



**LAUREA**  
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

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# Lähdetään Matkalle! - Let's Go!

A cultural awareness teaching tool for  
early childhood educators

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**Laurea University of Applied Sciences**

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The purpose of this functional Bachelor's thesis focusing on early childhood education, was to examine whether the Lähdetään Matkalle! -project is a functional and beneficial tool for early childhood educators to teach children about other countries and cultures. The thesis aimed to create new child-centered teaching method for early childhood educators and generate discussion about multicultural issues. The working life partner was Pilke Pohjantähti Polaris day care centre. The thesis was well suited for the day care because the day care centre is bilingual and several children have other than Finnish backgrounds. The theoretical framework of the thesis discusses about i.a. The National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care, child's identity, cultural knowledge and multicultural early childhood education.

The project was first conducted in the spring of 2016. It was a project made for one early childhood education course called Varhaiskasvatuksen moninaisuus ja erityisyys, in cooperation with Matinkylä day care centre in Espoo. The Lähdetään Matkalle! -project was then developed from the feedback and adapted using Service Design to fit the needs and wishes of the Pilke Pohjantähti Polaris day care centre. The implementation of the project took place in Vantaa in December 2017 in a day care group named Unicorns. With a parent child would fill question form which would later be presented to other children.

Developing and conducting the project provided a comprehensive understanding of product development and the field of early childhood education. The Lähdetään Matkalle! -project was successful. The results were evaluated using observation and feedback from the children and the group's early childhood education teacher. The Lähdetään Matkalle! -project could be done also in other early childhood education units because the project is functional, easy to duplicate and implement in another setting.

Keywords: multiculturalism, day care centre, early childhood education, cultures

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**Lähdetään Matkalle! Kulttuuritietoisuutta opettava tuote lastentarhanopettajille**

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Tämän varhaiskasvatukseen suuntautuneen toiminnallisen oppinäytetyön tarkoitus oli selvittää, onko Lähdetään Matkalle! -projekti käytännöllinen ja hyödyllinen väline lastentarhanopettajille opettaa lapsille eri kulttuureista ja maista. Oppinäytetyön tavoitteena oli luoda uusi lapsilähtöinen opetusmenetelmä lastentarhanopettajille ja luoda keskustelua monikulttuurisista aiheista. Yhteistyökumppanina toimi Pilke Pohjantähti Polaris päiväkotijärjestö. Oppinäytetyö soveltui hyvin päiväkodille, koska päiväkotijärjestö on kaksikielinen ja hyvin monikulttuurinen. Oppinäytetyön teoriakehyksessä käsitellään mm. Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman perusteita, lapsen identiteettiä, kulttuuritietoisuutta ja monikulttuurista varhaiskasvatusta.

Lähdetään Matkalle! -projekti tehtiin ensimmäisen kerran keväällä 2016 Varhaiskasvatuksen moninaisuus ja erityisyys-varhaiskasvatuskurssilla, yhteistyössä Matinkylän päiväkodin kanssa Espoossa. Sen jälkeen Lähdetään Matkalle! -projektia muokattiin saatua palautetta ja palvelumuotoilun keinoja hyödyntäen, jotta se parhaiten vastaisi Pilke Pohjantähti Polaris päiväkodin tarpeita ja toiveita. Toiminnallinen oppinäytetyö toteutettiin Vantaalla joulukuussa 2017 päiväkodin ryhmässä nimeltä Yksisarviset. Lähdetään Matkalle! -projektissa lapsi täytti vanhemman kanssa kyselypaperin, joka esiteltiin myöhemmin muille lapsille.

Tämän toiminnallisen oppinäytetyön tekeminen ja ohjaaminen tarjosivat laajan ymmärtämisen tuotteen suunnittelusta, kehittämisestä ja varhaiskasvatuksen alasta. Lähdetään Matkalle! -projekti oli onnistunut. Tuloksia arvioitiin havainnoimalla ja arvioimalla saatua palautetta päiväkodilta ja ryhmän lastentarhanopettajalta. Lähdetään Matkalle! -projektia voidaan hyödyntää myös muissa varhaiskasvatuksen yksiköissä, sillä projekti on käytännöllinen ja helposti muokattava ja uudelleen toteutettava.

Avainsanat: monikulttuurisuus, päiväkotijärjestö, varhaiskasvatus, kulttuurit

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## 1 Introduction

According to the National core curriculum of Early childhood education (2016), early childhood education and care is part of a culturally transforming and diverse society. Cultural diversity should be perceived as a resource. The community must recognise the right to a person's own language, culture, religion, and worldview as a fundamental right. Early childhood education and care appreciates and draws upon the Finnish cultural heritage and national languages as well as cultural, linguistic, and philosophical diversity in the community itself and in its environment.

In *Monikulttuurinen varhaiskasvatus ja esiopetus* (Halme & Vataja 2011), early childhood education is explained from the point of view of multiculturalism. The writers state that geographical and cultural diversity of children, has a positive and good effect on the nature and atmosphere of day care centre. On the other hand, if, a day care centre only concentrates on Finnish culture and excludes other cultures by neglecting to celebrate the festivities, play music or read literature from other cultures, the children get an incomplete view of other cultures. Research has shown that children who have a good knowledge of the world succeed better in adulthood. Multicultural day care also helps children learn many components of civics (Halme & Vataja 2011, 43).

Because of increasing immigration and globalization, it is vital to have knowledge and understanding about other cultures. It is also important to start introducing and teaching these topics from early on. Understanding and knowledge prevents xenophobia, misunderstandings, and complications with other cultures. According to Statistics Finland's data, at the end of 2016, 81,000 or 7.5 per cent of all underage children were of foreign background. The number of minors with foreign background has increased by nearly seven thousand, from 2015. In ten years, the number of children with foreign background has doubled. (SVT 2017)

*Lähdetään matkalle!* -project (in English *Let's Go!* -project) focuses on multiculturalism and children. The aim of the *Lähdetään Matkalle!* -project was to determine whether the project is a practical and functional working tool for early childhood educators to teach children about other countries and cultures. The project was developed to be a child-oriented educational tool for early childhood educators. While issues connected to multiculturalism and children are topical, there is a need to explore more the potential benefits for Finnish early childhood education.

The project was made in cooperation with *Pohjantähti* Polaris daycare centre, located in Vantaa. Vantaa city's Early Childhood Education curriculum (2017) emphasizes that there should be a possibility for children with different cultural backgrounds to practice their own

culture in addition to the Finnish culture. It is important to respect children and their cultures, and to see their cultures as part of the daily activities of the day care centre. These help the children develop and make them feel secure, increase their self-confidence and their sense of being supported (Opetuslautakunta 2012, 16). *Lähdetään matkalle!* -project's goal was to support multiculturalism and make it more noticeable in day care life.

## 2 Background to the *Lähdetään matkalle!* -project

In 2012 research showed that there are over 90 000 families, in which one of the parents or both speak foreign languages, in Finland (Väestöliitto, 2017). The number of such families has since then increased with the surge of refugees between 2014 and 2015 in Europe, including Finland. The refugee crisis led to several xenophobic acts committed towards families and other people from other cultures. To prevent xenophobia, it is important to know about other countries and cultures - and learning about them is most beneficial to start from early on. We thus recognized a clear need of a product that would help day cares to address diversity and multiculturalism. We hoped to develop a tool for early childhood educators which could help them teach children about other countries and cultures, in a child centred manner. For these crucial reasons the idea for *Lähdetään matkalle!* -project was created.

The development of the *Lähdetään Matkalle!* -project started in spring 2016. It was first created for an early childhood education course *Varhaiskasvatuksen moninaisuus ja erityisyys* (Diversity and Special Nature of Early Childhood Education) in which the task was to create a product suitable for children. The feedback received encouraged to further develop the idea in cooperation *Pilke Pohjantähti* day care centre. In this chapter we present the first project conducted with a day care centre in Matinkylä, Espoo.

The first project was conducted in the spring of 2016 in cooperation with Matinkylä day care. It started with a notebook, in which the children from several different cultural backgrounds could tell others important and interesting facts about their own culture and country from their point of view. The project was created by buying a notebook and printing world maps to allow the children to colour their country to show others where the country's location. Also, a character called Sepi was created. Sepi bird "travelled" around with the children to those cultures and countries that children decided to tell others about. The idea was that children would introduce the countries presented in the notebook to Sepi and to each other.

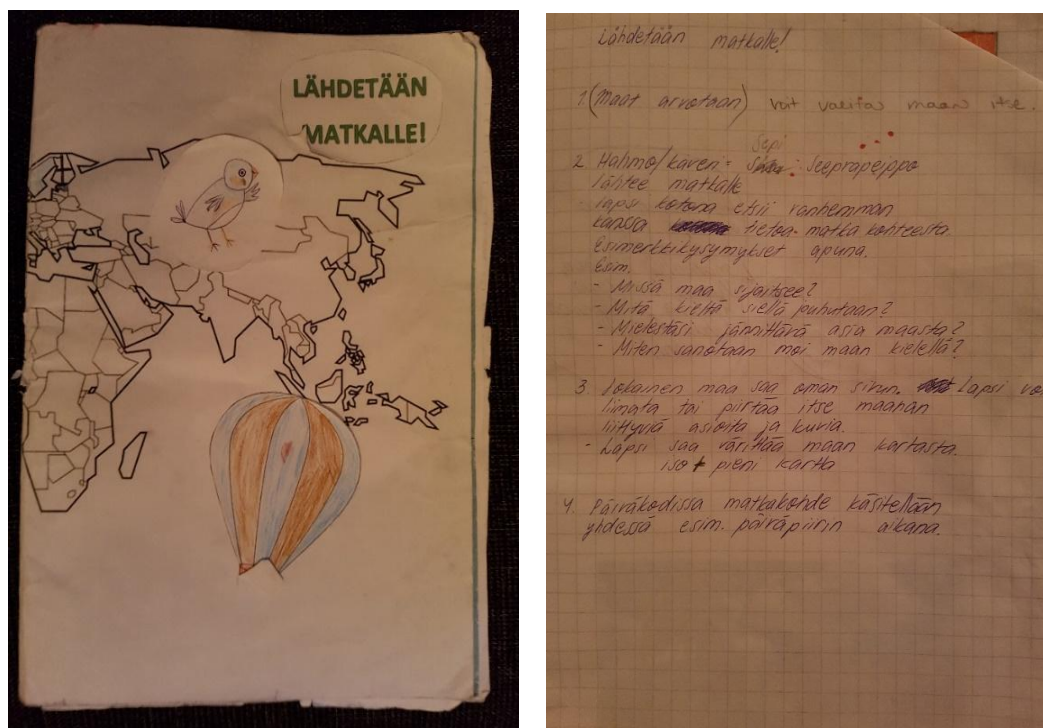


Figure 1: The front page of the first project and the instruction page in Finnish

On the notebook, there was an introduction setting out the reasons behind the project. It also gave some example questions, such as what is the capital of the country and what does the country's flag look like, what the traditional dishes are and so on. In Matinkylä day care centre there were children from several different cultures and backgrounds.

