

Sini Jääskeläinen, Saara-Leena Suomi

When A Child Protection Related Concern Arises

Kindergarten Teachers' Practices

Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences

Bachelor of Social Services

Degree Programme in Social Services

Thesis

Autumn 2013

Author(s) Title	Sini Jääskeläinen, Saara-Leena Suomi When A Child Protection Related Concern Arises – Kindergarten Teachers' Practices
Number of Pages Date	55 pages + 3 appendices Autumn 2013
Degree	Bachelor of Social Services
Degree Programme	Degree Programme in Social Services
Specialisation option	
Instructor(s)	Riikka Konttinen, Senior Lecturer Jukka Törnroos, Senior Lecturer
<p>The purpose of this study was to find practices that kindergarten teachers consider beneficial for acting on a child protection related concern and see how dialogue is present in these practices. Our aim was to provide information for other kindergarten teachers so they can develop professionally and acquire new working methods.</p> <p>This final thesis was a qualitative study. We used semi-structured interview as the data collection method and interviewed five kindergarten teachers. We analyzed the data with thematic analysis. Our theoretical framework consists of child protection's role in early childhood education, child protection related concerns, acting on the concerns, multi-professional cooperation and pedagogical partnership.</p> <p>The practices we found were divided into six themes: bringing up the concern, submitting a child protection notification, cooperation of kindergarten staff, multiprofessional cooperation, pedagogical partnership and tools that help acting on the concerns. The kindergarten teachers felt that being open and respectful towards the parents is the basis for acting on the concern. Pedagogical partnership should be built with the parents from the very beginning and there should be a low threshold for acting on the concern. The kindergarten teachers highlighted the importance of cooperation both within the working community and with cooperation partners. Additional training, observation, documentation and forms for assessing the concern were mentioned as useful tools.</p> <p>We conclude that the practices for acting on child protection related concerns are versatile. Dialogue has a noticeable role in the practices related to the cooperation with the parents. Important elements of dialogue found in the results were respect, openness, aspiration for mutual understanding and a safe space for the discussion.</p>	
Keywords	dialogue, early intervention, education, acting on the concern, pedagogical partnership, multiprofessional co-operation

Tekijät Otsikko Sivumäärä Date	Sini Jääskeläinen, Saara-Leena Suomi Kun Lastensuojelullinen Huoli Herää – Lastentarhanopettajien Toimintakäytäntöjä 55 sivua + 3 liitettä Syksy 2013
Tutkinto	Sosionomi
Koulutusohjelma	Sosiaaalialan koulutusohjelma
Suuntautumisvaihtoehto	
Ohjaajat	Lehtori Riikka Konttinen Lehtori Jukka Törnroos
<p>Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli löytää lastensuojelulliseen huoleen puuttumiseen liittyviä toimintatapoja, jotka lastentarhanopettajat kokevat hyväksi ja tutkia, miten dialogi näkyy näissä toimintatavoissa. Tavoitteenamme oli tarjota muille lastentarhanopettajille tietoa ja ideoita, jotta he voivat kehittyä ammatillisesti ja saada uusia työskentelytapoja.</p> <p>Tämä opinnäytetyö on laadullinen tutkimus. Aineistonkeruumenetelmänä käytimme teemahaastattelua. Haastattelimme viittä lastentarhanopettajaa. Analysoimme aineistomme teema-analyysin avulla. Opinnäytetyön teoreettinen viitekehys koostuu lastensuojelun roolista varhaiskasvatuksessa, lastensuojelullisesta huolesta, huoleen puuttumisesta, moniammatillisesta yhteistyöstä, dialogista sekä kasvatuskumppanuudesta.</p> <p>Löytämämme toimintatavat liittyivät kuuteen teemaan, jotka olivat huolen puheeksiottaminen, lastensuojeluilmoituksen tekeminen, päiväkodin henkilökunnan yhteistyö, moniammatillinen yhteistyö, kasvatuskumppanuus ja huoleen puuttumista helpottavat työkalut. Lastentarhanopettajat kokivat avoimuuden ja kunnioituksen vanhempia kohtaan olevan huoleen puuttumisen perusta. Kasvatuskumppanuutta pitäisi rakentaa alusta asti vanhempien kanssa ja kynnyksen puuttumiseen tulisi olla matala. Lastentarhanopettajat korostivat sekä työyhteisön sisällä että yhteistyötahojen kanssa tehtävän yhteistyön tärkeyttä. Lisäkoulutus, havainnointi, dokumentointi ja huolen arviointikaaviot nähtiin hyödyllisinä työkaluina huoleen puuttumisessa.</p> <p>Huoleen puuttumisen toimintatavat ovat monipuolisia tulostemme perusteella. Dialogilla on merkittävä rooli toimintatavoissa, jotka liittyvät vanhempien kanssa tehtävään yhteistyöhön. Tuloksissa tärkeitä esiin tulleita dialogin osa-alueita olivat kunnioitus, avoimuus, pyrkimys yhteisymmärrykseen ja turvallinen tila keskustelulle.</p>	
Avainsanat	Dialogi, varhaiskasvatus, huoleen puuttuminen, kasvatuskumppanuus, moniammatillinen yhteistyö

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Early Childhood Education and Day Care	2
2.1	The role of child protection in early childhood education	3
2.2	Early Intervention in day cares	4
3	A Child Protection Related Concern	6
3.1	Arising of a concern	7
3.1.1	Zones of subjective concern	8
3.2	Observing and documenting as tools for kindergarten teachers	9
3.3	Bringing up the concern	10
3.3.1	Erikson and Arnkill's method	11
3.4	Pedagogical Partnership	16
3.5	Multiprofessional cooperation	17
4	Dialogue	18
5	Previous research	20
6	Conducting the Study	22
6.1	The Aim and Purpose of the Study and the Study Questions	22
6.2	Methodology	23
6.3	Data Collection	24
6.4	Data Analysis	28
7	Findings	29
7.1	Bringing Up Concern	30
7.2	Submitting a Child Protection Notification	33
7.3	The Co-operation of Kindergarten Staff	34
7.4	Multiprofessional Co-operation	36
7.5	Pedagogical Partnership	38
7.6	Tools Helping Acting on the Concern	40
8	Reliability, Validity and Ethical Questions	41
9	Conclusions	43

10 Discussion	48
References	53
Appendices	
Appendix 1. Malli yhteydenottokirjeestä	
Appendix 2. Suostumus opinnäytetyöhön osallistumisesta	
Appendix 3. Suostumus opinnäytetyöhön osallistumisesta	

1 Introduction

This final thesis explores the different practices that kindergarten teachers find beneficial and useful for acting on a child protection related concern. The thesis examines for instance how do kindergarten teachers bring up the concern with the child's parents and what kind of tools they find convenient in concern related issues. The study also aims at seeing how dialogue and its elements are present in the practices. In the theory dialogue has a very important role. Dialogue is a central concept in the Bachelor of Social Services studies in Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences and we want to see whether it is also a part of the practices kindergarten teachers have for working with the concern. We believe that dialogue can improve the cooperation of kindergartens and families greatly.

This topic was chosen because although kindergarten teachers usually spend a rather large part of the day with the children and they also meet the parents daily, they submit only 1,8 % of the child protection notifications in Helsinki (Lastensuojelun ja päivähoidon yhteistyötä). This might be at least partly due to the fact that in the curriculum of kindergarten teachers in University of Helsinki child protection is not mentioned at all (Lastentarhanopettajan koulutus) and thus they might not have acquired very much knowledge about child protection during their studies. This is why we want to study the methods and tools that the kindergarten teachers in Eastern Helsinki have for acting on the concern and distribute them for a wider audience through the making of this final thesis. Learning from the experiences of the kindergarten teachers' who participated in this thesis can give new knowledge for other professionals in the field. We chose this topic also due to our personal interest in early childhood education and child protection.

There has been some previous research on the subject and other final theses have been made about similar topics. Ruponen, Vuorio and Örn (2012) have studied the awakening of concern in kindergartens, and the workers' experiences of submitting a child protection notification in Espoo. Yrjönen and Nygrén (2010) examined kindergarten teachers' views of submitting the child protection notification in Kymenlaakso area. Our study focuses on the practices that kindergarten teachers in Eastern Helsinki have for acting on a child protection related concern. Submitting the child protection notifica-

tion is an important part of these practices but it is not as central in this study as it is in the abovementioned theses.

Erikson and Arnkill have written a guidebook for early dialogues relating to concern about children. They have also developed a method for professionals for bringing up the concern with the parents for instance. This final thesis is largely based on Erikson and Arnkill's method and it is a central part of the theoretical framework of this study.

This final thesis aims to answer two study questions:

1. What kind of practices do kindergarten teachers experience as beneficial for acting on a child protection related concern?
2. How is dialogue present in these practices?

The study aims to acquire knowledge about the practices kindergarten teachers use for acting on the concern and about dialogue's role in the practices by interviewing five kindergarten teachers from different municipal kindergartens in Helsinki. The study method for this final thesis is semi-structured interview.

The goal of this thesis is to share kindergarten teachers' good practices and offer valuable information for other professionals and anyone interested in early childhood education and the work of kindergarten teachers. The information gathered in this thesis can also help developing the day care field by for example proposing possible development areas in kindergartens and by raising awareness of good practices kindergarten teachers have for child protection related concerns.

2 Early Childhood Education and Day Care

Early childhood education in Finland is a combination of care, education and upbringing. It happens in different areas of young children's lives and its goal is to support children's learning, growth and development. Early childhood education can also be described as meaningful and educational interaction between children and adults. An important part of early childhood education is the cooperation of the children's parents

and professionals involved in the children's lives. This cooperation is called pedagogical partnership and it aims at working together in a way that focuses on the children's best interests and their wellbeing. (Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman perusteet 2005: 11.)

Early childhood education is organised, supported and supervised by the society. The most central early childhood education service options are kindergartens, private childminders and open activities, such as play schools and clubs. In Finland the services are organised by municipalities, organisations, parishes and private service providers. (Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman perusteet 2005: 11.) Organising day care services is based on for instance laws and degrees. The value base for early childhood education is created by different international agreements on children's rights (for instance United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child) and national statutes. The documents governing the content of day care activities are National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care and Core Curriculum for Pre-School Education. (Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman perusteet 2005: 12.)

According to the law on children's day care, children who are under school age can get day care services. The aim of day care is to support families in their upbringing duty and promote children's development and growth together with the parents. It is important that the child can have continuous and warm relationships with the day care workers, diverse activities that support his or her learning and a safe learning environment. (Laki lasten päivähoidosta 1973/26.)

In order to ensure high quality of early childhood education it is vitally important that the personnel working with young children have the required skills and knowledge concerning for instance children's development (Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman perusteet 2005: 11).

2.1 The role of child protection in early childhood education

Child protection can be divided into two parts: preventive services and child and family specific services. Day care service providers such as kindergartens are an example of units that have a central role in the preventive services. (Services and benefits for families)

Preventive child protection that kindergartens are also a part of aims at supporting children and their families generally when they are not yet clients of actual child protection services. Its goal is to safeguard children's wellbeing and development and also to support parents in their upbringing duties. (Lastensuojelulaki 417/2007.)

The law for child protection requires the professionals working for example in the field of day care to cooperate with the municipality's child protection authorities if they notice a possible need for intervention in a child's or family's situation. According to the law cases that require the workers to inform the child protection authorities by submitting a child protection notification include issues with lack of care for the child or neglect, circumstances that endanger the child's development and the child's own deviant behavior. (Lastensuojelulaki 417/2007.)

Kindergartens are in a perfect position to do preventative child protection. The staff sees the children and families daily, unlike any other professionals, and can thus notice if there is reason to be concerned about the family. The staff at kindergartens can observe their clients regularly, and sometimes they know their clients for years, which creates a wonderful basis for pedagogical partnership and acting on child protection related concern. (Briggs & Hawkins 1997: 17.)

Sometimes kindergarten teachers might be afraid that there are not enough grounds for submitting a child welfare notification or that doing so would automatically lead to the child being taken into care. However, this is not often the case because submitting the notification only means that the child protection authorities must investigate the case and initiate the needed support methods. Professionals do not submit child protection notifications without sufficient grounds. Professionals, such as kindergarten teachers, can have important information about a child's situation for the child protection authorities. (Erikson & Arnkill 2009.)

2.2 Early Intervention in day cares

Early intervention is a process of observing problems and solving them. It is always a process, and starts as early as possible. It involves different ways to intervene in a possibly problematic situation of a child and a family. According to Huhtanen, children's deviant behavior, speech and well-being are matters that may cause an intervention by

a teacher. The base for early intervention is a concern for the child. The aim is to prevent and stop further problems and exclusion. Early intervention has two meanings: it can be seen as preventative and rehabilitating actions, such as offering special education for a child, but it is also the process that starts when a concern for a child awakes (Huhtanen 2000: 28-29.), and this is also what we refer to when we talk about early intervention in this thesis.

The early intervention process starts when somebody's behavior awakes concern in the teacher. The one performing the intervention is usually the teacher who brings up the concern and acts on it. The child and his or her parents have a large role in the process. The process moves forward according to the parents' reactions and attitude towards the intervention. (Huhtanen 2000: 30-31.)

The early intervention process has several stages. It aims to prevent problems as early as possible, and it is preventative action, which is performed through interventions. There are three kinds of prevention. The first stage is primary prevention, which is aimed for the whole population and includes i.e. laws and compulsory education. The second stage is secondary prevention, which is also called early intervention. Reducing the impacts of already existing problems is the goal for this stage, and it can include campaigns fighting against drugs or promoting children's reading skills. The third stage, tertiary stage, is for reducing inabilities caused by problems, and this includes different kinds of rehabilitation. The target group for prevention can be the children or indirectly the parents and the teacher teaching and raising them. (Huhtanen 2000: 31-33.)

