

# **“Tiny Diak”:**

## **A Project Plan for a Baby Nursery to Student-Parents**

Thesis

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## ABSTRACT

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Project plan nursery for infants from two to fourteen months old, located at Diaconia University of Applied Sciences for students that became parents during their studies. This thesis explains the procedure needed to open a nursery at the university and its benefits for all the participating parties. This could be an option while children still cannot join the public kindergarten due to age restrictions.

It is a product based thesis. However, it is also a project plan, because it is a product that needs approval, and a budget to be implemented. Although, the thesis aim is to build a nursery at the university's premises, the institution itself has not promised yet by any means that there will be a nursery in the future.

### **Keywords:**

Nursery, daycare, playgroup, University of Applied Sciences, infants, student parents.

## INTRODUCTION

The thesis idea came from a personal life experience. It basically consists in a nursery for infants from two to fourteen months old, located at Diaconia University of Applied Sciences'. The goal of this project, is to empower mothers to be active in their student life. At the moment, there is not such a service provided at the school or by the municipality. It would be a great help for student parents to have this assistance.

This service is optional and for those who need to graduate fast and do not want to take a year break in Finland. This thesis project plan does not aim to abolish the well fought maternity leave right, on the contrary, the goal is to give a chance for those who would like to manage maternity differently. This thesis explains the procedure needed to open a nursery at the university and its benefits. This nursery could be an option while children still cannot join the public kindergarten due to age limits.

Once the child is born, the mother must go on maternity leave at least from half a year to a year, interrupting her professional life in every aspect. The motherhood experience has many positive outcomes, nevertheless the mother may feel depressed and isolated eventually, since she stays at home taking care of the newborn.

Due to the short father's paternity leave and possibly the biological breastfeeding issue, it is the mother the one that needs to be constantly present. If the school could provide this aid, the student mothers could combine their new maternal identity without disrupting their professional life.

Many parties involved could benefit from these services, the university as a service provider but also possible study trainer in early childhood, the student-parents, the children, the placement trainees, and the welfare system.

## 1 GOALS OF THE NURSERY

The main goal of this project is simple and very clear. First, it is about empowering mothers after they give birth to continue their studies. It is good to be active, there is a risk of feeling lonely during the first months of maternity. This concept could help them to keep in touch with their professional life, friends and environment avoiding unpleasant side effects (Aiken 2000). Perhaps not every parent will agree on this, but the nursery is an optional service, no one is forced to use it if they prefer to stay at home.

As a secondary aim, it would be helpful, not only because the mothers get to assist to the lectures, but as a secondary option, they could also do their placement in the nursery. There will not be a need to post pone it until the child can join the municipality's kindergarten. Taking care of their own children meanwhile meeting other mothers, it is a perfect combination. Completing the placement, be your own child caregiver, learn more about child-care techniques and possibly create a parent social network.

For this, mothers should be prioritized over other students while asking for Diaconia University of Applied Sciences' nursery placement. Third, the infants can be close to their parents while they are studying, the location of the nursery is an important advantage. Finally, it would be beneficial for the school as well, because it lowers the risks of early studies abandonment after a long maternity break. In addition, this nursery model of university could attract more students that are interested in child education care. Diaconia University of Applied Sciences could be a pioneer in Finland with such a study program since it cannot be found elsewhere nowadays.

Considering this is a project plan based thesis, the concept will not be implemented straight away after published. It needs to be approved by several entities

to make it possible. The long-term goal would be to see this nursery working in Diaconia University of Applied Sciences in a close future, and possibly in many other universities around Finland. On the other hand, the short-term goal will be to receive the approval of the project plan at first by the university, and proceed with it.

It is essential that the school concedes a proper location in order to develop and execute this perfectly. When talking about children the primary concern is comfort and safety always. This thesis project plan cannot predict what will be the outcome when applying for these services. For that, after publishing this paper, there are going to be many issues pending of approval such as child safety space, legislation and financing the possible costs of the premises that would need to be solved beforehand.

If the project could not be implemented as such, the alternative would be to create a club activity based nursery during school hours. Meaning that the nursery could be conceptualized as a voluntary playground inside the school during lecturing hours. The volunteers could be students and the personnel of the school if interested, as long there are qualified professionals covering the task.

In the figure 1, the goals will be summarized.

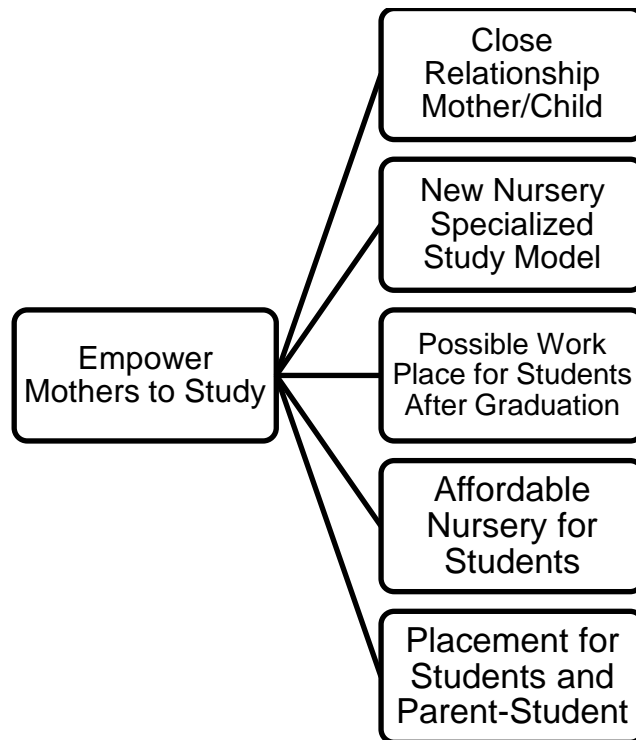


FIGURE 1. Goals of the Nursery.

## 2 PROJECT'S PLAN BACKGROUND

Pregnancy is a nine months long process that changes completely a woman's life. The body suffers many transformations at a physical and mental level. A woman can start already feeling limited, morning sickness, nausea, back pain, leg cramps... These symptoms can alter her immensely, sometimes even incapacitate her to continue with the daily routine. Nevertheless, since study is an activity that does not require a huge physical effort, a pregnant woman in most of the cases can continue studying until the end of the pregnancy, but not once the baby is born. The parents may feel that the baby will fit in with them but the truth is that they must fit in with the baby (Aiken 2000).

When a child is born, the life style needs to be adjusted according to the baby's needs. A woman goes on maternity leave at least from half a year to a year, taking a break from her professional life in every aspect. Despite motherhood is a wonderful experience, it also brings challenges. All human beings are predisposed to depression, but it is commonest in women in the reproductive years. Depression is only slightly more common in newly delivered mothers than in other mothers or pregnant women, but it may have serious effects on the developing child and family (Aiken 2000).

### 2.1 Allowance Policy

A "new mother" can feel lonely, depressed, and socially inactive since she should be at home taking care of the baby. Due to the short father's paternity leave and possibly the biological breastfeeding issue, it is the mother the one that needs to be present at every moment. One can imagine that after nine months of pregnancy and later on intensive baby care, a mother could feel exhausted and eager to get back to her own projects. The problem is that public kindergartens do not



accept children until they are nine months. In the meantime, the parents are the ones that should take care of the child (Terve n.d).

When the parental allowance ends, the child is approximately 9 months old. It can be arranged child care after parental leave in different ways. A child can go to a municipal or private daycare or can be taken care of at home. One can get support for home care, or private care support if the child is not in municipal care. Flexible or partial care allowance can be obtained if the working time is up to 30 hours per week and other benefits are met. This means that a parent could still receive care support for the child and still go to the university (KELA 2017/c).

## 2.2 Inner Factors in Parenthood

Parenting styles still vary enormously depending on the culture, from existing traditions and ecological necessities confronted by various societies. For example, in Finland and Scandinavia, parents get slowly ready for maternity and they do not mind being on a leave for a long time because the welfare system is designed to support paternity at many levels (Helsinki Times 2013). For example, if Finland is compared to South of Europe where the social security is not as supportive, an average Spanish mother can rely mostly on a strong family network so being a staying home parent is not emphasized. However, most women go back to work immediately after the 16 weeks in Spain, so the average option is the nursery, which often take children from a few months old and upward (Expatica 2016).

