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Creating Physical Education Lessons for Family Childminders

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Creating Physical Education Lessons for Family Childminders

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The aim of this project based thesis was to create and execute six physical education lessons for our working life partners; three family day care childminders in Klaukkala, Nurmijärvi. In addition our aim was to compose a manual of these lessons for the childminders. The purpose of this was to help the family childminders to plan structured and purposeful physical education lessons to be executed at their weekly gathering at a local youth center. Our thesis consists of four main parts; background and theory, active phase, manual, and evaluation.

We planned and implemented six physical education lessons for ten children between the ages of two and six. The lessons were created and taught keeping in mind that the working life partners' main wish was that all the children would enjoy and join in the activities. The main theory background we used while planning the lessons was teaching physical education and children's age specific holistic development. In the theory of children's age specific development we separated the children in three different age categories to have a better understanding of the whole development of each age group. We also refer to the guidelines set for physical education and address the significance of physical education in children's development.

We used observation during the lessons as a tool to evaluate whether the children were committed to the lessons, instead of gathering verbal feedback from the children. The reason for this was the big age gap and therefore the great difference in verbal expression skills of the children within the group. The Leuven Involvement Scale for Young Children served us in this purpose. We also gathered feedback from the childminders after every lesson using a feedback form. In addition we wrote a detailed report of every lesson which included a developmental discussion section where we evaluated our work. After finishing the active phase we composed a manual of the lessons and gave it to our working life partners. The manual was evaluated by our working life partners and us.

From all the positive feedback we gathered from the lessons and manual, and the children's high level of commitment toward the lessons, we were able to assume that our project was quite successful. Despite a few setbacks we can say we for the most parts met the goals we set up for the thesis.

Key words: Early childhood education, Physical education, Family Day Care, Children's Development

Susanna Hottinen, Hanna Pennanen

Liikuntatuntien luominen perhepäivähoitajille

Vuosi

2013

Sivumäärä

59

Tämän toiminnallisen opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli luoda kuusi liikuntatuntia työelämän yhteistyökumppaneillemme; kolmelle Klaukkalassa, Nurmijärvellä asuvalle perhepäivähoitajalle. Tavoitteenamme oli myös koota näistä liikuntatunneista perhepäivähoitajille ohjekirja. Tarkoituksena oli auttaa perhepäivähoitajia suunnittelemaan jäseneltyjä ja tarkoituksenmukaisia liikuntatunteja, joita he voivat käyttää viikoittaisissa tapaamisissaan paikallisessa nuorisotalossa. Opinnäytetyömme koostuu neljästä pääkohdasta, tausta ja teoria, toiminnallinen vaihe, ohjekansio ja arviointi.

Suunnittelimme ja toteutimme kuusi liikuntatuntia kymmenelle lapselle, jotka olivat kahden ja kuuden ikävuoden välillä. Liikuntatunnit loimme pitäen mielessä työelämän kumppaneidemme tärkeimmän toiveen, että kaikki lapset pitäisivät tunneista ja osallistuisivat toimintaan. Liikuntatunteja suunnitellamme tärkeimmät teoriamme liittyivät liikunnan opettamiseen sekä lasten ikäkohtaiseen kokonaisvaltaiseen kehitykseen. Lasten ikäkohtaisen kehityksen teoriassa erotimme lapset kolmeen eri ikäryhmään, jotta saisimme paremman kuvan jokaisen ikäryhmän koko kehityksestä. Käymme myös läpi ohjatun liikunnan tärkeyttä lapsen kehitykselle sekä käsittelemme suosituksia liikuntakasvatukselle varhaiskasvatuksessa.

Käytimme havainnointia liikuntatunneilla keinona arvioida lasten sitoutumista tunteja kohtaan, sen sijaan että olisimme keränneet sanallista palautetta lapsilta. Syynä tähän oli iso ikäjakauma ryhmässä ja siitä johtuva suuri ero lasten kyvyssä ilmaista itseään sanallisesti. Käytimme toimintaan sitoutuneisuuden arviointiasteikkoa leikki-ikäisille lapsille apunamme havainnoinnissa. Keräsimme myös palautetta perhepäivähoitajilta jokaisen liikuntatunnin jälkeen käyttäen palautelomaketta. Lisäksi kirjoitimme yksityiskohtaisen raportin jokaisesta tunnista, johon sisältyi kehityskeskustelu osio, jossa arvioimme työtämme. Toiminnallisesta vaiheesta kokosimme ohjekansion, joka sisälsi ohjeet liikuntatunneilla käyttämiimme aktiviteetteihin. Ohjekansion arvioivat työelämän kumppanimme sekä me.

Kaikista liikuntatunneista ja ohjekansiosta saaduista positiivisista palautteista, sekä lasten korkeasta sitoutuneisuuden tasosta liikuntatunteja kohtaan, pystyimme olettamaan, että hanke oli varsin onnistunut. Muutamista takaiskuista huolimatta voimme sanoa, että pääasiassa saavutimme opinnäytetyölle asettamamme tavoitteet.

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1 Introduction

Children have a need to move because moving and playing are natural ways for children to learn. Physical activities are an important part of children's holistic development and every child in early childhood education should get at least two hours of exercise a day in a safe and inspiring environment with suitable equipment. (Sosiaali ja terveystieteiden ministeriö 2005.)

Family Day Care is one of the many Day Care options available for families in Finland. It is the preferred form of Day Care for some parents because of the small group sizes and the homely feel of it (Mustikkamaa 2012, 18). Family Day Care in its simplest form can be explained as Day Care that takes place in the Childminder's own home or other homelike environment.

In this thesis we have described the journey we took to create, plan and implement Physical Education lessons for three Family Day Care childminders, who all together take care of 10 children between the ages of two and six in Klaukkala, Nurmijärvi. The basic idea of our project-based thesis was to create the Physical Education lessons, compose a manual of the lessons and to evaluate our work. The manual, which we provided to the family childminders, consists of six planned Physical Education lessons. The purpose of this was to enable the Family Child-minders to use those lessons in their everyday life with the children in the future and even develop them further if needed.

In the beginning of our thesis we have gone through why we chose the specific subject and introduce our working life partners. Theory part consists of explaining what family day care is, the significance of physical activities, evaluation methods and guidelines for physical education in early childhood education. We decided, since the age span is quite big, to separate the children in three different age categories: two-year-old, three-four-year-old and five-six-year-olds. This way we have the opportunity to consider the different skill levels of the children and make it easier to plan effectively our physical education lessons. We did concentrate on creating only indoor games since we wanted to take the best advantage of the space and equipment the family day care workers have in their disposal for few hours each Thursday in the youth center in Klaukkala.

Our Physical Education lessons were evaluated in three main ways; self-evaluation, written evaluation from the child-minders and observing the children. Self-evaluation consisted mostly of the report we wrote after each lesson and the developmental discussion we had together of how we did and what needed to be considered before the next lesson. The written feedback from the child-minders we read through after each lesson and used them as guidelines to direct us planning the future lessons. For observing the children we used The Leuven Involvement Scale for Young children and edited it to fit our purposes. Since some of the chil-

dren were so young, we decided instead of gathering verbal feedback, to use observation as a tool to assess the children's involvement during the lessons.

2 Background of the Thesis

First in this section we will go through the reasons why we chose this specific subject for our thesis. We will also explain what family day care is, since our project is tightly linked to it. Last we will cover the aspect of our working life partners, their wishes towards the project and what means we did have to take to inform the child-minders as well as the parents for example when we needed to ask permissions for taking photos of the children.

2.1 Choosing the subject

Our idea of the subject for the thesis "Creating Physical Education Lessons for Family Childminders" came to us after a short while of considering different ideas around early childhood education. It was clear that we wanted to focus on early childhood education but not in a kindergarten setting. This is because we wanted to learn new and exciting things during the thesis process instead of using a subject that had been widely used already. Family day care is something we are both interested in so it felt like a natural setting for our thesis. Though studies have already been made about family day care, we have not learned much about it during our studies which raised our curiosity towards it.

After deciding that we wanted family day care to be our setting for the thesis we started to narrow down our options of what to do in that setting. We remembered enjoying our course of physical education at school, which led us to think more about possibly developing physical education in family day care. Also we both have a background in sports in form of hobbies and even competitive sports, so there is an underlying interest towards sports and physical education. Because of our background in sports and our experience in working with groups of children we have often noticed, and discussed, the decrease of time children spend doing physical activities these days. The reason for this is that homes are nowadays filled with increasing amount of technology and actively playing children have turned into still sitting ones (Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriö 2005, 7). It is a great concern to us, because physical activities support child's holistic development (Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriö 2005, 12-14). Our bodies, minds, emotions and intellect form a whole and human beings are holistically part of every action we do (Zimmer 2011, 24). That is why our interest lies in supporting proper well-planned physical education.

We are both very hands-on people and learn best by doing so we decided to do a project-based functional thesis. A question came into our minds - how do family day care childminders plan and implement physical education lessons that are suitable for all the children that can be of very different ages? Most likely it is quite difficult, since in one family day care group there can be children from ages zero to six and sometimes even seven-year-olds that come and spend their afternoons there after school. The family day care workers might not have a lot of time to plan either, since during their work hours they mostly work alone and have to be the childminder, cook and a cleaner all in one. That is why we got the idea of planning and implementing the physical education lessons and in addition creating a manual, which can help the family day care childminders in planning their physical education lessons.

2.2 Family Day Care

In Finland Day Care means a combination of care, upbringing and education (Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö 2013). Day Care can be organized in kindergartens, family day care or in play groups. Day Care aims to support the families in the upbringing of the child in such a manner that it promotes the balanced development of the child's personality (Päivähoidon lait 2013).

Family Day Care is a form of day care where the care is offered in a private home or a home like environment. In a family day care there can be a maximum of four children including the family day care child minder's own children (Päivähoidon lait 2013). The small group size and the homelike atmosphere are the strengths of the family day care, because the parents of small children often appreciate this quality (Mustikkamaa 2012, 18). Small group size allows noticing the children's individual needs. In family day care children will learn in everyday situations, which are eating together, play times and outdoor activities. Children will also learn how to interact with people of different ages, since the groups can consist of children from zero to six and the children will come in contact with the child minders own family (Mustikkamaa 2012, 23).

The education of a family day care childminder has not been regulated in law, so the education history for family day care childminders is very diverse. Until the year 2000 the only education offered for family day care childminders was a family day care course, which usually lasted about 250 hours. Taking part in this course has never been a requirement to work as a family day care childminder (Oulun Yliopisto 2002). Nowadays there are vocational training possibilities for family day care childminders.

Though education is not a requirement to work as a family day care childminder, they still need to have a lot of knowledge of the development about children of different ages because in family day care groups the children can be of different ages (Mustikkamaa 2012, 15). There is some discussion on whether family day care will last as a form of day care in municipalities, because family day care childminders are getting older and it is difficult to hire new ones. It remains to be seen what will happen (Mustikkamaa 2012, 26).

2.3 Working Life Partners

Our working life partners were three family day care childminders, who each have three to four children in their family day care, total of ten children between them. The children were between ages two to six. All the family day care childminders who participated in our thesis project live in Klaukkala and have been working in this field for a long time, over twenty years each. We contacted originally one of the childminders and she suggested to us that we could do this project for all three of them, because they share a common space at a club room every Thursday morning from nine to ten thirty. The club room was a good sized gymnasium where the children were able to run freely and there were a lot of materials for different games and activities. We took this offer gladly.