Before implementing the project at the Matinkylä day care centre, we had a meet up with the early childhood education of the group the project was conducted. At the meeting, we discussed about the project the meaning behind it and we also showed her the product. We asked her to give some feedback and any improvement suggestions. She was happy about the project and the notebook we had created. She did not have any improvement suggestions. The project was well received, and the day care professionals were excited about it. The children could take the notebook home and, together with their parents, fill in the information they wanted to tell other children about the chosen country. Then, at the end of the week, they could present the information to other children.

This gave the children a chance to express themselves better, with their own words and through their creativity. The children's point of view was important. This project's aim was to spread awareness of the different kinds of cultures. The aims were also to give the children a possibility to get to know other cultures better and in a new way.

One of the goals was to make the connection between parents and children better by making them to work together with the notebook and thinking about the important and interesting



details of their country and culture. According to National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland (2005, 35), it is important that the family teaches the child their own language and culture. The development of the language and learning about the culture should be supported by the day care staff.

The notebook was going around the daycare for approximately a month. Even though the period was that long, and there were quite many children from multicultural backgrounds, only five countries were represented on the notebook. It was enough but less than we had expected. The staff of the daycare said that they did not have much time to pass it on because they unfortunately had another project going on at the same time. Therefore, they could not understandably really concentrate on this project.

This project got good feedback from the other students from the course when the project and the finished product was presented. Also, when collecting the notebook back from the day care centre, the children gave good feedback and were excited about the notebook and the idea behind it. They shared with us which countries they had created and what they had told the others. The countries that were represented were Sweden, Italy, Estonia, Canada, and Spain. It was beneficial to receive such good feedback, especially from the children. From this we also gained a lot of new ideas for improvement and further development of the product.



Figure 2: Examples of the task pages of the first project

### 3 Functional Thesis & Service Design methods

The Lähdetään Matkalle! -project is a functional thesis and in its development several Service Design methods were used. This chapter presents the concepts and the implementation of functional thesis and Service Design methods that were used in the development of the Lähdetään Matkalle! -project. Later the implementation of the applied Service Design methods is presented in detail.

The goal of functional thesis is to understand certain phenomenon. The project followed the principles of functional thesis, as well as the principles of Service Design and the related requirements were taken into consideration and followed in the project. The functional method demands a lot of time and effort. The functional method also requires understanding, developing with the project, and adapting to uncertainty and changing situations.

In a functional thesis the object is to show that the students understand and are familiar with the certain phenomenon's theory. (Vilkkä&Airaksinen 2003,1) It differs from qualitative research and quantitative research in its research methods and the findings are harder to estimate. In a functional based thesis, one of the requirements is to create a tool or a product for the studied field, in this case for early childhood education. The goal is to have the students learn, understand, and present how it is like to guide, rationalize, organize, and instruct with the created tool. The tool can be any kind of useful material, but it needs to be easy to use for both the user and the target group (Vilkkä&Airaksinen 2003, 9). Functional thesis enables the use of Service Design methods, including the possibility of the project to shape and form to fit the needs that the project is for. Service Design makes it possible to examine the service from a holistic and from detailed point of view. (Knight 2012)

Service Design helps in several different ways in product development. It is rather a new concept that describes evolving and interactive approach to product or service development. Service Design methods were the basis for this thesis even though the concept of it was not used until later in the development of the thesis. Service Design is part of innovation and development, it is problem solving and problem defining. (Mattelmäki 2015, 27) The aim of the use of Service Design results in more comprehensive, accessible, and useful service for the user (Schneider & Stickdorn 2010, 22-23). Service Led Design: Planning the New HR Function (Saunders & Hunter 2009, 11) states that one of the principles for service design is to get closer to the business. This leads to better understanding of the business and to more tailored services to fit more different needs of different clients.

There are several principles for Service Design; user-centred, co-creative and -designing, sequencing, evidencing, and holistic (Lazier n.d.). The project aimed to follow these principals. Co-designing is method which follows a human-centred design and involves users not only as subjects in project but as partners. It can create sense of social inclusion and

result user-centred service. (Junginger, Service design with theory 2012, 22-23) Service Design should always be client-centred, and the development of the product or service should always start with a need of one. The idea for Lähdetään Matkalle! -project started from a clear need of a product that addresses multiculturalism in early childhood education.

### 3.1 Applying Service Design Methods in the Lähdetään Matkalle! -project

This chapter explain how Service Design was used in the designing and developing of the thesis. First in the feedback from the previous project was taken into account. The Matinkylä day care centre project partners described the Lähdetään Matkalle! -project as useful and needed in the field. But they felt like there was not enough time for the one notebook to travel from home to home. It also could get lost, dirty or otherwise destroyed. This would mean that all the presentations would be gone. The first project was also too heavily centered on children with multicultural backgrounds. One of the corner stones for quality early childhood education is inclusion. These concerns were heard, and the project was altered based on them.

Emphatic Service design approach was used to make Lähdetään Matkalle! -project more functional, beneficial and comfortable. The base for emphatic design is to understand client or clients experience from the start of the development. (Mattelmäki 2015, 75) In this part of planning we reflected on the feedback and thought about new ideas to improve the project to be more functional and user-friendly. The notebook was replaced with question sheets. First drafts of the question sheets can be seen from appendices 1 and 2. By changing the notebook to the question sheets, there was no more hand-written instructions which made the project visually more professional looking and clearer for the user. Visually clean and clear product for user is in the centre of the Service Design (Mattelmäki 2015, 75).

The question sheets also made the project more inclusive and functional. With this change the project would not rely anymore on one family returning the notebook on time. There could be date set on the returning of the question sheet, but if the sheet was not returned in time or was destroyed it would not seriously affect the results of the project nor would the other presentations be ruined. Also lost or destroyed sheet could be easily replaced with a new one.

To make the project more inclusive the question sheets would be given to all. The first project focused on children with other cultural background than Finnish. This concern was established by discussing with the Matinkylä day care centre staff and through self-reflection. We felt that the first project excluded children with only Finnish backgrounds. The instructions were changed so that child can choose the country he or she wanted to tell about. And all could have the equal opportunity to participate in the project.

In the centre of Service Design based service and product development is also that it is touchable for user (Mattelmäki 2015, 75). Especially because the product is created towards the children it was important to us that it had a concrete aspect to it which children could touch and see. We believed that this would make the *Lähdetään Matkalle!* -project more exciting and understandable for children. This is why the Sepi bird was created as a stuffed toy rather than only as picture on the sheets (see figure 7).

The folder where the finished works could be stored, was created to show children that their work is appreciated and valuable (see figure 7). The folder made it also easier to storage and keep the final products clean. Also, the core curriculum of Pilke (2016) states documentation as one of its values. If the group's teacher wanted to, she could continue adding things to the folder or the finished works could be easily found from there and put for example to child's Learning folder (*Kasvunkansio*) or given out back home as a memory.

Then the *Lähdetään Matkalle!* -project was presented for the first time at the Pilke Pohjantähti Polaris to the day care center's manager Kaisa Kopisto and the early childhood education teacher Olga Germo who is the working-life cooperation partner for the thesis. They were told about the project. Its aims, concept, background, and changes that had been made. Kopisto and Germo were interested in the concept and project's aims and believed that the *Lähdetään Matkalle!* -project would be well suited for the day care as it is bilingual and there are several children with multicultural backgrounds. They also felt that product that address multiculturalism in day care centres is needed in the field. Germo thought that the Sepi stuffed toy was very good idea and made the project more interesting to the children.

The language issue came up in the early discussion when the *Lähdetään Matkalle!* -project was introduced to the Pilke Pohjantähti Polaris day care centre. They pointed out that the whole question sheet should be also in English. Because the day care is bilingual and there are children with different backgrounds other than Finnish, the project was developed from this feedback. The sheet was written to include both English and Finnish.

The question sheets were first designed for children at the age of six who intensively practice reading. Therefore, the sheet was created to be children friendly by writing the questions with hyphenated writing (see appendices 1 and 2). Children who have started to learn to read a bit, it was expected to make it easier for them to read and understand the questions when they were hyphenated. The hope was that the children would have been encouraged to read the text by themselves and learn to read a little bit. This changed after discussing and listening to the feedback from the Pohjantähti Polaris daycare staff. The English text would not have been written with hyphenated writing. In the development of the project this kind improvement suggestion was valuable and considered.

In Service design projects, products and services can and should be prototyped before being developed in full (Hayhow 2014). The final *Lähdetään Matkalle!* -project question form pages can be seen from appendices three and four. All wishes and alteration suggestions from the day care centre were listened to and taken into account. They felt that the introduction sheet was good and the questions on the task sheet were well chosen and interesting so there was no need to change them.

The project was open to all suggestions and altered to fit the needs of the day care centre. It was important that even though there was a concept of a project it was able to live, and change with the clients and for the clients throughout the process. Our working-life cooperation partner Olga Germo was asked to give feedback after every process stage the *Pilke Pohjantähti Polaris* day care centre was involved in. The discussions with Germo were conducted in English and she was treated as an important cooperation partner as well as a client. Client service does not mean only information sharing and convincing talking. It is also activating client to a dialogue where the client is offered the possibility ask and present their hopes. (Nieminen 2014, 137)

In *Monikulttuurinen asiakaspalvelu* (2014, 138-145) the right way to asking questions in a multicultural client situation is explained in detail. This client service situation way of questioning was used when discussing about the *Lähdetään Matkalle!* -project. It was used as it fitted well into client- and emphatic centered service design approach. First step is asking, and the starting question should be something easy. Especially in this situation when we were trying to establish client's needs and wants it was important to first find out their views. The first question aims to activate the conversation. Then the second step is to ask more. This question should be more detailed or descriptive. For example, open-ended questions were asked from Germo such as how did you feel about that or how would you change this aspect? After listening carefully for the answers, she was asked to elaborate her answer further. Finally, to make sure that she was understood right the answer would be repeated. This part was also important to prove that what had been said was heard. This method made it easier to gather as much information as possible. This method of asking questions was not used with the children.

