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Freinet's pedagogy as an important component of Finnish curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care

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<p>With every passing decade educators are drawing more attention towards alternative schooling because it seems that on many occasions it wins over the classic way of education. Celestin Freinet is one of the representatives of the alternative way of teaching. That is why this thesis was dedicated to study Freinet's educational approach in more detail and to find out how his pedagogy is incorporated in Finnish Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care.</p> <p>The starting point for this thesis was a literature review on Freinet's educational methods and its comparison with Finnish Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education. Already at this point it was visible that there are many similarities in these two approaches. Freinet strongly believed that the psychology of a child development should guide education, the same thought lays in the bases of Finnish education philosophy. That is why obligatory education in Finland starts with pre-school when a child reaches six years old (pre-school group may be provided by a daycare or school) and at seven children start their first grade.</p> <p>Having collected previous information I decided to see how carefully teachers of one of the local daycares are following the curriculum and if some improvements, which can be done by using more of Freinet's pedagogical approach were needed. In order to receive the needed information a questionnaire was made, and data was collected. In some areas the daycare routines indeed needed some improvement. Now focusing on Freinet's pedagogy I proposed several ways of how improvement may be done in the "Suggestions for improvement" chapter.</p> <p>The main purpose of this thesis to show and highlight the fact that an incorporation of the strong pedagogical approach in the National Curriculum may be highly beneficial not just for the children but for the educators as well. Also, this thesis may be a starting point for another research in the same field.</p>	
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<p>Vuosikymmenien myötä opettajat kiinnittävät yhä enemmän huomiota vaihtoehtoiseen koulunkäyntiin, koska näyttää siltä, että se voittaa monissa tapauksissa klassisen koulutustavan. Celesitn Freinet on yksi vaihtoehtoisen opetustavan edustajista. Siksi tämä opinnäytetyö oli omistettu tutkimaan Freinetin kasvatuksellista lähestymistapaa yksityiskohtaisemmin ja selvittämään, miten hänen pedagogiansa sisällytettiin suomalaiseen varhaiskasvatuksen opetussuunnitelmaan.</p> <p>Tämän opinnäytetyön lähtökohtana oli Freinetin koulutusmenetelmiä käsittelevä kirjallisuuskatsaus ja sen vertailu varhaiskasvatuksen suomen opetussuunnitelmaan. Jo tässä vaiheessa oli nähtävissä, että näissä kahdessa lähestymistavassa on monia yhtäläisyyksiä. Freinet uskoi vahvasti, että lapsen kehityksen psykologian tulisi ohjata koulutusta, sama ajatus on suomalaisen koulutusfilosofian perusta. Siksi pakollinen koulutus Suomessa alkaa esikoulusta, kun lapsi 6-vuotiaana (esikouluryhmä voidaan järjestää päiväkodissa tai koulussa) ja seitsemän lapsen aloittaessa ensimmäisen luokan.</p> <p>Kerättyäni aiemmin tietoja käsiini päätin katsoa, kuinka huolellisesti yhden paikallisen päiväkodin opettajat noudattavat opetussuunnitelmaa ja jos tarvitaan joitain parannuksia, jotka voidaan tehdä käyttämällä enemmän Freinetin pedagogista lähestymistapaa. Tarvittavien tietojen saamiseksi tehtiin kysely ja kerättiin tietoja. Joillakin alueilla päivähoitorutiinit vaativatkin parannusta. Freinetin pedagogiikkaan, ehdotin useita tapoja parantaa luvussa "Parannusehdotuksia".</p> <p>Tämän opinnäytetyön päätarkoitus on osoittaa ja korostaa sitä tosiasiaa, että vahvan pedagogisen lähestymistavan sisällyttäminen kansalliseen opetussuunnitelmaan voi olla erittäin hyödyllistä paitsi lapsille myös opettajille. Tietty työ voi myös olla lähtökohta muulle saman alan tutkimukselle.</p>	
Hakusanat	Freinet's pedagogy, Finnish curriculum for ECEC

1 Introduction

It is tremendously important for a student of social services, with a main study path in area of Early Childhood Education, to constantly upgrade knowledge about current available educational methods.

With every passing decade, educators are more and more drawing attention towards alternative schooling. On many occasions, it wins over classic. Often it happens because unlike traditional ways of education, which mostly resemble each other, alternative schools do not adhere to the idea that the same methods suite all students and communities (Albulescu & Albulescu, 2017: 9). There are numerous representatives of alternative curriculums such as Montessori and others. However, one name in that list often stays in shadow – Celestine Freinet. Therefore, when Freinet's name came to the view again, I felt it is important to fill the gap and study his educational approach more carefully especially because he gave children special place during teaching process.

The starting point for current work was literature review and exploration of existing works on the topic. I found this part is important for writing informative Bachelor thesis. The are two points presented in this work: Celestin Freinet and his pedagogical approach; in what capacity his techniques are incorporated in Finnish National Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care (further in the text ECEC) in example of exact daycare.

Following chapters are included in the thesis: information about Celestin Freinet; his pedagogical approach; comparison between Freinet's point of view and Finnish Curriculum for ECEC.

In the very begging an information search was conducted which was divided in two parts. Background study of the topic and actual research. With help of qualitative analysis, information which was collected from previous research on the topic was sorted and is presented in following chapters.

2 Background

We as human beings start our developmental road from the very first day of our lives. In the optimal scenario, the eagerness to learn and educate ourselves should not stop with compulsory or higher level of standard education. On the contrary, in order to keep our minds clear and flexible as long as possible we should continue to expand our knowledge and challenge ourselves with tasks, which we cannot comprehend/understand at first glance.

This is where Finnish vision of lifelong learning comes to the fore. For over twenty years, Finnish educational system is following this principle and every time it proves to be successful with numbers and statistics. (Niemi & Isopahkala-Bouret, 2012: 44) Therefore, it is essential to provide a strong base and structure to allow for future knowledge acquisition. (National Core Curriculum for ECEC, 2018: 19.) Saying this, it is worth having a more precise look at Early Childhood Education and Care (further in the text ECEC) curriculums, methods and strategies as it is the first step in the educational hierarchy.

