



Creating intergenerational contact between Oulunkylä English Kindergarten and Kustaankartano Centre for the Elderly

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The aim of this thesis was to plan, implement and lay foundation for an intergenerational program between Oulunkylä English Kindergarten and Kustaankartano Center for the Elderly. The program had the participation of two groups: a group of preschoolers and a small group of dementia affected elders. These groups were joined by the thesis partners and other early childhood and elderly care practitioners. The project was born out of an increased awareness of the institutionalization of the old and the decreasing contact between the elder and the younger generation. The human and intergenerational interaction the project involved was aimed at supporting both the preschooler's socio-emotional competencies as well as the elders' socio-emotional well-being. Also, the study authors' professional development served as incentive for finding effective ways to implement intergenerational activity sessions.

There were five intergenerational sessions implemented plus one separately meant only for the children's preparation for the project involved. During the five activity sessions the study authors have employed simple creative methods that were meant both to stimulate the participants on a sensorial level and to act as a connecting bridge between the two generations. Pro-social behavior was explained and encouraged during the intergenerational contact.

In this study, the authors look at the preschooler's socio-emotional development support through the socialization of emotion with the help of theoretical models introduced by Zeidner, M. Rogoff, B. and others.

The inquiry method used was action research, an emergent approach to qualitative research, pinpointed by Kurt Lewin. The evaluation methods were summative and formative evaluations and the data collected was qualitative and descriptive.

The sessions were natural, relaxed and pleasant. Pro-social behavior was evident and appreciated. The program will have continuity with future sessions organized by Oulunkylä English Kindergarten in collaboration with Kustaankartano Center for the Elderly.

Intergenerational contact, Socio-emotional development, Pre-schoolers, Action research

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Sukupolvien välisen kontaktin luominen Oulunkylän englanninkielisen päiväkodin ja Kustaankartanon vanhustenkeskuksen välille

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Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli suunnitella, toteuttaa ja luoda pohja sukupolvien väliselle ohjelmalle. Oulunkylän englanninkielisen päiväkodin ja Kustaankartanon vanhustenkeskuksen välillä. Projektiin osallistuvia ryhmiä oli kaksi: ryhmä esikoululaisia ja pieni ryhmä dementoituneita vanhuksia. Vanhusten laitostuminen ja sukupolvien vähenevä kontakti vaikuttivat projektin syntyyn. Sukupolvien välisen yhteistyön ja vuorovaikutuksen tavoitteena oli tukea sekä esikoululaisten sosioemotionaalista kompetenssia että vanhusten sosioemotionaalista hyvinvointia. Opinnäytetyön kirjoittajien tavoitteena oli toisaalta kehittää omaa ammatillista osaamistaan, toisaalta löytää toimivia keinoja sukupolvien välisten toimintatukien järjestämiseen.

Kahden eri sukupolven välisiä tuokiota järjestettiin viisi kertaa, lisäksi järjestettiin vain lapsille tarkoitettu tuokio, joka auttoi lapsia valmistautumaan tuleviin tapaamisiin. Tuokioiden aikana opinnäytetyön tekijät käyttivät helppoja luovia menetelmiä, jotka stimuloivat osallistujien aisteja ja toimivat yhdistävinä tekijöinä kahden eri sukupolven välillä. Tuokioiden aikana painopiste oli prososiaalinen käyttäytyminen ja siihen kannustaminen.

Tutkielman tekijät lähestyvät esikouluikäisten sosioemotionaalisen kehityksen tukemista tunteiden sosiaalisaation kautta käyttäen muun muassa Moshe Zeidnerin ja Barbara Rogoffin teoreettisia malleja Tutkimusmenetelmänä käytettiin toimintatutkimusta. Arviointimenetelminä käytettiin summatiivista, sekä formatiivista arviointia, kerätyt tiedot olivat laadullisia.

Tuokiot olivat luonnollisia, rentoja ja miellyttäviä. Prososiaalista käytöstä oli havaittavissa ja sitä arvostettiin. Oulunkylän englanninkielinen päiväkotijatkoo sukupolvien välistä ohjelmaa Kustaankartanossa.

Sukupolvien välinen kontakti, Sosioemotionaalinen kehitys, Esikouluikäiset, Toimintatutkimus

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1 INTRODUCTION

The modern world experiences big shifts in the aging youth ratio with Europe expected to have the highest discrepancy in these numbers. By 2050 every child under the age of 15 will have a correspondent of three elderly people aged 60 and above, fact that will stress the societal infrastructure, according to World Youth Report, 2003. Moreover, because the decline is distributed unevenly, some regions in Europe experience stagnation in population growth as early as 2015. With a stagnating natural growth and the youth being outnumbered by the old, an unwanted imbalance between the society's age groups is born. Ironically, though, even with the increase in the number of the elderly, the young ones have less and less contact with the aged because of the segregation the elderly experience by their institutionalization. Barring the afore mentioned imbalance and isolation between the groups in mind, it is our belief that creating strong links between these society "cells" is essential in maintaining a well-functioning wholesome society. Moreover, by sharing the responsibilities, obligations but also the benefits of frequent intergenerational contact, the Oulunkylä English Kindergarten's children from today could grow into the more caring and responsible adults from tomorrow.

In order to be able to take small steps towards the materialization of a society that holds more collaborative age groups, it was aimed at the implementation of a project that would lay the foundation for cooperation between Oulunkylä's English Kindergarten and Kustaankartano Centre for Elderly in Helsinki. In addition to the fact that children will get to be in contact with such a different age group than themselves, they will also participate in common social activities together with the dementia-affected persons. This would certainly raise feelings and thoughts in children that they will learn to manage with our help. In result, the children will be closer to grow into emotionally competent individuals, being at ease around others, respecting others and not having great difficulty in recognizing and understanding emotions in themselves and their fellow beings. Understanding and recognizing emotions would reflect in the children's behaviour, as during the participation in our sessions they will appropriate different attitudes and aspects of life in the local culture.

As for the study authors as practitioners, these planned contacts between the very young and the elderly with dementia are meant for testing for efficient methods of facilitating activities that make common participation possible on the long run, as well. The fact that the study partners, as future professionals, get to practice the activities they thought of being beneficial for the participants is essential to their own development. This way, their practice can inform them with the knowledge that will develop their next action which will generate, in turn, more knowledge. Since every interaction between individuals involves some degree social and emotional competencies, the hope was that the interaction the thesis partners are mediating will have an impact in developing the Oulunkylä English Kindergarten's children

socio-emotional skills. This fact will ensure, hopefully, future more successful intergenerational and prejudice-free relationships between them and the elderly, in general.

2 THESIS BACKGROUND

2.1 Working life partners

The contact with Oulunkylä English Kindergarten came about as one of study's authors did occasional substituting work for the day-care. Having been at the premises and also having talked with the manager of the day-care, it became clear that there was a pronounced interest in a project that would involve both Kustaankartano Centre for Elderly's residents and Oulunkylä English Kindergarten's children. At the same time, Kustaankartano Centre for Elderly was interested in a program that would bring children regularly to the nursing home and, thus, welcomed the project with open arms.

2.1.1 Oulunkylä English Kindergarten

Oulunkylä English Kindergarten is a private organization owned by the Parents' Society that offers 21 full-time and 7 part-time education and care places for children aged 3-7. The personnel consist of 2 qualified kindergarten teachers, usually Finnish natives, and 2 English native speaking teacher's assistants. As its name states, the day-care is located in Oulunkylä, Helsinki. The kindergarten has also school preparation classes that take place according to the Finnish curriculum and the general guidelines of the early childhood education plan. The main goals of Oulunkylä's English Kindergarten are supporting the children's development and growth as well as offer them English Language immersion; the latter happens through crafts, stories and/or activities conducted in English.

Activities at Oulunkylä English Kindergarten are planned keeping all aspects of child development and growth in mind. The kindergarten aims to "...help the child to develop as healthy and strong self-image as possible" and believes this is reached through creative methods as they support "...the child's individual creative expression and affirms his or her self-esteem and emotional development". (Oulunkylä English Kindergarten 2011, 3) Children are encouraged to wonder, explore, question and experiment and by offering opportunities for small group discussions the kindergarten aims to "...increase the child's confidence to express all kinds of thoughts and ideas on different phenomena of life". (Oulunkylä English Kindergarten 2011, 10) Not only expressing ideas and ponderings, expressing feelings and thoughts are encouraged Oulunkylä English Kindergarten as they believe it is "...important that the child can freely express his or her disappointment, fear, failure and frustration" and that the "...adult's respectful attitude towards all kinds of expression from the child increases the child's confidence in vocalising their thoughts". (Oulunkylä English Kindergarten 2011, 10 & 16)

In its Early Childhood Education Plan, Oulunkylä English Kindergarten also talks about “historical-social orientation” which refers to building “a picture of the past and the present with the children” about the formal event’s tradition. Transferring tradition and collective knowledge is the idea behind telling stories at the day-care and also behind elements of the undertaken project as the music on the background during the activities and the contact with the elderly and the diversely aged staff. The sessions’ implementation comes in completion to the kindergarten’s curriculum by enriching it with yet another action plan that encompasses the historical-social value presented on Oulunkylä English Kindergarten’s site. “Through the historical-social orientation we aim to enlarge the children’s outlook on different aspects of life and also to build some basic social consciousness. This consciousness will form a basis to the growth of a socially responsible individual”. (Oulunkylä English Kindergarten 2011, 14)

As a whole, the part of the outcomes the working life partner expects from the project are having correspondents in the National Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care the kindergarten bases its principles on. More specifically, educational goals as “...reinforcing positive behaviour and action towards others...” and learning “...to think about other people and care about them...” are of interest for Oulunkylä English Kindergarten and also key principles in planning and implementing the thesis project. (Oulunkylä English Kindergarten 2011, 14) The kindergarten also emphasises in “...child’s ability to accept diversity and development of a broader perspective of the world and life in general” by having multicultural staff and by “...exposing the children to a broader and more diverse cultural environment”. (Oulunkylä English Kindergarten 2011, 4) Taking part in an intergenerational project the children are exposed to a generationally diverse environment.

The project’s implementation meets a concrete need for intergenerational contact expressed by Oulunkylä English Kindergarten. It is facilitating the fore mentioned contact by setting a foundation between Oulunkylä English Kindergarten and Kustaankartano Centre for the Elderly. Moreover, by setting ground for collaboration and also implementing five contact session, the kindergarten gets a “magnifying-glass view” of how the collaboration looks in practice. General guidelines with regards to favouring more supporting sessions for children’s social-emotional development are made available for the kindergarten and will become part of the Early Childhood Education Plan of Oulunkylä English Kindergarten.

