



LAUREA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Interaction between staff of a multicultural daycare and immigrant families



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The purpose of this study was to find out the challenges faced by multicultural staff in interacting with immigrant families. The study used a qualitative research approach; semi and unstructured interviews to collect data. The participants were selected by the manager of the multicultural daycare based on their English language skills and also on their different experiences working with immigrant families. Five staffs were interviewed and the data that was collected from the interviews was analyzed through content analyzes. The questions that were asked in the interviews were to search for answers to the research question: what are the challenges faced by multicultural staff in interacting with immigrant families.

The findings of this study revealed that staffs of multicultural daycare do face a lot of challenges working with immigrant families. The findings reflected the various ways in which staffs use to interact with immigrant families; visual communication, social interactions, the use of translators and academic interactions were the main issues pointed out.

The study concluded that the city of Espoo should recruit and train staffs with immigrant backgrounds and train them for at least two years, so that they could work in multicultural daycare. This would help to overcome the challenges of interaction in schools and daycare centers. This should be treated as a matter of urgency because the immigrant population in Finland is growing rapidly and children are leaving daycare every year to primary school.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, Immigrant Families, Early childhood education and Pedagogical Partnership.

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1 Introduction

In recent times migration has increased due to economic down turn, political instability, and educational reasons. Some people migrate from their home countries because of instability while others move to search for greater opportunities. Due to these migrants integration into their respective host countries becomes an important issue. During that process, the migrant have to learn the cultures of their new home countries. As a result of this, the host countries are now faced with the challenge of integrating the migrants to their country. These challenges have affected the structure of society especially the education sector. As a result of this migration, host countries are looking for new method to learn, respect and accept other cultures and values.

The idea about multiculturalism began in the 18th century during the colonization of Africa by the European and North American. This migration of people has brought what we now know as multiculturalism. Mel Gray defines multiculturalism as “an ideology related to ethnic, cultural, racial and religious diversity that influences people’s identities and behaviors”. Migration of people from one country to another has led to mixture of different cultures giving room to acculturation. It was during the period of colonization that some writers and philosophers such as W.E.B.Dubois and William James saw the need for the whole world to embrace cultural diversity and accept each other’s culture. This led to the reflection by some writers who began to see how cultural interactions could turn out in future (Gray M & Stephen. A 2009,98-99).

Large scale immigration into Finland began in the early 1990s when many refugees and asylum seekers came into Finland from Somalia and former Yugoslavia. This inflow of immigrants has made Finland to become a multicultural society. This led to the growth of multiculturalism in the Finnish society. The immigrant population is now growing rapidly and as such, the schools and daycare staffs are facing the challenges on how to learn, respect and integrate the new comers into the Finnish educational system. The parent also has to play an important role in the education of their child. Statistics have shown that staffs in daycare do face linguistic and cultural communication due to language and cultural differences. This could be seen from the findings of the study that was gathered through interviewing of the staff. It becomes very difficult for the staffs to pass information to the parents. This study focuses on the interaction between the staffs of a multicultural daycare and immigrant families.

In Finland the government aims to assist parents from multicultural background by providing translators to help them to communicate easily with the daycare staffs. The Finnish government also tries to integrate these multicultural families by providing them some Finnish courses which could help them to communicate in their day to day lives (working in Finland). Communication plays a vital role in the interaction between staffs and immigrant families. If the teachers do not understand and respect the values and cultures of immigrant families, it could strain their interaction. This would not promote the child's success in school. Recently, the immigrant statistics that was published by Helsinki Sanomat shows that the number of immigrants has increased thus posing some challenges to the teachers on how they would interact with these multicultural families especially in daycare and school. Multicultural day care is a flexible and suitable teaching environment for kids. The curriculum is made according to the different needs of the children. There are equal opportunities for all the kids irrespective of the backgrounds.

My motivation of this topic was derived during my practical placement. During this placement, I visited other daycares and it was from then that I realize that there are some barriers in the interaction between staffs and parents concerning their child's education. My interest was also developed during my second placement in a multicultural center and it was from then that I realized that the multicultural families are increasing in Finland. It was from then that I decided to investigate how staffs of a multicultural daycare interact with multicultural parents. The full meaning of VKK metro project is an ongoing project by Socca where a quarter students (social services) of Laurea University of applied sciences undertake their research on writing thesis. The findings of this study will improve the goals of VKK metro project which is run by Socca.

2 Interaction between staff of multicultural daycare and immigrant families

2.1 Vkk metro project

VKK Metro project is an ongoing project by Socca (The Center of Excellence on Social Welfare in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area). The main objectives of Socca are to develop the customer work through practical research and development in the daycare of the metropolitan region of Helsinki. The research help to improve the daycare centers in the metropolitan region. The research aims and questions were tailored towards the problems experienced in the daycare. Socca gets its funding from contributors around the municipality in the Helsinki region. Socca has signed a partnership with the cities of Kaunainen, Vantaa, Espoo and Helsinki and two Universities of applied sciences, Laurea and Metropolia. The findings would assist the city councils of the metropolitan region to improve the conditions of the daycare (socca.fi).

In VKK metro project, their main priority is the voice of the kids that is always heard before every other person. Their main concern is also about early intervention, parenting partnership, staff development in early childhood education, and family and child services. They also focus on the development of daycare centers and also on the development of the kids with their parent involvement (socca.fi).

2.2 The multicultural daycare

This multicultural daycare is a designed school and daycare for small children. It has a suitable environment and a good curriculum. There is plenty of cooperation with schools and daycare centers. Their aim is to create a community which cares for the children's individual growth, development and learning. The daycare provides teaching for the native language of immigrant children as well as Finnish, according to the guidelines set by Espoo city. In early childhood education teaching is done in groups. The development of the child is supported in small group activities where language and cultural background is taken into account. The said group activities help in supporting Finnish language development of the child. The methods in these groups can include the Sanasäkki-method; it is mostly used in multicultural daycare in order to teach the young children how to describe some objects.

2.3 The theory of multiculturalism

Multiculturalism affects the way that we interact with one another in the society. This happens either informally, within our communities and formally within our professional sites without some of us becoming aware of the situation. People may come from different cultures and it might be very difficult for the new comers to fully embrace everything they find in their new settlements. Things that could be considered as normal in one person's culture, it might be a taboo in other cultures. In a society where different cultures co-exist and members of the various cultures have no basic knowledge of the other cultures, there are bound to be difficulties for integration to take place. In our today's world, the manner in which politicians and other authorities handle multiculturalism and its related issues shape the reputation of the country in the outside world. It is a phenomenon or an ideology which touches on many aspects diversity in our lives as people. Accordingly, Gray & Stephen 2009, 98 stated that: "Multiculturalism is related to ethnic, racial and religious diversity that influence peoples identities and behaviors" .The views of the people, especially those in authority concerning multiculturalism are always reflected in the laws governing it in that nation.

Despite some challenges, multiculturalism has a lot of advantages. Multiculturalism has done a lot of help in the history of social work. It has assisted professionals to know how to handle situations that are related to cultural, ethnic and religious themes. Social workers who have never had the opportunity to deal face to face with people from multicultural background could find it easy to handle cases that are related to cultures. There are usually differences in the way some things are done in the immigrant cultures as compared to the host country's cultures.