Developing clear procedures and policies for early intervention in each kindergarten unit is important. According to Briggs and Hawkins (1997: 208-209) doing so would most likely cause the workers to be more aware of the child protection related issues and as a consequence, the acting on the issues would happen sooner. To achieve this, the staff would be required to communicate, consider the issues and create some principles. The kindergartens would educate their staff, take action, check new employees' backgrounds and skills carefully, increase the transparency of their daily activities and educate the parents about child protection as possible steps towards the aimed early intervention policy. (Briggs & Hawkins 1997: 208-224.)

3 A Child Protection Related Concern

Concerns are subjective. Everyone has their own ways of treating concerns, reacting and becoming concerned. Huhtanen presents a teacher's curve of concern. The concern grows until it reaches a culmination point when the teacher acts on his or her concern and the intervention starts. After the intervention, the concern decreases. (Huhtanen 2000: 24-25.)

Erikson and Arnkill (2005: 20-22) believe that shared problems do not exist. Instead of trying to solve a common, shared problem, people are always attempting to find a solution to their own personal issues from their point of view. An example of this is a situation where a family is struggling: instead of having only one shared problem that everyone is trying to solve, all participants have their own issues to solve. The children can for instance try to overcome their own current issues, the family's adults' aim is to survive as parents and a social worker or a kindergarten teacher for example strives for acquiring the right professional approach for the situation.

Because of this Erikson and Arnkill prefer using the term a subjective concern instead of a problem. Subjective concerns are something that are felt by the professionals in a professional relationship and relate to a child or a family's issues. A professional's subjective concern often has two dimensions: the professional is concerned for the child's wellbeing and also for his or her own abilities and resources of helping the family.

According to Erikson and Arnkill (2005: 21) a concern is "always future-oriented – regarding the next moment or the next year – and can be defined as a subjective anticipation of how relationships will develop and what are one's own supportive resources." The concern is based on the professional's intuitive perception of the child's or the family's situation and on what the professional's own resources for the case are. A concern arises as the professional observes the situation. The professional then goes on to survey the observations using his or her previous experience, education and knowledge. After seeing the overall picture of the situation a concern might appear in the professional.

The concern can be felt as small or large depending on the professional's emotions. Although intuition is not always valued as highly as knowledge and facts, Erikson and Arnkill (2005: 21) state that it can be a very useful tool because it helps professionals to

“create an image founded on training and professional experience, and draws attention and gives meaning to certain issues”. Morality and professional ethics, however, come into the picture when the professional evaluates whether the situation needs intervening.

Cognitive, emotional and moral are three elements that are present in the professional’s intuitive image in all situations. Acting on the concern is thus a result of these three elements. A professional can never accurately foresee the consequences, which results in all his or her actions being “basically experimental” (Erikson & Arnkill 2005: 22). However, the professional will only want to commit such actions that, according to his or her professional understanding, will be supportive instead of causing more harm for the clients. The professional can assess the consequences only afterwards, and learn more about attending to similar situations in the future. (Erikson & Arnkill 2005: 22.)

3.1 Arising of a concern

In a kindergarten a concern for a child’s wellbeing can arise in the workers if they for instance notice serious issues with the child’s basic care. Issues related to basic care can be seen as lack of satisfying the child’s physical needs, such as hunger and the need for sleep. If the child is for example especially hungry in the beginning of the week after the weekend, the workers might start wondering whether the child gets enough nutrition at home. Issues with the child’s personal hygiene or having dirty clothes very often can also arise concern. (Onnismaa 1999: 19; Huhtanen 2000: 202.) Some very alarming signs that usually cause the workers to feel concerned quickly are signs of violence on the child or hints of other physical or mental abuse (Huhtanen 2000: 202).

Issues related to neglect of care and upbringing can also cause concerns. The child might not receive enough mental support from the parents or there might be issues in the interaction between the child and the parents. The child might show symptoms of tiredness, fear, anxiety and restlessness for example in situations when the parents are picking the child up from the day care. In these kinds of cases the concern can arise slowly and as a result of many small signs of concern combined.

A child protection related concern is different from concerns that are directly related to the child, such as a concern about learning difficulties. Often the workers in kindergartens feel that it is more difficult to take the concern up with the parents when the concern is related to families with issues and especially to the parents' issues. Examples of parents' issues are serious mental problems or substance abuse. Opening the discussion about an issue is experienced as challenging especially when the worker suspects that child protection services might be necessary. (Onnismaa 1999: 20, 24; Huhtanen 2000: 202.)

3.1.1 Zones of subjective concern

Zones of concern is a tool created by Erikson and Arnkill that can assist a professional to identify the level of worry concerning the child, the professional's personal resources and the need for more support. Often when a professional is concerned about a child's situation, he or she also worries for his or her own capabilities of helping the child. The issues that children might have can be wide and demand multiprofessional cooperation. The zones of worry can help professionals from different fields to find a common understanding of the situation and the seriousness of the case and also promote early intervention (Erikson & Arnkill 2005: 25.)

In the zones of concern the subjective concern that the professional might feel about a child's situation is seen as a line: on one end the professional has no concern at all while on the other end the professional fears that the child is in great danger. Erikson and Arnkill want to emphasise that their tool is not meant for categorising children but for assisting the professionals to identify and see where they themselves stand on the concern line. (Erikson & Arnkill 2005: 26.)

In the first zone (1) there is no concern. The child's development for example is normal and the professional's own activities are progressing well. In the second zone (2-3) there is a small concern. The professional might experience the concern more than once but he or she still thinks the situation is under control. Professionals feel that on this zone the concerns are relatively easy to take up and the correct support is available and often helps the child properly. When the concern is still on this zone the professional's possibilities for early intervention are strong because the children and the par-

ents' ways of acting can still be influenced on this stage. (Erikson & Arnkill 2005: 26-27.)

The third zone (4-5) is called the grey zone where the concern is more noticeable and continues to increase. The professional starts to lose faith in his or her own abilities to help and is experiencing a lack of resources. Usually concerns in the grey zone have been long lasting and the clients might be challenging. While experiencing an increasing concern and need for more support for the child, the worker might be afraid of over-reacting and not having sufficient justification for the concern. Other related issues are for instance legal matters such as confidentiality and the duty to notify child welfare authorities. (Erikson & Arnkill 2005: 26-27.)

The zone of great concern (6-7) is the last zone. In this zone the child is thought to be in very serious danger and the professional is completely out of resources so he or she must act on the concern. In this zone the concern is so great that the professional feels there is no other way but to intervene, thus concerns in this zone are in a sense easier to deal with than concerns in the grey zone. The professional's options on this zone include contacting a social worker, psychiatrist or the police. Acting on the concern in situations of great concern cannot be avoided. However, the faster the professional acts on the concern and takes it up, the better the child and the family can receive and benefit from the supportive activities. (Erikson & Arnkill 2005: 26-27.)

3.2 Observing and documenting as tools for kindergarten teachers

In daycare observing the child and monitoring his or her development are central parts of the work, as is documenting the observations. Thus the workers are able to evaluate the child's development and possible need for support. They also know the child well and observe him or her daily in different situations, so it is possible to notice for instance behavioral changes. (Heinämäki 2005: 15; Huhtanen 2004: 70.)

When a concern arises, the workers usually start observing the child and his behaviour more systematically, which can help in assessing the concern. There are several signals in the observed world of a teacher, and small, single signals are forgettable, but forgetting something repetitive and attention grabbing is more unlikely, especially if it is written down and documented. Documentation might feel time-consuming and not so

important but documenting the observations can help when it is necessary to recall events for some reason, for example when a concern needs to be brought up with parents. There are also tools made for teachers that can help with the documentation and one example of them is the Zones of worry by Erikson and Arnkil. (Huhtanen: 132-133.) Another tool proposed by Huhtanen (2007: 134) is the sieves of concern where the teacher fills out the sieve which has possible problems and issues and that way the teacher considers the child's situation and whether there is need to intervene. (Huhtanen 2000: 134.)

Informing the parents about a concern can be easier for the professional if he or she has written observations about the situation beforehand. Especially concrete examples are useful because they might make it easier for the parents to see why the professional is so concerned. Detailed observations can also be helpful when evaluating different support methods. Transferring the observations from a worker's mind to a written form will also help the worker to plan the discussion ahead. (Erikson & Arnkil 2005: 23-24.)

3.3 Bringing up the concern

Bringing up the concern with parents is not done without thought. Before contacting parents and bringing up the concern with them, the teacher has possibly consulted other professionals and examined the child's background and possible previous issues. By consulting others the teacher sees whether others have supportive experiences for his or her observations and then tries to improve the situation by using the supportive tools he or she has, while trusting his or her skills to solve the situation. When the situation is not solved, the teacher feels his or her own resources are not sufficient. The teacher is in a situation where he or she has to act on the concern and contacts the parents, bringing up the concern with them. (Huhtanen 2000: 41.)

Having a good start for the early intervention process is essential since it has an enormous impact on how successful the process will be. The teacher needs to consider how he or she will present the concern to the parents. Hiding information from the parents in order to make it easier for them to receive the concern is not a good idea. At some point the truth will be revealed, and that will weaken the co-operation. Being empathetic but honest when bringing up the concern for the first time makes it easier for the parents to accept the teacher's concern about their child. It might be a crisis situa-

tion for the parents, but it can be the same for the teacher as well, if parents' reactions are strongly negative. Besides empathy and honesty, the teacher should have enough information and knowledge in order to make the situation easier for the parents. Suggesting a plan of intervention with information on how it will positively affect the child might also help. (Huhtanen 2000: 169.)

When the co-operation becomes troublesome, and parents' reaction to bringing up a concern is strongly negative, it can cause a crisis for the teacher. In these situations having a good support system at work is necessary. Being able to talk about the case is essential, and social support in the form of listening and wordless caring is the best kind according to Huhtanen (2007:172).

3.3.1 Erikson and Arnkil's method

Erikson and Arnkil have developed a method for professionals for taking up difficult issues causing them to feel concern about a child's situation with the parents respectfully. The method is based on being honest and frank, which can facilitate and improve the relationship with the parents and create a team of parents and professionals in order to help the child. The method includes a form that can be useful in preparing for the discussion and assessing it later. There are three sets of questions in the form. The first set is used when the professional decides that the issue needs to be taken up with the parents for the first time and when they need to obtain more information about it. When the professional is preparing to meet the parents he or she can use the second set of questions to discover what kind of way would be the best for voicing the concern respectfully. After the discussion has been completed, the professional can use the third set to assess how the discussion went and how the professional feels of the issue after bringing it up. (Erikson & Arnkil 2005: 12.)

Erikson and Arnkil suggest that professionals write down their observations of the issues that are causing them to experience a concern without forgetting concrete examples as they can make it easier for the parents to see why the professional is concerned. It is important that the professional is only sharing his or her observations for instance of the child's behaviour and not speaking of anyone's personal traits in order for the discussion to remain professional and respectful. (Erikson & Arnkil 2005: 23.)

In the case of a greater concern, the concern should be broken down into smaller parts and the parts should be prioritised. In situations where there are several issues causing the concern the professional and the parents can meet more than once, which also allows the parents to have possibilities of reflecting on the situation. Professionals tend to discuss parenting related issues in a very general way because taking up concrete issues can be quite difficult. (Erikson & Arnkil 2005: 23.)

Finding a favorable way of phrasing and wording the concern beforehand is also necessary. The professional should choose his or her words wisely and remember what kind of clients he or she is dealing with. As a way of ensuring that the parents understand what the worker is speaking of, it is recommended that the professional avoids professional terms and uses everyday language instead. Erikson and Arnkil also remind that being on the same level with the parents is important. (Erikson & Arnkil 2005: 24.)

The professional should not try to avoid the real cause of the concern because the parents will easily notice that there was something the professional did not mention. Erikson and Arnkil use the term "hiding-and-guessing" for situations where both the professional and the parents try to guess the thoughts and future actions of the other side. This kind of approach can proceed further to the network of authorities for instance in cases where the professional informs the child welfare authorities of a child's situation but does not want the parents to know that he or she has done so. (Erikson & Arnkil 2005: 24.)

Anticipation is an important part of taking up the concern. It means the mental practising that professionals go through in their minds when considering different approaches and the consequences they might possibly have. The professional can pick the most fruitful tactic (the approach that helps him or her to take up the concern in a way that will both help the child and maintain the relationship with the parents) when he or she is completely conscious of anticipations. The awakening of a concern causes the professional to start pondering what should be done in order to help the child and what could be the results of action. The professional can mentally assess the results of each alternative by placing emphasis on aware anticipation and thus identify the best option for action. Taking advantage of the professional's previous experiences, be they positive or negative, is also encouraged. Anticipation can also work as a method for finding hope and new ways of acting by awakening the professional's curiosity in cases

where the professional has lost his or her hope due to a challenging situation that might have continued for a long time and to which there does not seem to be any improvement. (Erikson & Arnkill 2005: 28-38.)

Anticipations can be and often are wrong. Their purpose is to help the professional see what has caught his or her attention in the situation, what kind of additional knowledge is needed and how the knowledge can help choose the right support measures. However, it is important to note that a discussion happens between two or more people who each have their own opinions and anticipations. It does not matter whether the discussion actually happens as the professional anticipated, instead the important points are the feedback from the parents, an increased and new understanding of the child's situation and how these will affect the co-operation between the parents and the professional in the future. (Erikson & Arnkill 2005: 28-30.)

