



# Play as a source of well-being - the meaning of interprofessional collaboration

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Finnish Early Childhood Education uses a lot of play and functional methods as a tool for children's learning.

It is important for learning that children are allowed to participate and feel good and safe in those situations.

This requires the sensitive approach and cooperation of the adults working with them.

In this workshop, we talk about of multi-professionalism in Early Childhood Education in Finland. We will also tell about functional play methods and you will get to try them in practice.

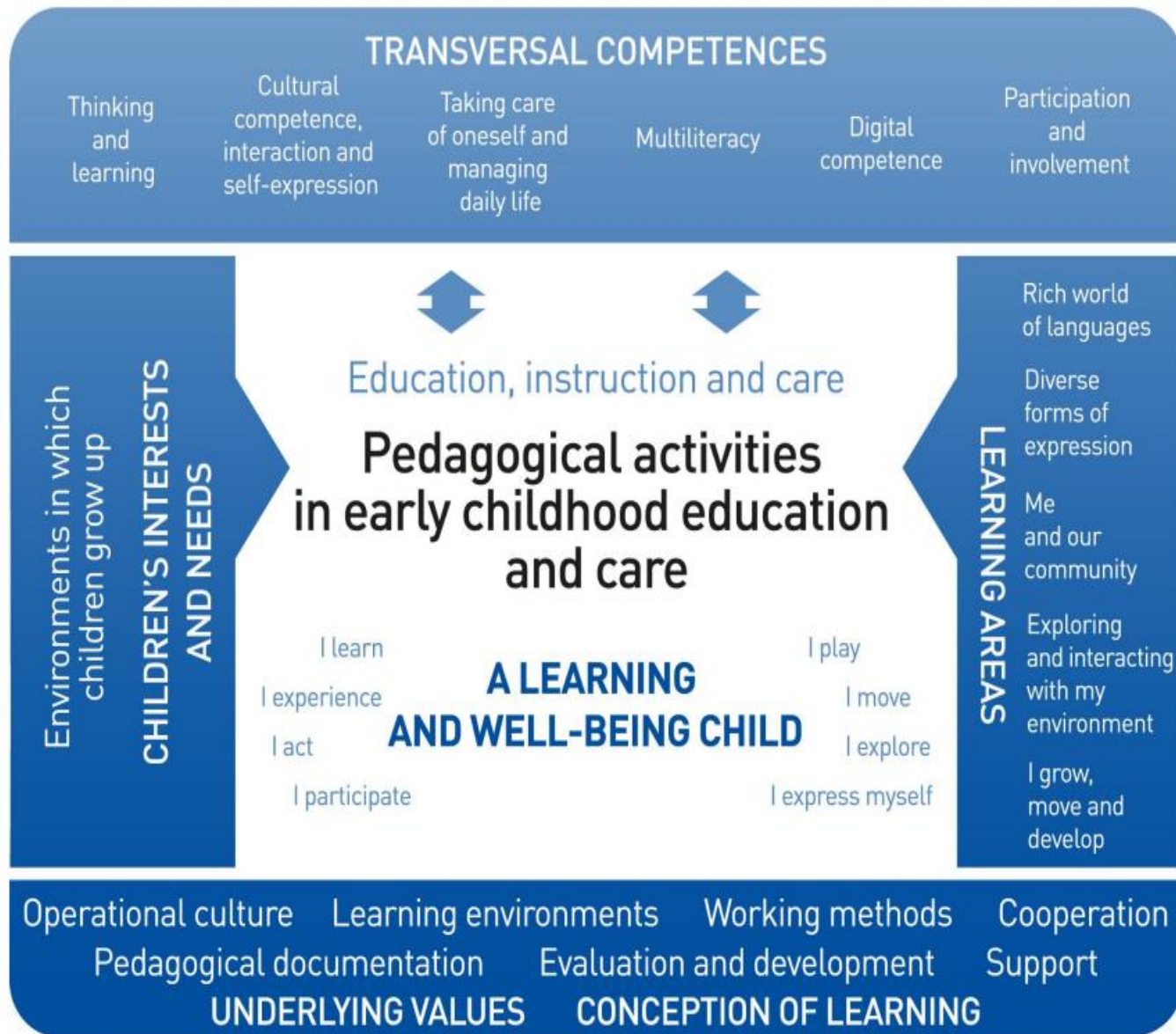
# Finnish Early Childhood Education and Care (Finnish National Agency for Education)

- The Finnish ECEC is based on an integrated approach to care, education and teaching -> so-called "educare" model
- The mission of ECEC is to promote children's holistic growth, development and learning in collaboration with their guardians.
- Learning through play is essential.
- Understanding the importance and pedagogical possibilities of play for the child in the promotion of wellbeing and learning is essential for ECEC

# The right of the child

- Participate and influence matters that concern them
- Participate in goal-oriented activities in which the principles of inclusion are followed
- Being heard, acknowledged and accepted as themselves
- Equal and non-discriminatory treatment
- Learn by playing and enjoy learning
- Practise and learn new skills and in interaction with others
- Express themselves in many different ways
- Receive adequate and lively individual support
- Build a solid foundation for their learning path
- Feel they belong to the group and make friends
- A healthy, safe and sustainable way of living
- Encouraging instruction, education and care





# Multiprofessional personnel in ECEC

Multiprofessional personnel of an early education centre is a resource for high-quality early childhood education, as it allows the utilization of everyone's training and competence and the appropriate performance of duties, tasks, and professional roles.