Social interaction holds an important role in Oulunkylä English Kindergarten Education Plan and ideology. The kindergarten states on their educational plan that “...primary developmental goal for children over the age of three is to learn social interaction skills with other children”, which comes to be the situation in the implemented intergenerational project. During the project, the children get to work collaboratively, get to share, wait for their turn, etc.,

while they are “working” in a group that aims for the same goal. (Oulunkylä English Kindergarten 2011, 8)

2.1.2 Kustaankartano Centre for the Elderly

Kustaankartano service centre is located in Oulunkylä, North Helsinki. Kustaankartano has 22 units with around 500 client places catering for various needs, including dementia care, psycho geriatric care, disabled care, short-term care and rehabilitation. There are also three day activity units and service centre which organises recreational and rehabilitating activities for pensioners and unemployed. For Swedish speaking elderly, Kustaankartano offers services in their own mother tongue. The elderly centre also has a crisis unit for elderly in social crisis at their home environment and infection ward for those with MRSA. On top of the regular care staff the institution also cooperates with, for example, an occupational therapist, physiotherapist, pedicurist, hairdresser, social worker and hospital pastor. (City of Helsinki 2013)

The Finnish Constitution lays the foundation for the structure of the care and services for elderly. Its core value is the respect for human dignity with the ethical principles of self-determination, a resource-oriented approach, equality, individuality, participation and security. (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities 2008, 12-13) As well as other institutions caring for elderly, Kustaankartano follows these regulations and define their own guidelines in Quality Handbook (Laatukäsikirja). Care and services offered at Kustaankartano varies from short- or long-term nursing home care to service centre's activities which are open to all pensioners and unemployed Helsinki residents. The work done at Kustaankartano is client-orientated and implemented as multi-professional teamwork. In an Act on Supporting the Functional Capacity of the Older Population and on Social and Health Care Services for Older Persons nursing home care is defined as “...a functional entity of services maintained by public or private service providers where social and health care services are offered mainly for older persons so that the services are provided in the facilities of the service provider or in the private home of the older person”. (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2012, 2) Kustaankartano promotes rehabilitative nursing and maintaining client's functional capacity for as long as possible. The core of all functions at Kustaankartano are based on guidelines of “ethical principles and criteria of good care” which include clients' individuality and functional capacity, sense of community, safety, good leadership and know-how. Kustaankartano aims to constantly develop and improve the elderly care by using knowledge from various researches, creativity and innovation. As defined by Ministry of Social Affairs and Health “social and health care services securing long-term care and attention must be provided so that the older person can feel that he or she is living a safe, meaningful and dignified life and can maintain social contacts and participate in meaningful activities promoting and maintaining his or her wellbeing, health and functional capacity

ty". (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2012, 5) In Kustaankartano functional capacity and independent initiative are supported by strengthening clients' individual assets and by facilitating purposeful and enjoyable activities. Clients have an opportunity to have an impact on their daily lives, and in planning, implementing and evaluating their own care. (Kustaankartanon Laatukäsikirja 2011, 10)

Kustaankartano emphasises on knowledge and development of elderly care and gerontology and works multi-professionally to enhance care practices to improve elders' quality of life. The centre has been involved in different innovative projects aiming to better the lives of the clients including Elsi Elderly Care safety floor where person detecting sensor floors were used to monitor clients' movements in their room. Kustaankartano also participated in an interactive robot project INTRO which tested using robots for recreational activities. On top of recreational activities in units recreation instructors arrange clubs, trips and other activities for everyone in the centre. (City of Helsinki 2013)

3 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Intergenerational practice

Beth Johnson Foundation in their 'Definition of Intergenerational Practice' talk about intergenerational practice by stating that "...it aims to bring people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contributes to building more cohesive communities. Intergenerational practice is inclusive, building on the positive resources that the young and old have to offer each other and those around them". (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2001) Beisgen & Kraitchman (2002) continue by defining that "...intergenerational programs help prevent unnatural age segregation..." and continue how these programs "...provide opportunities for interaction among people of diverse backgrounds and ages; for sharing of the experience of family life, ethnic origin, occupation, religious beliefs, stage of life, and recreation; and for promoting appreciation of cultural heritage, traditions, and histories and understanding of shared values". (Beisgen & Kraitchman 2002, 200)

Intergenerational practice commonly falls into categories of members of one generation supporting another, people from different generations working together to address community issues or people from different generations learning together. (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2001) Crucial to these are programs are intergenerational components namely, organisation, length and goals, participation from several generations as well as on-going exchange. Organising a program refers to organising a planned action which aims to reach certain goals within the timeframe agreed for that particular program. In order for a program to become an intergenerational one the participants need to be from different generations and the aims for

the program has to be “...beneficial to the participants as well as other people in their surroundings”. (Sánchez 2009, 7)

Intergenerational practice has become popular across the world due to the fact that “...the aging of the population has increased the participation and visibility of older adults in the community”. (Femia, Zarit, Blair, Jarrott & Bruno 2008, 272) Another reason for their popularity is the number of children living far away from their grandparents and/or in single-parents homes. (Femia et al 2008, 272) In the United States intergenerational practice is increasing and spreading across the nation with the idea of “...uniting the generations are the newer efforts to advocate improved services for the elderly and children together, rather than forcing the generations to compete with one another for resources”. (Lombardi 2002, 158). Shared sites, where services for elderly and for children are placed in the same premises, are becoming more popular and a growing number of elderly people provide childcare for their grandchildren or children from other families. (Lombardi 2002, 158)

In Finland too the idea of bringing two generations together is becoming increasingly popular. Kindergarten Hanna and group family day care unit Viikuna, situated in Helsinki, both work in close cooperation with the residents of Hanna-home, service centre for elderly. Kindergarten Hanna shares its premises with the service centre and group family day care unit Viikuna is situated in the same vicinity which allows regular contact between the institutions. Kindergarten aims to build respectful and caring culture. Both day-care units participate weekly in music and play sessions with the elderly and celebrate ‘grandparent day’ every year. (City of Helsinki/ Department of Early Education and Care 2013, 15- 17) Mannerheim League for Child Welfare coordinates a communal grand parenting project ‘kylämummit ja -vaarit’ where adult volunteers visit for example kindergartens and Mannerheim League for Child Welfare’s family cafes. These communal grandparents want to spend time with children and get involved in activities like reading stories, arts and crafts, playing, according to their own abilities and interests. (Mannerheim League for Child Welfare no date)

The Central Union for the Welfare of the Aged hosts an intergenerational project ‘Life Course and Generations’ which “...bring together people of different ages, to promote particularly older people’s psychosocial wellbeing and inclusion, and to reduce their loneliness and exclusion through increasing intergenerational dialogue”. (The Central Union for the Welfare of the Aged no date) One part of this project was called ‘Four Generations Meet’ which aimed to challenge different agencies to establish intergenerational activities, especially in culture, sports and food fields. These various one-off and continuous intergenerational projects and programs were, and some still are, operating across Finland. The programs ranged from children and elderly gardening together to a musical planned and implemented by youth and elderly. (The Central Union for the Welfare of the Aged no date)

3.2 Socio-emotional competence

According to Elias et al social-emotional competence “...is the ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of one’s life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development”. Further on, they discuss “competence” as a concept including “...self-awareness, control of impulsivity, working cooperatively, and caring about one-self and others”. (Elias et al. 1997, 2)

Denham et al (2003) share a similar view on the meaning of socio-emotional competence by noticing aspects of it developing throughout life. More specifically, they mark that the previously mentioned term “...includes emotional expression and experience, understanding emotions of self and others, and emotion regulation”. (Denham et. al, 2003; Denham & Burton, 2003) Goleman too talks about a term he coins as “emotional intelligence” and he pinpoints main defining features about the concept, features others link to social emotional competence: “self-awareness, self-motivation, managing emotions, empathy and perspective-taking –recognizing emotions in others and understanding others’ points of view”. (Goleman 1995 in Novick, Kress, Elias 2002, 3) While the term “emotional intelligence” might be viewed by some authors as having a larger spectrum, its definition and components overlap with those parts of socio-emotional competencies. Looking at emotional intelligence broadly allows the study authors to have a more enriched understanding of socio-emotional competence and development.

Throughout this paper, “socio-emotional competence” will be used interchangeably with “socio-emotional literacy”. Also, by discussing ways of supporting “emotional intelligence” this paper discusses, in the same time, the ways of supporting “socio-emotional competencies”.

3.2.1 Benefits of being socio-emotionally literate

“Emotions lie at the centre of social experience, providing us with meaning in our lives. Indeed most of what we do in social life, as well as how we do it, is influenced and informed by emotions and the activating social conditions that generates them”. (Lazarus 1991 in Zeidner et al 2009, 169)

The emotions or, more concretely, the emotions that are employed by our involvement in a certain situation, have a big influence in how we perceive that situation and what meaning we extract from it. Perception and meaning are powerful in shaping the reality of a situation. Parkinson 1996 makes note of the role of the emotions saying that they “...are deeply embedded in social contexts, reflecting and shaping social processes”. (Zeidner et al 2009, 169) Be-

cause of the close knit relationship between the emotions and the social functioning of a person, it can be also that the socio-emotional learning holds an important place in the child's social and overall well-being. The children that are socio-emotionally "competent" develop healthier, more positive relationships and benefit of a more successful social life. Elias et al (1997) talks about the importance of the socio-emotional education as being just as important, if not more important, than the academic education and concludes that "...in sum, both character education and social and emotional education aspire to teach our students to be good citizens with positive values and to interact effectively and behave constructively. The challenge for educators and scientists is to clarify the set of educational methods that most successfully contribute to those outcomes". (Elias et al 1997, 2)

3.2.2 The pre-schooler's socio-emotional development

Every aspect in child development is influenced by various factors such as biology, culture, gender and social status and all the children develop in their own individual pace. Therefore, it is not entirely possible nor it is fair to indicate exactly where child's development should be at a certain age. As Paige-Smith & Craft put it, "...focusing on sets of measurable outcomes suggests that 'children' are homogenous and those that meet the milestones are fine (i.e. 'normal'), while those that do not are outside the norm..." (Paige-Smith & Craft 2008, 66). Despite this, there are guidelines to show what kind of behaviour can be expected at different ages and give a rough idea where child's development is.

All the factors in development go hand in hand as they are "...intricately linked and if one aspect is hampered or neglected in some way a child will fail to reach her full potential" (Sheridan et al 1999, 6). At about the age of six, a child is likely to be going through enormous physical as well as emotional changes; developing coordination and balance, acquiring fine motor skills like writing and drawing, amassing knowledge and information at an astonishing pace and gaining experience of all sorts, both social and intellectual. (Aves & Bradley 2006, 16) Unlike the external physical changes, inner changes like socio-emotional development are harder to see and evaluate.

Socio-emotional development starts from birth and it is in some aspects a lifelong progress. Various factors shape child's socio-emotional development, especially experiences, attachment and interactions in an infancy stage. Dwivedi & Harper state "...there is much truth in suggestions that the early emotional attributes (including the basic infantile temperaments), socialisation skills and trends that emerge in infancy serve as the basis for all social-emotional development for the rest of the lifespan" (Dwivedi & Harper 2004, 30)

As 6-7-year old often spend more time outside home, friendships with peers are extremely important to them. Crucial in developing and maintaining these relationships is social understanding i.e. empathy as "...it is part of getting to know about others' lives and cultures and, by implication, what it feels like to be human" (Aves & Bradley 2006, 18). However, children in this age might often be unable to be empathetic for a long period of time, especially when other emotions, such as tiredness, take over.

Between the ages 1 and 4 child develops sense of oneself, beliefs in relation to others and understands that other people can have views, opinions and knowledge that are different to our own. "This development is essential in enabling us to recognize that it is legitimate for other people to hold different views and that by bringing different views together we can work more powerfully than by working alone" (Duffy 2006, 48). From about the age of 5, children start to understand complexity of emotions, for instance, that one can be experiencing more than one emotion at one time and emotions can be influenced internally and/or externally. (Dwivedi & Harper 2004, 40) Controlling one's own emotions starts in infancy and continues to develop throughout the lifespan alongside with knowledge of adequate means to express opinions and feelings. Self-regulation "...moves from more simple bio-behavioural forms of regulation during infancy and preschool years, to increasingly complex regulative behaviours during early school years, to more planned and strategic forms during adolescence..." (Zeidner et al 2009, 157). Regulating emotions is learnt from caregiver and peers by intervention and vicariously i.e. by observing how parent manages tantrums and how adults and peers respond emotionally in different situations. Around the time children start to understand emotions they "...develop the understanding that they can hide some of their feelings from other people under certain circumstances and vice versa..." (Dwivedi & Harper 2004, 37)

Zeidner (2003) provides a quite comprehensive model for looking at social competence development called the investment model. He proposes a conceptualization of emotional intelligence as consisting of three different processes that interact among themselves. Zeidner introduces the three layers that are the foundation for the emotional intelligence development; biologically based temperament qualities, rule based learning of emotional competencies and strategic emotion regulation. The first layer, biologically based temperament qualities, function as framework for the social competencies that are reactive to the parents' emotional behaviour, but they also influence it, in turn. These qualities are referred to, among others, as emotionality and/or sociability. The second layer, rule based learning of emotional competencies, describe the child's learning of emotional behaviour from his/her parents, teachers or peers, based on an "if-then" rule. The child learns to see emotions in self and others. The socio-emotional skills at this level are acquired by socialization practices as role modelling. The last layer, strategic emotion regulation, is a layer that looks at more self-aware and re-

flective processes of emotion regulation. It is a developmental stage that comprises, more or less, the previous two stages that work together in influencing a third one, that of strategic behaviour regulation. “This process is achieved via coaching or tuition on the part of socialization agents in the child’s environment. Also important is exposure to a host of proximal socialization agents (peers, teachers, etc.)” (Zeidner et al 2009, 144)

3.2.3 Supporting the pre-schooler’s socio-emotional development

Emotional intelligence (EI) has a rather elusive and dynamic character, when trying to understand these concepts one needs to keep in mind this fact. The meaning of emotional intelligence or emotional competencies depends a lot on angle one chooses to look at it. “Emotional intelligence is relatively more biological when conceptualized as temperament, and relatively more social-psychological when conceptualized as self-aware emotion regulation, but both genes and environment are important at all levels”. (Zeidner et al 2009, 166) This paper looks at emotional intelligence through an angle that inclines towards the psychosocial.

