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Meeting early childhood needs in non-standard hour childcare:

A resource perspective

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childcare:
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The purpose of the thesis was to investigate how non-standard hour care in Helsinki City can be developed in the future. The aim was to determine how Helsinki City's non- standard hour childcare units utilize their resources and to assess how they meet the needs of the children. Identifying challenges and evaluating whether children received timely and accurate support were regarded as important factors.

The thesis was designed to give children a chance to express their feelings, through which their needs could be interpreted. Another goal was to hear non-standard hour care employees and their views on resource efficiency. Therefore, the study was conducted by using two qualitative research methods: child observation and focus group interviews. The samples were collected from five different units in Helsinki city at the end of 2014. In total nine children and sixteen employees in the field took part.

The theoretical framework included looking into early childhood needs through the GIRFEC approach, the SCARF- model and attachment theory and understanding the importance of day-care resource management. Theory and research were considered to be inseparable complements and, therefore, an abductive approach was used for the data analysis. The theory supported in the data managing process, but the information gained from the observations and interviews lead the way.

Through forming different hypothesis, the analysis showed that resources were utilized differently among units that had an impact on the quality of care, employee wellbeing, learning environment and time management. Nevertheless, combining elements were also demonstrated. It was concluded that mutual guidelines were wished for the units and supporting children with special needs was seen as the main development area. Through increased transparency, this thesis hopes that it will function as an information tool that assists managers and employees in the field to mobilize their resources in order to develop more specialized childcare.

Keywords: non-standard hour childcare, early childhood, resources, learning environment, special needs

Jenni Tahvanainen

Varhaislapsuuden tarpeiden kohtaaminen vuorohoidossa: resurssi näkökulma

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Päättötyön tarkoituksena oli tutkia kuinka Helsingin Kaupungin vuorohoitoa pystytään kehittämään tulevaisuudessa. Tavoitteena oli määrittää kuinka resursseja hyödynnetään eri yksiköissä ja arvioida kuinka ne kohtaavat lasten tarpeiden kanssa. Haasteiden tunnistaminen ja lasten oikea-aikaisen tukemisen arviointi nähtiin tärkeinä lähtökohtina.

Työ suunniteltiin sen pohjalta, että lapset pääsisivät ilmaisemaan tunteitaan, jonka kautta heidän tarpeitaan voitaisiin tulkita. Tavoite oli kuulla vuorohoidon työntekijöitä ja heidän näkökulmiaan resurssien tehokkuudesta. Täten työssä käytettiin kahta laadullista tutkimusmenetelmää: lapsi havainnointia ja fokus ryhmähaastatteluja. Otokset kerättiin viidestä eri Helsingin Kaupungin vuorohoitoyksiköstä vuoden 2014 loppupuolella. Yhteensä yhdeksän lasta ja kuusitoista työntekijää osallistui.

Teoreettisena lähtökohtana toimi varhaislapsuuden tarpeiden määrittäminen GIRFEC- menetelytavan, SCARF-mallin ja vuorovaikutusteorian pohjalta, sekä päivähoidon eri resurssien ymmärtäminen. Analyysissa käytettiin abduktiivista lähestymistapaa, jossa teoria toimi apuvälineenä. Kuitenkin havainnoinneista ja haastatteluista saatu informaatio johti tiedon organisoimista.

Eri hypoteesien muodostamisen kautta löydökset kertoivat, että resursseja hyödynnettiin eri tavoin eri yksiköissä, mikä vaikutti hoidon laatuun, työntekijöiden hyvinvointiin, oppimisympäristöön, sekä ajanhallintaan. Yhteisiä tekijöitä löytyi erojen lisäksi. Yksiköille toivottiin yhtenäisiä linjauksia ja erityistä tukea tarvitsevien lasten tukeminen nähtiin tärkeimmäksi kehittämisaikaksi. Läpinäkyvyyden lisäämisen kautta, tämä päättötyö toivoo toimivansa informaatiovälineenä, joka tukee esimiehiä ja työntekijöitä resurssiensa liikuttamisen suhteen, jotta erikoistuneempaa hoitoa voitaisiin tarjota kaikille vuorohoidon lapsille.

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1 Introduction

Genetics, people, the environment and society have an impact on children's health, but clear consequences are difficult to define (Koskenvuo 2010, 294). All children deserve to grow up in healthy, safe and nurturing environments and day-care is one place many small children attend. Child-centeredness is the basis for early childhood education, and an educator's role is to enrich activities to meet the needs of the children. The quality of care, upbringing, and teaching are all considered essential for well-balanced growth. (Kalliala 2012, 45- 47).

Conducting early childhood research is a systematic manner to find out the truth about what is going on in child care settings (Gregory 2003, 27). As a concept of this thesis non- standard hour childcare is defined as day-care that is also offered during evenings, nights and week-ends (Palviainen 2007, 8). The objective of this qualitative study is to explore how non-standard hour childcare can be developed in the future.

The aim was to determine how Helsinki City's non- standard hour childcare units utilize their resources and to assess how they meet the needs of the children. A rights-based approach to child development is based on the principles of equality, participation, and empowerment. This kind of approach can achieve goals better than, for example, needs-based development approaches because it has the potential to promote democracy and social progress. (UNICEF & UNESCO 2007, 12). However, both approaches were regarded important in this thesis.

By observing and involving children in the research process, information related to their thoughts and needs can be received. Therefore, the first research question: how do you feel today, was aimed at the children. Through this question, the objective was to analyse what children express during their hours of care. The second part of the research included finding out what challenges and opportunities the professionals in non-standard hour care face while supporting children. In this section, the central research question; how can non-standard hour childcare be developed, was approached through mini focus group interviews.

This thesis is a separate study made for The Department of Early Education and Care of Helsinki and will function as a work development and information tool when dividing and making resource decisions related to non-standard hour care. The managers and child care professionals of Helsinki City's non-standard hour care units are in the target audience. This study is driven by a desire to make a difference. Through professional co-operation, the dream is to create more specialized care that meets the needs of all children in non-standard hour care and to resolve what changes are welcomed.

2 The background of the thesis

After working five years in daytime day-care, transferring to non-standard hour care has been interesting. Children attend irregularly, and the group and colleagues change. Therefore, this paper also seeks to address whether the type of care in itself and the constant changes in the environment affect small children. If the day-care and non-standard hour care aim at the same goals concerning child development but are two different settings, maybe the resources need to be looked at differently, as well.

Many employers require their staff to be available around the clock, and non-standard-hour childcare has been designed around the needs of the family's working situation (Palviainen 2007, 8). A discussion of the benefits and disadvantages of day-care has been active for a long time. The child's subjective right to day-care is often regarded as a question of the parents' rights. Nevertheless, the attention can be focused on the child. Decisions related to day-care are often political, but need to be based on early childhood research. Learning more about different early childhood settings increases the understanding and awareness concerning child wellbeing. (Sinkkonen 2012a, 127).

When parents and childcare professionals work together in partnership, the results have a positive impact on the child's development. The term parent does not necessary mean that one is the biological mother or father, but takes the role of a parent. Professionals should pay attention to getting to know the whole family in order to understand children and their personalities better. There are many family models, and every family is unique. (Pugh 2001, 146-148).

The stability of family life and safety are important to a child and children react differently to being separated from their parents (Pihlaja & Sinkkonen 2000, 37). For some children, it is exciting to come to day-care but for some separation from parents causes everyday sadness and fearfulness. Clingy behaviour is often related to separation anxiety. Continuous questions or crying can influence on an employee's accessibility concerning the other children. (Bell, Carr, Denno, Johnson & Phillips 2004, 7).

The relationships and interaction between the childcare staff and children are valuable but even they may not be continuous. There are periods when a child might stay at the nonstandard hour care for days or nights in a row without seeing their parent or parents. Small children should be protected from noise and too many people because they can only form a limited number of human relationships (Sinkkonen 2012b, 129).

Every child needs support at some point in one's life, but some require assistance on a more regular basis. The methods and measures of providing early childhood support in day-care

should be well documented. The child's early childhood education plan is made to promote the wellbeing of the child and to enable follow-ups. Adults have a duty to ensure that nobody "falls through the net". Day-care can shape outcomes to a certain extent. (Lipponen & Salmi 2013, 16).

There are children who enter early childhood programs with previously diagnosed health conditions, but also children with unidentified challenges. Based on a diagnosis or statements, professionals may recommend children additional support for day-care. An extra resource can include, for example, a special needs teacher or a special needs assistant. The group size can also be declined to be able to provide more personal care. However this is not always an easy option for a constantly changing group, but can and is used. (Huhtanen 2004, 44-45).

Implementing early childhood education and creating an environment that addresses all the children and their needs can be a challenge. Some children may act much younger, display developmental delays in language, social, cognitive, motor and self-help skills and, therefore, require careful observation. Nevertheless, child development often consists of irregular movement. As an example; at some point a child may move ahead in language skills while is lagging behind in motor skills. A child's behaviour puzzle needs to be looked at from different angles. In non- standard hour care environments, the atmosphere can be less predictable because naturally children are affected by each other's behaviours. Young children also differ in their exposure to social interactions, but day-care can provide these opportunities. (Bell, Carr, Denno, Johnson & Phillips 2004, 1-5). What happens when a child is not much present during playtime, but during nights instead?

The age difference of children in multi-age groups also shapes the group dynamic and structure. Due to irregularities in the environment, non-standard hour childcare often includes more basic care compared to early childhood education (Hannuniemi 2011, 10). Daily instability as a term refers to the variability in the number of caregivers in a child care group as well as to the changes in the child's peer group. One day a child can receive very personal care and the next day has to cope with a larger group. Non-standard-hour child care can be considered as flexible child care that is related to less predictable daily routines, as well as higher rates of child noncompliance towards caregivers. (Evans & Wachs 2010, 74).

In a constantly changing group where children have a greater turnover, the readiness to meet and to be prepared for a child who has more particular needs can be more complicated. It is not necessary the safest option to state that every time specialized care is arranged on a case by case basis. Every child, of course, is an individual, but in practice this can also contribute to unplanned or unprepared services. (Heinämäki 2004, 23-24).

3 Meeting early childhood needs

For a while, it was a trend to avoid a psychodynamic approach to child development because this knowledge was seen as “soft data”. In contrast, research based on biology or the brain has been argued to produce “hard data”. Fortunately, this division is becoming history and for the researcher, it made sense to mix data together. (Pihlaja & Sinkkonen 2000, 15) However, the overall principle that the researcher wanted to underline is that even when children have different needs, they all have their rights in common.

Children’s’ qualities and their participation rights are essential. If children trust adults, they will ask questions, and caring adults will take those questions seriously. Adults need to see children as eager for collaboration and sensitive to the world around them, and this should drive all action. (Hall & Rudkin 2011, 42, 48). Children need to feel comfortable in their learning environments, and they should feel confident in the people around them (Fisher 2013, 27). Frequent and positive interactions allow adults and children to build trusting relationships. A child who receives attention is less likely to engage in negative attention-seeking behaviours. (Bell, Carr, Denno, Johnson & Phillips 2004, 15).

As mentioned before, some children require more support during their childhood, and this is something that needs to be offered and assessed. Child care workers are in the critical position to spot whether a child is in need for more support due to regular contact with the child. Taking preventive measures and staying alert by identifying possible concerns is crucial. Providing accurate support is about putting many things together for the child’s best interest which requires collaboration. (Karageorge & Kendall 2008, 7).

Most children learn better when they are around people they trust and for the most of the time they just benefit from playing alongside others. Being able to be with someone a child can choose and relate to usually gives children an increased sense of motivation. (Fisher 2013, 180). Friends matter to children and it is important to attend to what happens between children and their friends. Friends can act as emotional supporters and can help each other’s to manage transitions and even stress. Many small children spend time outside their family but have the company of other children. Observing the social relationships they have is of growing importance because they can imply many things developmentally. Friendships are crucial for forming moral sensibility. (Dunn 2004, 2-6).

In day-care children gain ingredients that grow their personalities (Pihlaja & Sinkkonen 2000, 56). Diverse social competences can be found in any given child group. Evidence shows that repeated experiences of peer rejection can effect on emotional adjustment skills. Play entry is a complex activity for young children, and this can be more challenging when the peers

change more frequently. Some children have less experience with other play themes compared to others, and this is when considerable guidance and encouragement from adults is required. (Bell, Carr, Denno, Johnson & Phillips 2004, 4- 6). Nevertheless, non-standard hour care offers the opportunity for different types of play already based on changing peers and the sense of community is a strong asset. The advantage, a valuable resource for non-standard hour care is that the group size is smaller at times: it is not constantly big.

3.1 Current childcare issues

In Finnish day-care, no maximum group sizes have yet been decided on. Instead, the group size is indirectly controlled by utilization rates that exist between the children and adults. For example, there may be a maximum of seven children in full-time care to each staff member, concerning children over the age of three. The maximum is four children when children are under the age of three but this does not protect children from a large group size. (Kalliala 157-158). Previous studies have shown that employees worry about safety factors and the amount of responsibility often causes stress. The quiet children may be left without attention when, for example, the aggressive ones need it. (Perez 2013, 38-39).

A growing body of evidence indicates that crowding in child care settings is connected to inadequate language skills, aggressive behaviour, aimless wandering, fewer positive behaviours and less school readiness. There is even evidence for higher cortisol levels at day-care compared with levels at home. (Legendre, 2003; Sims, Guilfoyle, & Parry, 2006; Vermeer & Van IJzendoorn, 2006). Research has confirmed that crowding undermines the quality of caregiver and child interaction. Children are more likely to form a secure relationship with their care providers when group sizes are smaller. (Evans & Wachs 2010, 71).

The new legislation on early childhood education is on its way, and one of the changes in the law includes highlighting the right to early childhood education. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2014, 13). Unfortunately, change is not on time since the new legislation has been under construction for the past fifteen years. Forgetting about the law has been a disappointment for researchers, specialists and for the 50 000 employees working in the field because the existing law is over forty years old. (Lammi 2014).

Finnish children attend pedagogical early childhood services less than children in many other European countries. The United States of America has understood the impact of early childhood education on children's later development, but in Finland this has been undervalued on the political level. (Lammi 2014). According to research, high quality early childhood services are social investments in its' best form. These investments return to the society with an enormous interest: preventing early exclusion. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2014, 14).

A commitment to respecting the human rights of children requires accepting that promoting child welfare demands more than just good will. If children are subjects of rights, then they should have opportunities to be heard. They are entitled to be involved in decisions that affect them as individuals. (Pugh 2001, 47).

No one service on its' own can provide the right time support for different families and children. However, according to studies, parents feel that the support needed for raising a child is seen as one of the most important measures. The National Institute of Health and Welfare expresses that there is a need to clarify concepts in the new legislation. The concepts early childhood education and early childhood services do not clearly differ from one another. A municipality should be able to provide both. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2014, 14).

Sometimes, a child who needs special support may have to learn in a group where the staff has no training in early special education (Heinämäki 2004, 23). Taking a child during day-care or work hours to for example therapy may be tricky for a single parent. With this structure, the importance of interaction is of great relevance in childcare, and it needs to be multilateral and diverse to address the wellbeing of children. (Pihlaja & Sinkkonen 2000, 56-57). The social and health ministry considers it crucial that adequate and purposeful support can be arranged in children's own living environments. A child who needs special support in day-care may require social and health services as well. Preventive measures should be stated in the legislation and also day-care services should be regarded as early child protection. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2014, /).

Child care quality is a contemporary and highly sensitive issue, and there is concern that child care programs fall short of keeping children safe, promoting growth and competence. One source of information concerning chaos in childcare settings comes from the Life in Early Childhood Programs (LECP) scale and the scale's validity and liability have been demonstrated through research. Issues in the scale, such as child care crowding (too many children in the given amount of space) and environmental traffic (many adults and children in and out the space during the day) make it difficult to organize a schedule for children. "Traffic" is typical in non-standard hour care settings. (Evans & Wachs 2010, 69). Sensitive caregiving is a characteristic of high-quality childcare. Unstable childcare arrangements are associated with increased numbers of behaviour problems in young children. (Bell, Carr, Denno, Johnson & Phillips 2004, 15).

