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Peer related competence of immigrant children in a Finnish speaking day-care

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Peer related social competence of immigrant children in a Finnish speaking day care.

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This thesis is a research that explores peer-related social competence of immigrant children in a Finnish speaking kindergarten who are under the age of 8 years old. The research was carried out as part of our degree program and in collaboration with Mainingin Päiväkoti and HELMO project who were the researchers working life partners. The research aims to explore the factors that influence their competence towards their peers in a Finnish-speaking environment. The research was conducted utilising Qualitative research mixed method of observation and semi-structured interviews. The observations focused on how children gain-entry into groups, conflict resolution, maintaining play, peer collaboration and rejection. The semi-structured interviews sought to support the observation and explore the methods in place that are utilised by the kindergarten in order to support the immigrant children. Findings indicate that the main challenge the children faced was poor Finnish communication skills and it was individual to each child how well they interacted with their peers. The limitations of the study were that we could not explore the in-depth background of the children and the length of time the child was in a Finnish environment. Furthermore children are hindered by limited Finnish language skills in terms of communicating their wishes to engage in social activities with their peers, however this is not a hindrance in developing peer related social competent. Factors such as the language of play form a basis of how children develop skills that improve the strategies to form friendships. Skills required such as gaining entry into groups, maintaining relationships at an early age need support from the more knowledgeable others, in the case of this research that would be the staff within the kindergarten.

Immigrant child, Peers, Social competence

Goodwin Lainah & Pääkkönen Mari

Maahanmuuttajalasten sosiaalinen pätevyys ikäistensä kanssa suomenkielisessä päiväkotiympäristössä

Vuosi

2015

Sivumäärä

57

Tämä opinnäytetyö on tutkimus, joka tutkii maahanmuuttajalasten sosiaalista pätevyyttä ikätoveriensä kanssa suomenkielisessä päiväkodissa. Lapset olivat kaikki iältään alle 7-vuotiaita. Tutkimus tehtiin osana meidän tutkintoa yhdessä Mainingin päiväkodin ja HELMO-projektin kanssa, mitkä toimivat opinnäytetyömme yhteistyökumppaneina. Tutkimus pyrki selvittämään tekijöitä, jotka vaikuttavat maahanmuuttajalasten pätevyyteen toimia yhdessä ikätovereidensa kanssa suomenkielisessä päiväkotiympäristössä. Tutkimus oli laadullinen tutkimus, jossa käytettiin kahta menetelmää; havainnointia ja osittain rakenneltua haastattelua. Havainnoinnit keskittyivät siihen miten lapset liittyvät mukaan ryhmiin, konfliktien selvittely, leikin ylläpitäminen, ikätoverien torjuminen & yhteistyö -teemojen ympärille. Osittain rakenneltujen haastatteluluiden tarkoituksena oli tukea havainnointien löydöksiä sekä syventyä tapoihin joita päiväkodin aikuiset käyttävät maahanmuuttajalasten tukemisessa. Löydökset viittaavat siihen, että suurin haaste on lasten vähäinen suomenkielentaito ja se että oli yksilöllistä kuinka lapsi on vuorovaikutuksessa muiden lasten kanssa. Tutkimusta rajoitti tietämättömyys lasten taustoista, sillä emme pystyneet selvittämään esimerkiksi kauanko lapsi oli ollut suomenkielisessä ympäristössä. Lisäksi lasten rajoittunut suomenkielentaito estää heitä välittämästä heidän toiveitaan sosiaalisissa tilanteissa heidän tovereidensa kanssa. Tämä ei kuitenkaan ole este lapsen ja hänen ikätovereidensä välisessä sosiaalistaitojen kehityksessä. Asiat kuten leikin kieli on tärkeässä asemassa lapsen halutessa kehittää ja muodostaa kaverisuhteitaan. Taitoja kuten ryhmiin liittyminen ja kaverisuhteiden ylläpitäminen nuorena iässä vaatii aikuisen tukea. Tässä tapauksessa se oli päiväkodin aikuiset.

Maahanmuuttaja lapsi, ikätoverit, sosiaalinen kompetenssi

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Introduction

Finland traditionally is an ethnically homogenous bilingual country that like other EU countries has seen a steady growth in immigration. As a result there is an increase in the number of immigrant children entering Early Childhood Education services. Finnish kindergarten consists of Education and Childcare (Educare) furthermore it is the right of every child in Finland to these services irrespective of the parent income, background, and nationality. Educare is a child oriented holistic activity whereby the child is the starting point, Stakes (2004). State funded day care provides day-care services in Finnish, Swedish and Sami languages. This means there is a rise in the number of children who attend the kindergarten who communicate in another language other than the Finnish requiring ECE services. This brings to question for us in that how are these children supported in their development of how they relate to their peers.

The increase in the number children who require the use of day-care services can be seen as stemming from the need for their parents requiring to earn a living therefore for their children resulting in them spending fewer leisure hours with their children, let alone playing with them. The period from when the child is 'born to when they are eight is imperative to a child's well-being and is crucial to a child in later life' (Takanishi. 2004) In the words of the distinguished developmental psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner: "...in order to develop normally, a child requires progressively more complex joint activity with one or more adults who have an rational emotional relationship with the child. That's number one. First, last, and always." Bronfenbrenner sees the instability and unpredictability of family life we've let our economy create as the most destructive force to a child's development. Children today do not have the constant mutual interaction with important adults that is necessary for development. According to the ecological theory, if the relationships in the immediate microsystem break down, the child will not have the tools to explore other parts of his environment. Nowadays, pre-schools, day cares, etc., are replacing this essential, adult-child playful collaboration.

In day cares one finds children from a mix of different cultural backgrounds having to fit into the now new environment. Children from third-national backgrounds are faced with varying expectations and learning from their network of systems; home, day-care and community, expectations in some cases that are at polar ends and they somehow have to develop a competence to navigating through those expectations. We sought to gain a better understanding of the significance of peer collaborative interactions of these children involved thus birthing this research. Children nowadays spend more time with their peers and hence therefore the need to study how that can impact their thinking capabilities, language skills and also their

future. Barbara Rogoff suggested that peer interaction might provide children with the opportunity to practice and extend ideas, participate in role relations and observe more skilled peers who are likely to be more available as resources than adults. (Rogoff & Morelli 1989.)

This research was framed by questions like:

1. Under what circumstances can pairs of children help each other improve their thinking and social skills while working/playing together?
2. Can working collaboratively adversely affect children's thinking? Confidence?
3. Does a child need strong language skills in order to be competent with their peers

1 Background of thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to identify the current practice in the kindergarten in supporting the immigrant children's peer related social competence in a Finnish speaking kindergarten. Furthermore to ascertain the methods and systems in place that support the day-care. The idea of the thesis came about initially from personal interest of the authors and it was through consultation with Helsinki Multicultural Education Services (HELMO) project that the idea became more concrete as this serves to compliment and provide further contributions to the work that is already carried by the organisation.

The thesis is made under VKK-Metro, which is the developmental unit for early childhood education in Helsinki Metropolitan area. Every thesis that is related to small-children is made together with VKK-Metro. During years 2014-2016 the themes they focus on are developing play and playful learning environment. The aim is to look at children's play as how it can be suitable for children's development and learning needs as an environment of growth and learning. They also strengthen the knowledge of kindergarten teachers in how to use play as a pedagogical tool. (Socca - Pääkaupunkiseudun sosiaalialan osaamiskeskus. 2015.)

The aim of this thesis is to study Immigrant children who are in a Finnish speaking Kindergarten and how they relate to their peers, add to academic research and to provide our working life partners with further knowledge that will enhance their work with Kindergarten teachers. The thesis is limited to the children and their teachers. The objectives are three fold, contribute to academic knowledge, investigate features that relate to peer group entry, conflict resolution and maintaining play and assess methods currently employed by the teachers and how they support the child's peer related development.