Although all types of education including ECEC belongs to public services in Finland, just mandatory education is funded by government and local authorities, which means it is free of charge for students (Niemi & Isopahkala-Bouret, 2012: 44.) In Finland this includes basic education (preschool to ninth grade), upper secondary education (high school or vocational education), and even higher education (universities and polytechnics).

However, considering scope of this work, here will be discussed just matters concerned to preprimary education. When debates are going about ECEC then there are couple of options to choose from. Many of its providers, tend to create and develop their own methods and techniques in teaching approach. This is good, for there is not only one “good model” but it can be appropriate or not to a particular group. (Albulescu & Albulescu, 2017: 9.)

3 Theory

3.1 Forms of ECEC

There is list of different forms of ECEC services provided in Finland. It includes open daycares, family daycares and standard daycares. (National Core Curriculum for ECEC, 2018: 17.) Though, quite often, when discussion is going in general about ECEC in sight are coming not just standard educational programs provided by government, but also entering into the picture well-known alternative curriculums. Having this different possibilities in field of education makes it more flexible and more open towards cooperation with other educational partners as well it meets better needs of children and teachers. Moreover, parents can choose type of education, which is tailored to the needs of their child the most. (Albulescu & Albulescu, 2017: 10.) Additionally, alternatives in education provides holistic development of children personality and it is beneficial for general dynamic on route to more pliable educational system. (Albulescu, I & Catalano, H., 2017)

The most popular representatives of alternative educational methodic are: Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Steiner and Freinet. The first three educational approaches mentioned above are very well known and many daycares around the globe uses them as a main guideline for their daily activities. On the other hand, Freinet's approach is not as popular in pedagogical circles. (Acker, V., 2007: ix.)

Therefore, it is important to highlight Freinet's method as well. However, it is less often appearing in daycares' local curriculums; nevertheless, still proven to be successful in terms of children upbringing. (Petrescu, 2015: 284.)

3.2 Freinet's pedagogy in light of Finnish National Core Curriculum for ECEC

Every daycare in Finland independently of its specification (i.e private or public, language of education, methods of education and etc) follows guidelines which are outlined in Finnish National Core Curriculum for ECEC. Additionally, to that,

every ECEC providers obliged to provide their own local curriculum, which based on Core curriculum. (National Core Curriculum for ECEC, 2018: 8, 9.)

Finnish National Core Curriculum for ECEC states, that every child should have opportunity to grow, develop and learn via interactions with other people and immediate environment, thus their thinking is developing through versatile and meaningful experiences (2018: 20, 24.) Very similar concept can be found in Freinet's pedagogy described by Legrand. He stated that many educational approaches, which became foundations and trademarks of Freinet's pedagogy found its way out of necessity of the period of that time. For children after WWII, it was a necessity to get out of classroom for sake of their physical and psychological well-being. Therefore, the first innovation was the class outing to observe the natural and human environment (Legrand, 2000: 3).

Next important point discussed in National Curriculum is holistic way of upbringing and ability to obtain knowledge from surrounding environment (National Core Curriculum for ECEC ,2018: 20.). Freinet had similar thoughts when he was developing his educational methods. This is also mentioned by Albuлесcu and Albuлесcu in their work (Albuлесcu, Albuлесcu, 2017: 15) They narrated that for Freinet practical experiences are far more effective in acquiring deeper understanding of the subject.

Further in National Curriculum it is stated that children's interests and their previous experiences should be considered as a starting point for teachers when they are planning educational activities (National Core Curriculum for ECEC, 2018: 20.) Rodero, M. L. & Temple, C. (1995: 3) gave same example in their work dedicated to Freinet pedagogical approach. They wrote, that according to Freinet's philosophy, interests of a child's life beyond the classroom should inspire teachers. They also mentioned that the ideas which are generated by students themselves are more successful in future realization because of personal connection.

Another key point for successful learning mentioned in National Curriculum are interactive relationship in the class, as well as experience of belonging to the group (2018: 20.) Similar points are mentioned in couple of research, which were

studying Freinet's pedagogy. In each work it was pointed out that Freinet's goal was to create such atmosphere in the class, where kids are welcome to work together or alone according to their own wishes. So, they become aware of their own value as a member of the group as well as value of other participants (Albulescu, Albulescu, 2017: 15). Freinet saw it as a crucial teaching method to successfully obtain knowledge (Acker, V., 2007: 12). Based on facts mentioned above, Freinet started to develop thought how to communicate, not just in context of one classroom or school, but involve other schools in the area to discuss current topic of interest (Legrand, 2000: 3).

One more significant point of National Curriculum is that every child is entitled to support and professional guidance from the teacher in their learning (2018: 20.) Again, there are many research on Freinet's pedagogical approach in which similar thoughts are presented. It is stated by Lee, W. B (2008: 105) that Freinet saw teachers not as an authority figure dispensing information, but helper and guide whose primary purpose is to assist each child. Other authors mentioned similar point (Albulescu, Albulescu, 2017: 10, 15); they narrated that Freinet assigned to a teacher role of a facilitator (i.e organizing the class, and materials for the studies as well as maintaining positive climate in the class), additionally they help students to adapt to new situations around them.

3.3 Teacher in alternative education

Speaking of upbringing in ECEC settings, it is crucial that teachers' strategies are coherent with methods they use for education. Most important is that educator is choosing strategies which can stimulate children's participation in day-to-day life, which then can increase their independence in thought and action as well as develop sense of responsibility. (Albulescu & Albulescu, 2017: 11) Teacher has obligation in establishing genuine dialogue with his students and develop flexibility in himself to be able to accept difference of mindsets. To make alternative ways of education truly progressive, teacher has another important task to fulfill – observation and monitoring of the students' interest or boredoms during learning

process. Progressive educator should have in his arsenal wide range of strategies to avoid passivity in students and contrary to that make them take initiatives and be proactive in class. (Albulescu & Albulescu, 2017: 11, 12.)