Unfortunately, according to a project that was conducted in eight day-care units and funded by the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (2010), a majority of children expressed that they had been bullied. When children were asked to tell what bullying meant to them, they mentioned physical actions such as pinching, pushing and name calling. Giving threats

and being left outside a group already existed among young children. As a small example, birthday invitations were used as a form of power. A child who is left outside a group is most likely to be left outside later on as well, and this is why adults are needed: to break a cycle. Adults have the responsibility to intervene. (Kanninen & Sigfrids 2012, 62-64).

3.2 Getting it right for every child

A right-based approach views young children as active participants in their environments and seeks to create opportunities where children can express what is important to them. Supporting children requires a commitment to respecting the human rights of children and promoting and protecting their welfare. Respecting what children say forms an excellent basis. (Pugh 2001, 49). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) includes a provision that states that all children capable of forming a view have the right to be heard and to be taken seriously. Providing opportunities to be heard are necessary, and the right to speak is dependent on the right to be listened to. (Lawsdown 2011, 1-3).

Offering support at a precise stage is crucial. Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) is an approach that's development has been shaped by The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. No matter where or what children need, their families should always know where to find help and what support is available. The approach believes that every child should be:

- 1) Safe
- 2) Healthy
- 3) Achieving
- 4) Nurtured
- 5) Active
- 6) Respected
- 7) Responsible
- 8) Included

These eight indicators aim to enable every child to be a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor. How safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible or included a child feels, tells about one's wellbeing. The purpose of the approach is to ensure that anyone providing support puts the child at the centre. Practitioners need to work together with families and take early action at the first signs of any difficulty. (The Scottish Government 2012, 3-9).

Early childhood support can include early intervention, where especially children at risk of exclusion have been seen as a priority. Even though, the term intervention has existed for some time, the practicalities are still developing, and the actions themselves have not been studied much. Early intervention consists of moral questions and can be challenging. Therefore, it is a benefit that the early childhood developmental and education plans (such as Vasu and the Hyve 4 model) are these days wider and clearly designed compared to previous agreements. These collaborative methods between the child's home and day-care are very critical. (Alanen, Harrikari, Pekkarinen & Satka 2011, 29, 63-64).

Streamlined planning, assessment, and decision-making processes are core components of the getting it right for every child approach. High standards of co-operation and communication lead to the right help at the right time. Maximizing skilled workforce is critical in order to address needs and risks as early as possible. The capacity to share information also electronically is seen important. Consistent joint working and communication, where more than one agency is involved, is linked to co-ordination skills. The focus is on improving outcomes for children based on shared understanding of wellbeing. Providing correct support is about offering help as early as possible, spot-on, by considering both short and long term needs of the child. Working in partnership with the families tells about what is more or less helpful and what options are best possible. (The Scottish Government 2012, 6-7).

3.3 The SCARF- model

Whether a child feels valued is based on the experiences and signals one receives and how one interprets them. Every human has a strong inner need to be able to belong and to be close to someone. The children's level of confidence has an impact on their personalities. A child needs to feel that one is treated fairly, and this can be built on trust. The experience of fairness increases functionality and the understanding that everyone is valuable. (Cacciatore, Huovinen & Korteniemi-Poikela 2008, 149-152).

Dr. David Rock, the Director of the Neuroleadership Institute, highlights that having a language for mental experiences gives children more chances to regulate their emotions (Anderson 2012). According to his brain based model SCARF, some fundamental needs are so important to a child that they will determine how one will react to different people and situations. The child's action is based on whether they regard a situation rewarding or threatening. (Kanninen & Sigfrids 2012, 20). This, for example, can make a child either approach a playgroup or try to avoid it. The avoid- approach response is a survival mechanism created for people to stay alive no matter what age. The amygdala, a small part of the limbic system reminds us how to act based on memories. (Rock 2008, 2).

Emotional communication occurs especially in the limbic system on the right side of the brain, and the amygdala is essential in recognizing fear and begins to function straight after the baby is born. If a child is regularly left to deal with negative emotions, changes in the biochemistry of the undeveloped brains can occur. Stress can act as a stimulus that launches a neurochemical reaction. Trauma related to interaction can be very harmful to children when cortisol levels start increasing and can damage nerve cells. (Sinkkonen 2012a, 72 & 76).

The SCARF model consists of five domains that are: status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness and fairness (Rock 2008, 2). Children require respect from parents, caregivers, and friends, and even from an early age they become aware of their social status. Every child should feel that they are being valued for who they are and not just by their achievement. Adults can either confirm or deny the importance of different activities and the level of involvement. (Fisher 2013, 92).

A child needs to be able to feel safe and needs to be able to trust that both their physical and emotional needs will be satisfied, and this is what brings certainty in their life. Autonomy is necessary to feel that one has options to choose from and can have an influence on decision-making. The concept of relatedness is connected to trust and involves determining who is “in or out.” The experience of fairness is a crucial part of social motivation. (Kanninen & Sigfrids 2012, 21-23).

Small role modelling and encouragement can have an enormous impact on a child’s autonomy. Children need time to practice skills that make them more independent. This is time well spent because when children know how to manage their own time they will not become frustrated or bored. When independence is truly established, children learn with confidence without needing constant support. Children can be taught to mix their own paints or clean up after themselves and many children enjoy doing so. Children spend more of their day working and playing independently or together with one another. Learning from adults enables learning to be directed and specified but learning on one’s own puts greater demands on the child to find and use own resources to make own decisions. Independent learning can be provoked by adults, and it is a desirable element of early education. (Fisher 2013, 94-95 & 114-115).

All of the domains in the SCARF model are needs that are related to interaction. The model helps in identifying different needs and functions as a tool to promote change, through understanding what affects individual actions. The model enables people to realize how core social domains drive human behaviour and can help people to minimize threats and create rewards instead. (Rock 2008, 1).



Figure 1: The SCARF- model by Dr. David Rock
 (Figure added from: <http://www.edbatista.com/2010/03/scarf.html>)

However, to understand emotion regulation in cultural context we should be able to compare and evaluate different environments. Emotions are blended together with experiences, regulations of self, relationships and situations. Research has revealed expected differences in emotional expressiveness among different cultures. Still autonomy and relatedness can be seen as two basic needs that are both part of any individual and any cultural community. (Keller & Otto 2009, 997-999).

It is important to assess whether children are "wearing their scarf" on or not. If a child is stressed and acts in a non-typical way, the first step is to map out the child's daily life routines and possible factors that cause strain to the child. Reducing the amount of these elements instead of thinking that the child needs to be further examined comes first. (Sinkkonen 2012b, 129). Some children have challenges in coping with groups, and these children need to be supported as early as possible. A sense of relatedness is built when a child is asked to join in doing something together. This experience can be made more efficient by building confidence; doing things that are not too demanding or too easy. (Cacciatore, Huovinen & Korteniemi-Poikela 2008, 155- 159).

Neurological science can assist in how we teach children. Building time for reflection helps executive function- the ability to process information and exhibit self-control. Negative emotions do not support learning, but positive emotions broaden children's attention and their ability to acquire information. Happy children learn better. Therefore, using strategies that also help regulate emotions are important for teachers. The science of learning is something to pay attention to. (Anderson 2012).

3.4 The attachment theory

The attachment theory is a theory about human attachment and its regulation. It is a theory based on the work by John Bowlby and his followers and is one of the most important theoretical structures describing early childhood development. It outlines the importance of healthy relationships and bonding. Its strength and weakness at the same time is that the theory can be simplified into a few basic principles. The word attachment describes both physical closeness and emotional affection. The child's relationship towards a caring adult forms into an own system, which is always activated when a child's feeling of security is threatened. (Sinkkonen 2012a, 26-32). Bonding is the process of forming an attachment that leads to an emotional connection which is seen crucial for survival in childhood (Perry 2001, 2). Different types of attachment influence the child's everyday life.

The four attachments types identified in the theory are: secure, insecure- ambivalent, insecure- avoidant and disorganized. The idea of the strange situation is that infants bring their own attachment strategy into a laboratory setting where the mother is first present along with a strange adult, but then leaves. Some children play eagerly and show their toys to their mother and might be a little upset when the mother leaves but are happy to see their mother return. Some children are more sensitive, and they cry and try to go after their mother, and want to be cuddled straight away when their mother returns. The third group of children is seen as the most emotional one, and it seems that they are not comfortable in the situation with or without their mother. They may try to cuddle when the mother returns but protest a lot when the mother leaves and do not accept the support of a stranger. The toys are not attractive to these children, and they might toss them around. The separation cannot last for the three minutes that are usually used in the test because these children get too upset. (Sinkkonen 2012a, 42-43).

Securely attached infants are able to bring all of their feelings to the interaction situation, even the negative ones and have received nurture even when feeling angry and disappointed. They calm down in their mother's arms and are able to continue playing soon. They are able to trust that the mother will be available for them and can predict behaviour. (Sinkkonen 2012a, 44). Securely attached infants usually play in a relaxed manner with the stranger as long as the mother is in reach, but they can become slightly tense when the mother leaves (Keller & Otto 2009, 1006).

Insecure-ambivalent infants usually exhibit clingy and dependent behaviour towards their mother, explore around only a little and become stressed when left alone with the stranger. Insecure- avoidant infants ignore their primary caregiver and show little emotion to when they either leave or return, and they might prefer to play with a stranger. (Keller & Otto

2009, 1006). These children may experience that the mother can be trusted but that there is no reason to plead to her by using emotions. Mothers of avoidant infants do not encourage their infants to come near or close to them and do not seem to feel particular delight when having physical contact with their child. (Sinkkonen 2012a, 45).

Insecurely attached infants are used to receive inconsistent and unresponsive emotions from their caregivers, and this can impair their bonding. Therefore, insecurely attached infants feel threatened during times of stress. (Perry 2001, 4-5). Disorganized infants cannot cope with the strange situation and lack an adequate behavioural strategy (Keller & Otto 2009, 1006). Separation distress in itself or a disorganized bond with the parents may not need separate interventions, but there are cases when a child can become extremely resistant and avoidant. Combined with other harmful environmental factors the child can develop even a psychic disorder if one has to sacrifice own emotions. The fear of being rejected can prevent becoming attached to anyone. (Sinkkonen 2012a, 56-58).

3.5 Resource utilization and successful learning environments

To reflect on our educational practices requires thinking openly about our past and present methods in order to improve them (Hughes & Naughton 2008, 96). Eventually, it is also necessary to accept that unnecessary things are done as well. At the same time, there is no need to organize a child's needs in a particular order when they all are important. Energy should be put in the right place. (Kalliala 2009, 105-107).

Placing energy into child-centered work development that promotes the rights and interests of children can be seen as one of the main objectives of this thesis. The ones attending the focus group interviews can act as "change agents" and design together how resource use can be developed. It is up to the employees to create a safe and trusting atmosphere where children feel they can become attached to the workers. Children's actions may be based on what these relationships are like. (Kekkonen 2012, 41-45).

In this thesis, day-care resources are categorized into people, skills, time, the learning environment and tools. Resource efficiency is about utilizing resources as much as possible. One of its' principles has been to divide an incoming job into smaller tasks, which are performed by different individuals. Grouping smaller tasks and functions together so that the whole organization can fulfil the same task many times can increase efficiency. Resources are needed to produce a service and from an economic perspective, it makes sense to aim for the best possible use of resources. This has been a natural way of looking at resources because it is in human nature to save money. However, it is important to evaluate to which capacity re-

sources are utilized in order to meet the needs of children and to take a deeper look at the quality of services provided to them. (Modig & Åhlström 2012, 9-11).

Professionals make decisions related to the care service, environment, and teaching, and, therefore, have a significant impact on resource mobilization. Effective early education requires practitioners who understand how young children learn both as individuals and group members. They know how to motivate children. The quality in early year's settings is clearly linked to the quality of the staff that should be appropriately trained. (Pugh 2001, 23).

Learning environments also reflect what educators wish to share with the families. A place where all like spending their time - both adults and children, is important. (Bardige, Leinfelder, Segal & Woika 2006, 101-102). The partnership between early- childhood educators and parents aims at promoting the well-being and education of the child. Best solutions are found through co-operation, commitment and trust and therefore communication skills are a significant resource component. (Niiranen, Seppänen-Järvelä, Sinkkonen & Vartiainen 2011, 115).

Time is needed for the child's individual assessment, multi-professional co-operation, planning, implementing and sharing information. Clarifying the elements of challenging behaviours, creating a supportive environment, determining roles concerning assessment, implementing developmental plans and evaluating them together result in offering children support at a correct stage. (Bell, Carr, Denno, Johnson & Phillips 2004, 170, 183).

The child's' individual early childhood education plan and the Hyve 4 are models and tools created to ensure the wellbeing and documentation of early childhood development together with the child's parents. In these plans, the child's need for support is seen as intermittent, meaning that changes in the child's development should be considered from time to time. The need for support and the measures taken should be defined. Support measures can include adjusting the physical, psychological and cognitive environment to become more suitable for the child. The daily structure, communication possibilities, group activities and the child's self-help skills are seen important. (Kontu & Suhonen 2005, 21-22). Children cannot be fitted into activities, but activities need to meet the needs of children (Fisher 2013, 75).

Skilful early childhood teachers can plan developmentally appropriate activities that are tailored based on child interests. The level of activity engagement also indicates quality in child care settings. Activity engagement describes the time a child spends interacting with others and activities in an appropriate manner. Daily opportunities for participation also set a stage for positive behaviour opportunities, such as increased social responsiveness, prosocial behaviours and decreased negative mood. (Bell, Carr, Denno, Johnson & Phillips 2004, 104).

Verbalizing feelings to a child is an important skill. An emotionally available adult respects a child's own personal attempts to solve situations, offers options and asks about experiences. A positive relationship between children and their caregivers enables a group to function well. Boynton and Boynton (2005) have studied the impact of early educator's skills on a learning environment. Positive interaction can explain even 40% of the atmosphere and calmness that exists in a childcare group. Sensitive interaction guarantees a child the right to be heard and seen. A professional's duty is to look beyond a child's behaviour. A strong "group leader" usually has many different tools and resources at use when guiding children. Short disturbances and concerns often exist, but they should not prevent the group from functioning. In a group of "weaker leadership," unwished behaviour can spread around quickly. (Kanninen & Sigfrids 2012, 91-95, 154-156).

Sometimes practitioners are afraid to give children more control out of the fear of losing it themselves. As a small example: there can be many reasons for adults wanting to display children's art on the walls, but children may decide they would rather take their masterpieces home. A child should get to choose whether the adult's reasons are legitimate or not. It is important to acknowledge the child's achievement and ensuring that experiences are relevant and meaningful to the child. (Fisher 2013, 183-184).

Time for conversation and observation need to be found on a daily basis so that educators can acknowledge the children's strengths and interests. Time use can be optimized through managing activities that are not too easy or difficult for the children. Through sitting back and watching the children, significant moments can be witnessed. The nature of observation can vary. Children act differently when an adult is involved and can be distracted by having to take more than one role at a particular time. When time is first spent on figuring out the needs of the children, educators can plan activities far more appropriately. (Fisher 2013, 73-74).

Arranging early childhood support also requires particular skills from the day-care staff such as knowledge of different specialist services. The staff needs to be able to recognize developmental digressions and know whom to consult. Co-operation in the day-care field should guarantee the availability of materials and support needed. Tools do not function without the person who is working in the child's best interest. Assessing the day-care environment is also a significant precautionary support measurement. (Heinämäki 2004, 67-69).

Identifying "hot spots"- the times and activities during which challenging situations occur is crucial for offering timely support. It is essential that a daily schedule provide each child consistency, routines, leisurely time, and predictability. It is important to acknowledge that each

change in a child's day constitutes a transition. (Bell, Carr, Denno, Johnson & Phillips 2004, 69).

Days occur when even the best plans need to be adapted. The learning environment helps in being prepared for alternative options and sets the tone for learning. The selection and setup of play materials, tools, pictures and even how the space is divided support beliefs about how children should learn. Providing opportunities for children to learn about their world through play is important. The environment needs to be safe for all children but should provide possibilities for exploration. In a well-planned environment, children spend more time mastering new skills, work together and ask more questions. (Bardige, Leinfelder, Segal & Woika 2006, 59).