Our working life partners had quite open minds towards our project and they did not give us too many limitations when it came to the lessons themselves. Our working life partners had three wishes for our project. They wished that we could come up with games and activities all of the children would get into, that the children had the opportunity run freely for a while, and that we would keep their starting routine, which is sort of a clapping game that they always do before starting their activities, as a part of our physical education lessons. We agreed on these terms because they also supported our theory background. Certain rituals in the beginning and ending create a sense of security and trust for the children (Zimmer 2011, 140). These wishes were the key elements throughout our thesis' active phase.

We felt that before we were doing much of the planning we should ask permission from the parents for their children to take part in our thesis process. After all, without the children we would not have had much of a thesis. In a permission note we shortly explained our plans so far and asked whether they would allow their children to participate and if we could take photos of the lessons, which will be added in the manual. We mentioned that we will not be using their names or ages in the manual. All of the parents agreed on letting their children participate in the lessons and gave us the permission to photograph the lessons. Only one parent mentioned that she wished her child's photographs would not end up on the internet. That is why we decided to write a new permission note mentioning that we would not be up-

loading their children's photographs on the internet. We would make sure they would only appear in our final thesis presentation and on the manual the family day care child minders would get in the end of our project. Later on we of course realized that we needed to mention the children's ages to demonstrate in the final thesis how we were able to teach physical education to a group of children of the ages between two and six. We corrected this mistake in the new permission note and apologized for our mistake. We felt explaining our purposes and apologizing for our mistakes created a sense of trust for the parents.

3 Theory Background

When selecting literature and other resources to support our thesis we had to think mostly about the setting we were going to work in and what we actually wanted to achieve with this thesis. First of all we wanted to focus on the fact that physical education is very meaningful for children's holistic development. In Finland we also have detailed guidelines for what standards physical education in early childhood education should meet. We based all the physical education lessons on these guidelines.

In family day care the biggest challenge was going to be the big age gap between the youngest and the oldest children of the group so we decided to focus on literature about how developed children are physically, but also otherwise, when they are from two to six years of age. That way we were able to come up with basic activities that we could modify to suit the smallest and the biggest ones in the group. We also put a lot of emphasis on proper ways of teaching physical education.

3.1 Significance of Physical Activities in Child's Development

The basic need for every child is to move and explore the different surroundings they find themselves in; whether in- or outdoors. It is the responsibility of adults to offer such environment where it is possible for children to discover and try new different things as well as to make mistakes and fail.

In early childhood, movement and play are the most effective ways for children to learn as they get to know the world through their physical bodies and learn social behavior among other children during pretend play. Through play and physical exercise, children have the opportunity to express themselves. For children to develop different skills, diverse physical activities should be offered regularly and ensure that every child has the opportunity to participate in them (Karvonen 2000, 25). Some estimations claim that if children have irregular and

scattered physical activities in childhood it might hinder the need to find a physical hobby that endures throughout their life as they grow up (Lyytinen, Korkiakangas, Lyytinen 2001, 103).

Holistic approach highlights the importance of emotional, cognitive, social and physical aspects of a child. Swiss psychology Piaget brings forth the importance of physical exercise in a child's holistic development. Kokljuschkin (Esiopetusta liikunnan keinoin 1997, 9) writes about Piaget's theory that in early childhood, movement and thinking goes hand in hand as abstract thinking cannot be possible for the brain before concrete knowledge is attained from the body and surrounding environment. The more the child is in control of her body, the more she will be able to concentrate on other things when the movement patterns are done out of habit. Furthermore through physical movement it is possible to teach children different concepts such as directions, surfaces, colors and shapes (Kokljuschkin 1997, 9).

Physical activities in early childhood should offer meaningful experiences that do not strive for results, but the play is rewarding in itself (Zimmer 2011, 24, 75). Thus, it is important to create physical activities that attract and stimulates children's curiosity to participate in the games without being afraid of adult's judgment toward mistakes or failures to reach the goals set. Teaching physical exercises creates the opportunity to teach children how to control their basic body movements and that way help children to develop positive self-image and the trust for themselves to be able to accomplish different tasks (Kokljuschkin 1997, 20; Bee 2000, 104). This enables the child to feel being apart from the rest, an individual who can move and do things according to her own will.

As children take part in physical exercises that has been planned by an adult and which matches the children's motoric development stage, the movement pattern changes significantly in free play and other activities (Lyytinen 2001, 104). Thus, children mirror and imitate the shown example, learning to use the new movement pattern in other contexts and situations as well as make new variations out of it. The physical development of a child also broadens the social and cognitive aspects as the new acquired skills enable the further exploration of the surrounding environment (Bee 2000, 103).

3.2 Guidelines for Physical Education in Early Childhood Education

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health released a guide in 2005 called Guidelines for Physical Education in Early Childhood Education. In the guide are gathered recommendations of different aspects of physical education (2005, 5); amount, quality, planning and implementation, environment, equipment and cooperation. In simplicity the recommendations say that

children should every day get at least two hours of purposefully arranged and planned exercise in a suitable environment with proper equipment. The recommendations also add that this should be done in cooperation with the children's parents.

Our goal was to meet most of these criteria. Obviously we were not responsible for all the children's daily activities, but we created activities that the family day care childminders can then use in their work. We invested in the quality of the exercise by planning the lessons according to the skill levels and developmental stages of the children. The children we created the physical education lessons to were between the ages of two and six. Of zero to three-year-olds the recommendations (2005, 10-11) say that their exercise is mostly voluntary, which means that the child moves from own will or with others, and this should be supported by the adults by giving the child space and time to do their own thing whenever it is possible. This is the reason we were not too strict with our plans for the lessons, but rather gave room for the children's own imagination. Also three to six-year-olds mostly move voluntarily and adults should support this by also giving time and space for this whenever possible. The environment should be versatile and inspiring. At this stage the children should move actively at least two hours a day so that they get out of breath. We kept these recommendations in mind while planning the lessons.

We took into consideration the co-operation with the parents already in the beginning by sending them permission notes, where we explained what we were going to do and asked whether their children could take part in the activities and whether we could take pictures of the children and add them in the manual. The co-operation between the educators and parents has a bigger meaning when it comes to the children's development. Early childhood educators should provide the parents with information about the meaning of physical education for the child's holistic development and also encourage the parents to move and play with the children at home. This way it is ensured that the child gets the minimum of two hours of exercise daily. (Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriö 2005, 32)

Like mentioned earlier in this thesis, we were fortunate enough to be able to use the great space in a club room, where there was a lot of space for running and other activities and was filled with equipment. Ministry of Social Welfare and Health recommends that the environment where the physical education happens should be varying, so that the children could learn to adjust their existing skills to meet the needs of the new environment (2005, 26). But since our lessons took place only once a week, we trusted that the children get to exercise also in other environments such as the homes of their family childminders, their own homes and also outside and in the nature. This is why we chose to implement the lessons every time at the same environment, the gymnasium at the club room. This decision was also supported by the fact that all of the three childminders only met once a week at this club room and if

we were to include them all in the process, this was the time to do it. We were also lured in by all the magnificent equipment we were able to use at the gymnasium.

The equipment was a big part of our physical education lessons. Ministry of Social Affairs and Health list a great deal of equipment that are suggested be used while teaching children between zero to three and three to six (2005, 28-30). Many of them are suitable for both age groups, but for the older children the list is even longer. The equipment we were able to use that were suitable for both age groups were; balls, bean bags, mattresses and a parachute. We also used equipment suggested for the older group of children; hoops, scarves, music and equipment that improve balance. We also decided to use any equipment we came up with on our own that made the children jump, crawl, and walk, be still or run. Some of these were; a play tunnel and cones of different sizes.

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health also mentioned that evaluation is an important part of physical education in early childhood education. This should be done by the educator by methodically observing the quality and quantity of the movement and how the children's motoric skills develop. When this is done systematically during a longer period of time, the educator might notice some children lacking skills that the others might have. This should be taken into consideration when planning the physical education lessons so that the children who are not on the same skill level than the others can have the opportunity to practice the skills (Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö 2005, 21). In this thesis by observing the children we aimed to determine how invested the children were towards our physical education lessons on different levels instead of really focusing on their skills levels.

3.3 Age Specific Development

When we set out to plan the physical education lessons we knew the biggest challenge we faced was the children's age gap. Since we have both worked with children before, also in kindergarten setting, we knew that two-year-olds are nowhere near six-year-olds: physically or mentally.

For the theory background we decided to break the ages in three categories: two-year-olds, three and four-year-olds and five and six-year-olds. This offered us the opportunity to focus on more specifically on each age group and what they were capable of doing physically and mentally. Every age group we also broke down into four categories to try and take into consideration the child's development. The categories are motoric, cognitive, emotional and social. Without understanding the basics of every age group we would not have gotten very far.

3.3.1 Two-Year-Olds

At the age of two, gross motor skills are developing quickly. As the child's balance improves through walking, it enables her to learn to run and that way explore the surroundings more freely. Two-year-old is also able to handle a ball although with little clumsiness and throw it without falling as well as go near the ball when trying to kick it. Fine motor skills enable the two-year-old manipulate different sized objects: hold a pen, pick up smaller objects and even build a small tower out of blocks or cubes (Sheridan 2006, 26). The hand-eye-coordination is developing, giving the child a sense of space between herself and the object whether small or large and how to place herself according to the object.

At the age of two children will begin to learn to use symbols especially in pretend plays as different objects get a new meaning during the play (Bee 2000, 173). This is the clear sign of growing and developing imagination the child uses in pretend play to sort out the daily life and go through the new learned things. Two-year-old can already understand the rhythm in music and that it is possible to imitate and explore the sound (Louhivuori, Saarikallio 2010, 183). Especially the imitation can be seen while singing, because at the age of two the child starts to, according to the musical influences in the environment, to imitate the singing from the source, in this case an adult (Louhivuori 2010, 185). Furthermore, they enjoy shaking instruments like maracas or banging equipment that gives a rhythmical sound.

Children at two, as their language starts to develop, are constantly asking names for different objects. The constant asking why, how and what helps them to construct their language skills for later in life when they learn to build a long and understandable sentences. In her book, Sheridan (2006, 27) writes that a two-year-olds already have some kind of a concept of understanding short and easy instructions given by the adults.

Especially at this age children begin to see themselves as unique individuals and highlight the meaning of "I" in speech and other aspects in life (Rödstam 1993, 69). As the young child is still lacking words to properly express and voice her inner self, the physical side is the dominant way to give voice to the emotions and the way to be understood by others (Rödstam 1993, 68). Two-year-old also insists a lot of attention from the adults, perhaps to highlight her own worth as a person, which again refers to the over emphasized meaning of I.

Two-year-old children do not yet play fully with others although they might locate their play near other children and join in from time to time. A two-year-old might have, according to "The Developing Child" by Helen Bee (2000, 175), some kind of concept that not every person views the world the same way as the child does. Still children at this age have difficulties to share toys with others and tend to be protective of what they have got (Sheridan 2006, 24)

which again gives voice to the overemphasized perception of “I”. The difficulty to share and see the world through another’s eyes means the two-year-olds show a lack of empathy towards others, since they cannot yet relate to other children’s feelings that well.

3.3.2 Three-Four-Year-Olds

At the age of three and four the gross-motor skills are developed the way the child is able to hop, climb and run confidently. Handling a ball is better developed in four year old children, but three-year-old children are not far behind as they can already catch the ball between hands as their hand eye-coordination is developing. Small muscle development is good which allows the child to manipulate smaller objects effectively (Cooper, Halsey, Laurent, Sullivan 2008, 24) and draw and paint more accurately. Three year old is able to copy more simple shapes while drawing, like circles, while four year old is more capable of drawing letters and more detailed pictures of humans (Sheridan 2006, 36).

