



Role of Educators: Creating Emotional Safety at Day Care Centers.

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ABSTRACT

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The topic of this Bachelor's thesis is "Role of Educators: Creating an Emotional Safety in Day Care Centers". The purpose of this study is to present what emotional safety means, the importance of emotional safety, situations that can compromise it and also how educators can create emotional safety in day care centers.

The thesis is based on qualitative research. Data was gathered by conducting an unstructured interview with three educators and one director of day care. The questions for the interview were open, which helped the educators to share their views on the theme in depth.

The study gives valuable information about early childhood education and care and child and emotional safety. The study tells the reader how the actions of the people around a child have a great impact on the child's emotions. At the completion of this study I am hoping that the results will give grounds for further studies who take interest in emotional safety in day care centers.

Key Words: Early Childhood Education and Care, Emotional Safety, Child, Educators.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH	6
3. STUDY METHOD AND DATA COLLECTION.....	7
4. BACKGROUND.....	9
4.1 Who is a child?.....	9
4.2 Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)	11
4.3 Day care in Finland	13
5. EDUCATORS.....	14
6. EMOTIONAL SAFETY.....	17
6.1 Safety; it is a brain thing	19
6.2 Situations that can compromise emotional safety.....	20
6.3 Importance of emotional safety	21
7. EDUCATORS ROLE IN CREATING EMOTIONAL SAFETY	24
8. FINDINGS	28
9. CONCLUSION.....	31
REFERENCES.....	33
APPENDICES	35
Appendix 1	35
Appendix 2.....	36

1. INTRODUCTION

After having completed three practical placements in three different English Day Care Centers in Tampere, I had become very interested in children. My high interest in children prompted me to do this research about the children in day care centers.

Prevention of child sexual abuse used to be of great concern to me due to the fact that it has become rampant in my home country Ghana of late, but I couldn't work on this particular issue knowing very well that the possibility of getting people (victims), close relations of victims or social workers to interview was slim. And I also believed such issues are treated with much caution due to ethical reasons. Also, in working within early childhood education, I knew I would get the opportunity to be with children, observe them and to answer most of the questions I had in mind.

I realized that the children spend most of their time during the day in the day care centers. It was a totally new thing for me to watch parents bring in their wards as early as at six in the morning and leaving the day care at five in the evening. It became obvious for me that the parents trust the qualified staff in day care.

Numerous questions came to my mind during my first week of practice in the day care center. With the safety of these children becoming the most important responsibility of the educators, I asked myself if the parents knew how much work they had given the educators, if the educators knew the impact they had on the children's future and most of all what they needed to do to make the children feel much loved and feel to be at home although away from home.

The first three chapters of this thesis discuss the purpose, introduction and procedure. The fourth chapter goes into detail about the background of this work. First, about a child, ECEC and the day care system in Finland. The purposes of

daycare centers and the Finnish National Curriculum guidelines in early childhood education and care will be made available for the reader. Educators in day care centers and emotional safety will be discussed in the fifth and sixth chapters respectively. Chapters five and six become the main theme of the research, shedding more light on the meaning of emotions, how important emotions are and some situations that can compromise emotional safety. Chapter seven sheds light on the role of educators in creating emotional safety in day care centers.

The eighth chapter presents the findings of the research. The ninth is the conclusion.

2. PURPOSE OF THE THESIS

My thesis is mainly about children at day care centers. The main purpose of this study is to contribute to knowledge. The study focuses on the importance of emotional safety in day care centers and the role of educators in creating this safety for the children, and with the hope that the result of this study will give grounds for further students who take interest in emotional safety in day care centers.

The reader will have an idea about early childhood education and care in Finland after reading this research. Highlights of the early childhood education and care curriculum in Finland, the child and their rights, emotional safety and the role of educators will be made available to the readers.

The main purpose of this study is to show how educators create emotional safety for children as well as to present the benefits of emotional safety.

3. STUDY METHOD AND DATA COLLECTION

I chose to use qualitative method for my research. As David Silverman (2000,1) said, if you are concerned with exploring people's life histories or everyday behavior, then qualitative research method is the best to use. However, the reader should have in mind to avoid generalizing the end result of a qualitative research due to the fact that in qualitative research, generalization is avoided. In this case, the study is not to explain but to understand and interpret, which will help the reader to get close and into the role of educators in daycare centers and their way of giving meaning to things.