Zeidner’s (2003) Investment Model for emotional competence development offers a valuable prism of looking at ways to support children’s socio-emotional competence development. As previously said, Zeidner identifies three important layers in the child’s emotional development. The first layer, a more basic one, that is “...most likely a bi-directional pattern of effects between parents/guardians and children’s emotional behaviour”. (Denham 1998 in Zeidner et al 2009, 146) The first layer is followed by a second one that consists of a process based on an “if-then” rule of understanding emotion and it takes place in different situations the child is part of together with the adults the child is attached to. A third stage, a more complex process involving important elements of the previous two, is regarded to be a reflective, self-aware process and it is achieved mainly through coaching and being subject to the effect on the socialization agents like peers, teachers etc.

As Denham (1998) suggests “the family is the primary context in which children first learn about various facets of emotions, such as how emotions are identified and the various ways to manage affect”. (Denham 1998 in Zeidner et al 2009, 150) Familial socialization of emotional competencies is carried out, to a large degree, through the caregivers’ attitudes toward the child’s emotional expressiveness and how they regulate their child’s emotions. (Eisenberg et al. 1998 in Zeidner et al 2009, 150) However, as time goes by and the child grows “...the role of the parents diminishes, and that of other persons, especially peers and teachers, increases”. (Zeidner et al 2009, 165)

According to this model and of big relevance is the fact that the emotional competencies' developmental path does depend on the child's interaction with the surroundings. As Zeidner et al (2009) put it "...of critical importance, the model implies that the developmental trajectory of EI depends on the individual's interaction with the environment". They continue discussing the environment's effect on the emotional intelligence of a child by adding that "Enriched environmental conditions may help facilitate the development of EI, particularly if biological predispositions toward Emotional intelligence are fostered early in life". (Zeidner et al 2009, 167)

The investment model also proposes four main factors that contribute to the child's socio-emotional development. First of these factors is 'peer environment' which also influential on the socialization of emotion. The more children age, according to the model, the more powerfully they feel and respond to the peer environment. "Research suggest that when older siblings show a rewarding socialization pattern (i.e., reacting positively to positive emotions and not showing negative reactions to negative emotions), younger siblings demonstrate more emotional knowledge". (Zeidner et al 2009, 162) Second factor 'affective environment in school and community' refers to the way a teacher or an adult in charge acts emotionally in a school or community setting influences the way the child perceives and learns emotions. Generally, the emotional atmosphere the child is exposed to has a significant role in his development. Elias, Zins & Weissberg (1997) too note that the socio-emotional education can be facilitate through a variety of ways by writing that "...the social and emotional education of children may be provided through a variety of diverse efforts such as classroom instruction, extracurricular activities, a supportive school climate, and involvement in community service". (Elias et al. 1997, 2)

Third factor according to the Investment Model is 'the teachers' which hold an important place in the child's emotional learning mostly because of the power an informal relationship child-teacher can have over the first. Zeidner et al (2009) suggest that teacher can have a significant impact on the emotional cognition of a child by instruct and coaching (directly) and by social learning (indirectly, by observation of a role model). Indirect learning happens also if the teacher chooses to introduce the child to an environment s/he believes fosters the learning process. They have looked at ways the school environment can support learning. More concretely, they propose techniques teachers can facilitate learning and have suggested that "...students gain significant social skills and develop positive attitudes of altruism, kindness, and respect for others when given structured opportunities to participate as members of organized problem-solving teams". Similarly, it is proposed that engaging students in "...meaningful, creative, and stimulating activities that enhance their social interactive skills and reinforce pro-social values". (Elias et al 1997, 77) The importance of a positive, nurturing environment is emphasized repeatedly with the aid of words that carry a positive meaning,

like fostering open and free interaction and dialogue and creating an environment where equity, fairness and respect for difference serve as foundation in the interpersonal contact. "Teachers and staff should provide opportunities for students to experience success, positive reinforcement, and validation of their worth as individuals in a challenging and nurturing environment". (Elias et al 1997, 77)

Lastly, 'the child's personal experience of emotion' is, of course, essential in the way s/he understands and develops his/her emotions. "Children witness emotions in themselves, think about emotion-event links", their understanding of these links affecting their mental processes. Also, children that face certain impediments in acknowledging or making sense of their own emotions, can experience difficulties in "...knowing how to respond adaptively to others experiencing similar emotions in their environment". (Zeidner et al 2009, 162)

It is worth mentioning, however, that Barbara Rogoff (1995) too looks at the child's socio-emotional development and she identifies stages that have similar elements to Zeidner's model. While these two models are not that similar that they can be overlapped, they are not opposite either. Therefore, both of the models offer valuable angles of looking at the child's socio-emotionally development presenting extra elements that potentially help supporting it. (Rogoff in Wertsch, J, 1995, 139)

Rogoff acknowledges the development happening parallel to the personal, the community and the inter-personal level. She observes learning as taking place in different situations and she coins concepts as: apprenticeship, guided participation and appropriation. In an attempt of briefly explaining these terms, one can say that apprenticeship stands for an interaction of expert-novice type; the guided participation stands for a situation where learning happens through direct interaction or "...by engaging in or avoiding activities" as Rogoff herself marks. Specific to this concept is the fact that development happens through direct and intentional instruction for a goal. Finally, by participatory appropriation Rogoff puts forward the notion that the actions and the understanding of actions happens through the participants' continual participation. According to this way of looking at learning, the participant in the action influences its course radically, but it is also influenced by it. The participant, child or adult, "takes in" the situation s/he is part of, but also changes it. Even though Rogoff draws on Vygotsky's theory, she stresses the fact that the concept of appropriation is different than Vygotsky's "internalization". The reason for this is the fact that, according to Rogoff, internalization describes a situation of passivity where the participant only takes in things s/he is supposed to learn, while "appropriation" implies that there is a dynamic process caused by mutually influencing factors. (Rogoff in Wertsch, J, 1995, 139 -161)

While the theorist places these previous three concepts in three different layers just as Zeidner, similarly to him she also admits that the complexity of the socio-emotional development practically does not allow us to place the trajectory of development in different well-delimited categories. In other words, while she draws her developmental theory on three specific layers, she does conclude that the process of socializing of emotion requires the presence of elements of each layer that happen simultaneously or, at times, separately. However, maybe a more substantial difference is found in Rogoff's view of blurred boundaries between the "internal" and the "external". More specifically, the child is not a totally independent and well-delimited entity without reacting to the environment's influence. Conversely, the environment (the external) is not a solid and unchangeable unit either. Both are transforming each other continually. Participatory appropriation would be the way by which the children achieve a particular balance with the other participants, having adapted to a certain degree their behaviour and thinking to that of the others. The changes that are coming about as a result of the participation in common activities with the others, according to Rogoff (1995), are developmental because they head one specific direction. (Rogoff in Wertsch, J, 1995, 139 -161)

3.2.4 Supporting the socio-emotional well-being of the dementia affected elderly

The term dementia is used to describe a range of conditions that lead to a progressive decline in cognitive functioning" (Cook 2008, 1). Dementia is caused by various conditions, Alzheimer's disease being the most common one "...accounting on its own for about half of all cases" (Cayton et al 2008, 4). According to The Alzheimer Society of Finland 60-70% of those with dementia suffer from Alzheimer's disease (The Alzheimer Society of Finland 2009)

Since the conditions behind dementia vary greatly, the symptoms and the causes are also diverse. Cook states that overall the symptoms "...affect individuals' memory, reasoning and communication skills and impact on their ability to complete a wide range of everyday activities" 2008, 1). Problems with memory, especially with short-term memory, are common to most types of dementia and often the first sign of an illness. Another early indication of dementia might be difficulties with language i.e. naming things or people and "as dementia progresses, communication becomes more difficult" (Cayton et al 2008, 76). Dementia affects not only to person's ability to express themselves, but also to the ability to understand others. In Finland there are approximately 130 000 people with dementia, out of which around 85 000 are at least in the moderate stage of dementia (The Alzheimer Society of Finland 2009). Dementia is more common with those over the age of 65 but can, although rarely, affect working aged adults.

Since dementia effects on the functioning of the brain one's personality and behaviour often changes. In the early stages of dementia realisation of changing self and inability to perform as before might cause enormous anxiety and depression. Person's emotional reaction to the problems illness brings can vary from being withdrawn to being enraged and lashing out. As dementia progresses parts of the brain controlling impulses are damaged and a person affected by the illness loses control of his/her behaviour. (Hoffman & Platt 2000, 24) "Disinhibition, social awkwardness, "childishness," impulsivity, and low frustration tolerance are some of the behavioural expressions of these personality changes" (Hill & Backman & Stigsdotter-Neely 2000, 165). Helping to deal with these changes person with dementia needs appropriate care and support from people around him/her.

Sense of social inclusion and engaging in meaningful activities are two very important issues in wellbeing of all the people but especially so with those with dementia. According to Cook (2008) "...research designed to measure quality of life among people with dementia found that those people reporting the best quality of life were the individuals who also reported the best relationships with family and friends" (Cook 2008, 62). She adds that the benefits of having and maintaining social relationships "...are multiple, with people with dementia deriving not only companionship and love from family and friends, but also a sense of safety and support" (Cook 2008, 61). Arranging activities for those with dementia is vital as it increases self-esteem and wellbeing as well as enables engagement and interaction with others. (Cook 2008, 62)

By laying the foundation for intergenerational contact between the children and the elderly we are hoping for relationship formation affecting elders' higher quality of life. According to Williams et al. intergenerational contact can be beneficial not only for the children but also for the elderly as "...it is thought that these facilities and programs can increase older adults' sense of well-being, self-worth, general attitudes toward life, as well as helping them to feel part of the lives of the children with whom they come in contact." (Williams & Nussbaum 1999, 209) Williams' opinion is supported by Lombardi who states that "not only does the presence of older people in children's settings teach children about aging and enrich their lives, but active involvement with children also can help sustain older people's physical, mental, and emotional well-being and promote life satisfaction and improved self-esteem." (Lombardi 2002, 158)

3.3 Creative methods

Creative methods are art and expression techniques which can be used in various different environments with anyone from babies to elderly. The spectrum of these methods is wide, including among others music, visual arts, drama and reminiscence. Creative methods differ from the "normal" art methods by having its main focus in the experience and the process,

not the end result. (Salminen 2009, 10 - 11) These methods aim to enrich everyday life and to awaken the senses and the mind. (National Institute for Health and Welfare 2013) Art based activities can be used to promote and express one's own cultural heritage and simultaneously increase understanding of other cultures (Duffy 2006, 9). Research shows that taking part in art and culture activities improves people's health and well-being, it empowers, gives new experiences, creates and helps maintaining social networks and improve the living environment. (Tampereen yliopisto 2013, 8 - 9)