Children's views and thoughts were gathered by coming to their level on the floor, with them in the morning circle and asking simple questions and observing them. In the subchapter 7.2. the children's presentations and how they were encouraged and guided during the presentations is discussed in detail. If the *Lähdetään Matkalle!* -project is later developed further children could be involved more in the designing. For example, children could design the question in the task sheet based on what they want to know. This would require more time, but it could be interesting future research possibility.

Service design is very important especially when creating a product for health care, social service and early childhood education workers and clients. Since in these fields the worker usually works in close human contact, and it is crucial that the product or the service serves exactly the needs of those who it is designed for. Person is at the center of the service design (Lazier n.d.). According to Jarkko Kurronen (2015) public services for well-being are facing never before seen challenges such as that they are expected to create better services with smaller resources. Kurronen explains that innovation and service design can offer new ideas and answers to these problems. Services and products are going to be requiring more and more service design in their development process in the future.

Using Service Design provides that the service or product is suited for the clients. John Knight (2012, 173) argues that services should not only shaped by designers' thoughts and needs. He explains that design should be process involving many individuals and factors rather than the planned outcome of a single person. With using the methods and taking the actions mentioned *Lähdetään Matkalle!* -project was developed with its users for the users. Further development of the project would require more parents' participation in the developing. But as the thesis focused on the early childhood educator's user experience so this data was not collected at this point.

#### 4 Multiculturalism in Finnish Early Childhood Education

Multicultural, multiculturalism - these are still quite new concepts in Finnish early childhood education. In 1990s, when immigration increased in Finland, these concepts became more commonly used in the Finnish early childhood education discussions. Back then, Finland was still seen as a homogenous country, so multiculturalism was a new, exotic, and unknown phenomenon. Now-a-days multiculturalism is used to refer to ethnicity or immigration, which then implies a person who is not Finnish (Riitaoja, Poulter&Kuusisto 2010, 90). As immigration has been increasing since the 1990s, observing multiculturalism has become an important and a much-discussed matter in Finnish early childhood education. Especially in the metropolitan area, the day care centres are faced with linguistic and many other multicultural diversities. Next, multiculturalism is going to be explained from children's and the day care's perspective.

##### 4.1 Multiculturalism from child's perspective

Finnish society is changing, and it creates its own challenges. What is not always understood so well is that those challenges have also the potential of turning into something very valuable. As Finland is becoming more global and diverse, the early childhood education needs also to adapt to serve these new needs of children and their families. Early childhood education needs to support child's bilingual and cultural identity development and preservation. (Hujala & Turja 2016, 255) The Finnish childhood education system is highly

respected and recognized all over the world. The Finnish childhood education system is very child oriented and the Lähdetään matkalle! -project emphasizes this. The goal of the project is to teach children about other countries and create conversation at homes and in the daycare about multiculturalism and diversity from child's perspective.

By valuing child's own social identity, the project teaches children to value other's and their own country. The most valuable teaching in the project is to let children hear other people's voices about their background and understand how many different backgrounds there can be in only one child group in the day care centre. It is very important for children to understand that we are not alone and the Finnish way of doing things is not the only one nor the only right one. In early childhood work, the respect for individuality of the child and the appreciation of childhood are still the irrefutable pillars of work, regardless of the child's background.

#### 4.2 Child's social identity

People have two basic social needs, to feel part of the group and to feel that they are unique and valued as such. Identity is individual's own understanding of him or herself, who he or she is, what is his or hers place in the community and society. Cultural identity serves this need to belong to a group. Cultural identity consists of two concepts, culture and identity (Suomen Kulttuuriperintökasvatuksenseuran julkaisuja 2014, 15). Identity means person's self-conception of themselves and it is the basis for their personality.

In addition to learning several versatile skills such as walking and talking, the developmental task for a play age child is to develop the understanding about himself or herself. Children at this age think about who they are and how valuable they are to others. (Persoona 2 kehityopsykologia) Child often defines himself or herself through gender, family, or day care group. Child can also define himself or herself as someone belonging to a culture, religion, or representing a language (Halme&Vataja 2011, 11).

Every child needs to be valued, noticed, and respected, no matter what his looks, gender, culture, or religion is, as much as everyone else in the daycare group. The children have their own personalities, even the smallest child has his or her own personality. Most often the children already have created their own set of values and these values need to be taken into account (Kuusisto 2009, 10).

People are all different and being in multicultural and diverse day care has an impact on child and the development of his identity, worldview and what kind of an adult he or she is going to become. Kuusisto (2009, 8-9) has given good advices on how to help these developments and how the child can accept his differences and discover similarities. For example, Kuusisto has suggested staff members to encourage a child to draw a picture of oneself and then go

through what the child values and what is important to him or her. This helps with the acceptance and shows how everyone is different, and most importantly, unique.

The daycare staff should pay attention to the family's cultural and linguistic background, when being in cooperation with the family. Especially, when the family is from a different cultural background and speaks another language, the child needs support to be part of a group, and accepting the child, the daycare staff make sure the cooperation works with the family. When the family meets for the first time the daycare professionals at a meeting and the child is starting day care, they need to fill out a form for an opening discussion (Aloituskeskustelu). Using the interpreters, getting to know the traditions and celebrations, of their own, Finnish and other cultures gives the families a welcoming feeling. Good communication between the families and the daycare professionals is a requirement. Trust, openness, hearing one another and appreciation create a good and stable basis for successful cooperation. The day care professionals discuss the manners of the child with the child's parents in a way they have agreed with the parents. Documenting the child's action is a good way to communicate with the parents since the child can participate in documenting too (Opetuslautakunta 2017, 36-37). In this project, documenting is used since the children are documenting the information to the question sheet with their parents.

#### 4.3 Managing Multiculturalism in Day Cares

University of Helsinki has been a part of a research called MUCCA, Monikulttuuriset lapset ja aikuiset (in English Multicultural children and adults), by the Social office of the City of Helsinki, developing consultant Nina Onufriew, developing chief Eija Bergman, researcher Arniika Kuusisto and professor emeritus Mikko Ojala. They have studied multiculturalism and its growing need to be supported at early childhood education in four different kinds of daycares (Helsingin Yliopisto 2006). In this thesis project, some of the research findings are applied.

As soon to be early childhood education teachers we need to acknowledge the other cultures, but we also need to recognize those families, who come from other countries. Early childhood educators have an important role in helping families to adjust to the Finnish culture. Their culture and their habits also need to be acknowledged. It is important to show interest by asking questions about the country and the culture, the religion, and any other detail about their habits to get familiar with them and to know how to act around the family and the children. This all also helps to adjust the family and the children to the Finnish culture and society while showing them that we care about them and want to learn and know more. When you know other cultures, and know how to act, the cooperation with the families goes well and they feel safe and secure. Same goes with the children (Monikulttuurinen varhaiskasvatus pääkaupunkiseudun toimintamalli 2008, 11). With this project, we want to support this fact



and educate the children and the staff about other cultures. The children can tell by their own way about their culture, which is important because they get to express themselves.

The project's aim is to offer a new way to teach about different cultures in the day care. There are many games, stories, songs, and many other ways to get to know other cultures and support them but this is a new way to teach the children and for children to learn. It is important to get the parents involved too and with this project the parents were able to do this project in cooperation with their child and help the child to tell about their culture. The parents are the experts of their culture (Monikulttuurinen varhaiskasvatus pääkaupunkiseudun toimintamalli 2008, 11).

According to the national care of core curriculum of care and education of Vantaa (2017, 40, 51-52) the parents' knowledge and the experiences they find important to them need to be considered and examined, when the early childhood educators are making daily plans. Surroundings, parents and siblings, the personal history and the artefacts are good ways to teach cultures, history and events of the world. In this functional thesis we want to make the connection between parents and the children stronger. Children can use their parents as the source of information when finding out some facts about their home country and cultural heritage. This functional thesis goes through ongoing phenomena; immigration and increasing multiculturalism. Through this thesis children get to know them and with their parents they get to know their own cultures. The society is diverse, and the children learn to respect it and view it from different kinds of perspectives; they learn that all families, genders and people are diverse groups, and they need to learn to respect and understand that. Everyone are different, although unique. In this, parents are in an important role to teach that to their offspring and that their cultural heritage is passed along. Also, at the day care centres it is important to support the learning and when having cultural events, such as parties or any other kind of celebrations, families and close siblings are welcome to come and join them.

In the day care group, it is important to show an acknowledgment that they have many cultures in their group. For example, flags, literature, music, different kinds of celebrations, food tastings and pictures are good ways to make other people aware of the other cultures in the group and good ways to get to become familiar with them. Teaching multiculturalism is important, and it needs to be shown in the day care activities and daily life (Monikulttuurinen varhaiskasvatus pääkaupunkiseudun toimintamalli 2008, 11-12). Doing so, religious, and cultural diversity are being respected, the daycare centre is being supportive towards other cultures and religions and is being positive towards them and also the daycare helps the children to learn to respect other cultures and religions.

It is beneficial that different kinds of religions and cultures are being shown at the daycare. It shows what kind of connection those have together and how much they impact on each other.

When celebrating other important days, trying traditional foods and playing games common to other cultures and religions, practicing some Finnish habits at the same time as well, it helps to understand other perceptions and habits common to other cultures and religions (Kuusisto 2009, 14). In her book, *Homma hanskassa! - Päiväkodin monimuotoisuus rikkautena* (2009), Arniika Kuusisto goes through multiculturalism at day cares and gives some useful tips how to practice multiculturalism. She states that one of the purposes of raising a child is to open windows to the world by experiencing other cultures and religions.

In her other study, *Kulttuurinen, kielellinen ja katsomuksellinen monimuotoisuus päiväkodissa: haasteita ja mahdollisuuksia* (2010), in which she has studied opportunities and challenges at the diverse day care, she suggests that when the day care centre respects the families' values, it creates a bond of trust which is important for the children's development and growth. The values need to go together with the early childhood education methods of the day care centre but if the day care centre has different kinds of values or they cannot give what the family is asking for to get the needed child growth, considered desired in their culture or religion, the day care needs to inform the family if this is something they cannot provide (Kuusisto 2010, 101).

#### 4.4 Multicultural Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education teachers have an important role as to helping children grow to become good citizens and to developing their skills and mind. The main responsibility are the child's guardians, but early childhood education is in a key role in supporting this growth. It is also important that multiculturalism is being recognized and taught to the day care children because it is often seen as an unteachable subject. When there are children from other countries, it might often happen that their cultural differences are being ignored and the early childhood education teachers teach only Finnish culture. Multicultural early childhood education needs to be considered and taught to everybody. Halme and Vataja (2011, 44-45) have listed some matters about multicultural early childhood education that need to be practiced. These matters are: reducing prejudice, changing of social and school structures, equitable teaching, and the construction of knowledge.