A carefully engineered space can control group sizes, separate noisy and quiet areas and control traffic flow. A table for two is different from a table for five. Play areas can encourage co-operative play, empathy, creativity, helping behaviour and build self-confidence when designed well. Housekeeping and role-play areas provide practice in playing a grown up role and develop new skills. "Shop areas" develop number skills and playing a doctor can help children for example with their fears. Having an arts and crafts area encourages expression and develops a sense of personal accomplishment. A music area improves coordination and rhythm and develops listening skills. A discovery area that can include for example sorting and classifying develops observation skills and problem-solving. Different equipment and materials also assist in language development. Appropriate reminders and photos can assist in labelling themes and naming action and should be displayed at the child's eye level. Motivating everyone to explore the space and gain new experiences is the key. (Bardige, Leinfelder, Segal & Woika 2006, 77-83).

Some non- standard hour care environments are arranged based more on age and in some not. The characteristics and interests vary among different age groups. Babies will spend much time sleeping and are vulnerable to overstimulation whereas older children need a variety of social experiences. Age-specific activities and items with a broad age appeal need to be provided in multi-age groups. Schedules should be flexible and predictable at the same time. (Bardige, Leinfelder, Segal & Woika 2006, 75, 86). As a small example: on a cold winter day, it makes a difference whether a child can walk or not and the balance between outdoor and indoor play needs to be considered.

4 Research design

Research design is a way of organizing research in order to maximize the likelihood of generating evidence. Designing involves thinking beforehand about the kinds of conclusions one might want to draw and discovering less visible evidence was one goal. Using various data collection techniques is necessary to understand whether something works, how to improve it or why it does not work. (Gorard 2013, 6). Therefore involving multiple participants was seen as an important element and theory was used as an interpretation device.

All services require customer involvement in order to function which is one reason for choosing child observation as a research method. Services need to be developed through interaction and based on this focus group interviews were selected as a second research method. Knowing that we all have our backgrounds and experiences is crucial for service development. (Schneider & Stickdorn 2013, 36-37).

Qualitative research is easily described as profound but has been criticized to be a relatively minor methodology as such. It is suggested that it should only be contemplated as an exploratory stage of a study following counting (Silverman 2000, 8-9). However, there should only be research that uses different methods and asks various questions (Töttö 2004, 9). As for the research questions regarding this thesis, a qualitative approach was seen more suitable. The researcher identified the questions to be researchable also based on personal confusion, interest, and curiosity.

Triangulation increases validity and analysing the data from multiple perspectives ensures a larger overview of the research topic (Hughes & Naughton 2008, 127). Due to the researcher's experience of working in the field it was safer to use triangulation also to mitigate own researcher bias. According to Denzin (1978) there are four types of triangulation, and all of them were utilized. First data triangulation took place by using different sources in the study, in this case, children, kindergarten teachers, child nurses and one special need assistant. Secondly theory triangulation was put into use by going back and forth with literature throughout the process. Thirdly, methodological triangulation was done by using both observation and focus group techniques. Fourthly, even investigator triangulation was put to use during the focus group interviews. Investigating the research topic was done through within-methods triangulation meaning only qualitative research methods were used. (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner 2007, 114).

Allowing participants to "control their interview space" was seen important for both groups (Dimitriadis & Kamberlis 2013, 40). For this research process, the intention was to address power relations and advocate children's views to be tabled along with the views of those who

work closely to them (Pugh 2001, 49). Interviewing employees with different skills and knowledge can produce valuable data. Early childhood teacher researchers typically integrate research with their goals related to work. Both research methods also acted as forms of professional development and added knowledge base in the field. (Castle 2012, 7-9). This thesis considered theory and research to be inseparable complements from the beginning. Combining various perspectives allow us to examine alternative positions, phenomena and explanations during the research process. Therefore an abductive approach to data analysis was taken later on. (Gorard 2013, 30).

A research permit was applied and approved by the Early Childhood Education and Care Department during summer 2014, and the topic discussed beforehand with an early education and care specialist. At the beginning of autumn 2014, consent forms (Appendix 1) were given to the children's' parents personally, and the study process was explained face to face. Approvals were received on the spot and after this the child was asked whether one wanted to join. This was done to prevent possible disappointment.

The participatory child observation was conducted during the autumn 2014 in one of Helsinki city's non-standard-hour care units. Ten sessions in total were recorded from the end of August to the beginning of November and were completed first in order to gain insight on how to approach the focus group discussions through a child perspective. In total nine children attended: three boys and six girls between the ages of three and five.

The planning of the focus groups was done in October 2014 with the collaboration of a work-life coach. During a seminar held in September 2014, the thesis topic was introduced to Helsinki city managers of non-standard-hour care and work-life partners for the thesis were requested. The possibility of a work-life coach attending was mentioned, and available dates sent to the managers by e-mail. Because complete objectivity can be difficult to guarantee when one is close to ones' research topic, two "outside players" were brought into the interviews in the form of work-life coaches.

4.1 The child observation process

The nature of childhood keeps on evolving and research concerning children has to grow in order to respond appropriately to childhood needs. We should let children describe what childhood is from their perspective. (Alanen & Karila 2009, 54). Watching and learning are necessary tools for assessment and through these educators can understand the capabilities of the children they teach. Children's learning is rich, fascinating and surprising, and the process of observing children is in a sense its justification and privilege. Through truly understanding

what we see and respecting every child's uniqueness, informed decisions concerning children can be made. (Pugh 2001, 66-74). Listening with all senses is about empathy and reflections; trying to get a sense of the child's experience (Clark, Kjørholt & Moss 2005, 56).

Participant observation as a term refers to a variety of methodological practices where the emphasis of observation and participation can differ to some degree. In this study, the researcher acted alongside with the children of the non-standard hour care group as naturally as possible. (Leeson, Parker-Rees, Savage & Willan 2010, 63). Since the researcher was present in the everyday life of the children in the form of their teacher, it could be regarded both a strength and weakness at the same time. When a researcher and participants come close to one another, the personal and social implications become more complex, even though, there is the opportunity to observe more deeply (Keatinge 2010, 2). In this thesis, the emphasis was on participation and trying to learn about the children by participating. It felt relevant to have an adult role in the research process but at the same time choosing the "least adult role" seemed necessary. (Clark, Kjørholt & Moss 2005, 56-58).

Askeleittain - teaching material was used as a projective technique in observing the children and stimulating them into the topic that was; how do you feel? The material is published by Psykologien Kustannus Oy and is a program used in Finland for children between the ages of four and twelve. Through different games, photos, discussion and questions, Askeleittain aims at promoting social development, emotional skills and both expressing and understanding feelings. With pictures, stories and puppets the researcher guided children towards discussion or role-play but the children got to choose the main direction. For youngest children the theme of empathy is recommended because only at the age for four "emotional skills" develop to the point of understanding that people can feel differently in same situations. (Kanninen & Sigfrids 2012, 180). Therefore, material was used and adapted only from this category. The purpose of selecting this material was also based on learning and discussing together with friends.

At its' best the Askeleittain - material would be used during a long period and often (Kanninen & Sigfrids 2012, 182). The material was familiar to the researcher but for non-standard hour care it had to be adapted and could not be continued on a step by step basis. There was no regularity on who attended on a particular day and the group dynamic changed between sessions. It was not managed to provide all the nine children equal amounts of participation even the researcher came outside of ones' working hours when group work was easier to arrange. It was discussed that the same adult would be practical to guarantee continuity to the sessions. The following charts tell about the attendance amounts of the participants that differed from two to six sessions. The nine children are marked from A to I.

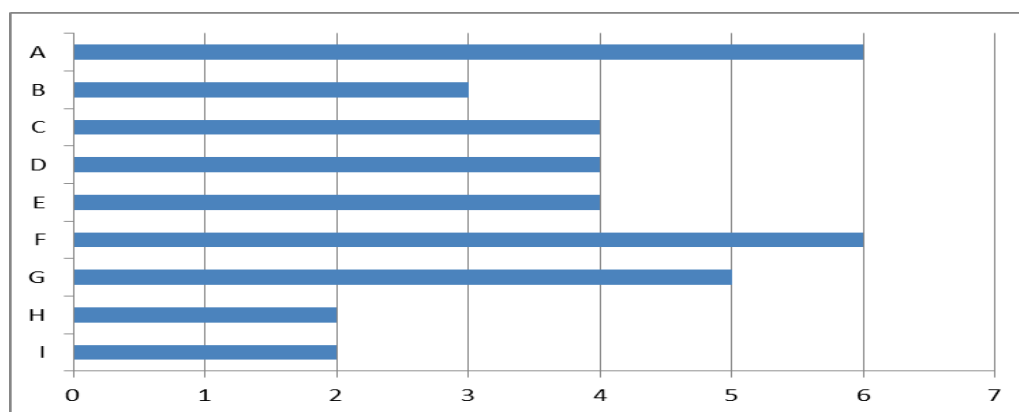


Figure 2: Children's frequency of attendance

The timing of the sessions was based on preliminary observations that required, for example, evaluating if a child is tired; is the best time before or after a nap, etc. Planning of the observation period was made in team meetings and by looking at child attendance lists. When dealing with emotions and children, anything can be expected, and many things were considered first. If, for example, a child wanted to stop the session it was made possible due to enough adults being close by. The location of the sessions was in the day-care environment but in a room where there was "fewer distractions".

Early childhood needs based on the need for status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness and fairness were in the focus of as well as all other possible needs the children expressed. The topic; talking about feelings was more general in nature, but the meanings were left for the children to specify. (Gronlund & James 2013, 33). Through evaluating feelings, the goal was to interpret needs more sufficiently. Whatever projective technique used the researcher should maximize the probability that the method is meaningful to the respondent and the sessions guaranteed children time to express their feelings in a safe environment with a familiar adult (Hoch, Pellegrini & Symons 2004, 74). If a child asked to talk about the feeling card that was used the last time this was respected. If they wanted to play and help the puppets, this was encouraged as well and lowered the level of adult participation while increasing the level of observation.

The ten observation sessions included children between the ages of three to five. However, the three-year olds either turned four either during the research process or very soon after. They were included based on if they wished to attend and fairness. The reason for the selection of this group was not the most ethical one but included certain practical grounds. These children attended the non-standard care on a more than less basis and had experience of different "shifts" and were able to express themselves through speech. Children who attended the care a lot less were unfortunately not included for research purposes. It was already estimated that even with nine children some would get to attend more and some less due to the

care structure. It was challenging to have children present not only at the same physical time, but at a time that was reasonable for the sessions.

Asking for the children's consent to be recorded was done at the beginning of every session, and attendance was voluntary. The children were told that the recording is used for research purposes and research as a concept was explained. The children were informed that the sessions included talking about feelings and their needs. The children were aware that their teacher went to school and considered themselves as research assistants. Some assistants would have wanted to know about the research "meetings" days beforehand so that they would be able to pick appropriate "meeting clothing". It was apologized to the children that, unfortunately, that might not be always possible. In practice, they mainly knew about their session only a few hours in advance. This also because we did not want to promise the sessions beforehand if there was a chance for disappointment. Luckily, the children adapted to the situation rather well within a few hours' notice.

Only recording of audio was taken during the askeleittain sessions, but describing the session, which pictures or material was used, and the atmosphere was done on paper straight after the sessions to serve as memory joggers. An Olympus audio recorder was bought to ensure the quality of the audio, and it ended up adding an own unexpected quality feature. Some children learned to pass it on nicely from a friend to another. They were allowed to hold the recorder if they wanted to and this they did naturally. During another session, some forgot about the recorder completely.

The beauty of the sessions existed in the fact that none of them were alike. Some included more free play and talk whereas during some sessions children specifically wanted to discuss individual pictures they chose. Some children wanted to speak through or with the puppets while others wanted to discuss their feelings directly. The level of researcher participation varied also depending on the topics discussed. Some children needed more guidance where others were very independent in taking direction. The first few sessions perhaps relied more on the material, which, on the other hand, needed to be introduced. Data wise, it was more productive to give more power to the children and adapt the material according to their wishes. The children granted access to their social worlds and after each session, it became easier only to observe what the children wanted to talk about and with one another.

Every participant was written down and the amount they attended counted throughout the process. Children attended between two- six times. On one occasion, the group session ended up being a pair session to guarantee one child more involvement in the process according to one's wishes. Making a change so that children are happily engaged is a smart and practical move. Adaptations help children become more successful and this in return can enhance the

understanding of the children for the researcher. (Granlund & James 2013, 145). For the children, it was important to care for the stuffed animals that were used during the sessions. Talking with or through the animals seemed to bring safety.

4.2 Focus groups

The resource mobilization theory (RMT) was first developed in the 1970's to understand the significance and power of social movements. In RMT, the belief is that people who share, for example, same concerns and grievances can take action together that result in resource mobilization. Individuals who share the same desire for change are called adherents and those contributing resources to the movement are called constituents. One idea of RMT is to find out how movements can turn bystanders into supporters and constituents that requires getting people to participate actively. How a group uses its resources influences the success of the organization. (Edwards & Gillham 2013 1-3).

Focus groups can function as democratic spaces for promoting change. For this reason, focus group interviews with a coaching theme were chosen as a second research method. Focus groups are very practical in filling in gaps in understanding information based on previous observations. The child observation supported the planning of the focus groups interviews through including questions from a child perspective. Drawing out complexities and contradictions was seen as another affordance for choosing the method. Focus groups have proven to be especially useful when doing research on a phenomenon that is known very little of and, as a result, they usually are followed by other types of research. (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis 2013, 40).

Focus groups can provide data from a panel of people quickly, and the interviews can be very flexible (Shamdasani & Stewart 1990, 15). Good childcare depends on proper assessment, which requires time for both children and the actual evaluation. It is also important to give recognition to educators who make decisions about what they teach, how and when. (Pugh 2001, 66, 74). By realizing what the real drivers of human behaviour are, co-operation between people can be improved, which is needed in the world of increasing change (Rock 2008, 1).

Coaching is focused on goal setting and deepening awareness and was therefore added to the interviews in order to support change in work culture (Britton 2010). The goal was to use the focus group interviews as empowerment methods, as well as research methods. Developing early childhood practices is based on many matters such as how the work community functions, everyone's wellbeing and the desire for change. Change appears in the form of thinking, feelings, and interactions in the work environment. Therefore, the idea was to stimulate

group thinking and learning during the focus group interviews without defining too strict goals. (Mäkitalo, Ojala, Venninen & Vilpas 2009, 28).

Focus group moderators are required to be flexible and should genuinely be interested in hearing the thoughts and feelings of the participants (Shamdasani & Stewart 1990, 79). There are risks related to conducting focus group interviews because one can never know exactly the groups dynamic beforehand. It is important to plan the meetings, in a way, that everyone gets to attend and express opinions. Drawing out even resistance is a benefit if similar experiences are seen through various perspectives (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis 2013, 40).

The focus group interviews consisted of employees working in the non-standard-hour care field directly with the children. This included eight kindergarten teachers, seven child nurses, and a special need assistant. All sixteen participants were female. Mini focus groups can provide more detailed information and due to time-related issues and practicalities, the participants were interviewed in groups of three to four. The participants were asked to join from different units. One purpose of focus groups is that the respondents are preselected, and some of the participants were familiar or know to the researcher. Using pre-existing social networks can contribute to the success of focus groups but it should always be made purposefully (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis 2013, 64).

The interviews began with hellos and a welcome with thanks, introducing the researchers, describing the thesis topic and the structure of the interview. A short description of the process and research topic had been sent beforehand to the units. The consent for recording was asked face to face and anonymity was guaranteed. A brief introduction to the researcher's past and profession was mentioned to build relatedness.

It was important to make a good first impression and create a comfortable atmosphere. Fairness can be increased through the level of communication, and successful moderators know that people learn best when they are interested in something. (Rock 2008, 6-7). The experience of relatedness and fairness allows people to tell their stories and sometimes listening can be as equally important as problem-solving (Amundson, Borgen & Butterfield 2009, 125).