Children are naturally creative and curious about their surroundings and "...by encouraging creativity and imagination we are promoting children's ability to explore and comprehend their world and increasing their opportunities to make new connections and reach new understandings". (Duffy 2006, 9) This is why for a long time creative activities and work with children have been closely linked. Children's socio-emotional skills development can be supported through art, play and other creative methods as they allow children to express themselves freely, both verbally and non-verbally. These activities also encourage a wide range of dispositions and attitudes including respect for others, self-discipline, helpfulness and acceptance. (Duffy 2006, 58) Various researches shows that creative methods can help with developing self-esteem and self-awareness as well as help improving psychosocial functioning and well-being. Usage of art based methods is also known to be increasing children's socialization and group cohesion. (Coholic 2010, 26) Creative activities and experiences also "...introduce the child to an aesthetic world; the joy of learning, artistic drama, forms, sounds, colours, scents, sentiments and combinations of experiences based on the different senses". (National Institute for Health and Welfare 2003, 22)

For elderly, especially those affected with dementia, creative methods can "...enable new modes of self-expression and communication - especially when traditional forms of communication have disappeared due to the progression of a disease". (Varho 2013) Art based activities which involve using different senses are particularly useful for those with dementia as "...results of observational studies of persons with severe cognitive impairment demonstrate that people with dementia, in common with all people, have higher order needs, such as those for social contact and sensory stimulation". (Downs & Bowers 2008, 188) Listening to music, poems or singing stimulates hearing and can bring back memories from the past and "...various studies show that, for example, people living with Alzheimer's are able to recognize and respond to familiar music, even in the final stages of the disease". (Varho 2013) Using visual arts, dancing and for example baking or cooking are particularly beneficial as they stimulate various senses at the same time.

3.4 Previous studies

There are numerous intergenerational studies done both abroad and in Finland; several of them being previous bachelor level thesis projects implemented in Finland. The methodology used varies from study to study as, for example, the use of ethnography as research method or simply undertaking and implementing intergenerational development projects. These studies and programs have been focusing on different areas concerning the intergenerational topic. A good example is Puotiniemi & Rautjoki 2010 project focused on “a deeper interaction between generations” and aiming to look at their group activities critically. Puotiniemi & Rautjoki’s goal was “to observe the group members” experience of the group activities and to describe methods that distracted and contributed to the interaction” among the two groups. The previously mentioned study was useful by providing a detailed insight into the practicalities of the activity sessions concerning structure, time and the methods used.

Lehtilä, 2009 Bachelor’s thesis work presents similarities to the project implemented by this paper’s authors through its goal of developing a “...cooperation between a day-care centre and service centre” and the promotion of “...interaction between children and senior citizens with activities”. However, despite the fact that quite a big number of studies have looked towards intergenerational contact as necessary and beneficial, just as this paper does, there is quite a sizable difference between these projects and the Oulunkylä English Kindergarten - Kustaankartano Centre for Elderly project. The difference lies in the fact that they are implemented between children day-cares and assisted living centres, also children day-cares and, in one instance, a day-club meant for seniors. Even though the “assisted living” home offers a 24/7 housing and care for the senior clients, the elderly in these homes suffer from impairments caused by deteriorated motor function rather than dementia affected cognitive faculties. Similarly, the recreational day-club for elderly participating in Kuusisto 2012 intergenerational project has clients whose cognitive functioning is at a level that allows the seniors to still live independently.

4 STUDY DESIGN

4.1 Purpose

The purpose of the study was to create a foundation for future collaboration between Kustaankartano Centre for the Elderly and Oulunkylä English Kindergarten that would come to support the young ones’ socio-emotional competence as well as the elders’ well-being. Focused on the intergenerational connection, the study consists of the implementation of five (5) contact sessions between a group of Kustaankartano Centre for Elderly residents and a group of Oulunkylä English Kindergarten pre-schoolers.

The contact sessions actively involve the authors of the study with regards to being able to improve the practice through a reflective process.

The project was born from a particular interest in improving the effectiveness of the study authors' practice and creates mutually beneficial intergenerational contact sessions. This way, the contact would become regular and would be adopted into kindergarten's program. Thus, the first research question has formed:

How can the cooperation between OEK and KCE be developed to make it part of the kindergarten's educational plan?

The idea that started the project was the need for intergenerational collaboration expressed by Oulunkylä English Kindergarten and Kustaankartano Centre for Elderly's marked interest. The project focused on the exploring of ways to support the children's socio-emotional development during the sessions of interactive contact with the elderly group. Therefore, a secondary research question emerged:

How to support the children's socio-emotional competence by intergenerational contact?

The data produced by looking into possible ways of supporting the socio-emotional development of the pre-schoolers and also by searching for effective methods of practice in the intergenerational contact sessions is meant to inform the Oulunkylä English Kindergarten's practice. However, because the data collected comes from the thesis' authors' journals and from the project's participants, it is subjective and not to be generalized.

4.2 Participants

The participants are a representative sample from a much greater number of persons that would benefit from being involved in the action research project. Not everyone linked to the project has participated because a small sample was found suitable for the beginning. From the participants, however, not all are involved to the same extent in the project sessions.

Uhlmann (1995) believes that participation is essential in action research because "real change" (i.e. lasting, sustainable change) can occur when the stakeholders (i.e. people actually within the situation) are part of the undertaken action. The reasons for this, she adds, are the facts that (1) the stakeholders are able to identify concerns being familiar with the everyday situation and practice, (2) are able to act and adjust things according to their particular environment, (3) the stakeholders are there after the short-term study has finished, (4) more minds can come up with more ideas. (Uhlmann 1995)

4.2.1 Oulunkylä English Kindergarten's participation

A small group of children from Oulunkylä English Kindergarten has taken part in the project selected from two kindergarten's age groups. The number of the children was seven and their age range is 5/6 to 7. The children were actively involved in the sessions participating fully in the activities and, by their feedback about the sessions, have provided useful information for the planning of the next session. The pre-schoolers would inform, indirectly, the practitioners about what makes good practice during the intergenerational contact sessions.

An Oulunkylä English Kindergarten practitioner was involved in the sessions, but the degree of participation was set at an observant level. In addition, however, the practitioner's role in taking feedback from the pre-school aged children participant in the project was valuable. On one hand, the practitioner is a native Finnish speaker, so she has had the ability to clarify the feedback forms to children in addition to the English used to take the feedback by the study author. On the other hand, there is a high familiarity between the early childhood practitioner and the children part of the project and a long-term teacher-child relationship. This relationship facilitates information to reach the study authors. More concretely, information about the children's spontaneous thoughts after the project, on the playground or at the kindergarten.

4.2.2 Kustaankartano Centre for the Elderly's participation

From Kustaankartano Centre for Elderly, a group of elderly have participated in the sessions. The number of the elderly would vary from one session to another according to their wellbeing at that certain time or, simply, their willingness to participate. The activities were planned for a maximum of seven elders - however, the number was much smaller at every visit. Full participant were a nurse in charge of the elderly and, also, not on a regular basis, but more like "visiting" the session various other nurses.

4.2.3 The study authors and their role

The role of the study authors in this project was that of "designing the overall study." While the authors are co-researchers, they are also participants that were planning the change. This way, "the participants are planners and decision-makers" and they were "managing the process of data collection and interpretation" (Dick, 1997)

The ones to manage the sessions collaboratively are the study authors who would take into consideration everyone's feedback when re-planning and also their own reflection on the action (i.e. the session). Even while involved actively, the study author did observe her actions and also other people's actions and draw some conclusions on the spot, some reflecting after

the session. The authors took charge of the children and have discussed a lot with them before the sessions about behaviour, life concepts, age, etc., all with regards to preparing the young participants for what was about to follow, what to expect - generally, preparing a fertile ground for the development of social-emotional skills. Moreover, the study authors kept contact with the parents whose children were involved in the study and also talked to the other practitioners about issues that arose related to the project.

4.3 Methodology

4.3.1 Action research

Action research was the strategy for social research used in this study. It includes a systematic investigation of the actions the study authors carried out and it is oriented towards change (i.e. improvement of practice). The data collected is qualitative and descriptive as it comes from an inquiry into the human experience in a certain context.

The reason action research was found suitable for this project is because it generates new understandings and it implies the implementation of the knowledge it generates. Unlike formal research, the knowledge generated by action research is applicable to the local settings and it is not meant to be generalized. In addition, the goal for action research is “...contributing to the preparation, and hence the competence, of educational practitioners”. (Gall, Gall & Borg 2005, 497) Crucially to action research and, therefore, to the study are the facts that “...the research feeds back directly into practice” and the undertaken “...process is on-going”. Descombe makes note of action research’s specific practical orientation towards issues, concerns or the need for development that arise “...as a routine part of the activity ‘in the real world’”. (Descombe 2003, 76)

Morton-Cooper (2000) looks at action research as to “...a way of approaching the study of human beings from a philosophical construct in which some form of sharing takes place within mutually supportive environments”. In this view, the process of action research can be “examined and contested” due to a critically reflexive approach taken to the whole process. This fact leads to generating a new way of “thinking, seeing, and acting”. (McIntosh 2010, 32-3) According to Naughton & Hughes, the change in the practitioner’s thinking and acting happens through the action research cycle. (Naughton & Hughes 2008, 45) The approach taken is reflective practice.

The use of action research can be traced back to the 1940s when the social psychologist, Kurt Lewin, whose “...main interest was in changing social systems using scientific methodology...” (Levin in Greenwood 1999, 25) started the application of action research by taking certain actions and keeping record of their effect. Also, action research stems from the “...scientific

outlining of General Systems Theory (GST)” (McIntosh 2010, 32) and it generates new knowledge about a social system while it attempts to change it. (Lewin, 1946; Peters and Robinson 1986 in Kock, McQueen & Scott 1997, 4) Lewin’s approach consists of planning, acting, observing and reflecting.

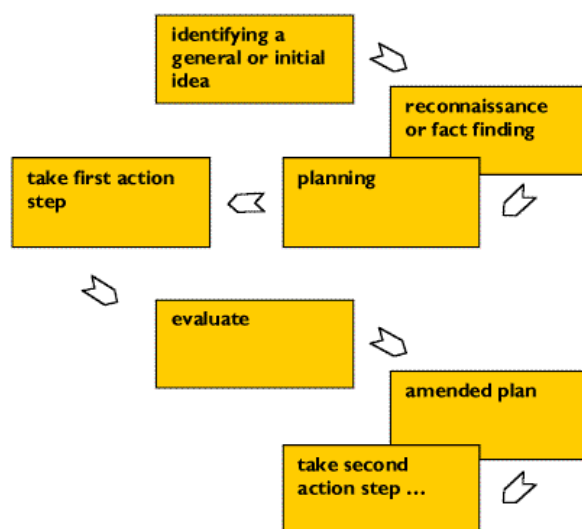


Fig 1. Kurt Lewin’s approach to action research

While conventional qualitative research has its benefits, action research was chosen as very suitable for narrowing the gap between researchers and the researched. Action research faces criticism on the fact that, by participating in the research, the researcher-practitioner loses the detached stance an outside observer might have, as Kock et al 1997 mention. However, they add that being involved and being a detached observer is inherent to action research for being both involved and absolutely detached is impossible. They continue arguing that “....research on human cognition has shown not only that human beings rely mostly on experiential learning for the acquisition of knowledge, but also that those experiences that are accompanied by intense emotional discharges (e.g. anger, fear) are remembered more vividly than those in which there is little emotion involved”. (Gioia and Sims, 1986 in Kock et al 1997, 18) Thus, involvement results in learning and it directly supports a process that has development as scope. It is true, nevertheless, that emotion does distort perception, but according to the latter authors, the cyclical process of action research allows the correction of misperceptions by re-analysing and re-iterating.

