

Mira Näsi, Miska Sikiö

Strengthening Participation to Increase Physical Activeness of Children in Vaahtera Day Care Center

Planning Physical Education With 4 to 5 Year Old's

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<p>In the new Early Childhood Education plan of 2016 the emphasis is placed on children's participation. The worry for the decreasing physical activity of children and youth motivated us to utilize participation to demonstrate children's ability to be more involved in planning of physical education.</p> <p>Our thesis consists of a theoretical and functional part. We collaborated with a day care center Vaahtera and were asked to help the staff to collect children's ideas for the upcoming semester for physical education. We had physical education sessions with a group of children ages from four to six. We welcomed the children to plan the sessions with us and we wanted them to create a tool for expressing their wishes. For our sessions, we had different themes and our goal was to draw children's attention back to those themes. The theory in our project consists of physical education and participation in Early Childhood Education.</p> <p>For feedback, we had a group discussion with children and a written questionnaire for the supervising teacher. Evaluation was carried out during our sessions.</p> <p>As a result, children were active participants throughout the project and the child initiated activity became more frequent towards the end. As a tool for expressing their wishes they came up with a mailbox where they wrote their ideas in a form of a letter at the end of each session. Feedback from the teacher showed that children participated more and were more active than normally.</p>	
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Tekijät Otsikko	Mira Näsi, Miska Sikiö Liikunnallisen aktiivisuuden lisääminen vahvistamalla lasten osallisuutta päiväkotiviikossa Vaahterassa. Liikuntakasvatuksen suunnittelu 4-5-vuotiaiden kanssa.
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<p>Lasten osallisuuden rooli varhaiskasvatuksessa on kasvanut uuden varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman tuomien muutosten myötä. Huoli lasten ja nuorten liikunnallisen aktiivisuuden laskusta viime vuosina sai meidät pohtimaan, voiko lasten liikuntamotivaatiota kasvattaa lisäämällä lasten osallisuutta liikuntatuokioiden suunnittelu – ja toteutusprosessissa.</p> <p>Tämä opinnäytetyö on monimuotoinen, jossa osallisuuden sekä liikuntakasvatuksen teorioita yhdistämällä suunnittelimme liikuntakasvatusprojektin 4-6 vuotiaille lapsille. Yhteistyöpäiväkotina toimi liikuntapäiväkotiviikossa Vaahterassa Jyväskylässä, josta pyydettiin kehittämään menetelmä, jolla lapset ilmaisevat toiveitaan koskien seuraavan toimintakauden liikuntakasvatusta. Kutsuimme lapset suunnittelemaan koko projektin kanssamme alusta loppuun, jotta kokonaisuudesta tulisi mahdollisimman lasten näköinen. Teemoitimme liikuntahetkemme kuitenkin sopimaan ikäryhmän vaatimuksille sopiviksi, mutta sisällön saivat lapset itse ideoida.</p> <p>Arvioimme toimintaamme yhdessä lasten ja ohjaavan opettajan kanssa, jokaisen liikuntahetken jälkeen palautekeskusteluiden avulla. Projektin loputtua pidimme lasten kanssa pidemmän arviointikeskustelun koskien koko projektia sekä teimme kyselylomakkeen ohjaavalle opettajalle.</p> <p>Lapset olivat aktiivisia toiminnan alusta loppuun ja lapsilähtöisen toiminnan rooli kasvoi, mitä pidemmälle etenimme projektissa. Liikuntahetkien sisältöön sekä omien toiveiden ilmaisuun lapset ideoivat vaivattomasti erilaisia keinoja. Ideoiden ilmaisussa päädyimme, ryhmäkeskustelun kautta, rakentamaan toiveiden postilaatikon, johon lapset saivat postittaa toiveensa kirjeiden muodossa.</p> <p>Saamiemme palautteiden ja havaintojemme perusteella projektimme suurin hyöty oli lasten aloitteiden sekä liikunnallisen aktiivisuuden lisääntyminen päiväkodin arjessa. Omasta mielestämme onnistuimme erityisen hyvin osallistavan ilmapiirin luomisessa, joka johti yllämainittuihin tuloksiin. Yksilöiden huomioiminen oli suurin haaste jatkuvasti vaihtuvan ryhmän sekä lasten ikäeroista johtuvan epätasaisen taitotason vuoksi. Lasten innokkuus toimintaa kohtaan, kuitenkin vähensi yksilöiden eroavaisuuden merkitystä ja jokainen osallistuja sai positiivisia kokemuksia liikkumisesta projektin aikana.</p>	
Avainsanat	Varhaiskasvatus, Osallisuus, Liikuntakasvatus,

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1 Introduction

Participation as a concept of social work has gained a lot of interest in recent years and in Finland the primary reasons for this have been worries about decreased activeness in political decision making and increasing number of socially excluded people (Kiilakoski, 2007).

Interest towards participation can be seen in Finnish policy-making and additions to legislation that emphasize the importance of inclusive and anti-discriminatory methods. For example, the renewed basis of Early Childhood Education-plan (2016) guides the professionals to support children's abilities to influence, participate and take initiative. Being listened to and democratic decision-making should be seen at a daily basis in day care setting. Child's ability to have an impact on their life is one of the fundamental aspects of participatory practice. Above mentioned practices aim to help children understand society and support children as they develop their self-image and identity. (Opetushallitus, 2016.)

Although Finnish government has taken measures to increase child and youth participation, through policy-making and regulations, we need to remember that it is entirely different thing to apply them into practice. The Council of Europe's policy investigation into Finnish policies reviled our inability to monitor the effectiveness of the laws relating to child and youth participation. (Council of Europe 2011, p 7-8.)

The law of Early Childhood Education states the children's rights when it comes to their education. In the legislation act 2 a § (8.5.2015/580) states the main aims for Early Childhood Education. It is mentioned there that the Early Childhood Education must promote every child's growth, development, health and well-being. It must implement diverse pedagogy when it comes to children's play, physical activity and creating positive learning experiences. Giving all children equal opportunities for learning and ensuring a safe environment. Children must have possibility for participation and to influence matters concerning oneself. We must work together with children and their guardians towards a balanced development and well-being. One of the points in this Act is also developing children's communication and communication skills and guiding them to be ethically responsible. (Varhaiskasvatustlaki 1973/36.)

It is mentioned in act 6 § (8.5.2015/580) that the Early Childhood Education environment must be safe, healthy, developing and must promote learning and take into consideration the child's age and development. The space and equipment must be appropriate. (Varhaiskasvatuslaki 1973/36.)

Act 7 a / b § (8.5.2015/580) states that in the day care center the child must have a personal education plan, which ensures that all children's personal needs are met. This plan should be made in co-operation with the guardians and the staff. The child's opinions should also be heard and taken into consideration when making the plan. (Varhaiskasvatuslaki 1973/36.)

Another cause for concern around the world is the physical condition of our children and youth. Berg & Piirtola (2014) have made a completion of researches done about exercise habits of the children and the youth in Finland during the years 2000 to 2012. According to their analysis of the data about half of the school aged children of Finland need more exercise and almost fifth of children aged 7-8 are overweight. They state that their analysis is mostly based on the data from the 2000-2002 and does not take on to account the changes that could have occurred during the time between then and now. (Berg 2014, p. 33-56.)

The data analysed may be old, but the rapid development of technology has had an impact on the physical activity of our children. According to Tuula Aira (2013) Finnish children were well above the recommended screen time in 2010. Study was conducted by WHO and it also confirmed an international trend called the drop off phenomena. Drop off phenomena refers to tendency of teenagers being notably less physically active than they were as children. (Aira et. al. 2013, p. 13 & 54.)

The purpose of this thesis is to combine physical education with participatory methods of social work in an early childhood education setting. We are trying to find a ways of supporting children as individual learners in physical education and give positive experiences about movement. Replacing screen time with physical activeness and prevention the drop off phenomena are matters that require early intervention and increasing participation is a good starting point for that process.