Religious factors might also slow down interactions. Every religion has its own norms and it would be difficult for example for a teacher who is not from a Moslim background to fully understand what kind of activities parents could involve in without interfering with their religious beliefs. The 21st century has been a century where there has been the growth of many different forms of technologies which has led to the growth of many bigger economies thereby giving an ease to communication. This has facilitated the movement of people from one place to another throughout the world. Due to this economic growth, the industrialized countries have had no choice than to experience the high rate of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. This is the reason why we have multiculturalism everywhere now in the world (Gray & Stephen 2009).

The issue of multiculturalism in early childhood education was not a big challenge to teachers of multicultural daycare. The staff of the daycare said children were all treated in the same manner irrespective of their different backgrounds. The study also explains that the best way to deal with multicultural interactions was for the staff to have enough experience working in a multicultural setting for quite some time. This would help the staff to know how to easily understand the needs of the different cultures. Their findings also described that the best working methods of multicultural interactions in daycare was easy when working in small groups with people from Finnish backgrounds and those from multicultural backgrounds. Multicultural interactions between daycare staff and multicultural families were done with the use of images, facial expressions, and the use simple and clear Finnish language to communicate (Chaouche & Grönlund 2010).

2.4 Global multiculturalism

Multiculturalism could be handled on a different perspective in other countries. Multiculturalism plays a great role in the identity of a country and this affects the country's image in the world scene. Putting in place this ideology and the lack of many approaches to multicultural issues, it play a very important role in the identity of the nationals of each country therefore contributing in the way that the citizens interact with each other. In countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, they practice what is known as multiculturalism from below .In these two countries; they try to solve multicultural issues using “difference blindness approach”. This is done by trying to integrate the individual immigrant using some form of assimilation whereby the immigrant have to learn the language and customs(majority) of that nation in order to fully become integrated. A good example is the United States which has a lot of many other cultures, ethnic groups ,norms, beliefs and languages (Gray & Stephen 2009:102), thereby creating a new multicultural American society. In the United States of America and the United Kingdom, there has been a lot of initiative that has been done to handle multicultural issues such as discrimination, housing and employment. But on the other hand, nothing great has been done at the higher or federal, administrative level to put an end to these problems.

In Finland, there is the Finnish Integration Act which aims at assisting the people from the multicultural background to become integrated into the Finnish society. Each of the municipalities has immigrant advisers who are in charge of helping the newly arrived to get a good beginning. These advisers help the immigrants by engaging them into what they called the Integration Plan. The integration plan is to prepare the immigrant to get a job in Finland and it could take up to three years. When the immigrant gains employment the integration comes to an end. The immi-

grants will also have to learn one of the two official languages Finnish or Swedish. When the immigrant is enrolled to the language course, he/she will now be taught some many issues about the Finnish society and culture (Working in Finland).

People have a different view about multiculturalism. For example David Cameron in 2008 defined "state multiculturalism" as "the idea that we should respect different cultures within Britain to the point of allowing them - indeed encouraging them - to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream" (guardian.co.uk 2008). According to David Cameron multiculturalism has failed and has led to many negative events in the British society because people from multicultural background have been given the right to practice their own cultures but on the other hand, they have misused these opportunities. He went further that same year to state that "state multiculturalism" has stopped the British people from strengthening their own identity and made it to be weakened (guardian.co.uk 2011). In his recent speech on the 5th of February 2011, as the British Prime Minister, David Cameron quoted "We have failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong. We have even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run counter to our values" (bbc.co.uk). In other words the British Prime minister meant that state multiculturalism has failed and has led to their own disadvantage thereby letting the new comers to go against the rules of their land. This has giving them the opportunity to say "I am Muslim, I am a Hindu, I am Christian and he was a Londoner too".

The German Chancellor in her speech made on the 17th of October 2010 stated that "multikulti" (bbc.co.uk 2010) concept (multiculturalism) has failed in Germany. Her views about multiculturalism were that people would live the life of togetherness interacting with their neighbors. The immigrants who are living in Germany should learn German language and respect their laws.

2.5 Immigrants and Refugees

Immigrants and refugees are those people who are living in another country which is not originally theirs but have emigrated to come and settle in their new home land due to different reasons. There is a great difference between immigrants and refugees because immigrants leave their countries of origin voluntarily in search for greener pastures while refugees leave their countries of origin due to wars, disasters and human rights abuses. If things return to normal, refugees are likely to return to their home countries while immigrants do not because they settled permanently in their new places (Potocky-Tripodi 2002).

The immigrants in Finland came to Finland from many places and this was due to different reasons. These reasons include; work, studies, family reunion and wars. The Somalis came in as a result of wars and immigrants from the former Yugoslavia came in as a result of the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s(hel.fi). This led to the opening of the Finnish borders giving more room for refugees to get into the country. Another reason was that of Finland's becoming a member of the European Union in 1995 making Finland a better place for voluntary immigrants. There were also many thousands of refugees from the Balkans and many thousands of Kurds from the Middle East due to the differences in the standards of living.

The number of asylum seekers from the Former Soviet Union in Finland since 1990-2004 has been over 3,400. Immigrants who came to Finland came in as asylum seekers, refugees or as family reunion, studies and as temporal workers. Amongst these immigrants, the largest population has been the Russians, Estonians, Swedish, Somalis, Chinese, Thai, and Iraqi etc. They are others who came from the European Union area such as Germany, United Kingdom and Sweden. (migrationinfo.org). As time went on, the number of immigrant children increases in day cares and by 2007, there were many children whose first language was not Finnish. The children either speak Somali, Arabic and Russian as their first language. Among these minorities, the largest came from Russian and Somalia having been more than the Swedish language which is the second official language in Finland (Siukola 2008).

