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“These weeks have strengthened my belief in the importance of physical education on any age.”

Supporting physical education activities in early childhood education and care through sociocultural animation

Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences

Bachelor of Social Services

Degree Programme in Social Services

Thesis

Autumn 2014

Author(s) Title	Milla Merinen, Maija Muukkonen & Petra Noppari "These weeks have strengthened my belief in the importance of physical education on any age.": Supporting physical education activities in early childhood education and care through sociocultural animation
Number of Pages Date	48 pages + 4 appendices 3 November 2014
Degree	Bachelor of Social Services
Degree Programme	Degree Programme in Social Services
Specialisation option	Competence in Early Childhood Education in Social Services
Instructor(s)	Seija Mäenpää, Lecturer Jukka Törnroos, Lecturer
<p>The purpose of this functional final thesis was to outline the importance of physical education in an early childhood education and care environment. Our thesis was conducted in collaboration with the Finnish-American Kindergarten in Töölö, Helsinki. We aimed to support our working life partner's physical education activities by means of sociocultural animation. Our goal was to support and deepen the physical education skills and knowledge of two of the kindergarten's teachers. We wanted to achieve a state where physical education would be more concretely and intensively a part of the kindergarten's daily activities.</p> <p>We planned and implemented an animation process, which included a first analysis and intervention. In our project we had four physical activity sessions, which involved physical education activities for kindergarten aged children. Through these sessions we demonstrated how to plan and implement diversified physical activities in various settings with use of different equipment. The sessions served as our main working method in animating the teachers. Our role as sociocultural animators was to facilitate the animation process.</p> <p>All together there were three questionnaires that were used as a way to evaluate the kindergartens physical education activities. The purpose of the first questionnaire was to establish the current situation. Both the second and the third questionnaire were used to evaluate changes that had happened during our project. Based on the responses from the questionnaires it could be argued that we met the goals set for our project.</p> <p>As a conclusion we establish that sociocultural animation is a beneficial framework in this type of project work. Animation offers means to influence participants in a positive way as it is based on voluntary action. The feedback we received from the participants was highly positive and therefore we can say that our project was successful. Our working life partner has expressed that they will continue to develop their physical education activities in the future.</p>	
Keywords	sociocultural animation, physical education, early childhood education and care, physical education skills and knowledge, social pedagogy, functional activity sessions

<p>Tekijä(t) Otsikko</p> <p>Sivumäärä Aika</p>	<p>Milla Merinen, Maija Muukkonen & Petra Noppari ”Nämä viikot ovat vahvistaneet käsitystäni liikuntakasvatuksen tärkeydestä kaikenikäisille.”: Liikuntakasvatustoimintojen tukeminen varhaiskasvatuksessa sosiokulttuurisen innostamisen avulla.</p> <p>48 sivua + 4 liitettä 3 Marraskuu 2014</p>
<p>Tutkinto</p>	<p>Sosionomi (AMK)</p>
<p>Koulutusohjelma</p>	<p>Sosiaaliala</p>
<p>Suuntautumisvaihtoehto</p>	<p>Varhaiskasvatus</p>
<p>Ohjaaja(t)</p>	<p>Seija Mäenpää, Lehtori Jukka Törnroos, Lehtori</p>
<p>Tämän toiminnallisen opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli kiteyttää liikuntakasvatuksen tärkeyttä varhaiskasvatusympäristössä. Opinnäytetyömme tehtiin yhteistyössä Helsingin Töölön Finnish-American Kindergartenin kanssa. Meidän tavoitteenamme oli tukea ja vahvistaa kahden työntekijän liikuntakasvatukseen liittyviä tietoja ja taitoja sosiokulttuurisen innostamisen avulla. Halusimme saavuttaa tilan, jossa liikuntakasvatus olisi konkreettisemmin osa päiväkodin arkea.</p> <p>Suunnittelimme ja toteutimme innostamisen prosessiin, joka sisälsi neljä toiminnallista liikuntatuokiota. Tuokiot sisälsivät liikuntakasvatustoimintoja päiväkotikäisille lapsille. Näiden tuokioiden avulla näytimme kuinka suunnitella ja toteuttaa monipuolista liikuntaa eri ympäristöissä, eri liikuntavälineitä käyttäen. Tuokiot toimivat välineenämme vaikuttaa työntekijöiden innostamiseen. Roolimme sosiokulttuurisina innostajina oli luoda tila innostamis-prosessille.</p> <p>Projektiimme kuului kolme kyselylomaketta, joiden tarkoituksena oli arvioida päiväkodin järjestämää liikuntatoimintaa. Ensimmäisen kyselylomakkeen tarkoituksena oli hahmottaa päiväkodin nykyinen tilanne. Sekä toinen että kolmas kyselylomake oli tarkoitettu arvioimaan muutosta projektimme aikana. Vastausten perusteella voimme väittää, että projektillemme asetetut tavoitteet täyttyivät.</p> <p>Johtopäätöksenä toteamme, että sosiokulttuurinen innostaminen on hyödyllinen viitekehys tämänkaltaisessa projektityössä. Innostaminen tarjoaa keinon vaikuttaa osallistujiin positiivisella tavalla, sillä se perustuu vapaaehtoiseen toimintaan. Saamamme positiivisen palautteen perusteella voimme sanoa projektimme olleen onnistunut. Lisäksi yhteistyökumppanimme on ilmaissut aikomuksensa jatkaa ja kehittää liikuntakasvatustoimintaansa tulevaisuudessa.</p>	
<p>Avainsanat</p>	<p>Sosiokulttuurinen innostaminen, liikuntakasvatus, varhaiskasvatus, liikuntakasvatus tiedot ja taidot, sosiaalipedagogiikka, toiminnalliset toimintatuokiot</p>

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this functional Bachelor's thesis was to outline the importance of physical education in an early childhood education and care environment. Our thesis was conducted in collaboration with the Finnish-American Kindergarten in Töölö, Helsinki. We aimed to support our working life partner's physical education activities by means of sociocultural animation. Our goal was to support and deepen the physical education skills and knowledge of two of the kindergarten's teachers. Our goal was also to motivate the teachers so that they would arrange more physical education activities in their work community. We wanted to achieve a state where physical education would be more concretely and intensively a part of the kindergarten's daily activities.

To achieve our goals we applied sociocultural animation, which builds the foundation of our project. In this thesis sociocultural animation was used as a method to motivate the two teachers of the Finnish-American Kindergarten. In short sociocultural animation covers all activities that aim to offer people a more concrete way of participating in the build-up of their communities. In this thesis sociocultural animation was present throughout the entire project. As sociocultural animation has a basis in social pedagogy the role of social pedagogy is likewise discussed in this thesis.

In addition to applying sociocultural animation and social pedagogy we also focused on the theoretical background of physical education in early childhood education and care. As physical education was the area we wanted to develop it was fundamental to know theory behind early childhood physical education. Although our project targeted the two teachers of the kindergarten, elements of child development had to be taken into consideration since the children of the kindergarten were also participants in our thesis.

The role of physical education in early childhood education has been debated in several media outlets in recent years and therefore we see our thesis as both relevant and current. Various online articles address this specific topic, for example "Jo päiväkotikäiset liikkuvat liian vähän – kaksi tuntia ei täyty" (Vantaan sanomat 2014), "Lapset liikkuvat liian vähän" (YLE 2011) and "Liian monen lapsen ja nuoren liike pysähtynyt" (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön verkkolehti 2010). The discussions on children's physical education and physical activeness have been immense.

In addition to the media discussions there are also various on-going projects, which aim to support children's physical activeness. For instance the Innostun liikkumaan - Kasvattajan työtä tukemassa (2013–2015) is a project that aims to promote less active children's physical education and exercise possibilities. The idea is to support the participation and equality of those children who have challenges in motor development, have a physical disability or may find physical exercise difficult due to overweight or obesity. The project's main target group is elementary aged children, but also takes into account pre-school aged children and upper-comprehensive school aged children. The project began because of the major concerns on children's health and physical inactivity, as well as health inequalities. The Finnish CP Association is in charge of the project. (Suomen CP-liitto Ry, n.d.) The Innostun liikkumaan - Kasvattajan työtä tukemassa project is also taking part in the health and culture innovation projects of Fall 2014 in Metropolia University of Applied Sciences.

Furthermore according to Pönkkö and Sääkslahti (2012, p. 136) recent studies have shown that children exercise much less than their ideal health and development would require, and therefore more attention should be paid to the amount and quality of children's physical education and exercise. For instance, the results from the Child Health Monitoring Development project pilot study (Lasten ja nuorten terveysseurantatutkimus: LATE) indicated various concerns for children's health and well-being. The results of this study are presented in the report; Child Health: Results of the LATE-study on growth, development, health, health behavior and growth environment (2010). This report indicated that the main concerns related to children's overweight and obesity, sleeping, physical activity and use of entertainment media (Child Health: Results of the LATE-study on growth, development, health, health behavior and growth environment 2010, pp. 9-10).

The study results revealed that children spent less time on physical activities and exercise than the recommended level given in the Recommendations for Physical Activity in Early Childhood Education in Finland (2005). The recommended level is at least two hours each day and according to the results 12 % of three year old children, 6 % of five year old children and 10 % of first grade children exercised less than two hours a day. Children also spent much time using different entertainment media as 73 % of three year olds and 66 % of five year olds watched television or used the computer for ap-

proximately an hour on weekdays. (Child Health: Results of the LATE-study on growth, development, health, health behavior and growth environment 2010, pp. 104-105, 149.)

As a conclusion the Child Health: Results of the LATE-study on growth, development, health, health behavior and growth environment (2010, pp. 10, 154) suggest that more attention should be paid to children's lifestyle issues, like nutrition and eating habits, sleeping and exercise habits as well as habits concerning use of different entertainment media. Because of these concerns on children's health and well-being we conclude that this thesis offers a valuable addition to the existing studies and discussions on the topic of children's physical activeness and childhood physical education.

2 Working life partner and target group

2.1 The Finnish-American Kindergarten

Our working life partner was the Finnish-American Kindergarten located in Töölö, Helsinki. The kindergarten offered a multicultural and an English speaking environment for us to work in and this is something we value as future Bachelors of Social Services. The idea to collaborate with The Finnish-American Kindergarten came from us and we contacted the head of the kindergarten to see if there was interest in taking part in our project. Our working life partner was eager to work with us and we both agreed on the idea of incorporating early childhood physical education into the project. There was a mutual interest in children's physical education and together we developed the thesis idea further. Through conversations it came forth that the kindergarten would like to increase and develop their physical education activities.