2 Participation

2.1 Definition

Participation in social pedagogy is multidimensional and complex subject and in Finland even more so because of the difficulty to find the counterword for the concept from other languages (Nivala&Ryynänen 2013). The word participation has multiple meanings in the English language. According to Leena Turja (2011) participation itself means being able to adjust one's own life and engage in the planning process of what is going to happen. Another explanation for the word is to be a part of activities planned by others. Turja distinguishes a third meaning for participation to be interventions of an outside source in order to increase participation in a client. These three meanings have their own concepts in Finnish language and their English equivalents could be "participation", "taking part" and "involvement". In purpose of clarity, I will use only these concepts with the above-mentioned meanings when talking about participation. (Turja 2011 p.26.)

In their article "Kohti sosiaalipedagogista osallisuuden ideaalia" Nivala and Ryynänen (2013) try to clarify the concept of participation by listing opposite meanings for the word. For example, if the goal for increasing participation would be preventing social exclusion, opposite for participation would be dispossession, the inability to access resources and possibilities for a better quality of life and thus prevent inclusion. In addition to the aspect of social well-being, participation towards political decision-making is one of the key parts of the concept of participation. The opposite of taking an interest in societal issues or expressing one's opinions can be called passiveness. Other opposites for participation are for example disregard and alienation. According to Nivala and Ryynänen the list of opposites show that we need more concepts of English language, like social engagement and inclusion, to define and understand participation more thoroughly. (Nivala 2013.)

There may be no clear-cut definition for the concept of participation, but these formerly mentioned three dimensions (participation, taking part and involvement), along with the explanation of what participation is not (dispossession, passiveness, disregard and alienation), certainly help to understand the motives for searching participatory methods in social field. Furthermore, they lead the way towards better functioning democracy and quality of life.

2.2 Ladder Models of Participation

How and when do we achieve participation is well researched area of social field and beginning to understand the concept leads to more elaborate ways of examining the different dimensions of participation. The most popular illustration about participation is the ladder model. Since the late 1960's the model has been altered by different authors and it has been applied to children by Roger Hart and further developed by Harry Shier as levels of participation. I will focus on these two models of participation because of their applicability to early childhood education, but note that both originate from the ladder of participation developed by Sherry Arnstein in 1969.

Hart's ladder has eight steps in it describing the level that child is participating. The ladder has been divided into two, non-participation and participation. The first three of the steps (manipulation, decoration and tokenism) are considered to have nothing to do with actual participation as the children are merely the objects for promoting agendas that they do not understand. This is usually because they are not able to understand or the purpose of the activity is not explained by adults. These three forms of participation serve in favor of the organizers agendas rather than the meaningful participation of the children involved and thus can be viewed as non-participation. (Hart 1992 p. 5-14.)

The remaining five steps of Hart's model are viewed as forms of participation where information can be viewed as a key factor in moving up from non-participation into the fourth step of the ladder which is called "assigned but informed". The difference from non-participation comes from the knowledge that the child has about the objectives of the activity and the role that child has been given. When the role of the child evolves the level of participation increases. In fifth step the children are consulted about a matter and results of the consultation are shared with the participants. Last three steps of the ladder are about children being a part of the decision-making process. Who takes the initiative towards participation, determines the ladder. Adult initiative to involve children marks the sixth ladder and last two require the child's inner motivation (their own initiative) to be a part of the decision-making. (Hart 1992.)

Shier (2001) states in his article "Pathways to Participation: Openings, Opportunities and Obligations" that the non-participation part in Hart's ladder-model might be the most applicable part to practitioners work as it provides a tool to reflect upon the methods that limit client-participation and how to avoid them. In the same article, Shier introduces his own model of participation. Aim of the model is to provide a tool of developing practice towards a level of participation that meets the requirements of Convention of The Rights of The Children. The five levels of participation by Shier are very similar to Hart's steps from 4 to 8. In addition to Hart's model, Shier includes the process of moving up in the levels. There are three questions and only after answering yes to each one, is it possible to move up a level. Are you willing to, are you able to, and is it obligatory to listen to children? If the answer is yes to all three questions, the practitioner has cleared level one and is ready to go to level two which is supporting children in expressing their opinions and the same questions are asked. This way the highest level of participation would be when the practitioner is willing, able and obligated to share power and responsibility with the children in decision-making. (Shier 2001 p.107-117.)

There are similarities between the explanation about the concept of participation by Turja and the ladder-model by Hart. We can link Turja's three dimensions of participation into Hart's ladders by placing the dimensions into the ladder. For example, children performing activities planned by adults (=taking part) can be associated with manipulation and decoration if the sufficient information about the objective of the activity is not shared. Adults efforts to make the child participate (=involvement) can be placed into the steps 3 to 6 in Hart's ladder with the sixth step being adult initiated involvement of the child in making decisions. So by applying the dimensions of Turja, the social pedagogical definition of participation is functioning only in the levels 7 and 8 of the participation ladder, where the child has involved him/herself into being part of the decision-making process. Hart, on the other hand, sees the steps from 4 to 8 in his ladder-model to be "models of genuine participation" because the level of participation needs to be individualized according to child's abilities. (Hart 1992.)

We can combine also Hart's non-participation part of the ladder with the list of opposites for the concept by Nivala and Rynänen, to understand what kind of practices need to be avoided in order to enhance participation. Shier's questions-model provides the foundation for reflecting the practice from the viewpoint of participation. Understanding the concept of participation in all of its complexity can be difficult and the tools presented in

this chapter are good guidelines towards more equal, democratic and participatory practice.

2.3 In Early Childhood Education

In the inclusive environment, we promote participation and equality in all activities. The children's, staff's and family's opinions should be valued. (Opetushallitus, 2016, p30).

The early childhood education plan mentions active and responsible participation as important foundation when building a democratic and sustainable future. It is part of the children's rights to be heard and participate with decisions that influence their own lives. It is one of the goals of early childhood education that it supports participation and encourages for children to take initiative. Children must be heard and they will plan, implement and evaluate the activities together with the staff. This will help them to develop their interaction skills and help them understand the importance of rules and trust. The staff must make sure that each child will get the chance to participate, since that will grow their self-confidence and improve their social skills. (Opetushallitus, 2016: 24.)

It is stated that children's understanding of co-operation, responsibility and consequences is improved through participation. Participation is supported by children's positive experience of being heard and seen and including children and their parents in making the plan for action. Children must be treated equally, but as individuals. With positive and encouraging interaction the child's identity development is supported as well. (Opetushallitus, 2016: 30.)

Participation in early childhood education has been studied a lot, especially from the viewpoint of the educators and adults. The aims of the studies that are presented here vary from finding out what educators think about the meaning of the concept and what participation means in practice. Also, exploring reasons why, the role of participation is not increasing in the pedagogy of day care-services and finally what can be done to support the participation of the child.

Stina Akola (2007) examined the differences between Finnish and German understanding and practicality of participation in early childhood education in her Master's thesis. Qualitative research was done by interviewing early childhood education professionals.

Nine professionals were interviewed from which five were from Germany and four from Finland. She distinguished three core problems and formed questions based on those. What way does participation appear in daily functions of the day care center? What methods do the professionals have of letting the child to be heard? What are the situations that the child is being heard? The results revealed that the Finnish professionals had more sceptic outlook on the complete participation of children. (Akola 2007.)

The idea of participation had positive connotation in all the interviews, but German pedagogy had the child's initiative in the center of the activity as Finnish professionals expressed their worry of losing control as child becomes more active in making decisions. Also, the age of the child tended to determine whether the child could participate into planning of activities according to Finnish professionals. Children were given decisions in daily activities of day care center and for the most part this was considered to be the only form of participation in Finnish pedagogy. Participation was only possible when it suited the plans made by adults and adults were willing to be flexible. (Akola 2007.)

The Germans had a bit different outlook in their planning of activities. Children had the expertise of what is interesting and fun as the adults took their ideas about the framework for the activity. In the middle of a project the adults would ask what the children want to learn more and they would make constant changes to the plan during the project. Flexibility and togetherness were the main principles of the activity and thus children had the room to participate as fully as they were able. Evaluation of the activities and development of practice had also very different forms in Finland compared to Germany. Finnish children were mainly asked to evaluate their own skills and the quality of their educators, where Germans got to voice their opinions about everything happening in the day care center. The evaluation was happening even during projects and thus the children got to develop the activities as they were going on. (Akola 2007.)