I chose interviewing as my main source of data collection because I believed that I could get more information about the theme than only depending on observing. It is important to note that the approach of interviewing allows the researcher to view the world of the informant's in a different perspective. Interviewing allows the researcher to know more about the participants' views and ideas about the subject at hand. Patton says that qualitative interview gives the impression that "the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit" (Patton 2002, 341)

I used open-ended questions for the interview because I wanted to know how the educators felt about the theme. And as Foddy says, "Respondents' answer to an open question indicate the strength of their feelings about the topic" (1993, 131). The total of ten questions was sent to three different educators and the director of daycare before a date was set for the interview. The questions were sent to them prior to interview in order for them to get familiar with the theme and prepare for the interview. I included the director of the day care center because she is an educator herself and although she acts as the director, she sometimes stands in for her workers when they are on any form of holiday. I also wanted to know about her opinions about the responsibilities of the educators.

An explanation of the study theme was explained to all those who took part in the interview. Although they were all familiar with the process of conducting in-

terviews, I explained to them that the interviews will be recorded, and after I have transcribed them, the tape will be destroyed. I also explained that all information obtained from them were strictly for study purposes and nothing else. All explanations were done prior to interviews. Interviews lasted between twenty to twenty-five minutes.

I had the opportunity to observe a group of children in a day care center from age five to six during my three weeks of practical training there. I first transcribed all the information gathered from the interview accordingly and then later grouped their answers by similarities before taking out the most important parts needed for this study.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Who is a child?

According to UNICEF's (United Nation's Children's Fund) Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child refers to "any human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier" (CRC Article 1). The definition of a child in the Finnish legislation is the same as the definition in the Convention of the Rights of the Child: a person below the age of eighteen is considered to be a minor.

In Schaffer's child psychology, the answer to, what is a child, cannot be given basing on the terms of inherited characteristics found in children alone but "it also depends on the nature of the particular society and its beliefs and customs in which that child is brought up" (Schaffer 2004, 20).

The Convention clearly specifies the upper age limit for childhood as 18 years but recognizes the majority may be obtained at an earlier age under the laws applicable to the child. To grow healthy, a child needs nutritious food, air, clean drinking water and maximum sleep. These are the basic needs of the human body.

These are some of the "abridged list of the rights of children, drawn up in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989" (Schaffer 2004, 25)

- Children have the right to life, their survival and development should be ensured.
- Children have the right to freedom of expression.
- Children have the right freely to associate with others.
- Children have the right to privacy.
- Children have the right to education

Children are whole people who have feelings, ideas, a sense of embodied self and relationships with others, and who need to be physically, mentally and spiritually healthy.

The need for the child to be loved and love is another important thing. Parents must show how much they love and care for the child. Children depend on their parents and look up to them for support, security and compassion. By providing much love and support, parents help the child to develop his or her self-esteem. (Bruce 2005, 12,13)

Children go through stages of development as they grow up. These changes being cognitive, emotional, moral or physical can be predictable or unpredictable. The developmental changes do occur during the stages of childhood, which are, the early childhood, middle childhood and adolescence. Early childhood starts from about two years to age of six, middle childhood starts from six to about twelve years. (Dimitrova 2009, 8)

Cognitive development stage: the child in the early childhood stage is subjected to rapid changes, their language, imagination and attentiveness develops quickly. With the middle childhood, children master basic writing and reading skills. And level of concentration, thinking, organizing and being flexible than before improves. Their level of grammar also improves. (Dimitrova 2009, 8)

Emotional development: children in the early childhood stage during emotional development, development of the concept of self and self esteem starts at this stage. They become aware of the gender differences and first friendship mostly starts from here. In the middle childhood stage, children become more aware of their culture and their interaction with the world increases. Achievement becomes important to them. (Dimitrova 2009, 8)

Physical development: during the early childhood stage, children become active and try all kinds of activities themselves like, running, riding bicycles and dressing or with a little assistance. During the middle childhood, the muscles gain

strength and there is a slow gain in weight and height. Unlike the children in the early childhood stage, they smoothly make movements like roping, jumping running etc. (Dimitrova 2009, 8)

4.2 Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

Early childhood education and care is a term which can't be defined in a uniform way due to the fact that, it may have different concepts in different countries. The Finnish National curriculum defines ECEC as "educational interaction taking place in young children's different living environments, which aim at promoting their balanced growth, development and learning." "ECEC is systematic and goal-oriented interaction and collaboration, where the child's spontaneous play is of key importance." (National curriculum guidelines on early childhood education and care in Finland 2004, 12)

The services and contents may differ from one another. In Finland for example, early childhood education and care have two aims, first, it is to take care of children under school age during the day and to educate the children before the school going age. Although there is a national curriculum guiding the early childhood education and care in Finland, there might still be some differences between the mode of services, organizing, staffs and means of funding.