# The competence of early childhood education personnel and multiprofessional teamwork in Finland

- The new Early Childhood Education Act came into effect in Finland on September 1, 2018. Composition of staff in early education centres enters into force on 1 January 2030. It regulates the competence of early childhood education personnel as follows:

## Teacher in early childhood education and care

The qualification criterion for the role of teacher in early childhood education and care is at least a Bachelor's degree in Education, which includes studies that give the teacher professional skills for tasks in early childhood education and care.

## Social pedagogue in early childhood education and care

The qualification criterion for the role of a social pedagogue in early childhood education and care is at least a Bachelor's degree in healthcare and social services, comprising at least 60 credits worth of studies oriented towards early childhood education and care and social pedagogy.

## Childcarer in early childhood education and care

The qualification criterion for the role of childcarer in early childhood education and care is a vocational upper secondary qualification in education and guidance, a vocational upper secondary qualification in healthcare and social services or some other suitable qualification that includes or has been supplemented with adequately extensive study modules on the care, upbringing and education of children.

In addition to working in the children's group, other important people work in early childhood education:

### Head of early education centre

Early education centres shall have a head who is in charge of its operations.

### Special education teacher in early childhood education and care

Municipalities shall make sure that the services of a special education teacher in early childhood education and care are available.

### Assistant

In some children's groups.

Daily cooperation is also done with the kitchen staff and cleaning services, although of course they are under different management.



# Multiprofessional cooperation in ECE

*“When organising early childhood education and care, municipalities shall collaborate with those responsible for education, physical activity and culture, child welfare and other social welfare, maternity and child health clinics and other healthcare, and with any other organisations as needed”*

(Act on Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland)



**In practice, for example:**

With parents,  
maternity clinic's nurses, doctors, psychologists,  
social services such as various forms of family work,  
child protection,  
special medical care,  
child therapists,  
local schools,  
libraries,  
cultural services,  
teachers specializing in language support...



# The child's ECEC plan is made in cooperation

- Children's early childhood education is determined by the national law, the national core curriculum of ECE, the curriculums (based on national) of the municipality or private kindergartens. In addition, a personal plan for early childhood education must be made for each child.
- At early education centres, a person qualified as a teacher in early childhood education and care is responsible for preparing and evaluating the child's ECEC plan.
- The competence of a social pedagogue in early childhood education and care may be utilized, particularly in the context of knowledge in the service system for children and families.
- A special education teacher in early childhood education and care participates in evaluating the child's support needs, support measures or their implementation as necessary.
- If necessary, experts or other relevant actors who support the child's development and learning also participate in preparing and evaluating a child's ECEC plan.
- In order to prepare the child's own plan, information about the child must be obtained by observing and listening to the child himself, and finding out his strengths and interests. Parents and everyone who works with the child play an important role.



# Inclusion & Finnish three-step support model in ECE & basic education

- In an inclusive operating culture, the participation, community and togetherness of children, staff and guardians are promoted.
- Each member of the community/staff is responsible for maintaining, evaluating and developing an inclusive atmosphere and operating culture.

The work is a continuous development of the operating culture and activities and not an achieved state.

**-> Educational inclusion is an important part of inclusion in society.**

## The Finnish three-step support model of support used in ECE:

1. general support,
2. intensified support
3. special support:

- The aim is to support the child's learning and promote lifelong learning and the implementation of educational equality in accordance with inclusive principles.
- The child gets the support he/she needs and individual guidance in his/her nearby kindergarten with flexible arrangements

## Cooperation and services required for the support

- Any social welfare and health care services, including rehabilitation received by the child, are recorded in the child's ECEC plan if this is essential for organising the child's ECEC.

# Play as a source of well-being

- Play is a child's way of approaching the world around them and embracing knowledge
- Play is a tool for self-expression for a child
- Play produces joy and pleasure for the children. Children are active agents when they play: they structure and explore the surrounding world, create social relations and form meanings based on their experiences.
- For the child, the significance of play lies in the play itself.
- Play promotes the child's development, learning and well-being.
- While children learn by playing, they do not personally see play as a vehicle for learning but a way of spending time, living, and perceiving the world instead.
- Experiences that stimulate the children's emotions, curiosity and interest inspire them to play.

