiset sosiaaliset tilanteet, kuten esimerkiksi työnhaku tai kaupassa asiointi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Toimiminen erilaisissa sosiaalisissa tilanteissa, kuten esimerkiksi työnhaku tai kaupassa asiointi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kiusaaminen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kuinka toimia yhteistyössä muiden kanssa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Kuinka tärkeänä pidät seuraavia asioita? \*

	ei tärkeää	jokseenkin tärkeää	tärkeää	erittäin tärkeää
Oppilas kykenee nimeämään ja tunnistamaan tunteita	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oppilas osaa ilmaista omia tunteitaan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oppilas kykenee tekemään yhteistyötä muiden oppilaiden kanssa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oppilas kunnioittaa toisen mielipidettä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oppilas pystyy hallitsemaan tunteitaan oppitunnilla	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oppilas ottaa huomioon toisten ihmisten tunteet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oppilas osaa ratkaista konflikteja	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oppilaalla on tarvittaessa käytössään mielenterveysalan ammattilainen kuten koulukuraattori, psykologi ja/tai psykiatri	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



11. Mitä mieltä olet seuraavista väittämistä? \*

	täysin eri mieltä	eri mieltä	jokseenkin eri mieltä	jokseenkin samaa mieltä	samaa mieltä	täysin samaa mieltä
Koulussa ei ole tarpeeksi aikaa sosioemotionaalisten taitojen harjoitteluun sekä opettamiseen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sosioemotionaalisia taitoja on vaikea opettaa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sosioemotionaalisten taitojen opetus on kodin tehtävä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hyvän ilmapiirin luominen luokkaan on tärkeää, vaikka se veisi aikaa oppiaineiden opettamiselta	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opettajan oma kyky tunnistaa ja hallita tunteitaan on tärkeää tunnekasvatuksessa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oppilaat, jotka eivät omaa riittäviä sosioemotionaalisia taitoja aiheuttavat ongelmia luokassa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jos oppilas ei opi sosioemotionaalisia taitoja kotona, en voi auttaa häntä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opettaja pitäisi kouluttaa auttamaan oppilaita sosioemotionaalisten taitojen kanssa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oppilaan sosioemotionaaliset taidot vaikuttavat paljon hänen kykyynsä oppia	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jos oppilaat pystyvät hallitsemaan tunteitaan, he oppivat paremmin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opettajan on vaikea opettaa sosioemotionaalisia taitoja oppilaille jotka tulevat eri taustoista	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
On vaikeaa ymmärtää ja hallita oppilaiden sosioemotionaalisia taitoja jos he tulevat eri taustoista	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. Asetatko joillekin tunneille tiettyjä tavoitteita jotka liittyvät tunnetaitoihin tai sosiaalisiin taitoihin? \*

- kyllä  
 en

13. Voitko antaa esimerkkejä tällaisista tavoitteista?


14. Rakennatko koskaan tarkoituksellisesti opetustilanteita joissa harjoitellaan ja pohditaan tunteiden ilmaisua ja säätelyä? \*

- kyllä  
 en

15. Voitko antaa esimerkkejä tällaisista opetustilanteista?


16. Mihin oppiaineeseen mielestäsi on luontevinta liittää sosioemotionaalisten taitojen harjoittelu? Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon. \*

- Äidinkieli ja kirjallisuus  
 Matematiikka  
 Liikunta  
 Terveystieto  
 Kuvataide  
 Musiikki  
 Kotitalous  
 Käsityö

Uskonto

Elämäkatsomustieto

Kielet

Yhteiskuntaoppi

Historia

Ympäristöoppi / Biologia ja maantieto

Fysiikka ja Kemia

17. Käytätkö jotakin seuraavista oppimateriaaleista opetuksessasi? Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon.

KiVa -koulu materiaali

FRIENDS -materiaali

Viitottu rakkaus

Männerheimin Lastensuojeluliiton materiaalit

Tunne-etsivät

muu, mikä?

18. Palautetta kyselystä ja mietteitä sosioemotionaalisten taitojen opetukseen



# Appendix B

## English Version of the Survey

### Social and emotional skills

Hello!

I'm a fifth year student on classteacher studies from the University of Turku and I'm doing my master's thesis on teachers' views on social and emotional skills and teaching them. I am kindly asking you to fill out the survey that I developed for my study. The survey will be filled anonymously and your privacy and identity is protected. The responses will be within the reach of the research team, including me and my supervisor, and will not be shared with any other people or institution. Participating to this study is completely voluntary and it takes around 10-15 minutes to fill. Thank you for your answer in advance!

Basic Information

1. Do you allow your answers to be used on a thesis or academic study?

- Yes
- No

2. Gender \*

- Female
- Male

3. Age \*

Age in years

4. How long have you been working as a teacher? \*

- 1-3 years
- 3-5 years
- 5-10 years
- over 10 years

**5. Which grade levels have you taught so far? \***

- first or second grade
- third or fourth grade
- fifth or sixth grade
- seventh to ninth grade

**6. Which grade are you mainly teaching now? \***

- first or second grade
- third or fourth grade
- fifth or sixth grade
- seventh to ninth grade

**7. Are you a classteacher or a subject teacher? You can choose both options.**

- classteacher
- subject teacher

Social and emotional skills are formed by individuals to identify and manage emotions as well as form meaningful human relationships to others. Social and emotional learning refers to those skills that are connected to self-esteem, motivation, regulation or behaviour as well as getting along with others.