Early childhood education starts from birth to the age of about seven. Children learn social, emotional, language, cognitive, spiritual and physical lessons at this stage. And the process or the ability to absorb things may differ from each child that is why early childhood education needs to be child-centered. In this case, it is important for the advocator to know what must be taken into account when supporting the child during his or her stay in the day care.

ECEC, in which pre-school education is included, and basic education together build an integrated entirety ensuring consistency and continuity in the child's development. The child's human dignity is the core value in the Convention on

the Rights of the Child that underlies ECEC in Finland. This core value is related to the four overall principles, which are respectively non-discrimination and equal treatment, the child's best interest, the child's right to life and full development, and giving due weight to the views of the child (National curriculum guidelines on early childhood education and care in Finland 2004, 13).

Core ECEC principles in Finland embody children's right to warm personal relationships; secured growth, development and learning; secure, healthy environments that allow play and a wide range of activities; receive understanding and have their say in accordance with their age and maturity receive the special support they need; and their own culture, language, religion and beliefs (National curriculum guidelines on early childhood education and care in Finland 2004, 13).

In Finland, the municipality provides different ECEC services which include day-care centre, group family day-care centre, family day care, private day care, play groups and after school care, special need and pre-school.

Apart from the ECEC services provided by the municipality, there are also private day cares. According to the ECEC policy in Finland, "The 1973 Act on Children's Day Care incorporated private day care as part of public day care in such a manner that it was even given the opportunity to receive the same state subsidies as municipal day care, provided that selection of children rested with the local authority." (Early childhood education and care policy in Finland 2000, 24).

There are other forms of ECEC services provided from different churches in Finland. ECEC services are provided from almost all the 600 Finnish Evangelical Lutheran parishes and the Greek Orthodox churches. In pedagogical terms, the church's ECEC objectives are in line with other ECEC objectives within the society. (Early childhood education and care policy in Finland 2000, 25)

4.3 Day care in Finland

“In Finland, every child under school age has an unconditional right to day care provided by the local authority once the mother or father’s period of parental allowance comes to an end, irrespective of the parents’ financial status or whether or not they are in work.” (Early childhood education and care policy in Finland 2000, 22) Due to the different situations in the individual families, parents can choose from the various forms of day-care services for their ward either provided from the private sector or local authorities.

Day care centers in Finland usually starts from 06:00 am till 5:00 pm but there can be an extension of time of picking up a child according to the agreement made between the parent and the educator. There are some day care centers which are open 24 hourly and this helps single parents who do night shifts. The day care center provides the children with meals as well as snacks. The number of children in a group might depend on the number of educators available.

Monthly fee is to be paid for the services provided at the day care. The municipal administration provides funds for children at day care. The amount of funds a family gets may be affected by their income and their size. A family with a low income gets the services for free.

5. EDUCATORS

Educators have important role in establishing rules, group processes among the children. Educators do have authority in the environments where these kids do spend their time in the days care. It is considered that the child and educator relationship do work in both ways, meaning that the two sides do influence each other. An educator is a crucial figure who has a long term impact on one's life both in the academic and personal aspects.

Day care staffs for Finnish children come from diverse educational backgrounds. The staffs have received training in their work which prepares them for early childhood education and care. The training aims at internalization of children's growth and development of the activities to support them.

The structure and dimensioning of staff at daycare centers is governed by the Decree on Children's Day Care. Previously, the Decree determined the group sizes for day-care centers and family day care. "Nowadays, regulation of the size of child groups at day care centers has been replaced by regulation of the staff to children ratio. In each daycare centre, at least every third person operating in care and education must have a professional qualifications conforming to the Decree on the Professional Qualification of Social welfare personnel – i.e. a post secondary level qualification. Other people with care and education duties must have an upper secondary qualification". (Early childhood education and care policy in Finland 2000, 42).