In some cases the concern needs to be taken up with the parents several times before any improvement can be seen. Usually the professionals find taking up their worries easy if they can expect the parents to have immediate positive reactions. Immediate reactions can also be expected to be negative, which makes it more important to prepare for the intervention properly and more thoroughly. If the professional can anticipate that the parents' reactions will be negative, he or she also has time to ponder ways of counteracting such reactions and being prepared for facing them without feeling fear or embarrassment. This way the worker can stay calm and manage to continue the discussion. (Erikson & Arnkill 2005: 28-30.)

The parents also have anticipations of their own. It might go against their anticipations when the professional brings his or her subjective concern into the relationship as this can be seen as an element of control. In these situations it is natural to have negative reactions and to feel the need for taking a defensive position. In most cases the concern also includes sadness, anger or resistance. It is possible that the parents have simply decided not to think about their child's issue even if they have been aware of it, as this can be a way of resistance. As the professional takes the issue up, the parents are in a way forced to face it, which can create a surge of emotions. (Erikson & Arnkill 2005: 28-30.)

"Normal negative reactions" are considered to be safe but if there is reason to anticipate the parents to react with violence, careful consideration is especially necessary. In

such cases the professional can for instance invite another professional to the discussion as a safety measure. Some situations might also warrant the involvement of agencies with more power, such as the police. What must be kept in mind above all is that the professional's duty is to work for the child's best interest. (Erikson & Arnkill 2005: 28-30.)

Professionals take up their concerns with the parents because they want to work together with the family in order to help the child and the whole family's situation. The professionals have a great opportunity to offer the family some positive feedback by identifying the resources and strengths that the child and the family have. Even in situations where there does not seem to be any resources present, it is usually also a strength that the concern can be taken up and thus the issues are still able to be solved. After the resources and strengths have been found, it is time to consider what kind of support could be available and best relieve the child's situation. With the help of dialogue, the professional needs to enter the family's life and try to see the world with their eyes when assessing and deciding on the support forms and methods. (Erikson & Arnkill 2005: 30.)

The professional can gain "tacit knowledge" through anticipation and reflection on the discussion. This knowledge can help the professional to reassess his or her concern. Things that can decrease the worker's concern are for instance simply having a constructive discussion and that the parents want to work together with the professional. Taking up a concern successfully helps both sides to see the situation more clearly but at this stage small changes should be the target of the attention. When the professional sees that the actions that have been initiated have a good effect on the situation he or she will gain more hope and belief in his or her own abilities to help. It is very important that the professional has a positive attitude towards the clients, because that will improve the clients' attitude towards the professional as well. In a situation like this the parents and the professional are in a virtuous circle and positive events lead up to more desired outcomes and changes. (Erikson & Arnkill 2005: 37.)

However, if the discussion did not proceed well the professional might feel frustration and even anger. It is also possible that the discussion only increased the worker's concern. Then Erikson and Arnkill (2005, 37) advise the professional to concentrate on the feedback received from the discussion and trying to recreate anticipations for how the relationship between him or her and the clients is going to change in the future. A posi-

tive aspect, however, is that after the professional has taken up the concern he or she at least has better or full knowledge of the situation and thus a chance to re-evaluate the case. (Erikson & Arnkill 2005: 37.)

It is not very realistic to think that the child's situation will improve shortly after the concern has been taken up with the parents. One discussion can very rarely solve issues that might have been with the family for a long time. In the case of several concerning factors it might be necessary to have more than one meeting for taking up the issues. After a successful meeting a plan of action is drawn together with the parents. The plan includes the responsibilities of each actor and can help the worker by decreasing the concern. Everyday situations give a good opportunity to see concrete results for instance as changes in the child's behaviour. Thus following and observing the situation and possible improvements is very important. (Erikson & Arnkill 2005: 38-39.)

In the follow-up meeting every participant should be allowed to voice their opinions on the progress that might have happened in the situation. It is also good for the family if the professional tells them whether the concern has decreased in his or her opinion. When the child's situation has sufficiently changed for the positive, the professional and the family can decide to end the monitoring of the situation but plans should be made for the future when something might cause the worry to arise again. (Erikson & Arnkill 2005: 38-39.)

It is necessary to re-evaluate the support methods if the professional is experiencing more concern since the previous meeting. The size of the concern must be compared to the worker's own resources of helping in order to deduce whether extra support is needed. In these kinds of cases where the concern is in the grey zone the meaning of supportive networks is highlighted. If the concern belongs to the small zone it might be sufficient to simply change the professional's own behaviour to help the child and thus decrease the concern. In cases of small zone concerns the concerns might be present only in some certain context or situation. However, the concern moves up to the grey zone when the issues are present in several places and situations, which requires the uniting of the resources of everyone included to improve the child's situation. The combined resources of the parents and the professional might be enough, or it might be necessary to for instance organize a network meeting if there is need for additional support. Erikson and Arnkill remind that helping the child's situation might take a very

long time and several kinds of helping methods might be needed. (Erikson & Arnkil 2005: 38-39.)

3.4 Pedagogical Partnership

Starting an early intervention process includes co-operation with parents. The co-operation might be challenging but also rewarding (Huhtanen 2000: 156). When a teacher intervenes in family's life, he or she crosses a personal and private boundary of the family and it can also cause strong reactions. Huhtanen states that even though nowadays there is abundant discussion about pedagogical partnership, in the end the parent is still the responsible one. It is still important to share thoughts about the child's development and being in school, or in our case, in kindergarten, between the teacher and the parents. The parents and the teacher enable communication about both simple and difficult topics by having a deep and continuing dialogue and discussion culture. The child might behave differently in different settings, which might cause tension when parents and teacher do not share the same view of the child. Thus, it is important to actually listen and be interested in the everyday life of the child, and share these thoughts betwixt the adults as well. (Huhtanen 2000: 38-39.)

Pedagogical partnership requires parents and teacher to agree on objectives for the childcare. In order to do so it is necessary to communicate and share thoughts. The co-operation has to be successful regardless of the different backgrounds and values. However, there are certain situations when the co-operation is at risk. Admitting to the teacher that their child is not perfect or that their family is having problems can be challenging for the parents. (Huhtanen 2000: 158-159.)

The teacher and parents have different roles and tasks in the pedagogical partnership. The teacher has knowledge for instance of the group dynamics while the parents know how the child acts at home. The child's behaviour can vary in different environments. (Huhtanen 2000: 160-161.)

Being client-centered is an essential part of being a teacher. That involves several characteristics that a teacher should have: friendly behavior, being active at problem solving and giving guidance, having empathy and communication skills, having knowledge on the matter and understanding of people. In client-centered approach the client's needs are the starting point. (Huhtanen 2000: 167-168.)

The importance of good pedagogical partnership is especially highlighted when the child has a need for special support regarding his or her processes of growth, learning and development. One of the aims of the partnership is to recognize such possible needs in a child as early as possible and create a plan for helping the child together with the parents. (Heinämäki 2004: 29.)

Pedagogical partnership is built on trust, respect and equality between the parents and the professionals. The professionals need to recognize and accept that the parents are the ones with the main responsibility for the child's upbringing. In practice this can be seen when the professionals include the parents in decision-making, listen to their views and appreciate their choices. (Heinämäki 2004: 29.)

As the parents are the best experts of their child, their expertise can bring valuable information for the professionals and thus their position should be valued. However, this does not mean that they should be left alone with making decisions for instance. The professionals offer their own expertise and knowledge for the parents in return but also respect the choices the parents make as the primary caregivers. It is the professionals' task to create good conditions for pedagogical partnership and to initiate the process as the child starts in the kindergarten. (Heinämäki 2004: 29, 31.)

According to Erikson and Arnkill (2005: 30) parents and professionals work together side by side with the child's best interest in mind. Thus having a good relationship between the parents and professionals is extremely important. A good relationship requires both sides to have respect for each other and the professionals should remember to be on an even level with the clients. Professionals should also keep in mind that they have the professional expertise through education and experience but the parents are the experts in their own lives and know their children best. When the expertise of both the parents and the workers are combined, the child's situation can be supported in a successful way.

3.5 Multiprofessional cooperation

A concern is not experienced in the same way because it is subjective. Thus professionals especially from different fields might see a client's situation very differently. The

professionals' viewpoints are dependent on their fields and basic tasks and their viewpoints tell them how the case should be seen. In order to obtain as diverse a picture as possible of the child's situation it is useful and important to combine information from different fields. (Erikson & Arnkill 2005: 24-25.)

Professionals who work with children create a cooperation network. This network can be an important resource and it can also serve to empower the professionals as individuals as well. In order to receive the support of this kind of a professionals' network it is necessary to activate it by discussing the concern with other possible members of the network. A good rule to remember is to ask for help in order to reduce the subjective concern experienced by a professional. (Erikson & Arnkill 2005: 39.)

4 Dialogue

Dialogue can be defined as thinking and exploring together in order to reach a common and improved understanding of a given issue through communication in an open and direct manner (Aarnio; The Co-Intelligence Institute).

All the members taking part in the dialogue are allowed to have their own views, but it is acknowledged that the whole truth cannot be presented by single views only (Dialogisuuden muodostaminen ammattilaisten). According to Bohm (2004) dialogue is not used for making decisions. The aim is to have "an empty space where we are not obliged to do anything, nor to come to any conclusions nor to say anything or not say anything" (Bohm 2004: 19). Thus dialogue is completely based on the people's free will and their voluntary participation.

According to Isaacs (1999) when having dialogue the participants should build a safe container where they could trust each other and feel safe regardless of their differences. This safe container is an important pre-condition for having a dialogue and it consists, for instance, of trust, respect, listening and suspending. Having a safe and private physical environment and space for the dialogue is also important.

Trust is an essential pre-requisite for dialogue. The participants must be able to trust each other thoroughly in order to engage in a dialogue. Without trust people are not willing to be as open and sharing as is necessary for achieving a true dialogue. (Bohm

2004: 18.) Having respect for the other members of the dialogue is also vitally important. According to Bohm (2004) each person has his or her own views and opinions that should be respected by the other members of the dialogue, no matter how differing they might be. Each member should also be equally valuable. In dialogues between a client and a professional this can be seen for instance so that the professional respects the client's knowledge of his or her own life and does not attempt to play the role of an expert in the client's situation. Both members are on the same level and the client has respect for the professional as well.

Listening is a basic skill that is very necessary in a dialogue. The participants should be able to listen to each other fully, paying attention and showing interest in what the other participants are saying. (Bohm 2004.) The feeling of being truly listened to can give a person important experiences of appreciation and a sense of being valued as a human being. This is especially important in client relationships in the social services field. (Dialogisuuden muodostaminen ammattilaisten.)

As dialogue happens between people with different assumptions, those assumptions will at some point rise to the surface. Bohm (2004) emphasises the importance of suspending in such situations. Suspending means looking at and reflecting on one's assumptions, opinions and thoughts in a way that does not suppress them nor believe in them. Suspending can help in becoming more open towards other people's ideas and views when the participant realizes that his or her views do not represent the absolute truth, which in turn aids in achieving a more fruitful dialogue. Unlike in a debate, there is no requirement for a conclusion in a dialogue. (The Co-Intelligence Institute.) Rather, as Bohm (2004, 30) states:

The object of a dialogue is not to analyze things, or to win an argument, or to exchange opinions. Rather, it is to suspend your opinions and to look at the opinions – to listen to everybody's opinions, to suspend them, and to see what all that means. If we can see what all of our opinions mean, then we are sharing a common content, even if we don't agree entirely.

Dialogue can be used as a tool in co-operation with parents. Agreeing on the aim of the dialogue is difficult. In early intervention, the aim of the dialogue between parents and the teacher is to find a new, mutual solution. In dialogue, everybody is expected to listen to each other and respect others' opinions while sharing their own thoughts on the matter. The communication is strictly on the matter, and it is viewed from different viewpoints. Not succeeding in this might lead to the dialogue being unsuccessful.

Huhtanen presents a form of dialogue as a possible communication method when bringing up concern with parents. This form has a dialogical approach and it involves voicing own opinions, but listening genuinely to each other is emphasised. In this form concentrating on listening is essential, and in concrete it means listening deeply, asking questions and documenting. Instead of using judgement, the aim is to give support, and that requires honesty when bringing up concern. Good articulation makes it easier for others to understand one's opinions. However, people might have different interpretations of the situation. The parents might question the interests of the teacher, thus the teacher needs to base his or her actions on knowledge and facts about children and what is good for them. (Huhtanen 2000: 173-177.)

Erikson and Arnkill (2005: 36) describe people who engage in true dialogue as "willing to let go of their pre-set ideas and listen to the contribution of others and thus, being open to ideas generated as results of this joint interaction, which would have otherwise gone unnoticed. In other words, one's opinion is not final, but a step towards the "ultimate outcome".

In dialogue the participants try to find some new understanding of the topic or an issue by actively listening to each other's views without attempting to convince everyone to think the same way or agree. Dialogue places emphasis on listening rather than speaking and it can happen between different people and internally in a person's mind. In addition to listening, dialogue comprises of speech, gestures, expressions and emotions and it can help people to understand how others feel about something. (Erikson & Arnkill 2005: 36.)

As a professional invites the parents for a discussion to bring up a concern he or she is also inviting them for dialogue and for "opening the process of thinking together" (Erikson & Arnkill 2005: 36). When the parents are given a chance to be experts of their own lives, the cooperation between them and the professionals can be improved, which in turn is likely to help the child's situation as well. (Erikson & Arnkill 2005: 36.)

5 Previous research

There have been some developmental projects concerning this topic. One was Varpuproject, which was started by Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in 2001 and lasted

for a few years. It aimed to develop early intervention in early childhood education and schools. The well-being of children and youth as well as prevention of their marginalisation were the main goals for the project. (Varpu – lapselle tukea 2005: 2.)

