

# Educational dialogue in kindergarten classrooms of Finland and the United Arab Emirates

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## Introduction

- The quality of social interactions and educational dialogue has been acknowledged as vital in the process of learning and deep understanding (e.g., Alexander, 2000; Mercer & Littleton, 2007).
- Students' achievements are not only dependent upon their own efforts but are the product of culturally situated forms of social interaction (Mercer & Howe, 2012).
- However, only few studies have examined variations in the actual educational dialogue between countries that differ in educational and cultural backgrounds (e.g. Alexander 2000; Wegerif et al., 2005).

## Aim of the Study

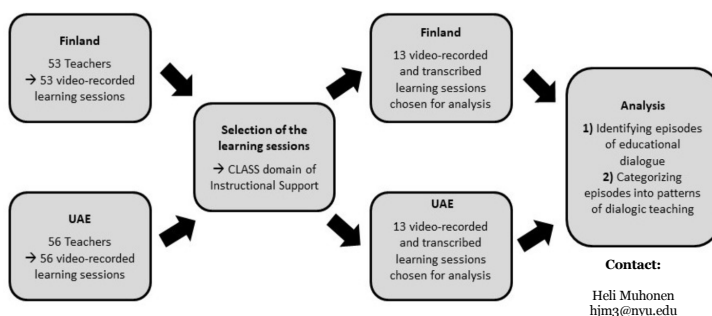
- The present study examined educational dialogue in two countries that differ in educational and cultural backgrounds: Finland and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).
- The present study aims to find out:

*How does the amount and quality of educational dialogue in kindergarten differ between Finland and the UAE with respect to the patterns of dialogic teaching and the subject of the learning session?*



## Data & Method

- The study is a part of research project of kindergarten teachers' stress and classrooms interactions in Finland (Lerkkanen & Pakarinen, 2016) and the UAE (Suchodoletz & Barza, 2016).



## Findings

	Teacher	Initiation of the dialogue	Student
Moderate	<b>Pattern 2a: Teacher-initiated dialogic teaching pattern of moderate quality</b> Teacher asks many short/closed questions to keep the dialogue going. Students do not participate without the teacher's help or encouragement.		<b>Pattern 3a: Student-initiated dialogic teaching pattern of moderate quality</b> Dialogue is student-initiated. Teacher might ask follow-up questions but does not make expansions or draw summaries that would collate what has been learned.
High	<b>Pattern 2b: Teacher-initiated dialogic teaching pattern of high quality</b> Teacher asks fewer questions but they are mostly open-ended. With the help of scaffolding, students participate and formulate their own initiatives in the shared knowledge-building process.		<b>Pattern 3b: Student-initiated dialogic teaching pattern of high quality</b> Dialogue is student-initiated but during the talk, the teacher makes expansions and brings together the main idea of the dialogue.

Patterns of dialogic teaching	Finland Number of episodes	United Arab Emirates Number of episodes
Pattern 2a: Teacher-initiated teaching dialogue of moderate quality	14	8
Pattern 2b: Teacher-initiated teaching dialogue of high quality	21	14
Pattern 3a: Student-initiated teaching dialogue of moderate quality	4	1
Pattern 3b: Student-initiated teaching dialogue of high quality	3	1
Episodes in total	42	24

## Discussion & Conclusions

- Teacher-initiated teaching dialogue of high quality (pattern 2b) was found to be the dominant pattern. However, the patterns showed variation in the quality of educational dialogues between the two countries.
  - In the UAE, fewer educational dialogues were found, teachers asked more questions and allowed less space for the open elaboration of diverse opinions.
  - In Finland, teachers allowed more open elaboration and sharing of different points of view and were sensitive to student initiative.
- A stronger emphasis on classroom interaction and dialogue in the national curriculum in Finland and the different kindergarten settings of the countries may explain the found differences.
- Since the quality of educational dialogue is shown to be linked positively with student learning already in Finland (Muhonen et al., 2017), the importance of educational classroom discussion should be acknowledged and its efficaciousness also be examined in the UAE.
- To promote educational dialogue, the importance of it should be acknowledged at the curricular level in each country's educational system and attention should be paid to teachers' dialogue and scaffolding skills already in teacher education.

### References

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