##### 4.4.1 Reducing prejudice & Changing of social and school structures

Reducing prejudice means that multicultural early childhood education can have an effect on children's attitudes towards cultures, religions and other diversities and people. According to an American research, 4-year-old children are already aware of differences between people and they know about ethnical differences. It is also known, from the 1960s, that children's prejudice can be affected and prejudices also change. When helping to create a positive attitude towards diversity, children can work in groups together and the daycare professionals can choose the right learning material.

When it comes to changing of social and school structures, the learning environment needs to be supportive and encouraging. The children need to have an equal opportunity to learn, participate and succeed. The children need to be evaluated in a way, in which different kinds of evaluation methods for different ethnic groups are being used and every child is evaluated in a fair way. It is the responsibility for the daycare professionals to see that these happen and that every child's different background is being respected and taken into account (Halme&Vataja 2011, 45).

#### 4.4.2 Equitable teaching & Construction of knowledge

As mentioned before, when deciding the teachable subjects for the day and the teaching methods to use, it is the responsibility of the day care staff to take into account the children's different cultural and religious backgrounds. For teaching, the day care professionals use cooperative methods, and the choice of the teaching methods depends on the style of how children learn.

Finally, the construction of knowledge is the most important part of multicultural early childhood education. The day care professionals teach the children and help them understand the differences between various cultures and how different cultures have an effect on how children gather information and how it builds (Halme&Vataja 2011, 45).

### 5 The view of the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care

In the planning and implementation of this thesis project, the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care (2016) was seriously taken into consideration, as it is the guide for all the professionals working in the early childhood education field. The National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care is a national regulation issued by the Finnish National Agency for Education. The National core curriculum for early childhood education and care is a legally binding provision for early childhood education providers. The National core curriculum for early childhood education and care is applied as the basis for preparing local curricula for early childhood education and care.

The purpose of the core curriculum is to provide a common basis for local curricula so that early childhood education and care are high-quality and equal for all children in the entire country. The basis of The National core curriculum for early childhood education and care is the Early Childhood Education Act. It governs the right of the child to early childhood education as well as early childhood education goals.

The National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care (2016) emphasizes that the goal of educating and teaching children is to further children's learning and help children to create the meanings about themselves, others, and the surrounding world. According to the curriculum, in early childhood education children need to be guided and motivated to

learn new things and are thought to use different methods to learn. The teaching is supposed to support children's inherent need to learn and be curious. Teaching should always consider children's developing skills, interests, and strengths. Every child's individual needs in learning and care need to be considered.

The National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care (2016) states that for the development of the child's identity, it is important the child feels that his or her own culture and language are valued and appreciated. It affirms the importance to support children when they build their cultural identities. The experiences, knowledge and skills of cultural heritage in early childhood education reinforce the child's ability to embrace, use, and change the culture.

At Pohjantähti Polaris day care, the staff emphasize open-minded and positive attitude towards multiculturalism. According to the Pilke Pohjantähti-Polaris Pedagogical Plan of Action (2017-2018), all languages and cultures are appreciated and considered as a richness; cultures and languages are educative for everyone and they inspire to learn more about the surrounding world. Multiculturalism is seen as an important part of the daily day care life. The staff is also very multicultural. For example, Russian, German, and Spanish are spoken to the children daily. Multiculturalism is viewed as an essential part of our early childhood education and as the National core curriculum for early childhood education and care from 2016 states that early childhood education is an important part of the social integration to Finnish culture. Early childhood education is part of a culturally diverse and multifaceted society. Cultural diversity is seen as a resource (Opetuslautakunta 2016, 30). The day care system is often the first contact to Finnish society and culture for several families. The early childhood education system aims to support the child and the family's adaptation to Finnish society and culture.

Intercultural interaction is one of the key challenges of knowing one's own culture and of knowing its effect on one's own thinking and behaviour (Opetuslautakunta 2012, 16). With *Lähdetään matkalle!* -project children could get more information from other cultures and for example their parents or of their own.

### 5.1 The National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care & Comprehensive Knowledge Base

The day care might be the child's first occasion to meet other children and get the opportunity to be in groups and socialize with others. At day care children start to create an understanding of their identity and they start to understand, create, and develop their values, knowledge, and skills. It is important to see the children, and their families, as individuals and face them accordingly to give them a feeling of respect. Also, knowing other cultures and languages gives the families a feeling of interest, and that leads to good

cooperation between the families and the day care professionals. In an interview of a Finnish social and health policy magazine, Tesso, *Monikulttuurisuus on arkea varhaiskasvatuksessa* (Pernaa, 2014), several early childhood education professionals (H. Paavola, R. Laaksonen, K. Sankalahti) discuss multiculturalism at the day cares, specifically in the metropolitan area, where multiculturalism is not a new subject compared to other parts in Finland. They argue how working with multicultural children and in a multicultural environment is seen as a richness and as an important work. In her interview Laaksonen has described that the early childhood education has an important role in the children's lives, especially if the child and his family have a multicultural background. It is important for them especially because early childhood education helps the families with social integration.

Comprehensive knowledge base, which consists of values, child's own will, attitudes, skills and knowledge, is created by early childhood education. Comprehensive knowledge refers also to how children act towards certain situations and how they use their skills and knowledge. Child's values, will to act and his or her attitude are affected by the way he or she uses knowledge and skills. When the world changes around us constantly, the importance of comprehensive knowledge has grown. Comprehensive knowledge and its development in every aspect of the child's life - at work, school and as a citizen - help the child to be part of the community and be independent. Early childhood education and how everyone acts and works around it has an impact on the development of comprehensive knowledge. The way the child's learning and well-being are supported and how different kinds of learning environments are being used plays also a role. These are all part of high quality pedagogical operation and strengthen the child's comprehensive knowledge base.

Comprehensive knowledge is being divided into five parts: interaction and expression, influencing and participation, learning and thinking, skills of the workday and taking care of oneself, cultural knowledge, both communication and information technological knowledge and, finally, multi-literacy (Opetuslautakunta 2017, 22). These five factors promote the comprehensive knowledge base of a child. Since the project focuses on culture, the way it is seen at day care, how it is taught and what kind of impact it has, we are going look somewhat deeper into that area than the other parts of comprehensive knowledge.

## 5.2 Cultural Knowledge, Expression, and Interaction

The world is full of linguistic and cultural diversity and the children will grow up around it. This highlights the fact how important it is to know other cultures and languages and how cultural, social, and interactional knowledge are vital. The skill to understand, identify and listen to different kinds of views and also the ability to know how to reflect one's own attitudes and values are part of knowledge. The ability to express oneself, understand as well as interaction skills have an important significance for one's well-being, ability to function and to one's identity. To know how to act around other people from different

religions and cultural backgrounds requires the understanding of knowing one's own and other people's cultures and respecting and understanding them. Early childhood education has a key role in teaching children about other cultures as well as expression and interaction skills (Opetuslautakunta 2017, 22).

Children should be encouraged to learn and get to know other languages, cultures, and different people. The day care staff has a major role in this task since they give an example to the children on how to act positively around people from other cultures, religious backgrounds and with those who speak different languages. The children are guided to be polite, to have good manners, to be open and to take others into consideration. This action is based on cooperation, where the children can learn how to express emotions and interact with other people in different situations. The children learn how to see situations from other people's perspective, solve conflict situations and how to show empathy. These strengthen the child's social skills and develops them. As his or her cultural identity is being built up, it is being supported. When the child learns about cultural heritage and gets experience at the kindergarten, it helps the child to change, use and adopt cultures. For example, parties, eating moments and plays offer experiences of other cultures, habits, and traditions and through these activities you can share them (Opetuslautakunta 2017, 22).

The city of Vantaa is one of the most multicultural cities in Finland and therefore different languages and cultures are considered at the day care centres of Vantaa. Religious, cultural, and linguistic diversity is being presented in a positive light and promoted at the day care centres of Vantaa. At day care, the children learn about other religions, cultures and languages. The families' knowledge about these subjects are also taken into account and the families can help when teaching these matters to the children. Every child's background is taken into account when planning activities and schedules (Opetuslautakunta 2017, 23).

Everyone has their right to be part of, culture including religion and practice their native tongue; these are seen as fundamental rights in different communities. According to the National core curriculum, early childhood education is part of diverse society and is culturally transforming. Having a variety of cultures in day care should only be seen as an asset. This requires the staff to know about other religions and cultures, to see situations from various perspectives. When the day care staff has a good knowledge of other cultures and religions, it has a good impact on the day care. Early childhood education values the diversity of other cultures, religions, and languages as much as the Finnish language and culture. Different kinds of new methods are created together with the staff and the children who also talk about new and different kinds of ways to act and think. This promotes the development of culture (Opetuslautakunta 2017, 31).

## 6 Description of the Working Life Partner

The working life partner for the project was Pilke Pohjantähti Polaris day care. Pohjantähti Polaris day care provides private day care as part of the day care unit of Pilke. Pilke Day Care Centres is a Finnish early childhood education company with a total of 69 day care centres around Finland. Pilke Day Care Centres Oy was awarded The Association for Finnish Work with the Key Flag Symbol to show that the service provided has been produced in Finland and is creating Finnish jobs. The Pilke website (About us section) states that the most important goal of Pilke Day care Centres is to make the child's day a good one - every day.

Pohjantähti Polaris is located in Vantaa and has 120 day care places for children aged zero to five. The fee for a day care place for a child is the same as for municipal day care place. There are five child groups Ilvekset Lynxes, Joutsenet Swans, Ketut Foxes, Lohikäärmeet Dragons and Yksisarviset Unicorns. The first three groups are for children aged zero to three and the other two for ages two to five. The project was executed in the group Yksisarviset Unicorns which at the time of conducting the project had a staff of two early childhood education teachers and a nurse. The main cooperation partner for the thesis was Unicorn group's teacher Olga Germo.

Pohjantähti Polaris is a bilingual day care centre and both Finnish and English are used daily in communication. Pohjantähti Polaris motto is that every child is a star and every child's uniqueness is valued. Their aim is to support the children's own cultural heritage by creating good conditions for playing and encouraging child's own creativity. Their early childhood core curriculum states that they appreciate and respect the cultural heritage of children from different cultures. The *Lähdetään Matkalle!* -project goal is to support child's own creativity and cultural awareness.