In 2012 Central Union for Child Welfare had a developmental project that promoted child protection authorities and early childhood education professionals' cooperation and they produced an information website and some materials that were sent to all daycare centers in Finland. One of the aims for this project was about early intervention and developing kindergarten teachers' abilities to recognize child protection related concern and acting on the concern accordingly (Lastensuojelun ja päivähoidon yhteistyötä).

Sini Ruponen, Valpuri Vuorio and Katariina Örn made a bachelor's thesis close to our topic in 2012. The name of the thesis was "Kun huoli herää päiväkodissa - työntekijöiden kokemuksia huolen heräämisestä ja lastensuojeluilmoituksen tekemisestä". They studied the arising of a concern in kindergartens from the workers' viewpoint and the steps of submitting a child protection notification in Espoo. They found that discussion between the workers was essential part of acting on a child protection related concern. The concern arose from a deviant behavior of a child or a parent. Submitting a child protection notification caused mixed feelings among the workers.

Another final thesis that focused on a topic close to ours is called "Päiväkodin huoli lapsesta: Kymenlaakson lastentarhanopettajien näkemyksiä lastensuojeluilmoituksen tekemisestä". Suvi Yrjönen and Jonna Nygrén wrote the thesis in 2010. They examined the child protection work done in kindergartens in Kymenlaakso from kindergarten teachers' viewpoint. They studied the factors promoting or preventing the submission of a child protection notification in kindergartens. The kindergarten teachers could discuss a concern with co-workers. They tried to solve the issues with parents before submitting the child protection notification. The kindergarten teachers felt that they do not receive enough information back from child protection services.

6 Conducting the Study

6.1 The Aim and Purpose of the Study and the Study Questions

The purpose of this study was to find and present kindergarten teachers practices that they find beneficial for acting on child protection related concerns. Thus we explored kindergarten teachers' viewpoints to the topic. We also wanted to look at dialogue and what kind of role it has in these practices.

Our study questions were:

1. What kind of practices do kindergarten teachers experience as beneficial for acting on a child protection related concern?
2. How is dialogue present in these practices?

The aim was to provide information on the topic for other kindergarten teachers who can use the information in their work to develop their work practices and themselves professionally. According to the statistics kindergarten teachers in Helsinki submit only 1,8 % of the child protection notifications, although they spend time with the children and their families regularly (Lastensuojelun ja päivähoidon yhteistyötä). Sharing the beneficial practices the participating kindergarten teachers have provides new knowledge, viewpoints and ideas for other kindergarten teachers. This will, over the course of an extended period, benefit the clients of the daycare centers and their well-being. We also wanted to raise general awareness of the issue and its importance. Furthermore this final thesis was written in English, and since it will be available online, the information will be accessible for a wider audience and can thus benefit for instance kindergartens even outside Finland.

We wanted to look at dialogue's role in these practices because it was heavily emphasized in the theories about acting on a concern. Dialogue is also a very important part of our own studies, and we view it as a valuable tool. These two reasons made us interested in seeing whether it would be such a strong factor in the practices for acting on a child protection related concern. We were also curious to see whether there were

some dialogical aspects that were not part of the practices and thought that those could provide some developmental ideas.

This topic was also important for us personally. It was chosen because we wanted to connect early childhood education and child protection in our final thesis. We are interested in having more knowledge about the topic since we are both currently working as kindergarten teachers and are planning to continue working with children and families in the future as well. The questions regarding child protection related concerns and acting on them feel challenging for us as new workers, and thus learning from others' experiences and practices seemed very useful.

6.2 Methodology

We chose to do a qualitative study. The reason for the choice was that we considered the qualitative study method to be the most fitting for our research questions.

According to Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara (2009: 164), qualitative study has a holistic approach towards information gathering. Own observations and discussions are seen as more reliable methods (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2009: 160-164). The approach in qualitative research is inductive (Alston & Bowles 2013: 12-13; Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2009: 164). General theories are reached through unique cases (Alston & Bowles 2013: 12-13). The data is explored in a detailed way from different viewpoints instead of testing a theory or hypothesis, which is often done in quantitative research. The sample is chosen purposefully and the research is conducted flexibly, by changing the research plan if needed. Uniqueness of the cases is taken into consideration during the research. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2009: 160-164.)

Understanding a phenomenon and others' viewpoints are among the interests of qualitative researchers. A qualitative researcher wishes to explore issues and matters meaningful for the participants. (Alston & Bowles 2013: 12-13.) In qualitative research, methods in which the viewpoints of the participants are in the focus are popular (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara: 2009: 164). Objectivity is an important aspect of quantitative research but in qualitative research it is often argued that it is not part of it because having no values in the research is impossible. Thus, this should be taken into consideration while researching. (Alston & Bowles 2013: 12-13.)

Our study questions already show that we considered the kindergarten teachers' viewpoints to be valuable to our research. We wanted to be able to explore their ideas and practices and felt that it would be done best by asking them about the matter. This would create a better and deeper understanding of the matter. We wanted to obtain deeper knowledge of the issue and be able to share the participants' viewpoints to other kindergarten teachers. The flexibility of the qualitative research interested us too. As a whole, qualitative research seemed to be the best research method for us because we thought that it would provide us with the best data to answer our study questions.

6.3 Data Collection

We started our thesis process in the spring when we chose our topic. Through spring and summer, we familiarised ourselves with literature concerning the topic. We also applied for our research permit in the spring and received it on April 15th, 2013. Originally we wanted to study the impact of acting on the concern on pedagogical partnership as well, but with the help of our teachers and fellow students we realized that the topic would not have been possible to be studied with the resources we had available, so we decided to focus on dialogue's role instead. To answer our research question, we decided to interview kindergarten teachers from Eastern Helsinki. A great amount of child protection cases in Helsinki are from that area (Helsingin tila ja kehitys 2012: 119), and thus we thought that the teachers and daycare centers in that area are likely to have more experience regarding child protection related concern and acting on it, than daycare centers in other parts of Helsinki, and that way the kindergarten teachers and daycare centers in Eastern Helsinki would have developed working practices for acting on the concern.

We decided to use interviews as our data collection method. According to Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara (2009), when using the method of interviewing, the researcher can be flexible and adjust the data collection according to the situation. An interview gives the interviewee a chance to voice his or her opinion and be an active participant. There is an element of unexpectedness in interviews: the answers are unknown beforehand. The answers can be diverse and in an interview, the researchers can ask additional questions and thus get clearer and deeper answers if needed. (Hirsjärvi,

Remes & Sajavaara 2009: 205-206) These were reasons that impacted our decision to choose an interview as our data collection method.

There are many types of interviews that can be used in data collection. We decided to use a semi-structured interview as our data collection method. In this method, the researcher has structured the interview somewhat, and has some questions in each part. Mostly the questions are asked in their order, but there can be additional questions to clear up something, ask for additional information or if something totally new is brought up, the interviewer is allowed to ask more about it. Typically these interviews consist of open-ended questions and prompts, which allow the interviewee more freedom in his or her answers. Semi-structured interview is a form of interviewee situated between structured interview and in-depth interview. Structured interviews are often questionnaires. Similarity is an objective for a researcher conducting a structured interview. The questions are mostly the same, and are asked in a specific order. In-depth interviews are very different from structured interviews. They are very flexible, and more like discussions. Often the researcher has some topics ready in order to gather relevant information. However, in-depth interview aims to look at the issue from the interviewees' viewpoint, and thus the structure is not as important. (Alston & Bowles 2013: 142-144.)

With the semi-structured interview method, the kindergarten teachers could answer with their own words, which provided us a chance to hear about their experiences and opinions more freely than in some other methods. Since we feel that the kindergarten teachers from this area are the best experts to answer our questions, ensuring that their voices were heard was necessary for our study. With the semi-structured interview we were able to concentrate on the topics that were relevant to our study. By using the semi-structured interview it was also possible to compare the participants' answers to each other and to theory, since we were able to cover the same topics with every interviewee. We felt that with the other two types we would not have been able to achieve this. A structured interview would have been too tight for us, and would not have provided much room for additional questions and obtaining deeper answers from the interviewees. On the other hand, since we did want to cover certain questions and themes, an in-depth interview would have been too open and flexible, and thus not the best fitting method.

Before applying for a research permit, we had already contacted some daycare centers in an area in Eastern Helsinki in order to acquire some information of the interest level

for our study. We approached a few of the kindergartens' managers in the area via email. When we contacted the managers, we told them we needed qualified kindergarten teachers for the interviews but we did not give any other specific requirements. The kindergarten teachers were selected by the kindergartens and the selection was partly based on the teachers' interest in the topic. We found two daycare centers that were interested already then, and after we had received the research permit, we contacted them again and started to look for other interviewees by sending emails to the managers. The managers who were interested then forwarded the message to their workers who personally then contacted us and we agreed on the interview time with them.

We were aiming to get 6-8 interviewees, but we did not achieve this. One of the kindergarten teachers canceled her participation because we could not fit our schedules together. We were able to find all our interviewees in April and May easily. When we contacted kindergartens again from June to August, we received no replies. We think that might be due to the summer holidays and the new autumn term starting. In the end we interviewed five kindergarten teachers from three different daycare centers that were all located in an area in Eastern Helsinki. The interviews were conducted in May and June 2013 in the kindergartens. We did not specifically test the interview questions beforehand, but we had gotten some feedback on them during our final thesis planning seminars. We also developed the questions slightly during the interviews if we noticed some question needed to be modified. However, drastic changes to the questions were not needed.

We interviewed each kindergarten teacher individually, one at a time, because we thought that taping and transcribing the interviews would be relatively easier and simpler that way. More importantly, by interviewing each teacher alone, we also could obtain the teachers' individual and personal experiences and opinions of the topic, and each teacher was allowed to have their own say. The interviews were conducted face-to-face at the kindergartens in peaceful rooms that offered the teachers and us enough privacy and where there was the least possible amount of disturbances. The teachers were interviewed during their working hours, at a time that was good for the teacher, in order to minimize the amount of extra arrangements needed from the kindergarten and the teachers. The interviews were recorded with two phones. The phones were easily available and had sufficient recording programs. The second phone was to ensure that if we had had any technical problems, we would not have lost our recordings. During

the interview, one of us was interviewing and the other one took notes. We changed the interviewer from interview to interview. All the interviews were conducted in Finnish.

Before starting the interview we introduced ourselves and our study and then had the interviewee sign a consent form in which the interviewees gave their permission for us to use the interviews for our study. In the form we explained how we ensure the anonymity of the interviewees. We also made sure that the interviewees knew that participation was completely voluntary for them. We reserved one hour per interview but the duration of the actual interviews varied from 30 minutes to 45 minutes. We were able to ask all the questions we wanted in that time and the kindergarten teachers were able to tell everything they wanted, so that time was sufficient. Some of the teachers were more talkative than others, and thus those interviews took more time. We also had to ask more additional questions from some interviewees. In the end we confirmed with the interviewee that we had discussed about everything relevant and then gave the kindergarten teacher a chance to ask any questions she had for us. We also told when the study would be ready and asked if the kindergarten teacher would be interested in receiving her own copy of the study.

We were satisfied with our choice of data collection. It gave us a good amount of data and the data was so logical that processing and analyzing it was not too challenging. Our sample did not consist of the amount of interviewees we aimed at but we feel nonetheless that we had the level of data saturation we were aiming at.

We chose the interview based on what seemed to be relevant based on the theory around the topic and what seemed to be the best questions to ask in order to answer our study questions. We also presented our first set of questions in a thesis-working seminar to our teachers and fellow students and were able to get some feedback on them before conducting the interviews. We started with questions about the interviewee's backgrounds and then asked about child protection related concern in their work, and what do they do when it arises. We had questions about submitting a child protection notification, bringing up the concern with parents, pedagogical partnership, the support of the work community, the procedures of the kindergarten and possible developmental needs. We modified some of the questions and added new ones after the first interview because that provided us with experience of what worked and what did not.

6.4 Data Analysis

We started our data analysis by transcribing the interview recordings, as soon as possible after the interviews when they were still fresh in our minds. We transcribed word for word, only leaving out anything that would violate the anonymity of the participants. After the transcription was done, we destroyed all our copies of the interviews.

After transcribing, we started to read the data carefully and code and process it. We used thematic analysis for our data. Thematic analysis is a very popular method of analysis in qualitative research. In thematic analysis the researcher searches for themes or patterns which then are used to structure and describe the data. It is flexible and thus often a good way to do analysis. (Braun & Clarke 2006: 81-83.) For us, this seemed to be the most applicable method of analysis because we predicted that we could manage our data well if we used this method. In general, qualitative analysis is quite flexible. Alston and Bowles (2013: 271) say that there are no strict rules for conducting the analysis and the situation can change and methods can vary. We used this for our advantage and used the thematic analysis as the basis but took some liberties in order for it to fit our research purposes even better.

Based on the interview questions, we divided the data to categories. That way it was easier to start looking for the practices from the data because we could see the similarities and differences and could avoid repetition. The data was also more manageable and understandable this way. Analysing the practices from the data happened by reading through the categorized text several times and picking them up from the text. After we had the practices gathered we started to look for themes among them. The themes structured the practices and made the findings easier to understand. Then at the final stage we analysed the practices and how dialogue is present in them. We based the analysis on what elements dialogue has according to literature about dialogue.

7 Findings

In this chapter we present our findings. We use citations from the interviews and we have also translated them into English freely by ourselves. The findings are different practices that were experienced as beneficial for acting on a child protection related concern by the kindergarten teachers that were interviewed. The practices are divided into six themes. The themes are: bringing up the concern, submitting a child protection notification, cooperation of kindergarten staff, multiprofessional co-operation, pedagogical partnership, and tools helping acting on the concern. The themes surfaced from the data but they are somewhat similar to our interview question categories, which were based on theory. The questions we asked were around those categories and thus they are partly presented as themes in our findings.