The understanding of rules during games starts to develop at the age of three and four. Especially at the age of four children start to take part in games with agreed rules. As the children mature three and four-year-old children are quickly developing in language skills, acquiring more words each day. This enables the growth of sense of humour (Sheridan 2006, 33). At this point, children can already remember many nursery rhymes and as they learn to control instruments more effectively. It is pointed out in “Musiikkipsykologia” by Louhivuori & Saarikallio (2010, 188) that children also enjoy being able to repeat something they have already learned. Furthermore, children are starting to link music to broader contexts. One of these is the understanding of social aspect of music which means children learn they can dance together (2010, 187).

Three- and four-year-old children are growing emotionally more independent from other people. Especially children of four are growing to be more aware of the feelings of other people as they pay attention more on how others show or express their feelings. At three and four, children learn simple ways to express their feelings with words such as “I am happy” or “I am sad”. They do not tend to seek and demand as much attention from adults as before. Also the development of empathy can be seen at this point when the children start to show sympathy towards other children especially if hurt and take into account others’ needs (Sheridan 2006, 37).

At three and four, the solo play decreases as children start to interact more actively together. Three and four-year-olds already actively seek the company of other children (Sheridan 2006, 37) and are making friends with children in whose company they like to spend time

with. They will also imitate and copy other children in how they behave and act in different situations. This can be seen for example in play or during games when one does not want to join in and the other copies the behaviour and does not join also or if one child wants to help then the other child copies the behavior and wants to help too. Furthermore the understanding for rules develop as in group plays children need to share, plan and discuss what to do (Sheridan 2008, 28). As three-year-olds are starting to learn to play with others the world of sharing toys and other things with others are taking place. In this process it is vital to an adult to help the young child to understand the rules of taking turns and sharing (Cooper 2008, 37).

3.3.3 Five-Six-Year-Olds

At the age of five and six, the children's muscles have grown more powerful. Developing co-ordination skills enables the children to manage more difficult skills such as riding a bike, standing on one leg and jumping on a skipping rope (Cooper 2008, 79). At this age, instead of concentrating on the basic movements, since they have been learned already, the children can start to focus on the tuning of their movement patterns. As they have learned to walk, they might enjoy trying tiptoeing, skipping, jumping, leaping and running. The small muscle development is more elaborate as the control over pens, brushes, use of scissors and other small objects progresses (2008, 110). Also the handling of instruments at the age of five and six is more controlled.

At this point children understand the concept of sharing and taking turns both in play and conversation (Sheridan 2008, 33). As the language develops quickly, sentences are longer and children are inventing jokes by themselves as well as enjoying rhymes and riddles. As the imagination and creativity increases, children of five and six enjoy stories and usually the told or read stories appear later in play whether the child is alone or with friends (Sheridan 2006, 39). Children at this age are capable of fitting their movements to the rhythm of music and are able most of the time to stay in one key when singing. Also the personal expression is strong in their own ideas when it comes to music and it can be clearly seen in the changing of tempo (Louhivuori 2010, 188-189). For example while singing trying to quicken or slowing down the song or while playing an instrument.

Children are more aware of the needs of others. This occurs in situations when the child tries to comfort the other who is in distress (Sheridan 2006, 40) and instead of just hugging actually uses words to calm the other down. At the age of six children are stating quite clearly their likes and dislikes and are able to give voice to their emotions (Cooper 2008, 122). Children of five and six can also be quite quick to voice out if they feel they have been wronged. Since

the developing child, at this age starts to be in control of her emotions and more able to state out her thoughts and feelings the tantrums come less often.

At this age children start to choose their own friends as well as join games with agreed rules to make sure everyone plays according to them (Cooper 2008, 126). It is not to be forgotten though that although children at this age have a strong sense of what is right and wrong and how to play fair with others, the child might end up cheating if the activity or game is too hard to cope with. Five and six-year-olds are more likely to show protective behavior towards younger children (Sheridan 2006, 40), but are still not able to take responsibility of the younger ones. Common trait is that children at this age are usually starting to help others in play or guiding them in some tasks they have already learned themselves (Sheridan 2008, 33). Children at this age can be sometimes used to help with the younger in some simple tasks, but under an adult's supervision.

3.4 Teaching Physical Education

Karvonen (2000, 26) states that the joy of movement should be visible during the activity. However it does not mean there is no need for properly planned physical activities. Before the physical education lesson the teacher is responsible for taking enough time to plan and develop the games (Shimon 2011, 52). The teacher should be aware and take into consideration the different developmental stages of the children while planning the lessons. Therefore, the biggest challenge we faced while planning the physical activities for the group of children was the age difference.

Many of the books mentioned the importance of age specific physical activities, Karvonen (2000, 28) being one of them, to help children to build a positive self-image through feelings of success. When the goals match the skill level of the children, the activities are not too difficult to perform even if they offer a bit challenge. One important aspect when teaching physical education is to offer the same opportunities for every child to take part in the activities and help build positive physical experiences regardless how motorically skilful the children are (Karvonen 2000, 10). Especially children with poorer motoric skills are the ones who need more guidance and opportunities to practice to learn new movement patterns.

As for the individualization, the teacher should be able to understand and accept the fact that every child is an individual with different needs and take it into account when teaching (Karvonen 2000, 10). Like adults, also children do not want to be seen only as a group, but seen and treated as individuals, separate from one and another with their personal needs and thoughts. Although the ideal is very high, the reality is that the teacher cannot all the time

notice and be aware of the individual needs especially when guiding a bigger group. Nonetheless, the teacher should be aware of the fact she is teaching individuals with different skills as not to plan and teach the lessons according to the more skillful children (Karvonen 2000, 25). Therefore our goal was to plan quite basic games and activities which could be modified to fit the skill levels of the older and younger children.

While guiding the lessons, children should have the opportunity to try and invent their own ideas as well. The teacher should understand to leave room for the children to invent and come up with what different things can be done and that way support their creativity. When children are not passively just following orders, but given a chance to participate in and take an active role in the activities, it could create a fruitful interaction between the children and adults when both learn from one and another. It is discussed in “Hyppää pois” by Pirkko Karvonen (2000, 27) that in every physical education lesson children should have the possibility to suggest ideas which will not only keep them inspired, but also help to develop their thinking patterns.

Furthermore a good teacher is able to encourage and give positive feedback to motivate the children. As mentioned before, a teacher who has acknowledged the individual needs of the children is aware of the different learning methods the children use and that way knows how to give constructive feedback. Kokljuschkin (2001, 14) writes of this that it is not only important to know the age and skill specific development of the child, but also be aware of the different ways to learn. While one child might learn the best by being in the spotlight and the centre of attention, another might be more withdrawn and learn by imitating the new things while drawn aside from the rest. That said the children should have the freedom to choose to join the activities in their own time without being pushed or forced. Of course it does not allow them to disturb the lesson. It is the teacher’s responsibility to set and explain the rules.

In addition the issue of safety must be contemplated when teaching physical education to children. It is the responsibility of the teacher to provide a safe environment (Shimon 2011, 53) where the playing area is free of hazards and the equipment are appropriate for the planned lessons (2011, 57).

3.5 Project-Based Thesis

We, like many others, chose to do a project-based thesis. Perhaps the biggest reason for it was the knowledge we both learn best by doing and actually physically getting up and doing something concrete instead of just reading and writing. The perception often is when a student starts to do a project-based thesis that it is easier to do, because one does not need so

much theory. That is not true. Project based thesis answers to both functional and theoretical needs, because theoretical analyzing needs a basis which shows what needs to be analyzed theoretically (Vilkka, Airaksinen 2003, 8).

A project-based thesis aims to either create guidelines to professional practice, which is what we aimed to do in our thesis, or to carry out an event, which we also did. Depending on the target group the way of implementing these can be a book, folder, notebook, guide, cd, manual, homepage or an event or exhibition in a certain environment. The important thing is that in the thesis both functional implementation and its reporting will meet (Vilkka 2003, 9). We met these requirements in our thesis by planning and implementing physical education lessons and creating a manual which entailed theory behind the lessons, instructions for each activity and photographs of the lessons, and by writing the report of our work.

Instead of a main research question we had a developmental task and our task was “Creating Physical Education Lessons in Family Day Care”. Vilkka and Airaksinen (2003, 16) state that a good subject for a thesis is one that raises from the studies and helps to create contacts to working life and to strengthen previous knowledge and skills from the are one finds interesting. We both enjoyed our physical education course at school and are interested in working in family day care or in the field close to it, so the subject felt suitable for us. Also we got to hand out a concrete outcome of our lessons for the people we did our thesis for so they can use it themselves and even develop it further in the future if they so want.

Vilkka and Airaksinen (2003, 19-22) also recommended using a Learning Diary as a tool for structuring the work and reminding what have been discussed, what needs to be done and helping to remember all the different references used. We decided to keep the diary in form of a private page on Facebook called “S&H Thesis Project!” There we shared links, ideas, files and discussed freely even when we were not face to face. It was a functional option for us, one we used a lot and where the files and thoughts, no matter how many months old, were safe and easy to access.

3.6 Research Methods in Project Based Thesis

As mentioned in *Toiminnallinen opinnäytetyö* (Vilkka 2003, 57) the research methods in project based theses are used slightly differently than if the thesis was based on quantitative or qualitative research methods. In project based theses’ the aim is to gather quality information by using research methods on the very basic level.

In quantitative research methods this means the data will be collected by mail, email, phone or on the spot. The analyzing will be done by basic statistics such as percentages and shown

by table and figures. We ended up using this method in analyzing our observation. Since the data collected during the observation was mainly numerical, there was no other way to analyze it. All the children were given a number between one and five on four different areas we focused on. We calculated the averages of these numbers for each child and on all four levels and then decided to show the averages on a Figure chart.

In qualitative research methods the data is gathered by using answer sheets that are presented to a group or to an individual and the feedback is gathered through a phone, mail or right at the place. The analyzing happens by using themes or finding the same kind of typical characteristic to answers. To quote Vilkkä (Toiminnallinen opinnäytetyö 2004, 57-58) it is not always necessary to analyze the collected data as precisely and accurately as it would be in thesis based qualitative research method. In project based thesis, the qualitative research method is well suited option to use in a situation where the goal is to carry out the idea which is based on the opinion of the target group.

In our case the wish from the childminders to us was to create games where all the children would join in. To include their opinions of the games and the lessons we used a two paged questionnaire which were given to the childminders after each lesson and where they could write their opinions about the lessons. We used the data to guide us as we planned the coming lessons and it also helped us to take into consideration their ideas and thoughts. Their written feedback served as guidelines as to what went well and what needed more planning regarding the next physical education lesson. We also used the data from the feedbacks in the evaluation section of our thesis to evaluate and examine our own ways of leading the lessons, did we reach the goals set and whether the childminders were satisfied with the lessons itself.

3.7 Previous Studies

We used other similar theses, about physical education in early childhood education, as a support for our project. There was few that were very similar to ours, some of which we found well-written and helpful and some that rather gave us ideas on what not to do. For example in a couple of theses', they had only planned and implemented four lessons which we thought was not a sufficient enough time to really try out which games work for the group and which do not (Heikkilä 2010 & Tiensuu 2010). These theses' gave us the motivation to do our thesis bigger and better. Even though Teija Heikkilä's thesis *Kivaa oli ja Hiki tuli: Liikuntakasvatuksen kehittäminen Haapaveden Perhepäivähoidossa* (2010) was one of the ones that included only four physical education lessons, it still gave our thesis a lot support because it was full of similar ideas to ours and contained theory base for these ideas.

After careful consideration we decided to use an evaluation form (appendix 1 and 2) designed by Noora Mattila and Tero Tiittanen for their thesis to gather written feedback from our working life partners (Mattila & Tiittanen 2012). This was suggested to us by our teacher and after thinking about it for a while we saw it as she did; “why reinvent the wheel”. The feedback form was everything we could have wanted, short, simple and yet informative.