Perhaps, there could be a less participation from the Finnish student side since as mentioned in the previous paragraph, Finns are used to have a great social security back up and probably family ties to rely on, like one of the mothers expressed in the questionnaire made for this project-plan. Still, this could be a reason for some students to feel like they are not active enough increasing their anxiety levels. Even cause early studies abandonment in the worst of the cases,

if they cannot cope with all their life situation. Besides, many students in the university have an international background, meaning that the chances that they have a family, or friend network to leave the child with while going to study are little. The nursery at the school could solve this problem, supporting mothers and fathers that are eager to combine parent and student lifestyles.

“There is a broadly shared assumption that women’s dedication to careers can be harmful for their offspring. This is not only because a full-time dedication to paid work limits the parents’ time dedication to children, but also that mothers will return home tired and stressed, thus affecting children adversely. I marshal all the evidence available and conclude that neither the new family, nor the gender revolution, has any negative effects on children, be it in terms of their cognitive development or educational progress”. A mother that is dedicated to her professional carrier it is more likely to feel complete, therefore be more positive around her children. Even if a parent is studying, it will not have any side effect on the child or their family life (Esping-Andersen 2016).

### 2.3 The Rights of The Child

In this section the relevant rights of the child by the UN convention for this project plan will be enlisted. As it is an activity for children, their rights need to be respected and taken care of in figure 2 (Unicef n.d).

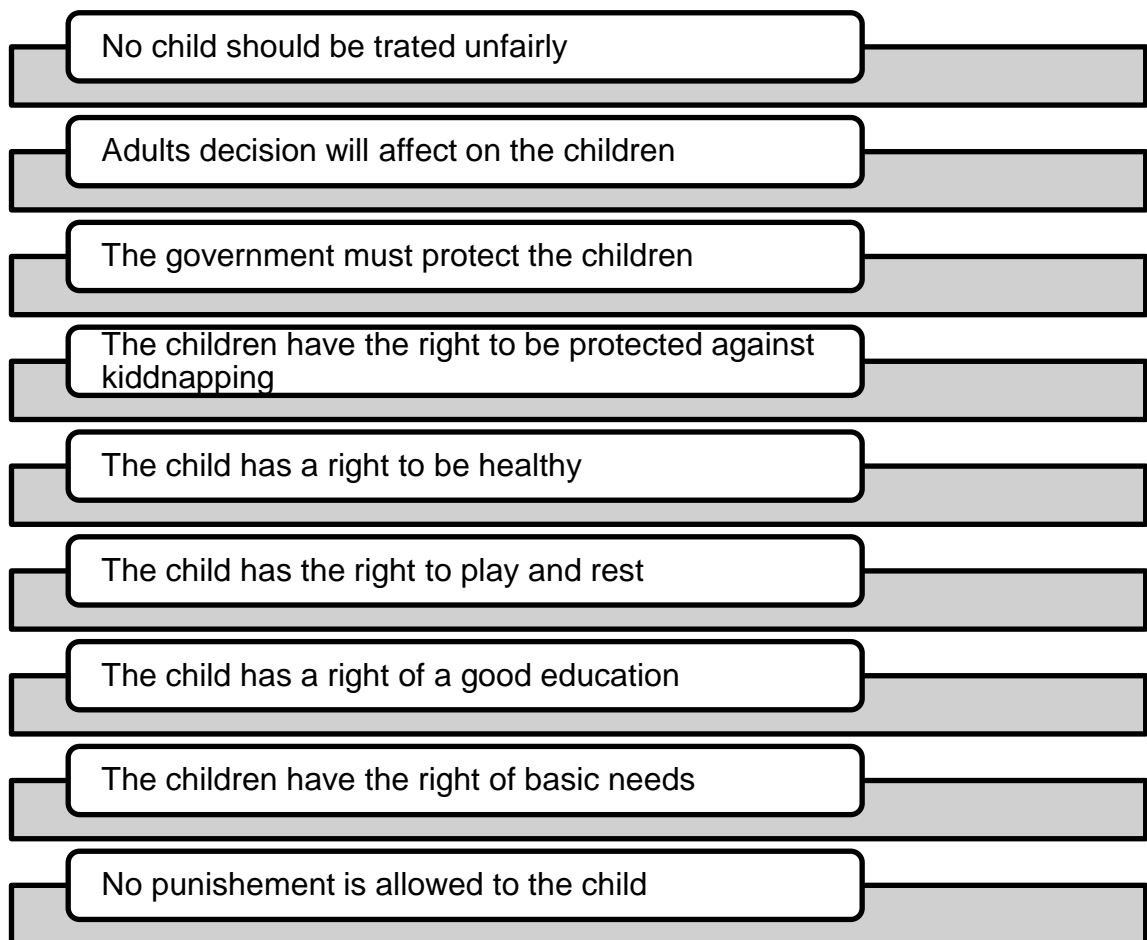


FIGURE 2. UN Rights of the Child.

These rights are relevant for the nursery because the children need to be treated well, and be safe while at the premises. The decisions from the adults, the teachers or own parents will affect the infants in some way. Children must be treated carefully, and the government need to cover as much as it can their welfare basic

needs. When talking about a nursery, there is many people involved in the process, so protection against kidnaping should be a priority. The child has the right to play, rest and be healthy while in the nursery, and outside of it too. They also need to receive a good education and explore their own little worlds, while they are at the daycare, the personnel and parents should facilitate that. At last but not less important, any kind of punishment is not allowed.

#### 2.4 The Nursery as a Different Option for Baby Care

It is believed that children who come from a caring family have the best chance to grow mentally healthy and have an independent adulthood. Obviously, it is also correlated on how parents behave towards their children, and their relationship (Panksepp 2004). The Attachment theory is concerned about the importance of "attachment" regarding the personal development of an individual. Even a high degree of autonomy could not imply desistance of attachments to parent figures. A baby who is attached to a caregiver has his primary needs met and accounted for. Due to this, they can spend more time alone interacting with their environment (Murray et al. 1993).

There is an African proverb that says, "It takes a village to raise a child", in fact, many societies around the world do not expect mothers, or parents, to take care of the children alone, this is known as alloparenting. Research on parenting has further shown that infants enjoy being with more than one person without distress. Moreover, different behaviors, relation types and environments, trigger a natural selection reasoning that allows the infants and their care providers to form adaptive relationships, constructing new social conducts in the child. The nursery could be a form of alloparenting, and help the parents not only to finish their studies, but their children to become more open and socially relaxed (Carter, Anhert et al. 2006).

If a parent feels stressed or depressed about her professional carrier is on hold, this frustration could pass to the child. It is being studied that the caregiver behavior, affects the structure and functioning of a child's brain and behavior during the neonatal period and the rest of his/her life. This research explains that development of the physiological systems managing stress reactivity, coping, and emotion regulation, could be eased when the parent and the child are able to handle everyday stressors that occur routinely in social interactions. In the worse of cases, it may be damaged by experiences of chronic stress when the caregiver is either the source of stress or fails to endure it, for example, when mothers are severely depressed (Weiner, Irving et al. 2012). However, if the nursery was implemented, it could assist the caregiver's life and by extent the child's one.

This shows not only having a child care facility in the school will be beneficial for the parents, but also for the children. If a child can rely on his mother being present at any time of distress because she is staying in the same premises, he will feel safe and grow up at many emotional levels. That infant is going to become more of a social being and eager to have new experiences which are vital to his learning and development.

There are other opinions regarding on "full-time schooling" children under two years old, like Professor Keltikangas-Jäärvinen explains to Suomen Kuvalehti (2012). Little children should not be taken to daycare while the child development progresses gradually. There should be a learning phase between the home and kindergarten group, where the child is taken care of in a small group of children. This solution is family day care (Perhepäivähoito). At that time, the child is treated by the same adult and the children around are familiar. The nursery at the university could be pictured as a family care somehow, since there would be very little amount of daycare hours, and the parents are in the same premises ready to assist their children if needed.

It is possible to achieve a joint, functional work– family balance. The latest government measures have been part-time work, flexible hours, job sharing and working from home. This movement has shifted social attitudes as well. Among dual-earner couples, fathers are increasingly less likely to expect their partners to constantly take care of the child. This is important, and necessary, as in the current economic crisis, more mothers are remaining in the workforce. This is a relevant point for the nursery, since it would help these parents to achieve their economical balance if they get to graduate fast and find and later a job (Angela, Walker 2013).

The nursery will be of course available for students that became fathers during their academic years too. Nevertheless, I will focus more on the maternity and women's point of view since is one of the main professional interest for my future professional career, asking mostly student mother's opinions. A questionnaire was made to see the demand of a thesis product based. During the procedure, I interacted with a small group which the product is oriented for, the mothers, by asking them through a questionnaire their opinion and wishes, and possibly fathers too.