Most of the educators do have a qualification as kindergarten teachers, special kindergarten teachers, social educators or bachelors of social sciences, bachelors or masters of education, practical children's nurses, kindergarten practical nurses and practical nurses.

There have to be at least one trained member of staff to a maximum of seven children at age of three in the day care. And for younger children there must be a staff with a vocational education to a maximum of four children. The ratio of staff to children aged three or above in part-time care is 1:13.

Working with children can be a lot of fun for the educator, the educator connects with children and their families, providing quality child care and education in an environment with full of possibilities. Educators who are naturally creative may find it easier to construct interesting lessons for the children as well as making plans and preparing unique activities for the kids to engage in during their stay at the day cares.

Among the common qualities of a day care educator are being able,

To have patience with the child and to have a great affection for children educators must be able to demonstrate genuine care for the children not only physically but emotionally, socially and psychologically. Having patience with the children and listening attentively to them makes them feel inclusive and that does not only make the educator approachable but also loving.

Observe, assess, plan for and guide the development of the child either individually or in a group: observation, assessing and planning form a very important role in early childhood education it is therefore important that an educator know how to observe, assess and plan for guiding a child's development. This helps to know which of the children needs extra help or if there's a need to draw the parents attention to a particular behavior. (Sharman, Cross and Vennis, 1995)

To ensure safety and promote health and nutrition: educators should be able to serve and feed the children with their balanced diet and provide them with the necessary toiletries in the bathroom. Educators need to provide a comfortable and safety environment for the children. (National curriculum guidelines on early childhood education and care in Finland 2004)

To communicate and collaborate with children, families, community and colleagues: the need of an educator to collaborate with colleagues is very important, moreover, educators need to ensure a good partnership with the individual families of the children as well as other professionals in the network of the child.

(National curriculum guidelines on early childhood education and care in Finland 2004, 16)

Manage the operation of child setting: the educator should be able to plan and set the environment of the children according to the curriculum used to operate the daycare. (Rodd 1998, 6)

To act and continue to develop professionally: the educator should be able to upgrade him/herself professionally. Examples, developing understanding of families' culture, racial, linguistic and social-economic backgrounds, expansion of knowledge on technologies. Etc. (Rodd 1998, 6)

Being a daycare educator comes with lots of challenges like to find new experiences to share with the children. Educators need to remember to be a guide instead of only a leader, by being a guide, they will walk side by side with the children; allowing them to choose their (interest) playing and learning styles but he/she (educator) will be there to support and guide the choice of the children.

6. EMOTIONAL SAFETY

Thinking of safety in daycares or mostly in any other place, the first thing that might come to one's mind is the physical safety. Safety isn't only about creating a harmless environment for children to play, keeping the right toys at the right places or choosing the right toys for the children but also taking into account the social-emotional development of the child and most importantly, the impact educators' actions have on children with emotional development. Yes, the physical safety is very important just as the emotional safety.

What are emotions and safety? Emotions and Safety are defined in Oxford dictionary as "a strong feeling deriving from one's circumstances, mood, or relationships with others" and "the condition of being protected from or unlikely to cause danger, risk, or injury".(oxforddictionaries.com)

Emotions are public; shown in our actions and they help to find sources of energy that are needed to respond to situations. Emotions as said by Tina Bruce, plays an important part in self regulation and respond accordingly and adaptively. "When we feel sad, the ability to think is decreased. When we have well being, the ability to think is increased" (Bruce 2005, 38)

Gerrod Parrott, says, emotions do communicate a person's perceptions and intentions to others and "they can be contagious" (2001, 2). Emotions are highly subjective "responses to events that are important to the individual" (Parrott 2001, 59) and the responses involve or reflect on others usually. Emotions are closely connected with physical, mental, and behavioral symptoms that appear within an individual. Emotions are closely connected with physical, mental, and behavioral symptoms that appear within an individual. Example, emotions show in our actions, facial expressions, body temperature, movements, and voice also cause physical reactions in our bodies

Jane Bluestein used the term “emotional safety” to refer to a classroom or an environment, in which students can experience all of the following definitions below,