Action research is often mentioned in contrast with positivist research because it has more flexibility, and therefore, is criticized for lacking rigor. However, any approach has its limitations, so the choice for a method rests on how the particular design meets the researcher’s objectives and goals. Action research has been chosen also because of this flexibility, allowing interactive communication and a complex description. Dick (1993) talks as well about a trade-off one does when choosing a certain approach over another. More concretely, he marks that in action research one most likely has to sacrifice replicability for responsiveness

as “...action research values responsiveness over replicability, because otherwise it is very difficult to achieve action as part of the research.” Conversely, according to Dick (1993), conventional research sacrifices responsiveness and that is the reason that makes it “...unsuitable as a change technique”.

In conclusion, prominent features of practical action research such as improvement of practice, the cyclical process for knowledge generation in local settings and the participation in action of the study authors/practitioners have made action research valuable and relevant for this study.

4.3.2 Data collection and analysis

The data collected during this project is qualitative and it is obtained through several techniques like project log/notes, written feedback questionnaire, feedback forms for children as well as discussion with practitioners and the study partner. Project log/notes contain observations made by the study/authors while participating in the contact sessions. The authors observed participant interaction, including their own behaviour during the sessions. Whatever seemed relevant was noted in order to reflect upon later. Written feedback questionnaire comprises open ended questions related to the objectives of the project sessions. It looked at collecting views about the way the participant interacted, the effectiveness of the methods employed during the visits at Kustaankartano Centre for Elderly and also allows space for other thoughts relating to an overall opinion about the sessions. The feedback forms for children are simple graphic ones (see appendix 4) and are relevant for the general feel the planned sessions have left behind. A goal for the sessions’ planning is, most of all, to create contact activities that are enjoyable and give the participant a positive feeling about interacting with others who are more different than themselves.

The discussions with practitioners and their feedback served in the emergent process of the action-research project undertaken. Both the Oulunkylä English Kindergarten practitioner and the Kustaankartano Centre for Elderly practitioners have offered their views on the sessions and their effectiveness and suggested changes where they saw fit. After each session, a reflective discussion among the study partners was the source for collecting thoughts about how the session went. Many ideas were mutually agreed upon and commonly observed; also new views have arisen. Therefore, in a first stage, a general idea has formed.

The qualitative data was interpreted and made sense of by the practitioners in this study by categorizing it according to answers obtained for the questions ‘what seems to have worked effectively during the contact sessions? Why?’, ‘what elements of practice need improvement

and why?’ and ‘what seems to have proved effective in facilitating participant interaction and, therefore, facilitates the employing of social skills?’.

According to Mac Naughton & Hughes 2008 “...any conclusion is generally an outcome of reflection.” They proceed by saying that a well pondered conclusion has solid basis in the data. (Mac Naughton & Hughes 2008, 216) The conclusion of the project also rests on summarizing the data and the analysis and informing how this conclusion has relevance and to whom. As a result of this collected and analysed data and that of the initiated change, “you will now have a very specific perspective on your topic and question that other people may not share; and your analysis of your data will reflect your specific experiences to date in your project.” (Mac Naughton & Hughes 2008, 216)

4.3.3 Evaluation methods

“Researchers make discoveries by reflecting on their data and action researchers are no different. Some action researchers’ discoveries happen in the moment of creating change. Other discoveries happen outside of the moment, when you take time to step back from your actions and reflect on them”. (Mac Naughton & Hughes 2008, 96 & 97) The evaluation used for this project has been formative and summative, the latter one having a few dimensions.

“Formative evaluation is more likely to be on-going, or of a monitoring nature, with continuous feedback to amend and improve a service or activity”. (Wadsworth 2011, 158) Because of its on-going attribute, each session was followed by feedback taken from the Oulunkylä English Kindergarten practitioner present during the session and the children. Also, the study authors have commonly answered the feedback questionnaires prepared in advance and the session was critically discussed. In addition, the study authors have reflected on their own individual practice. A simple feedback to be collected from the Kustaankartano residents was in plan, but their poor cognitive and mental state did not allow it.

The questionnaire (see appendix 5) used for the adult participants/observers has contained a brief explanation of the idea behind the project and has listed the objectives the sessions have, so the person that gives the feedback would be mindful of the project's focus. Generally, the questionnaire consisted of open ended questions to facilitate more complex answers. However, a couple of questions were left intentionally closed for two reasons: to keep the focus on the objectives' clear evaluation and to avoid resumption questions.

As previously mentioned, the children gave feedback also by choosing a smiley face representing different facial expressions (☹ sad, 😐 neutral, 😊 happy) about how the session went and were asked what they liked and what they did not like about the sessions. The feedback

was taken individually from each child to try avoiding children influencing each other's answers. Also, when taking the feedback, the authors employed an attitude that showed that negative answers are perfectly acceptable and there is no specific answer the children are expected to give. Due to elderly's very low cognitive abilities getting a feedback from them proved impossible and for this reason senior participants' feedback was dropped completely.

Summative evaluation was thinking about the "fate of a program at some point of closure or afterwards". (Wadsworth 2011, 158) Unlike the formative evaluation, the summative evaluation focuses more onto the process as a whole. After the last session, the study authors and the Oulunkylä English Kindergarten practitioner, as well, have had a discussion with the children about the whole experience.

For the summative evaluation, the practitioners (i.e. the study conductors) will answer a set of questions related to the project and their own learning as Mac Naughton & Hughes indicated. The questions cover three dimensions: the topic, the research questions and the own learning process. Regarding the research topic questions 'what can we state with certainty about our research topic?', 'what do we still want to know about it?' and 'what questions about it do we have now?' are asked. Referring to the research question practitioners answer whether they 'have we answered research question?' and 'would the same question be asked again if the project would start again?' as well as 'do the practitioners have new questions and issues as a result of the project?'. Lastly, referring to the learning process, questions like 'what is the most significant thing we have learned about our circumstances from/through our action research project?', 'what is the most significant thing we have learned about action research (as a way to create change) from/through our action research project?' and 'was any theory (or theories) especially helpful in explaining the events in our project? What was the most significant aspect of our action research cycle/s?' are answered. (Mac Naughton & Hughes 2008, 217, 219, 220)

5 IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Planning for action

The objectives of the project's sessions were revolving around encouraging pro-social behaviour for the development of socio-emotional competence in the children. In order to reach this umbrella objective (the socio-emotional skills improvement), the study authors needed to create the context for raising an active response from the participants and for natural personal contact. Part of the aims was also creating a pleasant atmosphere for the participants' well-being and their interacting among each other with ease. Last, but not least, the thesis partners were expected to look at things that have worked effectively during the sessions and create general guidelines that would inform the practitioners, as well. As previously said, the

idea for an intergenerational project has been born out of a high interest on all parties involved. Once it was agreed that this project should be something that needs to come to life, the next step was to think about the details, the practicalities and implementation related issues.

For a start, it was agreed that a permanent contact with the working partners and the study authors will be kept up. Communication and dialogue was essential during the project for its good function and also for an enriched understanding of the matters the study authors have dealt with. Before starting to plan and implement anything, the physical space the actions would take place was visited. Also, the number of participants was thought of and how that would relate to the space in use. Even though the space itself was not an issue for it was available and quite big, the project was thought of for a smaller number of participants. It has been agreed that the personal connection among the participants and between the study authors and the participants takes place best in a cosier atmosphere with less of a crowd. Therefore, a limit of 7 people per group has been set.

Consent forms relating to the participation have been created for the group of elders residing in one specific unit of Kustaankartano Centre for the Elderly whilst the children's parents have received both a consent letter via e-mail and also have been approached directly for discussion. Questions and clarifications needed to be made and sometimes some parent would need reassuring about the safety involved in the project.

On the elderly side, participation was conditioned by ability and will. Elder residents of Kustaankartano Centre have been assisted to the space where activities took place if their physical conditioned allowed it. Most of all, however, the elders needed to agree to be part of the activity sessions. This has been taken into account before starting off the activities, although there was no way of predicting who, among the persons fit for such activities, will want to be part of them. Also, safety came first, having in mind that children were to be present. Kustaankartano residents that were known to have aggressive outbursts very often were not included in the planning and, thus, not in the implementation. On the children's side, the participation was conditioned firstly by their developmental stage. The 5-7 age ranged seemed fit because the start of the transition from the ego-centric persona to the more aware and more empathic persona the child experiences around this age. At this time in their life, the children are amassing knowledge, gaining skills at a very fast pace. It seemed suitable that the project would meet the children's potential and development by favouring experiences that have the quality of giving a fertile ground for socio-emotional growth. Also, around ages 5-7 the peer relationships start gaining a very big importance in a child's life, so socio-emotional competencies are essential in maintaining them healthy and positive. A new understanding of life and people forms in the mind of the pre-schooler at this time. Suddenly,

the imaginary circle that has the child at its centre expands and the young one can see how their circle includes also part of the rest of the world. The rest of the world is constituted by people like herself/himself that have feelings and desires too - and those ought to be considered. Thus, aware of the transformation the children experience, the sessions have been planned to be supportive of it and make it as natural as possible.

Alongside all the literature read on intergenerational practice, socio-emotional competence, dementia, child development, etc., the study authors kept their planning informed by other practitioners as the Oulunkylä English Kindergarten teacher and the Kustaankartano Centre for the Elderly staff. Before the implementation there was a plan thought up, but with room for movement. While planning was done as thorough as possible, it was also flexible, leaving possibility for change and spontaneity. Also, the plan for each individual session was rethought according to the previous session with new information coming from feedback and the self-reflection.

When it comes to the materials needed, the study authors needed to make sure they were provided in the right amount. However, there was no question of shortage of materials because both working life partners have provided them. It was discussed with Oulunkylä English Kindergarten that they offer the painting materials, whilst Kustaankartano Centre provided the project with the space, baking tools and ingredients, drinks and anything it might be necessary on the spot.

The number of session needed to be more than just a few because of the intention of building a relationship between the two institutions and, more importantly, between the participants. Connections among people take time to form and having just 1 or 2 sessions was not thought to be as fruitful as visiting more often would be. However, time restrictions existed both on the study partners' side as well as the working life side (the holiday was soon to begin), so it was agreed that the minimum limit would be kept at 5+1 sessions. The number of the session was relevant for observing how the children's behaviour would change and what causes the change. In addition, having more sessions allowed more time dedicated to testing and preparing the ground for more actions in the future. Getting to know the participants' reactions to certain things better permitted a more suitable planning for the next session. The +1 session earlier mentioned was dedicated only for the children because everyone felt that it was very important that the children understand the idea behind the project. Moreover, information was crucial in children's understanding, so a lot of explanation was reserved for that session. Addressing feelings was vital in how the young participants perceived what was about to follow. Trying to make sure that the pre-schoolers really understand what is expected of them and the whole situation in context, before every visit, there were 5-10 minutes allocated for discussion.

The activities did not receive an essential role in the planning process. They were thought up for serving as a bridge between the young and the old, mainly. They were chosen for their role in sensory stimulation and creative expression. However, their role was reserved for building a connection between the participants, facilitate communication and response. Again, when planning the activities, the participants' fine motor skills were taken into consideration.

Throughout the whole process of planning and implementation, a light positive attitude was considered important and maintained and so was the cheerful and joyful interaction.

5.2 Activity sessions

The Oulunkylä English Kindergarten and Kustaankartano Centre for the Elderly project, as any project, generally, has a set of aims that come as a motivating force behind planning and implementing a design.