The first part of the focus group interviews included understanding the reality. To gain a bigger picture in this amount of time a resource wheel (Appendix 3) was used to assist in gaining multiple perspectives that also ensured everyone was heard. How the interviewees rated their satisfaction regarding the different resource slices provided direction on which way to proceed. The slices were divided into people, skills, time, learning environment and equipment and tools. The interviewees rated the slices from one to five; five being the best amount. Each slice was given their number meaning that the figures were not put in the order to rate from the best to the worst.

After this everyone separately told why they had given the number presented from their point of view, pros and cons. The averages of the sliced were counted and presented to the group, and it was discussed which area they want to focus on for the rest of the interview. Before idea generation, the focus was put on the goals. The purpose was to bring out what the ideal situation would be and what positive features it would bring. In coaching, this can be regarded as the “objective phase” that is necessary for increasing motivation. Change-oriented, ethical, child-centred adjustable and open-ended questions were used for the rest of the interview. Coaching aims at finding solutions by coming up with meaningful questions at the moment based on what the participants have told. Examples of questions used can be found in appendix two.

Problem-solving is an important part of reflection that can be described as thinking about action. During some interviews, criticism was already received during the resource wheel phase. This was welcomed because criticism often is a sign of a broader level of thinking and in this level pondering together with colleagues is important. Feedback opened together with diverse views and exchanging thought deepens the reflection and encourages to test own thoughts. (Mäkitalo, Ojala, Venninen & Vilpas 2009, 29). It is important to consider how we can respond differently, which is more moral, how will the children benefit from this action, etc. The sequence of hermeneutic reasoning assumes that when people think about something we come to know it differently. (Hughes & Naughton 2008, 101-102).

4.3 Data analysis

Qualitative analysis is about making sense of received data. The steps for the analysis were partly performed against the theoretical background in order to construct new insights. Emphasis was also put on existing knowledge but the data gained lead the way. (Tavory & Timmermans 2012, 175). Therefore an abductive approach to data analysis was seen appropriate to start interpreting new data. Starting purely from the data from scratch after working in the field for years was not seen realistic. (Paavola 2014, 3). Regarding certain responses theory also provided better framework. It was only throughout the process the researcher realized how much or little the used theories supported the analysis process.

Luckily, abduction allows moving back and forth between data and theory and the researcher was led away from “the old” to the new at the same time. In the context of research abduction refers to the process of producing new hypotheses based on surprising research evidence. The steps included in abductive analysis include revisiting the phenomenon, defamiliarization and alternative casing in where the theoretical background is gently “switched on” to try to

see the data in the light of different cases in as many ways as possible. (Tavory & Timmermans 2012, 168-176).

4.3.1 Revisiting the phenomena

The first step of both analyses began with revisiting the phenomena. As the researcher listened to the audios, transcribed them to narrative format and then read them, the first experiences were re-experienced in many ways. (Tavory & Timmermans 2012, 176). Transcribing the audio took around two hours for every observation session and around six hours for each focus group interview. All transcripts were made in Finnish and within a week from the sessions.

The process of going through the data received from the children was very different from analysing the focus group interviews. Children talked more with one another and played, commented on top of each other and background noises were present as well. The nine children were coded with letters from A-I. The twenty-four pages received from the almost 4 hour audio in total, also included for example songs, five interruptions and play sounds.

Data used in the focus group content analysis also includes speech and behaviour observations, and there was some complexity related to answers (Shamdasani & Stewart 1990, 104-110). During the focus groups, people did not speak much on top of one another, rather filled in gaps or continued the discussion, and this made the transcription process pleasant. There were only slightly more dominant speakers and laughter played a role in transcripts. Speakers were easy to identify even and coded from 1-16. In total eight teachers, seven child nurses and a special needs assistant attended the focus group interviews. Each session took around one and a half hours.

A large selectiveness of data was done and required already in the beginning phases due to ethical reasons. Sensitive matters that could reveal a participant or some else's identity were over marked with a black marker. These topics were written down in a notebook thematically in a form that could guarantee anonymity. (Ellingson 2009, 100). Background noises were also dropped from the transcripts that were solely made for this research purposes and not made visible to outsiders. The over marked text was deleted from the one on the computer, re-printed and revisited again. Still sixty-eight pages remained for the following steps.

As a result of reading literature throughout the thesis process, theoretical insights started to rise differently after each "data visit". This compelled the researcher to re-evaluate various aspects (Tavory & Timmermans 2012, 176). The target audience was also clarified based on assessing what truly had been said. The thesis ended up serving as a tool for units to share

information on both employee and manager level. Dividing the data was also done according to what the researcher thought would best appeal to both audiences.

4.3.2 Taking a step back

The second step, defamiliarization meant taking a step back from the immediate reactions. Objects that were relegated to the background of the first experiences started becoming clearer as well as the topics that needed to be given a second thought. (Tavory & Timmermans 2012, 176-177). The process of discovery during this step included digging into matters that seemed to be in opposition to each other and based on these more surprising features, and subtle clues appeared on the surface. According to Paavola (2014, 5-6) abductive analysis often highlights the paradoxical nature of discovery and the researcher felt the same way after the defamiliarization phase. However, this did not result in also leaving “common information” out. Before alternative casing and forming hypothesis, coding and categorizing was done.

Coloured markers and symbols, side notes, circles and different letter codes were used for the transcripts. Coding children’s feelings was already made into the form that could be presented both to staff and parents and read out to the children. (Appendix 4) Feelings that emerged from the text were: happiness, sadness, fearfulness, excitement, anger, shyness, disappointment, nervousness and boredom.

Coding was also used to mark whether the child spoke directly (D) or through play or a puppet indirectly (ID). Individual word counts were made as well. A circle was marked in the text every time a parent, friend or an important person to the child was mentioned. The main categories found included: possible threats, friendship, family and free time, play and needs in day-care and were linked to status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness or fairness.

Looking for frequencies can provide complementary information on specific behaviours and matters (Hoch, Pellegrini & Symons 2004, 106). A dilemma occurred concerning the measurement of the child observations because of the variety of attendance possibilities. Therefore, individuals and the group were both used as units for analysis. Every child matters and may require specific support. The following table tells about how the group structure changed throughout the sessions, and it had an impact on the group dynamics.

Session	Child present				Participants overall	Duration (min, avg. 23)
	A	B	C	D		
1	A	B	C	D	4	27
2	A	C	E	F	4	20
3	A	B	E		3	25
4	A	F	G		3	24
5	B	F	G	H	4	25
6	D	F	G	I	4	24
7	G	H			2	15
8	A	C	E	F	4	22
9	D	I	C	F	4	27
10	A	D	G	E	4	24

Table 1: Group structures during child observations

For the focus groups, frequency was be looked at from the perspective how many people brought the topic or theme up instead of only looking at how many times the matter was commented on. The transcripts showed that some interviewees expressed same ideas in many responses. (Guest & MacQueen 2008, 143-144). It was also interesting to look at why there were frequency differences between the groups. The group aspect was strongly in the background because when someone brought a topic up, on most occasions everyone had something to say about it within a group and in most cases coming from same intentions and viewpoints. Comparing frequencies helped manage and categorize data.

The main themes in the analysis of the focus groups emerged as:

- early childhood threats and challenges
- goals concerning the care
- suggested solutions
- time

Coding was based on subcategories that included:

- special and individual needs
- skills
- learning environment
- tools
- mutual guidelines
- communication & partnership with families
- teamwork & work wellbeing
- work ethics & motivation

- work schedules
- physical threats
- features of non-standard hour care

4.3.3 Searching for explanations

After these steps, it was reasonable to start thinking how the messages should be given out: The purpose: developing better care was the red line. This “storyline” would include improvements and suggested solutions. The SCARF model assisted in identifying types of needs and support children in non-standard may require and have. Theoretical elements were already added in the focus group process through the use of the resource wheel to trigger discussion. All the wheels were laid out on the carpet and averages were counted for each session and between all of the respondents. This together with re-reading the transcript provided more direction in which way to proceed. What already worked and what needed to be developed became apparent.

The purpose of using alternative casing meant forming various hypotheses. Searching for explanations began. Abduction is a way of searching for an “intermediate component” between data and theory and through this explanations can be shown to be correct or viable. It is common that solving surprises produce new surprises, and many findings were still left unanswered. (Paavola 2014, /).

Regarding the data gained from the focus groups, understanding reality first and moving on to what was desired and then to solutions seemed like a practical way to start managing the data. This way, the “story” started from the beginning and continued to the future. Challenges, opportunities, and solutions were elements found in all of the transcripts. In general, different types of goals and information were achieved after completing the content analysis. Gaining real-time information of non-standard hour care, dreams of what the care should be like and suggestions on what could be done were received.

Patterns were also examined through co-occurrences. Co-occurrences were another feature seen after the coding process and can be defined as the application of two codes to a discrete segment of text from a unique respondent (Guest & MacQueen 2008, 145). This hopefully brought fairness into the results shared, even though, much data was left out. Repeatedly found key words also provided the way towards finding the central themes.

Coding similarities and differences regarding resource use was done with the help of post-its and with the help of using the categories found. The meaning of systematic combining and

searching for connections that fit together are essential in abduction. (Paavola 2014, 7-8). The linking of data represented possible explanations such as:

- Some children are afraid of one another, physical and emotional threats found. Some children need more support in dealing with anger and frustration.
- There is a risk of not providing equal/needed attention to all of the children in some groups. Children have diverse and individual needs.
- Children with special needs are not in the same position support wise as children in regular day-care (some units/all units?)
- Children react to change differently and some express separation anxiety
- Different amount of risk assessment is done among units
- There are various group and unit structures
- Many mutual guidelines and practices are missing
- Clear vision of the future is not found among all units
- Some workers are tired and stressed
- Time and skills are managed differently among units/groups
- Some learning environments benefit the child more / some less
- Friends, family, play and free time are crucial for a child
- Play entry may be more complex for a child in non-standard hour care

Below are two small examples of the data managing process. The first sample is about sorting out and coding challenges concerning time use based on the hypothesis that time is managed differently by units. The second is about identifying one of the possible threats. None of the explanations were based solely on two quotes.

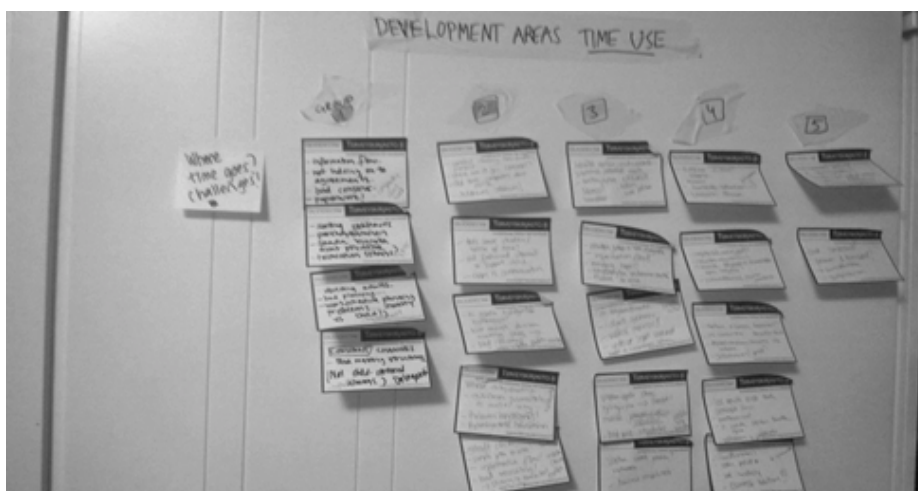


Illustration 1: Photo of the data management process

QUOTES / EVIDENCE

“Mua välillä ujostuttaa ni mä en välillä halua puhuu kenellekään.”

“I sometimes feel shy so I sometimes do not want to talk to anybody.” - C-

(CODE : FEELINGS/SHYNESS) 🚩

“Ne on tavallaan paremmassa tilanteessa jotka on meille vaikeita, mut nää jotka ve-täytyy jota me ei niin helposti huomata, vaikka huoma-taankin , mutta niinku riski on isompi, melkeen itku tulee kun ajattelee tätä.”

“Those (children) are sort of in a better situation who are difficult, but these who withdraw, who we do not notice so easily, even when we do, but the risk is like bigger, I almost cry when I think about this.” - FGI-

(CODE: INDIVIDUAL NEEDS) ⭐

THEME : THREATS ⚠️

Do children receive an equal/ enough amount of attention in all groups?

Do shy children go more easily unnoticed?

POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS ❓

Children's needs/ type of support vary.

It can difficult to provide equal amount of attention to children (in some groups)due to some requiring it more.

Figure 3: Example of data analysis

5 Findings

When the thesis topic includes the theme listening to children and what they have to say the use of quotes was considered to be relevant. However, the findings also revealed that many employees in the field experienced that they have not been heard, and wishes related to better childcare have gone unnoticed. The purpose of the quotes is to provide connection, transparency, feeling and contrast. Some comments were specifically requested to be mentioned, and this was respected. However to safeguard the anonymity of the participants, the quotes are marked with either C, which means that the quote is provided by a child or with FGI which tells that the quote is given by a focus group interviewee.

It felt necessary to mention the great attitude and atmosphere among the focus group participants and the sense of humour as a finding that was based on the amount of laughter shared while discussing serious matters. The findings from the focus groups were partly looked at from a time point of view due to time receiving the “lowest” overall rate regarding resources.

The findings showed that the children appreciated friendship and during the sessions demonstrated good friendship and communication skills with one another. They expressed their emotions rather well both verbally and through expressions. Friends were comforted, supported and listened to. Turns to speak were given even without the help of the researcher. Therefore, one of the main findings was that the young participants were able to respect their friendships and value them on their own and were brave and able to talk about their feelings.

In some situations children agreed with their friends and continued with the same topic. However, it was also a positive finding that most of the time children were able also to feel differently about a same matter and express this. This was easy for the children to accept and an aspect the researcher supported throughout the process: it is ok to feel differently. Therefore, some of the findings are from a more personal level and some from a group level. Needs and feelings varied among the participants that also tell about how individual needs children have.

5.1 The importance of family and free time

Most of the children talked more about their mother than their father. When discussing people, the role of the mother was most apparent and the word count showed that the word mom in its many forms was used seventy three times. Every child had something to tell about experiences of or with mom. Typically when a sad photo was discussed, many children brought up the thought that the child in the photo must be missing its mom.

“Mä en halua lähtee päiväkotiin mä haluan kotia. Jos äiti ois tullu tai iskä aikaisin, kelpaa kumpi vaan, tulee hakee, sit mä rauhotun ku mä muistin et mä voin leikkii prinsessa leikkii jonkun tytön kaa.”

“I do not want to go to day-care I want to go home. If mom or dad would have come early, either one is fine, comes and gets, then I calm down when I remembered that I can play princesses with some girl.” -C-

Missing parents was linked more to the hours of going to bed in day-care. Three participants shared experiences of bad dreams that they had seen. A few felt that it was frightening to come to day-care for the night. In contrast, one participant seemed to be excited about having the opportunity to stay for the night. Two participants talked about their sleeping toys and that the photos of parents were important.

”Koko yöks, äiti sano saa jäädä yöks!”

“For the whole night, mom said I can stay the night!” -C-

”Oon yrittäny sanoo äidille joka päivä et haluisin kuvan et voin levätä sen kaa niinku pienempänä.”

“I have tried to tell mom every day that I would want a picture so I can rest with it like when I was younger.” -C-

Mom was described as someone who sets limits, makes things possible, goes to work, comes to pick up from day-care and as someone the children spent their free time with. The main “negative” aspect was typically not receiving candy or toys when wanted or when mom gives “commands”. Everyone shared positive experiences and feelings towards mom. Another role experienced by three of the children was that mom is someone who makes promises. Many sentences started with the words: Mom promised (äiti lupas). Two children also discussed how good mom is at listening to them.

”Se voi tulla surulliseks jos äiti komentaa ja se menee jäähyllle.”

“It can become sad if mom gives orders and he goes to cool off.” -C-

”Mun äiti rakastaa mua, mul ei oo mitään leikkikaverii, äiti tulee mua hakemaan.”

“My mom loves me, I do not have anyone to play with, mom comes to get me.” -C-

”Äiti lupas et me mennään X:lle kylään.”