We interviewed five female kindergarten teachers for our study. All of them were working as kindergarten teachers in three daycare centers located in Eastern Helsinki when the study was conducted. Three of the teachers had received their education at university or the Ebeneser Kindergarten Teachers' College, and two interviewees had graduated as Bachelors of Social Services. The interviewees had work experience as kindergarten teachers in early childhood education from 8 to 25 years. All of the interviewees felt that they had a lot of work experience with a child protection related concern and acting on it. Two of the interviewees had additional work experience related to child protection services.

Based on the data, in general intuition seemed to be important in the process of acting on the concern. The kindergarten teachers felt that trusting their instinct in those situations was often successful.

Kindergarten teachers' motivation for acting on a child protection related concern was the wellbeing of the child. They are saying that their actions are based on that and one also mentions how taking care of a child's wellbeing and acting on the concern is their responsibility by law as kindergarten teachers. Acknowledging that their intervening is performed in order to ensure the child's wellbeing can also help in these challenging situations and give courage to act, according to the interviewees.

Kuitenki se mikä aina helpottaa on ajatella sitä lapsen parasta, sen takia olen täällä töissä, lapsi on niinku mun tärkein yhteistyötaho, et se helpottaa kuitenkin se ymmärtäminen et mä teen sen lapsen parhaaksi vaikka se voi-kin joskus olla hyvinkin vaikeeta.

However, what always makes it easier (to act on concern) is to think about what is best for the child, that is why I am working here, the child is the most important co-operation partner for me, so understanding that I work for the well-being of the child makes it easier even if it can sometimes be really difficult. (translation)

7.1 Bringing Up Concern

Bringing up the concern with parents was an important theme in our interview and in the data as well. The practices that arose from the data for this theme can be divided into three categories: how and what one should speak to the parents, how one should treat the parents and how to make sure the situation is as comfortable as possible.

The kindergarten teachers we interviewed had several practices for how and what one should speak to the parents. Based on our data, the threshold for bringing up the concern with parents should be low. The kindergarten teachers watch the situation for a few days at maximum, before bringing the concern up with the parents. That often happens in the everyday situations, for example when the parents come to pick up their child. The teachers might casually ask about the matter from the parents. The teachers felt that it was best to use the child's own words or say how they have noticed or observed something concerning when bringing up the issue. According to our data, it is important to be honest and say the matters as they are. However, the words should be carefully considered and they should show openness and respect towards the parents. Being respectful when bringing up the concern is important for the continuation of the pedagogical partnership.

Suora puhe on kaikkein paras et semmonen kiertely ja kaartelu on vähän huonoa et vaik se tuntuuki tosi kauheelta sanoo semmosii asioita mitä ei voi todistaa, et ne on totta, nii pitää vaan pysyy siin et "mul on semmonen tunne", tai et "must näytti siltä", mut enhän mä voi sanoo et "sä olet sellainen", et kylhän siin pitää aika tarkkaan osata ne sanansa asetella sitte.

Direct speech is the best way, circling around the topic is kind of bad even if it feels horrible to say such matters which can not be proved to be true, but you just need to focus on your idea of “I have this feeling” or “it seemed like that for me”, but I can not say that “you are this way”, so you need to set your words really carefully then. (translation)

The parents should also get to voice their opinion and viewpoint on the matter. Two of the teachers also proposed that they always try to find something positive to say. That can help the parents in handling the situation and also continuing the co-operation can be easier. For these same reasons, when the matter is not very serious yet, one way of bringing up the concern is to bring up a small part at a time. When the concern is in the grey area, the threshold for bringing it up should also be low, and there should be discussions within the team and with the parents while the situation is being watched and evaluated for a longer period of time.

The practices related to treating parents were about respecting them. The data suggest that being respectful towards the parents is essential, especially if one wants to have a good pedagogical partnership with them.

Vanhempien kunnioittaminen [on tärkeää] et se et pystyy sitä asiakassuhdetta jatkamaan eikä kaikki vaan tsummaa siihen huoleen, et on niit mui-takin asioita mitä sen perheen kans tehdään yhdessä, et niil vanhemmil on kuitenkin semmonen tunne et ne voi rehellisesti tulla tänne ja puhua. Et ei sit leimaa sitä koko ihmistä jos se on tehny jotain väärin suhteessa niihin lapsiin tai ei pysty sen parempaan nyt tällä hetkellä tai jotain muuta et semmonen tietty kunnioitus niit ihmisii kohtaan et kylhän ne kaikki yrittävät varmas-ti parhaansa kun he siinä elintilassa pystyvät. Että se on sellanen tärke asia mun mielestä.

Respecting parents is important so that you can continue the relationship with the client afterwards and you do not just focus on the concern, there are other things that you do together with the family, that these parents have a feeling that they can honestly come here and talk. So you do not cause stigma for the whole person if he or she has done something wrong towards the children or he or she can not do better right now, since I am sure they all try the best they can in their situation. So that is one important matter in my opinion. (translation)

It is also a beneficial practice to remember that parents are different and to take that into consideration in the interaction with them. One teacher mentioned how not having a common language can complicate the interaction and bringing up concern. She said that using a translator in those situations is essential, but noted how it is time consuming.

There are also practices related to the situation and making sure it is as comfortable as possible for everyone. The kindergarten teachers try to make sure that the environment and situation for bringing up the concern is peaceful and that there are no interruptions or others listening in.

Tärkeint siin on varata se aika, ja paikka, ja tila. Sitte vaikka tällänen paikka mis ei oo kukaan kuulemassa et hei mistä me puhutaan. Et eteises ei missään nimessä.

The most important thing is to reserve the time, place and space. And the place should be such where nobody is listening in to what is talked about. So definitely not in the hall. (translation)

The teachers also suggest to the parents that they can bring along people from their support network if they feel they need them. The teachers might also bring support for themselves to the discussion, for example the manager might join. Sometimes they might also ask some co-operation partners, like itinerant special education teachers or early support workers, to join the discussions and to provide their point of view to the matter.

Jos on ennakoitu, et keskustelusta saattaa tulla hankala nii siihen sitten voidaan pyytää esimiestä mukaan, tavallaan vähän niinkuin puolueettomana ottamaan kantaa, tai sitten on välillä sanottu et voiko hän tulla kirjajaan asioita, että työntekijällä tarvittaessa sitten on semmonen taustatuki. Myös sitten saatetaan vanhemmalta kysyä et jos on esim. yksinhuoltaja kyseessä et onko sulla joku ystävä jonka sä haluat tähän mukaan vähän tueksi ja turvaksi, että ei sitten taas perhe koe et on hurjasti ihmisiä siinä ja hän on niinku yksin siinä. Semmoset asiat pyritään ottamaan huomioon, tietysti tapauskohtaisesti mietitään, että paras kokoonpano istuu alas ja keskustelee. Aika usein perheet ei välttämättä halua siihen sitten ikäänkuin ylimääräistä porukkaa et he haluavat sitten ihan joskus jopa ihan kahdestaan ja sekin on ihan ok.

If we have anticipated that the discussion might be challenging we might ask the manager to join us, as an unbiased participant to give his or her opinion, or sometimes we have asked him or her to be the secretary so the worker can have some kind of background support. We might also ask the parent, for example if he or she is a single parent, if he or she has some friend that he or she would want to have in the situation as their support, so that the family does not feel that there is a huge amount of people there and he or she is alone. We try to take these kind of matters into consideration, but of course we think case by case what is the best group of people to sit down and discuss. Quite often families do not want any additional people and they sometimes want it to be just the two of us, and that is fine, too. (translation)

7.2 Submitting a Child Protection Notification

One of our themes for beneficial practices is submitting a child protection notification. Around this theme, there were practices related to the families. One practice is being honest to the parents about submitting the notification. All our interviewees agreed that the families should be told as soon as possible about the notification, and preferably before and after submitting it. When the matter is told to the family, it should be presented with the same words that were used when submitting the child protection notification. Before the notification is submitted, exploring the process of what happens afterwards together with the family is a good practice, our data suggest. The families might often have negative ideas of child protection and think that the teacher wants to separate the child from the family. Thus, providing information for the family about child protection and what possibilities and services there are, besides taking the child into custody, is important. Some interviewees also brought up that threatening the families with the notification should not be done.

Kyl me sit sanotaa hyvin varhasessa vaiheessa et tää [viittaa lastensuojeluun] on sit meidän yks yhteistyökumppani, et tarvittaessa, mut se että me ei ikäänkuin pelotella tai sanota, et jos sinä et ryhdistäydy nii sitten soitaan. Semmosta ei saa tehdä, et vaan se asiallisesti kerrotaan, et mitkä on ja se myös reilusti, et se [lastensuojeluilmoituksen tekeminen] on meidän velvollisuus tavallaan virkamiehenä.

We do tell very early on that child protection is one of our co-operation partners if needed, but we do not threaten or say that if you do not get better we will call. You cannot do that, instead you need to properly present the partners and also tell honestly that submitting a child protection notification is our responsibility as workers. (translation)

Our data suggest that in all three daycare centers there was a practice of submitting the notification with one's own name. One interviewee mentioned that if the situation is very challenging, the manager submits the notification in order to ensure that the person working with the family daily is not identified alone as the submitter and thus harming the daily co-operation with the family. Another practice in all of the daycare centers was that a single worker never makes the decision to submit a notification, unless the situation is really acute. The worker has to consult his or her team and the manager before the submission.

Yksittäinen työntekijä ei saakaan tehdä sitä päätöstä et se on sitte semmonen yhteinen huoli tavallaan ja katsottu se tilanne et se tosiaan on näin että ei niinku mutu-tuntumalla tai tulkinnoille ni ei saisi toimia niiden pohjalta.

A single worker cannot make the decision, it is kind of a common concern then and we have looked at the situation and confirmed that it really is so, so that you do not base the actions you take on interpretations only. (translation)

When making the decision of submitting the notification, the teachers said that one needs to be very confident that the concern is well-grounded, acting based on one's interpretation is not professional. When asked at which point do they decide it is time to submit the notification, the common answer was that they make the decision when the concern has accumulated enough and their subjective threshold has been crossed. A few participants mentioned that it is partly based on intuition too. However, when the situation is acute, the decision and then submission, as mentioned, is done immediately, and at one kindergarten there is a practice of having a colleague witnessing the situation.

On ollu sit semmonen tilanne että tulee isäpuoli päihtyneenä tuomaan lasta aamulla päiväkotiin ja samantien sanoin, et "hei, nyt sä et oo kunnossa", pyysin siihen todistajan paikalla ja sanoin, et mä joudun täst tekee lastensuojeluilmoituksen ja soitin samantien.

There has been a situation where a step father brought a child to kindergarten in the morning while being intoxicated, and I said immediately that "hey, you are not well right now", found a witness for the situation and said that I have to submit a child protection notification for this, and then called immediately. (translation)

7.3 The Co-operation of Kindergarten Staff

Our third theme, the co-operation of kindergarten staff, was heavily present through the interviews. The first thing the teachers told they do when a concern awakes is that they discuss with their team and colleagues. They ask others whether they have had similar observations and discuss them together.

Kyl mä yleensä ensimmäisenä jaetaan kokemukset ilman muuta työkaveriitten kanssa, että "hei, arvatkaa mitä kuulin...?" tai "arvatkaa mitä näin...?", ja vaihdetaan, et "hei ootsä huomannu mitään...?". Et siitä tulee se lähin tukiverkosto niistä työkavereista.

Usually I first share the experience with the colleagues, of course, like "hey, guess what I heard...?", "guess what I saw...?" or "hey, have you noticed anything...?". So the closest support network is the colleagues at work. (translation)

It was also mentioned in our data that it is important to make sure that there is enough time for these kinds of team discussions. Our data suggests that the importance of these discussions is great. The teachers also experienced the support and interest of other staff as helpful and needed, and that support was in the form of discussion as well. One of the daycare centers also had a special education children group that was taught by a special education kindergarten teacher. The teachers from that kindergarten were able to ask his or her for advice, which was seen as useful too.

Another co-operation partner for a kindergarten teacher is the manager of the daycare center. The teachers talked about the practice of going to talk with the manager about their concern and the manager can share his or her expertise on the subject. The manager is also responsible for the functions in the daycare center, thus, as mentioned earlier, he or she is required to be aware of the situation.

The help of colleagues was also mentioned as necessary after the situation with concern was over. The kindergarten teachers felt that they needed to talk about their experiences and feelings. That helped the teachers to handle the situations so that they would not be bothered by them anymore, and the teachers' wellbeing at work would also improve.

Se auttaa, että saa niinku purkaa sitä täällä et, et on se sitten oman tiimin tai esimies tai tämmönen pieni suljettu ympyrä, et saa vähän niitä omia ajatuksiaan purettua.

It helps that you can handle the situation here, that you have your own team or manager, or a closed circle where you have a chance to talk about your thoughts. (translation)

One practice that emerged from our data was also evaluating the process of acting on a child protection related concern by considering which part succeed, which not and what could be improved. One of the teachers had participated in work counseling which had been organized four times after a challenging case and felt it was a truly beneficial experience for her, suggesting that there should be more chances like that. One prac-

tice mentioned was also humor. The cases might be challenging so one way of handling them is using humor, even dark one.

One of the interviewees suggested a practice of mentoring the newer workers. A very common answer for what helps the teachers in the situations of acting on a child protection related concern was that experience is a huge factor, which eases the intervening. One of the kindergarten teachers wanted to encourage the newer and more inexperienced workers to just be brave and set to work, since that is the only way to gain more experience. According to her, a new teacher should not be afraid of situations of concern. Then afterwards, the matter can be handled by discussing with the more experienced teachers.