Now, having all previously mentioned tools in educator's arsenal still might be not quite enough to be a progressive teacher. Personal qualities and his genuine personality are important as much. Because all the techniques can be practiced and develop over the years, where personality is something, which is inborn. Fabrykowski (1992: 62) argues that, "pedagogic talent," is required to be a "member" of the teaching profession. Trow and Shumsky (1960: 28., 1968: 45, mentioned in Fabrykowski 1992: 62) have similar thoughts on the topic. They emphasize, that a teacher should like children, have an altruistic value, continues self-education and have a leader quality. On top of that he possesses initiative and responsibility. Another crucial moment – teacher should be involved with every topic they teach, and experiencing their individual interpretation of ideas, because in this way they can easier transmit main thoughts to the children.

Freinet (1967 mentioned in Fabrykowski 1992: 63) also was describing progressive teacher in a very similar way. According to him, there are three elements which constructing teacher's personality: psyche, intelligence and work. Where psyche consists of instinct, needs, temperament, and feelings. Intelligence, according to Freinet is the ability to assimilate experience from different areas of life and finally work is the development of one's own pedagogical style and methods. It is also mentioned in many related works to Freinet and particularly in Fabrykowski as well (1992: 63), that he stressed that the teaching profession requires continuing development in all areas of knowledge and skills.

However, Freinet strongly believed, that teacher should not take an authoritarian role in the classroom, though he was of an opinion that teacher should stay as a leader and guide to his students. Teachers continue to be competent and skillful in various areas. It is still teacher's responsibility to organize children and select methods and means required in the learning process according to needs and interests of each pupil or a group (Albulescu & Ablulescu 2017: 14.)

3.4 Parents' involvement in ECE

Discussing topic of ECEC one should remember that parents also play significant role in positive outcome of educational process regardless is it a standard curriculum or alternative. According to Alasuutari (2010, mentioned in Råde 2020: 2834) there are two frameworks, which are providing communication between parents and ECE facilities. First one is vertical, which is more traditional approach to the parent-professional relationship. In this case there is hierarchy – teachers over parents because it is assumed that first have expert knowledge.

As it is mentioned by Hakyemez-Paul, et al (2021: 67) parental involvement (PI) has a significant effect on children successful participation in ECE and in future academic life. Having in mind previously mentioned fact, Beveridge in his work (2005, mentioned in Hakyemez-Paul, 2021: 67) pointed, that almost all countries have adopted laws and regulations to increase PI in ECEC.

In Finland, according to European Parliament (2013: 20) these regulations are implemented on a very high level. It starts with decision making whether to use day care services at all, and if so where and what type of ECEC to choose. Finnish daycares are also obliged constantly communicate with parents. It includes small talks on daily basis during dropping off/picking up a child as well as prepared discussions (VASU or individual development plans) which are arranged twice a year. This allows to combine the knowledge and experience of parents and educators and can therefore adequately contribute to the development of the child. Same states Hill & Taylor in their work (2004, mentioned in Hakyemez-Paul, 2021: 69); they argue that PI in decision-making processes has an undoubtedly positive impact on the cognitive development of children. When parents and teachers agree on a common strategy and it is mutually followed at home as well as at the ECEC settings, child development going in more coherent and undisturbed way.

In the Finnish core curriculum for ECEC parents are mentioned as the primary responsible for their children education. That is why it is tremendously important

to create a trusting relationship between educators in preprimary education settings and parents (European Parliament, 2013: 18).

On top of the facts which are mentioned above supporting parents' participation can be seen as important at least in one more aspect. Increasing parental involvement in ECEC providing them with opportunities to influence their child's day which naturally leads to improvement of the quality of early childhood education in general according to Hujala (1999, mentioned in Venninen, T & Purola, K, 2013: 49).

3.5 Celestin Freinet

Celestin Freinet (mentioned previously in the text and further Freinet) was born in France and lived there between 1896-1966 years. He was a classroom teacher and a reformer of education. He developed new forms of schooling or "modern school", and he made them work in his classroom. (Rodero, M., L. & Temple, C., 1995: 1) The main focus of Freinet's "modern school" or alternative pedagogy is on learner autonomy and on making learners responsible of acquisition of new information (Mudure-Iacobe, I., 2017: 111).

Freinet started his teaching career in 1920 as an assistant master at the school of Bar-sur Loup. During years 1934 – 1935, Freinet with help of a politician friend managed to open his own school. (Legrand, 2000: 2) Main principles he was implementing in his school while teaching were: Democratic values in the classroom (i.e listen to children's wishes and built educational plan based on them), empiricism and practicality (whatever children are learning should be in connection with real life needs), interaction with nature and life (including field trips, learning out of school premises). (Lee, B., W., 2008: 104)

He also wrote series of books about educational methods he was using with his students. Topics he covered were for example democratic schooling, moral education, child-centered learning and many more. (Rodero, M., L. & Temple, C., 1995: 2)

Freinet was forward-looking teacher with inquisitive mind. Throughout his teaching career he was interested in progressive technologies; and at all time he was eager to test recent inventions. (Clandfield, D. & Sivell, J., 1990: 7)

3.5.1 Freinet's theory of child development

Freinet strongly believed that the psychology of a child development should guide education. That is why, his working style and methods (which will be discussed in next part) took their roots from the personality theory (Sigmund Freud) and on top of that Freinet, himself also defined three phases of child development.

Phase I (0 – 2 years old) “Groping in the dark”. Period of first reactions and initial phase of learning. During this period reactions are provoked by stimuli from the environment and most of responses are instinctive. According to Freinet this period child should spent at home in a caring and safe atmosphere.

Phase II (2 – 5 years old) “Arrangement”. " Time when a child tries to find his place in the world. After acquiring some information and experience child starts to organize the environment according to his/ her needs. During this stage child not only discovers the entire world, but he/she also tries to reconstruct it and create new things. Freinet argues, that this time should be spent in a daycare setting. Where educators helping child to mold his/her worldview in close contact with surrounding environment/nature.

