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Health and learning – building a common bridge challenging educational science and school development

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Research topic

Education is one of the most important determinants for public health and health is closely linked to education. Good health aids the learning process and a good learning environment in school also promotes health. The Swedish National Agency for Education states that schoolchildren's well-being and development should be a focus in schools, and health and lifestyle issues are to be addressed. In the recent guidelines for school health care staff in Sweden, the National Board of Health and Welfare highlights that staff are to contribute to health promoting school development and to eliminate obstacles for individual students' learning. This speaks for multidisciplinary approaches to finding common denominators in the fields of health and education. The focus of this paper is the health dialogues held between students from age 6 to 18 and school nurses. A participatory approach was used to describe and understand the professionals' and the students' experiences of the health dialogue, and their thoughts on how to promote health literacy and contribute to health equality. The aim is to explore the possibilities for the concept of health literacy to bridge the multidisciplinary areas of health and learning contributing to educational science and school development.

Theoretical framework and research design

The starting point for the theoretical framework is the concept of health literacy as a synergy between health and learning. We use theories by Aaron Antonovsky (salutogenesis) and Paulo Freire (critical pedagogy) to aid the understanding of health and learning from an educational perspective in school development.

Expected findings /conclusions

The collaborative nature of work needed in schools today, due to the past years of reform in the Swedish educational system, is inviting interdisciplinary research into

school development. We argue that the boundaries of educational science and practice can be transcended and redefined with the help of the concept health literacy.

Relevance to Nordic educational research

In our attempt to further our understanding of the multidisciplinary field of health and learning we found researchers in the Nordic countries are posing similar questions to us, thus finding it an interesting topic.

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