We also found theses written about family day care very helpful. There was rather little literature about family day care in general so we welcomed any information we found with open arms. Especially Katri Mustikkamaa’s thesis about family day care as a form of day care was highly informative and helpful (Mustikkamaa 2012).

3.8 Evaluation Methods

Evaluation was a highly important part of our thesis. Even though a project based thesis does not aim to do a research, it should still be done with an exploratory attitude. This means that examining and arguing the choices one makes during the thesis process. The arguments should be based on a knowledge base that is based on literature of one’s own field. (Vilkkä & Airaksinen 2003, 154.) We decided to evaluate our work in three main ways; self-evaluation, written evaluation from the childminders and observation of the children.

In self-evaluation we focused on four main parts; planning, implementation, team-work and the manual. The self-evaluation was for the most parts based on developmental discussions that we had after each lesson. Written evaluations were gathered after each lesson from the childminders in form a questionnaire designed for getting feedback from early childhood education professionals about a physical education lesson (Mattila & Tiittanen 2012). The questionnaire was short and simple and did not take too long time for the childminders to fill, which was positive. The last part, observation of children was chosen by us for the simple reason of the children being so different ages and any other form of gathering feedback would not have been fair to the younger children that do not have the same capabilities to voice their opinion as the older children.

We have explained our evaluation methods more deeply in the Evaluation chapter where we have also analysed the results of the observation and the feedback we got.

4 Implementation

The active phase started by drafting the thesis plan. After the plan got accepted we continued by planning the lessons based on the theory and our own personal experiences in teaching physical education with children and implementing them.

In this following section we have described in detail the lessons, games and activities.

The lesson reports were a big part of our self-evaluation as well as to show how we divided the work each time and also to show how the lessons progressed.

4.1 Planning Stage

During October we found our thesis topic. We got the idea of doing physical education lessons in family day care, because the thought of doing something in kindergarten setting did not appeal either of us and since the family day care side was quite unknown to us. Since we both are interested in sports and have been since childhood, we did not need to consider the option for long and so we started to form the final idea. Our teachers showed us green light with the topic. We created a timetable for our thesis that we could follow and we kept to it quite well throughout the whole journey.

A huge part in the beginning of our thesis plan consisted of hunting books and other literature for the theory background and trying to figure out what we wanted to focus on in our thesis. During November and December we settled with the literature we wanted to use and started to write our thesis plan. We also sent permissions to the parents in the very beginning and had time to make some corrections to them also before starting the lessons. We also got encouraging feedback in the beginning from the parents as they were interested in to see our thesis after it was ready.

Our thesis plan got accepted and we did not need to make many changes to it. Before starting the lessons we went to meet the group few times to get to know the children, the child-minders, the space and equipment. After it we started to plan our lessons and that took a big part of the time when we met and we had some challenges during planning, since we just wanted to start doing the lessons. We had challenges while creating the lessons, considering the children's age gap, and since we wanted to come up with games where no one got eliminated or got the feeling of competition.

4.2 Games and Activities

Our goal was to plan and implement seven thirty minute physical education lessons during January and February of 2013. Our aim was to carefully plan the lessons, but leave room for

spontaneity from the children's side and ours. We felt planning the lessons one by one ensured that the lessons were not too strict and that way end up not being fun for the children. We decided to add this section under the implementation, since it creates the base for our lessons and drafts the outlines why we made the lessons the way they are.

Children need to be able to train different aspects of themselves, which will make them more interested in physical activities. When the physical education lessons include a lot of play and pedagogically accurately instructed diverse activity and the children get to invent and try their own things, the children will have the opportunity to grow up in the best possible way (Karvonen 2000, 25-26). That is why we always planned the next lesson after finishing one. That way we got to use the information we got from the children and feedback we got from each other and our working life partners to create an even better lesson next time. For example at the first lesson we did a warming up game called the bouncing beans, where the children have to imitate different kinds of beans (bouncing beans bounce, rolling beans roll etc.). Our thought was that if the children get into the game, we know we can use that as a warm up game in the future as well. The children got somewhat excited of it, but since it was not a huge success, we did not use it again in our other lessons.

We did decide when we started that our time schedule was not to be too strict for the lessons. If the children wanted to play for more than the 30 minutes, it was possible and vice versa. We wanted the children to enjoy the lessons as much as possible, so that the physical education lessons would feel pleasant to them in the future also. The family day care childminders agreed on this also. The arrangement worked out well and if we saw the children still had some energy to continue after forty minutes, we continued the game or if it seemed they had hard time to concentrate after twenty minutes when we had gone through the games, we ended the lesson.

Because the children were between the ages two and six, we needed to take into consideration that some things that a six-year-old can do, the two-year-old will not be able to do. That is why we used simple games that could be then modified to suit every child's skill level. For example we planned a task track, where the children needed to do one task to reach the next point. There was a bean bag throwing point, where the children needed to throw a bean bag into a bucket. The bucket was very close for the little ones and further for the bigger ones. Also we planned the same with the mattresses. The older children were allowed to do somersaults under the supervision of an adult, but the younger rolled or hopped. That way we wanted to make sure none of the children felt like the tasks were too difficult or too easy. If we had games that were meant for bit older, we asked the childminders to help the younger if they needed help and the arrangement worked out very well.

We were also lucky to have the family day care childminders taking part in the lessons. Like mentioned before, they helped with the smallest children with tasks they might have felt were too difficult to handle by themselves. Also by taking the childminders in the lessons as active participants gave them the feel of the games and we also got three pairs of helping hands for which we are very thankful.

4.3 Lessons

The best part of our thesis process, as might have been guessed, very much was the implementing the lessons. Interacting with the children and the childminders and working together as a team were the parts that we enjoyed the most and also were quite good at.

Since the three family childminders had this great opportunity to use the gym of a local youth center on each Thursday, we decided that instead of doing indoor and outdoor games we would plan physical education lessons that would try to take the best out of the offered space and the various equipment they had in their disposal there.

In the beginning we planned to do seven physical education lessons. Perhaps the biggest reason for planning and implementing seven, instead of ten like our teacher suggested, was the financial aspect and time. Since neither of us have a car or a drivers license, we needed to travel to Klaukkala by using public transportation. This was not cheap to say the least. Also in the book *Toiminnallinen Opinnäytetyö* (Vilkkä & Airaksinen, 2003.) it is stated that the size of the project-based thesis should be decided according to the time and resources needed. We had resources for seven physical education lessons.

Unfortunately during our active phase we fell behind in our schedule. This was partly because of both of us being sick, which obviously made it impossible for us to go to lead a lesson for a group of children. We had also originally planned a lesson on the week some of the children had winter vacation. We could have done a lesson during that time, but it would have meant that we would have had only a few children attending and that would not have worked for our thesis. That is why in the end we only had time to plan and implement six lessons instead of seven as originally planned. We had to weigh whether it was more important to do all the seven lessons or to try to stay in schedule and after talking to the childminders we decided to go with six lessons. The childminders said that even though they would gladly have us planning their physical education lessons forever, they did understand that we needed to also try to stay in schedule.

Before planning the lessons, we decided together that while the other was instructing the lesson the other would be the observer and help with the needs that might rise during the lessons such as bringing out the mattresses, helping with children and so on. After the first lesson when we noticed the children were not disturbed by one of us taking pictures and being more on the sides, we continued to do so in all our lessons.

As mentioned before, the childminders wished that we would, in the beginning, let the children run around the gym and keep to their starting routine. We agreed to both and also noticed it was easier to start the warm up games when all children were already sitting in a circle. Also the starting routine worked out like a bridge for us to get to know the children and familiarize ourselves with them when we started doing our lessons by sitting in a same circle and clapping for every child who ran around it.

We had three main points in our every physical education lessons: warm up, the main game or games and then the ending. This helped to create a structure that was easy to follow, but also to give a little space within the frames if needed. The warm up games got the children oriented for the coming lesson and also gave us the opportunity to tell them why it is important to warm up. The main game or games followed the warm up game and was the longest lasting of all three parts. The ending gave the sense of closing the lesson and was a great way to calm down the children and give positive feedback.

After each lesson we gave feedback forms to the childminders who filled them and handed them back. Every Thursday after the lessons we sat down and read through the feedbacks, wrote our lesson reports and discussed our thoughts about the lesson and what could be developed. We also planned the next lesson on the same day. The developmental discussions were a big part of active phase and this is why they are a part of our lesson reports.

In the following part there are descriptions of the lessons one by one and each description ends with a summary of our developmental discussion that we used to evaluate our work and a summary of each lesson. The lesson plans are included as appendices (appendices 6, 7 and 8).

4.3.1 First Lesson - 10.1.2013

Observer: Hanna

Instructor: Susanna

The amount of children: 9

Length: 20 minutes

Goals: Teaching positive physical exercise habits, Creating body awareness, Exercising use of imagination and understanding of symbolism, Children learn to take actively part in the games

- Free running and day care's own starting routine

Children gathered around to sit in a circle after running freely for a while. In the circle each child gets to get up and run around the circle one at a time while others clap in rhythm with saying the child's name.

- Warm Up - Bouncing Beans

Susanna first explained that it is important to warm up before exercise and then asked the children to stand up and explained the game. In the game the children were pretending to be beans and were supposed to act according to the instructions; jump, crouch or sway standing up, hands in the air. Hanna observed and took pictures during this exercise. All of the children listened to the instructions well and most of them took part in the activity happily, though some seemed hesitant to join at first.

- Main Game - Nest Game

We set the equipment for this game out before the lesson so that they were ready at this point. The equipment for this game were mattresses that lay all around the room near the walls representing small animals' nests and bean bags and small scarfs that represented food. Children were instructed to take a pair or form a small group, they were helped if necessary. After this children were asked to take a mattress for each pair. At this point Susanna laid out the "food" in the middle of the gymnasium. Children were allowed to choose where their nests would be, they were helped with this a little bit. The children sat down on the mattresses and Susanna commanded the children's attention and explained the idea of the game. The children get to pretend different kinds of animals and move like the animals from the nests to the food and back, bringing some food with them to the nest. Susanna listed different animals one at a time and the children were eager to play rabbits, bears, birds and mice. After this they were allowed to pretend any animal they wanted and they came up with animals such as tigers, worms and cats. In the end Susanna checked that all the animals had collected enough food for the winter in the nests and then the children were told to help clean the room after the game. We felt like this is generally a good manner to learn. Hanna again observed, took pictures and helped when needed and also said encouraging things to children.

- Ending - Stretching

The children sat down on the mattresses after they had been collected in the middle of the room after the last game. Hanna put some on calming music in the background and Susanna started explaining how it is important to stretch after exercising. First Susanna showed some

easy basic stretches like trying to touch one's toes. After this the children were able to come up with some of their own stretches. The lesson ended here with everyone applauding. Hanna used this time again to partly take part in the stretching but also observing and taking pictures.

- Developmental Discussion

We both felt that we did a pretty good job at instructing the children especially this being the first time teaching a physical education lessons for this group of children. We were wondering before starting the lessons whether it would work that one is instructing and the other is observing. We thought the children might get distracted by the observer sitting in a corner. There were definitely positives and negatives in this arrangement. We noticed that while the instructor was helping a child the others were left without attention but at this point it was easy for the observer to step in and be help with keeping the control. We also thought that maybe in the future it would be wise not to spread the nest as far from the "food" as we did. Maybe this way it would be easier to manage the whole group and to prevent someone being left without attention. Children also took part in the game with their suggestions of different kind of animals instead of us just telling them what animals to imitate.