There is a lot of diversity in the children groups in the Pohjantähti Polaris. The view of the Pohjantähti Polaris early childhood educator teachers and nurses is that everyone's background and culture is respected and accepted. Diversity is not viewed as negative, even though it creates its own challenges, which the *Lähdetään Matkalle!* -project was addressing.

Pohjantähti Polaris's core curriculum for early childhood education and care is based on the core curriculum for early childhood education and care of the city of Vantaa. The individual child's core curriculum for early childhood education and care process starts with the National core curriculum for early childhood education and care gives guidelines based on the legislation for municipalities which these municipalities have to follow in their own core curriculum for early childhood education and care. Second, the organization's core curriculum for early childhood education and care is in this case that of the Pilke. Third element is the Pohjantähti Polaris core curriculum for early childhood education and care, followed by the individual teams' pedagogical plan of action. These all taken into account to

create a child's individual core curriculum for early childhood education and care. Children's individual core curriculum for early childhood education and care influences all of the above.

Pilke's core curriculum (2016) states the Pilke's early childhood education main policies: quality interaction, participation, small group work, learning environment, everyday pedagogy, project based working and pedagogical documentation. In Pilke Pohjantähti Polaris all these values and policies are acknowledged, and are apparent in everyday work.

Lähdetään Matkalle! -project emphasizes the same values and was thus well suited for the day care. It is a project based teaching and learning tool. Its cornerstones are interaction between home and day care actively listening to the child to find out what the child wants to say about the country and participation as everyone in the group has the possibility to participate.

## 7 Implementation

Implementation of the thesis project consists of planning the project and carrying out the project. In this chapter the development tools that were used in the planning stage are going to be presented. Later part of this chapter describes the way the Lähdetään Matkalle! -project was conducted. The figure 3 shows the whole thesis process step by step in a spiral template.

### 7.1 Planning Stage

In the planning stage of the Lähdetään Matkalle! -project, several product development tools were used such as SWOT-analysis, Lean canvas, and Service Design. Before conducting the project in the day care it was planned for several months so that it would be best suited for the day care and most beneficial for all parties involved.



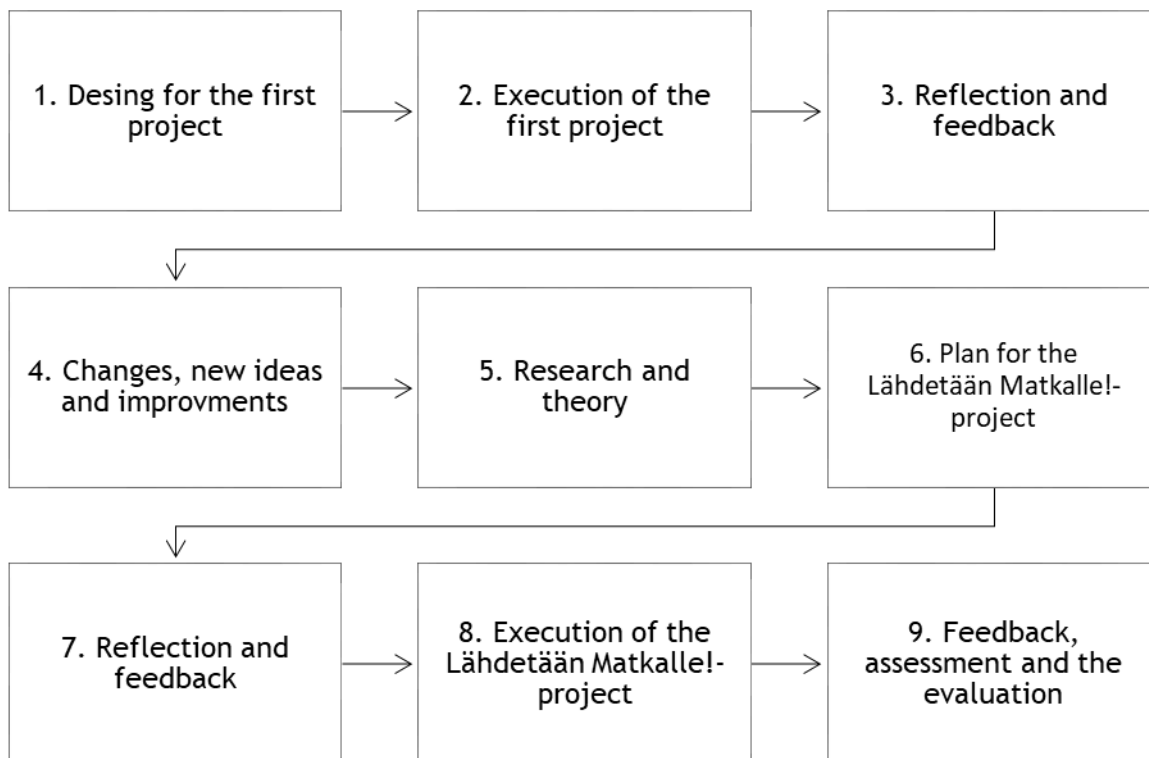


Figure 3: The thesis process

#### 7.1.1 SWOT-Analysis of Lähdetään Matkalle! -project

SWOT-analysis evaluates on one hand the internal strengths and weaknesses, and on the other hand the external and internal opportunities and threats of a project, business, or organization. The acronym SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Taylor 2016). When evaluating Lähdetään Matkalle! -project using the SWOT-analysis the goal was to examine its strengths and weaknesses as a useful teaching method for early childhood educators.

The SWOT-analysis was created to help organizations identify some internal threats and possibilities and external opportunities and threats. The analysis is regularly used during strategic planning (Rouse 2017). The primary objective of SWOT analysis is to help organizations develop a full awareness of all the factors involved in a decision (Taylor 2016). The analysis also helps to set the objectives for strategic planning and to identify the core competencies of the organization. When done correctly a SWOT-analysis can offer information that supports planning and decision-making.

A SWOT analysis generally requires decision makers to first specify the objective they hope to achieve for the business, organization, initiative or individual (Rouse 2017). The objective of Lähdetään Matkalle! -project is to be a useful tool for early childhood educators to teach children about other countries and cultures. The figure 4 shows some of the key concepts of the Lähdetään Matkalle! -project.

The SWOT-analysis started by first examining some of the strengths that Lähdetään Matkalle! -project has. One of the strengths is that it addresses current issues and seeks to address is the need for new ideas and methods to realize all the unexamined potential that multiculturalism and diversity have. The benefits of diversity in day care and school settings are not exploited enough. The main benefit that children learn to be critical, understanding and likely to gain favorably advantaged decision-making and reflection skills (Hujala & Turja 2016, 244). By contrast, if children are provided and taught to address issues only from their own point of view, it is not likely to serve them well in their future. Being able to communicate effectively in different parts of the world is argued to be very beneficial and essential, as well as the ability to create relationships and understand cultural nuances and differences in doing business in foreign countries (Kokemuller 2017). As the Pohjantähti Polaris core curriculum states, we don't know what kind of a world the children we take care of in day care are going to live in. This calls for new ideas to make the most of the benefits diversity and multiculturalism can bring. The Lähdetään Matkalle! -project aims to be one.

The development of the project and the preparation has taught and provided versatile competence to early childhood education. When working with children and other clients, in the social service field the professional must always keep in mind the theory behind the decisions and other factors the professional makes in everyday work. The theory is the foundation for all activities and is applied in action so that the goals of the different groups are achieved for the benefit of the customer.

There was already an existing concept of the Lähdetään Matkalle! -project which has been tested and received positively. The improvement feedback from the previous project was taken into consideration to improve the final project. The concept of the project is simple, and it does not require any personal information from anyone involved. The whole project stays in the use of the Pilke Pohjantähti Polaris day care. The project is ethically responsible and there are no issues related to its rightfulness. The project is virtually free for all involved. One of the goals of the project was to promote inclusion and involving without any costs the project is one way to make sure that it was available for all.

The Lähdetään Matkalle! -project also had its weaknesses. All different languages could not be taken into account in the project instructions nor in the questions. In a single group in day care children and their families are often from diverse backgrounds and the right set of

languages cannot be predicted. This weakness was tackled with adding instructions in English to make it easier for most to understand but taking all languages into consideration was impossible. The way children reply to the questions could not be influenced. If they decide not to answer there was nothing to be done. Also, it was not possible to make sure that everyone returned the sheet because there were several different factors influencing the return rate. At the planning section of the thesis there was not a clear plan for the distribution of the project.

The *Lähdetään Matkalle!* -project explores several opportunities. One of the opportunities tackles the distribution of the project. As mentioned earlier there is not a clear plan for the distribution of the project, but there are several opportunities, ways and channels to do so. Several studies show that teaching young children about other countries and cultures has a positive effect on their perspective on others. The project addresses present subjects. There is a continual need of change and new methods to teach young children. *Lähdetään Matkalle!* -project serves this need for new ideas and continual development of teaching methods.

In the SWOT-analysis, we also identified threats. There are a number of challenges and issues related to immigration. It is important that every child feels that they are appreciated as they are, thereby reducing marginalization. One of the aims of the *Lähdetään Matkalle!* -project is to include everyone but this is not always possible. If the family did not return the question sheet it is difficult to talk about the child's answers. For the project to be successful it was important to be aware about its strengths, weaknesses, possibilities, and threats. SWOT-analysis was a useful tool to evaluate the *Lähdetään Matkalle!* -project.