“Mom promised that we will go visit X.” -C-

Dad was mentioned five times throughout the sessions and by two different children. The role was related to picking up from day-care and spending free time with dad. On one occasion dad was also described as someone who makes promises. Other siblings were mentioned only on a few occasions and by two participants. Doing a word count regarding the important people in a child’s life in itself does not mean necessarily anything and these results are not generalizable. However, concerning this group it felt like this information could not be left out either. This would support the result that also employees in non-standard hour care experienced that they work together with many single parent families.

Many children were conscious of the fact that their parents go to work and saw that as the reason for attending day-care. The need for parents was expressed through missing them and sharing everyday experiences done at home and on free time. Visiting grandparents or them picking up children was experienced as fun. Grandma was mentioned eleven times and grandpa four times. Two participants talked about phone calls they make to grandparents as well. Grandma was also described as good listener on two occasions. Godparents were mentioned twice.

“Iskä on luvannu et me mennään Lintsille ja sit me on mennykin!”

“Dad has promised that we go to Lintsi and then we have gone!” -C-

“Äiti lupas mut sit se unohti samal ettei voi mennä hoploppiin, mut sil oli tärkeä työ.”

“Mom promised but then she forgot at the same time we cannot go to hoplop, but she had an important job.” -C-

“Minun täplikäs koira mummolassa jos sitä ei ulkoiluta sitten minä soitan mummille et pitää ulkoiluttaa”.

“My spotted dog at grandmas, if it is not taken outside then I call grandma that needs to be taken outside.” -C-

“Äiti sanoo, et vaari tulee hakemaan ni mä oon jee!”

“Mom says, that grandpa will pick up so I am jee!” -C-

Free time was described as fun. Visiting other children was mentioned often. Other important places mentioned by the children were Linnanmäki, Hoplop, the forest, the farm and the movie theatre. The Christmas holidays were arriving that was an important topic to the children, as well as Santa. Two of the children also discussed about their travels abroad and meeting family members outside Finland.

“Mennä maailmanpyörään äidin kanssa oli turvallista.”

“To go on the ferris wheel with mom was safe.” -C-

“Mua tekee onnelliseksi kun mä pääsen äidin kaa aina lintsille tai hoploppiin.”

“Makes me happy when I get to go Lintsi or hoplop with mom.” -C-

“Ärsyttää, jos ei pääse maatilalle ja äiti on luvannu, mut sit se ookkaan päässy.”

“Annoying, if one cannot go to the farm and mom has promised, but then she has not made it.” -C-

Many of the children were aware of how many days they have child care left before having a day or days off and were looking forward them. Much of the free time was spent with mom and children already expressed activities they had planned. Some children told that they do not sometimes want to go to day-care or stay there for too long. Some also mentioned the times they wake up and whether they felt tired.

“Mä oon menos tän viikon jälkeen matkalle kaks päivää.”

“After this week I am going on a trip for two days.” -C-

“Sillon kun äiti komentaa nyt lähdet päiväkotiin niin alkaa itkettää. Äiti aina lohduttaa.”

“When mom says now you leave for day-care I start to cry. Mom always comforts me.” -C-

“Mä toivoisin, että mulla ja äidillä on vapaapäivä.”

“I wish that I and mom have a free day.” -C-

“Ehkä sitä harmittaa kun äiti ja isi ei oo, ne äiti ja isä ja muut lapset lähti lomalle.”

“Maybe it is upset when mom and dad are not, them mom and dad and other kids went on holiday.” -C-

5.2 The necessity of friends and play

Every child brought up the need for play. All expressed having important friends in day-care but the days when friends were not present were also mentioned. Friends were seen as peer support and a friend was someone one can learn from, someone who listens and supports. The role and need for a friend in day-care could be analysed as much bigger compared to the adults in day-care if one would only look at the amount of how many times friends were discussed compared to the adults.

“Silmät voi nähdä mitä muut tekee niin sit itekin oppii tekee tavallisii asioita.”

“Eyes can see what others do so then you learn to do ordinary things.” -C-

“Mua iloittaa kun X on täällä ja mä saan leikki sen kaa täällä illallakin. Kun x ei oookkaan illalla, niinku nytkään en oo leikkiny pitkään X:n kanssa prinsessaleikkiä.”

“I am happy cause X is here and I get to play with her in the evening too. When X is not in the evening, like now we have not played princesses with X for a long time.” -C-

“Mua ujostuttaa ni sit mä kyl puhun jollekin kaverille. Jos mä oon kiukkunen ni sitten ystävä x lohduttaa mua.”

“I feel shy so then I speak to some friend. If I am angry then friend x consoles me.” -C-

The importance of friends was also noticed when discussing families. As an example a friend was able to comfort by providing examples on what they do when they miss someone or feel scared. Providing support was seen as a form of relatedness. Some members also thought about when they started day-care and how they felt shy when they did not yet know their friends but also expressed the changes in their feelings. Starting or changing a day-care group was seen as a concern of making new friends. As for a separate but important finding, one

child only wanted to participate in the sessions if one of his particular friends was present too. Peer support was important for trying out something new. In general the sessions did differ based on what group was present.

“Haluisitko tämän jälkeen tutustua kun minulla on marsu ja heppa?”

“Would you like to get to know after this cause I have a quinea pig and a horse?” -C-

“Sitä varmaan ujostutti kun mä näin sen ekan kerran kun muakin ujostutti.”

“He probably felt shy the first time I saw him cause I felt shy too.”

“Saanks mäkin leikkii, jos sä oot vielä siihen aikaan?”

“Can I also play, if you are still at that time?” -C-

“Sä voit kyllä aina pyytää mua jos mä oon täällä.”

“You can always ask me if I am here.” -C-

Child 1: “Mua pelottaa sillo kun äiti menee töihin.”

“I am scared when mom goes to work.”

Child 2: “Paitsi mua ei pelota ku mul on se äitin kuva.”

“Except I am not scared cause I have the picture of mom.”

Child 1 “Jos mun äiti on myöhään työssä ja mä jään tänne yöks ni mulla on ikävä äitiä.”

“If my mom works late and I stay here for the night I miss mom.”

Child 2: “Ei se nyt haittaa, puhelimen takia.”

“It does not matter, because of the phone.”

The children also discussed a lot about what they could play later on and suggested each other ideas. The children also had many requests concerning the use of different spaces in the day-care: what they would want to play or do more. Some play areas were more pleasing to the children than others. As an example the “nukkari” resting area room was mentioned most often and linked to role-play. A pirate ship was mentioned second often. Nuotta, an exercise area nearby was mentioned on a few occasions and seen as fun. It felt like a disappointment if one did not get to go there often. Not being allowed to climb and play on the trees was seen as annoying by two participants. Areas for making crafts were regarded important as well. Swinging was also mentioned on few occasions. Two children felt that the nap time is boring and they would have preferred to play, draw or do something else.

“Mua ärsyttää etten saa kiipee puuhuun, aika paljon, näin paljon (näyttää käsillä)... mä osaan kiipee siihen puuhun, oksat ei katkea!”

“I am annoyed that I am not allowed to climb the tree, pretty much, this much (shows with hands).. I can climb that tree, the branches do not break!”

“Mut tekee todella todella iloseks, must tulee tosi iloseks koko päiväkotii, leikiminen, tekeminen ja kaikki.”

“Makes me really really happy, me becomes very happy the whole daycare, playing, doing and everything.” -C-

About half of the sessions children played with the wild puppy and snail puppet. The children enjoyed looking after them and expressed many feelings that the puppets had. This tells about the importance of play.

As an example, children playing together:

Child 1: “Tää etana on kasvanut meiän tutkimusten ajan. se on vaan kurkottanu päätään ja pitäny omia juhlia. Se vaan kasvaa. Kaikki etanat vähän kasvaa.”

Child 2- “Tää koiranpentu pelkää.”

Child 1 “Musta tuntu kivalta hoittaa tätä etanaa.”

Child 3: “Kiltti pentu... tää etana luulee et tää on salaattia.”

Child 2. “Se etana luulee et se on ruokaa, makrooni...”

Child 4: “Saanko nytkin kertoo... rakastaa mua.”

Child 2. “Etana ei enää pelkää. Sitä pelotti ku täällä on niin paljon ihmisiä. Tää hauva rakastaa mua.”

Child 1: “This snail has grown during our research. It has just reached out his head and had his own parties. It just grows. All snails grow a little.”

Child 2: “This puppy is afraid.”

Child 1: “It feels nice to take care of the snail.”

Child 3: “Nice puppy... this snail thinks this is salad.”

Child 2: “The snail thinks it is food, macaroni...”

Child 4: “Can I tell also now.... loves me.”

Child 2: “The snail is not afraid anymore. It was scared because there are so many people here. This puppy loves me.”

When the snail was feeling sad:

“Etana sitä on varmaan sanottu, sinä olet limainen en voi leikkiä kanssasi.. se ei osaa kiipeillä laivaan... sit se yrittää kiipeillä sinne mut jos kaveri sanoo et mä en enää leiki sun kaa limainen etana, sit se menee ettii uusii ja uusii ja kaveriteita.”

“Snail it has probably been called, you are slimy and I cannot play with you.. it does not know how to climb on the ship...it tries to climb there but if a friends say that I will not play with you anymore slimy snail, then it goes to look for new and new friends.” -C-

Feelings related to being left outside a playgroup were expressed by three participants. Whether one had friends present to play with was another concern. Naturally, it was also a concern whether a friend leaves. Situations, where one comes to day-care and has to join friends who are already playing, were mentioned. Based on the children’s questions of who is present and for how long, the continuity and guarantee for having a friend present each day were not apparent to them.

“Jos mä jään pihalle yksin ilman kaikki kaveri, yksi kaveri voi tulla?”

“If I stay alone in the yard without all friends, one friend can come?” -C-

“Mua itkettää jos joku mun kaveri ei anna tehdä samaa kun muut kaverit ni jään yksin.”

“I cry if one of my friends does not allow me to do the same thing as other friends so I am left alone.” -C-

“Mä oon ainakin joskus surullinen jos kukaan ei leiki mun kaa.”

“I am at least sometimes sad if nobody plays with me.” -C-

5.3 The uniqueness of non-standard hour childcare

Throughout the interviews non-standard hour care was compared to day-care. Features of non-standard hour care and skills specifically needed for the job were repeated. The job description was seen more challenging. Non-standard hour care was described as an interaction jungle (vuorovaikutusviidakko). Some believed that collaboration and communication with families and workmates was slower due to the structure of care. Time management in itself was seen as a part of the job description as well as counting utilization rates. Teamwork was described as different, but there were several kinds of teams and unit structures based on the interviews. It was experienced that people knew more about what is going on what will be done next in day-care. Getting back into action considered was more puzzling after being many days off from work. The level of co-operation that is needed in non-standard hour care was remarked as crucial.

“Yhteistyö on hitaampia, vuorohoidon juna kulkee palon hitaammin ja vähemmän pystytään ehkä tekemään kun tavallisessa päiväkodissa vaikka tahtoa olisi.”

“Co-operation is slower, the non-standard hour train moves slower than in a day house and we maybe can do less even though there would be will.” -FGI-

“Me määritellään jo yleensäkin et kuin paljon lapsia on ja niitä lasketaan joka ikinen viikko ja sitten mietitään et kuka on missäkin ja tilanteet muuttuu ja taas mietitään et mites nää aikuiset menee...se niinku aikaa joudutaan sumplii.”

“We define how many children there are and count them every single week and then think about who is where and the situations change and we think again that how do these adults go...time has to be adjusted.” -FGI-

Many implied that the difference between day-care and non-standard hour care is not clear to all and that the specialties should be respected and recognized. It was a concern whether the “higher level” truly understands the nature of the work. Many also thought that because non-standard care is a small part of the whole day-care system, things are adapted, developed and done through looking only at day-care. Some experienced that non-standard hour care still raises a lot of questions and wondering when one, for example, one attends education. Education was seen more targeted to regular day-care, but mutually important topics were found.

“Se häiritsee mun työtä kun ne vaatimukset tulee ja tulee semmonen olo et kukaan ei ymmärrä, joku ymmärtää, mut ei ne isot jotka asioista päättää ne ei nää tätä vuorohoitoo, just ku me ollaan niin pieni prosentti siitä koko hommas-ta ni pitää mennä sen massan mukana.”

“It disturbs my work when the demands come and come and I feel like nobody understands, well somebody does, but not those big people who make decisions...They do not see this non- standard hour care, just because we are such a small percentage of the whole thing we have to follow the crowd.” -FGI-

“Me ollaan ihan rintarinnan tavallisen päivähoiton kanssa, tätä erityisyyttä ei haluta nähdä.”

“We are side to side with regular day- care, the uniqueness does not want to be seen.” -FGI-

The customer group and single parent families were brought up frequently, and many experienced that families in non-standard hour care became “closer”. The partnership with families and providing support was regarded as important. It was interpreted how a break up between parents could have an impact on a child needing non-standard hour care. Some interviewees had experienced being caught in the middle of parent’s arguments. Keeping the child’s best interest in mind was determined most relevant. It was also assessed to what extent can employees “dig in” to the family situations if a concern arises. Trying to sort out what the work-

ing hours or what the family structure and support network was seen as complicated at times. As an example, assumptions like only the other parent would have been present might have turned to be false. It was also acknowledged that non-standard working hours can have its own challenges and impacts on all: parents, children and workers. When planning parents meetings or evening it was considered important to think about the most appropriate time for parents and families.

“Vuorohoidossa on mun näkemyksen mukaa enemmän yksinhuoltajavanhempia ja on enemmän niitä yksinäisiä vanhempia... koska heillä on se vuorotyö...ni se myös tuottaa sitä vanhemman yksinäisyyttä kun kuljetaan eri rytmissä kun yhteiskunta yleensä... ni ne vanhemmat myös tarvitsee enemmän sitä kasvatus kumppanuutta ja sitä aikuista tukea täältä päiväkodista kun sellainen jolla on se parisuhde ja toinen vanhempi siel kotona.”

“In my opinion there are more single parents and more lonely parents in non-standard hour care... because they have the shiftwork... it produces loneliness for the parent when you walk in a different rhythm than the society in general...those parents also need more partnership and adult support from day-care than one who has a relationships and another parent at home.” -FGI-

“Se epämääräinen alue siinä välissä kun herää huoli lapsesta ja lähtee selvittämään sitä perhekuviota ni ne on vähän monimutkaisempia kuin mitä päiväaloissa saattaa olla.”

“It is a “grey area” in between when a concern awakes regarding a child and you start figuring out the family structure, they are a little more complex than what they may be in a day house.” -FGI-

The long “stay in times” of the children was discussed and how it may cause strain to a child. For this reason, it was seen decisive that the resources would match the type of care. It was brought to attention that some children spent more time in care than, for example, an employee did working within a week. Constant changes for the children were seen as a risk factor, more for the younger ones. Some interviewees noted that for some children understanding the order of the day was challenging and that routines got easily mixed up. As an example, children might ask after dinner whether they go out now when they typically would go to sleep at that hour. It was considered typical for children to ask after their parents and friends both. Children also asked these questions throughout the child observations.

“On pitkiä putkia lapsilla...paria päivää putkeen... ja jos aatellaan oppimisympäristönä niin se lasten määrä kun tässä systeemissä et ollaan yhdessä se kuormittaa varsinkin tätä vuorohoitolasta että se joutuu olee niin isossa ryhmässä... niinku liikaa aikuiskontakteja on ihan liikaa sen lapsen kestokyvyille ja varsinkin jos lapsella on erityistarpeita...”

“Children have long stay in times...a few days in a row...and if you think about it as a learning environment the amount of children when we are in this system together, it burdens especially this non-standard hour care child that he has to be in such a big group...like too many adult contacts for the child’s tolerance and especially if a child has special needs...” -FGI-

“Saat pitää sitä koko päivää niinku pulkassa et ne menettää ajantajun, sit kyselee hirveesti kuka tulee yöks kuka tulee siihen tuleeks se lapsi tänään missä se lapsi on nytten.”