- “A sense of belonging, of being welcomed and valued; being treated with respect and dignity; acceptance
- The freedom to not be good at a particular skills, make mistakes, forget or need additional practice and still be treated respectfully and with acceptance
- Having one’s own unique talents, skills and qualities valued, recognized and acknowledged
- The freedom to have and express one’s own feelings and opinions without fear of recrimination.
- The freedom from harassment, intimidation and treat of physical harm from adults or peers.
- The freedom from prejudice, judgment and discrimination based on academic, athletic, creative or social capabilities.
- Freedom from prejudice, judgment and discrimination based on physical characteristics and general appearance; religious, racial, cultural background; sexual orientation.
- Encouragement and success; recognition, instruction, guidance and resources according to need and regardless of need.
- Freedom from arbitrary, indiscriminate and unexpected punishment and reactivity” (Bluestein 2001, 31,32)

Jane Bluestein goes on to say that “Emotional safety is in the eyes of the beholder. A place can be very safe but if the student perceives it is not be, it isn’t”

6.1 Safety; it is a brain thing

The human brain forms an important role in the feel of being safe. It is where the perception of safety as well as our reaction to threat and other happenings begins. An author Daniel Goleman writes that “In a very real sense we have two minds, one that thinks and one that feels” He considers these to be two different ways of knowing, one more rational and analytical, the other more impulsive and emotional, even logical at times. Nonetheless, the parts of the brain that comprise these “two minds” actually work together, along with the body, mind and emotions in a linked system. The basic systems that make up the brain are the, brain stem, the midbrain, the limbic and the cortex.

The brain stem influences behavior geared to personal survival and to species preservation, such as social conformity and hierarchies, territoriality, bluffing and deceptive behavior, and ritualistic and instinctive attention – getting behaviors. Formal reasoning does not occur at this level. The stem develops between conception and about fifteen months of age.

The midbrain develops between fifteen months and about four years of age. This part of the brain is mostly equated with emotional responses to sensory stimuli and feelings. It regulates the immune and autonomic nervous system, appetite and sleep, and it's critical to memory and learning. It is also involved with our hormones, social bonding and relationships, our values and priorities, contextual memories and our sense of meaning and it's critical to transfer from short to long term memory. In terms of learning, repetition appeals to the mid-brain area, as does sensory-motor, visceral and emotionally charged input. It is an important player when it comes to the impact of emotional safety or its absence, on learning and behavior. (Bluestein 2001, 19)

The limbic system is typically included as a part of the midbrain and is used to describe the primary midbrain functions.

The cortex is a part of the upper brain, which begins to develop around age of four. The cortex is often equated with intellect, although it also controls speech and language, creativity, problem solving, planning and muscular movement. Rational thinking, intellectual and abstract thought, visualization, reflection, innovation and creativity takes place at this part of the brain. Cortex, craves novelty, challenges, change and new ideas. It is the part of brain that allows us to have feelings about our feelings. It's where we gain understanding of what we perceive, although not all of our perceptions make it to the cortex before we act on them. (Bluestein 2001, 19)

The brain is a pretty object about events, comments and other stimuli in the environment. It is only our interpretation of this input that engages our emotional reaction. When the brain perceives an experience as positive, pleasantly exciting and fun, it releases certain chemicals that assist learning and recall. When children perceive that their safety is in some way at stake, a survival mechanism called downshifting occurs. Anything that suggests the possibility of danger, whether real or imagined, becomes a higher priority than anything else that is going on at that moment. That data is processed first, shifting our attention from cognitive processes down to the faster acting limbic system. (Bluestein 2001, 31, 32)

6.2 Situations that can compromise emotional safety

There are many situations that can compromise the emotional safety of children, some of them can be the cause from the day care centers whilst others from their individual homes. Among the common situations in the day care is,

- When children feel they are not given the enough help or assistance they need.
- Feeling that no one cares about them
- Not being able to rest enough when they feel they need to.