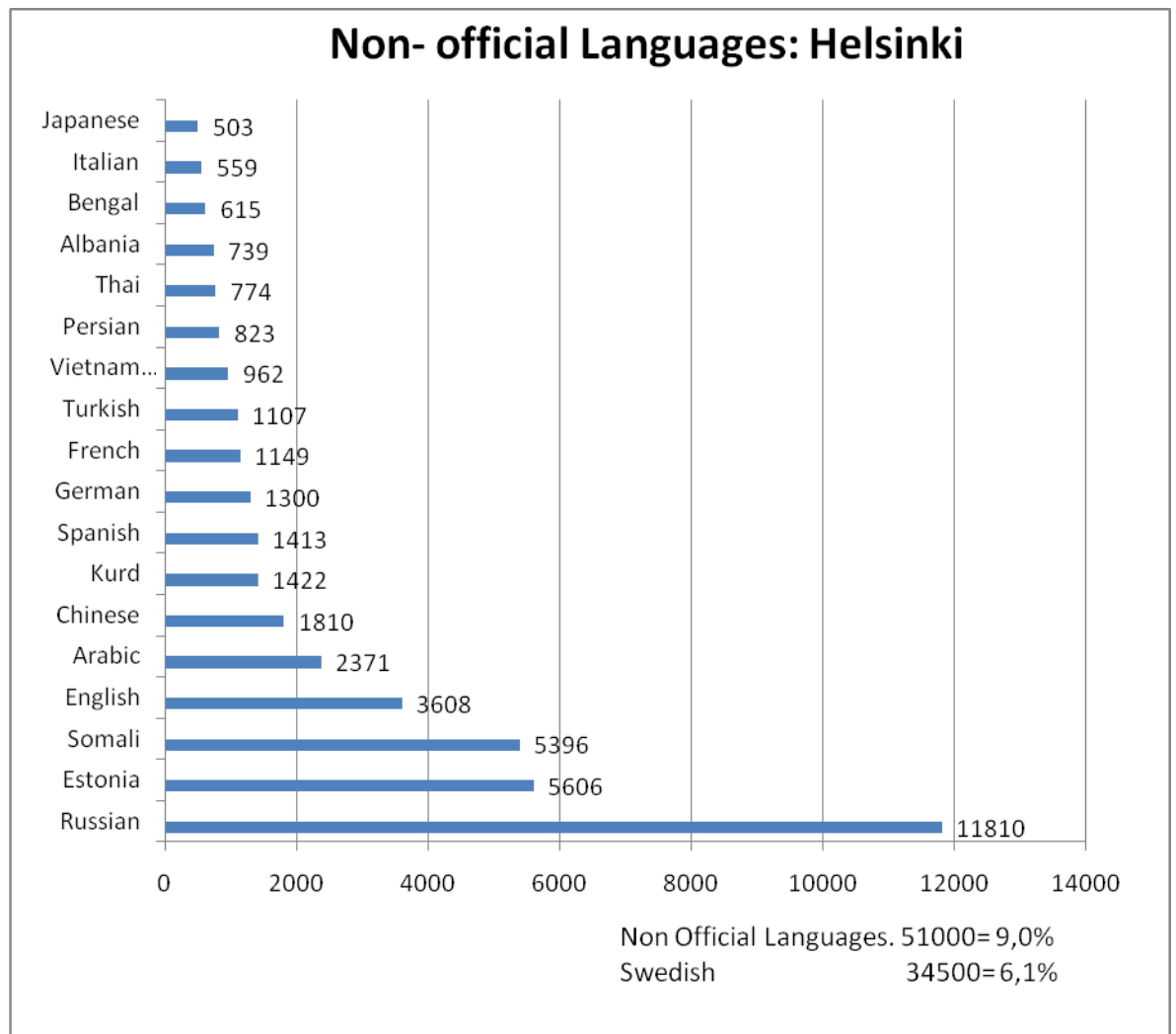
Table 1. Foreigners in Finland in 2008

Country of citizenship:	2008	%	Annual change, %	2009	%	Annual change, %
Russia	26 909	18,8	2,7	28 210	18,1	4,8
Estonia	22 604	15,8	13,0	25 510	16,4	12,9
Sweden	8 439	5,9	1,1	8 506	5,5	0,8
Somalia	4 919	3,4	1,4	5 570	3,6	13,2
China	4 620	3,2	16,1	5 180	3,3	12,1
Thailand	3 932	2,7	13,3	4 497	2,9	14,4
Iraq	3 238	2,3	6,7	3 978	2,6	22,9
Turkey	3 429	2,4	7,8	3 809	2,4	11,1
Germany	3 502	2,4	5,5	3 628	2,3	3,6
United Kingdom	3 213	2,2	2,2	3 333	2,1	3,7
Others	58 451	40,8	9,9	63 484	40,8	8,6
Total	143 256	100	7,9	155 705	100	8,7

Source: Statistics Finland, Demographic statistics

Migration statistics in Finland

Table 2. Largest none official language groups in Helsinki region in 2008



Source: City of Helsinki Urban Facts.

The table above shows the largest non-official languages in Finland in the year 2008. Russia, Estonia and Somali are the highest spoken non official language in the Helsinki metropolitan region. These 95 languages are spoken by at least five people in the Helsinki region.

2.6 Early childhood education and pedagogical partnership

2.6.1 Early childhood education

Kindergartens enrollment age of the children varies from one country to another. Early childhood education could be defined as the education of children from birth to age eight. It includes programs for infants and toddlers, nursery school, childcare, and preschool programs as well as kindergarten and primary grades. Kindergartens provide many educational programs to the kids. The kindergarten education has been very useful in building the relationship between teachers and parents, and teachers and school children (Spodek 1991, 6).

In Finland, the ministry of social affairs and Health and the ministry of Education take charge of early childhood education. The principles and guidelines on educational policy and legislation are set up by the Finnish parliament. The children daycare Act came into force in 1973 with the main objectives of children unconditional right to growth and learning in daycare. This Act aims at helping parents to raise their children in a balanced way. Recently in Finland about 46% of children in daycare age attend family daycares. Most of the children who are less than 2 year old are cared for by their parents at home but about 23% of them do attend public or family daycare. The children who are between the ages of 3 and 5 year old, about 63% of them attend daycare full-time. And 93% of children with at the age of 6 do take part-time preschool education (Broström & Wagner 2003).

2.6.2 Pedagogical and parenting partnership

In Finland there is the National curricular guideline for preschool education that care givers have to follow in the daycare programs. This is known as ECEC (Finnish national curriculum guidelines). The values of ECEC in Finland are based on international conventions on the rights of the child, national law, and other guidelines. The four principles of the convention on the rights of the child are non-discrimination and equal treatment, the child's best interest, the child's right to life and full development and giving due weight to the views of the child. Whereas the basic principles of the ECEC include: warm personal relationships, secured, growth, development and learning, healthy environments that allow play and wide range of activities, children receive understanding and have a say in accordance with their age and maturity, children receive the special support they need and their own culture, language, religion and beliefs. Educational goals of ECEC are: promotion of personal wellbeing, reinforcement of considerate behavior and

action towards others (includes thinking positively about other cultures) and gradual build-up of autonomy (Finnish ECEC Guidelines 2003).

Children should have a chance to grow-up as a part of both their cultural community and Finnish society. The services pay attention to ECEC as well as the mother tongue and culture of the child. Even though the roles of men and women vary in different cultures, the Finnish ECEC is based on gender equality.

The staff should be able to discuss with the parents the needs of the children based on their culture as well as the educational goals of the parents. The parents have to the main responsibility to maintain the child's language and culture. In ECEC the children are encouraged to use their own culture. Also they are given a chance to learn Finnish in everyday situations with other children and educators. The staff works together with the parents to plan how the child's mother tongue and culture are supported. According to ECEC guidelines, the child's culture, customs and history are studied and respected and are made to be part of daily activities. The staff should aim to inform the parents on the goals and principles of Finnish ECEC. The parents are encouraged to aim for functional bilingualism for their child; they are encouraged to support their child's mother tongue and are given advice on how to achieve it. Also integrating the child to Finnish society is a major part of ECEC (Finnish ECEC Guidelines 2003).

The ECEC guidelines oblige the day care to take in to account the right to learn one's own language (Hokkanen & Liehunen 2008). Kaskela and Kekkonen (2006) stated that parenting partnership is two-way communication with workers and parents. The worker and the parent have to work consciously to support the child's growth, development and learning processes. The Principles includes listening, respect, trust and dialogue. One of the main goals for parenting partnership is for the worker to recognize as early as possible the child's need for support in some area of growth, development or learning and to create a workable strategy in conjunction with the parents (Hokkanen & Liehunen, 2008). Parent education is a crucial part of understanding cultural diversities, which become apparent in different child-rearing patterns and attitudes to family life. Those working with multicultural families will need knowledge and understanding of these different cultural backgrounds. Other reasons for family education include among others the respect of different parenting styles, so that services would planned in cooperation with parents and should match their needs and that "bringing up children should be seen in the wider context of adequate employment, financial provision, housing and day care (Pugh & De'Ath 1984).