- Conclusion

All-in-all we felt very positive of the whole lesson. The children participated well in the activities and even the smallest ones seemed to understand the instructions. We worked well together as a team and we got the sense that we are welcome back to teach physical education. The goals set for this lesson were met which made us feel positive about planning the next lessons.

4.3.2 Second Lesson - 17.1.2013

Observer: Susanna

Instructor: Hanna

The amount of children: 8

Length: 20 minutes

Goals: Children learn to use imagination, Emphasis on teaching children to listen to instructions, Combining music and movement, Body awareness, Social skills for working together, Learning to work with equipment such as a parachute

Other notion: 1 new child, 1,5 years of age

- Free running and day care's own starting routine

- Warm Up - Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes

Already sitting in the circle Hanna asked the children to stand up and again reminded that it is good to warm the body up before any other exercise. She asked whether the children knew the Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes game already and most said yes. Almost all of the children began the game enthusiastically but half of them dropped out one by one towards the end. Still all stayed near the circle and watched. Susanna was observing but also sang along.

- Main Game - Parachute Games (Squirrel & Crocodile)

Parachute games got a lot warmer welcome than the warm up game. The Children were very interested in the parachute and pro-actively grabbed the parachute and listened well when Hanna explained the instructions. If someone did not focus on listening, Susanna was active in telling them to listen. These games focused on the instructions, and the children really needed to listen to understand what to do. In The Squirrel Game Hanna reminded the children of last week's nest game where the animals gathered food in their nests. This time the children got to be naughty squirrels and steal food from a nest under the parachute. All the child minders and the children held to the parachute and started making big waves with it. When each child's name was called they could crawl under the parachute, get a bean bag and come out on the other side. They were supposed to leave the food on the floor behind them and grab the parachute again. Smallest were able to do this with child minders but most wanted to do it alone and everyone got the point of the game and were very actively involved. In the end of this game children cleaned the bean bags off the floor ("ate all the food"). The next game was the crocodile game, and a child minder acted as the crocodile, crawling under the parachute. All the children and rest of the child minders lay on the floor with their feet under the parachute eyes closed. This way the crocodile was able to come and grab the children's ankles and gently pull them under the parachute where they became crocodiles as well. The children listened to the instructions well and made the game their own by calling the first crocodile the mummy crocodile and other the baby crocodiles. This game was repeated a couple of times, because the children requested this. Susanna was all throughout the game observing but also helping with keeping the group calm and listening to the instructions.

- Ending - Rest

In the end Hanna dealt out mattresses for the children which they could lay on. Susanna put calming music on while Hanna was explaining that the children needed to rest after exercising and told them to lie down on the mattresses quietly with their eyes closed until she came to pull their toes and told them to get up and take their mattresses back to the equipment storage room. This exercise went otherwise really well but a couple of girls wanted to hug each other and giggle which distracted the others little. Susanna helped calm them down so Hanna was able to walk around the room pulling children's toes.

- Developmental Discussion

Again we worked well as a team. We were able to focus on our own task when the other was always there to help when needed. This time we were not as well prepared as we should have been. We ended up not having certain equipment that we had first planned using, and we did not have a backup plan which meant that we had to come up with an ending game quickly on top of our heads. The good thing is that we came up with it quickly and neither of us panicked but rather just went along with what we had. We noticed that we need to find a way of getting the children's full attention, because clearly just asking the children to sit down or listen does not always work, especially towards the end.

- Conclusion

Again we had the notion that the lessons went well, even though we had not been as prepared as we should have been. It was nice to find ways we can improve ourselves but also see that we had planned games that all the children enjoyed and participated in. Especially the crocodile game we are going to use again as part of our lessons.

4.3.3 Third Lesson - 24.1.2013

Observer: Hanna

Instructor: Susanna (+Hanna)

Amount of children: 9

Length: 40 minutes

Goals: Creating a longer lesson, Gross motor skills such as crawling, balancing, rolling, throwing and jumping, Children learn to listen to instructions, Learn to wait for their own turn

- Free running and day care's own starting routine

During the day care's own starting routine, Hanna started assembling the equipment for the main activity, the obstacle course.

- Warm Up - Petterin vasara (Peter's Hammer)

After the starting routine Susanna asked the children to stay in the circle and asked whether the children had ever used a hammer or not. Some said yes but all knew what a hammer does. Susanna then told that we are going to start the lesson again by warming our bodies up and this time we will do it by playing Peter's hammer. She told the children to start hammer the air with their right hand while she started singing.

“Petteri hakkaa yhdellä vasaralla, yhdellä vasaralla, yhdellä vasaralla
Petteri hakkaa yhdellä vasaralla

Koko pitkän päivän”

In every verse, one hammer was added to the song. The children were encouraged to suggest which body part we could use as a hammer next. In the end we were hammering with our hands, feet, shoulders and heads. Hanna was singing along and observing.

• Main Activity - Obstacle Course

Before starting the obstacle course, Susanna stayed in the circle with the children while Hanna explained and showed what they were supposed to do in every obstacle. Two to three children weren't paying attention on what we were doing next so Susanna commanded their attention, by telling all the children to put hands behind the ears to make “elephant ears” and asking one by one if they were listening. This caught the children's attention and we feel we reached our goal of finding a way for them to focus on us. We used this method during the whole lesson. When the children were listening, Hanna explained the whole course and the children seemed eager to start doing the activity. We also separated the children to different obstacles as to avoid one obstacle being too crowded at a time and also that the children didn't need to wait so long for their turn when we started the obstacle course. The child minders were asked to help at different obstacles. After twenty minutes, Hanna suggested that we take a small break for the children to cool down which everyone agreed on, and we asked the children to lie down on the mattresses and relax briefly. At this point we asked the children if they had enjoyed the activity so far and whether they wanted to continue for a while longer. We were pleased to get a positive and excited response. For ten minutes we continued the activity and then we gathered the children back to the mattresses to listen what we were going to do next. While doing the observation Hanna was also helping the children at the obstacles.

• Ending - Therapy Ball Massage

To get the children's attention Susanna used the “elephant ears” again so that Hanna was able to tell them what we were doing next. Children got to choose their own mattresses and lie down on their stomachs. We dimmed the lights and put on relaxing music. Then we both started massaging the children's backs with the therapy balls which they seemed to enjoy full-heartedly and even asked if we could continue a while longer.

• Developmental Discussion

We as a team again worked very well together, supporting both of our ideas for example the short break, how to arrange the obstacles in the gym and when to end. We noticed that we do not have to plan our tasks as team members too precisely, because we can quite smoothly move from one task to another without ruining the big picture. We decided that instead of a whistle, we will use the “elephant ears” method (putting hands behind the ears, saying the

children's names one by one and asking them to listen), to get the children's attention in our upcoming lessons. Not only did this method work well for us, but the children also seemed to find it funny. One of the child minders brought to our attention that one of the children had been conflicted in our last week's game, the Squirrel Parachute game. The reason for this was that the child did not want to be a "naughty squirrel", because she has always been taught that it is not nice to be naughty. Together with the childminder we decided to be more aware of the words we use during the activities.

· Conclusion

We both agreed that this was the best lesson so far. The children were relaxed and attentive and all of them were participating in every game. The child minders have reached a status as team members in our eyes: they go along with our plans and instructions, helping us out without undermining our authority during the activities and restricting our creativity. We reached all of our goals this week: created a method to get the children's attention, successfully instructed a longer lesson without the children getting bored or too tired and took into account different motoric skills in the obstacle course. This week we also reached one of the main goals of the whole thesis; all the children attended all the activities of the lesson.

4.3.4 Fourth Lesson - 31.1.2013

Observer: Susanna

Instructor: Hanna

The amount of children: 8

Length: 30 minutes

Goals: Practicing listening instructions, following instructions and waiting for their turn, Children learn concepts such as traffic lights: when to walk or stop, Children learn to take turns as a tag or the "traffic light"

· Free running and day care's own starting routine

· Warm-Up - "Huugiguugi"

After the day care's own starting routine Hanna asked the children to stand up and start warming up by playing a singing game called "Huugiguugi" equivalent to "Put your right hand in put your right hand out ". Hanna told that first we are going to warm up our hands and then the children get to tell which body parts they would like to warm up. Some of the children definitely were not in a sing-a-long mood so this warm-up was a bust. Luckily rest of the children participated and we got it over with.

· Main Games - Red Light, Green Light and Parking lot tag

This time for the main games and the ending game we chose games with a lot of rules, which demand the children's full attention. Hanna asked whether the children know the traffic light colors are and what they mean. Then we also asked whether any of the children know the "mirror game", which is a very common game played in day care groups and schools. Some of the children knew it and seemed excited to start the game. Hanna proceeded to explain how we were going to combine the traffic lights and the mirror game to make the already familiar game more exciting. The game works so that one person is the "traffic light" and has to stand their back towards the other people in one end of the room. In the other end of the room the others stand in a line. The traffic light has an object in both of their hands, one bright green and the other bright red. When the traffic light shows the green object, other can start moving towards the traffic light, but when the traffic light shows the red object and turns around, the others have to stop and stay still. If the traffic light sees someone moving, the person needs to go back to the start. The one who gets to the traffic light quickest and touches the traffic light, gets to be the traffic light next. The children seemed to really like this game and understood the traffic light theme surprisingly well.

The second game was the parking lot tag. Hanna explained this game while Susanna put the same amount of small mattresses around the room that there were children. The mattresses were going to be the children's parking spaces and the whole gym a parking lot. Hanna was going to be a police officer and the children and the child-minder's got to be cars. When the police officer blows the whistle, the cars get to start driving around the parking lot and try to find another empty parking lot. While the cars are not on a parking lot the police officer can catch them and the cars that are caught become police's as well. This ensured no-one was dropped of the game and everyone got to be a part of the game until the last car was caught. The catch of the game was that on the parking lots they were "safe" and the police could not catch them. This game we were quite proud of because we came up with it completely by ourselves, but unfortunately the children were at this point so tired and cranky that most of them misbehaved and cried. It was a shame since there were a couple of children that found the game really fun and wanted to play again and again.

· Ending - Stretching and Little Paint Bucket

We had noticed before that the children enjoy stretching and always participate in it, so we chose to do it again. They did so also this time. To finish the lesson we chose to do a rhyme about colors, following the theme of traffic light colors. Every child got to come and sit on the floor in front of Hanna, their back toward her. Hanna held blue, green, yellow and red Lego blocks, which she had shown to the children beforehand to make sure they recognized the colors. She chose one color for each child and tapped the Lego block gently on the children's shoulders and said the rhyme:

“Pieni maalipurkki,
 olan ylin kurkki,
 punainen vai sininen,
 kumpi lienee väri sen?”

Then the children got to guess what color the ”little paint bucket” was. When they answered, whether they guessed right or wrong, they got to leave the gym to go and have their usual juice and cookie. The point was not that the children guessed the color right, but rather that that they got to wait their turn and then to get a small one-to-one moment with the instructor to clearly mark the end of the lesson.

- Developmental Discussion

At this point we were able to say the elephant ear method works. We still had no complaints about our team work. Susanna helped with the children who had difficulties concentrating on the lesson and the instructions. Of course it did not feel great when the children did not listen or they did something else than what had been asked from them and some did not participate at all, but if one good thing is to be found of this lesson, it is that we asked the children who did not seem interested in the game to leave the game instead of interrupting others. Couple of the children lay on the ground while others tried to play. Huugiguugi was not a success, only a few children wanted to take part in it.

- Conclusion

A fun thing about this lesson was, that this time one of the child minders said they will use the Red light, Green light game in their spring celebration for the children and their parents. Otherwise this lesson was not that good, because the children liked only part of our games and they all seemed a little bit off. The child minders said that some of the children were a little bit sick, so that could have affected them.