1.1 Terminology

In this Study the term *Finnish-speaking Kindergarten*

A normal state funded kindergarten, where Finnish is the only language that the educated professionals are using.

Early-Childhood Education and Care ECEC

“All children under school age have a subjective right to early childhood education and care (ECEC). The municipalities are responsible for arranging the ECEC services, for their quality and supervision. Families can also opt for publicly subsidized private ECEC settings. The Finnish ECEC is based on an integrated approach to care, education and teaching, the so-called “educare” model. Learning through play is essential.”

Immigrant child refers to the children who originate from other countries apart from Finland and are in Finnish day care service as a result of their immigration to Finland. This term was chosen for the study as it is a term that is widely used and because we could not use a specific country due to the fact that the children having differing origins.

1.2 Working life partners

We had two working life partners Mainingin päiväkoti and HELMO project. The study was carried out in Mainingin Päiväkoti in Espoo, which is a Finnish speaking kindergarten in a multicultural area; the methods that will be utilized are observation of the children in the kindergarten coupled with the semi-structured interviews with the education providers. We anticipated gaining knowledge on how the children communicate with their peers, and carried out the research based on the use Language as a tool, Vygotsky’s theory of social development and Urie Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological systems theory will formed the base of the theoretical framework.

HELMO is a project that is part of the African and African Europeans Association (AFAES) and is a EU funded project that aims to promote two-way integration between the Finns and immigrants. The project organizes workshops, seminars and events aimed at promoting multiculturalism and social inclusion. (AFAES-HELMO. 2014.) HELMO-project offers multicultural workshops for different target groups. Target groups for workshops are different professionals from early childhood education and social field. Third country nationals, who are heading to working life, can also participate. As immigration numbers are increasing in Finland also the diversity of client groups gets larger in the near future. This is why it is very important to improve readiness for intercultural interaction. The aim of these workshops is to develop the multicultural dialogue and the two-way integration. Teachers of these workshops are professionals from different fields with immigrant background and also multicultural instructors. (AFAES-HELMO. 2013.).

2 Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky (1978) emphasises the importance of ‘social interaction in learning’ and is fundamental in the learning process, moreover constructs and ideas are formulated ‘through the interaction a child has with peers and educators’ (Kalina & Powell, 2009). Vygotsky’s theory of social development lays the foundation for constructivism in our study where social interaction is imperative in child development. Vygotsky views languages as a social activity that requires the child to be an active participant of their learning and proposes that for learning to take place, the learning needs to be within the child’s Zone of proximal development and for the learning to be supported by a More Knowledge Other in this case a peer or a teacher. This will be supported by entities of Urie Bronfenbrenner Ecological systems theory this framework encompasses and pays attention to the child in the environment and the role the environment plays in the child’s life.

Consequently exploring this thesis through a sociocultural perspective we recognise that use of language, and interaction with peers are social activities and are social and cultural processes. For one to acquire and develop in these areas, it is through experiences shared with others and through activities that are shaped by society and ‘cultural and historical factors’.

2.1 Segmented Assimilation

Immigrant children in a host society go through a process of integration in that host country the children face a multiple of new experiences and in some cases extensive cultural differences to that of their own country. Some of these children are born in Finland however they are exposed to cultural difference between the home and the kindergarten they attend. So how is the gap bridged to aid the process of integration, the child’s experiences and support the needs to be of a good quality and positive nature? Our study identified significant areas that are intertwined, bilingualism, cultural competence and inclusive policies and procedures. The kindergarten is heavily guided by local and national policies that demand that children have individual plans that support their successful integration.

2.2 Early childhood education in a Finnish kindergarten in Espoo

The early childhood education of immigrant children is slightly different in every city or municipality. We were looking at the Espoo’s early childhood education plan because our kindergarten we observed was situated in Espoo. There it says that informing and discussing with immigrant child’s parents about early childhood education plan, its goals and principles, is extremely important. The plan says that when child’s Finnish or Swedish skills are being absorbed in the kindergarten the child’s mother tongue is also being developed incorporation

with parents at home. The teachers in the kindergarten are obligated to help the parents by giving them tools on how to support the development of the mother tongue at home. This is the base for functional bilingualism.

In the kindergarten different cultural backgrounds and learning styles are taken into consideration while planning the weekly activities. If it possible to bring objects or fabrics from child's culture and celebrate different events from different cultures and religions, it is being done in order to be able to support child's culture in the kindergarten. Pictures, gestures, supportive sign language are being used to help the child in learning to speak Finnish or Swedish. When adding picture cards into the kindergarten environment, it helps children to communicate with their peers and teachers better. Those cards can also be useful when communicating with parents, if there isn't a common language. If there are employees or students that speak the same language or come from the same cultural background they can help the child in developing his/her mother tongue and to improve the intercultural interaction.

Even in the kindergarten every immigrant child is met as an individual. Every child will have an individual bilingual plan that is being planned together with the parents and teachers and will be part of the early childhood education plan. Child's needs and goals will be added to the group's early childhood education plan. The teachers will use Finnish as a second language (S2) method; the main idea is play and participation of the child. The teachers also have to evaluate child's language development with a tool called kielireppu (language backpack). The aim of all this is to improve child's readiness to act in a constantly changing diverse world and to help the immigrant child in social integration. (Espoon suomenkielinen varhaiskasvatus Opetus- ja varhaiskasvatuslautakunta. 2013.)

2.3. Justification

First and foremost we chose to carry out a study that relates to children as this falls in line with the demands of our intended qualifications in relation to Kindergarten teachers. Secondly this provides us with further academic knowledge in early childhood education, and gives us grounding for future practice as Kindergarten Teachers. Finally the research into the social development of children of immigrant background in Finland is scarce and thin. Research suggests there is a steady increase in the numbers of children from immigrant background attending Finnish Speaking day cares furthermore this trend is set to continue, and the research concerning the effect this may have on children's social and peer developments. Although sample opportunities for 'cultivating multicultural education' exists and have been 'available for decades, in Finland, the basic problem throughout society, including education, is that multiculturalism is still seen as concerning 'the others''. (Holm & Londen 2010) Current sta-

tistics reflect that it is extremely important to make research about immigrant children in kindergartens because the numbers of immigrant children are increasing. At the moment 13.6% of the children in Vantaa and 14.2% of the children in Helsinki are immigrants. (Vantaan Sanomat) According to Tilastokeskus the number of immigrants in Espoo is 8.6%. There was no statistics available on the numbers of immigrant children in Espoo. (Tilastokeskus. 2014)

2.4. Theoretical basis of thesis

The Helsinki University and Helsinki city's social office carried out research in four kindergartens in Helsinki for this Multicultural children and adults in day care- project (MUCCA). The project was done between 2008-2010. Arniika Kuusisto compiled the data into Diversity of cultures, languages, and worldviews in the kindergarten: Challenges and Opportunities- report. Kuusisto suggest that according to the research the staff in the kindergartens' try to support the language development by facial expressions, gestures, and with pictures. Furthermore immigrant children make contact with the adult and peers effortlessly, even if they don't have a common language. In the research kindergartens supporting children's Finnish was the main point in goals as well as supportive actions. General vocabulary about playing is the key to social interactions and for learning the language. When the children got some friends their language skills improved rapidly. Sometimes it is important that adults help new children to get into playing with others. In some situations children are encouraged to use their mother tongue but the children might not do so because they don't want to stand out from their peers or it might be because using the mother tongue in the kindergarten feels too weird. Of course language isn't the only way of being separated from the main group.