Phase III (5 years and above) - "Schooling." During this time according to Freinet children are preparing to be a member of society and this period of life they spend at school. For children it should be the first place, where they can experience work and get encouragement as well as positive experiences and feelings of success. During this stage of children life teachers play a significant role in sense that they help children achieve a positive attitude toward work, including feelings of power and satisfaction.

Moreover, further Freinet discussing how every child encounter different obstacle during developmental stages. Providing logical assumption that If these obstacles

are successfully overcome, it provides to the child further stimulation for upcoming activities, feel of power, and satisfaction. On the other hand, shock of defeat causes regression.

That is why the correct influence of others, (meaning mostly adults) is tremendously important to the child coherent development. It is obvious, that neglected children are very vulnerable to the impact of surrounding environment in many ways, which can lead to many difficulties in the future; however too much attention can also damage a child's personality and make him/her incapable of independent action.

3.5.2 Freinet's educational methods and techniques

Talking more particularly about his teaching methods and techniques he largely relied on creative work of his students. According to Freinet's methodology one of the important goals for a teacher is to develop in pupils the ability to understand the world using all the senses so every part of children upbringing and education should emerge from contact with life and nature. He also emphasized that children should be taking an active part in learning as well as teaching process.

Being very innovative and open-minded person Freinet also was a passionate representative of his profession. He trusted that monotonous lectures are not delivering desired effect for accruing knowledge, therefore in his teaching he was replacing words with action in order children may acquire information better and faster.

Field trips was as important part of educational process as regular and more traditional classes. Freinet happily encouraged his students to investigate topic of the lesson themselves following with class discussion afterward's. Another tool for more diversify learning was compiling final summary of the findings in self printed brochures made by students; so later students can revise learned material as well as share it with students from other classes and even schools.

3.6 Finnish National Core Curriculum for ECEC

Now, going back to National Curriculum, which sets clear tasks and goals for early childhood educators. It points out that the age, needs, prerequisites and interests of children should guide the selection of working methods. Working methods must be functional and promote the creativity and participation of children as well as provide natural ways of learning. (2018: 39.) Discussion is going further about children's participation in planning and selecting the working methods in line with their personal prerequisites. Children must have an opportunity to explore the world with different working methods. (National Core Curriculum for ECEC, 2018: 25.) On the other hand, pedagogues of ECEC should support and encourage children to develop their mathematical thinking in natural as well as built surroundings. Also, it is crucial to provide environmental and technological education starting from early years in ECE. (National Core Curriculum for ECEC, 2018: 45.)

Twenty first century dictates own rules for children's successful upbringing and acquisition of new information and knowledge. Constantly developing Information and Communication Technologies (later in the text ICT) are quite rapidly entering educational environments, same goes for ECEC settings. Keeping this in mind, National Curriculum obligates daycares to provide multiliteracy and competence in ICT related questions to children. Thus, it is required in the everyday routine and promote children's equality in education. (National Core Curriculum for ECEC, 2018: 25.)

Connection with Freinet's points of view can be found even in this regard. This is clearly described in Petrescu's work. She argues, that however Freinet's pedagogical approach was founded more than 80 years ago it is still valid in 21st century, and in some sense, it may even outrun more modern views about education. She is also of opinion that Freinet's model, which was founded in the beginning of XXth century, probably is one of the best that can be used nowadays in regard to progressive pedagogy. On the same note, she was citing Freinet: "This type of education prepares today's children to live in tomorrow's world". (Petrescu, 2015: 284, 285) According to the author (Petrescu, 2015: 285) Freinet

strongly insisted on continuous improvement of tools and materials used for education. Based on this statement she made conclusion, that introducing ICT as one of additional educational option can bring major positive effect for students. Further she makes statement, that if Freinet would live nowadays, he would definitely utilize in his pedagogical career all modern ICT tools and possibilities such as tablets, social network/communication platforms and electronic media. This assumption derives from the fact, that Freinet long before internet made his students typesetting their own texts, which they would discuss in the class afterwards. Also, Freinet was encouraging correspondence between schools. All these things are possible to achieve now easily with technologies we have at our hands. Text editing programs, electronic mail, Web personal pages and forums can be big support for progressive education. (Petrescu, 2015: 285)

Petrescu (2015: 286) positively discuss, that with all possibilities which modern ICT gave, student's voice is finally visible. That what Freinet was trying to achieve throughout his teachers' career. Currently, students can make projects and post them on school's webpage along with pictures and everybody can appreciate the efforts of pupils. Further, it was discussed that Cyberspace provides vast amount of information in different forms, so it is task of a teacher to help a student to navigate through all the data which is available on internet nowadays. Author also mentioned that teachers should not loose critical spirit and way of thinking so not to turn just to a mere information consumer. She also stated that e-learning, which makes great leap especially in the last decades give students new attitudes towards studies and new cognitive strategies. At the same time ICT gives grate opportunities for individualized learning; something what Freinet was trying to achieve while developing his approach. (Petrescu, 2015: 286, 288)

4 Research question

The research question for this thesis is stated as: Does daycare follows National Core curriculum for ECEC and if implementing Freinet's methods can improve day-to day daycare routine?

During current studies at university many different pedagogical theories and approaches came to view (as mentioned earlier in the paper), but Freinet's philosophy about education was not sighted a lot; however, there is no objective criteria which clearly states, that one approach is better than the other (Albulescu & Albulescu, 2017: 9). Hence, it seemed, that a valuable piece of information might be lost if his name and pedagogical points of view were continuously ignored. He and many other progressively thinking teachers saw education not as a path to cultivate a common base for every child but to promote uniqueness of students as well as their teachers (Albulescu & Albulescu, 2017: 8).

Therefore, decision was made to fulfil missing information about educator himself and see if the pedagogical approach he developed about a hundred years ago echoes in curriculum of XXI century. To be more precise and focused, research area should have been narrow, but at the same time wide enough to obtain enough information. Thus, Finnish daycare settings and National Core Curriculum came to light.

Before starting main study on the topic, preliminary information collection was made. During that period, it got visible, that there are actually limited sources on this particular subject, which made research somewhat challenging. Nevertheless, going through many databases and using different methods of search for relevant information gave positive outcomes. Previous studies were ultimately found/discovered about Freinet and his ideology about perfect school.