## 2.5 Similar Projects and Findings

As previously mentioned, the background of the project lies on a personal experience that somehow has opened a need in this field. There are few projects related to nurseries at a school place or at work places. During the research were found private kindergartens that allow infants from zero to six years old. (Small Folks n.d). A private day care like Small Folks in Espoo is an expensive service, and is quite probable that a parent who is studying is going to have financial struggles because the cost per month is elevated.

Therefore, the cheapest option until now is home care, making the attendance to the lectures a very hard task, if not an impossible one. Family networks could be a great solution for those who can rely on them. Unfortunately, not everyone has a family living in the same city or even in the same country, especially if a student has an international background. For that, the nursery could cover the void of an absent family, friend or even partner that could help them in these circumstances.

On the other hand, there were found similar ideas such as big corporations that have kindergarten in the premises or private kindergarten services that could be offered in case a worker has an emergency, for instance a child sick at home, this was the case of Eduwings in China (Eduwings Kindergarten n.d). At major studies level, there are some universities that offer kindergarten utilities, for example the University of Oslo, but is mostly granted for the university personnel and researchers, rather than to their own students. In addition, it seems unaffordable due to the high-income requisites (UIO 2017).

Besides the University of Oslo, some other universities with daycare can be found, for example in the United Kingdom. The University of Leicester Nursery allows children from six weeks to five years, and is only open to University of Leicester staff and students (University of Leicester n.d). One more example would be the University of Bristol; the service gives priority to children of students and staff between 3 months and 5 years (University of Bristol n.d). These both resemble at best the idea of what a nursery at Diaconia University of Applied Sciences could be if it was available.

Another option could be hiring a private nanny. Unfortunately, not everyone can afford such services, and even if the municipality could grant one for a low fare, the mother cannot leave the baby for long periods of time yet. Plus, the service provided is a maximum of 30 hours for a period of twelve weeks. That is why in the case of mothers that are still studying, three months would not be enough to

cover their academic year, therefore the school could offer an early childhood nursery service to help in this situation (The City of Helsinki 2017/e).

There is a resembling service that approximates the idea of this thesis in the country. The University of Helsinki offers a temporary child care for its members at a reasonable price of five euros per hour. The minimum age must be six months old, and is only three hours a day. Unfortunately, the age limit still forces the mothers to stay half a year at home preventing them to join their classes earlier. Plus, at the beginning of the academic term, one can only book the maximum of two regular times for one week, making the task of attending to every day lecture complicated (Little HYY n.d).

Unfortunately, Little HYY was unable to give any information at the time they were approached. The personnel were not aware of the technical details, permits and needs of a day-care at a bureaucratic level. That is the reason the head of child welfare service was contacted, to get to know more about the legislation, permits, needs for a nursery to be implemented in the university, using Little HYY as a model for the enquiry.

In the nearby area of Diaconia University of Applied Sciences, one can find Arabian Leikkipuisto. The playground is designed as a common meeting place for children and families. The families can come and spend time in the courtyard playground, as well as indoors. In the park all the equipment and facilities are available to guests during the opening hours. As a student, the distance from the school makes this service unapproachable, since the location is not contiguous to Diaconia University of Applied Sciences. Finally, it is required the presence of the parents to participate in the playground, making then the attendance to the lectures impractical (Leikkipuisto Arabia 2017).

According to the incoming study plan, there will be a change on the study hours. The method is called "Blended learning", this means that the students will come



to the university just the fourth week of the month, while the rest of the time they can study from home virtually. This will make the learning path easier for the student parents, since they can manage their time from home. Still, they will need assistance during the week that they need to be present at school, making the nursery yet an important asset.

Recapitulating, the idea is to create a nursery for infants from two months to over one-year old, open during school hours, located at Diaconia University of Applied Sciences, oriented to mothers that got a baby during their studies and what to continue studying while being a mom. This is beneficial not only for the mothers that get to continue with their professional life, but also for the children that get to keep their mothers very close to them in such a needy stage. Bonding is one of the most important things for a baby and his/her mother, they are creating a link, an attachment, so they need to be close to each other during the first year of the child's life. After one year, the child should be able to join the kindergarten, especially the public ones offered by the municipality.

### 3 PROJECT PLAN SUMMARY

The thesis process started on spring 2017. The idea occurred because a personal situation exposed the need of this service in the university. The procedure has been slow due to my circumstances, having a child and to be a student at the same time requires high time management skills. In fact, these words have been written while the baby is sleeping. It is possible to be a parent and a student, but it takes a lot of focus, patience, and perseverance. Although, not every day one can get things done and can be frustrating, parenthood is a rewarding time in life.

A nursery at Diaconia University of Applied Sciences could create a harmonic combination between parenting and studying. It could help and benefit those who do not have a strong family network or simply wants to graduate faster. For this, the first step is to play devil's advocate, basically contemplate what are the positive sides and the risks if one would like to start a nursery at the university. There are many places that must be contacted as well, ask for permits, budgeting and perhaps consider remodel the premises, including the university interest on the matter. Also, if there is a need of interviewing students or personnel, it must be asked a permit from the university for research proposes.

Opening a nursery requires time and to go through many procedures (legislation, safety issues, budget etc.). Roughly, it could be said that once the plan is approved, the actual process could take one to two years. I wish that this plan could be implemented in many other universities and work places too in the future days to come. By now, the only thing accomplished is the publication of the thesis on November 2017.

Due to my current situation, travel around Helsinki interviewing face to face while taking care of the baby was not an option, not to mention very impractical. For that, all the contacts were made through e-mail, and phone calls. If analyzed step

by step the process goes as follows. First think about how the idea of the project plan works. Then, focus on those needs and research information, as described on the chart below.

In the figure 3, the steps will be summarized.

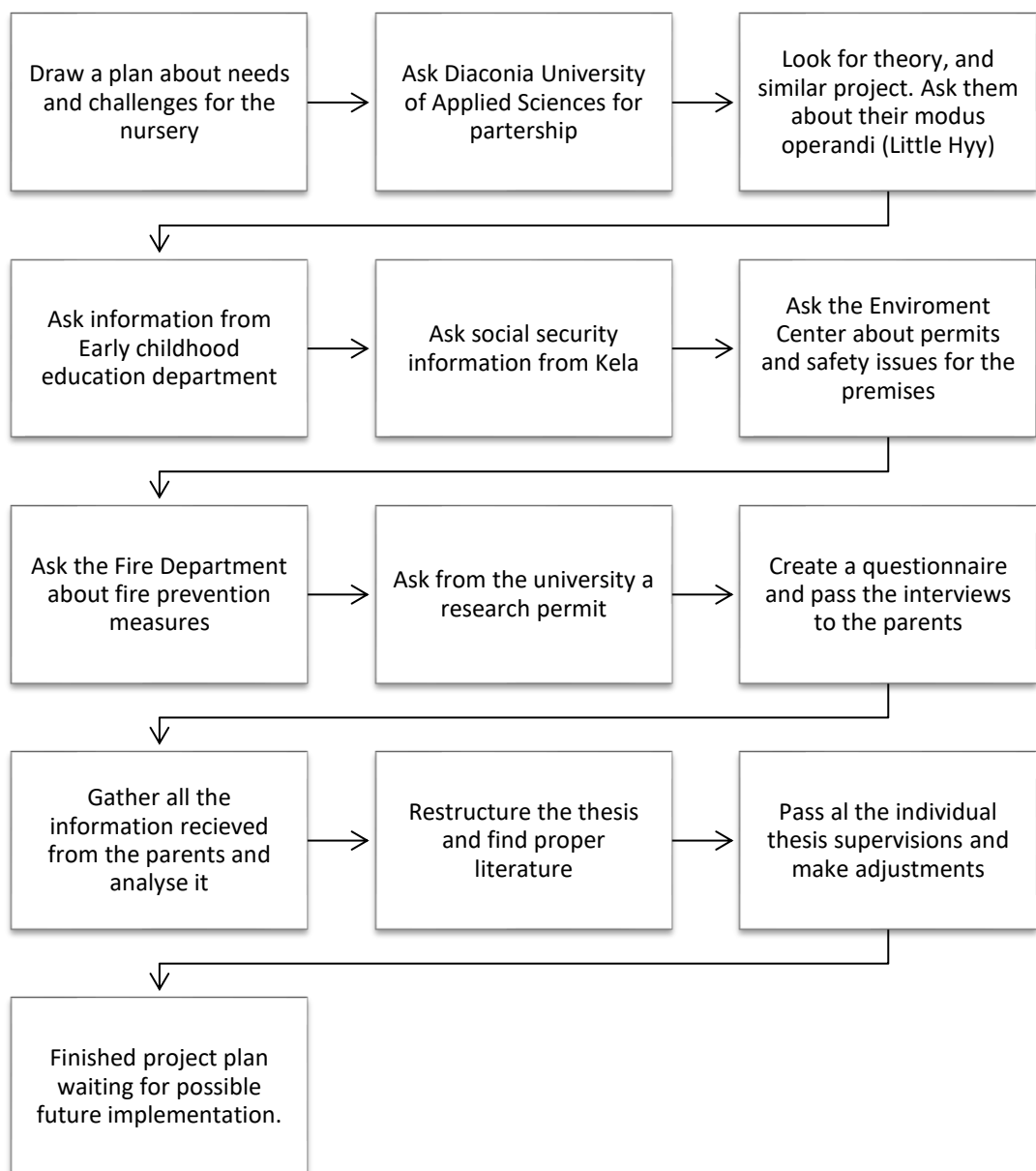


FIGURE 3. Process of Project Planning.