The Finnish-American Kindergarten is an English language playschool for 3- to 6-year-old children. In total there are three playschools situated in central Helsinki: Töölö (our working-life partner), Kamppi and Ruoholahti. The kindergarten has been running for more than 30 years and the basis of the work derives from the British Early Childhood Education model, which emphasises academic teaching and educational activities. All of the kindergarten's teaching materials are in English, which also serves as the dominant language of teaching. In total there are three child groups; 3- to 4-year-olds, 5-year-olds and 6-year-olds, and each group has their own individualised activities and tasks.

(Finnish-American Kindergarten, 2006.) Although the kindergarten follows the British Early Childhood Education model, every operating kindergarten in Finland, whether public or private, has to follow the National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care (The National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care, 2004).

The daily programme at the kindergarten includes both free play and structured activities. Through the combination of free play and assigned activities children's social and cognitive skills are supported. One of the kindergarten's main ideas is that learning should be fun and therefore children are allowed to play and explore freely. The Finnish-American Kindergarten allows each child to grow on an intellectual, physical, social and emotional level. The main emphasis is that the children experience joy when learning and obtaining new skills. (Finnish-American Kindergarten, 2006.)

The kindergarten also values parents input in their children's lives and therefore parents are invited to take part in their activities. The kindergarten sticks to an open door policy, which allows parents to freely visit and meet with the teachers. The kindergarten places importance on mutual respect and trust between parents and teachers and the early childhood education and care community. (Finnish-American Kindergarten, 2006.)

2.2 The Teachers of Finnish-American Kindergarten

The target group of our project were two teachers of the Finnish-American Kindergarten in Töölö. Both of the teachers have a long work experience in early childhood education and care, and have been working at the kindergarten for several years. We decided to narrow down our target group to two teachers. Due to the resources of the kindergarten it was not possible for all of the workers to take part in the project. We likewise saw this as a better opportunity to build a small fruitful collaboration.

One of teachers was the head of the Finnish-American Kindergarten and therefore is in charge of all of the three kindergartens. The head of the kindergarten has worked both in Finland and abroad, and has a long work experience in early childhood education. During her training she has attended various courses, which have involved different areas of children's physical education, like music and movement. As the head of the kindergarten she outlines that in their curriculum they emphasize the holistic approach

to education, meaning that they take care of children's physical, emotional and cognitive well-being.

The other teacher likewise has much experience in the field of early childhood education and care. Her know-how comes from a long line of work and training in early childhood education environments. On a personal level, she identifies herself as an active sports woman and has learned a physical way of life already from a young age. In recent years she has attended a variety of physical education courses organized by ESLU (Etelä-Suomen Liikunta ja Urheilu ry). The courses have been meant to give new ideas and practices on physical education in early childhood education environments.

Even though the teachers had existing skills and knowledge in children's physical education, based on the discussions we had with them we noticed that the kindergarten was not meeting the recommended amount of physical education set in the National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care. Therefore we saw this as an opportunity to awaken and bring out the existing skills and knowledge the teachers had. We also wanted to offer new ideas and practices to physical education activities. By supporting the teachers existing skills and deepening their current knowledge we aimed to motivate them to organize more physical education activities in their kindergarten.

Although, our target group were the two kindergarten teachers we also had a group of 5- to 6- year-old children acting as participants in the functional activity sessions of our project. We knew that by motivating the teachers to add more physical education activities there would be a direct connection to the children. The children's physical activeness and well-being would simultaneously increase as the amount of physical education activities would increase. The functional activity sessions, where the children acted as participants, were designed as a sociocultural animation method to motivate the teachers at the Finnish-American Kindergarten.

3 Defining social pedagogy and sociocultural animation

3.1 Social pedagogy

In early childhood education work social pedagogy can be described through these elements: there is a strong focus on the child as a whole and support for the overall development, and children and workers are seen as living in the same shared space rather than separate hierarchical domains. In addition professionals are encouraged to constantly reflect on their practice and apply both theoretical understanding and self-knowledge in their work. The emphasis is on teamwork, especially with the parents and other professionals, the importance of listening and communicating is crucial for a social pedagogue. (Cameron & Moss 2011, p. 9.) Through these elements one can get an overall image of what social pedagogy in early childhood education is. In short, social pedagogy supports children's upbringing and overall development by focusing on the child as a whole.

The words 'social' and 'pedagogy' in social pedagogy can be viewed in different ways. For instance, the word 'pedagogy' is often referred to as education, in addition pedagogy has a more broad and holistic understanding of education. The word 'social' stresses the centrality of relationships in working with children or any other people. Often, the word 'social' refers to the pedagogic work that the society undertakes, for example in services provided for children and young people. (Cameron & Moss 2011, pp. 9-10.)

According to Petrie (Petrie cited in Cameron & Moss 2011, p. 8) social pedagogy can be described "as where care and education meet, as being concerned with children's upbringing, as a broadly educational approach to social problems, as education that takes place in everyday lives, and as education in its broadest sense". This description of social pedagogy reflects on the importance of education in early childhood and therefore worked well for our project.

The basis of this thesis comes from sociocultural animation, a theory under the larger concept of social pedagogy. Sociocultural animation takes its theoretical background from social pedagogy; in other words, socio-cultural animation does not produce its own theory. Instead, sociocultural animation uses other theories from different sciences

in order to orientate its activities, meaning that all kinds of theoretical and practical information that helps in reaching the wanted goals. Sociocultural animation is seen as a social pedagogical technique, which is encouraging, motivating and an organisational action that allows people to create social networks. Even so, it must be emphasized that social pedagogy and sociocultural animation should not be mixed with each other as social pedagogy is the science behind animation and socio-cultural animation is cultural action based on social pedagogy. (Hämäläinen & Kurki 1997, pp. 202-203.)

Sociocultural animation is known as a goal-directed social practice, with awareness and voluntary action, which is always more or less connected to questions of humane development and fulfilment. This way sociocultural animation has a clear pedagogical background however spontaneity, freedom, being self-expressive and self-implementation are always present in socio-cultural animation. Even though socio-cultural animation isn't education in its deepest meaning, its basic goals are educational. This is why social pedagogy offers sociocultural animation both as a theoretical and practical model because they both have the same basic goals in education. (Hämäläinen & Kurki 1997, pp. 204-205.)

3.2 Sociocultural animation

Sociocultural animation has its roots in 20th century France, where after the Second World War it was used to rebuild the war torn country into a new and more democratic society (Kurki 2007, p. 69). In those days sociocultural animation was used in its most basic and primitive form and was in fact based solely on volunteer work. It was not until after the concept was adopted by UNESCO in the 1960's that it began to gain foothold as a paid occupation. One could argue that animation was born from the need of the people rather than as an outright concept of social work. (Kurki 2000, pp. 11-12.)

Nowadays the definition and the use of animation have changed a lot from what it was in the 20th century. According to Kurki (2000, pp. 19-20) a broad definition of animation covers all activities that allow people to participate and become more actively involved in their communities. More specifically it aims to create situations where social transformation is possible, in other words improving people's quality of life through their own participation. In general, the goal of animation is to improve the social interactions between people and bring together a group of people who share a common goal.

The purpose of animation is to empower and motivate people to become both more actively and consciously a part of building their own lives as well as building their societies. It aims to awaken the individual, or group, both personally and socially and through this allow for them to participate in activities they had not been able to participate before. Animation begins from the people: the animators go where the people live, work and socialize. Based on this animation is primarily about participation, since only by participating can an individual, or a group, enact change. (Kurki, Kurki-Suutarinen & Taruvuori 2010, p. 181.)

Animation is needed since change cannot occur without sensitizing and building motivation for change. Sensitizing refers to the awakening of people who have become accustomed to their everyday lives and do not see the need for change or feel unable to enact change. Motivation however is a step further as it awakens feelings and action related to an issue that was brought on by sensitizing. Furthermore, animation needs to focus on activities that are felt interesting and important by the participants since otherwise building motivation for change would not be possible. (Kurki 2000, pp. 129, 133-134.)

According to J.V. Merino (Merino cited in Kurki 2000, p. 23) animation has always two goals; the first is to awaken life where there is none and the second is to harness and support the abilities that already exist within individuals and groups. What is meant by the first is that animation aims to create movement and initiative in places where people have already accepted defeat. The second refers to helping people realize their hidden potential and to use it to improve their situation. In this regard the purpose of animation would be to motivate and strengthen people's ability to realize their full potential. (Kurki 2000, p. 23.)

The purpose of animation is to create a change in society through action taken by a certain group of people, in this case the participants of a certain animation project. Through participation animation helps people interact and work together towards a collective goal. Animation is always based on voluntary participation of the people. The responsibility is shared by the participants and the animator, however, each person is always in charge of their own progress. (Kurki 2000, pp. 77, 89.)

Animation can be divided into two worlds based on how it is used and what it aims to accomplish. In the hot world animation is seen as a reaction to the current dominating

and oppressing system. It aims to fight these systems, which represent indifference towards people in the systems. The work done in the hot world of animation arises from the everyday life of people, and it is the job of the animator to assist these people in analysing their experiences and to help them to see their role as a part of a bigger society. (Kurki 2000, p. 69.)

Different to the hot world the workers in the cold world of animation seek to work in the existing structures in society. In the cold world of animation the work is done within the system, using the resources that are already available. The existing social structures are seen as functioning well and the work is done within the limits set by those structures. Animators working in the cold world seek to help people without questioning the system itself. (Kurki 2000, pp. 67-68.) For the purposes of our final project we chose to work in the cold world. We felt that it was not our purpose to change the existing structures of society but rather to animate the workers within their existing system.

Animation can be used in as many ways as there are animators, however it has certain elements to it that remain standard. The process of sociocultural animation can be divided into seven standard elements; action, participants, time, institution, social relationship, strategy and philosophy. Although these elements can be found in every animation process they show themselves differently in the hot and cold world of animation. (Kurki 2000, p. 73.) However, for the purposes of our functional thesis the process of animation in the cold world was relevant.

The action element of animation refers to the organization of the group. It covers areas such as how will the work of the participants be facilitated and how will they reach their goals. What is relevant here are the individual interests of each participant such as learning new skills and carrying out activities. (Kurki 2000, p. 74.) In our project the action element was facilitated through the functional activity sessions. We wanted to ensure that the participants had enough time to work on both their individual and collective goals.

Kurki explains (2000, pp. 74-75) that in the cold world of animation the participants, both the clients and the worker, are seen as organizers rather than action takers. These organizers follow the commands that come from above rather than make rules for themselves. The animators are seen as mediators between the group and as the outside forces that control the action. In our project this was particularly evident. Ac-

cording to the Recommendations for physical activity in early childhood education (2005, p. 10) children should be able to participate in organized physical activities for at least two hours a day, and this is what guided both our project as well as the participant's actions. Our goal was to animate the workers to meet these guidelines instead of trying to change the actual guidelines.