Salla Alholm (2014) studied the same problem in her master's thesis in University of Tampere with a different method and larger subject-group. She used data collected from a group discussion of 20 ECE professionals about the educator's role in child participation in day care center. Alholm's study revealed different obstacles for participation of the children than Akola's research. The core problem seemed to be lack of cohesion in the understanding and practicalities regarding child participation among the work community. Problems arose especially when looking further from the team of professionals

working in one child group. (Alholm 2014.)

Another conclusion about the discussion is related to educator's role in either supporting or suppressing the participation of children. Supporting practices are distinguished as either activating or considering and suppressing practices are described as controlling or passivizing. Activating children happens when children are involved in planning, implementing and evaluating the activities and considering practices include taking the initiatives of the children seriously and giving every child a possibility to participate according to their own skill level. Controlling and passivation practices are then the complete opposite from those mentioned above. (Alholm 2014.)

Päivi Virkki (2015) also studied how the participation of children is seen and the possibilities to have an influence in practice from the viewpoint of children as well as educators. She used open interviews and stories created by children as a data collection method to get the child's viewpoint and themed interviews with educators. In total of 24 child-originated sources were gathered and 4 educators were interviewed. Results indicated that children are more motivated to fully participate when they feel like they succeed and the activity is flexible towards children and their wishes. Positive attitude towards the practices are also supported with enabling different choices for children, unexpected events/surprises, up-to-date equipment and positive interaction between the children. (Virkki 2015 p.118-121.)

Educators mentioned couple examples of supporting participation of the children. Long-term projects where children are leaders of the sessions has been motivating activity and creating the rules together with the children was expressed to be a way enabling the children to affect their surroundings. Interestingly the educators saw participation being possible only when the child learns to take responsibility, not child-participation as a tool of teaching about responsibility. The results also indicated that more troubling/hyperactive children tend to suppress the educators will to facilitate participation inside a child-group. Control and protection tend to take over when dealing with a couple of children that play too rough and it is affecting the whole groups ability to participate. (Virkki 2015.)

These three studies have something in common, but still have very different reasons for why it is difficult to facilitate child-participation in all areas of the early childhood education. From the cohesion of understanding among the workforce to structure of the child

group, there are many things to consider when planning a participatory practice in day care center. What needs to be understood is that children are capable, intelligent beings and professionals need to give them the space to think about, plan and develop their surroundings. There is already a great deal of good practices to support child-participation like creating the rules together and evaluating the activities as they are going on and these practices will form the core of our thesis.

3 Physical Education in ECE

“The aim for Physical Education in Early Childhood is to create a base where children appreciate health and well-being and helping them to create a lifestyle where they are physically active” (Opetushallitus, 2016: 46).

When it comes to Physical and Health Education it is divided into exercise, food education, health and safety. The Early Childhood Education should offer versatile options for physical activity and inspire children to move and experience the joys of it. Children should have active play indoors and outdoors all throughout the year. There should be both guided activities and children should also have the opportunity to create their own active play. The Physical Education should be regular, diverse, goal-oriented and should take place every day. The regular physical activity is important for the child’s growth, development, and well-being. When doing physical activity in a group it also develops the children’s social skills. (Opetushallitus, 2016: 46.)

In physical activity, we can utilize different materials and therefore it becomes a multi-sensory experience. The mission of physical education is to develop the children’s body knowledge and motor skills, such as balance and movement skills. The movement should be varied in length, speed and intensity. The children should learn to move by themselves, with pairs and in groups. They should also learn the typical sports for each season. (Opetushallitus, 2016: 47.)

3.1 Physical Development of 4-5 Year Old Children

Our target group is a group of 4 and 5 year olds. Children at this age are learning a lot through play. When it comes to the physical development of children that age, they start to grow height, lose their baby tooth and their muscles become more fine-tuned which

helps them to perform more detailed tasks, such as buttoning a shirt and tying shoelaces and overall their motor skills develop. Children at this age shouldn't be using a diaper anymore, but bed-wetting might still be common. They should also be growing on average 3 kg and 5 to 10 cm in one year. (Lee, K. 2016.)

At age 5 the children will also be more agile and able to use different physical play equipment, such as jump rope and bicycle. They are also able to jump, run, throw, climb, stand on one foot and swing, but not yet able to always understand and follow rules of a game. Children will also often test their limits and be adventurous and curious to see how high they can jump and how fast they can run. They may even practise riding a bicycle, skiing and ice skating. The children at this age need about 10 to 12 hours sleep per night. (MLL, 2017; Rock, A. 2016.)

3.2 Benefits of Physical Education

When talking about physical activity in Early Childhood Education, it simply means active play and moving and exploring the environment. Children should move at least three hours a day and avoid sitting or playing with electronics for a long period of time. The best way to accomplish this is for the adults to lead by example and to provide a lot of opportunities to be active in a safe environment. Also, it has been proven that children are more likely to become active in outdoor play rather than indoors. This is because they have more to explore in their environment when playing outdoors. Physical activity in Early Childhood does not only benefit the children's health at the time, but it can have positive long term effects. Children who are active from a young age has a stronger bone structure and better heart health. It is also said that it develops children's brains and social skills. Studies show that children who are physically active are better at managing their own emotions and behaviour and have improved attention. The most important long term effect in children who are physically active, is that those children are more likely to be active later in life as well. This is important for optimal well-being and health throughout their life. (Hnatiuk, J 2016.)

Studies show that physical activity is associated with many health benefits in children. These include lower cholesterol, lower blood pressure, less metabolic syndrome, better bone density and less obesity. Obesity is a cause for many health problems, such as, diabetes, joint problems, asthma, sleep apnea and heart disease. By reducing children's

obesity, they will benefit from better overall health. These studies also state, that the more physical activity with more intensity the bigger the health benefits throughout the child's life. (Janssen, I. & LeBlanc, A., 2010.)

Physical activity doesn't only benefit children's physical development it affects all the areas of development: motor development, cognitive development, psychological development and social development. Motor development means the developmental process of muscles and their movement, such as: walking, running, jumping, throwing, kicking, reflexes and balance. Cognitive development is the development of activities when you combine formation of knowledge and thinking. These include: memory, observation, language development, creativity and imagination. Psychological development includes the development of one's self-esteem and child's ability to recognize themselves as individuals with their own responsibility for themselves. Social development is in tune with the emotional development and it entails, communication skills, expressing emotions and controlling them. (Sääkslahti, A., 2015.)

People that are more active have a lower risk for many medical conditions compared to less active people. Extensive research shows the health benefits through participation in physical activity. These include lower risk of depression, less social anxiety and shyness and better self-esteem. Organized sport, especially in teams, have been said to be an important factor in a child's social development. Sport participation in children is associated with enhanced emotional and behavioural well-being, lower risk of emotional distress, better self-esteem and less shyness. (Eime, R. & Young, J. et.al. 2013.)

In previous studies the psychological and social benefits of participation in physical activity have been proven. Most of these benefits in sports are related with team or group sports and activities. In individual-sports children have higher anxiety scores, but in sports done in a group, children have much less social anxiety than inactive children. These types of sports also have many other social benefits, such as, making new friends, developing teamwork skills and having better communication skills. Psychological benefits include, having more confidence, feeling sad less often and being more emotionally controlled. (Eime, R. & Young, J. et.al. 2013.)

3.3 Recommendations for Physical Activity in Early Childhood Education

The recommendations for physical activity in Early Childhood Education in Finland were written in 2005 by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in Helsinki. This document states the minimum quantity and quality of physical activity children are meant to get for optimal health. (Sosiaali- ja Terveysministeriö & Opetusministeriö & Nuori Suomi ry, 2005.)