### 3.1 Data Collection

In order to be able to make a survey and pass it around other students, ethical issues must be covered. The study office was contact to receive a permit allowing the questionnaire to be sent to other student parents in the university. After the permit was granted, five respondents answered, four mothers and one father. The goal was to see if there is a real demand of a nursery in the university. Once the answers were retrieved and studied, it was shown that the students were unanimous. A nursery could be a good way to keep their student identity and at the same time be a parent, reduce stress levels, graduate in time, and find a job in a close future.

In the figure 4, the data gathering method is summarized.

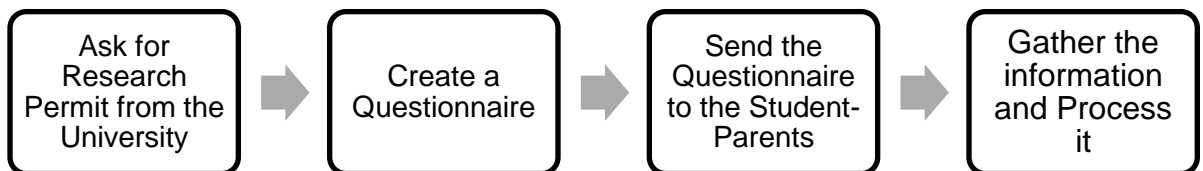


FIGURE 4. Data Gathering for the Project Plan.

### 3.2 Questionnaire Results from the Student-Parents

When one needs to interview personnel or students at the university, a permit for research is needed. After the permit was granted, questions were passed to the parents. The respondents were asked two simple questions via e-mail, if as a

student-parent would they like to use this service and why. Four mothers and one father replied the questionnaire. All of them were very pleased with the idea of a daycare service at the campus. Their replies had many similarities, but the commonest one was the wish to be able to continue the studies and still be a parent.

One issue mentioned was that, the student parent that got a child at the beginning of their studies, can only postpone one academic year from its start by the law, so if they would like to have another baby, it would not be possible to halt their studies any longer. They would need to make a choice between their family and professional needs. However, if the nursery was available they could move forward with their career, the respondent expressed.

Another aspect was, that the parents had to take at least a year break because no public kindergarten would have taken their children due to their young age. This issue had generated some challenges in their personal life along with a delay in their professional careers. Some other mother believed, that to have a nursery could help to reduce postpartum depression. Being active as much as one can could bring positive sides. Finally, on the economical side, slowing down a study year brought stress to the respondents, because it stretches the graduation time and the opportunity to get a job.

Some parents mentioned that taking their children to the lectures made them stressed. They feared the child would interrupt or disturb the class at some point. The feeling of being "on guard" constantly made the task very exhausting, affecting their concentration. On the contrary, a mother said that she could leave the infant to the grandmother while she is studying, but not all the respondents were as lucky with their family networks, meaning that this was not an available option for them.

One question was raised in their replies, if it would be possible to receive the Kela maternity leave benefit and at the same time be a student. After a phone interview

with an officer about this matter, Kela assured that one can be a student and still be on a maternity leave. Also, one could apply for student benefit keeping the maternity leave, but it would be decreased to the minimum amount. It would really depend on every case and personal choices the need to keep one or another.

In conclusion, it seems that a daycare service at Diaconia University of Applied Sciences would be a good solution for many parents that are in their student years. It would give them the chance to have a productive lecture without interruptions and increase the commitment levels on their carriers.

#### 4 PREMISES AND PARTNERS

The location of this nursery would be at Diaconia University of Applied Sciences. For this, the school should provide a permanent safe space to keep the infants while their mothers are joining their lectures. Basically, the concept is the same as used for kindergartens, the only different aspect is, that the ones joining it are babies. If at some point the mother's presence is required for feeding issues, or she would like just to check on her child, the nursery is one step away. If this project is finally adopted, a mother could use this nursery service until she can send the child to the official daycare.

Diaconia University of Applied Sciences is a University in Finland and a partner for this thesis project plan. It is the largest educator provider of social services in the country. Diaconia University of Applied Sciences offers several degrees such as graduate and post-graduate education in social services, health care, diaconal studies, education, and interpretation. Diaconia University of Applied Sciences owns five campuses across Finland which are in Helsinki, Oulu, Pieksämäki, Pori and Turku. It has approximately 3,000 students and 250 staff members (Diaconia University of Applied Sciences n.d).

This proposal for a project involves Diaconia University of Applied Sciences as a partner and provider for the space and the proper tools. In addition, the school could use its own resources to sustain this project, for example it could be an excellent placement opportunity for nursing, practical nurse, and social sector students, acting as personnel. Also, it implicates the mothers as users, since it is meant for them to use as beneficial help to support their study experience and their babies, so they can keep their mothers closed by which is very important at this early stage.

Furthermore, the nursery could be a perfect way to make sure this specific student sector is kept active, so the risk of study abandonment decreases. Meanwhile, the school still receives the subventions granted by the municipality per student that has successfully graduated and a grant from the municipality to implement the kindergarten.

Finally, as a future professional to be, this project will teach new skills that can be used in the future work place. After completed the studies, as a professional social sector student one is interested in family work, being this thesis a good opportunity to start with. It will be great to see in the years to come that this project was approved and implemented, not only at Diaconia University of Applied Sciences but also in every work/study place where this aid would be needed.



## 5 IMPLEMENTATIONS OF THE PROJECT AND POSSIBLE RISKS

As mentioned on the goal section, to make this project happens, it needs to face several issues such as safety, budgeting, and to be approved by the early childhood legislation standards “Varhaiskasvatusvirasto”, The Environment Center and the Fire Department among others. The answer from the child legislation authorities was the following, there would be two different approaches to develop the idea and many requirements. One is as a private daycare service; the other is as a private play group service.

### 5.1 Private Daycare Service System

On the one hand, Diaconia University of Applied Sciences could apply to have a private daycare service. As a private provider, the school should follow several steps to achieve this propose. First apply for financial support from the municipality, which can be applied for a year-round. The financial support includes an annual appropriation for the start-up costs of the daycare units or group family daycare units with two care providers. This financial aid can be used to cover the expenses caused by renovation, or purchases required to start this operation (The City of Helsinki 2017/f).

The maximum amount of the start-up support would be 1.000 euros per a full-time care for every child that is living in Helsinki. The conditions to receive the support are that is a new activity and it will start within a year. After this, the daycare must be open for at least three years after the support was received. The maximum amount of financial aid to start a daycare is 30.000 euros in total (The City of Helsinki 2017/f).

To finally receive the start-up grant and start the activity Diaconia University of Applied Sciences should pass the next steps: the supervisory authority has approved the facility, the premises will remain the same in the next three years, the school should finance half of the grant as a security deposit for the department of

early education and care, the university provides the necessary information about how the grant is going to be used and finally the school has never received this support previously. Regarding finances, perhaps finding a sponsor's support would be another option. In case some of these requirements are not met, the City can claim back the financial support (The City of Helsinki2017/f).

Once the first step is applied and the grant is given, the law requires a person in charge to monitor and ensure the quality of this service. This plan can also help to monitor the opinions and feedback of the service users. In addition to this plan, there must be publicly available at the daycare unit. Finally, Diaconia University of Applied Sciences must notify the head of the early education area in writing, if the responsible person is changed or the kindergarten has closed (The City of Helsinki2017/f).

Regarding to the staff members, they must meet the qualifications required of social welfare for the municipality and the law. In this case, the staff should be composed of social workers (sosiaalityöntekijä), social welfare ombudsman (sosiaaliamies), children moderator (lastenvalvoja), social director (sosiaaliohjaaja), kindergarten teachers and practical nurses (Finlex 29.4.2005/272). In a daycare center, the number of employees available for children under three years old of age is one member for every four children. This could open new work places at the university if the daycare is implemented, the school could hire its own graduated students for these proposes.