The time element in the cold world of animation refers to planning, implementing and evaluating in a set time span (Kurki 2000, p. 75). For our project we had detailed time schedules for all activities. Planning took the longest amount of time since in addition to planning the animation project we also had to plan the physical activity sessions in collaboration with the workers. We managed to stay within our set timeframe for the project, including both planning and implementing.

The institution refers to the bigger organization with whom this animation project is carried out. In the cold world the work is carried out mainly with existing organizations rather than creating new ones. (Kurki 2000, p. 75.) For us the institution refers to our working life partner. Even though this thesis is targeted specifically for the Finnish-American Kindergarten in Töölö, we feel that there is a possibility for our project to spread to the two other kindergartens since all three kindergartens work closely together.

Social relationship refers to both the relationships developed between the group members themselves as well as to relationships between the group and other members of the society. This element is characterized by a need to integrate into the existing society, a sort of socialisation of the people in the group. This socialisation can be achieved by a number of ways and it is up to the animators to decide the correct course of action. (Kurki 2000, p. 75.) In our project the social relationships between the group members played a much bigger role than relationships to the rest of the society. It was our goal to work within this one community and therefore there was not a huge amount of contact to other members of society.

Strategy, meaning to find the right ways to reach the goal, is based on passivity of the participants as well as the workers. Rather than believing in actual change occurring animators build a strategy around the already existing bureaucratic and difficult structures. This allows the people to believe change has occurred but in reality change has only occurred in their own life, not on a societal level. (Kurki 2000, p. 76.) Although this

may have a negative connotation to it this is not the case. For us the purpose was to navigate our projects goals to suit the physical education standards given in the Recommendations for physical activity in early childhood education. Therefore the purpose was to enact change on both a communal and personal level within the daycare rather than on a societal level.

According to Kurki (2000, p. 76) philosophy brings together all the actions and plans for the entire animation process; it is the main element of animation. In the cold world the philosophy is to preserve the already existing structures of society. Animators see actions as concrete and materialistic that focuses on the existing realities. In our project this was very similar to the strategy element of animation and will therefore not be repeated here.

There has been much discussion around the characteristics of an animator and although no consensus has been reached there is mutual agreement that a person cannot be an animator if they themselves are not animated. The main job of an animator is to motivate and facilitate a chance for people, both individually and collectively, to become animated and take action to improve their current situations. (Kurki 2000, pp. 80-84.) The core of animation relies deeply in humanistic action taken by the animator to secure people's sense of security in their lives.

Since animation is based on social relationships between participants the animator needs to be committed to the group. Furthermore, they need to be aware of their group members' strengths, both hidden and visible, and allow them to solve their own issues, which in turn lead to social development. Due to the humanistic approach of sociocultural animation an animator needs to be aware of their own values and ethics, and not let them interfere with their work. (Kurki 2000, pp. 80-84.) We feel that through our own animation and motivation we were able to motivate the workers better than if we had not been interested in the theme. Furthermore, our interest also benefited us while implementing the project since we felt it was easier to commit to a project that we felt very strongly about.

Much like all professional action these days animation too involves an aspect of evaluation and assessment. Due to the humanistic and social nature of sociocultural animation it has some unique elements in its evaluation. Any assessment of animation has to involve the people who were a part of the group; only they can assess their own

successfulness. Since the aim of evaluation is to improve and develop the activities, evaluation should be a continuous process throughout the entire course of animation. It is also important to carry out a final assessment after the animation process is complete. This evaluation is solely based on the results of the animation instead of the individual processes of the participants. (Kurki 2000, pp. 150-152.)

4 Physical education in early childhood education and care

Since we carried out our project in a setting that involved children it was crucial to include elements of early childhood education in our thesis. Although our main target group consisted of the two teachers in the kindergarten the children still took part in all the functional activity sessions, and therefore elements of child development had to be taken into consideration. Areas such as physical education in early childhood education needed to be well-thought-out before we could carry out our project.

Physical education in early childhood is important because as Doherty and Bailey (2003, p. 2) state “Children love to move and be physically active”. Physical movement plays an important role in children’s development and learning, and should therefore be supported in any area where there is interaction with children. Whether it is in a home environment or in a kindergarten setting children should have the chance to experience movement. (Doherty & Bailey 2003, p. 2.)

In Finland the National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care (Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman perusteet) (2004, p. 19) outline four inherent ways of acting of a child and one of these child’s ways of acting is physical activity and movement. All four ways of acting; playing, movement, exploration, and self-exploration through different art forms, should be present in early childhood education and care environments. Incorporating these features in all activities is important because when children are able to act in their inherent ways, it not only improves their well-being and self-esteem but their chance for participation as well.

Furthermore the Recommendations for Physical Activity in Early Childhood Education in Finland (Varhaiskasvatuksen liikunnan suositukset) (2005, p. 5) set out recommendations for physical education in early childhood education and care. The recommendations constitute as standards on how physical activities and play can benefit chil-

dren's development and learning as well as overall wellbeing. In total there are six areas that the Recommendations for Physical Activity in Early Childhood Education focus on; amount, quality, planning and realisation, environment, equipment and co-operation. These standards set in the Recommendations for Physical Activity in Early Childhood Education guided the planning and implementation of our project's physical activity sessions.

Children's normal physical growth and development is highly tied to physical activity and movement. The amount of physical exercise that children should have in early childhood education and care is a minimum of two hours every day. The physical activities should also be brisk enough so that children sweat and get out of breath. This is because brisk physical exercise strengthens children's muscular, respiratory and cardiovascular system. In addition daily movement and activity allow motor skills to develop and therefore children should have the chance to practice their motor skills in various settings with different equipment. Daily physical activeness in early childhood also contributes to children's overall health and well-being. Therefore early childhood educators should ensure that children receive the minimum amount of physical exercise each day. (Recommendations for Physical Activity in Early Childhood Education 2005, pp. 9-11.)

Children should also have the chance to practice their basic motor skills in diversified ways. Daily exercise, which is diverse and practiced in different settings, serves as a basis for the quality of physical education activities. Carefully planned and well-organized physical activities support children's motor development and neural development. Early childhood educators have the responsibility of ensuring the quality of physical education activities in their community and should therefore create the prerequisite for physical movement and play. Children should be given the chance to move as much as they want and as freely as they want. (Recommendations for Physical Activity in Early Childhood Education 2005, pp. 12-15.)

Based on discussions with our working life partner we came to the conclusion that although their kindergarten had many elements related to physical education, they were not fully meeting the requirements set in the Recommendations for Physical Activity in Early Childhood Education, mainly concerning the amount and quality of physical education activities. Therefore, through this project we intended to offer the teachers more skills and knowledge on how to organize physical education for their clients. The pur-

pose was to reawaken their interest for physical education and through this to increase the amount and quality of physical exercise in the kindergarten.

As children have an inherent need to play and move it is important that early childhood educators plan and implement activities, which support these needs. The planning and realisation of physical education lessons should include goal-oriented activities, with diverse plans. Planning and realisation of physical education also demands consistent evaluation and observation of children's growth and development. Evaluation assists in seeing differences in children's physical development, for instance if one child needs more support in their functions than others. The amount and quality of provided exercise should likewise be evaluated. Children should have structured physical education sessions at least two times a week, one session held inside and the other held outside. In addition different physical activities can be incorporated into other activities. (Recommendations for Physical Activity in Early Childhood Education 2005, pp. 16, 21-24.)

One of the key aspects of our activity sessions was to demonstrate the importance of planning. For each of our activity session we had a written plan that we went through together with the teachers so to highlight the elements that were important to take into account. A well-thought-out plan not only improves the quality of the physical activity session but also guides the teacher. Furthermore, plans can be reused and therefore we left the session plans for our working life partner to keep.

The environment also plays an important role in children's physical activeness. The environment of an early childhood education and care facility should be encouraging for physical movement. Different environments, both indoor and outdoor, enable children to adjust their skills and learn new ones at the same time. Educators should remove any obstacles that stand in the way of physical movement and furthermore, children should be taught safe ways to move and exercise. Available spaces should also be modified so that they fit the purposes of physical education. Educators should also utilize other nearby spaces, such as school gym halls from the surrounding area. Changing environments help keep children interested and motivated in physical exercise. (Recommendations for Physical Activity in Early Childhood Education 2005, pp. 25-27.)

Environment played a key role in our project since the kindergarten's own facilities imposed a challenge for physical education. Due to their small space the teachers felt

that they were not able to organize as much physical exercise as they would like to. It was our intention through this project to demonstrate how even a small space can act as a surrounding for physical education. In addition to this we wanted to show how physical education can be organized in other settings as well, and how important it is to use diverse surroundings to offer the children different experiences.

In terms of equipment The Recommendations for Physical Activity in Early Childhood Education (2005, pp. 28-29) suggest that every early childhood education and care facility should have basic equipment, which is easily accessible to children. There should also be a sufficient amount of equipment. Examples of equipment suitable for children's physical exercise can include balls, hula-hoops, balloons and jump ropes. Educators should ensure that there is enough wide-ranging equipment meant for children's physical education.

The co-operation of the recommendations means active involvement with children's parents. Parents have an immense role in children's physical activeness as children mostly learn from their home environment. Relating physical exercise into the home environment can be supported by collaboration between parents and early childhood educators. Early childhood educators can give guidance and share their knowledge on the importance of physical education in early childhood. Educators can also encourage parents to move and play with their children so that physical activities are also included at home. This way children are not only dependent on the physical education activities provided in early childhood education and care. (Recommendations for Physical Activity in Early Childhood Education 2005, pp. 31-32.)

The National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care (2004, p. 21) also stress how children begin learning and developing a physical way of life already in early childhood and therefore physical activities should be supported in early childhood education and care environments. Regular physical exercise constitutes as a basis for children's healthy development and holistic well-being. Through movement children learn, feel, experience and express. Physical activities also allow children to be in interaction with their environment and community.

The National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care (2004, p. 21) also confirm that early childhood educators should strive to actively develop and create opportunities for children to engage in physical exercise. Educators should

make sure that their environment is open and stimulating for daily physical exercise because a well-constructed environment invites children to move, play and learn new skills. Typically those early childhood education and care communities, which have a positive attitude towards physical activity, have more high-quality physical education. Children's growth and motor development is significantly tied to physical education and therefore consistent and regular physical activities allow their motor skills to develop. Through physical education, educators are also able to evaluate each child's development and learning. Therefore it is important that educators also reflect on what physical education means to their community and what physical education means to their children's learning. (National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care 2004, p. 21.)