While reading those papers and in parallel comparing them with latest Finnish National Core Curriculum for ECEC, it indeed looked like there are undeniable

links between them. Freinet's ideas are mirrored in many crucial points of educational doctrine of current curriculum.

5 Practical part

During my current and some previous studies, I have had several internships in different daycare settings (private English and municipal daycares). Also, working as a lastenhoitaja substitute in municipal daycares I had many chances to observe how experienced educators are implementing National Core Curriculum for ECEC in everyday practice.

Through my observations I made couple notices to myself. First, that some important parts of curriculum, for example one which states that children's interests and their previous experiences should be considered as a starting point for teachers when they are planning educational activities mostly is overlooked with some occasional exceptions. Another point which is quite noticeable in teachers work regardless is it a private or municipal daycare is that teachers are still taking rather authoritarian position in the class generally and especially during planned activities. It is teacher's decision if kids are working in the groups or alone, as well as it is teacher's decision in most cases of group division.

Saying this, it might be beneficial for children as well as pedagogues and other staff members of the daycare to implement more of Freinet's approaches in their local curriculum. This will help to bring more balance in day-to-day daycare life, living at the same time all current responsibilities and authority still for the teachers, but on the other hand it will promote lighter and friendlier atmosphere in the group. Also involving children in planning for upcoming activities will make them feel noticeable and important, will raise their self-esteem.

As it was mentioned previously in many parts of current thesis Freinet's pedagogical methods are children oriented in every possible way which helps promote and practice their ability of decision making, independent decision making as well as cooperation with other members (adults and kids).

5.1 Plan for Data collection and analysis

To make grounds for my previous observations there is a plan to make questionnaire through which I can find out how teachers themselves are evaluating different aspects of their work in connection to national curriculum for ECEC and how closely they are following it on daily bases. More specifically I want to get answers on questions, which in my opinion lacking the most of attention in real daycare life. Such as involving kids in decision making and freedom of children's choice.

For that reason, I made an agreement with my "work partner" private English daycare, that teachers and caregivers will answer my questionnaire and based on the answer will be proposed possible solution in which aspects of daycare routine they can implement more of Freinet's pedagogy.

The questionnaire will be conducted through Metropolia Google forms, which provides anonymity and security for collected data. Also, with help of different tools, which are provided by particular resource it would be easier to categorise and analyse answers.

Link to the questionnaire will be sent to the principle of the daycare and then distributed to all the teachers of particular unit. Time for answering the questionnaire about two weeks.

After all answers will be available, I plan to make quantitative and qualitative research. Conducting this part, I will try to identify which part of daycares routine might need more attention and improvement.

5.2 Description of questionnaire

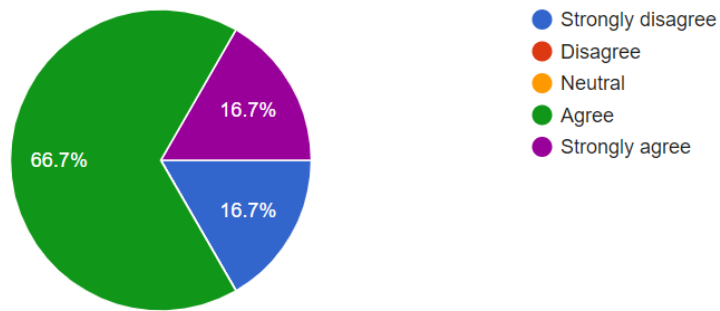
Questionnaire, which I prepared consists of 12 questions (Appendices 1). Each of questions highlights and emphasise previously mentioned points, which are described in this work and are important part of ECEC curriculum. All the questions were formulated in a statement format and had five choices for answering (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree).

First part of the questionnaire was dedicated to find out ECE caregivers' thoughts about teacher's role in the classroom and how much authority they are using during daily routines. Next couple of questions were asking teachers to evaluate their personal level of adherence to National Core Curriculum throughout their work. Following set of the questions was about children participation in decision making for daycare activities and their freedom of choice. Last questions in the list were about general classroom layout and its evaluation as well about alternative ways of information acquisition for kids.

5.3 Analysis of questionnaire

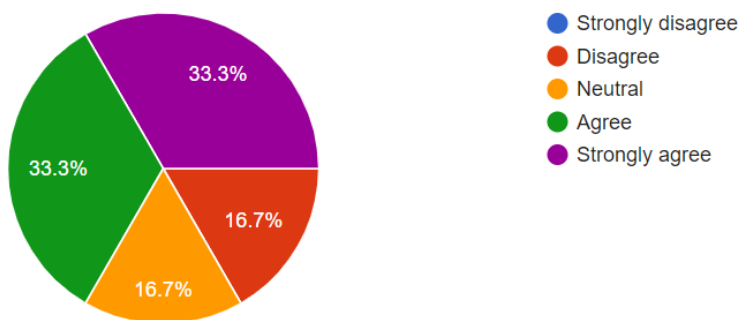
After questionnaire was sent to recipients, I started to get answers relatively fast. First reply I got already on the following day. This gave me an impression, that participants of particular research were willing to be part of it, and they are interested in results and outcome of this work themselves too. One downside which I encountered was that, unfortunately due to different reasons several daycare employees didn't return their answers. Nevertheless, data which I managed to obtain (6 responses) still gave me a good picture of what situation is in this particular daycare at the moment. Next sections will graphically show and explain each part of the questionnaire.

First question was about teachers' role in the class. From the graph below it is visible, that majority of participants 66,7% (which in particular case is five) are agreed, that teacher in the class should be more of facilitator and a guide during teaching process, rather than ultimate source of information. This type of thinking is going along with Freinet's philosophy of education as well it is supported by Finnish Core Curriculum, which I mentioned in previous chapters. Though, it was surprising, that one answer showed strong disagreement with particular model. However, with general positivity towards idea: teacher is guide rather the only source of correct information doesn't bring too much concern about this area. Also, represented result is supported by my personal observation of methods of delivering information to the children make me believe that this part of educational process in particular daycare is coherent and doesn't burden children.