4.3.5 Fifth Lesson - 7.2.2013

Observer: Hanna

Instructor: Susanna

The amount of children: 8

Length: 30 minutes

Goals: Children follow instructions, Children learn to act and work in a group, Children learn to handle the balls and a parachute, Creating a sense of body awareness, Children learn to combine music and movement

- Free running and day care’s own starting routine

- Warm-Up - Clap Game

Susanna asked the children to stand up and explained that we are going to try out a clapping warm-up game. The children again seemed not too enthusiastic about the warm-up, but instead looked at us like we were the most boring people on earth.

- Main Game - Ball Pass and Ball Parachute

Susanna asked the children to form a circle and then commanded their attention by using the elephant ears method. She then instructed what the children were supposed to do while the music was playing and what happened when the music stopped. In the beginning the children passed on only one ball, but then after a while Susanna asked them if they wanted a second ball to make the game a bit more challenging. Another ball was added to the game and then again Susanna explained that Hanna would play two different songs and that the ball would change direction when the song changed.

Short while later Susanna asked the children to sit down on the floor in a circle and sit their legs apart and roll the ball to other children.

This game finished Susanna took the parachute Hanna had brought closer and asked help from the children to spread open the parachute. First the children made bigger and smaller waves with it and then Susanna added two balls on it and told what the children were supposed to do. Later two more balls were added.

After the ball parachute Susanna asked would the children be willing to run or crawl under it while others were making waves. Susanna called the children by name and then they were allowed to run or crawl under the parachute.

- Ending - "Taputan" song

A "Fröbelin Palikat" Song that we played from the laptop and sang along. Surprisingly the children took part in this ending game, though they did not look very excited. After "taputan" song was over, we gave a big hand for everyone.

- Developmental Discussion

Even though this lesson again was not our best, we still noticed positive thing in our instructions skills. We both agreed that our skill to read the children and situations is good. We think Susanna did well when she noticed that the children enjoyed the parachute games and she continued on that path for a while. Why stop a game the children really like, is what we think.

- Conclusion

So far we can definitely say that the children do not enjoy most singing games or thing similar to those, so from now on we will not even try those with this group. As mentioned before we

have learned that spontaneity is really important when working with children, sometimes things do not go to plan and in those situations one needs to be able to improvise. The parachute works very well for this group because, there are many shyer children in the group and there is a low threshold to grab the edge of the parachute and that way join the activity.”

4.3.6 Sixth Lesson - 28.2.2013

Observer: Susanna

Instructor: Hanna

The amount of children: 8

Length: 45 minutes

Goals: Exercising the use of imagination, Understanding of symbolism, Listening to instructions, Waiting one's own turn, Learning different basic motoric skills such as crawling, rolling, grabbing, running and sense of balance

- Free running and day care's own starting routine

Children gathered around to sit in a circle after running freely for a while. In the circle each child gets to get up and run around the circle one at a time while others clap in rhythm with saying the child's name. During this starting routine a child who has been in the group about a month took part in the running. So far the child has just been sitting in the childminder's lap and observed the physical education lessons.

- Warm Up - Airplane

While sitting in the starting circle after the running routine, Hanna took the lead and explained to the children that today they were going to an island where in the end they might find a treasure they could keep for themselves. Hanna made very clear that for this trip to turn out well, everyone needed to listen what would happen during the journey. Whenever Hanna needed to catch the children's attention she used the elephant ear method and also the childminders, whenever they noticed someone was not listening, asked the children where their elephant ears were. After explaining the airplane warm up and starting the story, Hanna stood up and asked the kids to spread their arms to make airplane wings. Some of the children took part after hesitating a bit, but only two did not take part in the warm up.

- Main Game - Obstacle Course

Before the physical education lesson started we had already arranged the setting and discussed how we were going to organize our team work. Hanna continued telling the story and linked the obstacles in it such as crawling through a fallen tree trunk, rolling under low hanging branches and diving or swimming through a sea. We tried not to make the story too scary,

but to make it sound more fun and exciting since we got feedback from one of our earlier lessons that one child had been in conflict with the name of our game. While Hanna told the story and showed how the obstacles were supposed to be done, Susanna took pictures and helped where needed. Through the whole imaginary journey, the children listened well and were able to wait for their own turn. Even the one fairly new child who had not so far taken part in the games heeded the instructions actively and seemed to enjoy going through the obstacles. Children also came up with their own ideas while rolling under the “low branches”, one used a worm style, another moved like a snake, some crawled and some just rolled. In the end they were given one small bag each which included few small items, representing the treasure they found after the long journey through the “jungle”.

- Ending - Therapy Ball Massage

In the end we asked the children to lie down on the mattresses, put a calming music on and started to massage their arms and legs with the therapy balls. We had done this once before in our physical education lesson and decided to repeat it again since the children seemed to enjoy it a lot.

- Developmental Discussion

We felt like this was the best lesson of all for two main reasons; we had reserved the most time to plan this lesson and this showed in the fun and exciting storyline and how smoothly the lessons went and we had gotten to know the group and their skills and what they enjoy by this time. We both felt like we could not have done anything better to make this lesson any more successful.

- Conclusion

Though there was again a child that wanted to only somewhat take part in the activities we had planned for the lesson, we felt like this lessons was overall the best and we were happy that we were able to end our active phase in such a positive note. The children really seemed to enjoy the lessons, which to us was the most important thing.

4.4 Learning Diary

During our thesis process we kept a Learning Diary on Facebook “S&H Thesis Project” page which we created. It was private and meant for our eyes only. It was easy for us to log on Facebook and share thoughts, ideas and files and also discuss our schedule, what we had done as well as what we were going to do. The Learning Diary helped us keep in structure all the information we shared and made it easier for us to write the final report.

Without us noticing we also formed sort of a Learning Diary while we wrote the reports of each physical education lesson. When we read the reports of each lessons through when planning the next one, we noticed that the reports helped us in reminding us of what had not worked the last time and what did but also gave us ideas on what we could try next.

4.5 Manual

The manual, in our thesis, was a relatively small but also important part. We wanted to keep the workload of the manual as small as possible, because realistically thinking we already had an enormous task in planning and implementing the lessons in such a short time of few months. Still the manual was essential to do for a few reasons; we wanted the family childminders to have some concrete benefit of this thesis project after it was all done and we also wanted the children to have a memory of our lessons. In addition to this we wanted the parents of the children to have the possibility to see and read what we did with their children.

The manual consisted of following parts: acknowledgements to the childminders, children and parents, short explanation of some theoretical background we had used, detailed explanations of the activities and some photographs of the lessons and a list of references. Our goal was to make the manual easily readable and practical. We also invested in making it look intriguing, so we used bright colors and added fun pictures of the lessons. We wanted the manual to be practical and easy to use if they were in need of a quick inspiration or a game to come up with.

The manual was sent to the child-minders during March and we got positive feedback from it. In the evaluation chapter there is more detailed information about the feedback we got for the manual.

5 Evaluation

To evaluate the active phase of our thesis we decided, after carefully contemplating, to go with observation of the children, written evaluation from our working-life partners and self-evaluation. We also included a short evaluation of the manual which includes the feedback from the childminders and our own thoughts on how it turned out.

5.1 Observation

We thought about interviewing the children after each session to find out whether they enjoyed the lesson or not, and it could have worked in a group of children that were about the same age, but we felt like the feedback would not be accurate because a two-year-olds will not be able to voice their opinion in the same way as a five-year-old can. Instead of interviewing the children we decided to use observation as a tool to get feedback about the lessons from the children. Since we had had only very little experience in observation in practice, we wanted to have a clear structure in what to look for and how to understand it. For this we decided to use parts of The Leuven Involvement Scale for Young Children (1997). The LIS-YC is a useful observation tool for many different uses, one of them being kindergarten teacher education. It can increase students' sensitivity to understanding what is happening in the children (Laevens 1997, 15). We found the scale really useful for us, not only because of the learning possibilities it offers but because we found that it worked well in translating the children's behavior to us. Involvement is a measure for quality, and it can be seen in the action of people of any ages (Laevens 1997, 3).

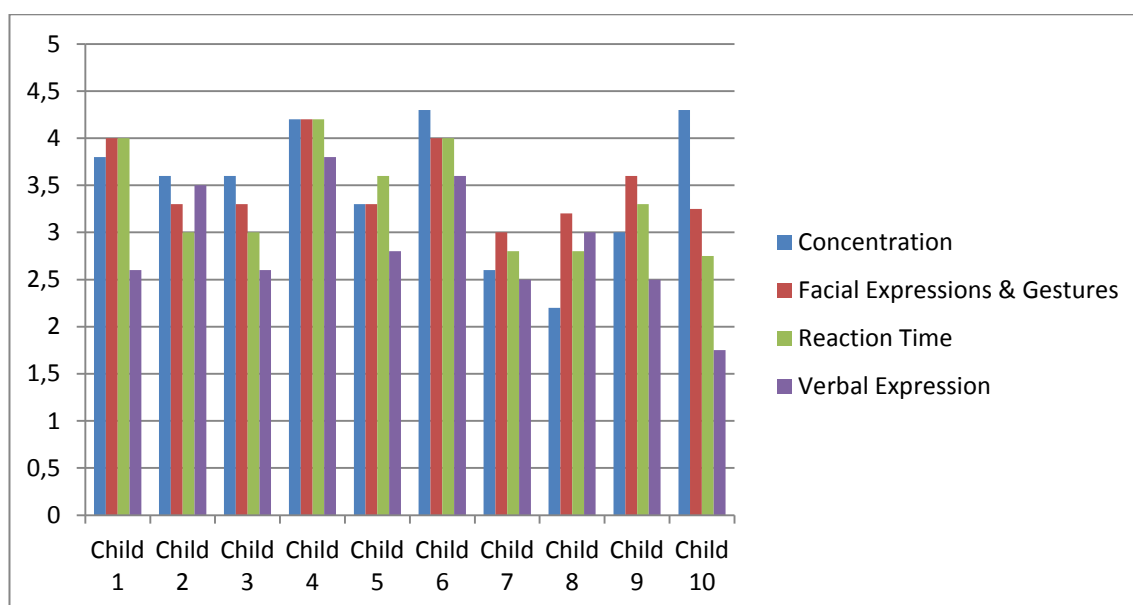
The LIS-YC in its simplest form consists of two parts; list of different signs of child's behavior, which can help determine the commitment towards the activity and LIS-YS -scale's five stages. We only looked for four of the nine signs which we felt suited our thesis the best, because we focused on the whole group instead of one child, and we felt like it was easier to get accurate data while we focused on only few of the most important signs. Those signs were: Concentration (the child focuses their attention closely to the activity - often can be seen in their eyes), Facial Expressions and Gestures (feelings can be read from the child's face and even their posture can reveal whether they are into the activity or not), Reaction Time (small children respond quickly to interesting stimulus) and last but not least Verbal Expressions (children sometimes express their commitment explicitly by commenting spontaneously). For all of the children we graded these four signs between one and five, 1 meaning "no activity", 2 "repeatedly interrupted action", 3 "somewhat continuing action", 4 "action that includes intensive moments", and 5 meaning "long-lasting intensive activity" (Laevens 1997, 6-10).