In the National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care (2004) it is stated that early childhood educators should offer and create opportunities for children to partake in physical activities and that is what this project aimed to facilitate. The goal of this entire animation project was to support and deepen the physical education skills and knowledge of the kindergarten's teachers. This in turn would lead to the teacher's feeling more motivated to organize physical activities for the children. We also wanted the teachers to reflect on what physical education means to them and their community.

5 Goals of the thesis

The goal of our thesis was to support The Finnish-American Kindergarten's physical education activities by means of sociocultural animation. Our aim was to support and deepen the physical education skills and knowledge of two of the kindergarten's teachers. In addition, we wanted to motivate the teachers so that they would arrange more physical education activities in their work community. The aim was to achieve a state where physical education would be more concretely and intensively a part of the kindergarten's daily activities.

By supporting and deepening the physical education skills of the teachers' we wanted them to internalize the importance of planning and implementation. We likewise wanted to motivate them to use different types of suitable equipment and settings for physical education activities. We aimed to support their existing knowledge on physical educa-

tion as well as motivate them to continuously learn and improve and gain new knowledge on physical education. We wanted the teachers to internalize the importance of quality in physical education. In addition we wanted them to internalize (and afterwards implement) the amount of physical education activities that should be offered to children daily.

To achieve these goals, and awaken motivation, we applied sociocultural animation throughout this project. We prepared and sent out three questionnaires regarding physical education in the kindergarten. The questionnaires included themes relating to our goals, such as quality, amount, planning and implementation, and environment and equipment. The second and third questionnaires were made to measure our goals for the animation process. In addition, we planned and implemented functional activity sessions in the kindergarten that were meant to motivate the teachers to arrange more physical education activities in their work community.

6 Planning and implementation of animation process

As stated before our goal was to motivate the two teachers at the Finnish-American Kindergarten to arrange more physical education activities in their community. Our goal was to support their skills and knowledge on early childhood physical education by means of sociocultural animation. We decided to apply animation because it offers a way to awaken motivation through participation. According to Kurki (2005, p. 347) the foundation of sociocultural animation always entails planned and goal-oriented activity, with focus on the design, implementation and evaluation of all activities and their connection to the community. As sociocultural animation was our main working method we designed a plan for our animation process.

Our animation process began with the first analysis, which purpose was to determine the current situation regarding physical education in the kindergarten. In order to find out and evaluate the current level of physical education activities we sent out an open-ended questionnaire that involved questions relating to the physical education. We had four main categories in the questionnaire; quality, amount, planning and implementation, environment and equipment. The structure of the questionnaire was based on the Recommendations for physical activity in early childhood education (2005). In addition to the questionnaire we also arranged a meeting with our working life partner to discuss

about their current physical education activities. Both the questionnaire and discussion served as the first step in the animation process.

The first questionnaire (Appendix 2) showed that both of the teachers had much knowledge on physical education in early childhood and on the importance of physical exercise in children's health and development. The responses likewise indicated that skills in planning physical education activities were found important. However, from the responses it could be seen that there was a need to strengthen these physical education skills further. The main concerns related to the physical space of the kindergarten. Furthermore, when asked if the teachers felt that they organized enough physical activities the responses were clear.

"No, we do not organize as much as I would wish. This is due to space constraints and the problems we have found trying to find a gym that we could use on a regular basis."

"No, I would like to organize more however the physical space puts limits to this."

In the questionnaire, the teachers brought out their concerns relating to the limited indoor space of their kindergarten. Organizing physical activities indoors seemed to be the most predominant challenge. The kindergarten's available space is small and therefore presents challenges in arranging physical education lessons. Both teachers felt that they do not organize enough physical activities mainly due to the space constraints mentioned above. The teachers stated that they are able to utilize outdoor spaces, like the nearby park but indoor physical education activities are limited. One of the teachers mentioned in their response that they would like to learn better ways of utilizing their own indoor space.

"Rather than wishing for more space, I would rather seek ways of better utilizing the already existing one."

After the first analysis and questionnaire responses, we were able to design the intervention of our project. The intervention included four functional physical activity sessions, a process evaluation and a final evaluation. The functional activity sessions took place in a four week timespan. Our plan was to facilitate the first three sessions and during each of these sessions the teachers would have a different role based on the animation process plan. Having observed and participated in these sessions they

would then facilitate the last session themselves. The activity sessions served as a way for us to motivate the teachers to think of new and exciting ways of organizing physical activities in their community through observing us. The functional activity sessions played a central role in the animation process.

We also paid attention to the evaluation of our thesis and animation process. We had a process evaluation, which evaluated our activities and animation process throughout the course of the entire project. Process evaluation focuses on continuous improvement and much like animation it strives to build a better future (Kurki 2000, p. 150). Therefore we had also designed feedback discussions as a part of our process evaluation. After each of the physical activity sessions we had a joint discussion where we reflected on the activities, such as the use of space and equipment. These feedback discussions enabled us to better ourselves and make changes when necessary. Furthermore, the feedback also supported the teachers' animation and self-evaluation.

Along with the process evaluation we also had a final evaluation, which took place after all the sessions were done. We had two questionnaires that were sent out after the four sessions, the first one straight after as to see short-term effects and the second one three months later to evaluate long-term effects. The second and third questionnaire likewise had the same structure as the first questionnaire, which was based on the Recommendations for physical activity in early childhood education (2005). We had the same four categories in the questionnaires and each category held different questions relating to physical education. The final evaluation questionnaires helped us to see whether any changes had been made to physical education activities of the kindergarten and whether we had achieved our goals.

In our animation process we focused on supporting our working life partner's involvement and participation in the process. We wanted to gradually add the level of participation of the teachers. In our plan we included four main themes; awakening motivation, increasing level of participation, adding participation in facilitation, heightening of animation. These four elements were visible in the functional activity sessions. In a way we saw our project as affecting the lives of both the teachers and children, at least in terms of physical education. Furthermore, we felt that our project brought together a group of people who shared a common goal. Below is a summarized version of the animation process of this thesis.

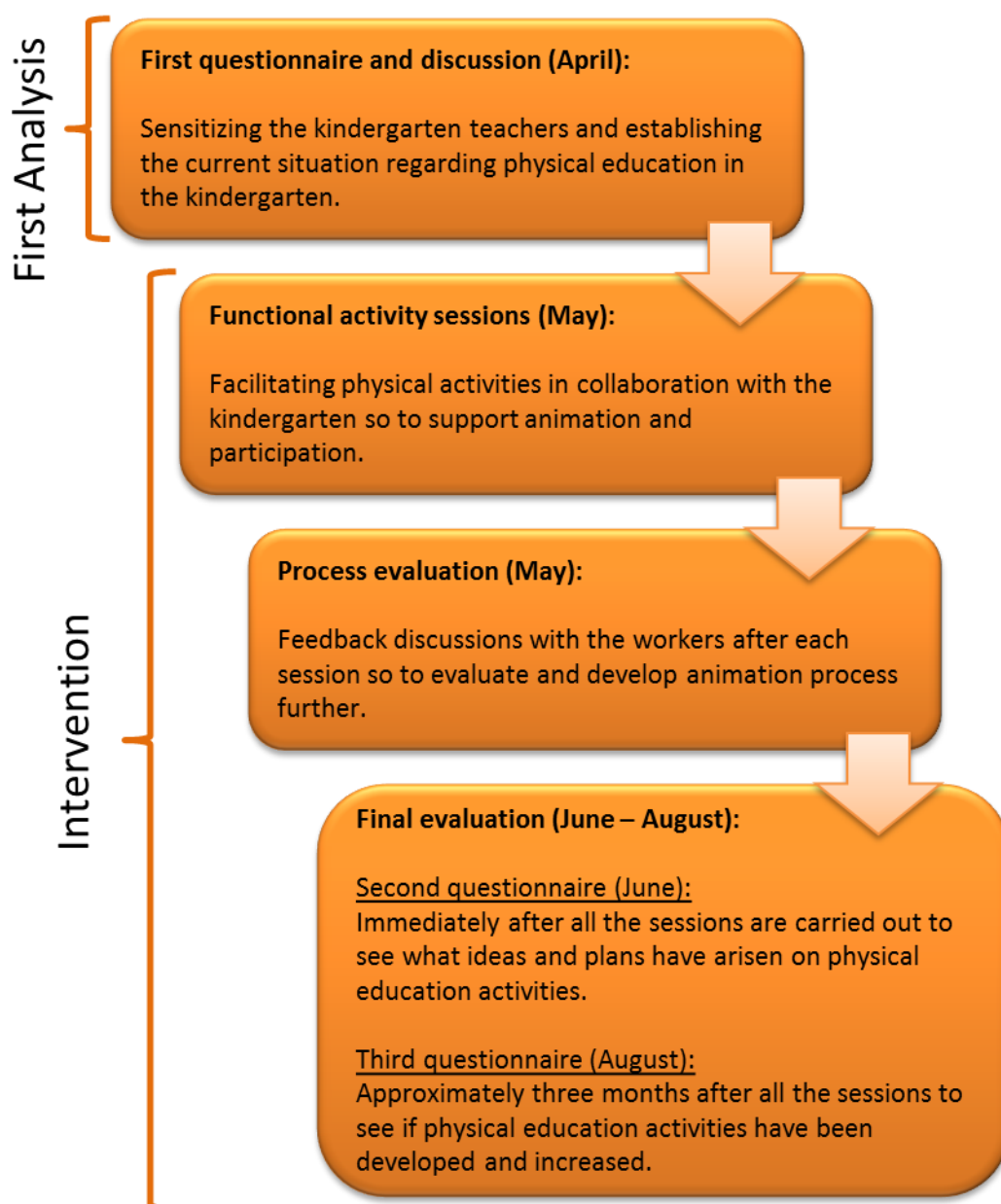


Figure 1. Animation process.

The functional activity sessions played an important part in the animation process. The sessions were planned together with the two teachers as it supported their animation and participation. For each of the sessions we chose different locations as to demonstrate how different surroundings can be used for different activities. We likewise wanted to demonstrate that the size of the available space should not be an obstacle when organizing physical activities. We also had a wide-range of different activities that supported the idea of diverse exercise. Furthermore, the sessions strengthened the teachers' involvement in the animation process.

7 Functional activity sessions

7.1 Activity Session 1 – Awakening motivation

Based on the answers in the initial questionnaire concerning the problems related to available space in organizing physical education, we decided to organize the first session in the kindergarten. The purpose of this was to influence the workers existing prejudice and to demonstrate that space does not have to be an obstacle when organizing physical activities. Furthermore by using their own space we hoped to motivate the workers in becoming more interested in ways of utilizing their own kindergarten facilities in the future as well.