Every culture has their own habits and they can be seen especially when eating and sometimes in participating activities. Different parenting values can be seen in children's relationships. If bullying or pushing appears it is not clear if it is because of the parenting habits or because the children are frustrated because they don't know the language well enough to communicate with it. It is important that the adults intervene with these actions and talk with the other children in the group and explain what is happening. Three solution models have been used in these four kindergartens for children who are in danger for isolation. First one is simply a directed play that an adult starts. Secondly is "friend lottery", the point of this is to make sure that everyone has a friend to play with and it differs from time to time. When children are playing with all the other children in the group the threshold to start bullying gets higher. Also this "friend lottery" has been able to bridge the gap between the genders, the boys and girls are more together in-group activities. Thirdly the rule games are good because they don't require as high skills as imaginary plays in language and culture vice. (Kuusisto. 2010)

2.5. Peer-related competence

Rubin argues, “ Friendships occupy, both in their actual conduct and in the world of thought and fantasy, a large proportion of children’s waking hours. They are often the sources of children’s greatest pleasures and deepest frustrations.” (Rubin. 1980) he stresses the importance and meaning that friendships have for a child moreover peers can give much more to the social development than adults alone. Furthermore for children to be able to develop their social skills for example forming relationships, group belonging, and intimacy they need to interact with their peers in different kinds of activities. (Association for Childhood Education International. 2011) Kindergarten is a space where a child spends a large part of the day engaging in activities with their peers.

Peer-related social competence for children is the ability to develop, form and maintain relationships with other children. It further requires a child to be able to regulate their emotions and have the capacity to gain experience in handling social situations. Early childhood interactions that are found in the home and mesosystems are fundamental in laying the ‘foundation for the development of the necessary skills required to be able to be competent with their peers (Guralinick 1999). The formation of these skills is centred around the social interactions the child encounters and is not measured along the lines of popularity but by the Childs ability to engage with other children, how they resolve conflicts and their ability to maintain play with other children. Historically the assumption was that “if parents were taught the correct child-rearing techniques then they would produce socially competent children.” (Barnes. 1995.) This assumption did not take into account the influences society and culture have in the development of the child. Children are born into societies that have differing values and cultural beliefs on how a child should be raised.

Children serve three unique purposes from one another; first providing opportunities for learning social skills, secondly enabling social comparisons and thirdly promoting sense of group belonging. When children are only with their parents, they don’t get enough challenges to develop their social skills, because parents are often making the communication too easy for their own children. Many times the parents just make too many interpretations and they are not letting their child to spell out what they need. These two habits don’t happen when children are interacting with each other and children’s conflict resolution skills develop when being with peers. The children also like to compare themselves with each other like who can run faster. This isn’t always a competitive act it is more like a reflective one. Children have a need to evaluate themselves through others especially their peers. This action is necessary for child’s own identity development. Read cited in Rubin suggests, “ Finding our strengths and facing our weaknesses, winning some acceptance and meeting some rejection... A favourable family situation helps us to feel secure, but experiences with our own age group help to

develop an awareness of ourselves and social reality which family experience alone cannot give.” (Rubin. 1980) The following aspects are important factors in a child being able form competent relationships with peers and those around them.

2.5.1 Conflict resolution

Children like adults undoubtedly will encounter situations that will result in conflict with their peers; this is a necessary part of a child development as conflict tests children’s ability to handle this situation. In relation to peer competence it is imperative to observe and support the child in how they deal with conflict situations. “Conflicts are essential in initiating and maintaining friendships” (Broadhead 2009.). Conflicts provide the platform for children to be able to negotiate and develop skills required to be able to maintain their friendships with their peers. It is paramount for children to be encouraged to resolve the own conflicts fostering the skills of negotiation and compromise. ‘Adult intervention is encouraged when the conflict becomes verbally or physically aggressive’ (Beaver et al 2002). Furthermore this promotes the development of independence, social communication and enhanced communication skills.

2.5.2 Gaining entry into a group

Integral to social development and peer competence is the Childs ability, to develop the skills of interaction, ‘attract and direct’ the attention of their peers. This forms the catalyst that enables the child to develop “true friendship while allowing children to encounter new experiences that challenge and develop understanding” (Ely. 2014.)

2.5.3. Maintaining Play

In the United Nation’s Convention on the rights of the Child it recognizes the importance of play in the lives of children by acknowledging play as a specific right. When a child is able to play s/he has accomplished one of the main developmental tasks of early childhood. That is why the early childhood teachers have focused so much on play and learning through play. “Young children learn the most important things not by being told but by constructing knowledge for themselves in interaction with the physical world and with other children - and the way they do this is by playing.” (Jones & Reynolds.1992) Children must be given the time and place to play and to be able to learn through play. “The quality of play and the attitudes of the supporting adults towards play shapes the quality of the play experience for children.” (Hewes.) When doing our observations we noticed that there is only 45 minutes maximum of structured activities before lunch and the rest of the time is spent either playing in or outside plus of course eating and naptime. The kindergarten is really encouraging the children to play

and the adults are trying to have the children to play with different children every now and then (Finnish child and immigrant child together) by this they are hoping that the immigrant child would learn appropriate social skills.

Popular children in groups have high levels of social competence. They are friendly, cooperative, helpful, nice, understanding, attractive, good at games and are able to consider others feelings- empathy. When these popular kids want to join a play they are commenting agreeably on the play that's going on and then asking a permission to join. These children are able to play well and keep on playing for long if they want. When doing the observations it was evident that many children wanted to play with this small immigrant girl. This girl did not know Finnish very well but she was always friendly and that is probably why everyone wanted to play with her.

Children who have problems on making friends or are being rejected by their peers; the reason usually for this is the child's annoying behaviour. Usually the behaviours that the children don't like are bossy, self-centred or disruptive. Also children who have learning disabilities or attention seeking problems, have troubles making friends because they have hard time on making and even harder time on maintaining play mostly because they find it hard to follow rules and understand the rules for a play or game. Through out the child's development his/hers prosocial skills (friendly and helpful) and self-control skills (anger management and negotiation skills) are the main features of social competence. (Advameg Inc. 2015.) "The skilful teacher of young children is one who makes play possible and helps children keep getting better and better at it." (Jones & Reynolds. 1992)

2.6. Peer rejection

Social competence refers to social, emotional and cognitive development such as skills and behaviour that all children need to have to be able to make and to maintain relationships. For small children the parents are the primary source for social and emotional support but as the children grow older the more important their peers become to play in child's social and emotional development. Young children engage their peers in imaginary plays. These plays allow them to develop their role-play and to see things from other people's perspective and also develop an understanding for social rules and resolutions for the future. Serious difficulties in peer relations often lead to peer rejections, which become big issues of stress for children in their life. Peer rejection often causes feelings of loneliness; low self-esteem and it can even escalate into a negative developmental spiral. (Advameg Inc. 2015)

Positive interactions with peers are essential for a child to learn social skills but rejected children, that often have poor social skills, are excluded from these positive interactions. Re-

jected children have fewer playmates to choose and they often tend to play alone or with adults. “Normal peer group can deprive rejected children of opportunities to develop adaptive social behaviours.” (Advameg Inc. 2015) It has been proven that childhood peer rejection predicts later mental health problems more than low IQ or school records.

“Positive peer relations play an important role in supporting the process of healthy social and emotional development ... It is not necessary for a child to be popular in order for that child to gain the advantages of peer support.”(Advameg Inc. 2015) It is important to keep in mind that if a child is playing alone it does not necessarily mean that the child is being rejected from other children and forced to play alone. All the children at some point need some time to play by themselves; some children like to play more than others. These are child’s personal characteristics, which should be respected. The number of friends does not tell the child’s level of social competence so forth it is not as important as whether the child is using appropriate social skills when s/he is interacting with peers. (Ostrosky. Meadan. 2010)

In one study that was mentioned in the Advameg Incorporations article was about peer problems and how they are encountered. One reason that they saw was if the child was distressed about changes in his/her life moving to a new place, parents fighting or born of a new sibling. Child will need some extra support from adults during this time but only for a while. When the peer problems have been going on for a long time then they need to be taken more seriously and more support needed from adults to help this child on improving his/her peer relations. What support the child needs depends on the child’s age and what kind of peer problems s/he has been having. It is adults’ responsibility to help every child to get positive peer relations and to develop his/her social competencies. (Advameg Inc. 2015)

2.7. Peer collaboration

Rubin says that people often get emotional security from a single close relationship, which is usually the spouse. The sense for community relationships is usually from friends, neighbours and colleagues. These two cannot replace one another for example friends cannot do much when a spouse dies but in the other hand the presence of an emotional attachment cannot ease the loneliness that people experience when they are lacking of friends and colleagues. (Rubin. 1980) When putting this into children’s perspective the emotional security is usually the mom or the dad, and peers and other adults are the people who give the sense for community relationships.