“You have to sort of keep the whole day in a package, they lose sense of time, then ask a lot about who comes for the night and who comes then and whether that child comes today or where is that child now.” -FGI-

5.4 Skills as assets

Most interviewees expressed that since the nature of the work requires more specific skills, most workers within non-standard hour care were highly or well skilled. This was counted as a significant resource. It was explained that often particular types of people want to work in the field and more importantly also stay in the line of work. Working entirely alone with the children was seen as a job for a responsible person who can make independent decisions and trust their pedagogical skills. It was clearly made known that child nurses do many other things than what they would do in a day house.

The role of the teacher was seen demanding at times. The level of how challenging varied, but skills related to team management kept appearing. It was typically the teacher who was most present in the same group from Monday to Friday. Delegating tasks and managing changes was seen as a continuous part of the job. It was seen important in lesson planning to acknowledge who one is working with and also benefit from their skills. However, coordinating tasks and leading the group was not seen as an easy task, but it was approached differently by the interviewees. Some felt there were more challenges in group dynamics. There were also different sizes of workgroups which had an impact on the amount of challenges: to how many people does one communicate and delegate to?

“Edellisen viikon olin toisen hoitajan kaa ja nyt mä oon toisen ja mites nyt...on erilaisii yksilöitä ite mä oon pyrkiny siihen et otan ne parhaat ihmisestä ja heidän taidoista ja sen mukaan me... ja oon taas nauttinut siitä et on vähän erilaista... monet sanoo ettei kykenis olee tollases ryhmäs siks et se on liian rankka ryhmä et koko aika vaihtuu ihmiset ja pitää luovii... se on sitä erityiso-
saamista.”

“The previous week I worked with another nurse and now I am with another and what now...there are different individuals and I have aimed at taking the best out of that person and their skills and according to that we...I have enjoyed that it is a little bit different. Many have said that they would not be capable of being in a group like that where people change all the time and you have to create...that is that special talent.” -FGI-

It was an interesting aspect that some argued that it might not necessary be a positive thing if a group possesses too many skills. Some felt that being nice and responsible is both a strength and weakness at the same time. It was acknowledged that it might result in being

too effective and doing work that is not necessary needed in one's job description and this was time away from the child. Some discussed matters they could leave for the management. Others continued the discussion towards what they actually would not need to take responsibility for and in some sense work prioritizing was done also on spot for some.

“Me ollaan liian tehokkaiks tehty, eli taloudellisesti tehokkaiksi, ei tehokkaiks lasta ajatellen, eikä edes meiänkään kannalta.”

“We have made ourselves too efficient economically, not efficient when thinking about the child or even from our point of view.” -FGI-

All interviewees talked about the importance of work motivation and all experienced that their units consisted mostly of motivated, educated and qualified staff. All groups experienced that they have skilled staff working together within their units but the topic of having more specific skills for special needs was seen as a development area. However, it was expressed by many that there are many skills employees have that are left unused or utilized. It was discussed that mainly people are very motivated in doing their job but then experience disappointment when things do not go as planned or one cannot use their skills “kicks in”. The feeling of being valued overall was linked to how much the job description and skills were respected. Some felt their skills were valued more than others. Some considered that because it was a cheaper option to get child nurses into the work field the quality of teaching was not seen as that important in non-standard hour care. For some, this also caused the feeling that kindergarten teachers and their skills were not respected enough.

“Olin just kehityskeskustelus... kaikki ne mun kehitysehdotukset oli huomioitu jollain tavalla.”

“I just had a development discussion...all of my development ideas were acknowledged in some way.” -FGI-

“Erityistaitoja voisi tuoda vielä enemmän esiin. Mulla on sellainen olo, että meillä on monilla sellaisia taitoja mitä ne ei ehkä käytä. Jotkut olisivat tosi taitavia järjestämään tapahtumia tai lapsille lauluhetkiä ja sitten ehkä jostain syystä niitä ei järjestetä. Joskus oon huomannut että vau kylläpäs tää ihminen järjesti tosi hienosti tän et miksei hän tee useammin näitä.”

“Special skills could be brought to attention more. I feel that many of us have skills that are not used. Some would be very talented in arranging happening or sing-alongs for the children and then for some reason they are not arranged. Sometimes I have noticed that vau this person arranged this really well that why does she not do this more often.” -FGI-

Skills and characteristics required for an employee of non-standard hour care are listed in the following picture and are based on what was brought up during the focus group interviews.

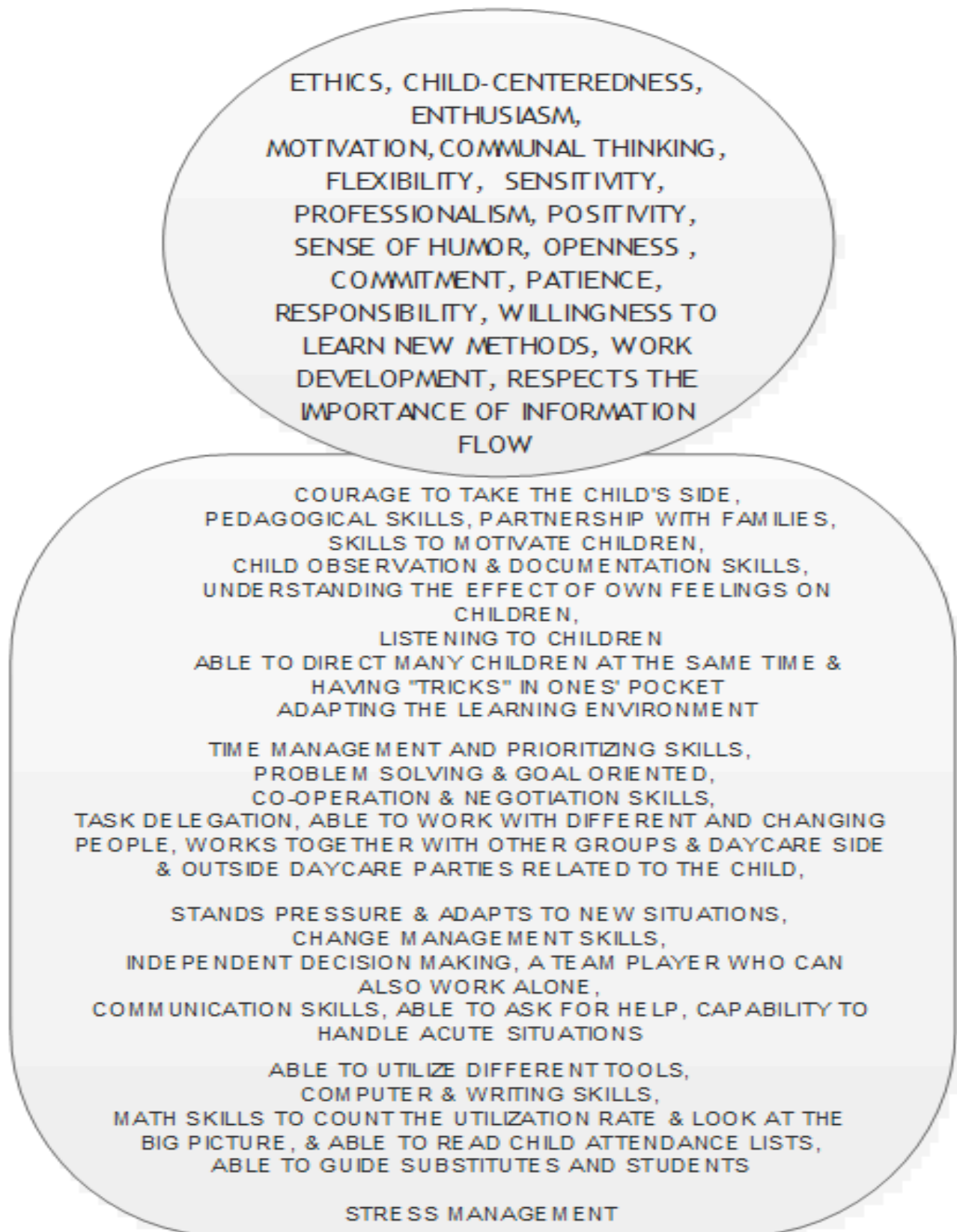


Figure 4: List of skills needed for non-standard hour childcare

“Me uskotaan siihen et lapsen hetki on nyt ja lapsen osallisuus...lapsi ajattelee että minä haluan tehdä vaikka jonku pyörivän häkkyrän ja sä et löydä täältä matskua.. ja sit jos sä haluat ja koko ryhmä innostuu siitä ideasta niin kyllä mä menen ja ostan tai menen kirpparille ja katon mitä se voisi olla, koska siitä mä saan sen ilon.. että mä toteutan sitä työtä mihin olen opiskellut ja kutsu- muksen saanut.”

“We believe that the child’s moment and participation is now.. a child thinks that I want to do a “rotating thingy “but you cannot find the material.. and then if you want and the whole group gets excited about the idea then I go and buy or go to the flea market to see what it could be because that is where I get the joy ...and implement the work that I have studied and have received a calling for.” -FGI

5.5 Child- centredness and time management

The results showed that everyone wished for more time with the children but the level of concern whether children received enough attention varied. Time spent with the children was experienced differently also within the same unit as well as between different units that was interesting. All wished for more time to observe as well and some compared their experiences now to previous ones. As an example, some felt that giving individual attention to a child throughout the day was regarded as minimal and in contrast others felt they had had enough time. Giving more personal attention was seen as a concern compared to giving attention on a group level.

Since time or actually the lack of it was a major feature in the thesis it made sense to list all “time thieves” that were identified. They did not appear during all interviews but units can evaluate themselves whether the following “thieves” exist among their units. When there is waste of time it may indicate that poor time management exists.

“Siinä ku ohjelmat ei toimi ni siinähen mennään metsään ja ajankäyttö kosahtaa siihen jos niitä ei pystytty hyödyntää.”

“When programs do not work we go to the wrong direction, time goes to waste if they cannot be utilized.” -FGI-

“Haaveena olisi et sä pystyt suunnittelemaan ja pystyisit toteuttamaan siinä sen toisen parisi kanssa asioita. Ni nyt on niinku...ei viitti. Se on niinku niin pettymys aina...se on niinku niin oikeasti turhauttava ja ammatillisesti tosi ikävä asia myöskin, sä et pääse toteuttamaan.”

“It would be a dream to be able to plan and to carry out things there with your partner. Now it is like...you do not bother. It is like disappointment always like... it is really frustrating and professionally also a very unfortunate matter as well... you do not get to implement.” -FGI-

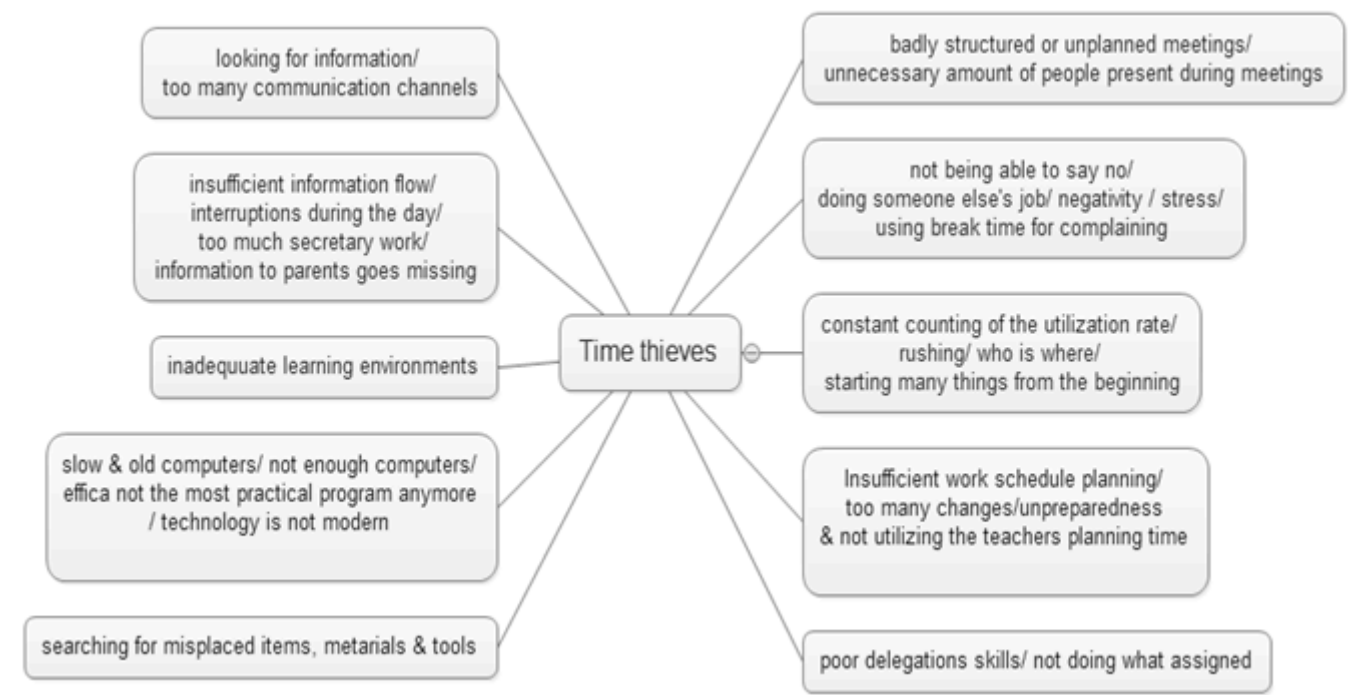


Figure 5: Identified timethieves

During holiday seasons and visits to other units some interviewees had noticed that many things are done differently. Some workers had also relocated or changed their job within the city units. It was brought up that even within non-standard hour care workers felt that they had to start almost everything from the beginning when changing units. According to some the absence of basic guidelines was seen as an extra cause of confusion. However, own agreements within a unit were considered convenient if they were good agreements. Adapting guidelines was seen as a positive option if it worked for the child's best interest.

“Helsinki ei ole...se mikä täs harmittaa on et kaupungissa on erilaisia käytäntöjä, tää pitäs saada kuriin et on yks ja ainoo systeemi ja siinä me ollaan ja kun ei olla ni tää aiheuttaa kyllä aikamoisia yksissä ja toisissa asioissa...voi hyvänen aika miten näin voi olla ...miten tää jatkuva palapelin tekeminen?”

“Helsinki is not...what is disappointing is that there are different practices in the city, this should be put into order that there is on single system and we are in it and when we are not it causes many things with a thing and another...how can it be like this constantly making this puzzle?” -FGI-

“Peruslinjaukset jos ne puuttuu se näkyy... silloin se on liian epämääräistä, epämääräisyys aiheuttaa tunnetta siitä ettei ole aikaa tehdä, se ei ole se pelkkä fyysinen kello mikä siellä menee.”

“Basic guidelines if they are missing it shows...then it is too vague, uncertainty causes the feeling that there is not enough time to do, it is not just the physical clock ticking.” -FGI-

Some of the interviewees expressed being aware of what adult-child ratios were like in other units or groups which caused dissatisfaction or the feeling of unfairness. The utilization rate was a hot topic and was not seen as a direct quality indicator for child care. How much attention or time a child required from an adult could not be estimated by solely looking at the utilization rate. Some felt that others had more staff present when needed compared to their group. Many felt that the constant counting of utilization rates and checking up with workmates if changes are ok in schedules also took up much of time. It was even considered on a few occasions whether the rates were always legal. Some figured that the rate is the same as in day-care, some counted based on five children per adult due to different ages and some used seven children per adult during the day and five during evenings and weekends. Some said they had rather tight rules that the amount would be seven. In short: the utilization rate was looked at from different perspectives.

“Ne ei muuttanu niitä lasten hoitoaikoja, sit se tulekin hakee sen lounaan jälkeen ni edelleen listalla on 9-18. Kun mä kysyin tästä, sanottiin et tää vaikuttaa meiän käyttöasteeseen.”

“They did not change the children’s care times, then she comes and picks after lunch and they still have 9-18 on the list. When I asked about this they said it affects our utilization rate.” -FGI-

“Muita yksiköitä ikäänkun verrataan siihen mis on parhaat käyttöasteet mikä ei todellakaan tarkoita se ei tarkoita et hoito on siel laadukkainta, tai et sen lapsen elämä on helppointa.”