Our goal in observing was to get two things out of it. Firstly ideas on what activities work with this group of children to make planning of the next lessons easier for us. Secondly we hoped it would give us a general view on how well we succeeded in planning and implementing the lessons, because after all, the most important thing to us was that the children would enjoy our lessons. Because this thesis was not a research and it did not focus on getting clear results we were able to use the LIS-YS loosely and for example create an observation sheet of our own (appendix 3) instead of using the one that was originally designed for the LIS-YS. There are three different ways to use the LIS-YS general assessment, using time intervals and con-

tinuing analysis. Our method was general assessment because it is the most useful tool in assessing quality of a group's activity. It is also used in situations where a kindergarten teacher wants to regularly assess the same activity or space and it gives the opportunity to specify who in the group each of the levels of commitment describes, and this is why we chose this method.

The following chart shows the average of what involvement stages each children were at during all the six Physical Education lessons, or however many lessons each child took part in, on all the four different areas we were focusing on. This average gave an idea of how involved the children were in the sessions throughout the six weeks. What we cannot see in this chart is the changes of levels of involvement some children had in each area during different lessons. Some were all throughout the lessons more consistent in their reaction towards the activities than others. But the ones that had the most changes definitely gave us the best ideas on what activities and games worked for this group and which did not.

FIGURE 1: INVOLVEMENT CHART



Since there were two of us, one was able to mainly stay aside from the activities and observe while the other led the group. Still it was surprisingly difficult to rate the children's involvement between one and five by watching the whole group however long each lesson took. Obviously we had to take into consideration whether each task required a lot of effort from the child, because that would also affect whether the child seemed committed or not. In a situation where the child seemed to be at level 2 at one point and at level 4 at the next we had to put the average of 3 for the whole lesson, just as simple as that.

Out of this observation we were mostly just able to tell which activities worked for the children but we were also able to notice some constant things that were obvious throughout the lessons. In figure 1 we have listed the children by numbers 1 to 10, 1 being the oldest child and 10 being the youngest. Child 7 and child 8 were good friends and we noticed that when one of them lost concentration, the other one did as well. It can be seen in figure 1, that they consistently reached lower levels of commitment than most of the other children, even child 9 who was younger than either of them. Also child 10, who was not quick to take part in the activities or say anything, with the exception of the last lessons, had a very high level of commitment towards concentration. Even when the child did not do anything else, the child kept his eyes fixed on the one of us who was instructing the lesson. In the figure 1 it can also be seen that even when the children were not quick to react otherwise, they still for the most part were very focused on the activities. They listened to us and wanted to know what was coming next.

Since the averages or the levels of commitment in all of the aspects we were observing were quite high we can say with some confidence, that the lessons that we planned were at least partly successful.

5.2 Written Evaluation from Working Life Partners

Our goal from the start was to establish a trusting relationship with the family childminders in order for them to feel comfortable in giving us honest feedback, after all that was the way we would learn the best. We decided to make a questionnaire and give it to each of the childminders after every lesson, because we wanted the option of using the feedback for our advantage when planning the next lesson. We pondered on what the questionnaire should be like, and it was quite challenging to come up with one that would meet all our standards. It had to be short enough that the childminders would have the time to fill it in after each session. Still it had to be detailed enough for us to get the information that we needed.

Our teacher advised us to use a questionnaire designed by Mattila Noora and Tiittanen Tero for their thesis *Liikuntatuokiokansio liikuntakasvatuksen tukemiseksi päiväkotit Tuulikellossa* (2012) that was very similar to ours except for set in a kindergarten. We had not even thought about using a questionnaire designed by anyone other than ourselves, but since our teacher convinced us that it was completely fine as long as we gave credit for the people who designed it, we decided to go along with it. As our teacher had said, it had already been tested and proved to be a working questionnaire in a similar situation as ours and we felt like that was a plus.

We got a lot of feedback from instructing the lessons which was good considering the coming lessons and for reflection to us. The child-minders wrote that the instructions were clear, the guidance was assertive and fluent and also that we were calm when guiding the lessons. They were happy that the atmosphere was positive and encouraging instead of being performance centered and that we gave the children the choice to take part and did not force anyone to join in. We also made clear that if someone did not want to join, the child knew also that disturbing the lesson was not an option. We got much positive feedback from including the childminders themselves in our lessons as one part of the team and they wrote on the feedback:

“Children and adults waited eagerly for Thursday’s physical education lessons.”

“The parachute game was fun for all (to children and adults).”

“Children took nicely part in the games (adults too).”

Also using the equipment seemed to work well. Especially the child-minders wrote about using the balls and the parachute that they were good and interesting equipment. That helped us to decide for example that we would use the parachute in other lessons also and create different games with it since during the lesson we also noticed that the threshold for children to join in was very low. One aspect we found a lot from the papers was the mentioning that the lessons were suitably challenging, because the children needed to listen and concentrate on the instructions given before the games. That made the children attending and woke their curiosity towards the coming games. Also the new games were interesting and exciting as they wrote:

“Interesting and different tasks.”

“New action woke children’s curiosity and all kinds of skills were needed.”

“The children liked the running and the excitement.”

As we have mentioned before we also got some critique after our lessons. One of these was the time we used the game naughty squirrels and one child was in great conflict with the term since it was wrong to be naughty. It was well made point and after that we considered the words or terms we used in our games and activities very carefully.

We wanted to get some freely written feedback from the childminders of the manual as well. To get the feedback from the childminders and have it in time to include the evaluation to our thesis, we sent the manual first to them through email as a PowerPoint version. Later on we delivered the manual itself in their hands. We got positive feedback from all the three childminders as they said it was very nicely made and easy to read, which was one of our goals when we made it, since it benefits none if it was very long and hard to read. They also

mentioned couple of times that they will use the games in the future when they plan their lessons for the children.

Furthermore they told us that they are going to use the red light green light game in their spring celebration where the families take part and that it was a nice change for all those singing games they have done in the previous years.

5.3 Self-Evaluation

Self-evaluation has been a big part of our studies so it was that also during our thesis process. We decided to evaluate our own work in four parts; planning, implementation, team-work and the manual. We felt like what we learned and how we perceived our work was one of the most important parts of the thesis process, because both are planning to work in early childhood education in the near future.

We decided to have a developmental discussion together after each session of our own and each other's performance during the lessons instead of doing it separately on paper. Purpose of this was to create a more positive learning experience, so that we would not focus on looking for faults in ourselves and each other. We feared too much criticism, especially if directed from one to another, would ruin our team spirit and create pressure to do well, when after all the whole idea for this process was for us to learn. These developmental discussions were meaningful to this thesis in two ways; they worked as a reminder during the active phase, for what we could do better when planning the next lessons, but the developmental discussions also worked as a part of a basis for our self-evaluation.

Planning was for us the most difficult part for a few reasons. Not only was it difficult to create physical education lessons that have a proper theoretical base keeping in mind that there are children from two to six years of age attending the lessons, but we also wanted to come up with new, exciting and fun games which made the planning process less fun for us. We also found that we had most tension between us in the planning stage, mostly because we wanted to plan the lessons well but found it difficult. As mentioned before, we both are very hands-on people and because of that we were often tempted to not plan the lessons so carefully and just come up with games that were just fun and did not have too much thought behind them, but if we had done that, the lessons would not have worked as well with the group as they did and we did realize that already in the planning stage. Now with hindsight 20/20 we see how important it was for us to take the time and really study what a two- or five-year-old could do or what was good to keep in mind when teaching physical education, because the lessons we spend the most time planning on were the ones that usually were the best.

A part of successful planning of physical education lessons for children is setting goals for the lessons. The goals for this thesis' lessons were based on them being easy to reach or work toward reaching by all of the children in the group. We did not know much of these specific children's physical skills beforehand but we considered the skill levels of different age groups generally when planning the goals. The goals for each lessons fit the group more and more towards the end, because we planned the lessons one by one during the whole implementation phase and we got to know the children. Especially the listening and following instructions got better as we worked with the group and many of the children, even the youngest, learned to wait for their turn during the games. As for the equipment the children got better with the parachute and enjoyed using it a lot as well as the balls and the obstacles during the task tracks. The second time we used the balancing equipment, the children knew what to do and many of them handled the obstacle without the help of an adult which they had needed when we first did the track. The children also started to take actively part in the games, by suggesting different things and movements that could be done for example on the mattresses or pretending to be different kind of animals during the games.

Some of the warm-up singing games were not that big of a success but some songs, especially the Peter's Hammer, got them singing and participating by eagerly suggesting what body part could possibly be the next hammer. Some of the rhymes and songs they knew, but some were new to them. Especially the clap game gave the sense of rhythm and body movement, as it was possible to make it more difficult by jumping at the same time.

We both believe we reached the goals set for the lessons quite well, but of course as every lesson is different as well as every child is too, there were days when we did not meet the goals with every child. They might have stopped paying attention, especially the youngest ones, and some days few children had their own things going on, being tired and cranky or sick even. Those situations gave us the challenge for instance considering explaining the rules easily and shortly enough to keep the children's attention on the subject. The plans and goals for every lesson are in the appendices (appendix 6).

Implementation of the lessons and teamwork were what we shone at. We both are great with children and it was really easy for us to get familiar with the group. One of the main things that lead us to believe we did well in implementing the lessons was that we had such a good contact with the children. They listened to what we were saying, wanted to participate most of the time and what was the best thing; they started to play "Hanna & Suski" at Day Care. We worked together really well and we completed each other when the other might have been struggling. This was one of the subjects that rose up whenever we had our developmental discussions.

We were both pleased how the manual turned out. It was quite a surprise for both of us how time consuming work it was to pull together all the parts of it. We ended up with a neat package with all the details we wanted to have in it. We wanted to make the manual colorful and intriguing so we settled with bright green as the background color for the pages. Even before we started writing the thesis plan, the thought of adding pictures to the manual was already there. And we both agree it was a great idea since the pictures of the lessons really made the manual come to life. When we had it ready in our hands, all printed out and colorful, we really had the feeling we did something that had a concrete outcome. The only negative thing we can say is that our manual did not turn out to be as packed with information about theory as it could have been. We only added the main points of the theory that we had kept in mind while planning, because as mentioned earlier in the thesis, we wanted to keep the workload of the manual proportional to the time we spent on the thesis as a whole. We also wanted the manual to be an easy read, which it turned out to be.

6 Ethical Issues

Trustworthiness goes hand in hand with ethicalness in a thesis. It was from early on important to us that our thesis was done in the most ethical manner as possible. We paid attention to this when we were in contact with our working life partners and the parents of the children. Both the childminders and the parents were always updated on what we were doing and we tried to be honest in every step of the way. As an example we can mention the time when we had to write a second letter to the parents to correct the information we had written wrong in the first letter asking for their permission for their children to attend our lessons (appendices 4 & 5). This was in our opinion the ethical thing to do since we were after all discussing where we will publish information and possibly photos of their children. Furthermore, because one of the parents wished that her child's photos would not end up on the internet, we of course decided to respect that and make sure they would not.

We also wanted to treat the children with respect and if they did not seem keen to do some of the activities, no one was forced to join in any activity. They had the freedom to choose to take part in the game or leave whenever they wanted to. All the children were treated equally and encouraged to take part in the activities. The children's safety and wellbeing was always our main priority and the lessons were planned keeping that in mind. For that reason we also asked for the childminders' to help any children that needed help and support during the lessons, especially the youngest ones. Also to maintain the trustworthiness with our working life partners, we were always on time for the physical education lessons and were prepared with the lesson plan, feedback forms and proper equipment.

7 Discussion

The idea for this project-based thesis rose from our own interest towards the subject, both physical education and family day care. Our goal was to get all the children moving and enjoying the lessons, which hopefully will help to create a strong basis for their physical activity in the future. All through the process we wanted to keep in mind our working life partners and their wish; creating lessons that would get all of the children excited and joining in the activities. In this chapter we have discussed some unique choices we made concerning our thesis and whether they were right choices for us or not.