The law is clear on the fact that the some of the staff members must be graduated already to operate this activity, but it does not forbid to use the activity also as a placement place. This could be the best opportunity for practical nurses and social instructors to learn and develop new skills regarding child care and legislation. Diaconia University of Applied Sciences could "recycle" its own students as well for this matter. Perhaps it could attract more students to be in the future, knowing that there is such opportunity available.

The practices regarding the daycare plan must be agreed beforehand by an exclusive agreement between Diaconia University of Applied Sciences daycare and the parents. The municipality will not participate in this process. The head of the early education area works together with the responsible person of the daycare unit offering advice and guidance. The head supervises the activities through annual visits and meetings, such as the self-monitoring plan of the care unit. For instance, the number of employees and their qualifications, safety of the premises, pedagogical principles in use, health condition like hygiene and meals distribution. If necessary the instructions for safety, cleaning, and meal provision could be provided by the regional service network. Also, the head will make sure that the responsible person of the kindergarten will be aware on legislative changes (The City of Helsinki 2017/d).

In relation to the safety of the premises, the university must contact to the Environment Center to obtain a positive statement. The Environment Center then arranges an inspection record required by the Health Protection Act that is needed for the Regional State Administration Office. The department of Early Education and Care in conjunction with the Building Inspection Office and the Environment Center will have their own roles in the process. The Environment Center will take care of the housing legislation, while the Building Inspection Office will look at land use and building legislation. At last, the department of Early Education and Care will develop its operations in the supervision of Private Social Services (The City of Helsinki 2017/a).

A student could ask for private daycare allowance to Kela to finance the expenses of Diaconia University of Applied Sciences' daycare. The grant will not be given to the parents but straight to the private care unit. To receive this support, the child must be only using this private care unit, the help will not be granted if the child is joining already a public kindergarten. This care allowance and care supplement is paid for each child eligible to it, the eligibility criteria vary depending on the municipality, family size and gross income (KELA 2017/b).

By Kela standards, every child has a right of 20 hours of early childhood education per week. An extended right could be applied if the parent is working or in this case a full-time student. The private care allowance amount paid from Kela is the equivalent of the day care fee for the child at most. For a child that needs 20 hours of care, the amount would be 172.25 euros per month. The private day care allowance is taxable income only for the day care provider. The help must be claimed when the contract with the daycare is made, or latest six months after the arrangement. The parents must use the WH 2e form from the Kela service to apply for the supplement (KELA 2017/a).

In the figure 5, the steps will be summarized.

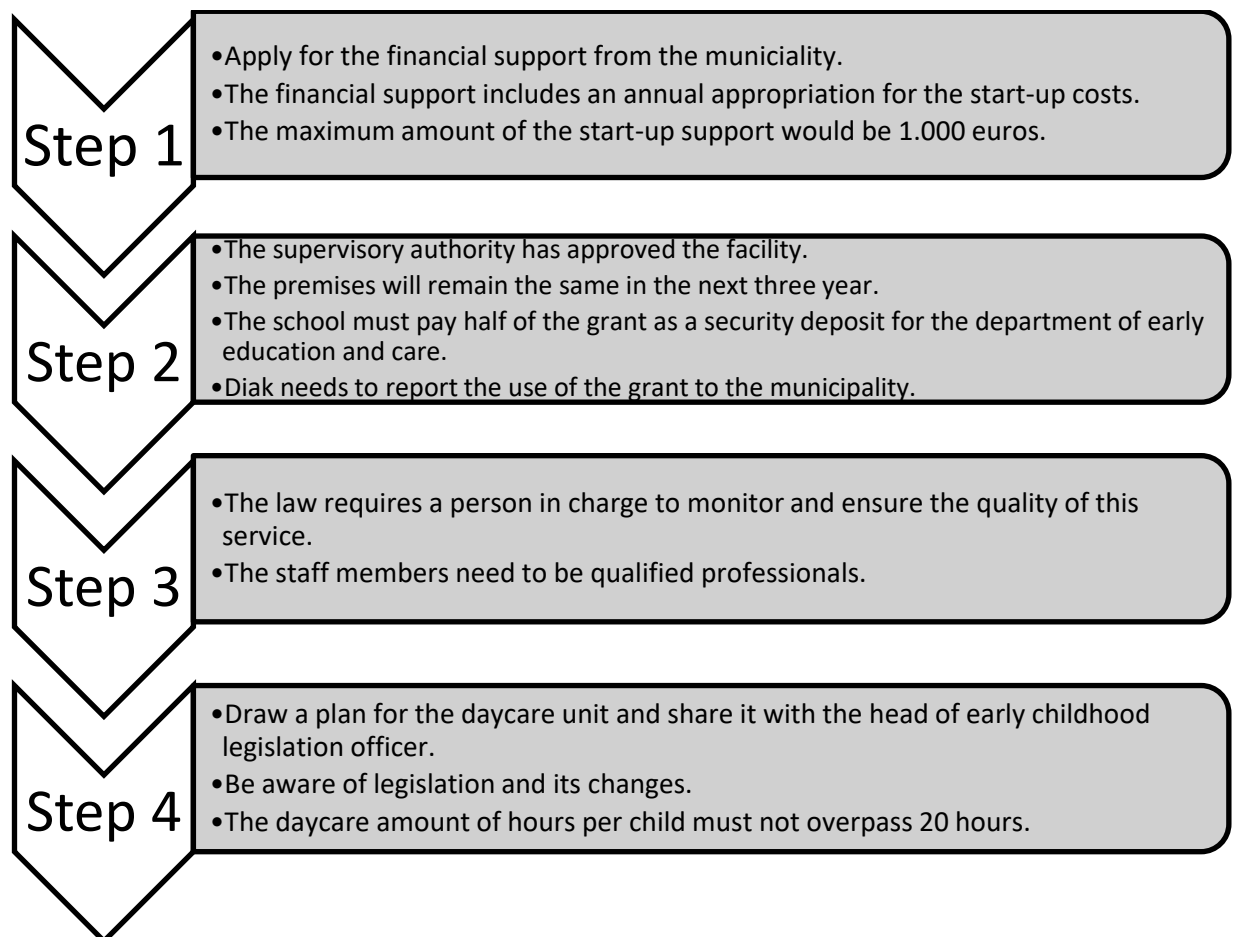


FIGURE 5. Private Daycare System.

## 5.2 Private Play Group System

This was another open option for the university to take in case the previous system is not available. Although, in temporary childcare run by a society, there are no instructions for the number of the teachers/directors at all. The usual requirements to operate these services are the following: there will not be more than 13 children under two year old per instructor, the staff members must be trained professionals, the Environment Center has approved the activity, the club has a plan for operating, the fire authorities have approved the installations, the service provider forms part of the payment register, an insurance for the children in the club has been taken and finally, the club should have an own website (The City of Helsinki 2017/a).

The service provider must submit a notification form to the Regional State Administrative Agency for private social services to the head of the area in which the club is going to be developed. All the providers that meet the requirements for the club activity will be eligible for the service vouchers, after the head of early education approval. Applications for becoming a service provider can be submitted year-round. The value that the service provider would receive is 100 euros per month per child from the municipality. In addition, it would be possible for the university to ask for an extra customer fee if needed or deems appropriate (The City of Helsinki/c 2017).

Once all has been approved, the playgroup could start to be operative. The allowed time for playgroup activities is 36 to 60 hours per month and no more than three hours a day. This means that unfortunately the hours of the playgroup would be restricted to 15 hours per week in total. This amount of time will not cover the whole lecture day, but it will be still a great help for those mothers that must carry their children around the university. On the other hand, since the blended studies are starting soon, this might be a better option, because the nursery would be needed one week per month.

Summarizing, if Diaconia University of Applied Sciences would decide to open a playgroup it would still be beneficial in many ways. If for instance the playgroup allows for starters 13 children, the university would receive 100 euros per each child, a total amount of 1300 euro plus the extra fee it would be probably enough to cover part of the final expenses for the service. Again, as in the daycare system, the staff must be professionally trained, but it could still be a good option to consider as a placement for the students too, especially for the mothers (The City of Helsinki/b 2017).

In the figure 6, the steps will be summarized.