- Being sensitive or intolerant of noise and movements by their mates.
- Having to sit so long during a lesson.
- Speaking, reading or presenting in front of their mates.
- Being called names.
- Favoritism of kids over the others.
- Being shamed and punished frequently.
- Not being taken seriously; dismissed, ignored or laughed at.
- Over hearing educators discussing the negatively.
- Educator's impatience and annoyance. (Bluestein 2001, 34-36)

There are other situations that can happen in an individual child's household that can compromise their emotional safety. For example,

- Being an only child;
- The loss of a family member
- Some parents inability to provide more necessities to a child; like more toys for playing.
- Divorce or separation of parents; especially if one of the parents remarries.(Bluestein 2001, 51)

6.3 Importance of emotional safety

Being emotionally safe promotes better learning abilities. Children who feel emotionally safe in daycares do have the greater chance of success during in early school. "Children who are emotionally well-adjusted have a significantly

greater chance of early school success while children who suffer emotional difficulties face an increased risk of early school difficulty” (Raver 2002, 3)

Not only do children who have an emotional safety environment grow to be active and sociable but free from chronic behavior disorders. On the other hand, children who experience difficulties with their safety concerning emotions are likely to acquire social problems in their early school attendance and if proper care is not taken of the particular problem, they grow with it and become a problem to the society.

Children feeling emotionally safe in their environment in the daycare center make them accept themselves for whoever they are as well as their mates. They wouldn't feel bad of a subject or a skill they are not good at but rather embrace what they are good at. By accepting each other for what they are, there won't be any rejections among themselves. Studies show that children who are rejected during their first year in school are likely to drop out of school and are at risk of committing criminal juvenile offences later in their adolescence stage. (Raver 2002, 5)

Children who are brought up in emotionally safe environment are, honest and more open. They grow to trust the people around them and it's easier for them to talk about their feeling. Honesty, trust and openness builds up and are freely exhibit because they know they will get those back from the people around them. (Gibbs 2006)

The sense of belonging is felt among children who have emotionally safe environment. This feeling makes them more attentive, open to new ideas and willing to do all tasks and activities in the daycare although they might have a little interest in them. The sense of belonging in that environment motivates them and that's increases their level of leaning in that environment. (Gibbs 2006)

Having emotionally safe environment in daycare center promotes the level in which children solve conflicts among themselves. They develop understanding for each other making it easier to solve the conflict they have with their peers. (Bruce 2005, 166)

The importance of emotional safe environment helps the child to learn with a mind free from anger. They are able to forgive easily and are also more tolerant and successful in their early childhood education.

7. EDUCATORS ROLE IN CREATING EMOTIONAL SAFETY

Providing behavioral, emotional, physical or any kind of safety may connect to discipline. We start thinking of discipline in terms of strategies like relationship building, success orientation and developing power dynamics that are more positive and cooperative than authoritarian and disempowering. “If we are in a relationship with people who want power, and we believe that our only options are “winning” at their expense or “losing” in order to accommodate their needs, we’ve got a problem” (Bluestein 2001, 290). With this kind of thinking to guide us, we will either end up putting a lot of our energy into making sure that we’ve got all the power in the relationship (by disempowering or controlling others) or we will simply give up and let them do whatever they want.

The notion that we have to make kids lose – that is, to hurt, denigrate or discomfort them in some way in order to change their behavior – has centuries of grim history behind it. According to historians Pulliam and Van Patten (Bluestein 2001, 291), going back to colonial New England, we know that school (day care center) was not a pleasant place to be, either physically or psychologically. Several floggings were administered to the kids for misbehavior or breaking a rule. It is rather unfortunate to know that punishment was seen as the only recourse in dealing with kids for misbehaving. Most potent negative consequences were used in an attempt to control an individual and make it clear to others that misbehavior acts were not tolerated.

Constant punishment leads to a stressful environment for kids. Staying in a stressful environment might make kids develop behaviors which include rebelliousness, aggression, anti-social, lying, total dependence, fearfulness, helplessness, giving up, etc.

Clearly, disciplining kids can cause emotional stress putting the emotional safety of the kids in danger. It therefore becomes important that the educator chooses the right ways of disciplining in the process of creating an emotionally safe environment.

Below are some of the educators' behavior and ways that educators can do to contribute to creating a safe environment.

Follow through: allow positive consequences only as long as kids cooperate or come through on their end. And withdraw privileges or positive consequences immediately, until the kids' behavior changes. Hold kids accountable without shaming or punishing them. (Bluestein 2001, 305)

Establish a win to win power structure: kids have power within limits. Control comes from the children's self management and not teacher's power. Make choices available by inviting their input and opinions. Educators need to trust and have faith in the kids' ability to self-manage. In this case, each will value their responsibility, collaboration, finding solutions and respecting one another's point of view. (Bluestein 2001, 305)