Tämmösis työyhteisöissäki pitäis enemmän laittaa niit nuorempia ja kokemattomampia tekemään niit ilmoituksia ja olla ite vähän niinku taustalla ja auttaa siin asiassa ja sen käsittelyssä. Mä ainakin koen et mä oon itte oppinu, että on jonkun semmosen kanssa vähän niinku yhdessä tehny ja vähä tää mentorointi-periaate vähän siinä sitte.

In work communities like this the younger and more inexperienced workers should be the ones submitting the notifications and you yourself should be in the background and help in the process and in handling it. I myself feel that I learned that way, that I submitted them together with someone more experienced, and the mentoring principle was present in that. (translation)

Based on our data, it seemed that there could be room for collective policy and procedures regarding acting on concern in the daycare centers. Most of the interviewees said that they do not have any such policies; the only thing that was mentioned was the use of the form, which helps to handle concern (“Huolen purkukaavake” in Finnish). That was also suggested by one of our interviewees, who strongly defended the importance of the forms.

7.4 Multiprofessional Co-operation

Daycare centers have several co-operation partners in Helsinki, and according to our data, many of those also take part in the process of acting on a child protection related concern. One good practice related to multiprofessional co-operation was present in many answers throughout the interviews: consultation phone calls to child protection. The data suggest that this is a great resource for the kindergarten teachers when they

need support for estimating the level of the concern and whether submitting the child protection notification is justifiable. Some of the teachers told how they had called and if the concern was serious enough from the child protection's viewpoint, they were able to submit the notification immediately.

Aika usein tehdään nykyään niin, että otetaan konsultaatioluonteinen puhelu lastensuojeluun ja kuulostellaan, että miltä heidän mielestään kuulostaa ja ohjaavatko sitten meitä tekemään varsinaisen lastensuojeluilmoituksen.

Nowadays we quite often make a consulting call to child protection services and listen what the situation seems like to them and whether they instruct us to submit an actual child protection notification or not. (translation)

One beneficial practice where a co-operation partner used is consulting itinerant special education teacher. He or she can give advice to the teachers and can come to the children's group to observe the child. Another consultant is a person from early support services. He or she can for example come to the discussions with parents and offer his or her viewpoint. He or she can also offer support for the family's everyday life, with the purpose of them not ending as clients of child protection. This was mentioned to be a free service for the daycare centers.

Two of the kindergarten teachers mentioned a practice of multiprofessional meetings. There were professionals present from different services: child protection, daycare centers, child health center, an early support person and an itinerant special education teacher. In those meetings, the professionals discuss example cases where a child protection related concern was present, and evaluate how the cases progressed and what could have been done differently. These meetings are held twice a year. Both kindergarten teachers had experienced it as a useful practice and wished there would be more co-operation like that.

Meillä on tällöinen moniammatillinen tiimi, verkosto kokoontuu, se on semmonen ihan hyvä foorumi missä vaihtaa ajatuksi, päivittää niitä tietoja puolin ja toisin, ne on ihan ansiokkaita juttuja.

We have this multiprofessional team, network gathering, it is a rather good forum where you can change your ideas, update your knowledge in both sides, they are pretty important things. (translation)

One developmental idea from the teachers was that there should be more co-operation between the daycare centers and child protection services after a child protection notice is submitted. The data tell that the kindergarten teachers are not very satisfied with the way it works now and they feel frustrated. They claimed that the child protection often requires them to share information about the child, but when the daycare center asks about the case, the child protection cannot offer any information based on the strict confidentiality law. That causes problems for acting on a concern, because the teachers do not know if the concern and notification were enough and if the situation is being handled, or whether they should still continue submitting the notifications if the same problems continue existing. One of the teachers said that it would be enough if they knew that the situation is taken care of.

Meille riittäis tavallaa se että lastensuojelun työntekijä sanois et asia on hoidossa ja näin et tavallaa se huoli poistuis meiltä siltä osin.

It would be enough for us if the child protection worker would say that the issue is being taken care of and that way our concern would go away for that part. (translation)

7.5 Pedagogical Partnership

Pedagogical partnership and factors of it come up in other themes' practices as well, showing how important a theme it is among the practices. All of the kindergarten teachers were familiar with the concept of pedagogical partnership, and emphasised the importance of it. One of the practices for this theme was starting to build the pedagogical partnership strongly already in the beginning when a child starts at the kindergarten. The kindergarten teachers felt that by creating a strong base for the pedagogical partnership and future co-operation in the beginning, later on when there might be concern for something it is much easier to act on the concern. This happens by investing on the first meetings and the familiarisation phase, according to the teachers. This was the idea when one of the teachers told an example of how sometimes the clients return to the old issues much later:

Joskus huomaa et jotain on jäänyt tapahtumatta niissä ensimmäisissä kontakteissa, et vanhempi saattaa sanoa et "silloinkaan ei sitä ja sitä huolehdittu", kysyttäessä "no hyvänen aika milloin?", vastaus on, että "no silloin kun se oli pienten puolella". Että ne helposti jää sitten kytemään ja tulee sit tämmöstä et joutuu vaikeita asioita käsittelemään nii sit ne ehkä herää semmoset tunteet pintaan, ja se on sitten hankalampaa ottaa niitä asioita esille.

Sometimes you notice how something was left undone in those first contacts, the parent might say that "then and then this and this was not taken care of", and when you ask when exactly, the reply is "when the child was in the younger children's group". So these thoughts can easily stay and when there are difficult subjects to be talked about, these thoughts and feelings arise again, which makes it harder to bring up those subjects. (translation)

Another beneficial practice is making sure that the parents are in the center and truly have a say on the matters. As mentioned earlier, honesty and openness are the essential factors in creating a good pedagogical partnership, according to our data. One of the interviewees also praised their system of having a named carer for each child. It works in such a way that the carer is then mostly the one who takes care of the child's matters and that makes it possible to have a deeper pedagogical partnership, according to the interviewee.

It is also a useful practice to present child protection as daycare center's co-operation partner from the beginning, but not threaten with it. And then, after the concern has been brought up, and maybe even child protection notification submitted, our data presents that the kindergarten workers have the responsibility for communication, because they need to act professionally. One of the interviewees described that in the beginning it might merely be something brief that is said to the parents and when the workers keep trying to communicate, slowly the parents hopefully start to communicate in return. The kindergarten teachers gave some examples of what they say after such an event: they might ask how the parent is feeling, show empathy, say how they saw it was hard for the parent and ask if the parents have any additional questions. It is also important to find and bring something positive to the situation. According to the data the workers need to remember the negative behavior is not personal and that judging the parents is not going to help. After the issue is handled and taken care of, it is better if the past is not recalled without a good reason.

7.6 Tools Helping Acting on the Concern

There were also several tools and practicalities that were present in the data. One of them was the already mentioned form, which is used to evaluate the level of the concern and the need for acting on it. All of the teachers mentioned that they have the form at the daycare, but some seemed to value its importance more than others. One of the participants said that it could be clearer, but there were also some that felt that it was a very useful tool when a concern for a child awakens. One kindergarten also mentioned the importance of it when new workers start working in a kindergarten. It can be used to talk about the procedures and co-operation partners the daycare might have.

Observation and documenting the observations seemed to be an important factor in the data. All of the kindergarten teachers used observation as their tool. The concern arose depending on the case, but some examples they mentioned were when a child's being and behavior changed, the child said or draw something concerning, there were physical marks of abuse, the parents' behavior changed, the parents' substance use was concerning, the parents did not seem to care about their child and were indifferent, the management of everyday life was challenging for them or when they had problems with their mental health. By documenting their observations the kindergarten teachers felt they could obtain a better picture of the whole situation. One of the teachers also mentioned that it was a useful practice because having notes is a useful form of support later as a reminder. This kind of documentation is unofficial, but according to the data, it can be a good tool when evaluating the observations.

Me kirjataan ehkä ylös jotain hakuaikoja, noutoaikoja, outoja juttuja, mitä lapset tekee tai puhuu tai perhe tekee tai puhuu, semmosia epävirallisia, oman itten takii semmosia merkintöjä et sais vähän semmost et onks mul vaan tämmönen tunne vai mikä se on.

We maybe write down some pick up times, weird things, what the child or family does or says, these unofficial notes meant for myself, so I can evaluate whether it is just a feeling or what it is. (translation)

One practice the kindergarten teachers also brought up was being active in educating oneself. Taking courses can develop one's skills and knowledge about the subject. Many of the teachers had participated in courses regarding child protection related concerns and acting on them. Many of them stated that the best way to learn was through practical training where there had been examples of possible cases and the

teachers had had to discuss them. One teacher had participated in a course where drama had been used as a method for exploring the cases. The participants could try different roles, and for example find a new viewpoint to the subject by trying the role of a parent in some challenging situation where a concern is brought up. The teacher's experience was a very positive one and she felt that kind of training, for example on a developmental day, could be beneficial for every worker in daycare centers. Couple of the teachers also wished for education about the child protection and about what their role as workers is. There was a Varpu-project some years ago and one teacher wished the project would be conducted in other areas of Helsinki as well.

8 Reliability, Validity and Ethical Questions

The reliability of a qualitative study can be improved by describing the process and conduction of the study honestly and accurately. Describing the location and the time used for the interviews and reflecting the interview situations also serve to enhance reliability. When interpreting the results one must explain what the interpretations are based on. Using direct quotes from the interviews can also show more reliability. (Hirjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2009.) Our research is thus reliable. If one would go to the same interviewees and ask similar questions, and then use similar methods of analysis, they would obtain similar findings. We present the process of conducting the thesis clearly and with that description the research would be repeatable.

Our research has a high level of validity. The interviews were recorded with two phones and one of us was also taking notes at the same time in order to increase validity. The recordings were transcribed word for word at our homes privately so the data could be kept as confidential as possible. We ensured the correctness of the transcripts by listening to the recordings twice. We used the same list of questions in all the interviews in order to ensure that we would obtain answers from each of the participants about all of the themes. Our findings are corresponding to the theory, and thus valid. They also provide a practical viewpoint for the theory and that way deepen the theoretical framework used for this study.

The main ethical considerations are related to maintaining the confidentiality of the clients of the participants: the children and their families. The kindergarten teachers needed to find a way to share their experiences and practices without identifying their

clients. We took care of the confidentiality of the teachers and their clients by removing all information that could possibly be seen as identifying, for example names of the kindergartens and kindergarten teachers, already in the transcribing phase. They were not identified later either. We did not use any identifying information in the data or thesis. We did not name the kindergartens where we interviewed the kindergarten teachers or separate the results based on the kindergartens so that the kindergartens in question could be recognised.

We informed the interviewees about the study as well as possible, and made sure they knew what they had agreed to, and that we had their permission to use the information they offered for us in our final thesis. When contacting the kindergartens via email, we sent an information letter, which contained information regarding for instance the topic, purpose and method of the study. We also made sure that the participants knew the personal information they shared is confidential and any identifiable information would not be included in the thesis. We asked the kindergarten teachers to sign a written form in order to obtain their consent. Kindergartens and kindergarten teachers' participation was voluntary to them and they also were free to change their mind about taking part in the study at any point and we ensured they were aware of this.

All the recordings were destroyed after the transcribing was done. The transcriptions were also destroyed after the final thesis was finished. The data we gathered from the interviews was kept private at all times during the thesis process due to the confidential nature of the information.

We as interviewers and makers of this study might have affected the interview situations for example with the ways we asked and phrased the questions. When we started the thesis process we did not have much knowledge of the topic, we merely had some assumptions of the possible results. We have started working as kindergarten teachers this autumn, which might have had some subconscious impacts that we are not aware of, on the study in the data analyzing phase for instance since we were looking at the data through the lenses of a kindergarten teacher then. We do not have any personal ties to the kindergartens or the kindergarten teachers we interviewed. It is also possible that the participants gave the kind of answers they thought we wanted to get. On the other hand, they might not have wanted to share certain information. For instance if the participants had had some negative experiences of situations of child protection related concern in the past, they might have been unwilling to tell us about them.

9 Conclusions

A more detailed version of the results of this study was offered in chapter seven. In this chapter we will present the conclusions of the study. In the first part we will discuss the conclusions in the six themes presented earlier and make connections to theory, and the conclusions about dialogue's role in acting on a child protection related concern will follow shortly after.

The main study question in this study was what kind of practices do kindergarten teachers experience as beneficial for acting on a child protection related concern. Our main conclusion is that these practices are quite varied and versatile, and thus we have categorized the conclusions under different wider themes.

Erikson and Arnkill's (2005) whole method is largely based on being respectful towards the parents. Honesty and openness are thus in the core of this method. The results of our study related to our first theme, bringing up the concern, seem to contain very much of the same information as Erikson and Arnkill's method. Respecting the parents and discussing possible issues with them openly and in an honest way is essential especially when bringing up the concern, but the parents must be allowed to have a say as well. According to both Erikson and Arnkill (2005) and our interviewees, the professional must choose his or her words wisely in order to not insult the parents and to make the situation as comfortable as possible for the parents. The threshold for bringing up a concern should be low. One very basic part of bringing up a concern is having a safe and private space for the discussion: difficult and delicate topics should not be discussed openly in the hallways for instance. It is also essential that the kindergarten teachers understand the importance of the parents' own support network and even encourage them to bring for instance a friend with them for the discussion, as difficult topics might be easier for the parents to deal with when they have someone supporting them.