Daily exercise is the basis for children's well-being and healthy growth. Children should get at least two hours of active exercise every day. For children aged 3 to 6 is physical activity often self-motivated. The adults should make sure that every day the child will have many opportunities for exercise in a diverse environment. (Sosiaali- ja Terveysministeriö & Opetusministeriö & Nuori Suomi ry, 2005.)

About the quality of the physical education it is explained, that children should get to practise their motor skills every day in different environments. According to the recommendations the Early Childhood Educators should plan and organize goal-oriented and wide-ranging physical education daily. There should also be one guided physical education lesson inside and one outside on a weekly basis. They should also support the children to move by creating an attractive environment. It is also important to remember to teach the children about safety when exercising in different kinds of surroundings. Children should have access to equipment for versatile ways of moving. There should also be focus on collaboration with parents when planning physical education. (Sosiaali- ja Terveysministeriö & Opetusministeriö & Nuori Suomi ry, 2005.)

In a recent update it has been mentioned that under 8-year old children should be getting at least three hours of physical activity, which includes both active and light exercise. Also there is emphasis on reducing long sitting periods as a goal. Children in early childhood, should not be sitting down for longer than one hour at a time. They should also be getting enough of sleep, rest and healthy nutrients from their diets. These goals are aimed to be achieved by 2020. (Opetus- ja Kulttuuriministeriö, 2016)

4 Activity Plan

In our thesis, we wanted to develop the way of organizing physical education in early childhood education that supports every child's way of participating into the activities. We try to inspire children to plan and evaluate the activities themselves and figure out their own way of making physical education more enjoyable. We have set a framework of combining play and certain themes because we wanted to include the goals of the recently renewed early childhood education plan into our project. The viewpoint of the child will be our priority number one, as the activity sessions are planned with a flexible mind-set that allow the children to be innovative and make changes as we are going on with the activities.

Only completely unchangeable part of our plan is the last part of each session. This is where we want to hear the children about their wishes concerning physical education and put their thoughts into one concept. In the beginning, we clarify that their wishes will be implemented into next year's physical education plan. The concept, in which we are compiling the wishes, will be designed and constructed together with the children.

Each activity session will have three parts: Coming together, exercise and relaxation. We start the sessions with a greeting game or a warmup-exercise that are easy to participate in, but also easy to evolve into suit more skilled children. In the actual activity part of the sessions we ask the children about the ways they would like to learn the skills related to that session's theme. Then either implement the ideas that come up or implement our own exercise's that support the learning and participation of the children. We always end the sessions with relaxation and discussion, that we hope will be mostly child initiated, about their own wants and thoughts concerning physical education and the sessions with us. The last thing that we do, on the last activity session, is handing out the concept that includes all the wishes from the five sessions, to the educator of the child group.

The renewed early childhood education-plan has a strong emphasis on participation of the children and their ability to effect in the kindergarten environment. The need for more participatory methods in multiple areas of ECE-work is real and we wanted to explore the possibilities of participation and physical education combined. Participation and be-

ing able to make decisions can be a strong motivator towards an activity. We see potential in giving children the possibilities to affect their physical education as prevention of dropping out from physical activeness later in life. We will never find out the long-term effects of our project, but our aim is not to do academic research on the matter, rather than to develop the physical education of our working life partner, day care center Vaahtera into more motivating and child-initiated direction.

4.1 Vaahtera and co-operation

We are doing our thesis in collaboration with a partner, which is a day care centre in Jyväskylä called Vaahtera which is part of the Norlandia day care centers. The group we will be working with has seven children ages four and five. We will have five meeting times to implement our action plan.

We wanted to do our thesis for Vaahtera because of their emphasis on physical education. There was other option in Jyväskylä region with the same emphasis, but Vaahtera was the most recently opened unit so we figured they would be more open towards working with us. This assumption was soon confirmed when we contacted the unit. We got the instructions to do whatever we want regarding physical education with children and already had the idea about linking participation with physical education and got positive feedback regarding the implementation of the idea. From there we had the freedom to plan and implement our functional part of the thesis as we pleased, but we kept in touch with Vaahtera by email and phone calls to confirm our ideas with the supervising teacher Anna.

We did not have meetings concerning our thesis and visited the unit only once before starting our physical education sessions with the children. This proved to be a mistake as we did not get sufficient information about our subject group and had no chance to influence the number of the children that attended our sessions which forced us to change our original plans for the sessions. all and all the co-operation went smoothly because we had practically no restrictions to our functional part what so ever, but could have benefited from more active communication with the unit.

Day care centre of Vaahtera is focused on supporting the natural exercise of children. They focus on children enjoying movement and guiding them into an active lifestyle. The staff points out on their website that through active play children start to explore the environment, develop their social skills and creativity and practise problem solving. They let the children be curious and they have good equipment that supports it and the space makes the children feel like home. They work in smaller groups which enables the children's participation and they want to help children develop a positive sense of themselves. They also have children in three different age groups and these groups have their own education plan for physical education. (Norlandia, Liikuntapäiväkoti Vaahtera. 2016.)

4.2 Methods

4.2.1 Fifth Dimension

Fifth dimension as a method of participation has been used for decades to motivate children to learn. The concept originates from psychology and differentiates animals and human's abilities to find meaning for objects. Both animals and humans can perceive an object, but only us humans can attach a meaning or many meanings for that object. The fifth dimension refers to this world of different meanings, making other animals, that are not able to find meaning for objects, four dimensional beings. (Hakkarainen 2002: 80.)

The method utilizes the world of meanings to create a situation, where the student is not performing in the real world, rather than a fictional space and trying to solve problems for a fictional character. Many variations from the fifth dimension – method have been perfected to suit the needs of the client group. For example, Saara Blomqvist & Aino Laine (2012) did a project with preschool children where children and adults solved problems together for the magician who lived in the magic-forest. The aim of this project was to improve interaction between the children and get them to think about bullying and how to prevent it. (Blomqvist 2012.)

The objective of using fifth dimension is to get the children and adults closer to one another by creating an authority, for example a beautiful princess, which they try to please

by completing tasks. The adults are there to help the children get through these tasks that often are connected to the curriculum or address a need of the children in pedagogical framework. It aims to create more equality and better interaction between the participants and motivate them to learn about things, that would in the real world be difficult to grasp. (Hakkarainen 2002. p.81) Imagination, play and participation are in the center of the activity, thus making it a good method for motivation of preschool aged children

4.2.2 Learning through play

Play is an important part of children's development. Play is defined as an activity, where the aim is in the activity itself and not its outcomes, it should be flexible and have a positive effect on the children. Play is natural and children often seek to play when given free time. There are different types of play and we will be using locomotor play, social play, object play and pretend play. Locomotor play is a large body activity, including exercise play. It is used to support children's physical development and growth. It is especially important in ages four to six, when physical coordination and healthy growth is important. Social play means playful interactions with others during play. Object play is using objects in a playful way. These objects can be anything from puzzles and blocks to balls and beanbags. This allows children to explore new movement and it develops their problem-solving skills. Pretend play refers to play where an object or an action gets a new meaning. For example, a cup can be a phone, ball can be food, ropes can be roads or a mat can be a river. This type of play develops children's imagination and creativity. It is also stated that pretend play enhances emotional security and is used a lot to treat children's anxiety or help them to deal with loss or trauma, by recreating situations they have been through without them having to discuss about those memories. Pretend play also develops children's mind development and social skills, by negotiating about roles and different task division. This is called social pretend play. (Smith, P. & Pellegrini, A. 2013.)

As we can see play is a crucial part on children's learning and is beneficial to all areas of children's development: social-, physical-, emotional- and personal development. Other benefits of play are language development and identity formation. It is also crucial that children will feel heard and that the adults will observe the play. (Miller, Cable & Goodliff 2010. P.99-108.)

4.2.3 Method for Getting Feedback

The evaluation of our project will consist mostly of our own observation of the children and evaluating the activity of the individuals as we are exercising. We also hope that the children participate into the evaluation and development of our project by reserving some time for group discussion at the end of each session. We adjust our original plans after every session taking the child-oriented ideas into account. At the end of the final session, we will have a bit longer group discussion where the children get to voice their opinions about our project. Children's feedback will be the most important for us, but we also want to hear the professional opinions from the educator of the group. For her feedback, we will prepare a questionnaire regarding our project from their viewpoint.