“Other units are like compared to where the best utilization rate is that certainly does not mean that the quality of care would be the best there or that the child’s life would be easiest.” -FGI-

“Siel menee niin hyvin ku tietää et niil on oikeesti henkilökunta aina siel mis pitää ja muuta et ... sehän potkii sitä systeemiä, asettaa eriarvoiseen asemaan...väärillä perusteilla... eikä tää oo kilpailu mut onhan se vaan kilpailu, mut siel on taitavat johtajat.”

“They have it so well when you know they really have staff always there where they should and so...it kicks the system, it puts you in an unequal position...based on wrong grounds...and this is not a contest but actually it is a contest, but they have skilful managers.” -FGI-

The length or amount of team meetings varied between the units as well as how many team members were able to attend. Some units had both monthly meetings and weekly team meetings. One group was in the process of changing their team meetings from weekly to less but for a longer meeting. All team meetings were seen crucial because of the long times employees might not see one another. Some experienced that meetings would be reduced in the future because substitutes for the meeting time cost.

Some wished for more time to speak about the children and many mentioned that is exactly what team meetings consisted of. However, there was not always enough to plan mutual ac-

tivities which would have been welcomed. It was expressed that is different to discuss in person than through paper and there was not enough time for this. Even though the information notebook Rapsa and child attendance list were seen as practical tools, it was also considered that they cover more main and bigger issues, not necessary small ordinary things or information about the child's day in more detail. Some did not understand why so many members would have to be present in "unit meetings" the matters did not involve the whole unit. If the information discussed in the meetings was not seen as relevant it was seen as time again away from the children. In contrast, some felt that their meeting times were used effectively.

"Rapsavihko ei missään nimessä ikinä voi välittää sitä kaikkea tietoa mikä välittyy sit suullisesti."

"The information notebook can never transfer all the knowledge that is transferred verbally." -FGI-

"Kun meillä on kallisarvoista palaveri aikaa se menee kokonaan siihen et katoaan ens viikko, ketä on töissä... tiedän taloja missä tämä palaveri on erikseen ja varsinainen talon palaveri missä käsiteltäs vähän niinku sisältöjäkin on erikseen."

"When we have precious meeting time it all goes to checking out how next week goes...who works... I know houses where this meeting is held separately and the actual house meeting that would cover like contents is separately." -FGI-

The interviewees felt differently towards changing from group to group and there were differences between the units in how much the staff experienced they had to move around. Some moved between three groups even during the same day. Some felt they knew rather well all of the children and some felt they did not. Others felt they did not the children but did not know the action or "rules" of the group they changed to. Then again, some expressed that they had the same team present most of the time and had very clear ways of action. It was seen as unfortunate if the adults changed a lot from a child perspective. Often the child was not with their "assigned" adults. Some interviewees felt it was more tiring to change the group many times within a week instead of staying in one's "own group". Rushing from place to place occurred more among some of the interviewed and hurry was experienced differently.

Sick leaves or absences resulted in not having enough staff or constantly briefing substitutes which was seen as very time consuming by some. However there were differences between the groups in how much they felt they received substitutes. Some felt they received them or help in general exceptionally well whereas others were very concerned about their child-adult ratios.

These changes were also considered to have an impact on how much children feel they need to test adults and their limits. Why there was more moving around in other units compared to others remained unclear but maybe was linked to work shift planning. Some mentioned that the amount of wishes employees have concerning their work shifts had an impact on the amount of jumping around. It was discussed that even in the planning phase it was not possible to stay in the same group even if nobody was away or sick. It was brought up how important it would be to plan the work shifts so that there would always be someone from the group present.

At least one unit had staff that were not necessarily assigned to a certain group but moved around from group to group. In another house this had not been tried. Equality was brought up as a basis for work schedule planning but was approached differently. In some units the basis was that everyone does an equal amount of the same shifts whereas in some units wishes were also heard. It was also discussed with a few whether the planning of shifts was either child or adult centred. Finding the balance of having shifts that work for both child and adult wellbeing was more difficult in some units than others.

“Lapselle se ois parempi et ois se muutama jotka olis siel aina ja sit oliskin ehkä niitä ihmisiä jotka ei olisi tavallaan sidottu mihinkään tiimiin ja vaan et ne oliskin niitä kiertäviä, mut siihen ei oo täällä koskaan, sitä ei oo edes kokeiltu.”

“It would be better for the child that there would be a few who are there always and then maybe would be those who would not necessarily be tied to a team and they would be those rotating ones, but we have never, it has not even been tried.” -FGI-

Skills were also taken into notice in shift planning in some units and from different perspectives. It was brought up that not everyone shares the same skills and that is a reality. It was seen that not all employees for example should or can work certain shifts if that shift included too many challenges for that person. Then again, it felt also unfair to some that then those challenges were left for others. Therefore the equality perspective in the work schedule planning seemed rather blurry. What was fair for another was not necessary fair to the other. Then again it was acknowledged in another unit that many different skills would be put in to use and was even taken into notice in the planning of schedules. It remained unclear to the researcher how work shifts were actually planned among the units, but the satisfaction concerning the work shifts and moving around among groups varied among interviewees and units. At its best team members experienced that their group functioned just fine.

“Hyvä työyhteisö antaa yksilölliselle taidoille tilaa, et mä en vedä sitä laulu hetkeä kun x osaa laulaa mut mä voin tehdä jotain muuta.”

“A good work community gives space for individual skills, I do not host the sing along when x can sing but I can do something else.” -FGI-

“Meillä on semmoinen onnellinen tilanne et ollaan sama tiimi kolmatta vuotta samois tiloissa...lapset vaihtuu joka vuosi mut ollaan niinku hitsauduttu yhteen.. meill on selkeet toimenkuvat.”

“We have a fortunate situation that we are the same team in the same space for the third year... children change each year but we have like molded in together and we have clear job descriptions.” -FGI-

It was regarded unfair by many that the planning time of teachers was not determined beforehand or was not used. Some felt they hardly had any time to plan activities which also contributed to the feeling of not being respected. In contrast, others got to decide for themselves when they would use the time. Some even considered this to be of good marketing value for their unit. In some cases the planning time was taken into consideration already when planning work shifts and in others it was not. The respondents who got to choose their time to plan and were not counted in the child group for that time had more positive experiences. Two respondents also remembered a time when teachers could do their planning outside the workplace. Planning was seen challenging due to not being able to leave the group, or feeling guilty of leaving a workmate alone, due to interruptions and having children around while trying to plan. Majority of the respondents did not plan anything during their free time and if there was no planning time during work hours then there was none and this was seen as unfortunate due to pedagogical responsibility. Why the planning time was not utilized in all units remained unclear.

“Se on ristiriidassa uusien laatuvaatimusten kanssa niinku ihan älyttömässä... sit ei kuitenkaan huolehdita siitä että on aikaa tehdä sitä työtä mitä on vaadittu.”

“It is in conflict with the new quality demands...like in a major one...then it is not taken care of that we would actually have time to do the job that is required.” -FGI-

It was brought up that if a group had two teachers it might be practical depending on the child situation that the other one does evening shifts as well. For a group with one teacher it was seen important that the teacher was present when most of the children were which was typically during daytime. However, the trend of having more children during evening times as well was discussed with one group. There were different practices between units whether teachers worked after six or not. Some thought it was a rule, many said exceptions are allowed. Some teachers did one evening shift during a scheduled list and some none. Some considered evenings to be a good time to make observations due to less “traffic”.

Some child nurses mentioned that they do not have the education for taking pedagogical responsibility which might be important to take into notice if the trend of having many children during evenings continues. It was considered that there are many interruptions in non-standard hour care like phone calls or parents asking questions during “hot spots” about care

hours. However, some groups mentioned interruptions more often which may indicate that other units experienced more interruptions than others.

5.6 Fair would be giving every child what they need

“Tää oli yks syy miks mä halusin tulla mukaan et haluun et sun työssä tulee esille... on tää erityislapsset vuorohoitoyksiköissä.”

“This was one reason why I wanted to join that I want it to be seen in your study...is the children with special needs in non-standard hour care.” -FGI-

It was perceived as a huge lack of resources that non-standard hour care units did not have existing integrated groups for children with special needs. Children with more individual and specific needs were seen as the main concern. It was an unfortunate topic to discuss whether parents would be truly willing to change their working conditions if their child could receive better care elsewhere. This was regarded as unfair towards the parents and children both and therefore was the most heated up topic concerning the interviews. It was a worry that parents may experience unnecessary guilt if not being able to change jobs. It was discussed that this especially does not support single parents. It was mentioned that especially children who had statements and recommendations for more specified care should receive exactly what is recommended no matter what the parents working life was like. This was the most striking result to emerge from the data and the matter was seen as very important to embrace.

“Mun mielestä se on aika hurja pistää vanhempi ton eteen että joko jäät tähän taloon ja yritämme parhaamme mukaan tukea ja auttaa ja vuorohoito muutenkin tuo...mitä enemmän tuen tarvetta on sen tärkeempää on strukturoitu päivärytmi. Mä huudan et pliiis ihan oikeesti jotkut päättäjät tuol näkis sen tarpeen... pitäis olla erityislapsille enemmän tukimahdollisuuksii et vanhemmat vois oikeesti tehdä sitä työtänsä.”

“I think it is quite fierce to force a parent to face that either you stay in this house and we do our best to support and help and the non-standard hour care in itself brings... the more need for support the more important a structured daily rhythm is. I scream that please, hey really, some decision makers would see this need... we should have more support measures for children with special need so that the parents could actually do their job.” -FGI-

Sadly, many elaborated that some children with special needs would receive better care elsewhere and if they got to decide, non-standard hour care would not be the place for all children. The interviewees wanted to support children with special or more particular needs more, but at the same time it was a worry whether too little time was spent with other children. Some felt that often children did not receive the equal amount of attention because of some children requiring it a lot more. A few participants also implied that aggressive children

and children with more visible needs are at least in the position to receive attention while there is the risk that more shy ones may go unnoticed.

All groups expressed that the amount of staff was seen as insufficient at times in order to meet all of the individual needs of all children. Some experienced also not being skilled or experienced enough to deal with certain matters or situations which resulted in feelings of frustration. Even though there was no current resource special needs teacher mentioned among any of the groups it was brought up how good material at some point a previous special needs teacher had shared and the material had been reused. Many felt that work amount which was not directly linked to the children had increased yet the working hours had stayed the same and this naturally accounted for less time with the children. There was nothing wrong with new responsibilities but also time was requested for them.

“Tuntuu et niitä tehtäviä ja vastuita tulee jatkuvasti paljon lisää, et välillä herää kysymys et mistä tää aika otetaan näiden kaikkien tehtävien tekemiseen et kun työaika on kuitenkin edelleen sama... ni mikä se on se lopputulos... se otetaan sieltä lapselta, eihän siinä oo muuta.”

“It feels like tasks and responsibilities continue to increase, so sometimes it raises the question that where do we take the time to do all these tasks when the working hours stay the same...and what is the end result...it is taken away from the child, there is nothing else.” -FGI-

“Ei ajatella paljon niitä lapsia on ja hankittas sen mukaan tukee, ne ei mee käsi kädessä. Kuka on päättäny kelle lapselle se menee?”

“There is not much thought on the children and acquiring support accordingly, they do not go hand in hand. Who has decided to which child it goes to?” -FGI-

It was also discussed that many children can have specific needs such as learning the Finnish language. Not being able to give individual attention or extra guidance for whatever the child's need resulted in feelings of a bad conscience among many interviewees. More time would have been required. It was apparent that daytime day-care was seen as more suitable for children with special needs, due to the resources and clearer routines available there. The need to for example constantly test adults was seen as action children in need of support often demonstrated. During crowded days the need for support or attention usually increased. Support measures for special needs in non-standard hour care were not seen as most practical and they were the same ones as used in day-care. Many mentioned that measure that only has a name to it but no meaning is not worthwhile. Support in real life would be needed because a paper in itself does not help a child.

“Määränpää se et lapsi saatas ehk päiväpuolen piirin niinku siis normi, puhun päivähoidosta ihan päiväpuolelle... ja ehkä niitä hakemaan niitä resursseja mitä sieltä vielä löytyy ehkä erityisryhmää ja niin pois päin... ”

“The goal is that we could maybe get the child into day-care...I am talking about the dayside...and maybe apply for those resources that can still be found there maybe a special needs group and so on...” -FGI-

“Se ei toimi... eihän se niinku... teen erityisen tuen joka ei käytännössä...jos oon kahestaan siel kollegan kaa ja mul on siel kaks kyt lasta ni miten mä siinä vaik seisoin päälläni ni en millään pysty, en vaan kykene vaikka kuinka haluisin, mul on kaks kättä, jalkaa ja yks pää.”

“It does not work...it does not like...I make special need supports (application) that does not in practice...if I am there alone with my colleague and I have twenty children then how could I even if I would stand on my head I cannot, I cannot no matter how much I would want to, I have two hands, feet and one head.” -FGI-

“Me tehdään erityisen tuen suunnitelmia... miten tuetaan lapsi on niin sanotusti kahden lapsen paikalla, mut näkykö se käytännössä... okei se näkyy sillä tavalla et kun se lapsi sit kun se menee kouluun sille voidaan hakea niin ku erityis... jotain statusta mut sen on vasta silloin se ei niinku nyt.”

“We make special need plans...how to support a child who so called has “two places reserved” but does it show in practice...okay it shows in a way that when a child goes to school one can apply for some special...or status but that is then it is not like now.” -FGI-

“Sekin on jo ihmeellistä jos saadaan ryhmän pienennys mut eihän me voida sanoa vanhemmalle et ei teidän lapsi voi tulla kun täällä on joku lapsi.”

“It is already amazing if we get a declined group size but we cannot say to a parent that your child cannot come here because there is some child.” -FGI-

“Tässä ajattelee just erityislasta ja vuorohoitolasta... jos me laskettas se kontaktien määrä mikä sil on päivän aikana...ja kuinka monta vuorovaikutustilannetta tulee hänelle ja vielä aikuisia jotka saattaa sanoa ja ohjata eri tavalla kun ei tiedä toisen asioista... niin se on ihan ylikuormittavaa tälle lapselle.”

“If you think about a child with special needs and non-standard hour care child... if we would count together the amount of contacts that one has during a day...and how many interaction situations arises and also how grown-ups may give guidance in different ways when they do not know each other’s “business”...it is overburdening to this child.” -FGI-

Some of the interviewees expressed frustration related to the feeling that they do not know the children well enough or did not have so much information concerning their life situation. Many told that in day-care they felt that were more up to date with everything related to the children’s lives. It had taken some to get used to the fact that you cannot know children as well as one would like to. Having an “assigned child” (omahoidettava) in non-standard hour care was seen as challenging if one did not see the child often enough. It was considered awkward if one held a child’s developmental discussion but had no first hand, only second hand knowledge of the child. This was not considered as good quality companionship as wished for. It was also unfortunate if a developmental discussion had to be cancelled with parents for a reason or another. Sometimes talking about the child with the family was de-

layed. It was harder to support the child or discuss with the families without personal observations. In contrast, many expressed that they knew the children well.

“Mul on sellainen olo et ehdin huomioida lapsia päivän aikana tosi hyvin. Ei oo sellaista oloa, et kauheeta, että nyt joku pieni on jäänyt huomiotta. Tässä kyl vertaan edelliseen ryhmään.”

“I feel that I have time to give attention to the children very well during the day. I do not feel like, oh horrible, now some little one has been left without attention. Here I do compare to the previous group.” - FGI-

“Kyl se on yks niistä asioista mikä häiritsee, ettei vaan kerkee olla lasten kaa tarpeeks.”

“It is one of those things that disturbs, not having enough time with the children.” -FGI-

“Must on ihanaa et oon saanut tutustuu niihin lapsiin ja luottamussuhdetta luonu... me ollaan tehty kaikkee ja osallistuttu ja niih... kyl sitä aikaa aina tarvii lisää mut se et edelleen jos on hyvä yhteistyö ja ihmiset.. ni sitä saa sit sovituu sitä aikaa... toisest ryhmäst auttaa.”