As a theme for this first session we chose body maintenance and control as well as learning about one's own body since typically these kinds of activities do not require a lot of space and would therefore be suited for this particular setting. According to Kuitunen and Syväluoma (2012, p. 15) body maintenance and control refer to the fluency of movement, speed, aesthetics and strength that can be achieved through balancing and other kinds of movement control skills.

Our main focus during this session was naturally continuing the teachers' animation process and our animation project. We wanted to awaken their motivation towards organizing physical activities for their clients as well as to offer them concrete tools in doing this. This in turn would help us achieve our goal of supporting and deepening the physical education skills and knowledge of the teachers.

All of the four sessions were divided into four separate parts: warm-up, main activity, relaxation and closure. The warm-up was planned around high pulse rate activities, the purpose of which was to get the children's muscles activated. It also included balancing activities in order to get acquainted with the theme of the session. When organizing physical activities for children it is important to allow them to get rid of their excess energy before starting the actual lesson. When children have had a chance to partake in high pulse rate activities, such as running, it makes it easier for them to focus on organized activities. (Pulli, 2013, p.37.)

Due to the size of the available space planning high pulse rate activities created a challenge. However, this was solved by creating an exercise where the instructor and the children pretended to go on a running trip. By coming up with alternatives that would work in a small space the children still had a chance to take part in high pulse rate activities and what's more important from an animation viewpoint we were able to show the workers how a small space can be used in physical education activities. Another part of the warm-up consisted of balancing activities. Both balancing and simply remaining in an upright position can be very challenging and thus balancing is a task that needs to be learned (Koskiahde 2010, p. 11).

Pulli (2013, p. 22) states that children learn to identify their own body better through games, which allow them to learn about their bodies in a general way as well as a more specific way, for example learning about different body parts. Therefore the main activity was planned around balancing activities along with activities that supported children's knowledge of their own bodies. These included different kinds of walking styles, such as crab walking and log rolling, which were meant to teach the children about their inner muscles.

For the relaxation we wanted to incorporate knowledge of body parts as well as aspects related to body maintenance, such as stretching. Stretching is an important part of physical fitness and the best way to maintain and improve muscle, tendon and ligament elasticity (Pieniniemi 2006, p. 8). In her book *Notkea kuin kissa* (2006) Pieniniemi describes how stretching can be made more interesting for children by using animal figures to demonstrate stretch movements. In our project we used this similar technique but came up with our own movements to show the teachers how they can utilize different theories to their own needs.

According to Pulli (2013, p. 38) it is easier for children to understand that an organized activity has come to an end if there is an exercise that is repeated at the end of each session. We chose to have a similar type of closure in each session as the relaxations differed so vastly in all four sessions. The closures also served as a way for us to receive feedback and review the session as a whole.

In addition to planning the actual physical activity sessions we had to plan the specific animation aims for each session so that they would help us achieve our main goal;

support and deepen the physical education skills and knowledge of two of the kindergarten's teachers and to motivate them to arrange more physical education activities in their community. The overall purpose of the sessions was to gradually add the level of participation of the teachers and eventually make us, the animators, unnecessary. This in turn would mean that the teachers would then feel animated and skilled enough to organize activities on their own.

During the first session the workers role was mainly to act as observers but we also offered them the possibility to participate if they felt comfortable in doing so. The idea behind this was that by observing the session the workers would see the importance of physical education and the excitement and joy of the children. In addition to this they would be able to learn new skills from observing us in the role of a teacher.



Figure 2. Children practicing body maintenance and control.

This first session took place on Tuesday the 8th of May at the Finnish-American Kindergarten where we carried out the physical activity session, with the children as participants of the session and the teachers as participants of the animation project. Although we had decided to offer the teachers an opportunity to participate in the activity if they wanted they chose to act as observers during the first session. After the session

during our feedback discussion with the teachers they expressed new ideas about using their own space for physical education, which signals animation and motivation from their part.

After each of the four sessions we thought it was important for the purposes of our animation project to not only have closure with the children but also with the teachers. The purpose of these feedback sessions were to allow for the teachers to express their ideas about the sessions verbally and through this reflect on the new skills and knowledge they might have gained during the lesson. Furthermore these feedback discussions allowed for us to talk about the benefits of physical education. It is an important part of animation to have continuous discussions where the participants can process their thoughts. We wanted to allow for dialogue to take place not just between us but also between the teachers themselves. Dialogue acts as a way for participants to exchange ideas with their community and to start the process of awakening, and through this awakening they can take action to improve their realities (Kurki, Suutarinen-Kurki & Taruvuori 2010, p. 181).

7.2 Activity Session 2 – Increasing level of participation

The purpose of this session was to demonstrate how different types of environments can be used for different physical activities. Therefore we wanted to show the teachers how a nearby gym hall could be used for physical education. During this session we wanted the teachers to see how versatile a gym hall can be for physical education activities. In addition, we wanted them to get inspired and motivated in using the gym hall themselves, thus advancing in their own animation process.

According to Zimmer (2002, p. 162) having activities in a gym hall is an ideal setting for children's physical education. Zimmer states that having flexible solutions for the available space allow workers to better consider each child's individual needs for both rest and exercise. We similarly thought that a gym hall would offer a great opportunity for educational activities that involve physical movement. The idea of arranging one of our sessions in a gym actually came from one of the teachers. It turned out that they had previously thought about using a nearby school gym for their physical education activities therefore we wanted to support their idea and take concrete action in making this possible.

As a theme for the second session we chose to have an activity circle, which included learning and developing basic gross motor skills, as well as observation and orientation skills. This theme worked well for this session since we had plenty of space and equipment available. This also enabled the teachers to take part in facilitating the session, which was important for their animation. According to Autio (2001, p.157) an activity circle is a form of physical education where all basic gross motor skills are used effectively. Movements such as crawling, walking, jumping, running, rolling and balancing are all part of an activity circle. In addition, orientation skills play a great role in an activity circle as it refers to the ability of orientating into unusual and quickly changing situations. In physical education this means for instance moving obstacles, rhythm and changes on the ground where movement is done. (Autio 2001, p. 50.)

From an animation viewpoint our purpose for this session was to continue to motivate the teachers and have them participate in the facilitation and instructing of the session. It was our purpose to offer them new skills relating to the theme of the session by having them participate in the activities we had planned. Through the added level of participation the teachers would also have an opportunity to practice their skills during the session.

Our second session was on Tuesday the 13th of May. The session was held in a gym hall, in the facilities of an elementary school, which is located near the Finnish-American Kindergarten. During this session we focused on fostering dialogue with the teachers, both after and during the session. The idea was that by participating in the activities and through our discussions, the teachers would remember the importance of physical education in early childhood education and care.

The first warm-up activity was a game called freeze-tag. This activity included a lot of running and balancing, both of which were part of the session's theme. The warm-up also included a "follow the leader" – game, where the main activity's five different stations were went through together. In order to ease the transition to the main activity, we felt that this second part of the warm-up was necessary. In "follow the leader" the instructor would demonstrate the activity done in each station, thus acting as an example for the children to follow. This game is a great way of developing observation skills, because it requires concentration, listening and being aware of one's surroundings.



Figure 3. Children taking part in the activity circle and practicing movement skills.

An activity circle offers a possibility of incorporating a variety of different physical exercises and movements. According to Autio (2001, pp. 157-160) the aim of having an activity circle is for children to enjoy and have fun, as well as to strengthen basic gross motor skills and get exercise. In addition to these, an activity circle is a great way of learning balance-, reaction-, orientation-, and agility skills, as well as spatial direction skills (Autio 2001, pp. 157-160). The plan for the activity circle's stations would include hula-hoops, mattresses, slaloming through obstacles, wall bars and a tunnel. We chose to have these activities, because we thought that these would offer the most variety between each station and develop the skills according to the theme.

In the second session we followed an open plan, meaning that we planned the session in a way that allowed both the children and the teachers to take part in the implementation of the activities. According to Zimmer (2002, pp. 139-140) having an open plan allows space for the children to come up with new ideas and variations for the different activities. In addition this is something that we wanted to allow the teachers to do. Having an open plan allowed them to become animated by coming up with new ideas for movements and participating with the children.

The first station included jumping in hula-hoops laid on the floor with both feet and one foot. According to Wickström (Wickström cited in Doherty & Bailey 2003, p. 76) jumping is “a motor skill in which the body is propelled into the air by a thrust from one of both legs and then lands on one or both feet”. In this station, children would jump in the middle of each hula-hoop laid on the floor using different variations. The children could jump/hop/bound forwards, backwards, and sideways with either feet or one foot. The aim was to get the children doing both big and small movements, while also stretching themselves and bending during this activity. Jumping is an effective way for children to exercise the muscles in their legs as well as strengthen their balancing skills (Terve Koululainen, n.d).

The second station included logrolling and wheelbarrow walking on mattresses. Logrolling supports learning about the inner muscles of the body. In addition, wheelbarrow walking is a core way of strengthening the big muscles in the upper-body. Furthermore, these activities support children’s social skills as they require co-operation with a pair. Muscular strength and muscular endurance are both important in early childhood physical education and should be practiced regularly (Gallahue & Cleland-Donnelly 2003, pp. 84-86).

The third station included slaloming through obstacles with a pea bag on top of their head. The aim of this activity was to develop one of the basic skills in movement; balance skills that indicate the cooperation of muscles, visual perception and equilibrium (Autio 2001, p. 49). According to Iivonen (2008, p. 21) practicing balance skills enables children’s movement to become more controlled, predictable and acute. We planned an activity, where the children would walk on a narrow bench with a pea bag on top of their head. According to Autio (2001, p. 180) exercises done on a narrow bench are great for developing both strength and balance skills.

The fourth station included climbing on wall-bars and jumping down on a thick gym mattress. The aim of this activity was to develop overall body control, muscle strength and coordination skills. Often a child is forbidden to climb in the fear of him or her falling down and getting hurt, but climbing is actually extremely important for developing children’s basic gross motor skills (Alatalo & Jaara 2010, p. 10.) The purpose of this was to also show the teacher’s that this fear is unnecessary and that the children enjoy this type of activity.

The fifth station included crawling through a tunnel both forwards and backwards. The aim of this activity was to develop skills that are required in crawling. Karvonen, Sirenius and Vuorinen (2003, p. 117) state that crawling is an important skill, which enhances physical development in many ways, such as coordination of limbs, spinal circulation, strengthening balance and overall strengthening of muscles.

For the relaxation part of the session we wanted the children to have a few minutes to lie down on a soft gym mattress, relax and listen to soothing music, while the instructors would stroke them gently with scarves. According to Autio and Kaski (2005, p. 138) relaxation skills have many good dimensions, both physical and psychological. Both argue, that relaxation should be a part of children's physical education sessions because among other things it fastens the physical recovery after exercising, improves concentration skills and gives an opportunity to rest and calm down (Autio & Kaski 2005, p. 138).