4.3 Ethics

Our project is done in collaboration with a day care centre and our activities will be done with a group of children. Children are a vulnerable client group and there are multiple factors to consider when it comes to ethics. We need to ask permission from parents, if their child can participate in the activities and whether the child can be seen in pictures and if their artwork can be seen in the final thesis. For this we made a consent form (Appendix 1) that the parents will fill out before our first meeting time. We also mention in this form that we will not be mentioning any names of the children.

When implementing our action plan, we should follow the Code of Ethics. We should treat children as equals, respect them and see each child as an individual, yet treat them all equally. We should always act in the best interest of the child and foster their independence. We should strive to have open conversation and to make sure that the children will feel heard. We will also have to ensure a safe environment during our activities. (ACP, 2013.)

4.4 Timetable and Content

We will have five meeting times that all last one hour in the day care center Vaahtera. Our themes are balance, which consists of stretching, twisting their body, bending, swinging, stopping and landing, moving skills that consist of walking, running, jumping,

sliding and climbing. and coordination/handling skills that are throwing, kicking and catching. We have been asked to create a format where children's wishes for future activities in physical education will be heard. Here we will explain the schedule, materials/tools used and our division of labour. In every single one of our meeting times we will try to create a positive learning experience for the children and let them participate as much as possible in planning the activities. We will use the methods of learning through play and fifth dimension, which were earlier explained. If the children will have difficulties in having ideas we will always come in and start giving possible ideas or starting points. We will both be involved in all activities. (Ahvenainen, T, Haapasalmi, P. et.al. 2015.)

On our first day with the children we will focus on creating a relationship with the children and staff and getting to know each other. We were asked to have a "Vappu" theme so our first activities will include balloon's and ticker tape. We will start in a circle, which ensures that everyone will have equal opportunity. We will pass a balloon and one who has the balloon will say their name. After that everyone can pick a balloon or ticker tape in a colour of their choosing. Then they will explore what are all the different ways of throwing and balancing the tool, first by themselves and then throwing it with a pair/group. Then we will have a game where the balloons/ticker tape is food and children gets to pick who gets it (monster, wizard etc). The children will only get simple instructions: to not touch the material with their hands and to get it from place a to place b. After this, we will plan our "wish tree". The children will plan with us, that how could we write down their wishes for the future activities. This could be a tree with wish leaves or house with dream windows etc. We will also discuss the children's wishes for the next meeting time.

For our next session, we are planning on having the activities outdoors and focus on moving skills. We will start the day with "Follow the leader". The children will all get to be the leader one by one and everyone simply must follow them. The leader can move by jumping, walking slow, running fast etc. This will get everyone warmed up and every child will get to participate and be creative. After this we will utilize the model of fifth dimension and be escaping our "monster". We will move in different ways in different areas, climb over and go under objects and try to get away on time. This is also the day when we will create our "wish tree" using carton, paper, glue and scissors.

The next theme is balance and our third meeting time with the children, we will start with a tool, which is same for everyone (for example a bean bag). The children will then have to experiment that how they can keep the object off the floor with balancing it with something else than their hands. If this goes well they can even try to start walking. After this we will make a balance track together. The children can decide the different activity points and what materials to build them with. This can be jumping the trampoline “over the river”, using the wall bars as a “spider net” that they must go through and using floorball sticks as “fallen trees” that they should walk on top of. Lastly, we will quiet down and do some yoga. Both the children and us adults will take turns in showing everyone a stretch that they will then copy. We will also use slow music to help set a more relaxed atmosphere.

For our fifth session, our theme is coordination and handling skills. We will start with giving the children access to all different shapes and sizes of balls and they can share any games/activities that they know that involves a ball. They can then teach this to everyone and we will try to do them. We will even try to invent a whole new activity together.

On our last meeting time, we will start with a trick track that combines all three of our themes. We will give the children access to all equipment of the day care and they can then plan a trick track with the help of adults. They can use cones, balance boards, hula-hoops, bean bags, ropes, trampoline and balls. We will also finish our “wish tree” and get feedback from children and staff with a group discussion that we will record just for the purpose of being able to make notes with us being able to participate in the discussion.

5 Implementation

Our themes are balance, which consists of stretching, twisting their body, bending, swinging, stopping and landing, moving skills that consist of walking, running, jumping, sliding and climbing. and coordination/handling skills that are throwing, kicking and catching. Here we will explain the schedule, materials/tools used and our division of labour. In every single one of our meeting times we will try to create a positive learning experience for the children and let them participate as much as possible in planning the activities. We will use the method of learning through play, which was earlier explained.

If the children will have difficulties in having ideas we will always come in and start giving possible ideas or starting points. We will both be involved in all activities. (Ahvenainen, T, Haapasalmi, P. et.al. 2015.)

5.1 Getting to know each other and developing motor skills

Our first meeting time took place on the 28th of April and we had 3 participants ages three to five. We started the day in a circle playing a little name game. We told our names, ages, favourite sports and from the children's request, favourite foods. After this we gave everyone a balloon and they got to independently get to know this new equipment and how to balance it, throw it and kick it. This activity was picked to improved their moving skills. After this they got to throw it with their friends in a style of their choosing. After this we came up with our own game with the children. This was called "feed the horses". Some of us were horses and the rest had to get all the food to the horse from place a without touching it with their hands. After this we made a variation where wolfs came to steal the food and we saw who ended up with more, horses or wolfs. As food, we used balloons that represented oranges, berries and grass. After all the physical activities, we ended again in a circle and the children came up with an idea of a mailbox to collect their wishes in.

We came up with a mailman Pate as our fifth-dimension character after the children came up with the idea for the mailbox. Children will send him letters at the end of each of our sessions.



Learning motor skills with balloons - throwing



Learning motor skills with balloons - kicking

5.2 Making the mailbox

Next meeting time was on the 4th of May and we had 4 participants ages three to six. We started again in a circle and started throwing a beanbag and whoever was holding it said their name. After this the children got to teach us “bull wrestling” that they wished to do. This was where there are pairs and both are on the floors on their knees and the other is trying to push the other one forward. Then we moved to doing our mailbox. This

was a lot of fun and everyone was working together to build a mailbox from an old shoe-box. After this we split the children and some were doing “children’s yoga” to improve their balance where each child got to come up with a move and everyone followed. The others were putting their wishes into the mailbox we had just created and sending them to mailman Pate. The child yoga did turn more into aerobics, since all the children still had a lot of energy.



Making our mailbox



Finished mailbox

5.3 Developing coordination and handling skills

Our third meeting time took place on the 9th of May and we had 8 participants ages four to six. We started now sitting down in a circle again passing the same beanbag as before. This time we brought a lot of coordination skills into the mix by passing it to every other one or by just one specific hand. Then the children got to pick the style and we went from passing it with our feet to freestyle. Then everyone got to pick a ball of their liking and they got to throw it, kick it and even throw “baskets”. After this the children wanted to play a game where “wolfs will catch sheep”. Of this we came up to a variation where in the middle of the room there was a wolf who had to be eyes closed. Then all of us rest were sheep that had to get through the fence without the wolf catching us. This everyone wanted to play many times and everyone got to be a wolf. Lastly, we had empty water bottles and a ball and we asked if the children could come up with something. They said, “let’s throw the ball to try to knock out the bottles”. So, we decided to do “bottle bowling” and took some wishes again to our mailbox to send to mailman Pate. Again, we finished in a circle and with our signature “HEY!” yell at the end.



Children came up with 'water bottle bowling'

5.4 Developing balance and making a trick track

Our fourth session was on the 15th of May and we had 7 children ages four to six. In our starting circle the children told us that they want to do the wolf and sheep game again so we did. After this we started to build an obstacle course where the children got to pick the stations. They came up with: ropes, trampoline, tunnel and "jar legs" to walk with, climbing wall bars and making a path from rubber hand- and footprints. This benefitted

their moving skills. After this we cleaned up together and had a quick game of hide and seek, which is what the children asked for. Again, we finished with an ending circle.