There was a study made that shows that 3 year old children, who have a very secure relationship with their mothers also appear to be the most competent ones in interacting with their peers. Rubin listed few skills that people should have if they want to be able to keep the

friendships going, first it is important to be able to attend group activities, children need to be supportive and approving to others, thirdly certain level conflict resolution skills are needed and lastly children must learn to express their own right and feelings and still remaining sensitive to the rights and feelings of others. Skills of empathy and to compromise are the biggest keys to maintain friendships in childhood. Usually the barriers for children to make friendships are mostly physical which means that the child would just have to go and ask another child to play with him/her. If a child is spending a lot of time alone it might be because s/he doesn't have the social skills to play with others but is also might be because at that point the child wants to spend time alone. "A child who has the skills to initiate play and communicate with peers may still choose to spend time alone but when a situation comes to interact with others the child knows how to act." (Rubin. 1980) Those children with lacking social skills don't have the chance to decide whether they play alone or with someone.

"Nevertheless, the difference between a child with close friendships and a child with who wants to make friends but is unable to, can be the difference between a child who is happy and a child who is distressed in one large area of life." (Rubin. 1980) Rubin also says that if a child is unable to make good peer relationships in kindergarten the child still has a chance to get the experience of making friend later in life. In intimate friendships the children have to accept themselves the way they are, have trust on each other, be destructive, constructive and insecure and jealous. Children are more straightforward in their friendships than adults.

3 Data collection & Data Analysis

We will be evaluating our data using the thematic (content) analysis. In our case it means that we start going through our data and familiarize ourselves with the content. Once we feel competent enough with the data we will start breaking it into smaller parts. After breaking them into parts we will start making lists and categorize them by similarities and therefore naming them larger categories. If we see that something would fit into more than one, then we leave it somewhere into the middle of them. Once we have done that we have new data that we can be more easily reflect on.

The data on our written records was for example conversations between children and short descriptions about conflict situations and peer collaboration for example. When there was an argument, it was easy to record it down with children's own quotations because after a while the argument discussions started to repeat themselves. Children in this age don't have very good skills for problem solving yet so they tend to use the way they know more than once. We gathered all the similar situations and ways to solve problems together from our notes and matched situations and who did what and how. This way we were able to see that children behaved similarly in conflict situations and that one child would not change his/her ways to

resolve conflicts. We did not record any situations where adults would actually interrupt and help the children solve the conflict in a win-win-situation. Here below are some examples on how we actually collected the data and made them into themes. There are two tables in table one there are different situations and in table two there are direct quotations.

Table 1.

What the child did?	Summary	Theme
Many times the children said that they would tell their mom, when they didn't get their opinions through or they were bullied	Telling mom if the child doesn't get what s/he wants.	Conflicts
Two boys (F) are playing together and then a third boy tries to join the play but then the other two turn against him and try to make him go play with someone else. The boy got rejected from other children as well so often he ended up playing alone.	Two boys want to play alone and then a third boy tries to enter but they don't let him.	Peer rejection
A boy (F) and girl start to wrestle without a reason for a while and then they hugged each other and went to do something else with different children	The kids wrestle then they hug and go play something else.	Peer collaboration
One of the youngest girls often played alone and wanted to play with adults	Girl wanted to play alone	Play
Young girl was being a princess with her dress and little bag. She was only playing with someone else if they asked the girl to play and took her with them.	A girl wanted to play with others but didn't have the courage or language skills to do so	Language

When four children (F2+2) were reading a toy magazine together everyone got to say what they wanted from Santa	Four children were reading a magazine together	Maintaining play
One girl is playing home the whole morning with two Finnish girls. One boy is playing alone nearby and interrupts their play with stupid things.	Three girls were playing “home” for one morning	Maintaining play

Table 2.

Exact narration	Situation	Theme
“Mä en halua ketää” - I don’t want anybody.	Said a girl when she wanted to play alone to a two other girls.	Peer rejection
“Mä en leiki sun kanssa” “okei okei mä laitan ” “sulla on vieläki enemmän kumulla” “mä en leiki enää ikinä sun kaaa” “mäkää en leiki enää sun kaa” “tyhmä” “sä oot niin ääliö” “Voinks mä leikkii teijän kaa” girl asks from two other girls who have been watching this episode.	One girl (F) and boy are starting to play with little plastic animals. But the boy took almost all of the animals and then the girl said that she wouldn’t play with him. The boy agreed to take few away but not enough in girl’s opinion. Then the girl says that she won’t ever play with the boy again and then they start calling each other with names. Then the girl asks two other girls if she can play with them and then the scene is over. In a while the boy and the girl are playing together again	Conflicts
“Can I play with you?” “No!” “Se on mejjän koti!” (= it is	Two girls are playing outside and walking around. After few minutes one asks one of the girls if he can play with them twice: “Voinks mä leik-	Conflicts

<p>our home) G “Ei oo” (= no it isn’t)B “Tää on meijän koti!” (=this is out home!) G “Ei oo, ei oo” (= no it isn’t, no it isn’t) B ”Ei oo ei oo” ” (= no it isn’t, no it isn’t) G</p>	<p>kii teijän kaa?” The girl says no and they continue walking. After few minutes the girls are playing “home” in the jungle gym. The same boy goes there again and asks if he can join. They recline once more but this time the boy forces himself into the play. Then one girl says that go away this is our home. The boy of course says that it isn’t. “Se on meijän koti!” “Ei oo” “Tää on meijän koti!” “Ei oo, ei oo” Then the girl some how gets confused and says also that it isn’t their home “Ei oo, ei oo” After this the girls go somewhere else but the boy stays in the jungle gym. Soon the boy is climbing with another boy from a different group and they are talking in Estonian.</p>	
<p>“Ei mee rikki.” (=it won’t break)</p>	<p>A boy (F) told a girl that she is not allowed to fold this rubber triangle because it will break. The girl said “Ei mee rikki.” (=it won’t break) and fold it a couple of more times.</p>	<p>Peer collaboration</p>
<p>“Tää on menny rikki sitä ei enää oteta.” Girl responds to</p>	<p>Girl is playing with a Finnish boy with Alias cards. Boy</p>	<p>Peer collaboration + conflicts</p>

<p>that “Oi se on menny rikki.”</p> <p>“Älä tule siin o meijä” (=don’t come there is ours)</p> <p>“Hei sit pitää kasata nää.”</p>	<p>says: “Tää on menny rikki sitä ei enää oteta.” Girl responds to that “Oi se on menny rikki.” They were talking about one card that was folded and said it was broken. After they had laid enough cards on the floor one boy (F) comes and walks across the carpet that had all the cards laid there. The girl then says to him “Älä tule siin o meijä” (=don’t come there is ours). The girl gets bored with playing with the cards and walks away. The boy shouts after her and says that she needs to come back and pile the cards back “Hei sit pitää kasata nää.” The girl doesn’t react for this so the boy has to get up and go to her. He has to tell her few times before she comes to help clean up.</p>	
<p>“Minä haluu äiti, X sinä haluat isä”</p> <p>”B ottaa äiti”</p>	<p>Two girls started to play with Barbie’s. They were not really playing together but at times they might change few words and continue playing for example</p> <p>“Minä haluu äiti, X sinä haluat isä”</p> <p>”B ottaa äiti”</p>	Peer collaboration
<p>“Ne on mun anna ne, hei ne on mun anna ne!”</p>	<p>Three children were playing with a Finnish child home and after awhile they swit-</p>	Conflicts

	<p>ched into a princess game, where to girls made each others hair, the two other girls continued playing home and soon they started to fight over a phone: “Ne on mun anna ne, hei ne on mun anna ne!” She yelled at the Finnish child when she wanted her phone back</p>	
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From the raw data collected we identified the following themes: play, language, conflicts, maintaining play, peer rejection and collaboration. We analysed and identified that language plays a significant role in the way the children form their friendships in the kindergarten. Furthermore this appeared also as a barrier to friendships in some cases as observed in Maininki Kindergarten. The language was an issue especially with immigrant boys.

