

Title of Research Project: An Exploration of Teacher Experiences and Perceptions of Social and Emotional Health Promotion in Irish Primary School

Researcher: Sinéad Foley



Contact details: sineadfoley7@gmail.com

Relevant key words: Social and Emotional Health; Wellbeing; Professional Learning Communities; Continuous Professional Development; Collaborative Practice; Facilitation

Summary:

While there has been much research in recent years in the area of social and emotional health promotion, there remains a lack of clarity around the role of primary educators in this area. The aim of this study was to investigate Irish primary teachers' perceptions of social and emotional health promotion as well as highlighting positive approaches employed and how possible challenges may be addressed in this area. This was a qualitative, applied research study which used semi-structured focus groups with primary teachers as the main focus of data collection. Data was collected in four different settings in order to achieve rigour. Key findings from the study indicated that teachers strongly see a role for themselves in relation to social and emotional health, however both greater capacity building for in-service and training for pre-service teachers is required. Likewise, teachers saw a need to support their own emotional health and wellbeing, as well as that of the children. Finally, sharing of professional knowledge was sought, as was support in bridging the gap between current policy and the curriculum.

As a result, Teaching Council funding was used to both complete the initial research and create a professional learning community among teachers in eight local primary schools. The community had the positive effect of fostering communal sharing of ideas and engagement with relevant research. Group discussion was facilitated, while participants had the opportunity to discuss best practice, share on-going initiatives in their own context, participate in individual and group presentations, as well as actively engaging with research - building their capacity to do so. They also had the opportunity to engage with CPD through facilitation of expert speakers. Collaborative practice, community links and research engagement were key facets of this project.

Published: May 2020