There are several objectives behind planning for the sessions. First, it was decided that the sessions should be planned in a way that would facilitate contact among the participants and raise an active response from them. Encouraging pro-social behaviour in the children towards the elderly and each other was an important goal. By "pro-social behaviour" the study authors refer to actions influenced by a positive, caring attitude towards one another as being kind, helping out, waiting for one's turn. However, the achieving of this goal would not be possible without managing to involve the participants actively, in the first place, and creating enjoyable sessions. Therefore, along-side the previous objectives, creating enjoyable sessions for everyone was another aim also. Lastly, the sessions were expected to produce guidelines for good practice; in the other words, information about what worked effectively during the sessions both the material aspect and practice wise. Every session was expected to meet most of the objectives previously discussed.

Before a first session, it was imperative that the children understand the idea behind the project which will be implemented. Also, it was a must for the planning stage that the thesis partners would assess how much the children knew exactly about the place they were going to and what were their expectations related to these future sessions. Therefore, a special introductory session only with the children was held at the beginning of the week the project was scheduled for a start. During the introduction, the children were explained the concept of aging and dementia. Life in the nursing home was discussed as well both for finding out how much the pre-schoolers know about it and informing them. The essential part during the discussion was addressing fears, worries, anxieties that might arise as a result of these visits

or the thought of visiting the nursing home. Moreover, the kids were encouraged to acknowledge and express these emotions and welcome them as natural. The appropriate behaviour expected from the children was as well discussed and the importance of kindness and politeness was, once more, stressed. Because being motivated plays a crucial role in the children's attitude towards what it is about to come, the study authors have appealed to the protective sense of the young ones by making it clear that they are very much needed and their visits are eagerly expected at the elderly centre.

The 1st session's theme was Mother's Day. Baking was chosen because the authors' previous experience with children did tell them that the children, generally, enjoy baking a lot. This was not the only reason, however. Baking is a very good method to employ when working with the young but with the old too for the fact that it stimulates quite a few senses in the same time. The sense of smell is pleasantly stimulated while baking which also prompts the mind to bring back memories of other times in the past spent baking good sweet bread maybe in one's family's company. Also, playing with the dough and shaping it offers stimulation to the sense of touch and sustains the development of the fine motor skills. Not only to the sense of touch, however, because by shaping and modelling, the dough involved the imagination and the creativity.

In this very first session, baking played an ice-breaker role as well. It was chosen for its power of engaging some of the senses and also builds a tacit bridge among the participants that did the same thing. The children would also help the elderly and each other with the modelling, this way also taking non-verbal contact. In addition, baking was chosen because it can support the socio-emotional development of the child because it sets the stage for helping, sharing and talking about what he/she plans to do. Having a palpable result from the actions undertaken, the children can take pride in their accomplishment.

The 2nd session was spring themed and it revolved around the same objectives as all of the sessions did: pro-social behaviour encouragement, creating a pleasant cooperative atmosphere among the participants and supporting the socio-emotional development. In this session, the creative method employed was painting because of its input in the children's socio-emotional developmental trajectory. One of the essential elements painting would offer to the children is the freedom to express freely through colours. Finger-painting was, again, regarded as an excellent medium of communication and emotional expression. In addition to this, painting was seen as beneficial for both age groups due to its sensorial stimulation both on a visual and tactile level.

The 3rd session was on some level quite similar to the 1st one, but not entirely. The sensory play has proved to be very effective in the baking session, so it was employed again. It offers

stimulation to the sense of touch of the elderly and it employs, once again, the imagination and creativity of the children. Modelling the magic dough was chosen for this session also because this time there was a more pronounced focus onto the cooperation, sharing and helping out side of the interaction. The participants, unlike in the first session, have received tools that would help them in their modelling process, but that needed to be shared with other participants. Discussing their creation was encouraged and also participating in others' creative process as well.

The 4th session was a continuation of the 3rd one. The magic dough shapes created in the previous session were painted during this one. Again, the children have had the chance to experience self-expression through using colours freely and also benefitted from the visual stimulation caused by these colours. The elders too have experienced the variety of colours and the sensation of playing with paint gives. This time, everyone's creation got more life through colour. As with the other sessions, active participation was encouraged, but not forced. The same attitude was employed with encouraging interaction between participants.

The 5th session was also the last session and it was thought of as a very free and relaxed good bye visit. Part of this visit was going outdoors, enjoying the sunny weather with the elderly and the children, having a barbeque, eating, and generally having a good time. The idea was for the elders to feel the wind against their skin, the smell of the grill and the pleasure of eating outdoors with children running around. Also, the children have benefitted from a less structured time in the nature and around being part of a small community of people from different generations. Also, during this visit, a brief time was dedicated to having a summative discussion with the children about the whole process they have experienced. The discussion had an informal nature and it was done while everyone was eating their desserts.

While the sessions were planned creatively for the supportive input they can have in the participants' socio-emotional well-being and motor and sensorial development, the creative methods and the activities per se did not hold centrality in the project. The activities' role was supporting the direct interaction between the two participant groups part of these sessions by offering a pleasant medium of communication. The sessions were meant to offer a supportive context for the intergenerational contact in a creative setting.

6 FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to set the ground for collaboration between Oulunkylä English Kindergarten and Kustaankartano Centre for the Elderly. This cooperation was sought with regards to support the pre-schoolers' socio-emotional competencies and to find effective ways of doing so. The strategy for social research was action research because of its descrip-

tive nature and emergent character. The participants in this study were 5-7 year old preschoolers from Oulunkylä English Kindergarten, dementia affected residents from Kustaankartano Centre for the Elderly, the study authors and also the elderly centre's practitioner. The data collection and the evaluation have been done by taking feedback from the participating children and staff, from discussions among the study partners and also from self-reflection. The data in the findings is qualitative. Some of the quotes found below are statements and observations made in Finnish, some in English. The ones translated from Finnish can be found in original in appendix 6.

One of the first findings was that the elders were in more of a poor shape than expected, both physically and mentally. This first finding was supported by the Kustaankartano staff members' feedback:

“At the moment our ward's residents are in lower cognitive state. However the participation was always 100% as everyone takes part in their own way”. (1)

Part of the emergent themes during the first two sessions was the feeling of anxiety some of the children have voiced. One of the children has said that it is...

“Scary. Not the elderly, but the whole situation”. (2)

However, by the 3rd session, the feelings have changed about being in the company of the elderly, as two different children were stating. Also, peer support was present in the group as it can be seen in the second quote below:

“At first, I was scared to be there, but then my mom explained it to me sensibly”.(3)

“First I was scared, but then others helped me so I wasn't anymore.” (4)

After this point, being afraid did not come up anymore before or after the sessions, but the parallel on-going observation of the whole situation being natural. The fore mentioned adjective kept popping up regarding to different aspects of the intergenerational encounter, as behaviour, contact generally and the activity sessions.

“The contact was natural and altruistic.” (5)

“Children were very motivated and they enjoyed the session a lot. They seemed happy and as if they have done that before. Natural situation!”

Humour was a big part of the contact sessions and it was noticed several times by several different participants:

“Plenty of humour used by both participant groups.” (6)

“So many laughs and happy faces!”

Pro-social behaviour, earlier mentioned as being one of the sessions’ objectives, has received attention from the outside observer as it was seen as part of participants’ behaviour. The feedback from the Kustaankartano staff has noted the following:

“By observing children's and elders' helpfulness towards each other it was evident that children, being more able bodied, took initiative helping the elderly whenever they noticed that elderly were unable to do something.” (7)

Also, the children’s behaviour has showed many pro-social aspects as waiting for one’s turn, working cooperatively in a successful way and, generally, showing good manners. The practitioner observing the session has noted that:

“When the dough was been made everyone waited for their turn nicely. Everyone behaved nicely and swapping cookie cutters happened in good spirit.” (8)

“Children behaved so nicely. They were calm and polite.”

Upon talks about the meaning of the visits that have been paid to the nursing home, quite a few children have mentioned the word “help”. More concretely, they have understood that they are expected to help and that they are needed.

“We help the elderly to remember things and to rehabilitate” (9)

Also, children have responded well to verbal instruction and, in addition to that, they have taken initiative. Oftentimes, children took contact without being guided to do so.

“Straight away a child starts helping an elder with painting; no conversation, but they are laughing at each other.” (10)

All in all, the participants took contact, as the feedback below can describe:

“We noticed that the contact between the participants was straightforward and easy-going and consistent with children's and elders' own persona. Some were braver and quicker in taking contact, some needed time to adjust.” (11)

However, not all contact was of the same nature. Many of the elderly participants did not have the ability anymore to express themselves verbally and in a coherent manner. Regardless, these elders have intently observed the children and “worked” together in some actions. Other elderly persons have addressed the pre-schoolers verbally and paid them compliments. Due to the verbal communication’s shortcomings, meaningful discussions between the old and the young participants was not possible as it was hoped. Nevertheless, the activities that everyone has taken part in have facilitated direct contact.

It was rather impossible to take feedback from the elderly. Their cognitive state, as previously mentioned, has not allowed them to participate in giving feedback. The nurse responsible for their well-being has informed the study authors that the afternoons/evenings after the pre-schoolers have visited the nursing home were calmer. It was also difficult to assess whether there is any memory of events on the Kustaankartano residents from one session to another, one week apart. There was, nonetheless, a remark from one of the residents that might suggest so.

“Children again!” (12)

The pre-schoolers have not had the opportunity to receive praise from the elders for their helpful and kind actions towards them, but they have received praising from the study authors that were participants in the sessions. Also, the nursing home staff expressed positive feelings towards the young ones’ behaviour. When asked about their favourite part, the children have said they liked baking the most. When asked about what they do not like, a few of them answered more than one time that they dislike having to leave.

Parents have informed the study authors that the children have talked at home about the elders and, in some cases, they have even performed role plays. In another instance, a pre-schooler has shown his younger sibling how the elders eat with a trembling hand. Also, the thesis partners have been informed that the child that has explained his sibling about how the elders eat, while visiting North where he has grandparents, he insisted that they go to the nursing home - place where he wants to work.

The study partners as participants and also activity leaders have got their share of feedback as follows:

“O&K’s cooperation with children was natural and supportive. You did great. You were very active, encouraging and natural”.

An unexpected event, the death of a Kustaankartano resident, has proved to be a fact the study authors needed to think how to approach. The resident that has died had been 100 years old and she was already known to the children because her advanced age has impressed

them. Her absence did not go unnoticed. Two or three sessions after her passing, the children were still asking about her.

Another unexpected event was the fact that during one of the sessions there was not a full time presence on the nursing staff's behalf. Due to illness the activity coordinator has not been able to participate and for an unclear reason staff members present did not attend in the session to help the elderly. Rather, they were working on some other tasks in the immediate vicinity.

Part of the expectations accompanying this project was building relationships of friendship among the elderly and the young ones - a relationship to be carried in the future, as well. Again, the fore mentioned condition of the elderly has not permitted a relationship to build, at least, by verbal communication. However, it is impossible to say whether friendship has started developing or not because of the elderly's inability to give feedback and, generally, because feelings of closeness cannot be quantified.

The study partners have identified a few things that seem to obtain a positive answer from the children, and generally, seemed to be functioning effectively in this given session. According to the observation and the feedback received, the informal nature of the session and, generally, the relaxed atmosphere during the visit have been noticed and appreciated. Contributing to the relaxed atmosphere is the participation of the very young, the old and adult aged, all equally. Chit-chat and laughter have been noticed as effective and noted down. The planned structure of the sessions has not been very rigid and spontaneous thinking and modifying of the initial plan was required. As said before, baking of all activities was preferred. From the study partner's side and also the nursing home staff there was a lot of praising for the children's behaviour. The allocated time for the session has revolved around an hour and it seemed to be sufficient for the intergenerational activities. The seating was not ideal and it did not correspond to the initial plan of seating alternately one child, one elder, one child, etc. This fact was due to the fact that in each session there were more pre-schoolers participating than elderly. The time of the day reserved for the visits suits the kindergarten more than the nursing home.

All in all a total of 5+1 sessions have been planned and implemented during this project. As a result of this project's implementation, future intergenerational session will be carried out by the current staff in Oulunkylä English Kindergarten and Kustaankartano Centre for the Elderly.