The kindergarten teachers employ measures that encourage interaction amongst the other children. Some days the teachers might divide the playmates for the session before hand and the children are not allowed to change their play during that session.

3.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is, ‘an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. Whereby the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting’ (Creswell. 1998.) Therefore using Qualitative research methods is the most appropriate as it allows us to carry out the study in the day-care which is one of the children’s most naturalistic setting in which they socialise with their peers and teachers utilising Finnish Language.

3.2 Observation & Implementation of Observation

Observation is a well-established methodology for exploring the social world, and should be considered in situations where detailed descriptions of a setting and meanings and values of its inhabitants need to be explored”, (Fox. 1998.) Observing is natural for human beings may be because of the evolution we want to observe our environment or then maybe simply put

we are just a curious species. Observing includes all our senses and because of that it also includes interpretation of data we collect. Almost right away once we have observed something our brain starts to interpret it. While observing our perceptions process the information what we percept and it creates us an understandable picture. To be able to get the best results it is important that observers are able to adapt to the environment where the observation is happening.

While observing especially children it is important to write down as much as possible. While taking notes we need to keep in mind that it is not possible to write down everything and so the information we wrote down has already been edited, we selected what we wanted to have on paper. Many times observers are seeing what they want to see so it is important to try stay objective to the data collected. Observation also has its criticisms and the main one probably is that some observations are hard to be connected to the theory, which usually helps us to understand more than just specific cases. (Fox. 1998.)

The observation group consisted of 13 children about half of them were immigrants. The immigrant children were from Estonia, Russia and Vietnam. All children were between 3-5 years of age. The observations took place in the classroom environment and outside during free play and organized activities. We chose to use written record as a method to record our observations. It is the simplest one, which did not require any special consent from the parents. The day care had already permissions from the parents for their child to participate in researches. The bad thing about using written record was that sometimes there was something happening very fast or in two places at the same time, which made it harder to record everything.

3.3 Semi-structured Interviews

The choices of semi-structured interviews for the teachers are twofold. Firstly time constraints for the participants and the researchers the interviews would be arranged during the working hours of the teachers we may not get more than one opportunity to carry them out. Secondly the data that will arise can be reliable in getting answers to our research and there is an opportunity to prepare some of the interview questions prior to interviewing. They will contain a mix of closed and open-ended questions and questions that will arise during the interviews. The interviews will be carried out after a short observation period to identify the current working practice of the teachers. We have factored in the reality that this type of research seeks a high degree of self-disclosure from the teachers and it is imperative that the data we collect is handled sensitively. We will ensure we will use pseudonyms in order to protect their privacy.

3.3.1 Formation of interview questions

The interview questions were constructed based on our research questions and were grouped into themes. There was a set of nine questions that fell in the following themes; opening questions, leading questions and explorative questions.

3.3.2 Implementation of interviews

The informants of the interviews were all qualified kindergarten teachers from the kindergarten the observations took place. All three informants were Finnish women who were either from Metropolitan area or had been living here for years now. The interviews took place in small room in the kindergarten facilities. The interviews were done at two different times. On the first time there was one interviewee and on the second time there were two. The interviews were not recorded only written down. The interviews went with a slow pace so it was easy to get direct quotations.

4 Findings

The interviews were held over 4 days and in total acquired 130 minutes of material, semi-structured interview questions were used as a guide for conducting the interviews. The informant group was flexible in the kindergarten and also the number of informants from the semi-structured interviews. The informants of the interviews were all qualified kindergarten teachers from the kindergarten the observations took place. All three informants were Finnish women who were either from Metropolitan area or had been living here for years now. The observation group consisted of 13 children about half of them were immigrants. The immigrant children were from Estonia, Russia and Vietnam. All children were between 3-5 years of age. The observations took place in the classroom environment and outside during free play and organized activities. During the interviews and after the content analysis the following themes emerged, language, friendship, and peer collaboration.

4.1 Language Skills

It is indicative from our findings that some immigrant children, who possessed limited Finnish language skills, opt to interact and play more with the children who are younger than them. Although this may be so that this was not the case with all the children in the study, "*aika lapsikohtaista vaikuttaa niin paljon kielen lisäksi lapsen oma persoonallisuus*" Quote 1. This is attributed to the child's own skills, their confidence levels and their ability to engage with their peers. The kindergarten teachers in line with national legislation utilise methods that aide and strengthen the children's Finnish language skills through the use of picture commu-

nication systems, which is supported by movement and actions. The informants in this study indicated that children between the ages of 3-4 years saw rapid skills of acquiring Finnish language skills. Children at unstructured times reverted to the use of their mother tongue with peers who speak the same language as they do. Furthermore when the child's language is '*not strong enough often physical force is used, holding on to the toys or to get some help*' the informants note that this changes when the child's confidence grows. (Interview data 2&3)

4.2 Play

It is the adults' role and responsibility in a kindergarten to make sure that all the children get positive peer relations. Once the children keep on getting better in peer relations, they are able to maintain their play longer. In our research we saw that the Finnish children were able to maintain their play longer if it was a small group of Finnish girls. When there joined an immigrant child the play usually ended quite soon after that. The immigrant children also changed the play many times during the free playtime if they were by themselves or playing with another immigrant child. It was also noticeable that if a child got rejected enough of times the child would end up playing alone. The reason for rejection was almost always either the child's social or language skills.

4.3 Peer collaboration & Conflict resolution

In the group where we did the observations there was an immigrant boy who was playing alone quite a bit but at times that was the way he wanted but he also wanted to play with his peers. Often when he tried to join a play by just taking a toy car to play in the city carpet that is meant for toy cars for example. The others often told him off or the other children left to play with something else. It is hard to tell if the boy has the required social skills because his language skills are not good enough to use them.

In the kindergarten where the observations were done was an immigrant girl who often played alone, with an adult or was colouring with someone. She often chose activities that did not require talking. She did not really have good peer interactions assumedly because of the limited language skills.

There was this small immigrant child in the place where we did our research. She did not know Finnish very well but because of her personality and cuteness, it was easy for her to find someone to play with. I think the other children really thought that she was cute and nice to them, which enabled her to have many positive peer interactions within a day. Throughout these interactions the small girl will develop her Finnish language and will be so-

cially competent much faster than the girl from the previous chapter, who was often playing alone or with an adult.

During our observations in the kindergarten it was often happening that the children told other children that they would tell their mom or the professional adults in the group, when they didn't get their opinions through or they were bullied. Also in many cases if a child got upset with another child they usually told them that they wouldn't play with them and usually also called with names such as stupid or idiot.

5 Ethical Considerations

Qualitative research presents ethical considerations that are 'subtle and that differ to those found in quantitative research, by the fact that qualitative research deals with people in their environment and feelings. This may leave us vulnerable to the unpredictability of this type of research, because it is exploratory in nature we need to bear a preparedness of handling unpredictable situations. (Eisenhaucer & Wynden 2000) We utilized the support network that was available to us namely our working life partner, thesis tutors and had regular and open discussions between ourselves with the aim of ensuring the efficacy of the research and protection of the participants.

We entered into this research we will ensure that on our part that written informed consent is sought from the necessary people and Espoo City Council. For the children permission and consent will be sought from the kindergartens that act as the children's guardians while they are in the school furthermore from the parents. This will be continually reassessed throughout the research process and further permissions will be sought should situations change, i.e. a new teacher, child enters the group. Moreover we will on our part ensure the rights of the participants' are protected unequivocally.