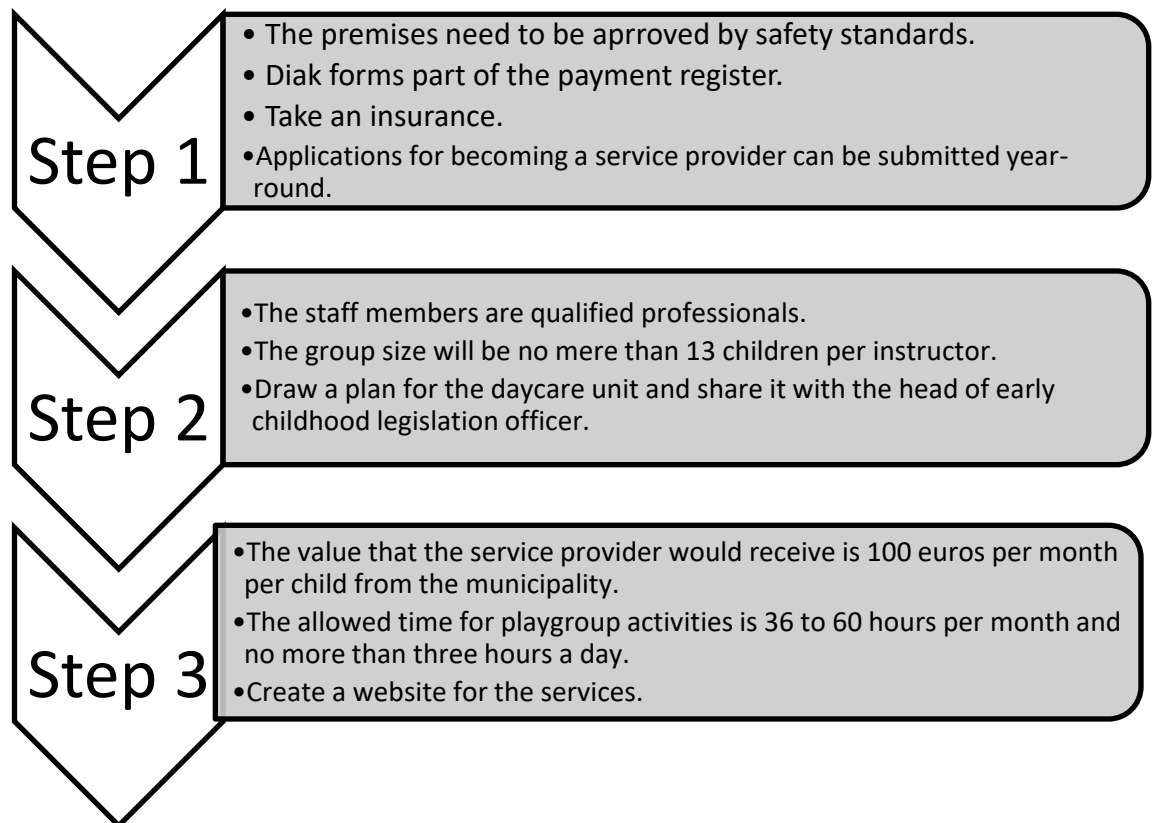


FIGURE 6. Private Play Group System.

## 5.3 Space Requirements

### 5.3.1 The Environment Center

The Environment Center is one of the authorities in charge of planning and supervise the premises when making a daycare. The Environment Center may provide a plan or design of a new daycare or the modification needed for existing premises, the consultations are free of charge. According to the Health Care Act, and in accordance with Section 13 of the Health Protection Act, a notification to the Environment Center must be made 30 days before the start of the kindergarten. The obligation to notify applies to regular day care and club, but also in daycare activities. On the notification must be attached a layout floor plans from all the rooms and clearing of the ventilation (Environment Center 2013).

After receiving the notification, the Environment Center will carry out an inspection. Then, environmental manager studies the situation and consults the involved parties, in this case the university, and rectifies the plan accordingly. The Environment Board charge the processing of the notification with a fee. If the daycare activities are approved, the premises are ready to be used. If in the future there would be any changes on the premises, such as renovations or increasing the number of children, the Environment Center must be notified. The procedure then, would be the same as before (Environment Center 2013).

The Environment Center should also be notified if the operator is in the premises changes. For this, an e-mail is enough to explain the contact details of the new operator. Information about the ending of the activity must also be reported. Daycare facilities are also subject to regular inspection, in accordance with the environmental health monitoring plan. The inspections under the control plan are billed to the operator by the environmental committee (Environment Center 2013).

If the university would like to have a catering service for the kindergarten, a written notification about the kindergarten's kitchen must be submitted to the Environment Center, no later than four weeks before commencement or substantial modification. The processing of the food storage notification (registration), includes the recording of the relevant information in the control area database maintained by the supervisory authority and the preliminary assessment of the food premises. The Authority shall send to the operator a certificate of the notification. The kitchen will be subject to a systematic inspection in accordance with the Food Act after registration (Environment Center 2013).

The processing of the notification and the checks in accordance with the food control sampling and surveys will be charged. The Environment Board determine the fees. The number of inspections and sampling is based on the activity risk assessment as well self-monitoring. Changing the operator of a food business, suspending the operation, and the closure of the activity must be notified to the Environment Center. In small units where food comes ready, for example the baby food, the kitchen can be normal home kitchen. A microwave would be enough to warm up the milk or meals. Then, a second pool of a double sink can be used for hand washing. A liquid soap dispenser and a paper towel rail must be provided in the pool (Environment Center 2013).

The environmental conditions of the daycare must follow the rules. When designing the location of a kindergarten, one should find out the noise level and air conditions in the area. The Government Decree (993/1992) has adopted general noise values for outdoor and indoor noise levels. The decisions are made according to the noise generated by traffic and other neighboring activities. The medium level must not exceed 55 dB in outdoor areas, while indoors, the midday level of noise may not exceed 35 dB. If the noise level is exceeded, protection may be required by noise abatement measures such as noise barriers, improve exterior walls, windows and other structures that may require sound insulation (Environment Center 2013).



Regarding the air conditions of the area, the government have set guidelines for air pollutants, such as nitrogen dioxide and inhalable particulates. In the urban area the biggest factor affecting air quality is traffic. Industrial plants or other industrial or traffic-boosting facilities near the site may also affect air quality locally. The air quality guidelines are defined by health criteria and applied including land use, transport, and construction. According to health effects studies, the most vulnerable traffic discharges are children, elderly people, and persons with cardiovascular and respiratory disorders. Thus, daycare facilities are part of so-called sensitive sites (Environment Center 2013).

The facilities must be designed in such a way that they are easily kept clean. In the case that there are several daycare rooms. There is a need to distinguish between the areas of different groups in the daycare center by door to prevent the spread of contagious diseases and have own toilet/hand-washing system. A suggestion for this, could be to remodel or adjust one bathroom nearby the nursery room only for this activity. Several bathrooms can be found on each floor, so reserving one for the daycare practices should not be a major issue. In the facilities of part-time clubs and clubs, one toilet and hand-basin can be considered sufficient for 15 children. Under the age of three, children should have a shower basin or similar basal place in the toilet too (Environment Center 2013).

Lighting should be sufficient too regarding child activity services. At least 10% of the floor area should provide sufficient natural light. A smaller window for part-time groups and clubs is enough. Luckily, mostly all the rooms at the university have windows and good illumination is provided in the whole building. It is important to remark that the electrical equipment and installations must be safe and child proof. The spaces must have at least one opening ventilation window. Exits (except for emergency exits) must be equipped with a windshield or other technical solution for preventing drawbacks (Environment Center 2013).

One of the important goals of building design must be a good and healthy indoor climate. The plans should favor eco-friendly and low-emission materials. No microbes, dust, gaseous compounds, or other contaminants must be present in the

indoor air. The Indoor temperature should be at least +20°C during the heating season and not exceed 23-24°C. The floor surface temperature shall be at least +19°C and the walls shall be at least + 16°C. The room temperature must not rise above 26°C, unless the temperature rises due to the warmth of the outdoor air (Environment Center 2013).

Concerning the soundproofing and noise must be planned and considered. The activity space must be adequate achieving good sound conditions. Air and acoustic sound must comply with the requirements by the law. Particularly indoors, adequate sound insulation should be provided within surrounding housing. The damping of the rooms should be such, that the reverberation time in playrooms and similar spaces is not more than 0.6 seconds. Continuous equal sound level caused by ventilation equipment and other technical equipment can be used up to 35 dB in daytime use (7 am-7 pm) in children's premises (Environment Center 2013).