The core of our thesis was planning and implementing the physical education lessons, and also composing a manual of the lessons we had executed. From the start we wanted to be realistic with our goals, and not try to reach toward things we were not going to achieve and that is why decided that the manual would be a nice addition to the lessons we had implemented rather than a project of its own. With that said, we both wish we had started the thesis process six months earlier than we did, so that we would have had more time and resources to make the whole thesis, but especially the manual, even wider and more detailed. Still we feel like we did meet all of our goals to the extent we were able to; lessons got done, manual was a nice little package, children were happy and the childminders were content with our work.

We had agreed in the beginning that each Thursday we would meet face to face and work on our thesis together and other times we agreed what parts we would write separately and then read through later together. Mostly we managed to meet face to face, but also Skype, Google docs and our Facebook thesis project page helped us to keep in touch and work together if we did not manage to meet physically. Arranging time for our thesis was not as hard as we had thought it might turn out to be, even though we are both working full-time, but of course not having the extra time during the crucial time of doing our thesis affected on the energy we had to put toward the thesis. This also made us think that we should have started the thesis process earlier.

Every Thursday, after each lesson, we decided to have a developmental discussion talking about what we succeeded on and what did not work. The developmental discussion for us was mainly an alternative way of doing self-evaluation, as individuals but also as a team. We both agree that the developmental discussions gave us a valuable tool to reflect on what we did and that it was a better choice than if we had settled on observing one and another during the lessons. Furthermore this made it easier for us to focus on teaching the lessons not having

to think about criticizing each other. For that we are sure many conflicts were avoided and our teamwork was fluent.

One of the most unique choices that we made was, instead of asking children's opinion about the lessons for feedback since some of them were only two years old, to use observation as a tool to assess the children's involvement during the activities. The Leuven Involvement Scale for Young Children provided us with the proper tool. Of course the scale was not perfect, since we can hardly know what each and every child felt or thought during the lessons. The way we used it, the scale measured four aspects of the children: facial expressions and gestures, reaction time, concentration and verbal expressions. These four aspects we chose since they fitted the purpose of the observation best and we thought we would be capable of taking notice of maximum of four aspects of a child's behavior at once. Of course we had doubts on whether the scale would work and if we should have interviewed the children after all, but we did get some meaningful information out of the observation.

Observation worked well for also in the sense that it gave us the opportunity to form an understanding of the group dynamic of the children. For example we were able to see if there were children that provoked each other to act naughty, or if some of the children did not fit in the group. This way we were able to address any small issues that might have occurred.

Apart from the observation scale we decided to play it safe with the theory we used. Instead of going through an enormous heap of literature we decided to really invest in a few materials that we trusted and we thought supported our thesis. This choice helped us stay on point with our thesis and not get sidetracked by trivia information about early childhood education or physical education. In our opinion we chose good quality theory to support our thesis and that makes our work that much more trustworthy.

We definitely did the best work in being in contact with the children and teaching them the activities. The theory background about teaching physical education seemed to pop up in our minds whenever we were teaching the children. The interaction with the children came very naturally from us and we got the most positive feedback for the way we taught the children clearly and firmly but gently. Mostly we were quite satisfied with the structure and activities of the lessons we created, but it was sometimes hard to concentrate on the writing the thesis itself. With this said, perhaps the hardest part in the whole thesis process was writing the final details and finetuning of the report. The biggest part, the active phase, was done at this point and it was very difficult to try to concentrate on small details.

We cannot underline enough the importance of writing the thesis plan, since it helped us a lot while writing the final thesis so we are grateful we did that part well.

Furthermore we pondered on the possibilities of use of this thesis in the future. It would be interesting to see other projects similar to these be done in co-operation with family day cares; for example arts and crafts lessons in family day care. Since we have gotten mixed information about the well-being of family day care childminders, it would also be interesting to read a study about their work conditions and -hours, salary and their overall well-being in their work for example compared to a nursery nurse.

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Figures

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Appendices

Appendix 1
Feedback Form part 1

Palautelomake

Päivämäärä:
Nimi:

Palaute ohjauksesta:

Vuorovaikutus



matala



korkea

Motivointi



matala



korkea

Turvallisuus



matala



korkea

Vapaa sana ohjauksesta:

Appendix 2
Feedback Form part 2

Palaute tuokiosta:

Onnistuminen

onnistui hyvin

Miksi:

ei onnistunut

Miksi:

Kiinnostavuus

hyvin kiinnostava

Miksi:

ei kiinnostava

Miksi:

Haastavuus

sopivan haastava

Miksi:

ei haasteita

Miksi:

Vapaa sana tuokiosta:

Appendix 3
Observation Sheet

	Concentration	Facial Expression & Gestures	Reaction Time	Verbal Expression
Child 1				
Child 2				
Child 3				
Child 4				
Child 5				
Child 6				
Child 7				
Child 8				
Child 9				
Child 10				

Levels:

- 1 - No Action
- 2 - Repeatedly Interrupted Action
- 3 - Somewhat Continuing Action
- 4 - Action Which Includes Intensive Moments
- 5 - Long-lasting Intensive Action

Children's Verbal Expressions:

Appendix 4
Letter to Parents 1

Hei Vanhemmat!

Olemme Laurea ammattikorkeakoulun neljännen vuosikurssin sosionomi-opiskelijoita. Olemme tekemässä toiminnallista opinnäytetyötä, jonka aiheena on liikuntakasvatus perhepäivähoidossa.

Tarkoituksenamme on pitää kerran viikossa n. 2kk ajan 30minuutin liikuntatuokioita lapsille. Tällä pyrimme edistämään lasten hyvinvointia ja riittävää liikunnan määrää ja samalla luoda valmista pohjaa ohjattuihin liikuntahetkiin, joita perhepäivähoitajat voisivat käyttää myös tulevaisuudessa.

Liikuntahetki on vapaaehtoinen, mutta mikäli haluatte lastenne osallistuvan niihin, tarvitsemme luvan siihen huoltajilta.

Toiminnallisessa opinnäytetyössä tulemme käyttämään valokuvia liikuntahetkistä osana lopputyöme esittelyä, johon tarvitsemme myös huoltajan suostumuksen.

Liikuntahetket tapahtuvat anonymieina, eli emme julkaise lasten nimiä tai ikää, sekä sosionomiopiskelijoina meitä sitoo myös vaitiolovelvollisuus.

Ystävällisin terveisin:

Susanna Hottinen
Hanna Pennanen

Palautathan alla olevan kappaleen perhepäivähoitajallenne 5.12 mennessä!

- - - - -

Lapseni saa osallistua ohjattuihin liikuntatuokioihin

Kyllä ☐Ei ☐

Lapsestani saa ottaa valokuvia, jotka tulevat esiintymään osana lopputyön esittelyä

Kyllä ☐Ei ☐

Allekirjoitus

Päivämäärä

Paikka

Hyvät vanhemmat,

Olemme tällä viikolla aloittamassa lasten liikuntahetkien toteuttamisen.

Joudumme myös tekemään selvennyksen sekä korjauksen edelliseen tekemäämme lupalappuun.

Liikuntahetkissä lapsista otettuja kuvia emme laita internetiin.

Kuvat esiintyvät ainoastaan portfolioissa, jonka jätämme perhepäivähoitajille, sekä valmiin opinnäytetyön esittelytilaisuudessa johon osallistuvat ohjaavat opettajamme sekä koulun oppilaita.

Korjaus jonka joudumme tekemään, koskee kohtaa jossa kirjoitimme, että emme julkaise lasten nimiä tai ikää. Opinnäytetyön aiheen takia joudumme mainitsemaan lasten iät arvioinnin tekoa varten, mutta lasten nimiä emme mainitse.

Ystävällisin terveisin

Hanna Pennanen & Susanna Hottinen

Appendix 6

Lesson Plans & Goals

Plan for Physical Education Lesson # 1:

- ✓ Warm-Up: Bouncing Beans
- ✓ Main Game: Nest Game
- ✓ Ending: Stretching

Goals:

- Teaching positive physical exercise habits: Moving diversely, Structure; warm-up, exercise, ending.
- Creating body awareness: Suitable exercising for all ages; different movements like jumping, swaying, crawling.
- Exercising use of imagination and understanding of symbolism: Bean bags are “food”, mattresses are “nests”, children are “animals”. Already 2-year-old’s have developing understanding of symbolism
- Children learn to take actively part in the games: First lesson; encouraging children to be part of the games

Plans for Physical Education Lesson # 2:

- ✓ Warm-Up: Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes
- ✓ Main Game: Parachute Games (Squirrel & Crocodile)
- ✓ Ending: Rest

Goals:

- Children learn to use imagination: Suitable for all ages, “Naughty Squirrels”, “Crocodile mommy”
- Emphasis on teaching children to listen to instructions: Up from 3 to 4-year-old’s understand rules of games
- Combining music and movement: Up from 2 years children understand the rhythm in music
- Body awareness: Touching “Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes”
- Social skills for working together: Up from 3 years social skills are developing better; everyone needs to participate in moving the parachute
- Learning to work with equipment such as a parachute; suitable for even the youngest children

Plans for Physical Education Lesson # 3:

- ✓ Warm Up: Petterin vasara
- ✓ Main Activity: Obstacle Course
- ✓ Ending: Therapy Ball Massage

Goals:

- Creating a longer lesson: See how long the children have energy
- Gross motor skills: Such as crawling, balancing, rolling, throwing and jumping. Suitable for all ages.
- Children learn to listen to instructions: Obstacle course has a lot of rules, From 3 years and up start to understand them, smallest can imitate and follow the adults
- Learn to wait for their own turn: During obstacle course have to wait for turn, needs to be taught from 3 years and up, older children already know, smallest are taught

Plans for Physical Education Lesson #4:

- ✓ Warm Up: HuugiGuugi
- ✓ Main Games - Red Light, Green Light and Parking lot tag
- ✓ Ending - Stretching and Little Paint Bucket

Goals:

- Practicing listening and following instructions: even 2-year-olds understand easy instructions, red light, green light game starts with careful and also easy instructions
- Waiting for their turn: up to 3 year-olds start to understand social behaviour in a group like waiting for their turn, this in red light green light game and also in little paint bucket rhyme in the end
- Children learn concepts such as traffic lights and when to walk or stop: up from 2 years children understand symbolism like a rubber cone is a light or imitating to be something else like a car, challenging children even at 6 to understand when to walk and when to stop
- Children learn to take turns as the “tagger” or the “traffic light”: 3-year-olds and up start to be able to share and take turns

Plans for Physical Education Lesson #5:

- ✓ Warm Up: Clap Game
- ✓ Main Game - Ball Pass and Ball Parachute
- ✓ Ending - "Taputan" song

Goals:

- Children follow instructions: up to 2 years children are able to understand easy instructions and follow them with the help of an adult, especially in ball pass and ball parachute game
- Children learn to act and work in a group: from 3 years children start to socialize with others, needed in the main games
- Children learn to handle the balls and a parachute: up from 2 years children are able to grasp and hold different kind of objects and handle them
- Children learn to combine music and movement: even children at 2 years understand rhythm in music, in the ending

Plans for Physical Education Lesson #6:

- ✓ Warm Up - Airplane
- ✓ Main Game - Obstacle Course
- ✓ Ending - Therapy Ball Massage

Goals:

- Exercising the use of imagination and understanding of symbolism: airplane and obstacle course: from 2 years understanding of symbolism starts to develop
- Listening to instructions: 2-year-olds already understand easy instructions, good for all age groups to practice
- Waiting one's own turn: from 3 years of age social skills are developing - children learn to wait
- Learning different basic motor skills such as crawling, rolling, grabbing, running and sense of balance: good for all age groups to develop in