In order to uphold the 'principles of honesty, openness & non-deception' (Banks 2006). The process of obtaining the necessary permissions and consent have been carefully considered through our working life partner we have gained permission to carry out the study in one of their partner kindergartens. The research idea was forwarded to the kindergarten via HELMO and a meeting set up to discuss the purpose of the research and how the information would be used. Our research is targeted at children under the age of 8 years and will not 'interfere with the children's integrity' we are not required to seek consent from the parents, as the research will be carried out within the normal activities of the kindergarten'. The decision of informing the parents was undertaken in line with their policies and procedures relating to research permissions were sought from Espoo city council as the kindergarten falls within their catchment area.

6 Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of our research it is paramount that credibility is the foundation of our research, and ensuring that our findings are congruent with reality. In order to achieve trustworthy finding we employed measures that incorporate credible research practice. First and foremost we ensured we familiarised ourselves with the Kindergarten that participated in the research, this served to build trust between the researchers and the Kindergarten. We took care to ensure we did not become overfamiliar with the Kindergarten as we were aware of the 'dangers that may emerge, i.e. the demands we make like the timings of the observation and the participants could in essence deter the Kindergarten from participating furthermore we ensured that we did not get immersed in the culture of the organisation. We utilized both the observation and interview method, as the data collected from the use of two methods acted as a compensatory measure were the shortcomings of one of these methods. There was a "necessity of obtaining a variety of perspectives in order to get a better, more stable view of reality' and gave an alternate perspective.

7 Discussion

Through an ecological perspective the child's peers, home, community and school influence peer-related social competence. The settings are paramount to the child's development in the early years as they learn and observe others in these settings. (Vygotsky, Bronfenbrenner 1979) From the stage of infancy children possess the ability to learn. Peer competence is a construct of the interactions that occur within the environment, there are of course factors that can hinder the child's development of these skills, namely family environment, developmental delays or behaviour disorders. Inherently this can in essence hinder a child development of the necessary skills required to be socially competent with their peers, as this can challenge the child's ability to regulate their emotions furthermore they may also be limited in the ability to develop strategies to join new groups.

The results of this research suggests that children can and do assist each other's thinking in the course of collaborative problem solving as predicted by both Piagetian and Vygotskian theory. Piaget theorized that children construct knowledge through action, their curiosity about the world around them drives their learning, and this is a dynamic process with a number of stages. Vygotsky (1978) goes beyond independent discovery it postulates that assisted discovery carried along by peer collaboration. Teachers group together classmates of differing abilities and encourage them to teach and help one another. The children observe each other's actions and manipulations, ask questions to define concepts or motivations, and build off each other's ideas and actions to create a more intricate and collaborative experience.

By combining Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories it is suggested that the benefits of peer collaboration arrives from active participation in interaction and verbal communication with a partner who has a different perspective, either due to more knowledge or a different perspective. Social cognitive conflict is created when a child becomes aware of a conflicting viewpoint. Cooperative co-construction occurs when two individuals explore each other's thoughts and together create a new integrated perspective. For both theories it is crucial that peer collaborative interaction focuses on the content and rational of that which is different in order for cognitive change to occur.

Theoretically, then, the cognitive value of peer collaboration for learning appears to be linked to two main factors: Firstly The interaction needs to be with a more competent partner or with a different knowledge base to ensure there is the necessary mismatch required to promote the re-examination of the child's own understanding that leads to internal re-organization and cognitive change. Secondly the child must be an active participant. Active involvement in the task and participation in verbal communication, especially reasoning, appear to be the facilitating mechanisms through which cognitive restructuring and cognitive change occurs.

Too often we are in fear of "cheating" and the idea that children may converse with each other during an assignment or learning process. We fear that this is a bad thing and that children are not showing their individual skills and knowledge. On the contrary, what better way to enhance what children gain from learning experiences and what they produce to show their knowledge than to allow them to converse and collaborate and share their ideas and knowledge? This can only foster a higher level of understanding of and level of knowledge about the subject. It is apparent from this study that children move to a higher level of understanding about an activity or experience when it is experienced in collaboration with peers.

From the findings we identified that some of the children for example, assisted the immigrant child in the activities of daily living guidance from the morning circle through to other activities in the classroom. Further observation indicated that during free play the Finnish girl played with children from the other groups. It is not clear weather this was a deliberate act not to be with the child, or whether it was an unintentional act. It is also important to not that Children relationships/friendships with peers can operate at a rapid pace. The children share information and ideas that they may not have been able to come up with on their own and they are able to perform new tasks and enhance their experience by utilizing teaching and learning strategies with each other moreover these concepts can be beneficial in all learning environments if they are recognized by teachers.

The collaborative interactions observed in this study are shaped around the concepts of children actively participating in their development as well as the impact of children's peer interactions on their development. Children constantly communicate their knowledge, skills, and ideas both verbally and non-verbally with each other throughout their interactions and coordinate their participation to create a collaborative experience. It is in these instances that children assume the roles of teacher and learner. As children display their skills, verbally express their knowledge, and share their ideas in a directive and exploratory tone, they act as a teacher communicating with a learner in a reciprocal manner. As their peers receive the information through listening or observing, they model the behaviour, contemplate it in relation to their own thinking, or collaborate towards a shared goal. Collaboration consists of mutual involvement by the children involved, equality of the relationship, and motivation based on a shared understanding.

7.1 Language

Child development in this case the social development exists within the constructs of that society, with the use of cultural tools and artefacts. Of all the cultural tools language is the "most pervasive & powerful cultural artefact that humans possess to mediate their connection to the world, to each other and to themselves" (Lantolf & Thorne. 2006). Language is in essence a social act and an action that has a constructive role in social life. Language is a vehicle of thought that provides an effective tool to communicate with those in our lives. Essentially it is the most "pervasive and powerful cultural artefact that humans possess to mediate their connection to the world, to each other and themselves" (Lantolf & Thorne. 2006.)

Fundamentally it goes beyond being a means of communication as it acts a social connector with the environment and allows children to express themselves, share thoughts, feelings and ideas with others (Hoff 2009). From this we infer that language is a social act as it takes place with the involvement of others, the children we will observe need ways to connect with their peers and educators. Thus we do not limit our use of language in this study to the role it plays in the communication aspect but extend it to the role it plays as a tool for social construct in child's social development and not extend it to how the child acquires it.

Evidently the language spoken plays a part in the children's communication and understanding. In Europe similarly to Finland it is increasingly common for children to utilise two or more languages simultaneously, the Finnish legislation requires that the educational plan of a child in ECE day care should include Finnish as a second language and needs to be incorporated into the individual immigrant child plan. However its inclusion in the plan does not act as a replacement for the Child's mother tongue. (Jamk.fi).

Young children engage their peers in imaginary play needless to say this requires a form of social interaction. Fundamentally this interaction is paramount to a child's ability to be competent with their peers and in social settings. Social competence refers to social, emotional and cognitive development such as skills and behaviour that all children need to have to be able to make and maintain relationships. For children the parents are the primary source for social and emotional support but as the children grow older the more important their peers become to play in child's social and emotional development. This play allows them to develop their role-play and to see things from other people's perspective and also develop an understanding for social rules and resolutions for the future. Serious difficulties in peer relations often lead to peer rejections, which become big issues of stress for children in their life. Peer rejection often cause feelings of loneliness, low self-esteem and it can even escalate into a negative developmental spiral. (Encyclopedia of children's health). Play is attributed and is a necessary for children as it 'nurtures overall development' furthermore it is a catalyst for reaching their full potential. (Goldstein. 2012.)

Children through play can lay the foundations that enable them to problem solving, learn and aide the development of 'emotional intelligence' thus resulting in the child having an increased awareness of other peoples intentions and their own and facilitating their development of understanding emotions and promoting fairness (Azar 2002). Ultimately this results from the play itself being fair, and arguably a contributory factor to how a child develops peer-related competence. Goldstein postulates that through play a child's fear, anxiety and stress levels can be reduced creating an heightened level of self-esteem, resilience and the ability to deal with emotional pain and increased capacity to cope with new situations and change in the child's life. The children in this study have varying levels of change, namely for some the entry into a new environment which has varying cultural and linguistic expectations.