7 DISCUSSION

As presented in the 'Findings' section, the atmosphere during the sessions felt natural and relaxed which is, in the study partners' opinion, the reason for the sessions going so well. The

children responded well to instructions, seemed really motivated to help and interestingly, their desire to be helpful seemed to grow by each visit. Despite the fact that the discussions with the elderly were often one-sided, the children did not give up and kept interacting with the elderly. The study authors saw a strong correlation between the high amounts of praising the children got on their behaviour and their willingness to please by supporting the less able and, generally, being very helpful. Starting with the first session, the one aimed at children only, the authors tried to appeal to the children's protective senses and make them feel needed. Had the practitioners not offered children the praising they deserved, the young ones' positive actions would have been left without feedback due to elderly's cognitive and communicative abilities. As well as praising, children's emotional development depends a lot on the adults' own feelings and as a result, if an adult expresses positive feelings in a situation, the child "picks up" on the adults' emotions and s/he shapes his/her emotions accordingly. Thesis authors' believe that, during this intergenerational project too, the same role modelling took place and observing the practitioners' relaxed body language and humorous verbal communication, the pre-schoolers de-tensed and their feelings of anxiety decreased. These observations are backed up by Zeidner who mentions that teacher can support children's socio-emotional development directly by instructing and coaching and indirectly by being a good role model and offering children an environment where s/he believes learning can happen. (Zeidner et al 2009, 165)

As mentioned in the literature organising enjoyable activities and offering a chance for social inclusion increases elderly's well-being and it supports their sense of safety and support. (Cook 2008, 61). Organising simple sensory based activities allowed everyone, even those with low cognitive abilities, to take part in the sessions. By kneading dough, smelling fresh sweet bread, hearing the background music and children's chatter, tasting the sweet bread and so on, all those present were participating. From the feedback given by Kustaankartano it was obvious that these intergenerational sessions were 'doing something' as the staff noticed that the evening after the sessions were calm and more peaceful than normally. They also noted that from the elders' point of view the sessions were fruitful and interesting which was evident from the fact that the participants stayed the same almost every week. Only natural causes for absence and illnesses stopped people taking part. Despite having a relatively low participant group these sessions aroused interest in other, non-participating, residents who came to have a look what is happening.

There were, of course, some challenges to the project as, for example, the fact that a resident has died after the first visit pre-schoolers made. It was an event no one has thought of, for some reason, so it raised a dilemma about what action to be taken. The idea of the project was that the practitioners support socio-emotional competence through interaction - preferably positive. The dilemma was born from the fact that the study authors and the prac-

titioners all had mixed feelings about whether the children needed to be told or not. On one hand, the adults did believe in honesty as being a good way to support the children's emotional development. On the other hand, the many changes in the children's lives at that very moment (transition from kindergarten to school) and also their expanding "universe" was causing them anxiety. The pre-schoolers have showed a more developed awareness of aging and dying and they spoke about it at home; quite a few being very preoccupied by fearful thoughts. While both parties, practitioners and parents, addressed these feelings and tried to help the child welcome them, they believed that bringing up the death of the elderly lady was not a good idea. They all have agreed that it was a too high of a chance that the positive learning situation would turn into a damaging experience, so the decision was made as to not notify the children of the resident's passing.

Another challenging situation took place when the nursing home's staff was not available to help the elderly during the activity sessions. Besides the ethical issue it imposed, it also gave a hard time to one of the study authors. Having been a worker in elderly care, she has found it a bit hard to distinguish at that time what was her role during the session: that of an early childhood worker or that of an elderly care worker. Being in a nursing home made her automatically to take responsibility of the elderly and feel that it is her duty to take care of them. Only after reflecting on her own behaviour did she understand that her role was to be the childcare worker and not part of the care staff. As for the other study author, having not yet been in a nursing home and, thus, never in contact with people suffering from dementia to this extent, this project has proved to be an interesting learning experience for herself, too. She also faced the challenge of using her own emotional competencies and emotion regulators skills in this new unfamiliar environment while being aware that she needs to be a model and a safe person for the children that were accompanying her.

When it comes to their own learning trajectory, the study authors looked at the questions in the 'evaluation' section suggested by Mac Naughton & Hughes and tried to answer it truthfully. The result was that one can certainly state that the project was a positive experience for most of the people involved. There are questions that were born as a result. For example, what dynamic and what kind of activities would a project with more able elders require? How would the children describe their experience in that case? The research questions have been answered, in the thesis' authors' opinion, with the mention that there is no hundred per cent certainty when it comes to the socio-emotional dimension. The theoretical models have provided a good prism for finding ways to support the children's socio-emotional development, but it is good to keep in mind that they are just theories and not absolute truths. There is a need for much more research done about the human "inner dimension". It is also very hard to predict the socio-emotional outcome, generally, because each individual reacts differently to

different stimuli. There are many ever changing variables influencing the emotional life of an individual.

The time allocated for each session (one hour) proved to be the exact amount of time needed to successfully do the activities, tidy up, etc. Thinking on “one’s feet” and, generally, being spontaneous was a very important bit when taking part of intergenerational projects like this. The study authors believe that the teacher’s role was essential due to coaching, praising and emotional support provided. Unlike a variety of other intergenerational projects, this thesis project was implemented with elders with very low cognitive abilities. Despite the challenges, it is safe to say it is possible to involve elderly with various stages of dementia in similar projects to this, although one has to be aware of the fact that communication might be lacking and alternative creative methods for contact might be necessary. Projects like this are needed and they fill up a gap in intergenerational programs. It is important to keep in mind that the experiences resulted from similar projects are not easy to quantify, so a researcher/study author really needs to think carefully about what he/she wants to accomplish by planning and implementing an intergenerational encounter.

In conclusion this project aiming to create an intergenerational contact and supporting the children’s socio-emotional development was a success and the goals for the project were met. The feedback given by participants and working life partners as well as study authors’ own reflections showed that the sessions were enjoyable, relaxed and the children’s pro-social behaviour was evident.

8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

During this study, the dignity of the participants, young or old, has been kept in mind and respected at all times. No single group was used for the purposes of the other. However, it needs to be indicated that the fact that one group was more able bodied than the other has had a say in the way the two groups have interacted.

8.1 Self-determination

Ethics and human rights play a big role in social welfare work as “...the aim of social welfare work is to do good, to help people, to reduce poverty and suffering, and to bring about change and development”. (Talentia 2007) According to Ethical Guidelines for Social Welfare Professionals appreciating the value of human life and human dignity is indicated by principles of right to self-determination, right to participation, right to be treated as a whole and right to privacy appreciate the value of human life and human dignity. (Talentia 2007) The right to self-determination is fulfilled by respecting and taking into consideration clients’ “conceivably possible”. (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2009) The right to participation recognises the “...full involvement and participation of people using their services in ways

that enable them to be empowered in all aspects of decisions and actions affecting their where the client cannot express their will about the care...” the service provider then consults both the client and his or her legal representative or family member”. (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2009) To respect the right to self-determination and right to participation all the activity sessions are voluntary and participants can drop out at any time. Clients are reminded before each session about their right to discontinue with the session should they feel like doing so.

8.2 Informed consent

Part of the right to self-determination and vital to research with people is informed consent. The informed consent form should explain briefly the topic and meaning of the research, how privacy of the client is taken into consideration, where the thesis is published and remind the client about their right to opt out at any time of the process. Researcher cannot ask for permission straight from the client, it has to be done by the institution involved with the client. (The City of Helsinki 2012) As the clients involved in our thesis are suffering from dementia obtaining informed consent set challenges as the client might not understand what is expected from them. When compiling the informed consent form we kept the language simple yet professional and kept the form compact. We also took into account that in cases where research participants are cognitively impaired “...the assent of a representative of the patient may be considered an appropriate alternative” (Wilkinson 2001, 52) and clarified that the form can be signed by client's advocate if necessary. The informed consent form used for this particular project can be found in appendix 2.

As Kustaankartano is under The City of Helsinki's Social Services Department and Health Care anyone outside the department willing to conduct a research where distinctive information about the clients or staff is collected has to apply for research permission. (The City of Helsinki Social Services Department and Health Care 2012) Research permission for this project was gained on 22 April 2013 (see appendix 1).

8.3 Safety

Kustaankartano's staff members are responsible for the clients' wellbeing and safety. This means that not being part of the Kustaankartano staff we cannot be left alone with the residents and assume the responsibility for their wellbeing and safety. Therefore, our activities will be held in the presence of a staff member. Moreover, having our activities in the living room/kitchen area, there will always be someone from the staff present in case of emergency. Similarly, a kindergarten staff member will be attending our activities at all times. To

prevent children bringing bacteria to the nursing home or catching any from there, anti-bacterial gel was used on arrival and before leaving the premises.

8.4 Credibility

Part of the efforts that have been made in order to make sure the end result would be a study that does not lack in credibility, it was attempting to the best of the abilities to get familiarized early with the participant organizations. Also, the participants that have been chosen are a representative sample of Oulunkylä English Kindergarten as well as Kustaankartano Centre for the Elderly.

“A cornerstone of research ethics is that respondents should be offered the opportunity to have their identity hidden in a research report.” (Oliver 2003, 7) Therefore, during this study, notes the study authors have made did not contain any information that would give out a participant’s identity. However, if it happened that a name was used unintentionally in the project notes/observation notes, it would not change the anonymous position due to the fact that the notes are destroyed upon the study completion. Thus, during this study, details were not circulated, the participants’ identity remains undisclosed and confidentiality is assured by anonymity. According to Oliver (2003, 81) while ensuring the participants’ of their right to their anonymity, one needs to consider also who else might have access to the data collected besides the study author.

When the attention shifts to the reliability bit of the study process and results, a positivist researcher might argue that a good manner to test reliability is to look at its attribute of being replicable. However, having chosen a methodology that produces qualitative data, replicability was not sought as, for example, in depth description was.

There was not much variation in collecting the data. The questionnaires were handed in and completed in the same settings as each time, the feedback discussions happened mainly in the same place and the children have given feedback right after the sessions. When the pre-schoolers were helped with giving the feedback in, the study authors adopted an understanding and neutral attitude to the answers given, as there are no right and wrong answers and whatever the child was saying was accepted and written down. While, again, positivist researchers would advise for closed ended questions for a higher degree of reliability, in this study there were only a couple of closed ended questions were it was really deemed necessary for rigour. The rest of the questions used have been open-ended to allow the respondents descriptive freedom. The observers’ reliability lies in the fact that the observation was conducted also following some pre-decided criteria which was based on the sessions’ objec-

tives. Each questionnaire given out has had indications in its header about what the aims of the project were.

“Objectivity is a principle that aims to minimize the influences of the researcher’s values, beliefs and potentially vested interests in the topic being researched. Someone who is not seen as objective under this definition is described as biased (Marlow 2001 in D’Cruz & Jones 2004, 71).” However, when doing qualitative research, objectivity might have a different nature or connotation. More specifically, of course the study author tries to maintain his/her objectivity in the process of research, but on the other hand, “absolute truth” is not an aim. Rather, instead of this set in stone truth, the study authors look at being accurate in collecting an accurate description of a respondent’s view and experience without altering it.

Also, being objective in a study would presuppose that the researcher would be a detached observer that would not allow his/her own values and beliefs influence the undergone study; however, case can be rather different when the researcher is part of the researched. Also, “as social workers, we need to consider whether or not such a stance is possible or desirable when the objectives of social work clearly position us in particular ways in relation to disadvantage and inequality.” (D’Cruz & Jones 2004, 71) When it comes to values regarded as being positive, it’s hard to draw a line between the personal and the professional.

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Appendix 1

Research Permission from City of Helsinki. (overleaf)



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Päätös tutkimuslupahakemukseen HEL 2013-004921

HEL 2013-004921 T 13 02 01

Päätös

Virastopäällikkö päätti myöntää hakemuksen mukaisesti tutkimusluvan Kristiina Tirin (AMK, Laurea Otaniemi) tutkimukselle ”Creating intergenerational contact between Oulunkylä’s English Kindergarten and Kustaankartano Centre for the Elderly”.