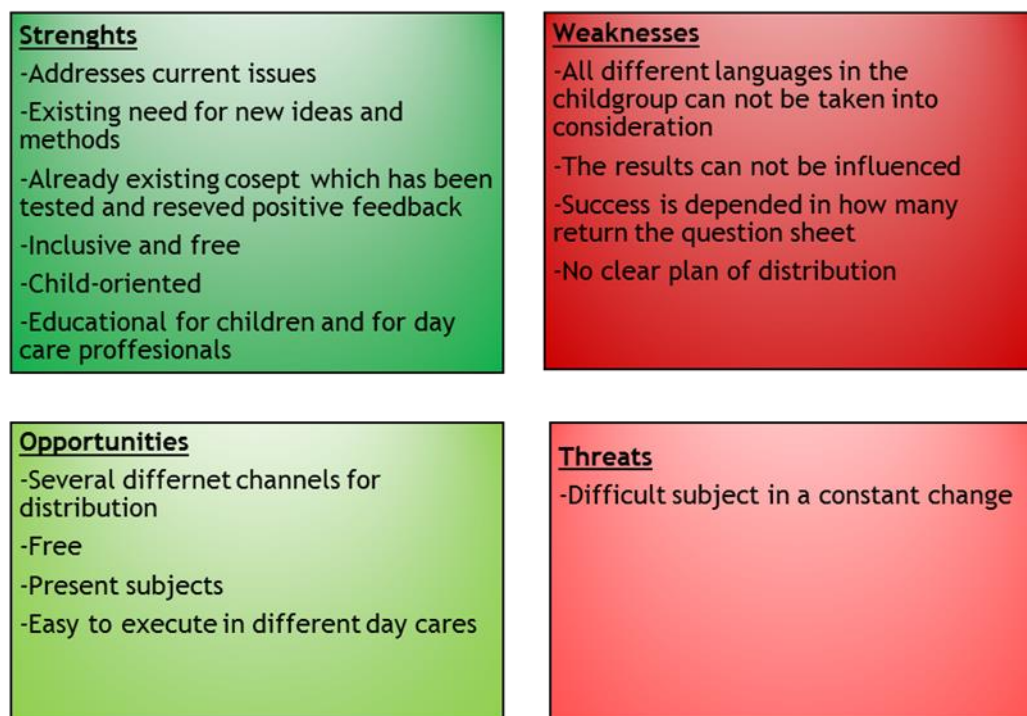


Figure 4: SWOT analysis

#### 7.1.2 Lean Canvas of The Lähdetään Matkalle! -project

In this section Lean canvas is described and how it was used in planning the Lähdetään Matkalle! -project. Lean canvas is a tool to help entrepreneurs and others. to develop and present their product, organization and/or service. It is designed to facilitate a comprehensive overall picture of a service or business (Nieminen 2016). Lean Canvas by Ash Maurya, has been adapted from the Business Model Canvas model by Alexander Osterwalder (Mullen 2016). Lean canvas is a lot more quick and functional way for new start-ups to develop and present new ideas than a business plan. Lean canvas does not only detect early stages risks but can be useful throughout the development process (Maurya 2012).

Lean canvas created to examine the Lähdetään Matkalle! -project consist of nine boxes that influence each other (figure 5). The first box was titled the Problem. The Problem section's goal is to understand the main problems of the target clients. The three main problems that the Lähdetään Matkalle! -project tackles are the increase in the number of children with immigrant backgrounds in day care, taking all represented cultures into consideration and the several challenges of multicultural early childhood education.

There is need for a product to address these challenges and the solution section presents the main characteristics of the product to help with the problems. The Lähdetään Matkalle! -project's goal is to provide an effective way for early childhood educators to teach children about other cultures and countries and the solution to this is through appreciating and using

multiculturalism as effectively as possible, as a valuable resource and as a learning and educational opportunity.

Key Metrics section outlines the measures that are taken into account. For the Lähdetään Matkalle! -project to be successful the participation of children and families is important. Participation needs to be taken into consideration and monitored.

The section titled Unique Value Proposition defines the goal of the Lähdetään Matkalle! -project and what it as a product promises for the user. The aim is to help early childhood educators to teach children about other cultures and countries in a practical and child-centred way. Knowledge about the world around us is going to be very beneficial in the children's future and the Lähdetään Matkalle! -project also provides for children to present their own background and share what they themselves deem as important.

Unfair Advantage section should examine the ways that Lähdetään Matkalle! -project stands out from its competitors. Lähdetään Matkalle! -project does not have competitors unlike some other products because it is not a product seeking any monetary compensation. There are few products that address the same issues. The advantage of the project is that the format is tested before, and it is functional.

Channels section presents the ways that the product is distributed to clients and users. There is not yet a clear plan of distribution of the Lähdetään Matkalle! -project. Cooperation between day cares is important and if the project is successful, this might be the way for other day cares to use the project as a teaching method. The Pilke day care organization consist of 69 day care centres around Finland (Pilke Päiväkodit 2016). This could be a good network to distribute the project in the future.

In the Customer Segments section, the clients and those who benefit from the product are introduced. Lähdetään Matkalle! -project is a new teaching method for early childhood educators. The educators, children, and parents can learn new skills and information about other cultures and countries. The educators also gain information of children's views about these matters which is valuable. For children there are several benefits from this product.

The section of Cost structure explains what the service or product costs for the administrator and for the users. The Lähdetään Matkalle! -project entails very low costs for the day care where the project is executed. The costs are from printing the question sheets for the children but otherwise it does not cause any other expenses. For families the product is free, and it can be a factor in improving participation. There is no financial barrier to participate in the project.

The purpose of the Revenue Streams section is to show ways the product can generate money. The Lähdetään Matkalle! -project's goal is to be a free educational tool and teaching method for all. There are no revenues to be expected, at least not at this point of the development of the project or in the final product. All the answers and other material from the project are going to stay in the personal use of the day care.

<b>Problem</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The increase of number of children with immigrant backgrounds</li> <li>▪ Taking all represented cultures into a consideration</li> <li>▪ The challenges of multicultural early childhood education</li> </ul>	<b>Solution</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Appreciating and using multiculturalism as effectively as possible, as a valuable resource and as a learning and educational opportunity</li> </ul>	<b>Unique Value Proposition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Practical, child-centered way to address multiculturalism in daycares</li> <li>▪ Way for early childhood educators to teach children about other cultures and countries</li> </ul>	<b>Unfair Advantage</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tested previously</li> <li>▪ Functional</li> </ul>	<b>Customer Segments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Early childhood educators</li> <li>▪ Children</li> <li>▪ Parents</li> </ul>
	<b>Key Metrics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Participation</li> </ul>		<b>Channels</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Daycares</li> <li>▪ Cooperation between different daycares</li> </ul>	
<b>Cost Structure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Very low cost for the daycare (printing)</li> <li>▪ Free for families</li> </ul>		<b>Revenue Streams</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The goal is to be educational tool and there are not revenues to be expected</li> </ul>		

Figure 5: Lean canvas for the project

## 7.2 Implementation of the Project, Results, & Children's presentations

In functional thesis it is important that the implementation is not only limited to the making of the project. So far, the preparations for the project have been described and explained. For instance, how the day care was in cooperation developing and planning the project. In this part of the thesis the project is going to be explained in practice and the results from the question sheets are going to be presented. The implementation process of the thesis project can be seen in detail from the figure 6.

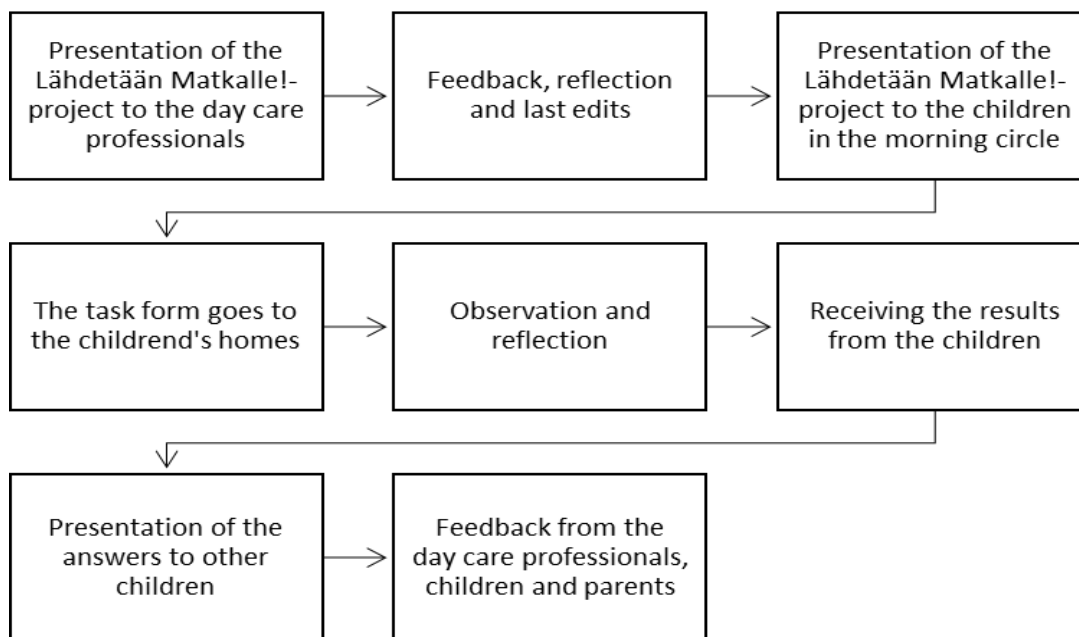


Figure 6: The implementation process of thesis project

The project started with introducing the project to the children in their morning circle. They were told what the project was and why it was made. The question form was explained in detail to them. They were shown the project folder where the finished question forms would be returned as well as Sepi the bird. The folder and Sepi the bird can be seen in figure 7. Every child was then given the question form into their locker to take home. In the entrance hall there were additional instructions for parents to notify them about the project. In total twenty-two question sheets were handed out. They were given on Tuesday with a request to return them by Friday. The following Monday the answers were presented to the teacher and other children in the group with guidance and help.



Figure 7: The return folder and Sepi the bird

Several of the forms were returned and with guidance of one of the authors of the thesis children were able to present their answers to others. As they were presenting their answers they were praised and encouraged by other children. Several children presented Finland and the other countries were Indonesia, Germany, Hungary, and China. There were eight forms returned in total from the twenty-two handed out. Later in the discussion the reasons for this are going to be examined. From the figure 8 parts of two examples of the returned forms can be seen. The examples were picked by random and no individual child can be recognised from them.

The number of finished and returned forms is not the most important part of the Lähdetään Matkalle! -project. The learning situation in the morning circle is the most educational part of the project. As mentioned before children present their chosen country with guidance of one of the authors of the thesis. In the children's presentations the educator's role is important. Listening and encouraging are essential. It is vital that the educator listens to the child and what he or she has to say about the country being presented. The educator can also ask guiding questions for example have you visited this country or do you know anyone who has. It is important that the teacher shows the interest and encourages the child to tell more. The person who is guiding the child's presentation can also ask everybody to be quiet and tell children how important it is to be respectful of others presentation. After all the



presentations the children were asked if anyone has any questions or wants to add something. After the presentations all children were thanked and there was a small discussion about other countries initiated by the children.