Deglamorize Obedience: if obedience was a critical to the success of an industrial economy, information age demands for initiative and critical thinking render it a liability, inspire cooperation instead. Motivating cooperation builds commitment, engagement and resistance to peer pressure without compromising safety or putting the educator/student relationship at risk. (Bluestein 2001, 305)

Respect the kid's need for dignity: humiliation breeds anger which is a potential for escalated conflict or retaliation, or being turned inward with self destructive consequences. Avoid aggressive intimidating, invasive or threatening gestures or words. Inspire a sense of conscience and responsibility without embarrassing or implying inadequacy, defectiveness or low worth. Allow leadership for opportunities for all. (Bluestein 2001, 305)

Make success possible for everyone: eliminate discipline problems that arise when kids see no point in making a positive effort or behaving in class because they are going to fall anyway. Identify what they know and teach accordingly.

Appeal to different modalities, preferences and intelligences. Also build social skills and problem solving capabilities as needed. (Bluestein 2001, 305)

Eliminate double standards: act the way we want the kids to act, model the values we would like them to adopt, use the words and tone we find acceptable from them. Apologize when you blow it and respect the fact that they are driven by similar needs.

Set and maintain clear boundaries: educators can reframe rules as boundaries that are clear, proactive, stated positively and design to accommodate the educator and the kids' needs. Focus on positive outcomes. Give clear directions, make policies specific. Avoid warnings, excuses or delayed follow-through. (Bluestein 2001, 306)

Keep consequences positive: use promises instead of threats to minimize resistance and place responsibility on children without undermining the quality of the relationship. Educators can observe or interview the kids to determine a variety of meaningful positive consequences. Make as many as these options available to kids to give them a stake in participating and cooperating. The educator should leave door open for self-correction. (Bluestein 2001, 306)

Depersonalize conflicts: see conflicts as problem to be solved, not as battles to be won. Defuse potential conflicts before they have a chance to increase. Watch the need to win or be right. Try not to be shocked or impressed by attention-getting behavior. Don't be too quick to jump into conclusions about the kids intentions. Avoid taking misbehavior of kids personally. Educators need to stay calm, disengage and physically separate, if necessary. Management of anger is also very important. (Bluestein 2001, 306)

Focus on the positive: kids like school better when their teachers are positives. Acknowledge cooperation, progress, effort and achievement, using recognition statements. Avoid too much praising of kids. And instead of being judgmental, describe what you see and tell the kids how their choices pay off for them. Allow

positive consequences, when earned. Call parents with good reports and good notes can be sent home to parents. (Bluestein 2001, 307)

I honestly believe that majority adults chose to be educators because they love working with children and want to make a difference in a positive way in the children's life. These children spend most of their day time with educators in the day care centers, automatically putting their life in the hands of the educators. Providing safety becomes one of the most important responsibilities of the educator.

8. FINDINGS

The main findings of the Bachelor's thesis show what has been already suggested by theoretical sources in the theoretical background section. In quoting of interviewees, I will replace their names with 'informant 1 or 2, respectively to avoid any recognition.

During my practical training, I noticed that the educators there need to consider a lot of factors when planning activities for the kids. They operate in a multicultural environment, where majority of the kids have different backgrounds being, religious or socioeconomic status. To accomplish a goal by making everyone happy can be tiring yet fun.

Educators had almost the same answer when I asked about how they can create emotional safety.

" I listen.....I am a very active listener. Not only do I make the child feel good by listening but also get to read their facial expressions"

"I encourage children to ask more questions and talk more about how they feel. That helps, you know? It makes them feel I care. I comfort them and make them feel loved when needed (Informant 1)

"....participation is very important to me. I perform different activities with them in order to make sure that none of them feels left out. Some of them prefer one activity to the other. I praise them when needed... tell them it is ok to make mistakes and help them to solve those mistakes"..... (Informant 2)

At our school we use the Virtues Project. The project consists of teaching children the fact that they have all the virtues inside of them (love, compassion, forgiveness, self-discipline, obedience, orderliness, etc...).