The Finnish child protection law requires professionals who work with children, such as kindergarten teachers, to submit a child protection notification when a child's health,

wellbeing or development might be endangered and it is necessary for the child protection authorities to investigate the case (Lastensuojelulaki 417/2007). Based on our data, the families should be informed about submitting the notification preferably even beforehand. When informing the parents, it is good to use the same wording as was used in the notification. It is also important to go through with the families what happens after the notification has been submitted. Submitting the notification only means that the child protection authorities must investigate whether there is need for child protection services; it very rarely means taking the child into care immediately (Erikson & Arnkil 2009). Kindergarten teachers consult their teams and kindergarten managers before submitting the notification and sometimes the manager might be the one officially performing the submission. According to Erikson and Arnkil (2009) professionals in the social field are often worried that they might submit a child protection notification “too easily”, without sufficient grounds. Our data show that the kindergarten teachers in this study feel the concern must be well grounded because acting based on interpretations only is not professional. The notification is submitted when a worker’s subjective threshold is crossed but in acute cases it is done immediately.

According to Huhtanen (2000: 41) teachers often consult other professionals before bringing up the concern with the parents. Based on our data, when a concern awakes, it is first discussed with the team. Consulting others helps the professional see, whether other workers have also made similar observations about a child or a family. The support and interest of one’s colleagues can also be helpful. Thus it is important to have enough time for team discussions. The manager of the kindergarten needs to be informed about concerning situations as he or she has the main responsibility of the kindergarten and its functioning. The manager often has expertise that can benefit kindergarten teachers in concerning situations. Afterwards it is good to evaluate the process of acting on the concern with one’s co-workers and ponder what could be improved. Workers’ personal experience that is gained simply by working in the field is very useful in acting on the concern, but new kindergarten teachers should not fear difficult situations either. Our data suggest that there might be need for more common procedures or policies in the kindergartens for acting on a concern.

Due to their different educational and occupational backgrounds people from different professions can see a situation from varying angles. Multiprofessional co-operation can help obtain a more diverse picture of a case and bring new insight into it. (Erikson & Arnkil 2005: 24-25.) Good examples of multi professional cooperation that emerged

from our data are consultation phone calls to child protection services, which serve as an important resource to kindergarten teachers in assessing the situation; consulting itinerant special education teachers or workers from early support services who are useful extra resources and also offer support for the family; and multi-professional meetings for daycare, child protection, early support and health care workers for discussing cases and learning from them. Having a co-operative network of professionals can be a good resource that serves as a source of empowerment for the professionals as they receive support and knowledge from the other members (Erikson & Arnkil 2005: 39). However, more co-operation between kindergartens and child protection services is wished for because strict rules for confidentiality for instance hinder acting on the concern since the kindergarten teachers do not know whether child protection has intervened on a situation or not, and thus the kindergarten teachers' concern continues.

It is important to have a good, trusting relationship between the parents and the professionals when working together for the child's best (Erikson & Arnkil 2005). Trust, respect and equality are the main principles on which pedagogical partnership is based on (Heinämäki 2004). Pedagogical partnership is thus a vital concept in acting on a concern as well and it should be built from the beginning when a child starts in a kindergarten. Acting on a concern is also easier when the relationship with the parents is on a solid basis. Parents must be allowed to voice their opinions and thoughts freely, and all parties should stay open and honest towards each other. Intervening a family's life by acting on a concern might have negative consequences for pedagogical partnership (Huhtanen 2000). In such situations kindergarten teachers must maintain their professionalism and attempt to restore the pedagogical partnership. Being empathic and trying to find positive aspects are beneficial for the relationship.

Based on the data there are different tools that help kindergarten teachers act on their concern. Examples of such tools are different forms. As a part of their method on action on a concern, Erikson and Arnkil (2005: 12) have also developed a form with questions to help the professional assess the situation and the ways to handle it. Observation and documentation are also useful tools: they help obtain a better picture of the situation and documenting the observations for instance in writing aids in evaluating the observations. Erikson and Arnkil (2005: 23) also recommend documentation of one's observations. Lastly, additional education and training are also beneficial for the kindergarten

teachers in acting on a concern because they can increase one's knowledge and skills regarding matters related to the concern.

Our second study question was about dialogue and how it is present in the practices the teachers found to be beneficial. We found it to be mainly present in the co-operation between the kindergarten teachers and the parents. We were able to find several elements of dialogue in this co-operation and thus found dialogue's presence to be significant in the practices related to the co-operation between kindergarten teachers and parents.

The aim of dialogue is thinking and exploring together to form a common understanding (Aarnio; The Co-Intelligence Institute). According to Bohm (2004), dialogue is not used for making decisions and reaching a conclusion is not required. The participation in dialogue is voluntary. This was best seen in the findings when the kindergarten teachers were speaking of the concern on the grey area. If the concern is in that area, the communication and process of acting on the concern continues for a long time. When the teacher brings up the concern with the parents, he or she wants to hear the parents' viewpoint as well, and then proceed forward together, if that is possible. Forming a common understanding is an objective for the co-operation between the teacher and the parents, which is dialogical, but often it is also necessary to reach some kind of a conclusion and make a decision of the future actions during the meeting. Also, participating in the discussion is not completely voluntary for the parents: not participating might lead to serious issues; the teacher might for example submit a child protection notification.

One element of dialogue is open and direct communication (Aarnio; The Co-Intelligence Institute). The kindergarten teachers need to be honest and not to judge the parents (Huhtanen 2000). These dialogical elements are clearly seen in our findings. The kindergarten teachers emphasise the openness and honesty of their actions, and in all of the practices there is a clear willingness to be as transparent towards the parents as possible and bring up the concern in an early phase. Openness and honesty are essential parts of pedagogical partnership as well. The kindergarten teachers aim at being honest with the parents when they submit the child protection notification.

Bohm (2004: 18) speaks of a safe container, which is a requirement for dialogue. According to him, it consists of trust, respect, listening and suspending. The participants

need to trust each other in order to share and be open enough for dialogue. (Isaacs 1999; Bohm 2004: 18.) The kindergarten teachers refer to trust when they talk about pedagogical partnership and how it should be invested in when a child starts in a kindergarten. Forming a good pedagogical partnership from the beginning creates a basis for the future co-operation in the form of trustful relationship. One element of dialogue is the importance of having respect for the other members of the dialogue (Bohm 2004). The kindergarten teachers also see it this way when discussing the co-operation with the parents. Being respectful in communication is essential for a good pedagogical partnership. Active listening is necessary in dialogue (Bohm 2004). In kindergarten teachers' practices this can be seen when the teachers point out that the parents should also get to voice their opinion, which then would impact the issue truly. This requires that the kindergarten teachers listen to what the parents are saying. Bohm (2004) says that suspending refers to looking at one's assumptions and opinions objectively which can help to be more open towards other people's ideas and views. In our findings, the dialogical element of suspending can be seen in different ways. When a concern arises, the teachers often casually ask about the matter from the parents, very early on, wanting to hear the parents' viewpoint instead of forming an opinion of their own immediately. Thus they are ready to suspend their own ideas in these situations. They also try to remember that people are different and take that into consideration in the interactions, and thus they might suspend their opinions and be ready to listen to a different opinion openly.

Having a safe physical space for a dialogue is also important (Isaacs 1999). The kindergarten teachers try to take care of this dialogical element by making sure that the environment and situation for bringing up the concern is peaceful and that there are no interruptions or other people listening. The situation is also made to be as comfortable as possible by having additional people as support if necessary.

In dialogue, every participant is equal and valuable, which means that in professional situations the client is seen as expert of his or her own life and the professional respects that (Bohm 2004). This is what pedagogical partnership is about. According to Heinämäki (2009: 29, 31), a pedagogical partnership is based on trust, respect and equality between the parents and the teacher. The parents are the best experts of their child and that can bring valuable information to the professional (Heinämäki 2009: 29, 31). The importance of pedagogical partnership is present in the kindergarten teachers' practices, and it is one of the main themes.

In the practices related to other themes, dialogue is not very present. The co-operation within the working community as well as multiprofessional co-operation are emphasised in the results, but the teachers did not deeply discuss the co-operation and its exact contents. Thus, analysing elements of dialogue from these contents was not possible. However, there is a clear lack of dialogue between the kindergartens and child protection services. The kindergarten teachers often give information to child protection authorities but do not receive any information back, and kindergarten teachers' trust for child protection services did not seem to be very high. The kindergarten teachers seem to need more information about child protection services. It also seems that there is not enough mutual understanding between the day care and child protection services and communication and dialogue could be used as tools for improving this.

10 Discussion

We were able to find some limitations and matters that we would do differently in our thesis. However, everything considered, we are satisfied with the results and believe that they can be useful for others working in the field of early childhood education as well.

If we were to remake this thesis we would test the interview questions before conducting the interviews, so we could be more confident that they function as intended. That way we could also plan the duration of the interviews better beforehand as well. We could have understood better which questions work and which do not if we had done this. We would also modify some of the questions slightly. When we were analysing the results, we noticed that we could have asked more about some issues and less about others. This would have given us even more useful data to be analysed.

Since we did not have the amount of interviewees we were aiming at, we would probably start the whole process of contacting the kindergartens earlier. It caused us some stress when we could not find more interviewees in the end of summer. However, after looking at our data we realized that we do have enough of it for the needs of this study. We had saturation, even though we did not have the planned 6-8 interviewees. If we had started earlier, we probably could have had more interviewees. Like men-

tioned, it was not necessary, but could have added the reliability of our study and the variety of our findings when we would have had even more viewpoints.

This was the first time doing a study of this scale for both of us, so our inexperience might have had an impact especially when conducting the interviews. If we had been more experienced interviewers, we could have possibly been able to ask even better additional questions. Couple of the interviewees gave quite short and compact answers, and occasionally it was challenging to get them to elaborate more. With more interview skills we maybe could have succeeded better.

Our topic for the thesis was very sensitive. It could have easily cause negative feelings to emerge in the kindergarten teachers because it circles around a challenging and emotional theme. The kindergarten teachers have a lot of responsibility for the children's well-being when they have to submit a child protection notification when they see it is necessary. Failing to ensure a child's well-being and unsuccessful attempts in acting on a child protection related concern are not easy topics to talk about. There has been abundant discussion about the failings of child protection professionals recently in the Finnish media and a myriad of blame from many directions. We did not ask about these negative matters on purpose, because we did not want to offend anybody, or to awaken any negative feelings, instead we wanted to focus on the positive side and the developmental aspects of the topic. That can also be seen as a limitation, because we could have gathered interesting information that way. However, it was not our topic and we could doubt the honesty of the answers if we had ventured into the negative side. Furthermore, we do not think we would have gotten as many willing participants that way.

We feel we were able to answer the study questions well. We could find several practices kindergarten teachers have for acting on a child protection related concern. We were also able to consider and identify the presence of dialogue in the practices. Thus, our thesis answers the study questions well.

Our study provides information on different practices kindergarten teachers have for acting on a child protection related concern, and brings up the importance of dialogue in those practices. This thesis brings information from practice to the field of early

childhood education and it can offer valuable information for decision makers about ways of increasing kindergarten staff's competences of reacting and acting on a child protection related concern and help develop the day care field that way. The study can also help kindergarten teachers to consider their own practices and ways of work and to reflect on them. Kindergarten teachers can also get new ideas from the findings and develop their working methods to response to the situations that deal with a child protection related concern better. Additionally, the thesis also gave the kindergarten teachers a good opportunity to be a part of developing the field by sharing their knowledge and good practices so others can also benefit from their ways of acting in situations of a concern. We think that our thesis highlights the importance of dialogue in this kind of work and that can also help the professionals to reflect on their own working methods to see whether there is anything that can be improved by using more dialogue.

On a general level this thesis brings attention to the issues about acting on a child protection related concern, its importance for kindergarten teachers and the challenges in co-operation between kindergartens and child protection services. We think these are all matters that should be developed further because they are essential in ensuring the well-being of children in Finland.

The process of making this final thesis has developed us professionally and increased our occupational competencies of working as kindergarten teachers. Both of us have started to work as kindergarten teachers during the thesis process, which has motivated us more because the topic feels even more important to us now. We feel that conducting this study has given us a great amount of knowledge regarding kindergarten teachers' possibilities of acting on a child protection related concern and we have thus been able to benefit from the results of this study as well. We are now more confident in our own abilities of facing situations with a child protection related concern and acting on it in our work. Making this final thesis as a pair has also improved our pair and group work skills. Working together has been a valuable resource as we have been able to get support from each other and have more than one viewpoint for the study.

Our findings can be generalized to a certain point. We think that there are certain practices that are present in many of the kindergartens in Eastern Helsinki area, because

the core of the practices was very similar in all of our interviews. Almost all of the participants mentioned how child protection related concern has been a rather common thing in the kindergartens of the area. If we had gone to some other area in Helsinki or in Finland, where the amount of child protection related cases might be fewer, there might not have been as much experience for this topic and thus our findings would have been more limited and possibly fewer. The importance of dialogue would have been obvious but we do not know whether it would have had such a significant role in the practices. However, since this is a qualitative research with only a few interviewees, we cannot generalize the findings too much. The findings can, nevertheless, be used by kindergarten teachers anywhere to reflect, consider and develop their working methods. The kindergarten teachers who are experienced on the topic have more knowledge and skills and those are applicable anywhere.

Based on the interviews we conducted, we think there should be more education and training for kindergarten teachers about a child-protection related concern and ways of recognising it and reacting to it. Ensuring children's holistic wellbeing is a central part of the work of a kindergarten teacher and thus having sufficient knowledge on child protection related issues is very important. A point that was also brought up in the interviews several times is that there should be more co-operation between the kindergartens and child protection services, even during times when there is no child protection related concern. The multi-professional network meetings mentioned by the participants seem to be an excellent forum for the professionals from different fields to exchange information and experiences. We think they should possibly be organised more often, although the resources for this might be quite limited as the child protection workers for instance often have a high case load. By increasing and improving the co-operation of kindergartens and child protection it could also be possible to diminish the fears the kindergarten teachers and the families might have towards child protection.