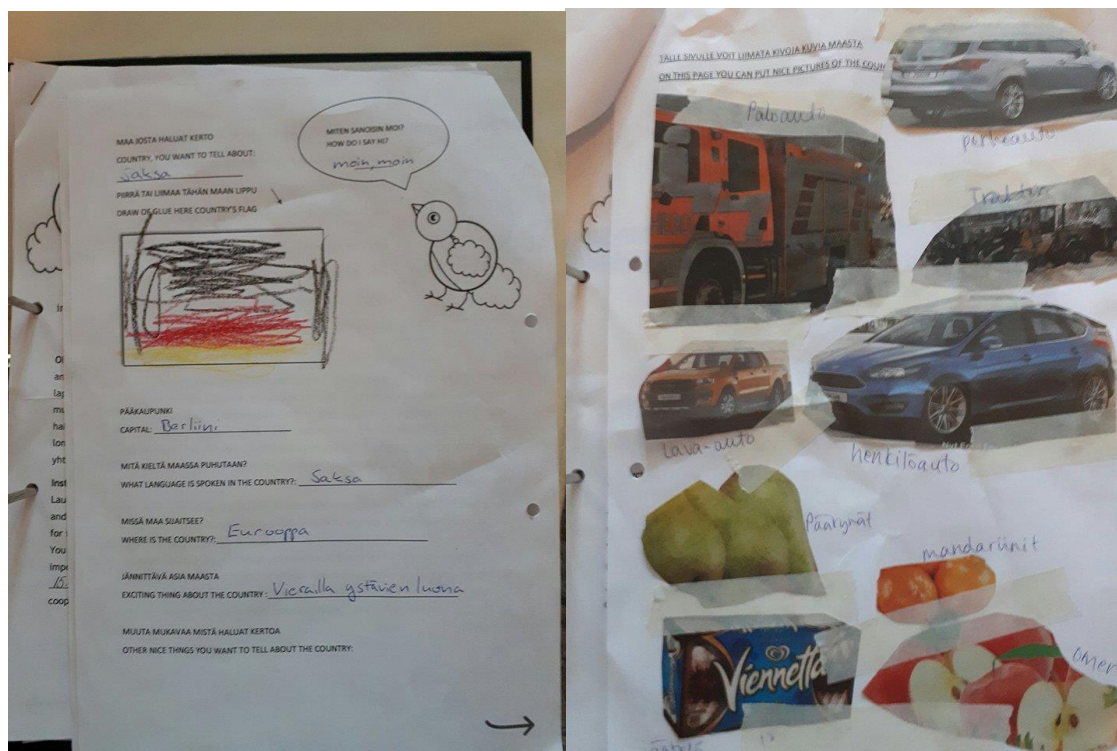


Figure 8: Examples of the finished task sheets

## 8 Ethical Questions & Reliability of the Research

In this chapter the ethics of the functional research thesis are evaluated and examined. For a thesis to be ethical and valid it needs to follow the principles of the responsible conduct of research. (HTK 2012) There are several principals for research to be ethical and all these have been followed through this thesis process. All the rights of the participated children and families were taken into consideration during every part of the planning and the implementation of the thesis project. No personal information was needed or gathered, and no individual child or family can be identified from the finished works nor from the thesis. The research permit can be seen in appendix 5.

When considering the ethics of the thesis, it is important that the research's results can be repeated when done in another setting. It is possible for other early childhood educators to conduct the project in another day care centre and with other children. The age of the children is important as the project is probably best suited for children over four years old.

JHL (The Trade Union for the Public and Welfare Sectors) has set ethical values for early childhood education. The values consist of respecting and supporting people, environment

and rights of the children, and also early childhood educators. This functional thesis has supported some of these ethical values while doing this project. These values are, from quote to quote:

- “I support and treat the child, family and my co-workers equally and fairly apart from gender, religion, origin, age, abilities or opinions.”
- “The child has a right to good and high-quality care and education every day.”
- “I support the child’s individual growth and development in cooperation with the parents and I also help the child to find his own place in a safe society.”
- “I support the child’s self-determination and his choices, and I consider his age and the state of his development.”
- “I develop my professional knowledge and my working methods. I assess my own work and get involved in its development.”
- “I act confidentiality, remembering the professional secrecy.” (JHL)

The thesis was conducted according to these values of ethics of the Finnish early childhood education. These are only the few of the values but we think these values are the most important when considering this functional thesis. For example, tool was created, assessed from many perspectives, and developed with the cooperation partner. The tool was given to the right age group considering the children’s age and development level and tasks. The thesis process developed the authors professional knowledge and children were treated equally.

Lähdetään Matkalle! -project is meant to be used as educational tool early childhood educators. It is quantitatively impossible to count how much the group’s teacher, the children in the group, or the parents learned during the project. By getting good feedback and through observation it can be only estimated. This is one of the characteristics of functional thesis.

The number of participants must be mentioned when examining the results. Only one day care centre group participated in the thesis project and only eight children returned the question form. All children who returned the form on time got to present it. It was promised to children whom did not return the form in time that they would later have the opportunity to do so. The returning of the forms and how many of them are in the folder is not the most important part of the Lähdetään Matkalle! -project. The most important educational situation was in the morning circle. In this thesis project the presentations were guided by one of the authors of the thesis. If done in another setting group’s early childhood educator can guide the presentations.

It must be mentioned that one of the authors of the thesis has had previous contact with the participating children in her past employment. Her relationship has become positive after working in the day care for six months, therefore her attitude towards the children cannot be claimed as neutral. Having a previous relationship with the children helped with the observation of them. Which is same when done in another day care group by another educator.

## 9 Discussion

This discussion part gives an account of what went well in the project, how it was received by the early childhood education teacher of the group and children and what affected the results. Later the development needs and ideas, and finally further research needs are discussed. The feedback from the project from the group's early childhood education teacher Olga Germo and a few parents are going to be presented. Evaluation form was not used. The questions were asked with open questions and the goal of the interviews was to open a dialogue where they could share their ideas and thoughts about the *Lähdetään Matkalle!* -project as well as their views on the importance of teaching children about other countries and cultures. Children's views and thoughts about the project were observed throughout the implementation of the project.

Several children presented Finland which was not expected. Children were asked to tell why they chose the countries they chose, and there were many different answers given. Those who wanted to present Finland said that it is their home country or that they know so much about it or that they love Finland. Those who chose other countries said that they chose them because they knew about the country or because they had visited it or because family member or a parent was from this country.

During the introduction of the project, children were excited and curious. Some of them liked petting Sepi and thought it was cute. After the presentation several said that they liked it and did their best. As mentioned before very few had the chance of returning the project and they were sad that they didn't have it with them. The reasons why all did not have it with them varied from lack of time to forgetting. It was expected that some would not return the question form in time. The children were told that everyone who has done the project will later have the chance to present them with the guidance of the teacher.

*Lähdetään Matkalle!* -project is about letting children to express themselves through art and to do the project together with parent and present it to other children. It hopefully created a sense of community and equality. When there are many cultures and languages mixed up together in a group, this kind of a project evens the differences out since the children can do it together with their families and show what they have done to others. Since the task paper is the same for everyone, the children shared the same information about their cultures as

others and they could express themselves through the task pages, it made the children feel like they have succeeded; they have done a task which is interesting, and they can share interesting facts of their culture (Kuusisto 2009, 16). The *Lähdetään Matkalle!* -project was well suited for this day care centre because it offered the children a channel to tell other children about their own culture.

The working life cooperation partner was Olga Germo who has been working as an early childhood education teacher for approximately 25 years. She has a lot of experience the field. She also felt that the children were excited about the project. She thought that the project was very beneficial and needed in the group. It created discussion about other countries and children liked and were excited about sharing their work and what they had done with other children. She praised the way the children's presentations were guided, feeling that it was very important part. She felt that it was beneficial especially for five-year-old that they got the feeling that they know how to do it and their work is appreciated.

Germa liked the fact that the project included parents and that they participated. Germa said that she believes that these kinds of projects are valuable and beneficial for the children and that in the day care different cultures and countries should be presented and celebrated more. For future development she said that there should be more time given to return the projects, followed by more discussion on the presented countries. Overall, she felt that the project was successful.

The feedback was requested from two parents whose children did the project. No feedback form was used but parents were interviewed briefly to understand the parents point of views about the project and on the importance of teaching about other countries to children. Their names are not published as promised in the research permission that no individual child or family can be recognized from the final thesis (appendix 5). They felt the project was beneficial for the children. Both said that teaching about other countries is important because there can be several children with different cultural backgrounds present in the group and those should be celebrated, learned from, and talked about.

The authors of the thesis learned a lot during the thesis process. The cooperation with Pohjantähti Polaris day care worked well and it was good to see how excited the children were about this topic and whole project. The research question of thesis was to find out whether the *Lähdetään matkalle!* -project is a helpful tool for early childhood educators to teach children about other countries and cultures. The goal was not to store or put aside the finished forms. The aim was to create discussion in the group and teach children about other countries with the help of the forms. The making of *The Lähdetään Matkalle!* -project has provided a broad understanding to the field of early childhood education. The thesis project was created to benefit the field of early childhood education.

## 9.1 Suggestions for Further Research

In the future the knowledge gained from this thesis process and project is going to be highly beneficial. There is quite little research about children in the day care with immigration background (Hujala & Turja 2016, 237). The *Lähdetään Matkalle!* -project has a lot of theory and evidence for its benefit and support for its goals. Even though the subjects related to it have not been studied as broadly as they could be and should be. As a next step, the issues related to the project would need to be studied more broadly.

Several literature sources that address multiculturalism in Finnish early childhood education, for example Kuusisto's *Homma hanskassa! - Päiväkodin monimuotoisuus rikkautena* (2009) and *Monikulttuurinen varhaiskasvatus ja esiopetus* (2011) by Halme and Vataja, give many good examples about the ways of seeing multiculturalism at day care centres as a richness and helping address other cultures and countries. In Finland, especially in the metropolitan area, there are already a lot of multicultural day care centres celebrating other countries' celebrations and doing activities, which are part of other cultures. Hopefully, soon, these kinds of daycare centres can be seen and found from other parts of Finland as well, since the immigration is increasing every day.

The authors of the thesis recognize that the subject addressed is current and it needs to be researched and discussed about more. The thesis does not provide quantitative answers or findings, nor it claims to do so. It was created to be a cultural awareness tool for early childhood educators and educating are its focuses. The findings are subjective in a way, but if done in another day care group it could create different kind of discussion, feelings, and presentations just as good and valid.

Later using Service Design methods, the children and parents could be involved more in the development and designing the project. Children and parents could for example suggest, vote on, choose form or request the questions they want on the form and which they want to answer to. In the thesis this was not done, because the authors felt that this should be done by the groups early childhood education teacher as he or she has already established relationship with the family. Also in the thesis the focus was in the experience of the early childhood educator and whether the project is in itself functional and beneficial.