Equipment available for children to build an obstacle course from.



Finished obstacle course part 1



Finished obstacle course part 2 - Children wanted to play 'floor is lava'

5.5 Developing moving skills and getting feedback

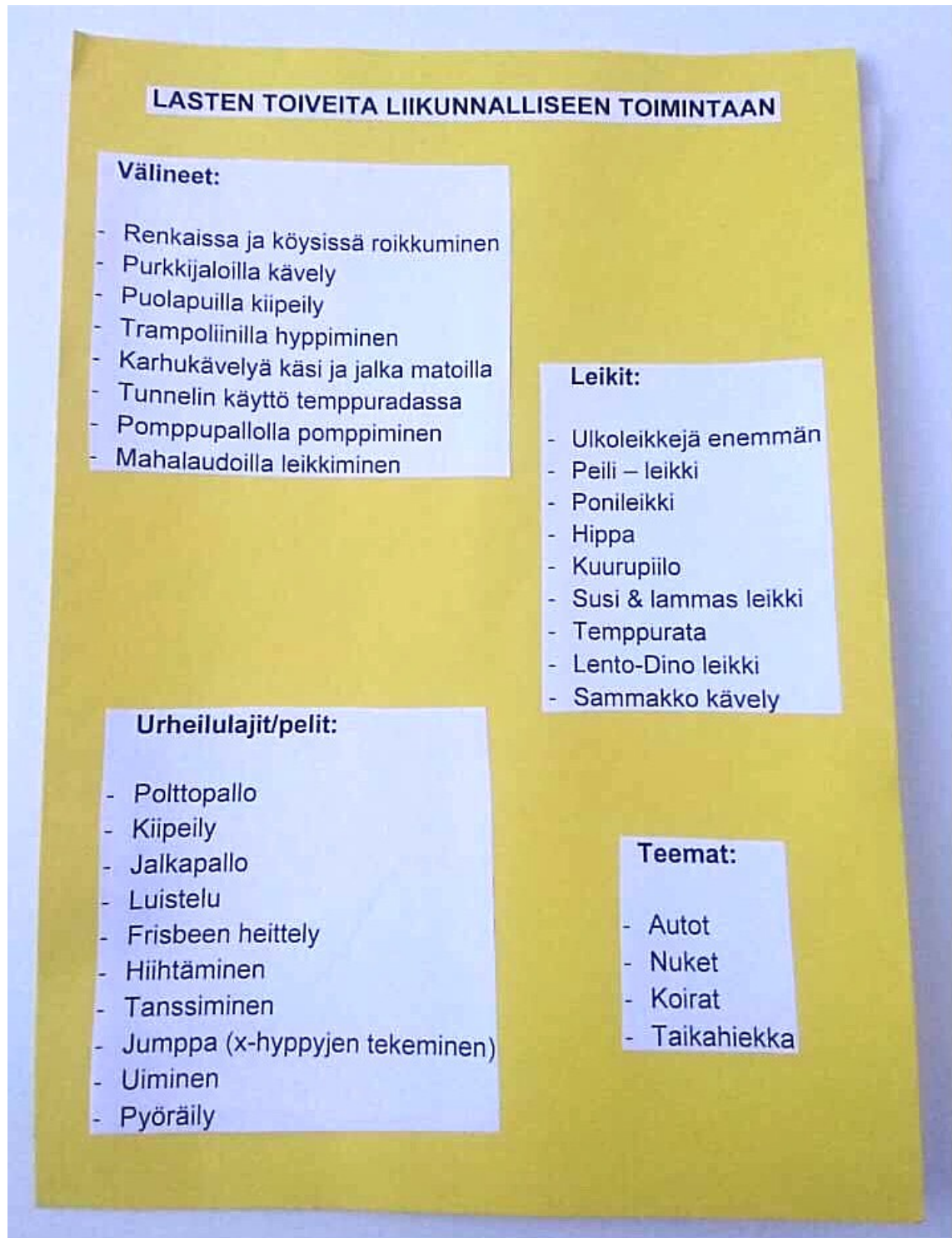
Our last meeting time took place on the 16th of May and we had 4 participants ages four to six. This was our last meeting time and in our circle the children told us that they want

to play “flying-Dino game”. Since we didn’t have a lot of room we had one as a Dino in the middle of the room and everyone had to get from the other end to the other. We also used different moving methods every time such as jumping, crawling and walking. After the children wanted to play a game called “Mirror”, but we decided to make it into “colour mirror” There was two in the front and they called orders such as: “those who are wearing something red can take 3 steps forward.” Or “those who have black in their shirt can take one jump forward”. Then we moved to a circle and had a group discussion for our feedback with assistant questions. After this was over the children wanted to play dodgeball that we played four rounds of. The meeting ended with a nice group hug and everyone waving us a goodbye.

After this meeting time we collected all the children’s wishes and made a completion of them into a yellow cardboard. We divided the wishes into four different categories: equipment, activities, games/sports and themes. Equipment that children wanted to use more were: trampoline, ropes/hoops, wall bars, plastic jar legs, balls and tunnel. For activities children wanted more outdoor play, hide and seek, catch, obstacle courses and the game called mirror. When it came to games and sports the children wanted more dodge ball, football, ice skating, climbing, throwing frisbee, skiing, dancing, swimming, gymnastics and biking. Finally, the themes that they wished for were cars, dolls, dogs and magic sand. We gave these collected wishes to the day care center to use if they want to when planning their physical education for the future.



Kids wanted to play dodge ball during our last session.



Children's wishes collected into a cardboard for the day care center.

6 Evaluation and Feedback

The project started off with great enthusiasm and the children were active and innovative from the first session all through the project. We were successful at combining our previously mentioned themes with the participatory methodology that allowed the child-oriented ideas to be implemented into the project. When the elements of physical education are added the whole purpose of our thesis becomes visible. To make physical education fun and pleasant for everyone. Although we had one child drop out from the sessions in the middle of the project, we considered our goals regarding the participation of the children to be met. The child that did not want to continue the project with us was the youngest of the group at age 3 and had issues with keeping up with the much older children of the group.

We started each time in a circle and finished in the same circle. This gave the sessions good structure and made the transitions easier for children. It also gave a calm and accepting platform for children to tell their ideas. We also noticed that children often came up with themes, such as pony's and car's rather than activities or games. Some of the days there were children that didn't want to participate to some of the activities, because they were tired or feeling sick so we then gave them tasks such as cheering their friends or setting up the equipment. We noticed that occasionally it was challenging to control the group of children and we would even describe it as a creative chaos. We noticed that the more children participated the more they also wanted to make their own rules.

Each time we were able to utilize fifth dimension, when the children got to send letter to mailman Pate, where they expressed their wishes concerning their own physical education. It was easier for children to come up with ideas when they were directed to an outside authority.

Our difficulties were in large part because we did not have enough collaboration with the unit before we started our planning. This was unfortunate, because it forced us to plan the activities without meeting the child group. We planned the project based on the word of the unit's chief and our information ended up being incorrect. 7 children between the ages of 4 to 6, turned into 9 children from ages 3 to 6.

We also could have paid more attention to cultural diversity. When we started our project, we noticed that there were couple of children that were from a different cultural background and one of them didn't speak any Finnish or English. He had a sibling in the group who could translate for us and if she wasn't present we had the possibility to utilise the day care centres picture cards.

Since we went into this project wanting to increase participation, we knew that our activity plan is most likely going to change. With our first session, we started as planned and soon, as we hoped, the children started adding their own ideas. We also noticed that closer to the end and our final two meeting times the children started trusting us more and being more open about their ideas. We felt that the division of labour was good throughout the project and we were able to give clear directions to the children.

We had few core goals that we wanted to achieve. One, we wanted to work in a way that invited the children to be the most active agents in every part of the project. Two, the final product needed to be something that helped the day care center's professionals in their future planning. Three, we wanted to create moments of joy for the children originating from the sensation that they can express themselves in a physical way in a safe and supporting environment.