Glass, metal, cardboard, and board waste should be sorted separately if they are discharged at least 50 kg per week. If there is hazardous waste, should be delivered to a licensed waste collection point. A closed waste disposal room in the building must have sufficient exhaust ventilation separated from the general ventilation pipe and a floor drain and Water point for cleaning the premises. The bio-waste collection point should be cooled to prevent odors in warm seasons (Environment Center 2013).

After going through all the Environment Center requirements, it could be said that it can be only speculated what the remodel or adjustments will be at the time of the process application. Also, because the university building is recently new, there should not be many modifications to make, but perhaps the indoors soundproof insulation and reserving one bathroom for the children's use. The risk could be the lack of budget for those costs.

In the figure 7, the requirements will be summarized.

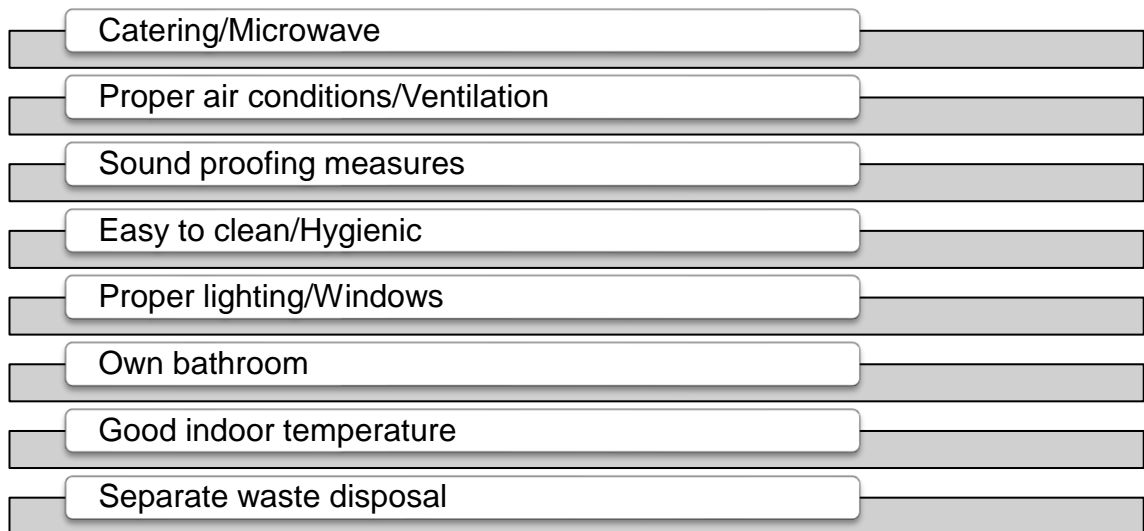


FIGURE 7. Environment Center Requirements.

### 5.3.2 Fire Prevention

In Finland there are different constructional requirements for a classroom/school building and for kindergarten spaces, according to the fire department. For example, a fire alarm system is mandatory in the kindergarten but not in the classrooms. The first step is to make sure, that the space is suitable and apply a construction permit. Every space has its own defined use. If one wants to change this use, the Building Control must be contacted and carry out the modifications, if needed. After the constructional matters are approved, the risks must be evaluated and make a rescue plan.

Here are explained the basic requirements regarding fire safety:

“Buildings shall be designed, built, and furnished in such a manner that the hazard of ignition of fire is as low as possible. The hazard of external ignition shall also be considered in this context. Heating devices shall be located and built or installed in such a manner that their use will not create a hazard of fire or explosion. Buildings shall in general be separated into fire compartments to limit the

spread of fire and smoke, to provide safe egress, to facilitate rescue and extinguishing operations and to limit property losses” (Minister of the Environment 2002).

“Nursing rooms shall not in general be in buildings incorporating rooms with fire or explosion hazard. Ventilation devices shall be made in such a way that they will not increase the hazard of spreading fire or smoke gases. When assessing the fire-technical characteristics of walls, ceilings and floors, the contribution of the materials to the fire, the time to flashover, the release of heat and the production of smoke and flaming droplets is considered. Building materials, which do not contribute to the development of fire in a hazardous manner, shall be used” (Minister of the Environment 2002).

In the figure 8, the requirements will be summarized.

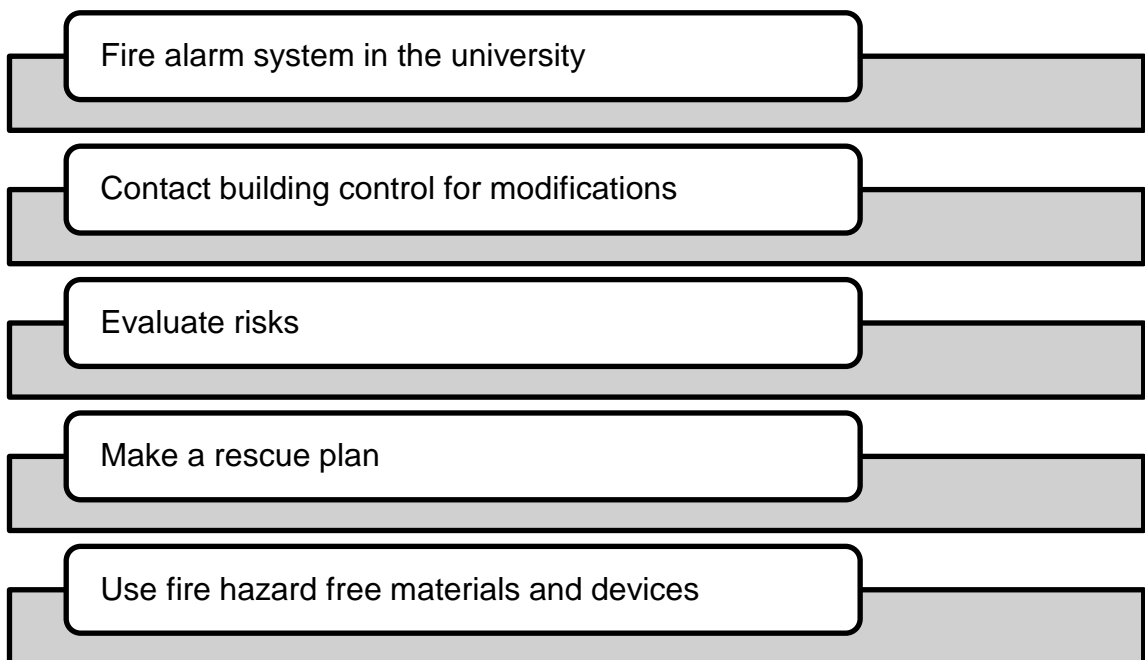


FIGURE 8. Fire Prevention Requirements.

#### 5.4 Possible Risks of the Project Plan

The risks will be enlisted as follows:

- The risk is that the project is unavailable due to some technical or bureaucratic issue, such the approval from the municipality or the availability of Diaconia University of Applied Sciences after financial-premises calculations. Unfortunately, this is only a plan of how a daycare unit process works, so the risks will not be seen until the start of the activity itself.
- The risk while applying for this operation, is that due to the noise coming from the urban area and inside the premises, the university should remodel a room for kindergarten activities, according the Environment Center requirements. Unfortunately, this aspect cannot be known until an environment officer comes to inspect the location. On the contrary, since the building is still brand new, there should not be any problem regarding the air and ventilation, so modifications might not be necessary.
- The risk while applying for this operation, is that some materials are inflammable, so the university should remodel a room for kindergarten activities, according the Fire Department requirements.
- A possible risk is that the funds are not enough to create the nursery.
- The lack of a possible safe suitable space is also a risk.

## 6 PRODUCT AND RESOURCES

The Nursery location will be at Diaconia University of Applied Sciences. Previously was mentioned that only graduated professionals can be part of the staff members. Among others the titles were practical nurse, kindergarten teacher, social instructor etc. By the legislation children must be supervised by qualified professionals, the number of employees available for children under three years old of age is one member for every four children. Depending on the agreed space for the activity, the number of children allowed into the daycare and the personnel would be decided accordingly. It does not seem viable now since it seems there no room available yet for this cause.

Once the University has decided a suitable location for the daycare and the municipality has approved it, the activity could start to be ready for use. Although, it could take at least one to two years for the opening. The place must be safe for the infants and clean. Special equipment is needed, such as cribs, toys, changing diaper station, lockers... An easier option could be that the children could sleep in their own strollers, use their own diapers, toys, and food provided by the parents. This way the school does not need to be concerned about daily maintenance extras, neither the users would need to pay an extra fee for this service.