# Narrative play

- “Narrative play” is a term introduced by Hakkarainen & Bredikyte (2020) and it could be defined as an imaginative social role-play activity where children jointly construct a storyline.
- The approach combines children’s narratives, play, exploration and learning and makes the child's thinking visible.
- Activity that is both play and problem solving.
- The imaginary character can be the authority (adult “in role”).
- Adults are only the characters helpers in action -> adults and children are equal actors.
- To create a meaningful and developing working environment for children.
- Agreeing on common rules and procedures in play.
- Main focus on creating a social environment and interaction.

# How to start the narrative play project?

- A children's group whose early childhood education goals are clear to you.
- After that, you set the goals for the narrative play: what the children and the group of children should learn. The goal can be from mathematical skills to practicing social and emotional skills.
- The core story of a narrative play project can be a ready-made story or created by you or your team. In the beginning, it already takes into account the children's interests. Think of a character who acts as the central imaginary character of the game and as the leader of the game and its supporter, as a motivator.
- You gather the children together and tell them what is coming, the story begins! In general, you should start by creating something exciting, fun, surprising, a problem that needs to be solved! All this is presented by the character of the narrative play.
- All the adults involved know the plans and support the character with their actions.
- The first time, it is also important that the children have time to get to know the context, world around the character). The character can be a hand puppet or soft toy performed by an adult. An adult can also dress up as a character. Play can also include other roles.
- A narrative playtime can be included in the group's schedule, for example, every week.
- There is always the same ritual when starting and ending a story-telling playtime, for example a song, a poem, a shout of encouragement, relaxation, etc.

# Narrative play project

- The narrative play is divided into several episodes with different tasks, stages and moments of adventure. Children's wishes and ideas are taken into account in order to progress the story.
- A play project can last several weeks, a semester or even a school year!
- Adults observe, evaluate play moments and plan narrative play regularly.
- The different times of the narrative play can be implemented differently, but the main character supports it and the story continues every time.
- Children join the game voluntarily and each in their own style.
- In addition to the actual main character, there can be other roles in the game.
- Play includes positive excitement (and often for children it is a great place to practice self-regulation).
- The learning environment of story-based play can also be elsewhere than in the kindergarten or school.
- There are many functional methods in play, such as creative methods visual art, movement, drama and music.
- Narrative play can end in some significant event, for example the children solve a problem and a party can be held!

# Narrative play planned and implemented as a multiprofessional way

- Goals are set for the whole group.
- Each child's own goals are taken into account -  
> multiprofessional expertise can be utilized (e.g. supporting language, regulating emotions, developing motor skills, etc.)
- Metropolia students' example: a narrative play project  
“Wizard of the fairytale forest . There were children in the group who are a bit shy. The goal was that all the children participated to the play project and would be more encouraged.
- The main goal is that everyone is encouraged to participate!

# Create a character

- Create a character who could visit the children to challenge them to solve some tasks.
- You come up with the character (name, age, story, place where it lives, what it aims at, what is it afraid of, its situation now, environment, characteristics).
- Examples of such characters used with children include "Forest Fairy" (human-nature close relationship), "Old sailor" (City sea areas, plastic pollution, distant and diverse cultures), "Orphan Snowman", loneliness, dress, seasons), "The Old Owl" ( community elder, helping, collaborating).



# The plan for narrative play

- How the story begins?
- What is taught in this group? The children are 5 years old (21 children and 3 adult)
- Make a plan of activities that have concrete pedagogical goals for the learning session.
- How can you motivate children long-term narrative play that lasts the entire spring semester?

# Childrens special needs and multi-professionalism

An imagined situation of a group of 5-year-old children:

*Many children need support for communication*

*There has been bullying in the group*

*One child has a personal assistant due to motor challenges*

*Three children meet regularly a speech or physical therapist every week*

- The teacher of the group: responsible for the pedagogical goals
- Parents' involvement and perspectives
- The special education teacher: special needs in the group
- The social pedagogy: take care of how all children are involvement and can participate
- The role of special assistant
- Roles of therapists
- Other actors and co-operation



*“Multiprofessional  
cooperation increases  
the child's rights and the  
child's safety.”*

*-Metropolia's students-*



# Materials

Hakkarainen, P., Bredikyte. M. & al. Narrative environments for play and learning (NEPL)" guidelines for kindergarten and school teachers working with 3-8 years-old-children. 2017.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323772938\\_Narrative\\_environments\\_for\\_play\\_and\\_learning\\_NEPL\\_guidelines\\_for\\_kindergarten\\_and\\_school\\_teachers\\_working\\_with\\_3-8\\_years-old-children](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323772938_Narrative_environments_for_play_and_learning_NEPL_guidelines_for_kindergarten_and_school_teachers_working_with_3-8_years-old-children)

<https://www.oph.fi/en/education-system/early-childhood-education-and-care-finland>

<https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/National%20core%200curriculum%20for%20ECEC%202022.pdf>

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