These goals we were able to sufficiently achieve regardless of the difficult situations we faced especially in the beginning of this project. The fact that children were always happy to see us and they had positive experiences in planning the sessions, made it clear that the participatory way of working was successful. We got even more encouraged about the end result when the teacher gave us feedback, that the children's initiatives had increased after our project started and it had made the teacher's work easier.

6.1 Participation during our session

Children originated activities were in the core of our original plan and we wanted to support and encourage them to voice their opinions and ideas for further development. We simply approached this with the mind-set of creating the right kind of atmosphere to our sessions and giving the children enough time to think and develop their ideas.

The children got to participate in two different levels during the project. They got to influence the sessions and the activities immediately if they wanted to and write down their wishes for future physical education sessions in a letter that they would put in our own mailbox. The wishes put in the mailbox would be implemented into next semester's planning. The idea of the letters and the mailbox also came from the children and we used almost one entire session into building and decorating that mailbox. This seemed to have very positive effects into children's initiatives towards voicing their opinions in the future sessions.

We talked about our activities and sessions every time we met and collected feedback from children about the days. Everyone were very enthusiastic about the activity parts of the sessions, but had different opinions about our discussion times and waiting periods. This was expected, but the main goal was to get the children motivated to be more physically active and find joy in movement so the sessions were a success in that sense. The feedback from the teacher made us even more confident of our project as she had noticed an increase of initiative and activeness from children after we started our project.

Playfulness and companionship with the children played a big part when we wanted to create an environment where the children can talk about their wants and needs freely. It required a lot of improvising and observing from us and efficient distribution of the responsibilities helped with that a lot. We spent some time with the children before and after we started our activities, because we wanted the children to start focusing even before we start the session. After every session, the children asked us to come outside to play with them and we wanted to grant those wishes as much as possible. This created a sort of companionship between us and the children that was based on a mutual respect. We wanted to respect their wishes so they (most of the time) respected ours.

We had our challenges in making sure every child got the attention they needed, because of the group size and variation of the children. We never knew how many children would be with us and who was going to be present. We needed to plan the activities in a way that enabled for a 3-year-old to participate, but also challenge the 6 year olds of the group. We should have made it clear from the start that we cannot have that much variation in the number of the participants and especially in the ages of the children. On the other hand, we did not have much choice in the matter as the unit had just started their business and the number of older children was low (about 7). One factor was also

the fact that that group of 9 children did not know each other very well. We figured that the activities would have been easier to implement if the children were better acquainted. In the end, we made the best of the challenging situation and managed to achieve our goals concerning the child group and our learning.

6.2 Feedback

For our feedback and data collection we did a group discussion. From the children, we asked five guiding questions: What has been fun, what has been boring, is it nicer to do activities when you get to pick what you do, did you learn something new and do they feel like they have gotten the chance to participate.

“It was nice to play our favourite games and to decide what we want to do”

The children told us that mostly they enjoyed the obstacle course and the sheep and wolf game. None of them could think of activities they didn't like, but some thought that it was boring to sometimes sit in a circle and listen. Many mentioned that it was nice to come up with things to do and some mentioned that they have really liked that we have come and played with them. They said that they have learned new games and some even said that they have done the same activities also at home the same day.

From the teacher of the group we were doing this project with, we got feedback that the children looked forward to our meetings and this project gave them the opportunity for the children to express themselves and be more innovative. She also told us that our directions to the children got better throughout the weeks and that our division of labour could of been more clear.

7 Discussion

We chose this project due to both of our interest to physical activities and we wanted incorporate the new focus to participation including to the Early Childhood Education plan.

During the project, we learned to adapt according to the group's needs and to improvise in very short time. The changes we made to our original plan altered some of the objectives of our project, but the result pleased every party of the project. These sessions were very educational for us as we had not worked in an actual day care center for a long time. We got to experience the changing environment and circumstances again and the experience reminded us of the constant need for flexibility in this profession.

The need for flexibility and adaptability of a kindergarten teacher became clear to us when working with a group that had large variation in the skills and abilities between the children. These differences are something that we will face every day when working in kindergarten and they needed to be addressed in every part of any project. Flexibility of the schedule and exercises that can be adapted in a way that enables participation of everyone, according to their developmental stage and skill set.

The changes in the group provided lots of challenges as we had different number of children in every session varying from 4 to 9 and we didn't know the number until the morning of each session. Both of us were sick almost an entire week during this project, but miraculously we only needed to reschedule one of the sessions. The illness took its toll on both of our well-being and affected inevitably to the project as well.

We were very pleased about the innovative and enthusiastic attitude of the children and because of their activeness our project turned out to be successful. The participation of the children became visible through the mailbox, the letters children wrote and from the content of our sessions which was mostly planned by the children. The wishes of the children can be used during the planning of the next semesters physical education for the day care center of Vaahtera.

We managed to take every individual into account during the sessions with the help of the whole group but we also had times when someone did not want to participate into the activities. We wanted to give the children the freedom to choose not to participate and encouraged these children to participate the way the felt was best and reminded everyone that observing the activities was also one way to participate. We felt that this method was successful in creating the kind of atmosphere we were looking for. In the end, every child participated actively at some point of each session and got positive experiences from exercise.

When doing this kind of activity with the children, we recommend regulating the group to be as similar regarding the age and the number of children. This makes it easier to make more consistent plans that support the participation and needs of every individual of the group. Also, having the same children for every session would increase the quality and quantity of the child-oriented ideas. We felt that the constantly changing group affected negatively into the togetherness of the children during our sessions and would like to replicate the project with more time and coherent subject group.

When it comes to our personal development we learned a lot during this project. We gained a lot of practise on planning and implementing activities with children. Throughout this project, we needed to carefully plan activities yet at the same time have the plans be flexible enough to encourage children's participation.

When we started working on this thesis we were wondering about, how the new ECE-plan will change the way we plan and implement our practice in this field. It was interesting to read about Akola's (2007) research and to see how visible child-participation already is in Germany. We were aware that similar practices exist in Finland already, but came into the conclusion that we can do better.

We looked at the benefits of participation from the perspective of the client and determined that people tend to be more motivated towards active participation if they are involved in the planning process themselves. Then came the realization about how our organization of physical education in kindergartens and schools have very little or non-existent possibilities for participation from a socio-pedagogical viewpoint. We wanted to approach physical education in a way that is not so widely used in the practices of our ECE -and school systems, and see if we would be able to create something that serves in favour of the children, the professionals and our educational system.

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Appendix 1. Activity plan

Date&Time: 28.4.2017, 8.30-9.30

Theme: Physical education

Equipment/Materials/Environment:

Balloons, party ribbon/Daycare center's "gym"

Content Orientations:

Growing, moving & developing, Many forms of expression

Objectives

Students:

- Meeting the children and introducing them to our topic
- Creating the right kind of atmosphere for our projects larger purpose (children planning their future activities)
- Getting to know the environment and equipment more thoroughly
- Get the project's main goal (the wishtree) started by planning the concept together

Children:

- Familiarizing with us and understanding the theme of our meetings.
- Planning the activities/exercise/play with us
- To find joy from physical activeness while thinking about what/how/why we enjoy movement

Description

Students:

- We start together in a circle and play couple of introductory games (balloon) with the children, where we study their names and preferences regarding themes that children choose.
- From the circle we move on into exploration of our material by individually and with pair trying out different things with a balloon. Instructing will be done by Miska and Mira will be observing the children from the side.
- From here on out we want to listen to children and their ideas for games and activities we could do with balloons and party ribbon. We will have couple of backup games, if the children will not have ideas to implement.
- Ending discussion in a circle led by Mira with Miska supporting and we will huddle up and shout out something as the grand finale of each session.

Children:

- Children will come to circle at first and tell about themselves and tell us what they want to know about us
- They can activate themselves into moving by playing with balloons and party ribbon
- Children will process the objective of our sessions from the start and hopefully understand that we want to know their ideas and implement them together during the project
- After the activity-part of the session the children will get a chance to plan the concept of our wish collection in a group discussion. We will end the first session after the children are finished with the discussion.