One functional thesis idea is that there could be material developed around the topic. The material would consist of some information and then practical exercises and cases, which would cause discussion. There could also be drama exercises, which would help to practice for the real situations and would also help in understanding different viewpoints that are present in these situations. This material could be used for example during developmental days in kindergartens to train the workers. We thought of this

idea when the need for something like this was brought up in the interviews, and one of the interviewees had had the chance to try this kind of drama in an additional training course. Since everybody cannot participate in these courses it would be more useful if there was material that could be used with all the workers.

It would also be interesting to study the practices used by kindergarten teachers from different educational backgrounds and compare whether there are any differences. The education of a Bachelor of Social Services for instance is quite focused around the wellbeing of whole families, and dialogue has a very central role in the studies at least in Metropolia University of Applied Sciences. Thus kindergarten teachers with this degree might have some different viewpoints and knowledge on the topic.

We are also curious about the viewpoint of child protection workers. In our study we found that kindergarten teachers think that the cooperation between kindergartens and child protection services is very one-sided and they feel that they are the only ones required to share information. A possible topic for a further study would be to see how the child protection workers experience the cooperation with kindergartens and how the cooperation could be developed in their opinion.

References

Aarnio, H. *Dialogi pähkinänkuoressa*. Internet document.

<http://www.cimo.fi/instancedata/prime_product_julkaisu/cimo/embeds/cimowwwstructure/21135_Dialogi_pahkinankuoressa_Aarnio_06062011.pdf> Read 18.10.2013.

Alston, M. & Bowles, W. (2013) *Research for Social Workers - An introduction to methods*. 3rd ed. Abingdon: Routledge

Bohm, D. (2004) *On Dialogue*. New York: Routledge.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2), 77-101.

Briggs, F. & Hawkins, R. (1997) *Child Protection - A guide for teachers and child care professionals*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Dialogisuuden muodostaminen ammattilaisten ja perheen välillä. Terveystieteiden tutkimuskeskus. Internet document. <http://www.thl.fi/fi_FI/web/kasvunkumppanit-fi/tyon/periaatteet/dialogisuus_ammattilaisen_ja_perheen_valilla> Read 19.10.2013.

Eriksson, E. & Arnkil, T. E. (2009) *Taking up One's Worries. A Handbook on Early Dialogues*. Jyväskylä: Gummerus Printing.

Helsingin tila ja kehitys 2012 (2012) Helsingin kaupungin tietokeskus: Helsinki.

Heinämäki, L. (2004) *Eriyinen tuki varhaiskasvatuksessa – Eriyispäivähoito – lapsen mahdollisuus*. Oppaita 58. Helsinki: Stakes.

Heinämäki, L. (2005) *Varhaista tukea lapselle - työvälineenä kehittämisvalikko*. Oppaita 62. Helsinki: Stakes.

Hirsjärvi, S., Remes, P. & Sajavaara, P. (2009) *Tutki ja kirjoita*. 15th ed. Helsinki: Tammi.

Huhtanen, K. (2004)a. Varhainen puuttuminen, ennaltaehkäisevää ja korjaavaa toimintaa yhteiskunnan eri tasoilla. In Keskinen, S. and Virjonen, H. (eds.) *Vanhemmuuden ja lapsen kasvun tukeminen päivähoitossa*. Helsinki: Kustannusosakeyhtiö Tammi, 188-206.

Huhtanen, K. (2004)b. *Varhainen puuttuminen. Erityisen tuen tarpeen kohtaaminen päivähoitossa*. Helsinki: Oy Finn Lectura Ab.

Huhtanen, K. (2007) *Kun huoli herää - Varhainen puuttuminen koulussa*. Juva: PS-Kustannus.

Isaacs, W. (1999) Dialogue. In McGee-Cooper, A. and Trammell, D. *Dialogue: The Power of Understanding*. [Pdf]
<<http://amca.com/amca/wp-content/uploads/Dialogue-The-Power-of-Understanding.pdf>> Read 19.10.2013.

Laki lasten päivähoitosta 36/1973. Given in Helsinki 19.1.1973.

Lastensuojelu. Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö. Internet document.
<http://www.stm.fi/sosiaali_ja_terveyspalvelut/sosiaalipalvelut/lastensuojelu> Read 20.9.2013.

Lastensuojelulaki 417/2007. Given in Helsinki 13.4.2007.

Lastensuojelun ja päivähoiton yhteistyötä kehitettävä. Lastensuojelun keskusliitto. Internet document. Updated 18.01.2012.
<http://www.lskl.fi/tiedottaa/tiedotusvalineille/tiedotteet/tiedotteet_2012/lastensuojelun_ja_paivahoidon_yhteistyota_kehittava.2267.news> Read 27.02.2013.

Lastentarhanopettajan Koulutus. Helsingin Yliopisto. Internet document.
<<http://www.helsinki.fi/okl/koulutukset/varhaiskasvatuksen/Lto-tutkintorakenne%202012-2015.pdf>> Read 27.8.2013.

Onnismaa, E.-L. (1999) *Päiväkoti lastensuojelun tukitoimena – toiveiden tynnyri vai huolten hautomo?* Stakes. Helsinki: Stakesin monistamo.

Ruponen, S., Vuorio, V. and Örn, K. (2012) *Kun huoli herää päiväkodissa – työntekijöiden kokemuksia huolen heräämisestä ja lastensuojeluilmoituksen tekemisestä*. Bachelor's thesis. Laurea University of Applied Sciences.

Services and benefits for families. Ministry of Social affairs and health. Internet document. <http://www.stm.fi/en/social_and_health_services/children/services> Read 20.9.2013.

The Co-Intelligence Institute. *Dialogue*. Internet document. <<http://www.co-intelligence.org/P-dialogue.html>> Read 20.10.2013.

Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman perusteet (2005) Stakes. Oppaita 56. Saarijärvi: Gummerus Kirjapaino Oy.

Varpu – lapselle tukea ajoissa. (2005) *Opettaja*. 38 B.

Yrjönen, S. and Nygrén, J. (2010) *Päiväkodin huoli lapsesta: Kymenlaakson lastentarhanopettajien näkemyksiä lastensuojeluilmoituksen tekemisestä*. Bachelor's thesis. Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences.

Malli yhteydenottokirjeestä

Kysymys päiväkodillenne liittyen opinnäytetyöhömmme

Hei!

Olemme kaksi sosionomi-opiskelijaa Metropolia Ammattikorkeakoulun kansainväliseltä linjalta ja olemme juuri aloittaneet työstämään opinnäytetyötämme. Opinnäytetyömme nimi on "Acting on child protection related concern - kindergarten teachers' experiences and good practices" eli olemme kiinnostuneet lastentarhanopettajien lastensuojelliseen huoleen ja huolen puheeksiottamiseen liittyvistä kokemuksista ja hyvistä toimintatavoista ja käytännöistä, joita heillä mahdollisesti on. Haluamme siis selvittää, millaisia hyviä käytäntöjä lastentarhanopettajilla on huoleen puuttumiseen.

Koemme, että tämä aihe on tärkeä ja mielenkiintoinen, ja olennainen osa lastentarhanopettajan osaamista. Opinnäytetyön tekeminen aiheesta tarjoaa lisää tietoa jo lastentarhanopettajina toimiville kuin myös tuleville sellaisille, ja myös päättäjät voisivat hyötyä siitä, esimerkiksi lastentarhanopettajien koulutusta suunniteltaessa. Lisäksi haastateltavat saisivat mahdollisuuden reflektointiin ja kokemuksistaan puhumiseen, minkä kautta he voivat olla tietoisempia omasta osaamisestaan. On tärkeää, että lastentarhanopettajat osaavat tunnistaa ja tiedostaa oman osaamisensa, ja sitä kautta myös tilanteet, joissa heidän osaamisensa ei ole riittävää, jolloin he saattavat tarvita tukea esimerkiksi työyhteisöltä. He, sekä osallistuvat päiväkodit, saavat myös valmiin opinnäytetyön itselleen halutessaan, ja lukemalla toisten opettajien kokemuksista ja käytännöistä he voivat myös itse oppia ja saada lisää tietoa aiheesta.

Olemme juuri valmistelemassa tutkimuslupa-hakemusta opinnäytetyöllemme, ja ajattelimme etukäteen jo kysellä päiväkotien kiinnostusta aihetta kohtaan. Opinnäytetyömme on siis laadullinen tutkimus, joka tulee sisältämään 6-8 lastentarhanopettajan haastattelut. Yksi haastattelu kestää noin 45-60min ja ne toteutetaan yksilöhaastatteluina. Pyrimme löytämään haastateltavia useasta alueen päiväkodista. Haastattelut toteutettaisiin mahdollisimman pian tutkimusluvan saatuamme. Opinnäytetyössä haastatellut lastentarhanopettajat tulevat esiintymään anonymisti. Tällä hetkellä toivomme voivamme tehdä haastattelut touko-kesäkuun aikana.

Haluaisimme tiedustella teiltä, onko päiväkodillanne kiinnostusta aihetta kohtaan ja löytyisikö teiltä kenties yksi tai kaksi lastentarhanopettajaa, joita voisimme sitten tutkimusluvan saatuamme aiheesta haastatella?

Ystävällisin terveisin,

Sini Jääskeläinen ja Saara-Leena Suomi

Suostumus opinnäytetyöhön osallistumisesta

Tällä asiakirjalla annan kirjallisen suostumukseni osallistumiseeni Metropolia Ammatti-
korkeakoulun sosionomiopiskelijoiden Sini Jääskeläisen ja Saara Suomen opinnäyte-
työssä "Acting on child protection related concern- kindergarten teachers' good practi-
ces".

Osallistuminen on minulle täysin vapaaehtoista ja voin perua osallistumiseni milloin
vain, myös haastattelun jälkeen.

Haastattelut ja niissä kerätyt tiedot pidetään luottamuksellisina koko opinnäytetyöpro-
sessin ajan eikä niitä luovuteta ulkopuolisille. Tietoja käytetään vain opinnäytetyön
tekemiseen. Haastattelut nauhoitetaan ja nauhoitukset tuhotaan heti kun litterointi on
tehty. Litteroidut haastattelut säilytetään opinnäytetyön valmistumiseen asti, jonka
jälkeen ne poistetaan. Litterointivaiheessa aineistosta poistetaan kaikki yksityiskohdat,
joista voisi tunnistaa päiväkodin, yksittäisen lastentarhaopettajan tai asiakkaan. Haas-
tateltavat esiintyvät nimettöminä eikä niitä päiväkoteja, joissa he työskentelevät, tulla
nimeämään opinnäytetyössä.

Opinnäytetyö esitellään Metropolia Ammattikorkeakoulun opinnäytetyöseminaarissa
2013 syksyn aikana. Valmis opinnäytetyö on saatavilla Metropolian Sofianlehdonkadun
toimipisteen kirjastossa sekä Theseus-sivustolla internetissä. Opinnäytetyöhön osallis-
tuvat päiväkodit saavat myös halutessaan omat kopionsa.

Paikka ja aika

Haastateltavan allekirjoitus ja nimenselvennys

Haastattelukysymykset

TAUSTATIEDOT

Ikä? Koulutus? Kuinka pitkä kokemus varhaiskasvatuksesta? Minkälainen tausta lastensuojelulliseen huoleen liittyen? Oletko tehnyt lastensuojeluilmoituksen?

HUOLI JA PUUTTUMINEN

Minkälaisista asioista lastensuojelullinen huoli herää?

Miten toimit huolen herätessä? Onko sinulla joitain toimiviksi havaittuja toimintatapoja, joita käytät? Millaisia?

Miten toimit, jos lastensuojeluilmoitus täytyy tehdä? Missä vaiheessa teet sen? Miten teet päätöksen siitä? Miten vanhemmille kerrotaan asiasta?

Miten toimit harmaan vyöhykkeen huolen kanssa? Mihin vedät rajan ja milloin toimit? Mihin perustat tämän päätöksen?

Mikä on huoleen puuttumisessa helppoa? Entä vaikeaa? Onko asioita, jotka helpottavat tai vaikeuttavat huoleen puuttumista? Millaisia?

HUOLEN PUHEEKSIOTTAMINEN

Missä vaiheessa huoli otetaan puheeksi vanhempien kanssa?

Miten huoli otetaan puheeksi vanhempien kanssa? Millaisia käytäntöjä tai toimintatapoja näihin tilanteisiin on?

Millaisia onnistuneita kokemuksia sinulla on huolen puheeksiottamisesta/huoleen puuttumisesta?

KASVATUKUMPPANUUS

Pohjustavat kysymykset: Tunnetko kasvatuskumppanuuden käsitteen? Miten ymmärrät sen? Toteutetaanko kasvatuskumppanuutta päiväkodissasi?

Millaisena näet kasvatuskumppanuuden/vanhempien kanssa tehtävän yhteistyön roolin huoleen puuttumisessa?

Onko teillä hyviä käytäntöjä, joilla pyritään varmistamaan yhteistyön jatkuvuus huoleen puuttumisen jälkeenkin? Millaisia?

YHTEISÖN TUKI SEKÄ PÄIVÄKODIN OHJEISTUS JA KÄYTÄNNÖT

Millaisia käytäntöjä päiväkodilla on huolen kanssa toimimiseen ja siihen puuttumiseen?

Onko päiväkotitoiminta opastanut lastentarhanopettajia huolen puheeksiottamisesta? Millaista ohjeistusta on annettu?

Saatko mielestäsi tarpeeksi tukea lastensuojelulliseen huoleen liittyen muulta työyhteisöltä? Millaista tukea?

KEHITTÄMINEN

Mitä tukea lastentarhanopettajana tarvitsisit näissä tilanteissa?

Miten tietoja ja taitoja huolen puheeksiottamiseen ja huoleen puuttumiseen liittyen voitaisiin mielestäsi kehittää?