

STMS REPORT: DIGITAL MEDIA IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION - WHAT SAY THE CHILDREN?

1. Background and general information

1.1. STSM researcher: Pekka Mertala, University of Oulu, Oulu (FI), pekka-oskari.mertala@oulu.fi

1.2. Host: Stavroula Kontovourki, Department of Education, University of Cyprus, Nicosia (CY)

1.3. Duration and period: 16 March 2016-24 March 2016

2. Report on activities

STMS consisted of two parts: 1) participation in the second DigiLitEY -meeting and 2) research visit to University of Cyprus.

2.1. DigiLitEY-meeting

I participated to all general meetings and to the working group 2 (WG2) meetings which concentrated on young children's digital literacy and multimodal practices in early years settings and schools and in informal learning spaces.

One of the WG2's missions is to compose a comprehensive literature review on the current stage of research on young children's multimodal practices. As my current PhD research partially overlaps with these themes I, alongside with Saara Salomaa volunteered to gather and summarize the findings of the relevant studies that concern digital literacy in early childhood teachers' (pre-service) training programs. This task is to be done by the end of May.

2.2. Research visit to the University of Cyprus

The research visit had two aims: 1). to exchange ideas and experiences on theoretical and methodological questions of childhood studies and 2).to collect data in local preschools which could be used in a comparative and complementary manner with the data I had collected from Finnish preschoolers. Children were asked about their ideas of future classrooms i.e. what kind of tools, devices and activities there would be. A drawing-telling - method where children's drawings act as mediational tools was used.

While the pilot data collected during the STMS is concise the preliminary findings based on it are worth to pay attention to. Interestingly the children in pilot study drew and expressed much more teacher led activities than their Finnish age mates. Even in drawings where teacher wasn't present many of the children told that s/he has the control over the digital affordances in the classroom. These preliminary findings underline the importance of culturally (i.e. pedagogical culture) sensitive interpretation of research findings.

Both, these findings, and the discussions with Dr. Kontovourki and her colleagues have been extremely valuable for revising my (now accepted) paper based on the Finnish data and for composing a paper I'm presenting in the first DigiLitEY training school in Praga, Portugal in June 2016.