Positive interactions with peers are essential for a child to learn social skills but rejected children, that often have poor social skills, are excluded from these positive interactions. Rejected children have fewer playmates to choose and they often tend to play alone or with adults. "Normal peer group can deprive rejected children of opportunities to develop adaptive social behaviours." (Encyclopaedia of children's health) It has been proven that childhood peer rejection predicts later mental health problems more than low IQ or school records.

"Positive peer relations play an important role in supporting the process of healthy social and emotional development ... It is not necessary for a child to be popular in order for that child to gain the advantages of peer support."(Encyclopaedia of children's health) In one study that was mentioned in the Encyclopaedia of Children's health was about peer problems and how they are encountered. One reason that they saw was if the child was distressed about changes

in his/her life moving to a new place, parents fighting or born of a new sibling. Child will need some extra support from adults during this time but only for a while. When the peer problems have been going on for a long time then they need to be taken more seriously and more support needed from adults to help this child on improving his/her peer relations. What support the child needs depends on the child's age and what kind of peer problems s/he has been having. It is adults' responsibility to help every child to get positive peer relations and to develop his/her social competencies. (Encyclopaedia of children's health)

The United Nation's Convention on the rights of the Child recognizes the importance of play in the lives of children by acknowledging play as a specific right. When a child is able to play s/he has accomplished one of the main developmental tasks of early childhood. That is why the early childhood teachers have focused so much on play and learning through play. "Young children learn the most important things not by being told but by constructing knowledge for themselves in interaction with the physical world and with other children - and the way they do this is by playing." (Jones & Reynolds. 1992)

Furthermore children must be given the time and place to play and to be able to learn through play. "The quality of play and the attitudes of the supporting adults towards play shapes the quality of the play experience for children." (Hewes.) Popular children in groups have high levels of social competence. They are friendly, cooperative, helpful, nice, understanding, attractive, good at games and are able to consider others feelings- empathy. When these popular kids want to join a play they are commenting agreeably on the play that's going on and then asking a permission to join. These children are able to play well and keep on playing for long if they want.

Popular children in groups have high levels of social competence. They are friendly, cooperative, helpful, nice, understanding, attractive, good at games and are able to consider others feelings- empathy. When these popular kids want to join a play they are commenting agreeably on the play that's going on and then asking a permission to join. These children are able to play well and keep on playing for long if they want. When doing the observations it was evident that many children wanted to play with this small immigrant girl. This girl did not know Finnish very well but she was always friendly and that is probably why everyone wanted to play with her.

Children who have problems on making friends or are being rejected by their peers; the reason usually for this is the child's annoying behaviour. Usually the behaviours that the children don't like are bossy, self-centred or disruptive. Also children who have learning disabilities or attention seeking problems, have troubles making friends because they have hard time on making and even harder time on maintaining play mostly because they find it hard to follow

rules and understand the rules for a play or game. Through out the child's development his/hers pro-social skills (friendly and helpful) and self-control skills (anger management and negotiation skills) are the main features of social competence. (Encyclopaedia of children's health) "The skilful teacher of young children is one who makes play possible and helps children keep getting better and better at it." (Jones & Reynolds. 1992) It is the adults' role and responsibility in a kindergarten to make sure that all the children get positive peer relations. Once the children keep on getting better in peer relations, they are able to maintain their play longer.

Our findings are justifying our own theories about peer teaching and learning by explaining the value of social interactions on children's learning as well as the process of children's social interactions in terms of their developmental gains.

The kindergarten being a multicultural-setting has the provision that offers linguistic and cultural development opportunities for the child. The Finnish National Curriculum emphasises the importance for children to have the right to engage in early childhood education regardless of the socio-economic, cultural and ethnic background. Moreover it facilitates the integration of immigrant children into Finnish society with the aim of easing the acculturation process. Furthermore the purpose it serves for children of Finnish origin is that it provides education of different cultures and fosters tolerance and understanding. This said, we observed in the nursery that despite the diversity of the young children the staff that provided the education and care was predominantly of Finnish origin.

Based on the Child's rights to their own culture and custom and evidently our findings indicated some factors that cross the culture spheres. For children between 3-5 there is only one place in the toilets where you can wash the children's butts. It is located in the boys' toilet. There was once a situation when a black boy got very confused because he saw a naked girl in the boys bathroom with the teacher. She had peed in her sleep and then they had to come and wash her. The boy came to the bathroom because he had to pee but couldn't because the girl was there so he went away. After a minute he came back and covered his eyes and went for the toilet. The teacher thought that it was because of the boys 'culture; nakedness is not natural in all cultures. Christmas, church, Muslim children have stronger religious views; one black boy was ashamed of his black belly. The question then arose how does one go about education children of such diverse culture.

Firstly it is about realizing what the common problems and barriers that may be encountered. Research suggests that there is at times insensitivity to client's cultural, ethnic, sexual and social needs with regard to those of a different cultural background 'Clients are not often trusting of service provision that is given by people who are of different socio-economic, reli-

gious and ethnic background' added to this are barriers of language and reluctance in constructing culturally competent service provision. This poses challenges for the teachers (Congress & Gonzalez 2013). How then can these barriers be overcome?

“Cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviours, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system or agency or among professionals and enable the system, agency, or professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations”(National Association of Social Workers. 2000). It is shaped by the policies; conduct and actions that the individual and services employ that will enable them to effectively deliver services to the communities concerned. This involves incorporating the communities' values and belief systems. Though it is prudent to explore the challenges that can be an obstacle to producing favourable behaviours and attitudes.

Finland is a pluralist society with what appears to be insufficient awareness of racial, cultural and ethnic difference within the social service delivery structure. Hence requiring elements of tolerance this said egalitarian tolerance could be a challenging exercise, as tolerance itself means different things to different people. Resulting in differing views of what is intolerable practice. For example on one hand there is the view that we already do enough for the immigrant population in the country as they have a right to access the service that are available to indigenous clients and on the other hand this is not necessarily challenging unjust policies and practices that can further marginalize individuals and communities, (Triandafyllidou 2011). There appears to be a clear need to distinguish within the services the need to retain cultural patriotism, and the incorporation of multicultural approaches to social work: sustainable change is achievable through a more multicultural work force that reflects the community that is being served, ensuring that there is a better understanding when it comes to engagement regarding cultural, religious and ethnic difference this then would act as a catalyst for positive change.

The need to incorporate a just delivery of service provision it comes to reason that kindergartens become culturally competent organizations. There is a clear need for this type of education to be employed. Cultural competent management is paramount to the success of any initiative. This can equip the services and the workers to be more attune to respecting and promoting the children's rights and work towards reconstructing structures that are not conducive to promoting equality and justice. This infers early childhood education practice requires 'top down' work to obtain social justice, that is, work that challenges power structures that maintain inequality (National association of Social workers. 2007). As much as an individual worker may push for any change to take effect it is only by the strength of policy and decision makers that any meaningful change can take effect. This does not abdicate responsibility from the kindergarten teachers themselves. The influence they have lies in the contact they

have with the children. It is from narratives from the immigrant children that teachers can begin to understand the systems and structures that clients find to be discriminatory and gain an understanding of how practices, policies within their organizations can be revamped in order for them to be just. A closer look and lessons can be learnt from problems and barriers faced by societies that have engaged in redevelopment of the service structures.