Even though studies suggest that negative experiences in early life do not necessarily damage the person permanently, the influence of early interaction should not be minimized. According to Gillian Pugh & Erica De'Ath (1984.136) "An increasing body of research now supports the view that optimum development is associated with highly interactive parent-child relationships in which the adult is consistently responsive to behavior imitated by the child, elaborating the child's language and encouraging play and exploration". As society places high expectations on parenting it is key that it also provides support, help and advice to parents that is not limited to crisis situations (Pugh & De'Ath 1984).

As reported by Hand, Wise (2006), in the United States the main barriers to the partnership between teachers and parents is because of the lack of good communication .This might be in the sense that teachers might have a positive attitude to parents whose educational level is high and whose income is also very high. They pay more attention to the rich and most educated parents. The staff good relationship with the parent might prove positive if the parent is willing to learn more from the caregiver. Another barrier that might affect parenting partnership might be the lack of time. This is because parents are not always available in the mornings because they have to run to work while caregivers are available in the morning and are free for engagement with parents.

3 Methodology

3.1 The purpose of the study and research question

The purpose of this study is to investigate how staffs of a multicultural day care interact with immigrant families. Interaction between staffs and parents contributes to the child's educational success. This study seeks to find out ways on how interaction between the staffs of a multicultural day care and immigrant families can be improved. Another objective of this study is also to find out the different challenges that the staffs of a multicultural daycare face while interacting with multicultural families. The research question that is being addressed in this study is;

What are the challenges faced by the staff of a multicultural daycare in interacting with multicultural families?

3.2 Qualitative Approach

“Qualitative research can be referred to as a family of methods in which some methods are more compatible than others .Some of these members have been around for a long time e.g. ethnography ,case studies and grounded theory. The other members such as narrative analysis, constructivism, and phenomenological approaches are newer to the scene” (Padgett D: 2008:1). There is a difference between qualitative research method and quantitative research methods. With qualitative research is person-centered while with quantitative it is variable-centered. Qualitative research seeks to stress on the meanings and questions why things are supposed to be in a particular way although it is the reality. While quantitative research uses statics to get its results. Qualitative researcher's uses questionnaires, observation and interviews to collect data. In this study, I wanted to know the challenges staff do face when interacting with multicultural families. That is why I decided to use qualitative research which was less expensive and data easily collected.

3.3 Data collection

In this research, I used semi unstructured interviews to collect data. As explained by Deborah in her book "Qualitative Methods in social work research", interviews helps to bring more information from the interviewee as a result of the face to face contact. They might also be the use of body language which could shed more light in the interview (Deborah 2008).Having had face to face interviews with the participants, it helped the researcher to see from their appearance their age group and race. Tape recorders were used to record the interviews. The form of ques-

tions was the same to all the workers but the interviewer can modify the order of the questions or can change some questions in a different way. There are no ready answer options; everyone answers in their own words. This method is good in finding out tacit knowledge and controversial details, which might not come up in a traditional interview. I preferred interviews in carrying out the research because when conducting an interview, the interviewee may bring out many ideas and themes within a short period of time meanwhile using questionnaires may lead to very short answers. There might not be enough space and time to fill in the questionnaires. The questions might also be very straight that needs very straight answers but with interviews you could ask open ended questions which responses could lead to more probing to get more information (Hirsjävi & Hurme: 2006).

The participants are the people that the researcher interviewed in this study. There were a total of five workers who work in multicultural daycare. All the participants were females and they all came from Finland. These participants were selected based on the different experiences they have had working in multicultural daycare, age group of kids that they work with and their duration in the day care. The respondents were free to decide either to participate in the study or not. They were advised to withdraw at any stage of the research. They were also selected since they could speak both English and Finnish languages fluently. This was because the researcher could mostly speak and understand English language more than the Finnish language. I intended to interview both the staff and the multicultural parents in order to get a two sided response but due to language barrier on the part of the researcher, only the staff was then chosen to take part on the research.

3.4 Semi-unstructured interviews

Punch Keith (1998) stated that unstructured interviews are interviews that open ended and give an in-depth understanding and could also be called ethnographic interviews. This type of interview helps the interviewer to understand the behaviors of people that are revealed through the interview period without the interviewer having any prior knowledge about the themes that might arise during the interviews. According to Fontana and Frey (Punch K 1998), unstructured interviews have seven aspects in which it could help the researcher to collect data during interviews. In this study I had the interviews in a setting that was accessible by the participants and me. Although the researcher of this study was not very fluent in Finnish she could speak and understand some level of Finnish language. Besides Finnish language, the participants could also speak English and the researcher could speak English language as well. The researcher also had a good knowledge about the participants' culture (Punch Keith 1998).

3.5 Data analysis

There are many different methods and approaches in which qualitative research could be analyzed. In this study content analysis was used to analyze data that has been collected from the research. Content analysis has been used in analyzing data for so many years now when technology was not well developed. It was used by Harold Lass to analyze the contents of magazines, newspapers and the reason was that he wanted to find out why people were more interested in a particular media and their intentions of using the particular product. A suitable example was to show how newspaper and radio could present the same information in different ways (Jupp.V 2006).

Content analyzes was used to analyze the data because it would help to easily come out with the different themes that I got from the data. The interviews lasted for 30minutes per participant. When the data was collected, the researcher had to listen over and over to the tape and tried to get familiar with what the respondent had said. And later on transcribed and wrote down all the various responses that the participants had responded from the five different questions that she had asked them into text. The researcher looked at the first questions and tried to compare all the five different result to the same questions. All the answers that were similar she had to put them under the same group. The ones that were not similar to the others and had a different idea were written down separately.

As stated by Jupp (2006), the aim of content analysis is for the researcher to identify clear and important ideas that are brought out in the message and to use suitable methods to see how they could be link to each other and the themes. And also the number of times that the different participants mentioned the same ideas made the researcher to notice that there were a lot of similarities from all what the five participants had said during the interviews. It was from this point that I had to come out with four different themes which are similar to the research question of this work What are the challenges faced by the staff of multicultural daycare in interacting with multicultural families?. Corresponding ideas were grouped together and the ones that were not similar were grouped under a different theme. The researcher came out with the theme of visual communication, social activities, the use of translators, and Academic interaction. Content analysis has so many diverse categories which could be positive or negative, immigrants, asylum seekers, cultural issues, women, gay and children. In this kind of topics, the researcher will take the frequency in which words, interest appear as indicators explaining the meanings for the whole idea. The raw data was edited and the part of the interviewer was taken out and only the direct words from the participants were written and stored.