Päätöksen perustelut

Pohjoisen palvelualueen johtaja ja sairaala-, kuntoutus- ja hoivapalvelut -osaston osastopäällikkö ovat antaneet tutkimuslupahakemuksesta puoltavat lausunnot. Tutkimusluvan ehdot ovat seuraavat:

Yhteyshenkilönä on Kustaankartanon hoitotyön asiantuntija Heidi Lehtonen. Yhteyshenkilön tehtävänä on valvoa, että tutkimus toteutetaan suunnitelman ja lupaehtojen mukaisesti.

Tutkijat tekevät suullisista palautteista muistiinpanot ilman henkilötietoja ja kirjalliset palautteet kerätään ilman tunnistetietoja. Aineistot hävitetään opinnäytteen valmistumisen jälkeen.

Tutkimuksesta ei saa aiheutua viriketuntien pitämisen lisäksi muita kustannuksia sosiaali- ja terveysvirastolle.

Tutkimuksen valmistuttua tutkija esittelee tulokset pohjoisen palvelualueen johtoryhmässä.

Tutkimuksen valmistuttua tutkimusraportti tai sähköinen osoite, josta se on luettavissa, toimitetaan sosiaali- ja terveysviraston käyttöön (osoite Helsingin kaupunki, Kirjaamo, Sosiaali- ja terveysvirasto, PL 10, 00099 Helsingin kaupunki).

Lisätiedot

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Virastopäällikkö

22.4.2013

Ote

Hakija
Palvelualueen johtaja
Osastopäällikkö
Hoitotyön asiantuntija

Erityissuunnittelija

Otteen liitteet

Liite 1
Liite 1
Liite 1
Liite 2

Pöytäkirja on pidetty yleisesti nähtävänä Helsingin kaupungin kirjaamossa (Pohjoisesplanadi 11-13) 26.04.2013.

Virastopäällikkö

Matti Toivola
virastopäällikkö

Appendix 2

Suostumus opinnäytetyöhön osallistumisesta

Olemme sosionomiopiskelijoita Laurea ammattikorkeakoulusta ja teemme osana koulutustamme opinnäytetyön. Opinnäytetyömme tavoitteena on luoda perusta Oulunkylän Englanninkielisen päiväkodin lasten ja Kustaankartanon vanhusten yhteistoiminnalle järjestämällä yhteisiä tuokioita näiden kahden asiakasryhmän välillä.

Pyydämme suostumustanne opinnäytetyöhön osallistumiseen. Toimintatuokioita järjestetään viisi (5) kertaa. Toivomme teiltä suullista palautetta jokaisen toimintatuokion jälkeen sekä kirjallista palautetta kaikkien viiden toimintatuokion jälkeen.

Osallistuminen on vapaaehtoista ja teillä on oikeus kieltäytyä milloin tahansa. Kaikki tiedot käsitellään luottamuksellisesti ja nimettömänä. Opinnäytetyö on julkinen ja se julkaistaan ammattikorkeakoulujen Theseus-julkaisuarkistossa (www.theseus.fi).

Annan suostumukseni

En anna suostumustani

Helsingissä __ . __. 2013

Haastateltavan/lähiomaisen/vastaavan hoitajan allekirjoitus

Ystävällisin terveisin,
Kristiina Tiri ja Oriana Buş

Kuvauslupa

Yhteistukioiden aikana otetaan valokuvia mm. valmiista töistä. Valokuvat otetaan siten ettei ketään voi niistä tunnistaa ja kuvia käytetään vain opinnäytetyöhön.

Annan luvan valokuvaukseen

En anna lupaa valokuvaukseen

Helsingissä __ . __. 2013

Haastateltavan/lähiomaisen/vastaavan hoitajan allekirjoitus

Ystävällisin terveisin,
Kristiina Tiri ja Oriana Bus

Appendix 3

Permission letter for parents

Dear parents,

Some of you might remember that I am at the final stage of my studies for becoming a "sosiologi" and a big part of it is my thesis work. I, together with my thesis project partner, Kristiina Tiri, have decided that our project will aim at creating a contact between Oulunkylä English Kindergarten and Kustaankartano Elderly Centre. The idea came about after, many months earlier, Raisa expressed interest in collaborating with a nursing home and I was around to hear it.

The contact would happen first on a trial basis and consists of 5 activity sessions between the elders and the children. Participants in the sessions will be about 7 children from OEK and about as many (max.) from the elderly home. The aged ones are affected by dementia, so their participation depends in a great deal upon their ability and willingness. The activities we were thinking of doing with these two groups are baking and finger-painting; these activities have been chosen both for their developmental input for the children as well as for the fact both the elderly and the children love doing it. However, before going to the nursing home, we will have a session only with the children and talk about their expectations, their anxieties (if any) and inform them as well as we can about what a nursing home is.

The aim of the sessions is to support and strengthen the children's socio-emotional competence, meaning control of impulsivity, working cooperatively, caring for others and behaving respectfully.

The sessions will start probably at the end of April, depending greatly on how long it takes for the city of Helsinki to give us the research permission. You will be informed, however, about the exact dates as soon as we know them.

Pictures will be taken during the activities, but it will be done that way that the face of the child will not appear in them. There will be pictures, however, that capture the child's face, but those will not be used in any form with regards to our thesis. The only ones to use them are you, the parents.

Present during the visits will be Saija and a nursing home staff ready to help, while I and Kristiina will participate in the activities.

The final thesis work will be published on a public thesis portal you can find at <http://www.theseus.fi/web/guest;jsessionid=94CD85F5094FECFE025AF825F13E17E3> .

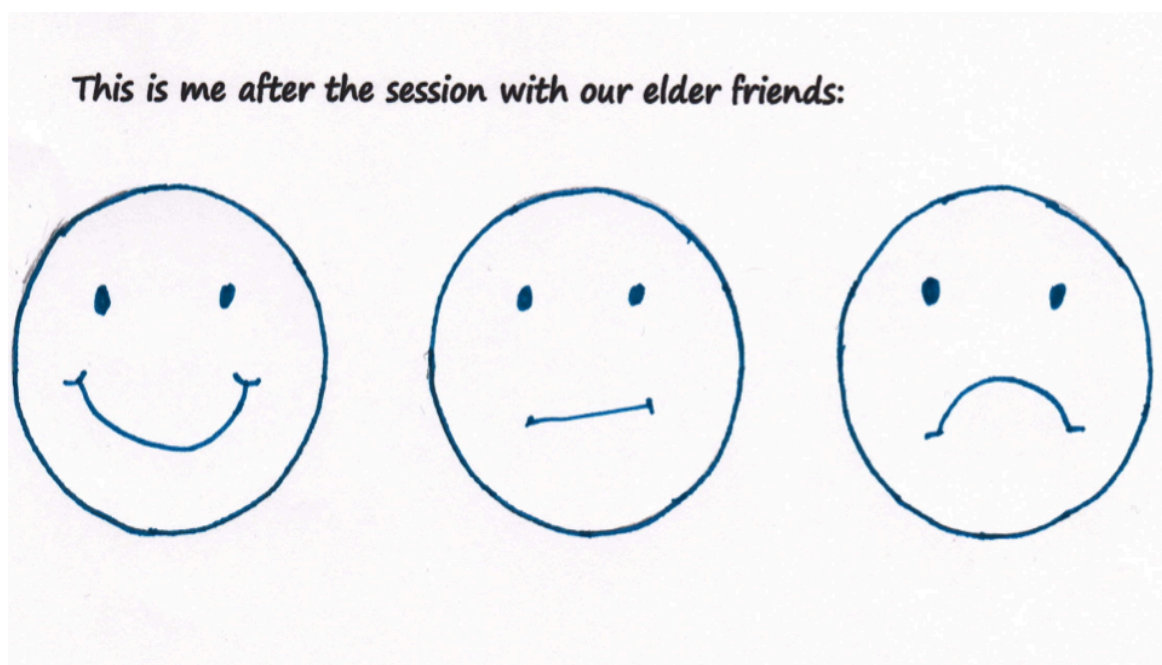
The identity of the children is not disclosed by name or other personal information. At the end of the project, you will be briefed in about how the whole process went. Hopefully, after we finish our "trials", a long term contact will be maintained with the nursing home, so it might be that all of the children from the kindergarten will get to visit.

The reason you get this e-mail is because, upon talks, we all agreed that we would like your child to be part of this project and we need, of course, your permission for his/her participation.

Appendix 4

Feedback form for children

1. What was good during this session/ What did you like?
2. What did you not enjoy during this session?
3. How do you think the elders feel about this session?



Appendix 5

General information for the staff present at the implementation of OEK-KK sessions

The idea behind the project is finding a good way to **support the children's socio-emotional development** and, additionally, to contribute to the socio-emotional well-being of the participant Kustaankartano residents.

By socio-emotional development in children, we refer to supporting the ability of the child to understand, manage and express the socio-emotional aspects of one's life. Aspects of social development (competence) include:

- control of impulsivity
- working cooperatively
- caring about one-self and others
- self-awareness

We'd be grateful if your feedback is mindful of our sessions' **goals**:

- facilitate contact among participants
- create enjoyable sessions for both parties
- raise active response from the participants (verbal and/or non-verbal)
- encourage pro-social behavior in children towards the elderly (be kind, help out, wait for their turn, etc.)

Feedback questions:

1. **Was pro-social behavior encouraged during the sessions?** (being kind, helpful, working cooperatively, waiting for one's turn, being polite, etc.)

2. **How did the participants relate to each other?** (communication, non-verbal actions, avoiding or helping, being silent, etc.)

3. **Did the session raise active response from the participants?** (verbal and/or non-verbal)

4. Did you notice things that worked effectively during this intergenerational contact session? If yes, what?

5. Is there something that, in your opinion, could be done differently in a future session? If yes, what?

6. Overall, what is your opinion regarding this session?

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE OUR QUESTIONNAIRE!

Kristiina & Oriana

Appendix 6

Original quotes

1. ”Lisäksi tällä hetkellä osastollamme on kongnitioltaan heikompia asukkaita, mutta osallistuminen oli aina kuitenkin 100 %:sta jokainen kun osallistuu omalla tavallaan.”
2. ”Pelottavaa. Ei vanhukset vaan koko tilanne.”
3. ”Aluksi mua pelotti olla siellä, mut sit äiti selitti mulle järkevästi.”
4. ”Aluks mua pelotti, mut sit muut autto niin ei enää pelottanu.”
5. ”Kontakti oli luonnollista ja pyyteetöntä.”
6. ”Huumoria riitti puolin ja toisin.”
7. ”Seuratessamme lasten ja vanhusten auttavaisuutta toisiaan kohtaan on selvästi havaittavissa että lasten toimintakyvyn ollessa parempi he auttoivat vanhuksia pyyteettömästi myös täysin omasta tahdostaan huomatessaan jonkun olevan kykenemätön johonkin tehtävään.”
8. ”Jokainen odotti hienosti vuoroaan, kun taikinaa tehtiin. Kaikki käyttäytyivät hienosti, muottien vaihtelu onnistui hyvässä hengessä.”
9. ”(Me) autetaan vanhuksia muistamaan asioita ja kuntoutumaan”
10. ”Lapsi alkaa heti auttamaan vanhusta maalaamisessa; ei puhu, mutta naureskelevat iloisesti toisille!
11. ”Yhteistyömme tuloksena olemme havainneet että kontakti osallistujien välillä oli mutkatonta ja suoraa, lasten/ vanhusten persoonan mukaista. Toiset uskalsivat ottaa rohkeammin ja aiemmin kontaktia kun toisilta aikaa kului hieman enemmän.”
12. ”Lapsia taas!”