The skills required to develop cultural competent attitudes are not necessarily inborn, but they are skills one can acquire. They should be part of every kindergarten teachers practice reinforced through further training and development. This will go some way into delivering socially just principles. The knowledge and sensitivity to other cultures would yield more competent practice. This said leaders and managers of ECE play a crucial role in its success: by creating a culture 'that embraces and is committed to cultural competence.' They breed a 'healthy workforce'. (Congress & Gonzalez 2013)

The face of the Multicultural educational settings: the way it is presented plays an important role. The current face of the kindergarten is mainly Caucasian Finnish with few workers from the minority background. This in itself It is therefore imperative to have workers of Ethnic minorities within the services. It is of crucial importance that ECE services understand the changing face of the environment in which we live that is recognizing that Finland is becoming a richly diverse country and that social identities have and will continue to change. "Our approach to diversity within our communities will influence whether we work toward social exclusion or inclusion"(Gutiérrez 2007). In other words the it dependent on how we choose to deal with the changing society if social services remains unchanged it will continue to leave those who are marginalized out.

It is paramount to acknowledge and critique the problems that exist within the kindergarten services and social welfare structure and delivery. Opportunities for new outcomes can be valuable to these services. It is when there is dialogue that there can be development in the profession. In our findings the teachers showed a willingness to gain an understanding of the children they worked with. Although they are equipped with tools that supports the communication of the children like the use of pictures to identify.

One of, having to spend a lot of time away from my children and the school has become more like a second home to my children. My child in nursery school prompted me to work on this research, being placed in a multicultural environment where new culture and new language skills have to be learnt. Thus I found it important to recognize the value of collaborative work in the place he spends most of his time, as opposed to individual work. How really do his friends help him develop his thinking, language skills, and confidence levels that will later be used as he enters his teen years? Because these deficiencies in primary relationships tend to

show themselves especially in adolescence as anti-social behaviour, lack of self-discipline, and inability to provide self-direction

7.2 Conflicts

Children are constantly creating conflicts with their peers. That is a normal thing to happen in children's lives. It is educators' responsibility to help children solve the problems the way that they create a win-win-situation out of it and might even be able to prevent similar conflicts in the future. If the conflict is managed poorly it can have a negative impact on child's self-esteem and on social development. There are a couple of different types on how conflicts might start. First ones are ownership disagreements, when children are fighting over a toy. Second ones are the situations when children want to be first in something and forcing other kids to play the way they want. Third ones are the situations when children are joining a play that has been going on for a while. Fourth situations are when violent play escalates into an aggressive one. Last situations are when children have differences over the rules of the play and game. (Isenberg & Jalongo. 2010.)

The Australian primary schools have this project called Kids Matter together with Mental Health initiative in the project they created a leaflet about conflict resolution. They managed to create different ways to respond to conflicts and they called them win-lose approach, win-some-lose-some and win-win. Using the win-win- approach to resolve conflicts means sorting out the problem by helping children to discover variety of ways, which will help everyone in the conflict to get what they want. In order for a child to be competent enough to solve problems s/he would have to have good social and emotional skills. With guidance children can help to solve conflicts using the win-win approach and gradually develop from there until they are competent to do it independently. (Wertheim, Love, Peck, Littlefield. 2006.)

Situations of conflict were evident in the research, like when a girl and a boy were starting to play with little plastic animals. But the boy took almost all of the animals and then the girl said that she would not play with him. The boy agreed to take few away but not enough in girl's opinion. Then the girl said that she won't ever play with the boy again and then they started calling each other with names. Then the girl asked two other girls if she could play with them and then the scene was over. In another situation two boys were playing together and then a third boy tried to join the play but then the other two turned against him and tried to make him go play with someone else. The boy got rejected from other children as well so often he ended up playing alone.

There was also a situation when a boy and a girl started to wrestle without a reason for a while and then they hugged each other and went to do something else with different chil-

dren. All of these situations fall under the types on how do conflicts start which was mentioned in the first chapter.

One of the teacher we interviewed said: "It is very individualistic on child on how much does the language skills effect because child's own personality effects great deal as well." This came up when we were talking about children's ability to solve conflicts. It was clear to us that the children whose language level was lower they used more of their body language and gestures than spoken words to start conflicts (taking a toy from other child's hand) and to end them (giving a hug after conflict).

7.3 Gaining entry and maintaining play

Paramount to peer competence is the Child's ability to engage and maintain play relationships with their peers. The process itself is a challenging one when a child is faced with developmental challenges. For children who have developmental delays and or social communication problems and visual impairments the challenges they face are more heightened than those who do not (Ely 2014).

In this research the children did not have any of those challenges but all possessed a challenge in this respect this was due to their Finnish language abilities. This in itself did not hinder their attempts to engage. During free play it was observed that the children utilised methods of gaining entry into groups. On a few occasions they waited and hovered around the area where they wanted to join the play. It is because "it is challenging to find your own place within the group", as one of the teachers we interviewed said.

Two Finnish boys are playing together and then a third boy tries to join the play but then the other two turn against him and try to make him go play with someone else. The boy waits and plays with toys in the home area. After some time the boy successfully joins the group.

The boy here was able to gain the attention of his peers and played alongside but necessarily with the peers for a while and successfully attracted the attention of the other boys. Through watching and mimicking the other boys' behaviour, the other children in the group were able to accept to the boy as he had 'successfully shifted their focus' to include them. (Ely 2014, Deiner 2013) Further studies could be focused on the reasons why the play ends faster when immigrant children joins the play and how are social skills related to language skills.

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Appendixes

Interview questions for teachers

Language competence

1. How are the children who use Finnish as a second language supported while in the day-care?
2. What tools and methods are used in the kindergarten to communicate with children who use Finnish as a second language?

Social development

1. How are the children supported socially?
2. Is there differences in the way the children behave in social circumstances and with their peers

Peer competence

1. How do the children engage with their peers?
2. How are they supported in their engagement with the other children?

What systems and methods do you utilise to support the children in adapting to the Finnish environment?

What do you view as important in the children's social and language development?

What is working currently in the way the children are supported in Kindergarten at the moment and what improvement can be made?

What support do you need in carrying out your work that supports the children?

Kallid vanemad,

Me oleme Laurea Kõrkkooli kolmanda aasta õpilased. Oleme just tegemas oma lõputööd ning viime läbi oma uurimustöö [redacted] rühmas. Uurimustöö toimub nädalatel 47 ja 48. Meie eesmärgiks on kindlaks teha laste suhtlusmeetodid teineteise vahel. Me keskendume eriti lastele kes räägivad soome keelt teise keelena. Vastame meeleldi teie küsimustele inglise või soome keeles.

Parimate soovidega,

Mari ja Lainah

Уважаемые родители,

Мы являемся студентами 3-его курса Университета прикладных наук «Laurea». В данный момент мы работаем над нашей дипломной работой и планируем сделать необходимые наблюдения для нашего исследования в группе [redacted]. Наблюдения запланированы на недели 47 и 48. Наша цель изучить методы общения детей между собой. Мы особенно заинтересованы в наблюдении за детьми, у которых финский язык является вторым. Мы будем рады ответить на все ваши вопросы на английском и финском языке.

С уважением,

Мари и Лайна

Tiedote vanhemmille:

Hyvät vanhemmat,

Opiskelemme sosiaalialaa Laurea Ammattikorkeakoulussa viimeistä vuotta ja tarkoituksenamme on tehdä opinnäytetyömme vaatimat havainnointit [redacted]. Havainnointikertoja on viikoilla 47 ja 48. Tarkoituksemme on kartoittaa lasten keskinäisenvuorovaikutuksen tapoja ja menetelmiä. Olemme erityisesti kiinnostuneita selvittämään miten suomea toisena kielenä puhuvat kommunikoivat muiden lasten kanssa ryhmässä. Vastaamme mielellään kysymyksiinne jos, on jotain kysyttävää.

Syksyisin terveisin,

Mari ja Lainah

Notice for parents:

Dear parents,

We are 3rd year students from Laurea University Applied of Sciences. We are now working on our thesis and will do the observations needed for our research in [redacted] group. The observations will happen on weeks 47 and 48. Our aim is to map out children's methods communication with each other. We are especially looking at children who have Finnish as their 2nd language. We are happy to answer your questions in English or in Finnish.

Kind regards,

Mari and Lainah