7.3 Activity Session 3 – Adding participation in facilitation

We wanted to arrange one of the physical activity sessions outdoors as outdoor space offers much variety and almost endless room for movement. This way we also supported the kindergarten's own interest and desire to use the outside park nearby. The first questionnaire likewise showed that the kindergarten's teachers try to take as much advantage of their surrounding outdoor areas due to their limited indoor space. Therefore we wanted to support the workers existing use of outdoor space for physical education.

The theme of our session was ball skills and ball games. The session's warm-up activities were planned around basic ball skills as these skills are necessary for continuing onto ball games. Huovinen, Remahl and Turunen (2009, p. 9) similarly conclude that basic ball skills serve as a basis for playing different ball games. These skills are a part of ball handling skills and children need both ball handling skills and perceptual motor skills when playing ball games. Basic ball skills include rolling, passing, throwing and catching, kicking, bouncing and travelling. (Autio 2010, pp. 134-135).

The activities for the warm-up were adapted from *Liiku ja leiki: Motorisia perusharjoitteita lapsille* (Autio 2010, pp. 134-135). In our plan we included four main

basic ball skills with different variations for children to practice. As some of the children were more advanced than others, variations helped to adjust the exercises for each child's level. When planning physical education activities it is preferable to think of different variations to support each individual's development level, individual skills and comfort zone. Mastering basic ball skills supports children's coordination skills, like hand and eye coordination and use of gross motor skills for different movements.

In the main activity we had two ball games: tunnel ball and dodge ball. The reason we chose to have games was because games are a fun and exciting form of physical activity and movement. Doherty and Bailey (2003, p. 9) point out that when children play games they are prone to various learning experiences. Through games children learn problem-solving skills, communication skills, team-working skills, decision-making skills as well as skills to identify fair play.

Besides being fun and educational we wanted our ball games to really support the children's physical activeness and abilities. Both dodge ball and tunnel ball require use of large muscles therefore the children are able to practice and improve their gross motor skills. Doherty and Bailey (2003, p. 9) likewise confirm that children should have the chance to develop their motor skills and experience high amounts of physical activity. In addition we wanted to show the teachers how games can be used for various purposes in early childhood physical education. Keeping our animation process in mind we focused on showing how games can be utilized when arranging physical education activities for young children. Games are not only exciting and educational but also effective in terms of physical development and activeness.

The relaxation part of the session was likewise planned around ball skills and games. In our relaxation we chose to use balloons for variety and diversity reasons. We played a balloon circle game and did an imagination exercise with balloons. Both activities supported the children's imagination and creativity. Adding storytelling to games and exercises is important for children. Through play and storytelling children are able to engage in activities and practice basic motor skills without even noticing. (Autio 1997, p.134.) Both of the balloon activities were adapted from *Liiku ja leiki: Motorisia perusharjoitteita lapsille* (Autio 2010, pp. 138, 140).



Figure 4. Children practicing ball skills and playing ball games.

This third physical activity session, like all sessions, included our plan of using soci-ocultural animation to support and deepen the physical education skills and knowledge of two of the kindergarten's teachers. At this point we wanted the workers to take part in the session through their own initiative. The end goal of participation in animation is that each individual would be able to responsibly build their future as well as their present both on an individual and community level (Kurki 2005, p. 345). The purpose of the animation process was that each teacher would be able to bring their own contribution to the process. On a community perspective the kindergarten can work as a team to modify their existing frameworks relating to physical education. The process of animation requires contributions from both the individuals, each one of us students and each teacher, and the community in other words the kindergarten and us students as a group.

The third activity session took place on Thursday the 22nd of May. Our third session focused on prompting the workers independence, confidence and enthusiasm to plan and implement the final physical activity session. In terms of animation and the goals we set out for this project we really wanted this third session to support the teacher's animation process. It was our purpose that gradually with each session the workers

own initiative and involvement would grow and they would feel motivated to plan and implement their own activity session. Especially in this third session we encouraged the workers to take part in the activities as instructors instead of as observers. As Kurki (2005, pp. 345-346) states animators are those who try to encourage and motivate people, and make participation possible. As our project went on our role as animators would start to decrease so that the teachers would begin to take responsibility of their own actions. The fourth and final physical activity session of this project would be planned and implemented by the teachers so we would then step aside and give room for their self-fulfillment.

7.4 Activity Session 4 – Heightening of animation

This was our fourth and last session and the purpose was to create a space for the workers to practice and demonstrate their skills and knowledge on physical education in early childhood education. They would do this through planning and implementing a physical activity session completely by themselves. Nonetheless we were still a part of this process as animators and supporters but it was our purpose to allow the teacher's to use their newly found skills related to physical education, and through this increase their animation even more.

The overall theme of the fourth session was ball skills and ball games, which was decided by the teachers. It is worth mentioning that the teachers had made a written plan on their own without request from us, the animators. In our mind this demonstrates their motivation and use of skills and knowledge. As can be seen the theme of the session relates closely to the theme of our third activity session. Although we did not plan the physical activity session itself we still had to plan our aims for the session from an animation perspective. The purpose of the last session was to create a situation where the teachers would have the highest level of participation so far. This in turn meant that although we, the animators, would be present during the session it was crucial that all activities would be carried out by the teachers themselves.

From the first session we wanted to support the teachers' independence so that they would feel motivated to arrange more physical education activities in their work community. Therefore, this last session was planned to be the heightening of animation as well as participation. Since as Kurki, Kurki-Suutarinen and Taruvuori (2010, p. 181) explain the animators are ready to step back and leave the community where they are

working only when the people's own resources have been mobilized and taken into use. This last session was meant to highlight the entire process and lead to the conclusion that the animators would no longer be needed in the community.

The final physical activity session took place on Tuesday the 27th of May and like the first lesson it took place inside the kindergarten's own facilities. The warm-up of the session consisted of four different movements, two of which were made to get the children's heart rate going and muscles warmed up and two of which were meant to stretch their muscles before starting the actual lesson. In one of the activities the children ran in their places, both fast and slow, and in the other they did jumping jacks. The third and fourth were something that the workers came up on their own. They were movements that were meant to stretch the body. They included moves such as standing with your backs against your pair and handing the ball to one another from first between your legs and then above your heads.



Figure 5. The teachers instructing the children in different physical activities.

The main activity consisted of two parts: a skills part and a games part. For the skills part the workers took some ideas from our third session where we used different kinds of balls and focused on improving the children's hand eye coordination. In this activity

the skills part focused on different activities done in pairs with a ball. There were exercises like rolling the ball with different parts of your body as well as throwing and catching the ball. For the game part the children played a game called postman, postman. In this game one child is a postman who picks two children from the group to partake in a race.

For the relaxation of this session the teachers had chosen to include elements of music, which in our opinion was a sign that they had indeed felt animated about planning this session and taken the time to find a suitable song. This also showed their skills since they had combined music with physical exercise. In the song the children are going on a trip and the music tells them to do different things, such as walk to the park, play in the park etc. The song included parts of sitting down, which offered a nice way for the children to relax and calm down after the session.

8 Evaluation of functional activity sessions

According to Kurki (2000, p. 150) evaluation in animation, like all other activities, starts from the people. This means that the animation project's target group should be actively involved in the evaluation process, and self-evaluation is a crucial part of the entire animation process. We wanted to incorporate self-evaluation into our project and decided that this would be done in two ways. The first was through the feedback discussions, which we had with the teachers after each session. Although this was meant as a way to deepen the animation process, we also saw the discussions as an opportunity for the teachers' self-evaluation. The second was the questionnaires that we send out after the activity sessions. These questionnaires included questions that also offered room for self-evaluation to take place.

In animation the goal of evaluation is to not only evaluate the outcomes of the project but also to evaluate the project as it progresses. Evaluation consists of critical, value based and systematic reflection by all of the participants, including the animators. At best animation is seen as a continuous process throughout the project that actively involves everyone who comes in contact with it. The purpose of an on-going evaluation is to not only assess what have been the goals of the project but to also assess what are going to be the outcomes and what could be the outcomes. By doing this, the aim is to revise the goals of the project, improve the actions taken and alter the whole pro-

ject based on the evaluations. (Kurki 2000, pp. 150-151.) For us this meant that after each activity session we had to evaluate our goals and actions and alter our plans when necessary.

During our first physical activity session our plan was to awaken motivation and engage the teachers to the physical education activities of the session. After the first session we realized that more participation was needed from the teachers and therefore we decided to focus on this area more in the next session. During the session the teachers mainly only observed and although this was important too, we would have liked for more participation from their part. Furthermore we realized that more attention needed to be paid to the animation process itself since we had only four sessions in our project. The actual activities however, were successful and the children were excited to take part in the activities.

The second physical activity session was more successful than the first one, at least in terms of the teachers' involvement and process of animation. The successfulness of the session was mostly due to the thorough planning. We were more aware of the animation process and more focused on supporting the teachers' participation. The physical activities also went well and were smooth to implement. Regardless of the fact that there should have been a bit more variety for each activity, it gave the children an opportunity to use their own initiative and to come up with new movements. Zimmer (2002, p. 134) states that it is important to have room for variety and imagination, so that the children can also be a part of the implementation. From an animation viewpoint this also gave the teachers an opportunity to engage in the activities in a different way. Both teachers gave the children plenty of ideas of altered variations for each activity.

During the second activity session we focused on having the teachers participating in the activities with the children and us, the animators. It was important to have the teachers involved, as we needed to continue the animation process. After our first session we noticed that more involvement and participation was required and so we were able to improve this area and make changes in our own actions. This is one of the benefits of process evaluation. We were pleased to see that the teachers actively took their own initiative in participating in the activity circle and seemed to enjoy taking part in the activities with the children. All in all the level of participation during the second session was higher and successful in relation to the animation process.

The third physical activity session was likewise successful as the activities went well and the children seemed to really enjoy themselves. Nonetheless there could have been improvement in terms of the teachers' animation. During the third activity session we focused on having the teachers actively present. The teachers' participation and engagement in the facilitation of the session was essential as we were close to the end of our project. However, what was noticed during the session was that their involvement was a bit limited. The teachers took part in couple of the ball games but overall there was a lack of engagement in the session. The teachers seemed disinclined and this is one of the elements of animation; the level of participation and commitment may vary.

During the session we tried to get the teachers involved in the activities but both of them seemed distracted. This was possibly due to the fact that we were in the park at the same time with the kindergarten's other child group. Whatever the case we, as animators, need to also take responsibility and see what could have been done differently in our own actions, for example while planning we could have taken into consideration more concrete ways of supporting participation.