Raw Data

Data

Subcategories

Main Categories

- if a child needs some items like rain coat, we draw the image on a large paper and try to show to the parents
- we use pictures to show to the parent, for example the picture of a pair of boots
- We always draw images of what we want from the parents

Presenting Drawing and pictures
Using body language

Visual communication

FIGURE 1: Visual communication

- Social activities like Christmas party, Spring parties are being organized by the school
- Through these activities and gathering, we have the opportunity to ask about their own proposals
- I think to work in a multicultural day care, teachers need to be open-minded and have some social skills

Small talks with parents
Socializing with families

Social Activities

FIGURE2: Social Activities

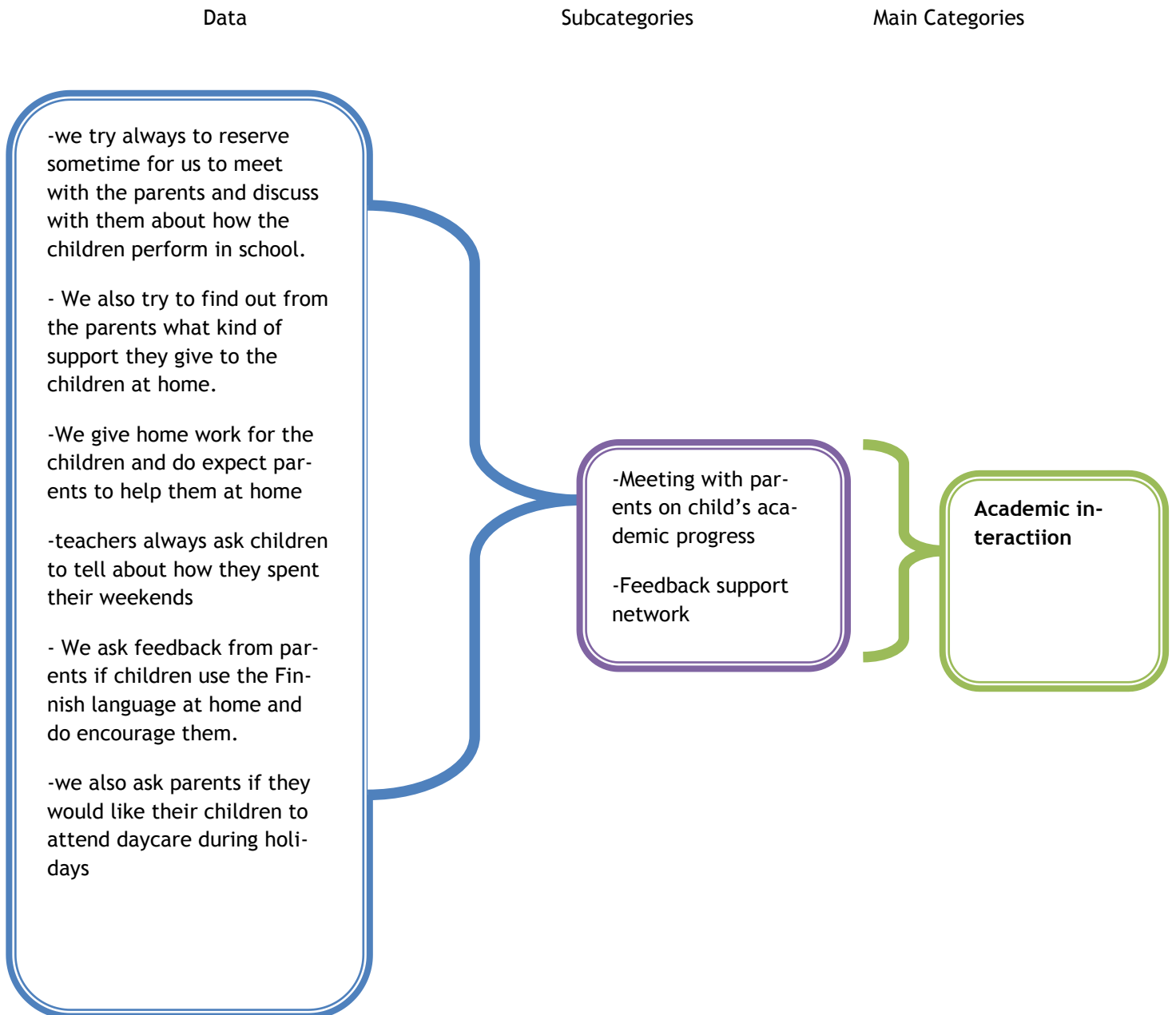


FIGURE 3: Academic interaction

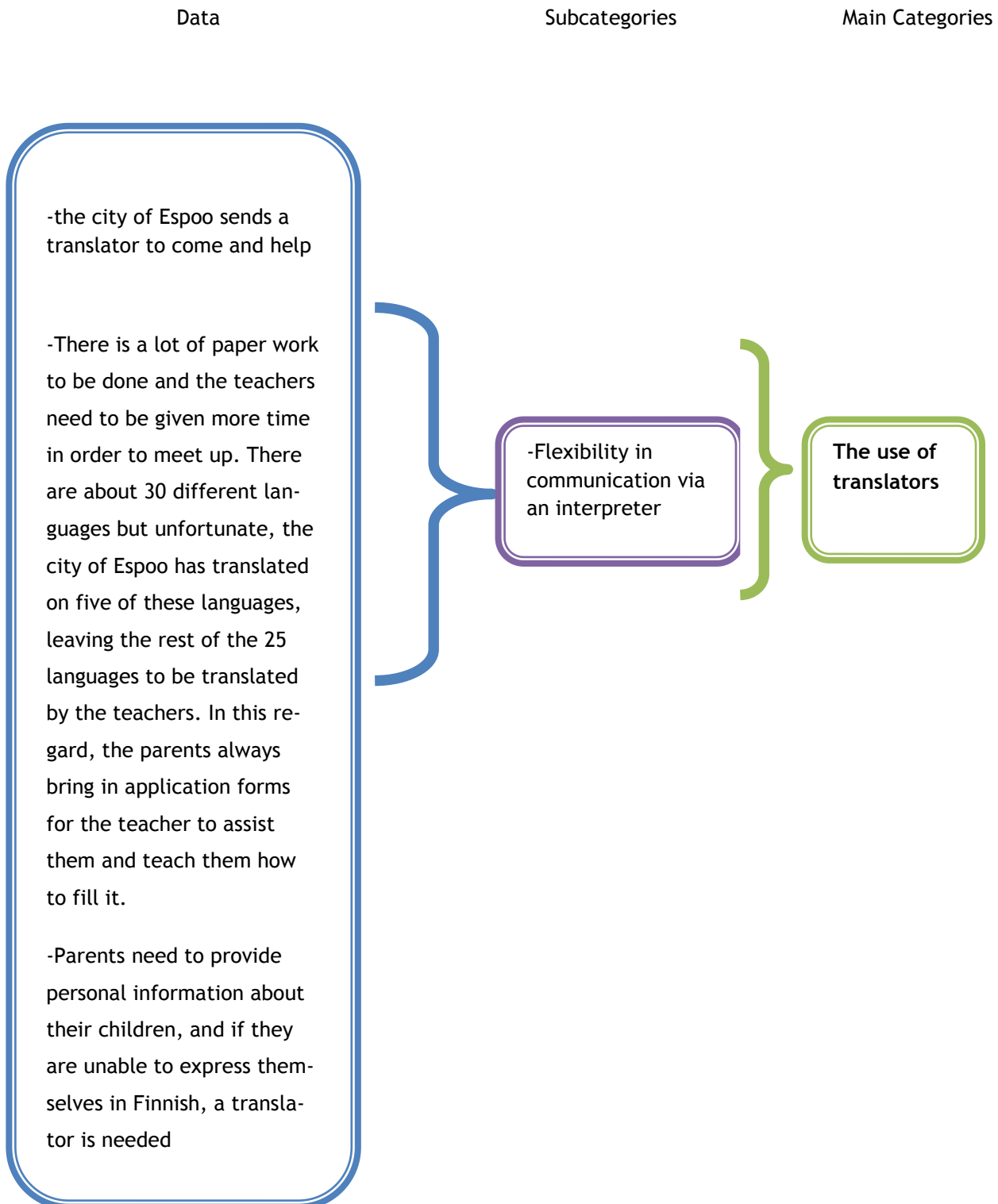


FIGURE 4: The use of translators

4 Findings

This section explains the findings and the results that were collected through interviews. The reason for carrying out this research was to find out how teachers of multicultural daycare interact with multicultural families. There were five teachers that were interviewed in order to find out how they interact with parents from multicultural families. These findings have been linked to the theories of multiculturalism, early childhood education and pedagogical partnership. The data that were transcribed was divided into four different themes in respect of their different ideas.