(Fig. 1. In my opinion teacher's role in the class is more of a facilitator and a guide rather than the one and only source of knowledge)

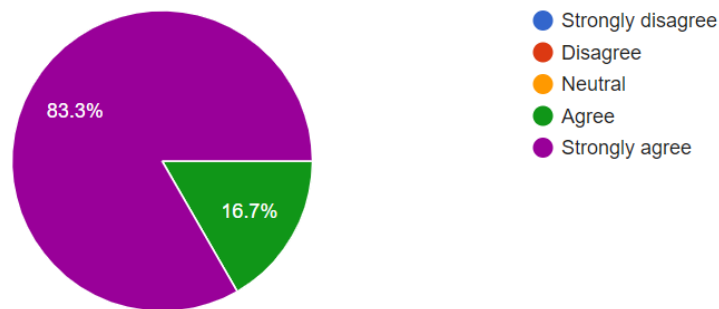
Next question, about children autonomy during learning new information in day-care settings brought not as straight forward results as in previous example and it is visible in figure 2. One respondent stayed neutral regarding this topic and one answer again showed disagreement with statement, which in percentual correlation made 33.4%. Gladly 66.6% (four participants) gave positive replies. Having this information in hands and knowing that Core Curriculum for ECEC as well as Freinet's methods also support idea that children should have opportunity freely explore new topics in their own way in my opinion it is one of the areas where daycare educators may improve their performance.



(Fig. 2. Teacher should give freedom to children explore "topic of the day" by themselves in their preferred manner)

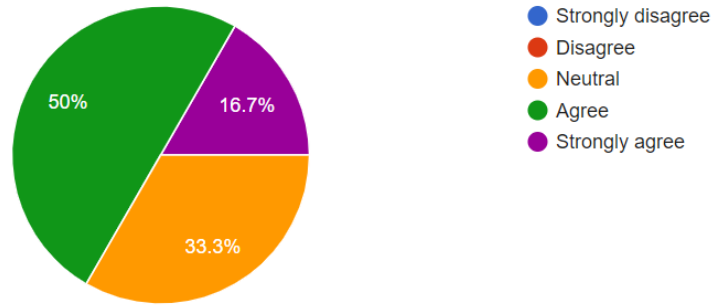
On the other hand, next question/statement about children sharing in the class their own ideas, experiences and already existing knowledge on particular topic

is totally appreciated, supported and encouraged by all respondents as it is presented in figure 3. Majority of answers, which is 83,3% fell in category “strongly agree” with just one answer “agree”. During observation period I personally noticed that children are welcomed to participate in active discussion, during learning sessions. This part of educational process in particular daycare doesn’t need any support, as it is already reached good level.



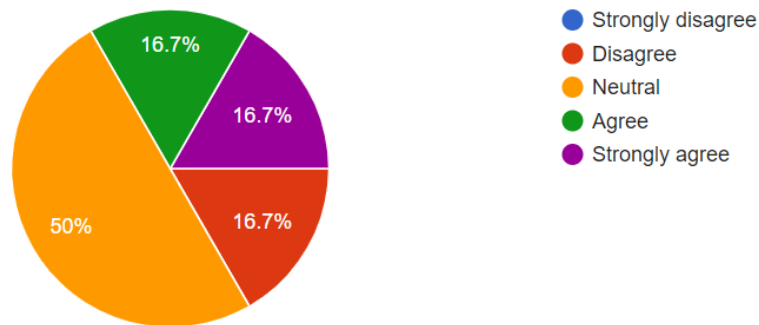
(Fig. 3. It is appreciated in the daycare, when a child shares his/her own experience, findings and knowledge with other kids/adults about a particular topic.)

Statement number four about following closely ECEC National Curriculum on daily bases throughout the work all in all came back with positive results. More than a half of respondents agreed that they do follow curriculum quite close in their daily routines; and two replies came neutral, which might be interpreted as educators are not sure in what degree they actually following National Curriculum, or they can’t actually identify in which areas they do follow, and which parts of educational process still needed to be improved to be up to National Curriculum standards.



(Fig. 4. I (personally) closely follow National core curriculum for ECEC in my working life)

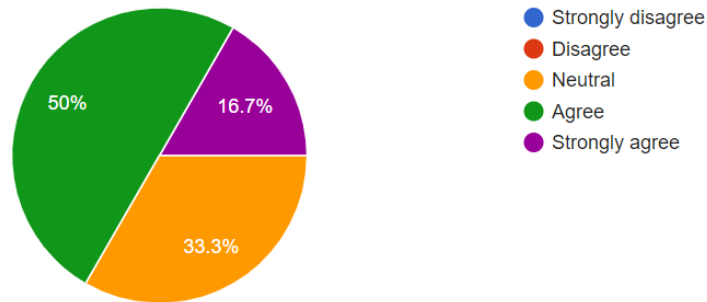
Following statement was in a way continuation of previous one. However, main point of this statement was to see how educators evaluate their following of Core Curriculum while they are planning guided activities. In this case just two answers came as positives, rest responses were either neutral which is 50%, or disagreement 16,7%. Here it is clearly visible, that this area of educational process needed to be revised, and possible solutions how to tackle this situation will be described in following chapter.



(Fig. 5. All activities which I (personally) implement at the daycare are according to National Core Curriculum standards)

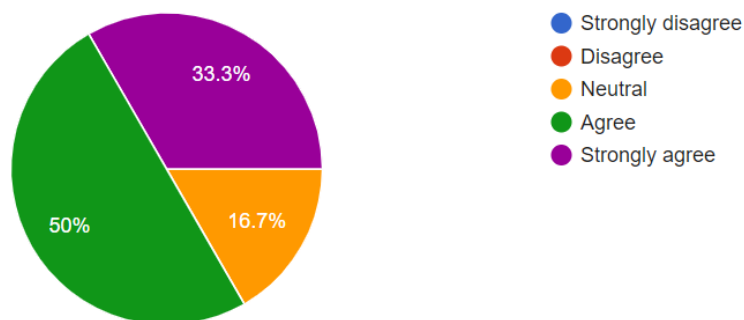
Next set of questions was regarding children’s active participation in planning of daycare life. Out of which first statement was inviting teachers to evaluate kids’ direct involvement during planning process (i.e children’s wishes included in the

learning process/program as they are). More than half participants agreed/strongly agreed with this statement.