The schedule should be on school days, Monday to Friday, or in case of blended studies adjusted accordingly. The mother will need to leave the infant before her class and agree with the nursery worker/volunteer the picking up time, visits between hours are allowed. For safety reasons, only the parents always showing their ID, need to be the ones that picks up the baby, not a friend or a classmate. To be able to use this service, the parent should book in advance at the beginning of the semester, via e-mail the hours she/he is going to need childcare. This will facilitate for the workers their labor distribution as well as the activity planning.

The activities displayed at the day care should be simple and efficient to entertain the children while their mothers are gone. Usually a baby sleeps for three to five

hours during the day time, this means that there is a great chance that the child spends the daycare time napping (What to Expect 2017). If that would not be the case, the kindergarten caregivers should have some activities prepared to entertain the children, for example, playing music, singing, storytelling time.

The parents could be reached by mobile phone in case their presence is needed while the baby is in the daycare. An instant messenger such as What's Up or a traditional SMS could be used for this task. Since the parent is in the same facilities as the daycare, it would be easy, fast to access and it will not disrupt entirely the lectures that he or she is joining at that moment.

## 6.1 Product

The next list will show the nursery in a nutshell.

- The location of this nursery would be at Diaconia University of Applied Sciences. For this, the school should provide a permanent safe space to keep the infants while their mothers are joining their lectures, while children still cannot join the public kindergarten due to age restrictions. It is a project plan nursery for infants from two to fourteen months old, for students that became parents during their studies.
- The goals of this project plan are simple and very clear. First, it is about empowering mothers to continue their studies. It is good to be active, there is a risk of feeling lonely during the first months of maternity. This concept could help them to keep in touch with their professional life, friends and environment, avoiding unpleasant side effects. Perhaps not every parent will agree on this, but the nursery is an optional service, no one is forced to use it if they prefer to stay at home.
- Many parties involved could benefit from these services, the university as a service provider but also possible study trainer in early childhood, the student-parents, the children, the placement trainees (innovative study model), and the welfare system.
- There would be two different approaches to develop the idea and many requirements (Chapter 5). One is as a private daycare service; the other is as a private play group service. The welfare system could finance part of the expenses as a loan for the remodeling of the premises.
- The Early Childhood Department is the authority on charge of the legislation applicable to the nursery. The head of the early education area works together with the responsible person of the nursery unit offering advice and guidance.
- The Environment Center and the fire Department, are the authorities in charge of the safety planning and supervise the premises when making a daycare. They may provide a plan or design of a new daycare or the modification needed for existing premises.



- At last, the project plan needs to be approved and implemented.

### 6.1.1 Budget

The budget needed to build the nursery is approximate in figure 9. The numbers that are displayed here, may distance from the final cost to implement these services. If the daycare would start with a small group of children, for instance 12, it means that by the legislation there must be at least three teachers and one supervisor. The salary of the personnel is about 2.500-3.000 euros per worker (Oikotie n.d). The amounts of the equipment (furniture, microwave, music device, toys...), operation costs, possible remodel needed, are also relative (Forbes 2007). If is taken to account that the university has a brand-new building, there might not be needed much remodeling after all.

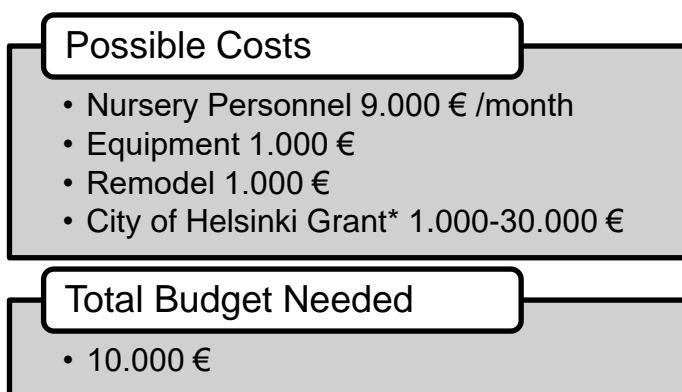


FIGURE 9. Budget Calculations for the Nursery.

\* The financial support from the Municipality, includes an annual appropriation for the start-up costs of the daycare units or group family daycare units with two care providers. This financial aid can be used to cover the expenses caused by renovation, or purchases required to start this operation. The maximum amount of the start-up support would be 1.000 euros per a full-time care. The conditions to receive the support are that is a new activity and it will start within a year. After this, the daycare must be open for at least three years after the support was received. The maximum amount of financial aid to start a daycare is 30.000 euros in total (The City of Helsinki 2017/f).

Concluding, the initial budget for the nursery could be rounded up to 10.000 euros as starter. If it is considered that the municipality grant could be a sum of 1.000 to 30.000 euros, it is hard to estimate the final costs of the nursery. Again, these calculations are just an approximation and they should be used only as a suggestion. The final expenses could vary depending of the real needs of the premises, for example remodeling issues, equipment, etc.

### 6.1.2 Recycling as an Equipment Affordable Choice

After going through the possible budget costs, it could seem that 10.000 euros is an elevated price to begin with. However, there are other solutions available to cut expenses such as recycling. If the equipment used for the nursery could be retrieved from a recycling point, not only the budget costs would be lowered, but also it would be a zero-waste business.

According to the Zero Waste International Alliance, the zero-waste concept means “to guide people in changing their lifestyles and practices to emulate sustainable natural cycles, where all discarded materials are designed to become resources for others to use” (Zwia 2009). In this case, the university could use of the zero-waste mentality, using second hand items for the nursery equipment. For that, an agreement with the Recycling Center (Kierrätyskeskus) could be drawn regarding the recollection of furniture, electric equipment, toys, kitchen appliances.

Due to its proximity, the Recycling Center could be an option to consider since it would make easier the equipment recollection task, or possible item replacing in the future. The Helsinki Metropolitan Area Recycling Centre is a non-profit organization that offers a substitute to single-used culture. The store provides usable second-hand items at reasonable prices, fixed and ready for a new use (Kierrätyskeskus n.d).

### 6.1.3 Future Profitability of the Nursery

First of all, is needed to define what profitability is. Profitability means a business is able to earn a profit and pays back the initial investment, after the activity is being running for a period of time. A profit is what is left after the business expenses are paid, in this case, salaries, renovation, equipment (Investopedia n.d). Therefore, the nursery needs to be a profitable business for a while, in order to create profitability and be sustained by itself without other major investments.

The nursery at Diaconia University of Applied Sciences should be a low fare service, oriented to the student prices. If a student-parent has not graduated yet, it might be hard for him or her afford an expensive daycare. For that, if the university considers it reasonable, the fee should be student friendly. If the Little Hyy daycare (mentioned in chapter 2) is taken as an example, the amount they charge is five euros per hour and they have a sibling discount. It might seem an elevated price still, but the university will consider at the time of the implementation what is fair.

At least the first couple of years, the nursery is more of a social aid rather than a profitable business, the investors/sponsors should be ready for that. However, the municipality might grant as maximum of 30.000 euros at the time of the opening, so this will cover the negative expenses of possible remodeling, costs of permits, etc. To determine the worth of an investment in a company, stakeholders cannot rely on a profit calculation alone.

It is necessary to analyze in the first place if the business resources can be optimized, for instance get the equipment from the Recycling Center (Investopedia n.d). The best option to gain sustainability and become a profitable business should be a partnership with other nearby universities like Arcada or Metropolia. With this, the number of customers would be enlarged, as well as the profit.

## 7 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CONNECTED PROJECT

Community Development is a process where people from a community plan and act together, creating solutions to common problems (Oxford Dictionaries n.d). The nursery project plan accomplishes the ideals of Community Development. Mothers and Fathers are part of our community. As a mother myself, I thought about this idea, because I felt it could help many other parents in the same situation as I am. Being a parent is challenging sometimes, if one is also a student, assisting to the lectures with a baby doubles the difficulty. A nursery could be an aid for those student parents that need for any reason to graduate quickly. As mentioned along this document, it has many beneficial outcomes for all the parties involved, the parents, the children, and the university among others.

## 8 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

During the thesis process I learnt how to draw a project plan. It may seem an easy procedure, but the truth is that it takes some time to look at the “big picture” from all the sides. When one plans for a project, it could be said that is like building a relationship. The first thing that strikes is enthusiasm. The chance to help and reach others in need through your ideas, is a rewarding feeling, you want to make it work. The next reaction might be stubbornness, because for the planner the concept already works, thus the objectivity lines are blurred. After a while, one realizes that there is nothing such as a perfect idea, and you adopt the critics positively as observations. Finally, after all the adjustments, the thesis is ready to be presented. Somehow, it brings at the same time comfort and relief. I just hope that the readers will enjoy my project plan idea as much as I did creating it. I wish someday it could be implemented at the university and in many other centers.

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