4.1 Visual communication

Visual Communication is a system of communication whereby image, drawing or picture is used to pass the message unto the next person (degreedirectory.org). The participants felt that due to the differences in language, it has been very difficult for them to fully interact with parents from the multicultural background. As a result of this the staffs need to use the body language in order for them to communicate with the parents. In this regard, the staffs have to draw some images of the particular item that they needed the parents to bring to school for the child.

"If a child needs some items like rain coat, we draw the image on a large paper and try to show to the parents".

"We use pictures to show to the parent, for example the picture of a pair of boots"

The participants explained that they make sure that they explain to the parents how daycare is operated in Finland and how to dress their children during the winter and summer. Most of the families are coming from different part of the world. Some are coming from places where they do not have four seasons like in Europe. Due to this fact, they will hardly understand what winter means and how to adjust to the harsh weather. Some of the parents bring their kids to school without having the knowledge that the kids will need some outdoor clothes. The picture drawing helps to pass the message to the parent.

"We always draw images of what we want from the parents"

According to these participants, language barrier affects their interactions with parents from the multicultural background to a larger extent and it would be better if these parents are well informed about their new home land when they arrive in the country and this should be implemented when they undergo the process of integration.

4.2 Social activities

Social activities are any kind of activities that are considered appropriate for any social occasion. Social activities play an important role in the day to day life of every individual. In regards to the multicultural daycare, it's one of the most important venues where teachers come in contact with the parents; children and everyone have the opportunity to express his/her opinion on how things are done in the daycare. The participants have the impression that it is through the so many social activities that they organize throughout the academic year that gives them more room for them to interact fully with the parents. In other words, daycare system might not be the same like those of the client's origin. The participant felt that it is important for them to explain to the client how daycare is run in Finland. According to them it is through these gatherings that they meet parents and discuss with them about the plans and objectives of the daycare and give opportunities for the parents to bring in more new ideas to help in the progress of the school.

"Social activities like Christmas party, spring parties are being organized by the school"

"Through these activities and gathering, we have the opportunity to ask about their own proposals"

The participants explain that in spite of the fact that most of the clients are from the Muslim background and they are from the Christian background, this does not act as any hindrance to them. They already know what it is to work with people from different cultures and religion. They ask from the clients what they do not really understand about them in order not to offend their clients unknowingly.

According to the respondent by having the respect of other cultures helps the two parties to fully interact without having any cultural problems. If other cultures are not respected, it could strain the interactions between the teachers and the parents. It could also affect the way that the parents participate in social activities.

“I think that to work in a multicultural daycare, the staff needs to be open minded and have some social skills”

4.3 Academic interaction

Academic interactions occur between the teachers and parents about the child’s educational success. The multicultural teachers create some forum where teachers and parent meet to discuss about their child performance both in school and at home. The participants saw that there was also the need for academic interactions with the parents. In Finland ECEC guidelines insisted on parents involvement on their children education. The parents are always invited for discussion about their children’s performances in school and also asked how the children perform at home. In these meetings, there are the questions about the language development of the child and new ways on how the kids could learn. The participants explained that there was some kind of a follow up study in home and school. Children are given some assignments to let their parents assist them how to do it at home.

“We try always to reserve sometime for us to meet with the parents and discuss with them about how the children perform in school”.

“We also try to find out from the parents what kind of support they give to the children at home”.

“We give home work for the children and do expect parents to help them at home”

The participants also saw the need for language development of the child. This was so important because most of the children did not use Finnish language as their mother tongue or first lan-

guage. In the day care the teachers use Finnish language as the language of instruction while at home the parents use their mother tongue to the child. This also poses as some challenges to the child in that they use a different language in school and a different language at home.

"Teachers always ask children to tell about how they spent their weekends"

"We ask feedback from parents if children use the Finnish language at home and do encourage them"

"We also ask parents if they would like their children to attend daycare during holidays"

4.4 The use of translators

Translation is the process or an act of translating from one language to the other. The people who translate are known as translators (Merriam-webster.com). Due to the differences in language and culture and also that most of the families do not speak Finnish as their first language. The participants thought it that translation also plays an important role in their interactions. In spite of the fact that they use simple and clearer Finnish, things would not go on well without the use of translators. Most of the immigrant families are still new in Finland and do not speak basic Finnish language, Swedish nor English. Only few of the parents whose kids attend this daycare speak English. As a result of this, the participants felt that without the use of translators, it would be very difficult for them to interact with the parents. Language plays a very important role in their day to day interactions.

"The city of Espoo sends in some translators to come in and help"

"There are about 30 different languages but unfortunate, the city of Espoo has and help" translated on five of these languages, leaving the rest of the 25 languages to be translated by the teacher"

The participants also felt that due to language barrier, they are faced with a lot of work to do. They sometimes have translators but not in every case. There are more than 30 different languages that the multicultural parents use every day but only five of these languages are being translated into Finnish by Espoo city. This means that for the other remaining languages who do not have translated versions, it is now left on the teachers to do the work. The teachers are not given enough time to do this work. They have to translate everything within their normal working hours.

"Parents need to provide personal information about their children, and if they are unable to express themselves in Finnish, a translator is needed"

5 Discussion

5.1 Ethics and trust worthiness of the research

In social research, ethical issues do come up because it involves the people and getting information from them. Qualitative research is a design/method of conducting a research and it is mostly used in social research. It is for this reason that when carrying out qualitative research, the research is bound to take the ethical issues into consideration. The sensitive nature of some topics in qualitative research, it's the ethical issues that helps the researcher to collect all the information needed in the study (Punch 1998). In this study, qualitative methods were used to collect data. It was with the help of the ethical issues discussed below that helped the research to collect all the data in writing the research.

Deception and Disclosure of the participants of this research is prohibited. The participants in this research were not deceive about the topic and the reasons as to why the research is being carried out, and no potential harm was done to them if they participate in the research and the place where they research will be done (Padgett.k.2008).

In this research, the author tried to follow and respect all the ethical guidelines of the working life partner (city of Espoo), Laurea's ethical guidelines when conducting a research as a student and also there has been some research that has been done on Multicultural parents and pedagogical partnership. Laurea thesis by Liehunen and Hokkanen (2008) on the "differences on how the staff of a multicultural day care talks about a worry with parents of a Finnish or multicultural child". There has also been the research on "Interaction with a multicultural child-kindergarten Teachers views and Experiences by Chaouche and Grönlund (2010) in the Helsinki metropolitan daycare. There was also a research done in Australia by Kelly Hand and Sarah Wise (2006) "Parenting Partnership in Culturally Diverse Child Care Settings-A care Provider Perspective". All of these studies were carried out in Finnish language and most of the text books that were used were also in Finnish language. As a result of this, it was difficult for the author to find enough references done in this study in Finland.