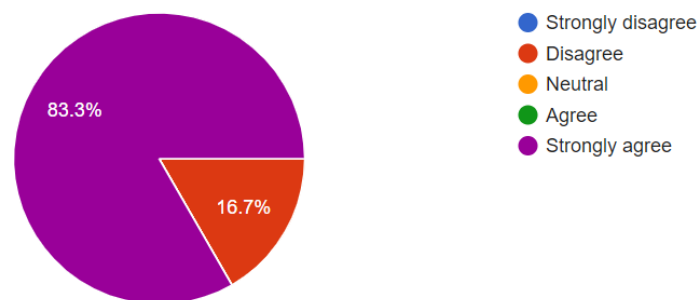
(Fig. 6. Children are invited in planning of daycare's upcoming activities)

Next statement of the set was about indirect children participation in planning. Which means educators observe kids during free play, listens what topics children raise during their conversations, notice what games children play and based on mentioned above points make their plans for upcoming events, field trips, and general subjects which will be included in educational process. In this case it is visible slight increase in positive answers. Which shows teachers attentiveness towards their student and wish to follow ECEC curriculum. Of course it is one of the important moments, which are mentioned in Freinet's pedagogy too.



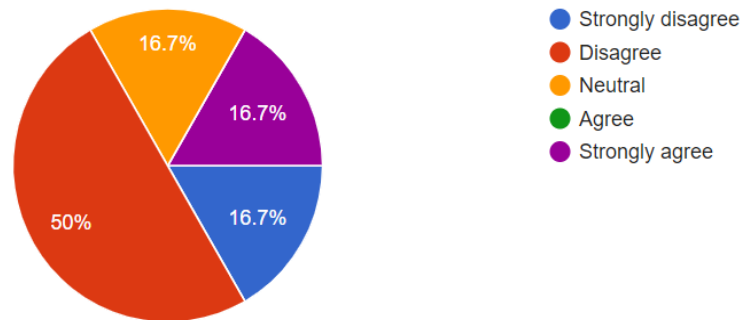
(Fig. 7. Children have their input in decision making in regard of daycare life (future field trips, themes for the daycare parties etc))

Last statement in this particular section was about feedback which children give after some activities. Surprisingly, one out of six answer came as a negative. Rest 83,3% came as strongly agree. In my opinion, considering immense overweight towards positive side in this question there should not be worries, that in general, children's opinion is counted in this daycare and educators are following guidelines of National curriculum regarding involvement students in planning of daycare life.



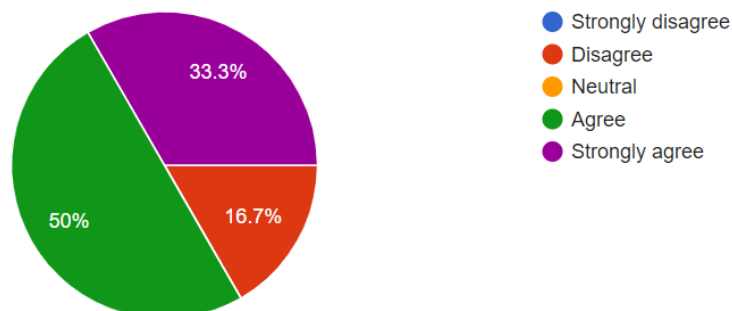
(Fig. 8. Children's feedback about previous activities is taking in consideration while planning future activities)

Next statement in the questionnaire was asking to reflect educators on how much freedom they give children during pre-planned activities. Results came very unexpected (Fig. 9). Only one person out of six agreed, that children can have freedom of choice (i.e. doing task alone or in the group, children may choose themselves with whom to work in the group). Rest responders disagree that students can have such a freedom during guided activities. Which means teachers take total authority in this part of educational/organizational process and not quite follow National Core Curriculum. This issue will be also addressed in the next chapter.



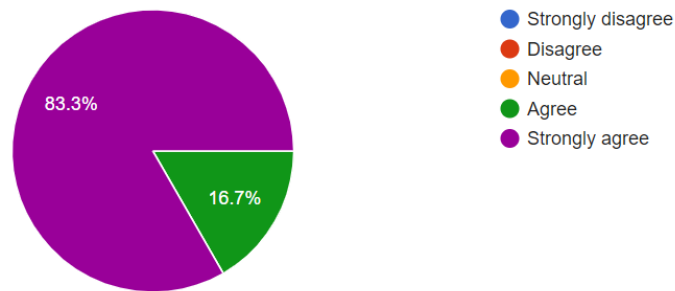
(Fig. 9. Children have freedom of choice (work alone or in a group, with whom to work if it is group project etc) during pre-planned activities)

Next couple of statements were about classroom layout. First one was about how easy children can distinguish one play zone from another effortlessly manoeuvre between them. Results came very much positive, as it is visible on figure ten. Majority stated that in this daycare different workstations are easily noticeable and accessible. Just one reply came as disagreement. From my side I must say that it is indeed quite easy for children to get to different play/activity corners. Except probably art supplies such as paints and extra crafting things. For that children must ask special permission and most of the time one educator then stays with this group.



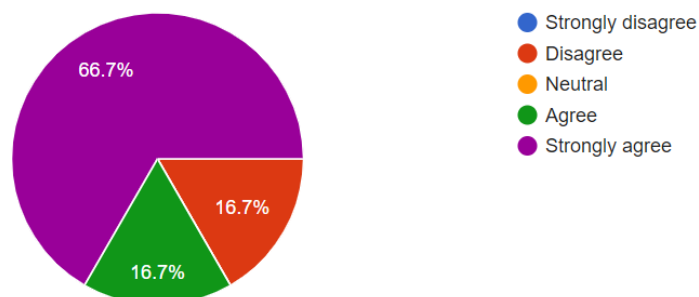
(Fig.10. Classroom layout aloud children easily see different activity stations and move between them)

Another statement from this category was that different activity centres in the daycare promote and support diverse cognitive development of the children. Responses in this case came hundred per-cent positives with variation: 83,3% strongly agreed with the statement and 16,7% agreed. It is high result and good indication that educators follow ECEC curriculum.