Based on the definition above, please answer the following questions.

**8. How often do you address the following emotional skills with your students? \***

	never	rarely	sometimes	often
Identifying emotions and naming them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Showing student's own emotions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accepting student's own emotions and the emotions of others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Self-control and managing emotions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consideration for other people's feeling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**9. How often do you address following skills with your students? \***

	never	rarely	sometimes	often
Treating others fairly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respecting other's opinion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conversation skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teamwork skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taking responsibility of yourself and others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Managing conflicts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Different social situations such as work search of running errands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How to operate in different social situations such as work search and running errands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bullying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How to work in collaboration with others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**10. How important are the following students skills for you? \***

	not important	somewhat important	important	highly important
Student is able to name and identify emotions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student is able to express his/her feelings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student is able to work collaboratively with other students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student respects other people's opinions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student can manage his/her emotions in class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student is considerate for other people's feelings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student can solve conflicts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If necessary, student has access to mental health professionals such as	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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	not important	somewhat important	important	highly important
school social worker, psychologist and/or psychiatrist	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? \*

	totally disagree	disagree	somewhat disagree	somewhat agree	agree	totally agree
There isn't enough time in school to teach social and emotional skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is difficult to teach social and emotional skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social and emotional skills should be taught at home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Creating a good work environment to the class is important, even if it takes time from teaching subject matters	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher's own ability to recognize and control their emotion is important in emotion education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students who don't possess sufficient social and emotional skills cause trouble in class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If student does not learn social and emotional skills at home, I cannot help him/her	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers should be trained to help students with social and emotional skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student's social and emotional skills affect considerably to his/her ability to learn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If students can control their emotion, they learn better	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is hard for teacher to teach social and emotional skills to students that come from different backgrounds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is hard to understand and control social and emotional skills of students if they come from different backgrounds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. Do you set goals for some classes that have to do with emotional or social skills?

- yes
- no

13. Can you give examples of such goals?


14. Do you ever intentionally build teaching situations that focus on expressing and contemplating emotions and how to regulate them? \*

- yes
- no

15. Can you give examples of such situations?


16. To what subject do you feel social and emotional skills practice can be most easily attached to? You can choose more than one option. \*

- Finnish and literature
- Mathematics
- PE
- Health education
- Art
- Music
- Home economics



- Crafts
- Religion
- Ethics
- Languages
- Social studies
- History
- Science /Biology and Geography
- Physics and Chemistry

**17. Do you use the following materials in your teaching? You can choose more than one option.**

- KiVa -school material
- FRIENDS -material
- Viitottu rakkaus
- Manneheimin lastensuojeluliiton material
- Tunne-etsivät
- other, what?

**18. Feedback from the survey and thought about social and emotional skills education.**


## Appendix C

### E-mails Sent to the Participating School Administrators

Hei [rehtorin nimi]!

Opintoni Turun yliopiston Rauman opettajankoulutuslaitoksella ovat tulleet siihen pisteeseen, että teen parhaillaan graduani perusopetuksen opettajien näkemyksistä sosioemotionaalisten taitojen opetuksesta ja tarvitsisin osallistujia tutkimukseeni. Tutkimus toteutetaan kyselylomakkeen avulla ja se soveltuu kaikille, jotka opettavat luokkia 1-9. Kyselyn täyttämiseen menee n. 10-15 min. Kyselyyn osallistuminen on täysin vapaaehtoista ja se suoritetaan täysin anonymisti. Lomakkeilla kerättyjä tietoja käytetään ainoastaan tutkimuskäyttöön. Olisin erittäin kiitollinen, jos voisit tarjota tätä kyselyä [koulun nimi] opettajille täytettäväksi.

Alla on linkki kyselyyn sekä lyhyt ohjeistus opettajille.

Ystävällisin terveisin,  
Janita Viitaniemi  
Turun yliopisto  
Rauman opettajankoulutuslaitos  
[phone number]  
[e-mail]

---

Hei [koulun nimi] opettaja!

Opiskelen Turun yliopistossa luokanopettajaksi ja teen parhaillaan graduani luokanopettajien näkemyksistä sosioemotionaalisten taitojen opetuksesta. Kaipaisinkin nyt vastauksia ja toivoisin, että vastaat linkistä löytyvään kyselylomakkeeseen. Kyselyyn osallistuminen on täysin vapaaehtoista ja se suoritetaan täysin anonymisti. Kyselyn täyttämiseen menee n. 10-15 min. Kiitos jo etukäteen vastauksestasi!

Linkki kyselyyn:  
[link to the survey]

Ystävällisin terveisin,  
Janita Viitaniemi  
[e-mail]