Once children understand that they have all of these we encourage them to use the virtues in the classroom. Once they start using the virtues we praise them for the commitment that they are showing to taking the harder approach, it is not easy to make the correct choice. Children usually react by instinct if they are not taught other methods of handling situations (hit, shove, bully, kick). When the child knows that his efforts are being appreciated, they try harder and they start taking responsibility for their behavior. This helps control the environment and the need of discipline by the teacher is almost not necessary. (Informant 3)

When asked about some of the challenges they face in the process of creating emotional safety of the kids:

“It is difficult to make the child understand why they are not allowed to eat a certain food or participate in a particular religious activity. Not only do you have to explain to the child but also to the whole group because they always want to know why their mate is eating a different food or not participating in an activity” (informant 1)

“I think that sometimes one of the biggest challenges that I face is lack of knowledge. As teachers we are expected to know many things..... However there are times that our knowledge falls short and we do not even have concept of what is required from us. I always need to read and research more about different concepts about keeping these children safe in all aspects” (informant 3)

“.....some parents make our work more challenging. When you talk to them about their child they feel you are labeling them or complaining.....they get very defensive over their children” (informant 2)

A summary of the responses I got from the educators about the benefits of creating emotional safety in day care is:

By making a child feel emotionally safe we are providing them with the opportunity to explore, question and examine without the fear of feeling embarrassed of asking their questions and inquiries. We allow them to come to school with the knowledge that there will be no children or staff member that will laugh at them for making a mistake, or will hit them in the playground. When the child feels safe, they are able to verbalize what they are feeling without fear of rejection. Feeling emotionally safe, they are capable of making rational decisions when confronted with difficult situations.

9. CONCLUSION

Looking at the day care systems in Finland, I will say that parents have different options to choose from for their wards. It doesn't matter which day care a parent wants to send their children to, the municipality ensures that the child gets the basic needs required at the day care.

Educators are to have a required specification to meet up to the standard of being educators in the day cares. I believe the qualifications of educators make them know exactly what to do with children and that helps to run day care smoothly. Most of the educators for example, where I had my practical training, have been educators for long and doing things repeatedly that makes them more experience with the children. The educators take their roles more seriously knowing the impact they have on the child's future life.

The findings of this Bachelor's thesis cannot be seen as a general in any way as the sample studied. The methods used do not allow generalization; hence generalization will not be expected. Findings of this study are important for only the theme studied.

The importance of the findings of this research is to be considered as a basis for further in-depth studies. During the collection of data, it came to my notice that much wasn't done on this theme, although the emotional safeness of children is very important. I will therefore, be glad to know that more researches are done on this theme. I would have liked to involve parents to know their thought about their children's emotional safety and what it means to them if I had the opportunity. Involving a parent would have perhaps changed the result of this study but it would have been better to know what the parents think.

The interviewing part was very successful due to the fact that the volunteers were use to that procedure and have participated in other interviews before. They were all well experienced and have been educators for at least ten years and have been responsible of several kids. Although they were use to the pro-

cedure, it was still made clear to these educators who volunteered to be interviewed, that they can withdraw from the participation whenever they wanted. The volunteers were very cooperative and willingly shared their experiences.

I am very satisfied with the result I get for this research. It has been a great learning experience for me. I enjoyed the process of data collection very much and I now have a clear view of how educators create emotional safety in day care centers. I give much respect to educators in general for taking such responsibilities upon themselves.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Hello,

I am Barbara Ofori Twumwaa a Ghanaian student currently studying for Bachelors degree in Social Services and Health Care at Pirkanmaan Ammattikorkeakoulu in Tampere. I am in my third year now and I am at International Early Education Center for my practical training from 19th January to 9th February 2009.

I am writing my Bachelor's thesis on 'Role of educators: creating emotional safety at day care centers'. I am now collecting data and would like to know if you can help me to find educators who will volunteer to participate in an interview that I will organize.

A total number of ten questions will be given in advance to the educators who will participate in the interview and I will be available at any time they will be ready for the interview during my practical training here in International Early Education center.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Barbara Twumwaa

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For further enquiries you can contact my supervisor,

Marjo Harju-Tolppa

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Appendix 2

Questions for interview.

- What is a safe environment?
- How many ways can a safe environment be created?
- How can a child be made to feel safe emotionally?
- How do educators know if a child is feeling safe emotionally?
- What are some of the benefits of making a child feel safe emotionally?
- How do educators incorporate nature and immediate neighborhood of the child when creating emotional safety?
- What do educators consider most important when thinking of emotional safety?
- What works most when creating emotional safety?
- What are some of the challenges faced when creating emotional safety?
- Do you always work according to the national curriculum guidelines for Early Childhood Education and Care when planning a safe environment for a child?