The fourth and last, physical activity session was successful in terms of sociocultural animation. During this last session it was important that both of the teachers had a chance to participate in the planning and implementation of the activities since this was an important step for their animation. The fact that the teachers used a lot of the movements from our previous sessions, with some modifications, showed us that they had felt motivated to use features they had learned in our sessions. In addition to this it was a success for our project that the teachers decided to use the space inside the kindergarten since this was one of their main challenges. We went through their plan for the session together to see how they had used their previous knowledge and skills, and perhaps new ideas they had gained during our project. The activities themselves were suitable for the children and they had enough variety to keep the children interested throughout the session.

From the last session's feedback discussion the teachers expressed that they enjoyed seeing the children have fun and that they felt more motivated towards organizing physical activities, both in their own facilities and in other settings. In addition to this the teachers expressed new ideas on using their own space for physical education, which signals animation and motivation from their part. When evaluating our functional activity

sessions as a whole, we see them as successful implementations. The objective of the sessions was to gradually add the level of participation of the teachers and through this motivate them to become more actively involved in organizing physical activities for their clients. Our sessions offered guidance and enthusiasm and also a possibility for the children to partake in physical activities.

9 Ethics and reliability

Since this final project was done in collaboration with a kindergarten and physical education activities were implemented with a group of children, we needed to take a close look at the ethical considerations when working with a vulnerable client group; children. There are several ethical factors that need to be considered when working in the field of early childhood education and care.

Firstly, we needed to get consents from the children's parents asking if their child was allowed to participate in the four physical education sessions that we were going to carry out during the spring. For this, we prepared consent forms (Appendix 1) that the kindergarten handed out to the parents to fill out before the activities started in May. In addition to asking consent to participate, we also asked the parents if their child was allowed to be photographed during these sessions. In the consent letter we introduced ourselves, shortly explained the final project and informed the parents that all the collected material from the sessions was to be used in this final project only. In addition we emphasized on securing the children's anonymity. We made sure that the children who were not allowed to be photographed were not in any of the photos taken.

Secondly, safety issues were considered and taken into account while planning and implementing the physical education activities. It is important that the safety factors are paid attention to and that the adults are aware of the situation and its development at all times. This includes eliminating all dangerous elements and having rules which everyone is aware of. When the safety factors are considered, everyone can enjoy and major accidents can be avoided. (Autio 2001, pp. 31, 93.) Safety considerations were also a main concern for our working life partner and therefore we made sure that safety issues were met with the utmost respect they required. We ensured that all equipment used in all four sessions were appropriate and designed for physical activities and exercise. We likewise made sure that all instructions and rules were explained clearly and

that every participant understood and followed them. Furthermore, we had a first aid kit with us at all times in case of any injuries.

Since our final project included having questionnaires made for the two teachers of the kindergarten, we also wanted to inform them about the ethical factors involved in the questionnaires. We ensured that their anonymity was protected and that the questionnaires were to be used for this final project's purpose only. In addition, both the questionnaires and consent forms are going to be destroyed after this final project is finished and approved. Also all recorded material will be deleted once the entire thesis process is complete.

In this final project, ethics started to play a role already in the process of narrowing down our topic and collecting the required material, and then discussing about the project and its findings. Ethics is seen in the collecting of the material, working with the material, and in the usage of different methods and references. Furthermore, ethics is seen in the fulfilling of different agreements regarding a final project (Diakonia Ammattikorkeakoulu 2010, pp. 11-12). In our thesis it meant complying the time schedule and the contents of each activity session with the teachers of the kindergarten. This final project was carried out respecting these ethical principles. The whole process followed the planned time schedule and agreements in good cooperation both within the final project group and participants from the kindergarten.

In order to support the reliability of this final project we have aimed to thoroughly report about the planning, implementation and evaluation of the functional part of this thesis. The theoretical framework of this project is based on both literature and online sources. The challenge in using literature as a reference is to select and choose the most qualified sources for the specific topic. In addition, morally correct research suggests that one does not choose the first source available or the one that is familiar to them. The critical selection of references is also affected by what type of information one is looking for, how it is going to be used and what kind of project it is going to be. Furthermore, when using the Internet as a tool for searching information, one must be very critical. In order to avoid mistakes, one should use material and sources that have already been through high surveillance control. (Tähtinen 2007, pp. 12-13.)

Our challenge was in finding theoretical references on sociocultural animation. We used three different sources from Kurki and struggled to find more in either Finnish or

English. We realized that there is other literature on sociocultural animation in German, Spanish and French but since we do not understand any of these languages, we could not use these sources as references. Therefore we were only able to use Kurki as a reference. Sociocultural animation is a new framework in the Nordic countries and therefore there is not a lot of translated material concerning animation.

Reliability of this thesis also comes from using accurate and honest information. The questionnaires constructed for this thesis were the same for both respondents and included detailed information, such as the questionnaire number and date. Each questionnaire had a brief description on what the questionnaire was based on. Furthermore, the responses represented in this thesis are likewise reliable as the responses taken from the three questionnaires are direct quotes and have not been altered in any form. Also the photographs, which are visible in this thesis, are real and have not been manipulated or edited.

10 Conclusions

The goal of this thesis was to support and deepen the physical education skills and knowledge of two kindergarten teachers in the Finnish-American Kindergarten in Töölö, Helsinki. Our goal was also to motivate the teachers so that they would arrange more physical education activities in their work community. Our thesis applied sociocultural animation as a method for awakening motivation. We wanted to achieve a state where physical education would be more concretely and intensively a part of the kindergarten's daily activities.

Based on the final evaluation and feedback we were able to achieve our goals, which we set out in the beginning of our project. In the evaluation of the functional activity sessions it can be seen that the sessions were successful and benefited our working life partner. Although participation of the teachers was not ideal in each session the overall experience was found positive as well as supportive. Furthermore, the findings from the final evaluation questionnaires showed that the kindergarten teachers had increased physical education activities in their kindergarten and that their skills and knowledge relating to physical education had deepened.

Our animation process included a final evaluation, which served as a way for us to see whether any ideas and plans had arisen on physical education activities and whether physical education activities had been developed and increased. The two questionnaires likewise helped us to evaluate our project and animation process on a general level. Responses from both questionnaires showed that animation had actually started to happen as there were planned and implemented changes in regards to the physical education activities of the kindergarten. Sociocultural animation strives to enact and reinforce change and relies on practices that evoke initiative, participation and reflection (Kurki 2005, p. 346). The kindergarten teachers had shown all these features during the course of our project.

The second questionnaire (Appendix 3) was aimed at revealing so called “short-term changes” and was sent straight after the four physical activity sessions. With this questionnaire we wanted to see immediate thoughts of the two teachers. We wanted to see if any ideas or plans had started to arise on physical education based on our sessions. From the responses it could be seen that new ideas and plans had started to develop. In the questionnaire the first question asked about knowledge the teachers had gained on physical education in early childhood during our project. Both teachers confirmed that their knowledge had strengthened in the course of our thesis.

“It has confirmed my previous belief that children need and enjoy a wide variety of different physical education activities. The students provide a variety of activities in different spaces that was interesting to observe.”

“These weeks have strengthened my belief in the importance of physical education on any age.”

In relation to the skills needed for physical education, such as planning and implementation of activities and use of different equipment and environments, the teachers showed newfound enthusiasm. Both teachers felt more enthusiastic towards physical education and had agreed to organize more guided physical activity sessions. One of the teachers had also made arrangements to buy more equipment suitable for children’s physical education activities. This same teacher likewise confirmed that we as students gave her new ideas on the variety and diversity of physical education and this was found helpful. The other teachers likewise specified that she has felt more proac-

tive since our sessions and has planned to organize more physical activities in various settings, both in indoor and outdoor environments.

From these second questionnaire responses it is visible that the teachers have had a positive experience working with us and have felt that their knowledge on the importance of physical education in early childhood has been reinforced. Both teachers agreed on discovering newfound enthusiasm towards arranging physical education activities. The questionnaire responses show positive signs in relation to our goals and what we wanted to achieve with this thesis. From the responses it can be said that the teachers have taken initiative in developing their physical education activities.

The third and final questionnaire (Appendix 4) of our final evaluation was aimed at revealing so called “long-term changes” and was sent in the end of August, approximately three months after the activity sessions. The questionnaire responses showed that the two teachers had taken concrete actions in implementing more diverse physical education. The teachers tell that there has been an increase in the amount of physical education activities and more attention has been paid to the quality of physical education in the kindergarten.

“Yes indeed. We have acquired equipment suitable for the space available to us; such as balls, shapes for the floor, a parachute etc. I have also planning to attend a training course provided by ESLU on “Liikuntaa pienissä tiloissa”.”

The responses also indicate that the teachers have been actively developing their skills in terms of physical education. These skills have been advanced through use of different material, such as books on children’s physical education and through training courses. One teacher shared that their skills in organizing physical education activities have developed based on a more concentrated emphasis on the importance of physical activity. The other teacher responded that her “imagination has “bloomed” thanks to new equipment.”. The teachers have also shared their knowledge and skills with colleagues and this is a great sign of camaraderie and sharing with the community. There has also been collaboration with another kindergarten (named as a “kummipäiväkoti”) and plans to have joint physical education sessions.

Both teachers also still feel enthusiastic towards physical education and have continued to think of new ways of organizing physical activities. In example one of teachers

tells that they have engaged children in new games. The responses likewise show that the teachers have spent more time on planning physical education activities and planning has also been easier due to the new purchased equipment as they allow to plan a wider range of activities. There has also been a wider use of both indoor and outdoor environments. Also one of the teachers shared that they pay more attention to the kindergartens own space.

“Perhaps more aware of the limited space thus trying to find activities suitable for the limited space available to us.”

From the third questionnaire responses it can be seen that the teachers have developed their physical education activities considerably. Firstly they have arranged more guided physical activities than previously and secondly have gone through with their plans on buying new equipment and utilizing different environments. The responses show that the workers have been actively making changes to their physical education activities and this is a great sign of motivation. The teachers seem to be participating in their community's physical education more increasingly. There is also co-operation with other partners. The responses of this third questionnaire are highly positive and we as animators feel that our project has been beneficial to our working life partner.

Nonetheless, we do acknowledge that one must be critical when evaluating a thesis and all its processes. For instance the responses from the questionnaires must be reflected on critically. The accuracy of the responses can only be determined by the respondents. We can only assume that the given responses are honest and answered with integrity. Whether the plans and ideas of our working life partner are actually implemented in “real life” cannot be guaranteed. However, we have a strong belief that the kindergarten teachers in this project have found our collaboration as fruitful and supportive and thus have gone through with their plans on developing and increasing their physical education activities.