(Fig.11. Different activity stations in the daycare promote and support diverse cognitive development of the children)

The last statement was asking to grade importunity of field trips in connection to educational process. Most of the educators strongly agreed, that learning through the trips is as important as standard educational process, which shows, that teachers in this particular unit quite open to explore new methods of education. However, one response showed disagreement with the thought that trips might help in knowledge acquisition.



(Fig.12. Field trips are as important for children as standard studies in the class.)

6 Suggestions for improvement

In this chapter I want to address several points related to educator's work which needed closer attention according to analysis I made earlier. Evaluating responses presented in previous chapter it looked like in general, teachers of this unit evidently trying their best to follow National Curriculum and paying attention to children needs, however there is all the time place for improvement.

Suggestions, which will be presented in this chapter are based on theoretical part of this thesis. There are presented Celestin Freinet's educational methods supported by National Curriculum for ECEC. Following suggestions which are presented below would be beneficial for both parties: teachers and children.

First area of development in day-to-day routine is to give children more opportunities to investigate "topic of the day" in their own way. According to Meredith Cicerchia one possible approach may be "child-led learning". In this case, a child will often be given free range to engage with material as he or she pleases. Obviously, teacher plays significant role in this approach as he/she helps child as much as one need, but at the same time does not take power of decision making. Educator supports and encourage child, provides resources and the structure students need to make progress in new knowledge acquisition.

Next area of possible improvement is to plan daycare educational activities keeping in mind central points of National Curriculum for ECEC. For that reason, it is advisable time to time re-read curriculum's chapters which are more actual for current learning activities. For example, teacher plans to discuss with children recycling topic. In the curriculum there is chapter dedicated to this issue: "Exploring and interacting with my environment", environmental education. There are many tips for educator how to make learning process stimulating and at the same time according to educational standards.

Another part in the day care's routine, which I think may be improved and developed is children decision making during pre-planned activities. Supporting statement for this developmental area is mentioned earlier in this work (Albulescu,

Albulescu, 2017: 15, mentioned in Sirjajeva, 2021:7). It is important that educators show children that they have trust in them and their ability to decide themselves how they want to execute assigned task: alone or in a pair/group, with whom they want to work at the moment. Of course, educator's presence and continues guidance and help is must, but at the same time it should not be overpowering.

7 Discussion

Starting point for the thesis was my strong opinion that Finnish Core Curriculum for ECEC has many common grounds with Freinet's pedagogy. I began my work on the paper with literature review and information gathering, which was challenging, because unfortunately there are not as much research made on this topic in English language. Collecting needed information took quite amount of time. However, resources were limited still similarities in main questions between Freinet's educational methods and National Curriculum was undeniable.

Next step was to see, how daycare teachers of one particular daycare following ECEC curriculum and if there are some points where it can be improved with paying more attention to Freinet's pedagogy. Through questionnaire I obtain needed information. Although just six replies came back general pattern was visible. No doubts with wider reply range conclusions would be more accurate. Despite that results turned out quite optimistic. Teachers do follow curriculum which means as well they do implement Freinet's educational methods too in some capacity. Nevertheless, there emerged few areas which could be developed and enhanced through following closer Freinet's methods (those are described in the previous chapter).

However, there are several researchers previously made on Freinet's pedagogy, I hope that this work can be of some contributing to already existing knowledge about this genius pedagogue from point of view of Finnish ECEC. Also, this thesis might be a starting point for other research work; for example, "differences between daycares using Freinet's framework and general curriculum".

8 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to widen knowledge about Celestine Freinet, his educational methods, and see if there are any common grounds with Finnish National Core Curriculum for ECEC. During studying the question, it got clear, that amount of previous research on this topic is rather limited and scarce. Nevertheless, information which was presented in those papers was highly informative and gave opportunity to accumulate enough data to fulfill requirements for current work.

Findings, which are presented in this paper, clearly show, that Celestine Freinet truly was the teacher of progressive mindset and another important representative of alternative education. Due to the way of his thinking, teaching, communicating with students and methods he used in his school, it is possible to state that he undoubtedly was ahead of his time. It is astonishing to see how ideas which were considered as innovative and may be even controversial hundred years ago become more than normal nowadays and are implemented in some degree almost in every local curriculum across Finland. Examples provided in 'Background' part are contributing to earlier stated hypothesis that National Curriculum for ECEC and Freinet are sharing similar views on perspectives to education in many important points.

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Questionnaire

Please rate given below statements with consideration of your own work experience as a teacher or lastenhoijtaja from 1 to 5 (where 1 – strongly disagree, 5 – strongly agree).

1. In my opinion teacher's role in the class is more of a facilitator and a guide rather than the one and only source of knowledge.
2. Teacher should give freedom to children explore "topic of the day" by themselves in their preferred manner.
3. It is appreciated in the daycare, when a child shares his/her own experience, findings and knowledge with other kids/adults about a particular topic.
4. I (personally) closely follow National core curriculum for ECEC in my working life
5. All activities which I (personally) implement at the daycare are according to National Core Curriculum standards.
6. Children are invited in planning of daycare's upcoming activities
7. Children have their input in decision making in regard of daycare life (future field trips, themes for the daycare parties etc)
8. Children's feedback about previous activities is taking in consideration while planning future activities
9. Children have freedom of choice (work alone or in a group, with whom to work if it is group project etc) during pre-planned activities.

10. Classroom layout should allow children to easily see different activity stations and move between them.
11. Different activity stations in the daycare promote and support diverse cognitive development of the children.
12. Field trips are as important for children as standard studies in the class.