The majority of qualitative research involves active, face to face engagement; informed consent is an ongoing and negotiated process (Waldrop 2004). Before the researcher conducted the interviews, she made sure that the participants were already aware about the topic of the research

and the purpose of the study. The participants of this research were also made aware in advanced on how long the interview will take and the procedures that the research will undergo. They were also told that they were free to discontinue the research should in case they do not feel as to continue. They were told about the materials i.e. recorders to record the interviews and what will be done to the tape after the data has been collected. After the researcher had finished transcribing the data, she had to destroy the recorded information by erasing all the information on the tape and returned the recorder to Laurea University of Applied sciences. They were also informed about the school where the student is studying and the project that will be sponsoring this research. No incentives were given to the participants in order to bribe them to participate in this study (Padgett Deborah 2008).

In qualitative research, it is the duty of the researcher to respect the confidentiality agreement that he/she signed before carrying out the research. In this case, the researcher should safeguard the identity of the participants, not writing their names and trying to expose the particular information that came out from them. If the research wants to hand out the information to a third party, it is the duty of the researcher to seek permission from the participants and ask them if they would like the information to be passed to third parties. If they refused, the researcher has no right to give out the information without their knowledge. There should be no breach of confidentiality no matter the circumstances (Padgett Deborah 2008). In this research, the student tried to maintain the terms of the confidentiality agreement by not releasing the material to third parties. The names of the participants were not mentioned in the study. The information that came from each participant was not possible to easily identify the person who made the statement.

Coercion and deformed consent are another quality of a qualitative researcher. Deborah Padgett (2008) stated that the researcher should not carry out research with the people that he/she is familiar with. An example could be a case where a teacher may ask his students or coworkers to take part in his research. Due to familiarity, the participants might not give out the correct information that the researcher needed may be due to emotional reasons and also due to the sensitive nature of the topic. In this research, the author did not know any of the participants that took part in the research. The participants were not selected by the researcher. They were selected by the manager of the daycare. This made it very impossible and difficult for the researcher to get used to the participants. This made the participant to give out the necessary information that the researcher needed.

Another ethical issue that was taken into consideration was moral ambiguity and risk. When carrying out qualitative research in the course of the interviews the participants might disclose some information that causes shock and emotional feelings. In this regard, it is for the researcher to make sure that there is enough trust between him and the participants. Without having trust, the participants may be unwilling to give out information. The researcher has no right to give out any information that the participant has given. Some information might be so touching that the researcher could breach the confidentiality agreement between him and the participants. They might involve the police in the study whereby that was not the intention of the participant to get the involvement of other authority. Such cases might be the abuse of child and domestic violence (Padgett D 2008). In this study, the researcher from the beginning had won the trust of the participants. They knew where the researcher was studying and the purpose of the research. The topic itself was not that sensitive and needed no immediate action.

Social Research as an ethical value of a researcher. In qualitative research, it is the responsibility of the researcher to meet the participants as a social responsibility (Padgett D 2008). In this study, the researcher went to meet the participants in their school before carrying out the interviews.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

The study was carried out in order to find out the challenges faced by the staffs of a multicultural daycare in interacting with immigrant families. This daycare centre admits a number of children from multicultural families every academic year. Most of these families whose children attend this daycare are very new in Finland and they do not understand or speak Finnish at all. The teachers are now faced with the problems on how they could interact with these parents due to the language and cultural differences. The findings will also reflect on the study of other people related to the theories of multiculturalism in Finland and abroad and also on early childhood education and pedagogical partnership.

The findings showed that the teachers of multicultural daycare could now interact with parents of immigrant families easier compared to some years back. This was based on their level of experiences that they have had working with the multicultural families. Most of them said when they started working in a multicultural daycare for the first time was very challenging to them. But as time went on, they got used to the new methods involved in this area of work. Also, the

teachers of multicultural daycare faced some difficulties in order for them to fully interact with these immigrant families. Due to the teachers experience in working with immigrant families, their methods of interactions have improved.

The city of Espoo is the proprietor of this daycare and as such it also serves as a network to the immigrant families. It is the city of Espoo who helps to integrate these immigrant families and also make sure that the families do have daycare where they could take their children to during the day while they themselves spend their time in learning Finnish Language. Espoo city being the owner of the school, play an important role in helping interaction to flow between the teachers and the immigrant families by providing the school with translators in most of their work, this has helped in the interaction process between the teachers and the parents. It is not that easy for immigrants coming to a new country with a different language to study and the cultural shock that the face on how to adjust and adapt to the new system. This comes with time. The more the families interact with the workers of the school; it help in their own language learning.

Coming to Finland to live permanently as a foreigner, pose so many new challenges. These immigrants are faced with the problem of understanding the new environment and how to learn and speak the language. Finnish is not their first language and as such, it would be very difficult for them to interact easily without the basic knowledge of Finnish. Due to this barrier in language, the immigrant parents face the challenge of taking their kids to the daycare. When they get to the daycare for their first time, they find it very difficult to explain to the workers how to work with their children. There are many issues which the immigrant parent might want to discuss about their kids but in what language could these people engage in a discussion? It is such a very challenging task .It was because of this barrier in language that made the multicultural teachers to come up with the visual communication in order for the immigrant parents to understand their messages. The use of images as a tool for communication reaffirms the findings of the Metropolia thesis by Chaouche Mari, Grönlund Sanna (2010) that the multicultural teachers do use images and some gestures to communicate with the parents from multicultural backgrounds.

According to the multicultural staffs, having Knowledge of English language could help the clients to easily interact with the staff. Some of the immigrant parents do speak and understand some amount of English language. Therefore since they are new in Finland and do not speak and understand any Finnish, it would be better for them to use the English language as a means of communication. Most of the multicultural teachers do speak English language and if some of the immigrant families could speak some English, it could ease communication.

Also, parenting partnership plays an important role in the success of the children's education. The workers always invite the multicultural parents for meetings about their children's performance in school and also ask the parents how the children perform at home. In the study of Rea Paloheimo (2009), one of the multicultural parents was eager to know from the workers how their children perform in the daycare. Some of the multicultural parents were also happy with the feedbacks that they got from their children when they returned home. The children said they play, sleep, draw and eat nice food while in school. This made the parent to be satisfied with the daycare services.

The staffs were not that comfortable with the work load that they have to translate the forms into more than 25 languages. To them it would be better if the city of Espoo could translate about half of foreign languages into various application forms. This would ease the work of the staffs.

Furthermore, children are the same everywhere irrespective from their different backgrounds. The workers work with the children as the same when working with Finnish children. This also matches the findings by Chaouche and Grönlund (2010) who stated in their thesis that the teachers did not believe that there was in multiculturalism in early childhood education. The teachers thought that since children are treated equally as the ones from the Finnish background, there was no need for them to agree on multiculturalism in early childhood education. It might have been different if the children were treated differently due to their multicultural backgrounds.

Multiculturalism approach was revealed in this work. In order to work with people from the multicultural background: it is good to have respect of their culture and religion. The theory of multiculturalism states that multiculturalism affect the way that we interact with each other and it is good for everybody to embrace each other's culture (Gray & Stephen 2009). In addition, the daycare workers should be ready to ask from the parents what they do not know about the other culture rather than basing their minds on assumptions and stories that they must have heard from people of that particular culture.