If the groups educator wants to address certain multicultural issue in the group, he or she can change or add question/-s to the form. The folder design and the physical Sepi bird are optional (figure 7), if the project is conducted in a different setting. The folder was created for easier storing of the finished works and to make it easier for the teacher and the children to later examine the finished works. Sepi the bird was created to make the project more exciting for children and easier for them to understand and follow the instructions.

The authors of the thesis believe that through innovation, open dialogue, sharing new ideas, and learning together with clients the Lähdetään Matkalle! -project can reach its full potential and benefit as cultural awareness tool for early childhood educators.

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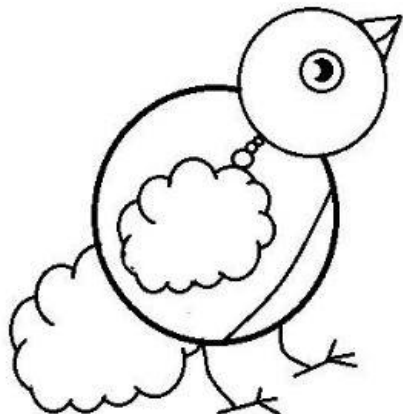
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## Appendix 1: First draft of the introduction page



HEI! MI-NUN NI-ME-NI ON SE-PI. VAN-HEM-  
 PA-NI SAI JUU-RI UU-DEN TYÖ-PAI-KAN.  
 TYÖN KU-VAAN KUU-LUU, ET-TÄ PER-HEE-  
 NI JA MI-NÄ MAT-KUS-TE-LEM-ME PAL-JON.  
 LÄH-DE MAT-KAL-LE KANS-SA-NI! VAN-HEM-

MAN KANS-SA VOIT KER-TO-A MI-NUL-LE HA-LUA-MAS-TA-SI MAAS-TA. KUU-  
 LI-SIN MIE-LEL-LÄ-NI UUT-TA TIE-TO-A, E-RI-TYI-SES-TI JUU-RI SI-NUL-LE  
 TÄR-KEI-STÄ A-SI-OIS-TA MAAS-TA!

**Ohjeet vanhemmalle!** Olemme lastentarhaopettaja opiskelijoita Laurea ammattikorkeakoulusta Otaniemestä. Teemme lopputyötä monikulttuurisuudesta ja lapsen näkökulmasta muihin maihin. Lapsen kanssa voitte yhdessä etsiä tietoa ja mukavia asioita valitsemastanne maasta. Voitte myös leikata, liimata ja piirtää haluamianne asioita. Tärkeintä tietoa on, minkä lapsi itse kokee tärkeäksi. Täytättehän lomakkeen \_\_\_\_\_ mennessä. Valmiit työt esitellään muille lapsille. Kiitos yhteistyöstänne!

**Instructions for the parents!** We are early childhood education teacher students from Laurea University of Applied Sciences Otaniemi. Our thesis subject is multiculturalism and the child's point of view of other countries. Together with the child, you can search for information and other nice things that you wish to fill in from your chosen country. You can also cut, glue in, and draw what you want to tell about the country. The most important information is what a child finds important. Please fill this form by \_\_\_\_\_. The finished work will be presented to other children. Thank you for your cooperation!

## Appendix 2: First draft of the task page

MAA JOS-TA HA-LU-AT KER-TO

COUNTRY YOU WANT TO TELL ABOUT:

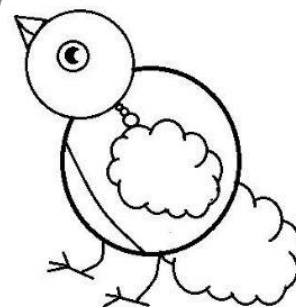
\_\_\_\_\_

PIIR-RÄ TAI LII-MAA TÄ-HÄN MAAN LIP-PU

DRAW OF GLUE HERE COUNTRY'S FLAG



MI-TEN SA-NOT MOI?  
HOW DO I SAY HI?



PÄÄ-KAU-PUN-KI

CAPITAL: \_\_\_\_\_

MI-TÄ KIEL-TÄ MAAS-SA PU-HU-TAAN?

WHAT LANGUAGE IS SPOKEN IN THE COUNTRY?: \_\_\_\_\_

MIS-SÄ MAA SI-JAIT-SEE?

WHERE IS THE COUNTRY?: \_\_\_\_\_

JÄN-NIT-TÄ-VÄ A-SI-A MAAS-TA

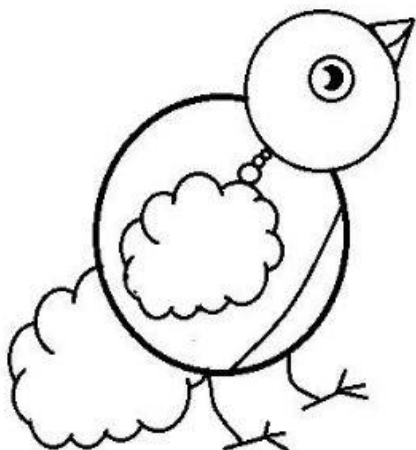
EXCITING THING ABOUT THE COUNTRY : \_\_\_\_\_

MUU-TA MU-KA-VAA MISTÄ HA-LU-AT KER-TOA

OTHER NICE THINGS YOU WANT TO TELL ABOUT THE COUNTRY:



## Appendix 3: Final draft of the introduction page



Hei! Minun nimi on Sepi. Perheeni ja minä matkustelemme paljon. Lähde matkalle kanssani! Vanhemman kanssa voit kertoa minulle haluamastasi maasta. Kuulisin mielelläni uutta tietoa, erityisesti sinulle tärkeästä maasta!

Hey! My name is Sepi. My family and I travel a lot. Let's go on a journey! With a parent you can tell me about your chosen country. I would love to hear new information, about a country that is especially important to you!

**Ohjeet vanhemmalle!** Olemme lastentarhaopettaja opiskelijoita Laurea ammattikorkeakoulusta Otaniemestä. Teemme lopputyötä monikulttuurisuudesta ja lapsen näkökulmasta muihin maihin. Lapsen kanssa voitte yhdessä etsiä tietoa ja mukavia asioita valitsemastanne maasta. Voitte myös leikata, liimata ja piirtää haluamianne asioita. Tärkeintä tietoa on, minkä lapsi itse kokee tärkeäksi. Täytättehän lomakkeen \_\_\_\_\_ mennessä. Valmiit työt esitellään muille lapsille. Kiitos yhteistyöstänne!

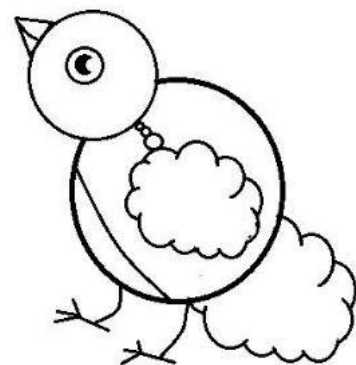
**Instructions for the parents!** We are early childhood education teacher students from Laurea University of Applied Sciences Otaniemi. Our thesis subject is multiculturalism and the child's point of view of other countries. Together with the child, you can search for information and other nice things that you wish to fill in from your chosen country. You can also cut, glue in, and draw what you want to tell about the country. The most important information is what a child finds important. Please fill this form by \_\_\_\_\_. The finished work will be presented to other children. Thank you for your cooperation!

## Appendix 4: Final draft of the task page

MAA JOSTA HALUAT KERTO  
COUNTRY, YOU WANT TO TELL ABOUT:

\_\_\_\_\_

PIIRRÄ TAI LIIMAA TÄHÄN MAAN LIPPU  
DRAW OF GLUE HERE COUNTRY'S FLAG



PÄÄKAUPUNKI

CAPITAL: \_\_\_\_\_

MITÄ KIELTÄ MAASSA PUHUTAAN?

WHAT LANGUAGE IS SPOKEN IN THE COUNTRY?: \_\_\_\_\_

MISSÄ MAA SIJAITSEE?

WHERE IS THE COUNTRY?: \_\_\_\_\_

JÄNNITTÄVÄ ASIA MAASTA

EXCITING THING ABOUT THE COUNTRY : \_\_\_\_\_

MUUTA MUKAVAA MISTÄ HALUAT KERTOA

OTHER NICE THNGS YOU WANT TO TELL ABOUT THE COUNTRY:



Appendix 5: Research permit

## Tutkimuslupa

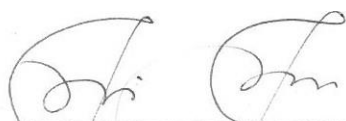
Virva Kirjavainen

Iida Puomila

Olemme sosionomiopiskelijoita Laurea ammattikorkeakoulusta Otaniemestä. Teemme projektipohjaisen opinnäytetyömme Pilke päiväkotia Pohjantähdessä. Haemme tutkimuslupaa päiväkotia Pohjantähden johtajalta Kaisa Kopistolta. Opinnäytetyön tarkoitus on selvittää, onko Lähdetään Matkalle-projekti käytännöllinen ja hyödyllinen tapa lastentarhaopettajille opettaa lapsille muista maista ja kulttuureista. Projektin avulla lastentarhaopettaja pystyy myös paremmin ymmärtämään lasten näkökulmia monikulttuurisuutta kohtaan. Opinnäytetyömme ohjaava opettaja on Annika Kultavirta.

Aineisto opinnäytetyöhön kerätään lasten ja perheiden täyttämästä monisteesta, sekä haastattelemalla ja keskustelemalla päiväkodin henkilökunnan ja muutaman vanhemman kanssa. Yksittäisen lapsen tai perheen tietoja ei kerätä tai julkaista. Ketään projekti pohjaiseen opinnäytetyöhön osallistunutta ei voi tunnistaa lopullisesta työstä. Lasten tekemät työt jäävät päiväkodin omaan käyttöön. Opinnäytetyö suoritetaan yhdessä lapsiryhmässä päiväkotia Pohjantähdessä.

Olemme tietoisia siitä, että terveys- ja sosiaalialan opiskelijana opinnäytetyön tekemiseen sovelletaan vaitiolovelvollisuutta, josta on säädetty mm. Laissa sosiaalihuollon asiakkaan asemasta ja oikeuksista (2000/812/15 §) ja Laissa terveydenhuollon ammattihenkilöistä (1994/3/17 §). Opinnäytetyön jokaisessa vaiheessa huomioidaan sosionomien ammattietiikka, sekä jokaisen tutkimukseen osallistuneen oikeudet.



Kaisa Kopisto

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Allekirjoitus ja nimenselvennys

Vastalla 23.10.2017

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