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Date&Time: 4.5.2017, 8.30-9.30

Theme: Physical education

Equipment/Materials/Environment:

No specific equipment or materials/Daycare center's "gym" or outside

Content Orientations:

Growing, moving & developing, Many forms of expression

Objectives

Students:

- To start doing exercises related to different moving skills like crouching, jumping, running and sliding
- Although we have a different theme for every session from now on, we still want to implement the children's ideas so we are going to do warm-up activities related to our theme and encourage children to develop new ways of moving in the given framework
- We want to make the warm-ups as simple as possible with the possibility for modification to suit the more advanced individuals. This is to make sure everyone will be as motivated as possible from the start
- Get ideas for future implementation concerning movement skills
- Build the mailbox of wishes and mail the first ideas

Children:

- Explore their movement skills in a safe environment and inside their own capability
- Do different exercises and develop them further as they want&need
- Think about games and activities that support learning different moving skills
- Feel free to voice their thoughts and opinions while we are doing the activities and in the discussion part.

Description

Students:

- We start in a circle and say hello to each other. Then Miska will instruct the children into the warm-up game (follow the leader) as Mira takes pictures and observes

- After warming up we will ask from the children if they have come up with any suggestions about the next activity and implement the idea that gets the most support from the group
- In case there will be no ideas from the children, Mira will take the lead by hosting a game that supports children trying different types of moving
- We will end our session by constructing the mailbox of wishes and collecting the first ideas as a group

Children:

- Children will come into the circle and tell us about their day
- Warm-up game will be follow the leader where everyone gets to be the leader once if necessary
- Children are asked what they want to next related to different movement skills and everyone gets to say something
- Children plan their own drawings that they cut out of a cardboard and glue on to the mailbox
- Lastly we will write their first wishes down on a letter that they will then put into the mailbox

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Date&Time: 9.5.2017, 8.45-9.45
 Theme: Physical education

Equipment/Materials/Environment:

Trampoline, benches, balls etc./daycare center's "gym"

Content Orientations:

Growing, moving & developing, Many forms of expression

Objectives

Students:

- Get the children excited about practicing their balance in a safe way
- Motivate to use their full skill set by using imagination and finding different meanings into ordinary things (5th dimension)
- Get ideas for games and activities that develop balance

Children:

- Participate into the activities within their own capabilities
- Learn about their balance and how to develop it
- Have fun while doing the activities
- Develop and plan the activities together with us
- Try different elements and learn about the possibilities of the daycare center's equipment and environment

Description

Students:

- We will start in a circle as usual and meet&greet
- Mira will give different objects to the children and give short and simple instructions of what they can try with the objects
- Then we will ask if the children want to plan a obstacle course together with us that challenges us to develop our balance
- Miska will host a child-yoga session as the ending and at the same time we will be collecting the children's wishes into the mailbox

Children:

- The usual start and then the children can chose the object they want to work with
- Ideas for what to do with each object are listened to
- Building the obstacle course together and then going through it as many times as they want
- Settling down into a circle and showing different stretches or movements and repeating them as a group
- Writing letters into the mailbox

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Date: 12.5.2017, 8.45-9.45
 Theme: Physical education

Equipment/Materials/Environment:

Different kinds of balls/daycare center's gym or outside

Content Orientations:

Growing, moving & developing, Many forms of expression

Objectives

Students:

- Developing handling skills and coordination with games that the children know and like
- Get the children to teach us about their favorite games and activities with different kinds of balls
- Finding out special skill of every participant
- Planning a new game or a variation of already existing game with the children
- Writing down the favourite games of the children and the rules of the game developed together

Children:

- Teach us about their favourite things and teach a skill for the whole group

- Be courageous and creative when trying to invent a new game
- Support others ideas and develop things along the way

Description

Students:

- We start in a circle with balls in the middle and meet&greet
- We ask the children about any games including a ball or balls and then play the most popular game
- We will ask the children to take some space and start bouncing the ball and trying different things with it
- The we will ask everyone to show one thing that they are good at and others to try to repeat it
- Then we will go through the favorite games of everyone and try to come up with combinations or variations of the games in order to invent a new game
- Discussion at the end and collecting wishes

Children:

- To try different things with balls and develop their coordination and handling skills in the process
- Think about their own skills and try to come up with something that they can show to others
- Support others and be proud of their own skills
- Be innovative in their own terms and give out anything that can be added as a rule or an element to our new game

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Date: 15.5.2017, 9-10

Theme: Physcal education

Equipment/Materials/Environment:

Ropes, hula hoops, trampoline etc.

Content Orientations:

Growing, moving & developing, Many forms of expression

Objectives

Students:

- Give children all the power in the session to decide and plan the hour
- Support everyone's ideas and give everyone a chance to affect
- Get ideas from everyone for the mailbox and have a great last day with the children

-Get honest feedback from the children at the end as well as their last wishes

Children:

- Have the support and safety needed to plan the day together
- Come up with the games as a group and getting through the day without any hassle
- Realize that they have the ability to plan activities themselves and have fun with each other

Description

Students:

- We meet&greet and ask the children what they want to do as a warm-up
- Then we encourage them to plan together the activities of the session and we give suggestions and help if needed
- Collecting the last wishes and hosting a group discussion about our project (summary, plusses&minuses, what could we do differently)
- Solid ending with a little bit different pattern so that children know we are not returning

Children:

- Circle for beginning
- Decide the warm-up and other activities
- Come to circle for feedback discussion
- Ending & good byes

Appendix 2. Interview with the supervising teacher

From the teacher we had more specific question. Here is what she replied:

What have you thought about our project?

The children have been very excited and looked forward to our meeting times. It has made my job easier, especially now while being pregnant. The beginnings and endings were nice, since they were always the same. This has also brought the opportunity for the children to express what they want to do also outside of our meeting times.

Have the children been participating more than usual or been more active?

The children participate already a lot, but this definitely gave them room to be more innovative.

In what areas is there room for improvement?

In the beginning the directions for the children were a little unclear, but towards the last meeting times this got a lot better. There also could have been a better division of labour which would have made it more clear for the children.

Appendix 3. Lupahakemus

Lupahakemus

Hei!

Opiskelemme Metropolia ammattikorkeakoulussa sosionomiksi. Teemme tällä hetkellä opinnäytetyötämme, jonka tavoitteena on lisätä lasten motivaatiota liikkumaan päiväkodissa osallisuuden kautta. Toteutamme viisi erilaista toimintahetkeä lasten kanssa, niin sisällä kuin ulkona, liikuntaan liittyen huhti- ja toukokuun aikana. Kertojen jälkeen kokomme myös palautetta lapsilta sekä työntekijöiltä. Tavoitteena on saada lasten ääntä kuulumaan enemmän toiminnan suunnittelussa.

Toimintaa varten pyydän suostumustanne lapsenne osallistumiselle. Valmiissa opinnäytetyössämme näkyy niin lasten kuvia sekä heidän tuotoksiaan, mikäli vanhemmat ovat siihen luvan antaneet. Lasten nimiä ei julkaista. Opinnäytetyömme julkaistaan sen valmistuttua arviolta vuoden 2017 loppupuolella ammattikorkeakoulujen opinnäytetöiden verkkoarkisto Theseuksessa.

Halutessanne annamme mielellämme lisätietoja.

Palautattehan allekirjoitetun lupalomakkeen mahdollisimman pian päiväkotiin!

Kiittäen:

Mira Näsi mira.nasi@metropolia.fi

Miska Sikiö miska.sikio@metropolia.fi

Jyväskylässä (päivämäärä)

Lapsen nimi

Huoltajan allekirjoitus ja nimen selvennys

Lapseni saa osallistua toimintaan.

Lapseni kuvan saa julkaista opinnäytetyössä.

___ Lapseni kuvaa ei saa julkistaa opinnäytetyössä.

___ Lapseni tuotos (piirros, taideteos) saa näkyä opinnäytetyössä.