In terms of our animation process, we feel that our project was successful. The plan, realization and evaluation of our project, was well-thought-out and correlated to principles of sociocultural animation. The first analysis allowed us to define the starting point of this project and plan further steps. The first questionnaire was used as a tool for the analysis. We noticed that our first questionnaire was perhaps too extensive as the teachers did not answer all questions with full detail. Several of the questions were

answered with a single sentence or a single word. Nonetheless we were able to evaluate the starting point with the responses we received. Since noticing that the first questionnaire was too extensive we decided to shorten the two latter questionnaires.

The intervention allowed us to take concrete action and work side-by-side with our working life partner. The functional physical activity sessions, which were part of the intervention, worked well and were successful. We felt that due to our planning and preparation the sessions were smooth to implement. Through the sessions we were able to influence the workers and support their animation. However we do feel that we could have improved our own role as animators and reinforced the workers participation even more. At times we felt that the level of participation was low and could have been increased by our own actions. Participation is an important element of sociocultural animation and therefore should have been supported more.

Evaluation, which happened throughout the project, guided us to improve and develop our processes. The process evaluation served as a continuous assessment and helped us to improve our activities. The feedback discussions with the teachers were important in terms of dialogue. Dialogue supported open communication and understanding of one another. As mentioned evaluation is a critical process of sociocultural animation.

The final evaluation questionnaires were the main tools in assessing our project's successfulness and end results. The responses showed signs motivation and positive change and therefore it can be said that animation had happened. As we had shortened the questionnaires we were able to get more comprehensive and detailed answers and therefore evaluation was reliable. We were pleased with the changes we made to the questionnaires because of the responses we received.

All in all, we were able to meet our thesis goals and benefit our working life partner. We were able to motivate the two kindergarten teachers to increase their physical education activities by means of sociocultural animation. We were likewise able to strengthen and deepen their skills and knowledge relating to physical education in early childhood education and care. Our working life partner made changes to their physical education and this way affected their community in a positive way.

11 Discussion

The topic of physical education in early childhood education and care has been discussed and debated in several media outlets in recent years. There has been an increasing concern for young children's health and lack of exercise over the past few years. The goal of our thesis was to support two kindergarten teachers' skills and knowledge on physical education. Kindergarten teachers have the responsibility of children's' holistic well-being, both mental and physical. In this thesis we wanted to support the teachers' motivation to arrange more physical education activities in their work community. Our project provides information on how to use sociocultural animation as a working method.

Physical education is extremely important for children of all ages and therefore we feel that this thesis has been important for our working life partners' development of early childhood education. We hope that our working life partner will share what they have learned and increase physical education in the two other Finnish-American kindergartens as well, Kamppi and Ruoholahti. Furthermore, we hope that our project will inspire other people studying or working in early childhood education to experiment with sociocultural animation, as it can truly be an eye opening framework to use in early childhood education. Although, our project used sociocultural animation as a way to increase physical education, its applications are close to endless.

This thesis process has been a valuable learning experience for all of us. We feel that throughout this process we have gained valuable knowledge and confidence that is going to be useful for us as future professionals in the field of early childhood education and care. Studying such theories as sociocultural animation, social pedagogy and physical education has deepened our understanding of early childhood education.

As individuals, in this process, we feel that we have succeeded well. We have been able to divide both the research and writing without difficulties. We also feel that because of our common interest in early childhood education this process has been extremely valuable for us as individuals and as a group. When reflecting on the entire thesis process what we would have done differently is time management. Since there were three of us working on this project, on occasion it was challenging to find time to meet. However we feel that because of this, our communication skills improved and this in turn supported our professional growth as students. As a group we feel that it

has been a great strength for us to be working together as a group of three. This has made it possible for us to divide all tasks and have more than one viewpoint. We were also able to support each other throughout this entire process.

As a conclusion we would like to point out that we feel content with our final project. Implementing this final thesis has been a rewarding, challenging and most importantly valuable experience for our professional growth and development. We have gained both theoretical and practical knowledge, and overall the entire experience has been empowering.

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Consent Form

1.4.2014

Dear parents,

We are Bachelors of Social Services students at Metropolia University of Applied Sciences. We are carrying out our final thesis during Spring-Autumn 2014 in cooperation with Finnish-American Kindergarten, Töölö.

Our final thesis includes four physical activity sessions during May 2014 with juniors and preschoolers. Our purpose is to raise awareness on physical education in early childhood and include physical education more concretely and intensively in the kindergartens weekly programme. The activities will revolve around different physical activities combined with physical play. They will be planned according to the children's developmental stage.

The activities will take place:

Thursday 8th of May

Tuesday 13th of May

Thursday 22nd of May

Tuesday 27th of May



We will also take safety issues into account when planning these activities. Furthermore we will have two staff members present during all the sessions. Should you have any questions about the project or other concerns we are happy to answer them.

Regards,

Milla Merinen, Maija Muukkonen & Petra Noppari

milla.merinen@metropolia.fi maija.muukkonen@metropolia.fi petra.noppari@metropolia.fi

Degree Programme in Social Services
Metropolia University of Applied Sciences

Consent Form



We will also be photographing and recording the sessions for the purposes of our thesis. All recorded material will be used confidentially and anonymity of all children will be ensured.

Please return this consent form to Finnish-American Kindergarten by the 25th of April 2014.

Name of child: _____ Parents signature: _____

☐

My child can participate and be photographed

☐

My child can participate but cannot be photographed

☐

My child cannot participate nor be photographed

Questionnaire 1

Questionnaire for Bachelors Thesis

Please answer the following questionnaire with detail and as truthfully as possible.

When finished please send your answers directly to the following email:
petra.noppiari@metropolia.fi.

Anonymity of all respondents will be guaranteed and only the authors of this thesis will view the given responses.

If you choose to do the questionnaire in writing (paper form), please let us know so we can make arrangements to get it from you.

Please return your responses by Sunday the 13th of April.

This questionnaire is based on the *Recommendations for physical activity in early childhood education. Helsinki 2005. 44pp. (Handbooks of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.)*

We thank you in advance for your responses!

Milla Merinen, Majja Muukkonen & Petra Noppiari

Degree Programme in Social Services

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences

1.4.2014

Questionnaire 1**Quality**

1. Do you consider physical education in early childhood important? Why or why not?
2. How would you describe your own knowledge and skills on physical education in early childhood?
3. Describe your knowledge on children's motor skills development as it relates to physical education.

Amount

1. Do you feel you organize enough physical activities for the children? Describe.
2. Do you feel your kindergarten meets the physical education recommendations in the *Recommendations for physical activity in early childhood education. Helsinki 2005. 44pp. (Handbooks of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.)* Explain.

Planning and Implementation

1. Do you set aims for your physical education activities? What kind? Why or why not?
2. Do you plan your physical activities? If so, how?
3. Why do you plan your activities? Why not?
4. Do you feel that you have enough time planning the activities within your working hours? Describe.
5. How much time do you spent on organized physical education activities? Separate planning and implementation.
6. What types of physical activities do you organize and how often? For example daily, weekly, monthly? Describe.

Environment and Equipment

1. Do you feel your kindergarten environment is inviting for children's physical movement and activity? Why or why not?
2. Is your environment supportive of children's physical activities? If so why? If not why?
3. How does the available space (both indoors and outdoors) and equipment support the physical education activities? Explain.
4. Do you wish you had more available equipment and space? Describe.
5. What kind of material do you use to support your physical activities? If you don't use any, why?

Questionnaire 2

Questionnaire for Bachelors Thesis

Please answer the following questionnaire with detail and as truthfully as possible.

When finished please send your answers directly to the following email:
petra.noppiari@metropolia.fi.

Anonymity of all respondents will be guaranteed and only the authors of this thesis will view the given responses.

If you choose to do the questionnaire in writing (paper form), please let us know so we can make arrangements to get it from you.

Please return your responses by Thursday the 19th of June.

This questionnaire is based on the four physical activity sessions arranged during May.
(8.5 - 27.5.2014)

We thank you in advance for your responses!

Milla Merinen, Majja Muukkonen & Petra Noppiari

Degree Programme in Social Services

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences

27.5.2014

Questionnaire 2**Quality**

1. During these four weeks what kind of knowledge have you gained on physical education in early childhood?
2. How have your thoughts changed on the importance of physical education in early childhood?

Amount

1. After these four sessions do you feel more enthusiastic towards physical education in early childhood? In what ways?
2. Do you feel inspired to organize physical education activities? What type and why?
3. Do you intend to arrange more physical education activities?

Planning and Implementation

1. Do you regard planning of physical education activities more important after these four sessions? Why?
2. Have you gained new ideas on planning physical education activities? If so, what kind?
3. How has your view changed on using more time on planning and implementing physical education activities?
4. When planning and implementing physical education activities do you intend to add more variety and diversity through e.g. games? In what ways?

Environment and Equipment

1. After these four sessions how do you feel about the importance of using different spaces for physical activity sessions? Do you intend to utilize outdoor and indoor spaces more?
2. What kind of new ideas have you gained on using your own indoor space in regards to physical education activities?
3. Have you thought about using different equipment and materials in future physical activity sessions?

Questionnaire 3

Questionnaire for Bachelors Thesis

Please answer the following questionnaire with detail and as truthfully as possible.

When finished please send your answers directly to the following email:
petra.noppi@metropolia.fi.

Anonymity of all respondents will be guaranteed and only the authors of this thesis will view the given responses.

If you choose to do the questionnaire in writing (paper form), please let us know so we can make arrangements to get it from you.

Please return your responses by Friday the 12th of September.

This questionnaire is based on the entire thesis process starting from spring 2014

We thank you in advance for your responses!

Milla Merinen, Majja Muukkonen & Petra Noppi

Degree Programme in Social Services

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences

25.8.2014

Questionnaire 3**Quality**

1. Since May, have you consciously paid more attention to the quality of physical education in your kindergarten?
2. Since the last questionnaire, how have you used the knowledge you've gained on physical education in early childhood?
3. Have you applied new ideas or used new sources in strengthening your physical education activities?

Amount

1. Have you arranged more physical education activities since May? What kind?
2. Since May, have you still felt more enthusiastic towards physical education in early childhood? In what ways?
3. How have your skills in organizing physical education activities developed?

Planning and Implementation

1. Have you spent more time on planning and implementing physical education activities since May? If so, in what way?
2. Since May, have you planned and implemented physical education activities with more variety and diversity? If so, in what way?
3. When organizing physical education activities do you still regard planning important? If so, why?

Environment and Equipment

1. Since May, have you used your surrounding areas for physical education activities? E.g. the park and Taivallahti school gym hall. Are you going to utilize the spaces in the future?
2. Have you used your own indoor space for physical education activities? Do you intend to use it more in the future?
3. Have you acquired more equipment and materials for physical education?