More so, it is good when working with a particular individual, work with him and in case of any mistakes made by him, the blame should be attributed to him alone and not to generalize it to the whole clan or to everyone that belongs to that same religion or culture. However, having the

respect for different cultures would ease multicultural interactions. In the findings of Rea Paloheimo (2009), one of the parents from the multicultural background had told the workers that her children were from a Muslim background and so they do not eat pork. The workers should not give their children pork because it was against their religion.

Moreover, social gatherings play an important role in the interactions between multicultural families and immigrant parents. Inviting parents to come and watch and see how their children perform on stage makes the parents to be very proud of their kids. There is also the display of all the artwork that has been done by the kids. The parents look at it with a lot of disbelief to see great work that little children could do within a short period of time living in Finland. Most of these surprises come up as a result of the fact that in the home countries of the clients, children of less than four would not be good in art like what they see in Finnish daycares. This result is similar to that of Chaouche and Grönlund (2010) in their study that working in small groups with the parents and children was the best way to learn how to interact in a multicultural daycare.

The participants of this research rated their professional skills as being flexible, being eager to learn more and at every given opportunity. They also said that working with immigrants from different cultures has helped them to think better and to reflect and search for solutions on how to handle certain issues. In the study by Chaouche and Grönlund (2010), reported that teachers who have had some experiences working with multicultural families were the best teachers who could interact more easily with the multicultural families than those who have never had the experience.

The concept of early childhood education and pedagogical partnership in this study showed that there was the need for parental involvement in their children education. The findings showed that the child's educational success depends not only on the worker but also on the part that the parents do play. There were some barriers to parenting partnership. Also, Hand and Sarah (2006), found out that in the United States care givers do not like to involve parents so much to their children education due to language barrier between care givers and multicultural parents.

Communications play a vital role in the partnership between parents and daycare workers. Since most of the multicultural families did not speak Finnish language so well, it was difficult for the workers to get enough information from the parents about their children without the use of translators. In the study carried out by Rea Paloheimo (2009), she stated that most of the parents from the multicultural backgrounds could not attend most of the development meetings

organized by the staff. Only one Finnish-Jewish family attended the meetings because she could communicate in Finnish language.

There was also the issue of language barrier as it was difficult for the participants to fully express themselves in English language fluently since it was their second language. This made the interviewer not to be able to prop enough and get more information. The participants had to give direct answers and tried to use only the simple English word that they found it easier and comfortable for them.

This study is of great importance especially to the social work students whose main priority would be to work in a multicultural environment and also for those who are interested in working with children and families. This study would help them to be able to know how to break some of those barriers that do affect the flow of communication between the workers and the clients. These barriers might include language and multicultural issues.

The study needs more research to be carried out in the future. This is the first time that a research is carried out on the challenges face by staff of a multicultural daycare and multicultural families in English language. It is recommended that in the future, the researcher could also include the teachers and the parents in the research. This would give an opportunity for the researcher to understand from the multicultural parents' perspective the challenges that they face in interacting with the teachers of multicultural daycare. It would be also advisable if the city of Espoo could also hire more staff from multicultural background to work in the multicultural daycare. This could help them to save time and money to look for translators

5.3 Conclusion and Suggestion

Methods of interactions between staff of multicultural daycare and multicultural families were stated by the participants. The objectives of VKK metro project on improving in the standards of daycare through research is also in line with this study. It is through the current research that is done that will enable the project to be aware of the present challenges that teachers do face in daycare. The concept of early childhood education and pedagogical partnership could be seen clearly from the findings of the participants. The theory of multiculturalism was also discovered in the findings and also reflected to the findings of the literature review on past studies. The findings revealed that teachers who work with multicultural families do need some special skills (flexibility, open-mindedness, willingness to work and learn from other cultures, and respect for other cultures) which would help them in their interaction process with the families.

The similarities of the quotations from participations helped the researcher to come up with the four different themes (Visual communication, social activities, academic interactions and the use of translators) in this study. Visual communication helped the workers to communicate and pass their message to the immigrant families. Social activities helped the workers to interact more with the parents and make them to become more familiar with them. Academic interactions gave the workers and parents the opportunities for them to discuss about their children educational performance both at school and at home. The use of translators helps the workers to communicate with the parents and also help the parents to fill in application forms in Finnish language. Facing some challenges in working in a multicultural environment is a normal phenomenon if the worker does not come from the same culture with the client. It is also normal for the immigrant families to face challenges in Finnish educational system since things may not be done the same in the home country of the immigrant.

The methodology that was used in the research was a suitable in that, the people who participated in the research were social and healthcare professionals. They had the necessary experiences that were needed in the kind of area of work. They were well educated and also competent in their field of work. The interview was suitable for the collection of data and it helped the researcher to meet with the participants face to face. Meeting with the participants face to face help the author to know the origin of the participants and their race and ethnicity. It also made the researcher to probe in to get more information. The researcher was familiar to the settings where the interviews were carried because she had been visiting the school for some meetings. The researcher has also worked in the daycare before and also knew how the daycare setting was like. This facilitated the collection of data. Content analysis was used in coming out with the different themes of the findings.

However, since the number of immigrant population is increasing rapidly in Finland, it would be advisable for the Finnish Government to employ staff from immigrant backgrounds. Time is running very fast and the children are leaving daycare every year. The government needs to introduce new integration program in which immigrants would be train and qualify them to teach in daycares. This program could be a two year intensive teaching program on working in a multicultural setting. This would help save time and money allocated for the services of translators.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 the research questions and interview questions

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The main reason question to be addressed in the research is

- 1.) What are the challenges faced by Staff of multicultural daycare and multicultural families.

The interview questions that were asked to the participants of the study were:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (relationship, skills, and attitude)

1. How do you feel working in a multicultural day care?
2. What kind of skills is needed by staff to fully interact with immigrant families?
3. What are the most important ways do you know it could help to improve on the interactions between staffs and multicultural families?
4. What experience have you had in working with multicultural families? How do you rate your skills in this area?
5. How should staffs and multicultural parents interact?

Appendix 2 Consent form

CONSENT FORM

I am Tanyi Sheila a final year student of social services and healthcare in Laurea University of Applied sciences, Otaniemi. I am carrying out my final year project to enable me complete my studies. I would like you to grant me the permission to carry out research in your daycare. I will need you as staff to take part in my interviews so that I could have the necessary information which would help me in writing down my research. I will be very grateful if you could spare me some of your free time and have the interview session with me.

I preferred to have interviews with you especially because of your rich experiences working with multicultural families and also because of your bilingualism. I believe that you are the suitable group which could give me the necessary information that I want and the kind of information that I have been eager to know about. Your feedbacks will help in the changes of the Helsinki metropolia daycare services being the objectives of the VKK metro project.

The purpose of this study is to find out how the staffs of Hösmarin Puisto daycare interact with multicultural families. The aim of the study is to find out the different challenges faced by staff of Hösmarin Puisto daycare in interacting with the multicultural families.

I hereby promised that all the information that will be provided to me by you will not be given to third parties without your knowledge. I will also try to maintain the confidential agreement between the city of Espoo and my school that I signed with them before the start of this study. I will also not force you to answer any of the questions that you do not find pleasant or find sensitive. You are free to discontinue if you do not feel comfortable with the topic. All your names will be protected and none of you will be identified. You could contact me if you have any doubts.

Thank you for your participation

Sincerely

Student: Sheila

