The aim of this study was to describe and understand what kind of experiences physical education teachers had of the use of social and emotional skills during an in-service course and within a year after the course. The purpose of the in-service course was to develop teachers' skills to manage variable social interaction situations at school. The in-service course comprised four two-day contact meetings and distance-learning phases. The social and emotional skills studied included active listening, clear self-expression by using I-messages, problem-solving skills, conflict resolution skills, systems approach and group skills (see Lintunen & Kuusela, 2007). The participants were 16 teachers of physical education. The data of this study consisted of the participants' semi-structured learning diaries during the course and the interviews of five participants a year after the course. The data was processed by using inductive content analysis procedures. Firstly, the actual expressions were collected from the transcribed interviews. Secondly, the expressions were simplified. Thirdly, 22 initial themes were established grouping the expressions according to the contents. Finally, the initial themes were condensed to seven sub-themes. One of these sub-themes called "challenges in practicing social and emotional skills" is reported in this paper. According to the data teachers started to practise the skills in every day life at home and in teaching, which indicates that they found the skills useful and worth learning. Teachers, however, felt that it was demanding to use the skills if the teacher was busy and her emotions ran high (for some reason). Shifting from confrontation with an I-message to active listening was perceived difficult, and the teachers were often embarrassed and felt inadequate in these situations. Conversations with other teachers were regarded as to be helpful when dealing with negative feelings. The teachers noticed that using these skills demands lots of concentration, and that the old behavioural model returns easily. Some of the teachers felt that the new way to interact was formal and strange. In addition, one teacher highlighted the power and value issues between students, teachers, and the whole school community as important questions. Despite the challenges, teachers believed that it would be possible to progress in using the skills in the long-term. The conclusion of this study was that the learning of social and emotional skills takes time and that negative emotions might emerge in the early beginning phase of learning.


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