“I think it is wonderful that I have gotten to know the children and built trusting relationships... we have done everything and participated and yeah... you always need more time but still if you have good cooperation and people... you can arrange the time...help from another group.” -FGI-

“Tietysti sitä voi syödä mennä ulkoilemaan ja mennä nukkumaan joka päivä niinku mennäänkin mut oishan se kiva muutakin.”

“Of course one can eat and go out and go to sleep like we do every day but it would be nice to do something else too.” -FGI-

All interviewees shared the best interest of the children. However, common guidelines that were aimed also to the parents were wished upon. It was hoped that Helsinki city would have mutual protocols, not guidelines, concerning the pick-up times and resting hours of the children. This was considered as right time support, the right to sleep. Some employees felt it is unfair for a child to arrive to care for example at 5.30 am. Others experienced that picking up a child after ten is rather late. A lot of thought was put into what is the family's need and what is the child's need or right in these situations. Sometimes the interviewees would have wanted to take the child's side more but did not know how to proceed without exact directions.

“Se jos mikä ois mun mielestä lapsen oikea-aikaista tukemista vuorohoidossa, että sille täältä päiväkodin taholta määriteltäs tarpeelliset lepoajat.”

“That is what it my opinion would be giving a child timely support, so that we on the day-cares' behalf would define necessary resting hours.” -FGI-

“Kiinnitin huomioita et meil toimi hyvin se lapsen viimeisin hakuaika, niinku täällä hyvin, kun siellä haetaan 22.30.”

“I noticed that the last time to pick up a child works well here...there they pick up at 22.30.” - FGI-

“Ensin se menee nukkuu siel päiväkodissa sit se herätettään raahataan kotiin, sit se menee uudestaan nukkumaan...parhaas tapaukses se sit viel herätetään aamul et pitää lähtee takas nukkumaan.”

“First they go to sleep in the daycare and are waken up and dragged home, then they to sleep again and in the best case are even waken up in the morning to go back to sleep.” - FGI-

“Mä heräsin liian aikaseen, en jaksanu nukkuu ni nyt väsyttää.”

“I woke up too early, I was too tired to sleep so I am tired now.” -C-

5.6.1 Different learning environments

It was also considered important that the physical environment would have a homely vibe due to some children spending more time there. Some units felt that this had been achieved whereas some felt that there was a good pedagogical atmosphere present but something homely missing from the setting. Both were seen as important. Many expressed that it would be important for children in non-standard hour care to be able to move outside the physical day-care unit as well. Time spent outdoors was seen as important for children's health.

The yard was experienced differently and at its worst as a safety concern. A big yard was seen as a place to also relieve energy and enabled more movement, but not all had this resource. One group considered their yard to be very dangerous for children. Proper fencing as a topic was brought up. Some felt that either the nearby surroundings were not child friendly or there were not enough resources (people) available to leave for a fieldtrip. In contrast some commented that children had excellent opportunities for trips and to for example play in the forest.

In multi-age groups it seemed to be more challenging to adapt the environment according to children's needs. With a wide age range creating play areas for all was seen difficult. Therefore it was seen important that the space could be easily turned into what suits the activity or purpose. What was a suitable learning environment for one child was not necessarily seen suitable for another and this was linked to either the children's age or not having enough space to build more suitable play areas.

“Mistä saatas semmonen paikka minkä vois rakentaa jonkun tietyn ikäisille... ehkä semmosta paikkaa ei tuu koskaan olemaankaan vaan se et sul matkalauku ja sä luot sen et nyt me tehdään tässä tätä kun on minkä ikäisiä on ...”

“Where could we get a space that could be built for a child a certain age...maybe that kind of place will never exist but you have a suitcase and then you build that now we do this here when we have certain aged...” -FGI-

The findings from the child observations also showed that some of the tools or materials that the children would have enjoyed to use were not always in their reach but the children attending the sessions were capable of asking for those things. The adult in day-care was mostly described as a provider for tools such as paints, art, craft and sport equipment and games. Most of the comments related to the adults in day-care had to do with the learning environment. When equipment was too high or out of reach then the children expressed that they had to ask an adult for help. All participants mentioned some items or tools they would need help for. The results also showed that children in certain cases tried to first solve the situation themselves and then asked help if it was really needed. Some children used their own resources first. As an example:

“Jos mä huomaan korkeella yhen laatikon...kurkotan ja kurkotan, mun ei tarvii luovuttaa, täytyy vaan kokeilla uudestaan jos ei onnistu täytyy pyytää aikuisen apua.”

“If I notice a box up high I reach and reach, I do not need to give up, have to just try again and if it does not work I have to ask a grown up for help.” -C-

“Mä tartteen aikuisen apua jos mä haluan pistää kukkia ite maljakkoon.”

“I need an adults’ help if I want to put flowers in the vase myself.” -C-

All focus groups expressed that the learning environment could be more child friendly. A few interviewees mentioned that when grown-ups do not know where materials or things are it would be unrealistic to assume that children would either. Dividing children into different physical spaces or learning areas was seen as a concern. In some units more play areas would have been welcomed. This was seen important for having the peace to play. Many felt that there was too little space compared to the amount of children. Too much noise or crowding was not seen well for either children or the staff. It was also a problem if a groups “learning space” was located in a place where many others passed through. In contrast a few interviewees felt they had good or excellent use of space. They felt they could always divide children into smaller groups and areas even if all were present. This was described as a blessing. There were even differences to some degree within units which for the researcher raised the question of how is space or groups actually divided.

“Se on liikaa niiden hermostolle... pyritään niitä jakaa mutta kun niitä jakotiloja ei oikeesti ole.”

“It is too much for their nervous system...we try to divide them but there really is no dividing space.”

5.6.2 Towards equal safety management

Eight of the nine child participants expressed the feeling anger or disappointment related to other group members. The topic of somebody hitting, pushing or throwing something at friends was discussed during seven of the sessions. Since the takes and audios were rather short the topic of someone physically expressing frustration or anger towards a friend was rather big and can therefore be considered as the main “threat”. Children expressed that they had been thrown at by items such as toys, puzzles, books, sand, rocks and pinecones. Biting was mentioned on one occasion.

“Mua itkettää kun kaverit lyö.”
“I cry when friends hit.” -C-

“Kun joku lyö mua ja hakkaa mua ja tönii mua kuralätäkköön niin meen likaseks.”

“When someone hits me and beats me and pushes me in the puddle I get dirty.” -C-

“Se vihaa kaikkia...se tulee paha mieli... minä lyön.”

“He hates everyone...I feel bad...I hit.” -C-

Being hit in the face was discussed with one participant based on an occurrence in daycare which would indicate that children still think about such matters afterwards. Another participant noted that then children are not allowed to go back to the sandbox if they throw sand at friends. One participant used the word bullies (kiusaa) when talking about some group members and all others only described action experienced by group members. Even when one participant used the word bully no other child started using the word.

One child expressed very clearly the feeling of becoming irritated and sad when feeling scared when discussing the topic. The feeling of being scared was often connected to physical threats and some children only connected this response to older children than themselves. Some children felt more strongly than others. An adult in day-care was seen as someone who can say stop and set rules more for other children than the participants themselves. One child told about how nice it is to go to an adult if one is scared.

“Kaikke voi kertoa vaikka ei halua kertoa siitä jollekin ni voi kyllä kertoa... ei tarvi pelätä että aikuinen suuttuu tai jotain.”

“Everything can be told even though you do not want to tell about it you can tell someone... you do not have to be scared that and adult gets angry or something.” -C-

“Mua ärsyttää aina se kun mä pelkään, surullista kun mä pelkään.”

“I am irritated always by when I am scared, sad that I am scared.” -C-

“Mua ujostuttaa kun jotkut isot pojat kulkee mun ohi...ni mua alkaa ujostuttaa ja mietittää mitä ne pojat alkaa tehdä.”

“I feel shy when some big boys pass me by...so I start to feel shy and think about what the boys will start doing.” -C-

Safety issues were evaluated among the focus groups. The worry was directly linked to children. Some interviewees felt more risk assessment could be done especially regarding time when one works alone. Even doing risk assessment when going to the bathroom, if alone with the children was brought up during two of the interviews. Safety bracelets and buttons were discussed, both having them or the lack of them. Some brought up scenarios concerning what could happen if something happens to the adult, as an example, what if they broke a leg? It was also a fear whether children who express running away from day-care would actually do so. Having the phone with one at all times was seen necessary when working alone.

Some told that it was unfortunate if there was no time or a place to calm down and breathe if a stressful event had occurred at work. This was not seen fair to the child because it was considered how easily children react to emotions. Long waiting times for children were also considered as “hot spots” but still occurred. However, safety issues were experienced more strongly by others which again raise the question that are there more risks taken in other units when working alone compared to others? Some concentrated on the topic more and some just briefly mentioned certain safety concerns. Was worrying about basic safety issues again time away from something else?

“Voi olla yksi aikuinen ja jos sul on joku yksi vuotias ja vähän rajumpi et miten ne joutuu ottaa kaikki mukaan kun menee vessaan... et ne täytyy saada... hurjia tilanteita.”

“There can be one adult and if you have some one year old and another fiercer one that you have to take them all to the bathroom...that you have to get them...frantic situations.” -FGI-

“Niitä odotustilanteita ei saisi hirveesti tulla, sit alkaa tapahtuu kun on eri ikäisiä ja temperamenttisii.”

“Waiting situations should not occur too much, then things start to happen with different aged children and temperaments.” -FGI-

“Arvaamattomampi lapsi voi yks kaks vaik heittää tuolin.”

“A more unpredictable child can suddenly toss a chair.” -FGI-

5.7 Happy workers, happy children

Work wellbeing was a theme covered during all of the interviews. Some interviewees expressed tiredness, and many were concerned about their co-workers wellbeing. Bad conscience was a topic brought up many times due to the respondents wanting to do their job better. Many felt that they had things that were left hanging or undone. Many expressed that people are tired, and some cannot handle any “extra” and this resulted in fewer activities for the children. As an example it was discussed that arranging a sing along does not necessarily require much resources or time, but when people are tired it seems like a bigger deal.

Some argued that it is displeasing when night shifts get cancelled due to it having an impact on how one can plan one’s free time. It was discussed how working different shifts can be more challenging both mentally and physically. Constantly making a longer day than originally planned was seen as negative. From a teacher perspective it was explained, what a difference an unplanned nine hour and day compared to an eight-hour work day can have, especially when one is constantly present in the group. Many informed about changes in work shifts and schedules. Nevertheless, the level of how much stress or dissatisfaction it caused among groups and members varied.

“On vähän niinku keikkatyöläinen, mut kuitenkin ei oo keikkatyöläisen vapautta.”

“You are sort of like a temporary worker, but without the freedom of a “gig worker.” -FGI-

“Muutenkin vuorotyöntekijälle on jo rankka kokonaisuus tehdä vuoroja ...tutkimuksia tehty miten voi rasittaa ja unirytmiiin vaikuttaa ym. ja sit kun vielä niitä lähetään veivaamaan ja heittämään ees taas, et tulee viel muutoksen muutos.”

“It is already a heavy whole in itself for a shift worker to do shifts...there is research made how it can cause strain and impacts on sleep rhythms etc. and then when you start mixing even them up and throwing back and forth, that a change of a change still comes.” -FGI-

It was easier to adapt to work schedule changes if they were known beforehand, early enough. Some members felt that phone calls received during a day off that resulted in waking up earlier to work after days off were not seen as pleasant. Some also made calls back to work after leaving, because they had forgotten to tell something at work or called to check whether a shift was still the same. Some felt changes were more constant and impacted too much on free time whereas others did not express any difficulties in adjusting their free and work time or brought the topic even up.

The results imply that not all units have so many adjustments that need to be done or that schedules are planned differently. Surprises received during the same day were not appreciated but flexibility was seen as important and needed nevertheless. It was hoped that the difference of being flexible and the right to say no would be understood. Some had experienced feelings of being guilt tripped if not being able to adjust to “more immediate” changes. Some interviewees mentioned that their units had had work counselling, some said they have discussed about getting some and some mentioned they had hoped for some but never received. Again skills were mentioned also related to work wellbeing: if one starts solving too many matters it can become exhausting.

“Se on välillä ihan ok tulla aikaisemmin mutta sovitusti.”

“It is ok to come earlier once in a while but when it is agreed upon.” -FGI-

“Me yritetään ja on tahtotilaa on et saatas järjestyy ettei ois semmosii hetkii et ois ihan ypyöyksiin ison lapsikatraan kanssa ja aika joustavastikin ihmiset on vaihdelleet työvuorojaan.”

“We try and have willpower to arrange it so that there are no moments that one would have to be all alone with a big child group and people have been quite flexible in changing their shifts.” -FGI-

“Se voi olla se voimien syöjäkin että ratkomme täällä asioita ehkä liikaakin...se on kaks teränen miekka tää taito mikä täällä on.”

“It can also be the ” strength eater” that we solve matters here maybe even too much... it is a two sided sword the talent that we have here.” -FGI-

Workmates were experienced differently but all groups saw team work as the key to success. A good team saved much time and played a vital role in problem-solving. The overall experience was that workmates had a substantial impact on work wellbeing. During the interviews, the respondents spoke highly of one another supported each other and even give praise and direct positive feedback. Genuinely caring for children was seen as a combining factor. It was seen important that nobody was left alone and during hard times a workmates support was appreciated. Many considered their workmates to be a big privilege and even a perk. It was reported multiple times how it makes work easier when people understand one another even by half of a word or sentence without misunderstandings. Unfortunately, it was also a worry how easily negativity “sticks and is passed on” and some interviewees considered this to be too time-consuming. Positivity and own wellbeing were found important.

“Positiivisuus tuo tulosta, ei tarvii olla ees positiivinen palaute vaan positiivinen puhe...se tapa puhua...se on niin hirveen iso.”

“Positivity brings results, it does not even have to be positive feedback but positive talk...the way to talk...it is so big.” -FGI-

“Tärkein työkalu olen minä itse ja mun täytyy pitää itseni kunnossa, ja mulla jääkaapin ovesta lukee, että päätän tulkita toisten sanomisia ja tekemisiä ensisijaisesti myönteisesti, se on mun tärkein työkalu, ei maksa mitään.”

“The most important tool is myself and I need to keep myself well and on my fridge’s door it says that I decide to interpret others sayings and doings first of all positively, it is my most important tool, does not cost a thing.” -FGI-

5.8 Proposals and visions for change

It was seen as important to give positive feedback to workmates and to talk in a positive manner. Changing personal ways of dealing with negativity, continuous reflection and staying solution focused were seen more productive time, communication and wellbeing wise. One group was worried about how adults may talk over children and figured that coming up with hand signals among workmates to prevent this might be practical. Rewarding oneself and learning to be more merciful were seen as motivating factors. Finding ways to relax was also considered an important skill.

“Jos antaa sen lapsen tehdä jotain kivaa nii sitten se innostuu siitä, eikä oo enää niin villi... sitten tykkää tehdä sitä juttuu.”

“If you let a child do something fun and he gets excited about it and is not so wild anymore...then he likes to do that thing.” -C-

“Olemme tyytyväisinä jos tätä voi ajatella myös foorumina työasioista päätäville.”

“We are satisfied if this can be seen also as a forum for those who make decisions related to work.” -FGI-

“Kokemuksen pitäis olla suunnitellussa mukana... ei oo muuten käytännön arvo.”

“Experience should be involved in planning...otherwise there is no value in practice.” -FGI-

“Mitä sit jos ei ehdikään vessaan tai ulos tietyssä minuutissa että mitä sitten.. ehkä ollaan vähän onnellisempia kun mennään kaks minuuttia myöhemmin”.

“So what if you do not make it to the bathroom or outside in an exact minute...so what... maybe we are slightly happier when we go two minutes later.” - FGI-

“Tietyillä toimintatapojen muutoksilla voitais harpata isoja askeleita eteenpäin... täällä on tehty.”

“Through changing certain ways of action big leaps could be taken forward...has been done here.” -FGI-

The interviewees approached solutions from multiple perspectives and it felt beneficial to list all ideas below even though some solutions were already at use in some of the units. The wish and dream, was to gain more time and energy for the children either through new solutions or through smaller group sizes or more staff. Common guidelines were called for.

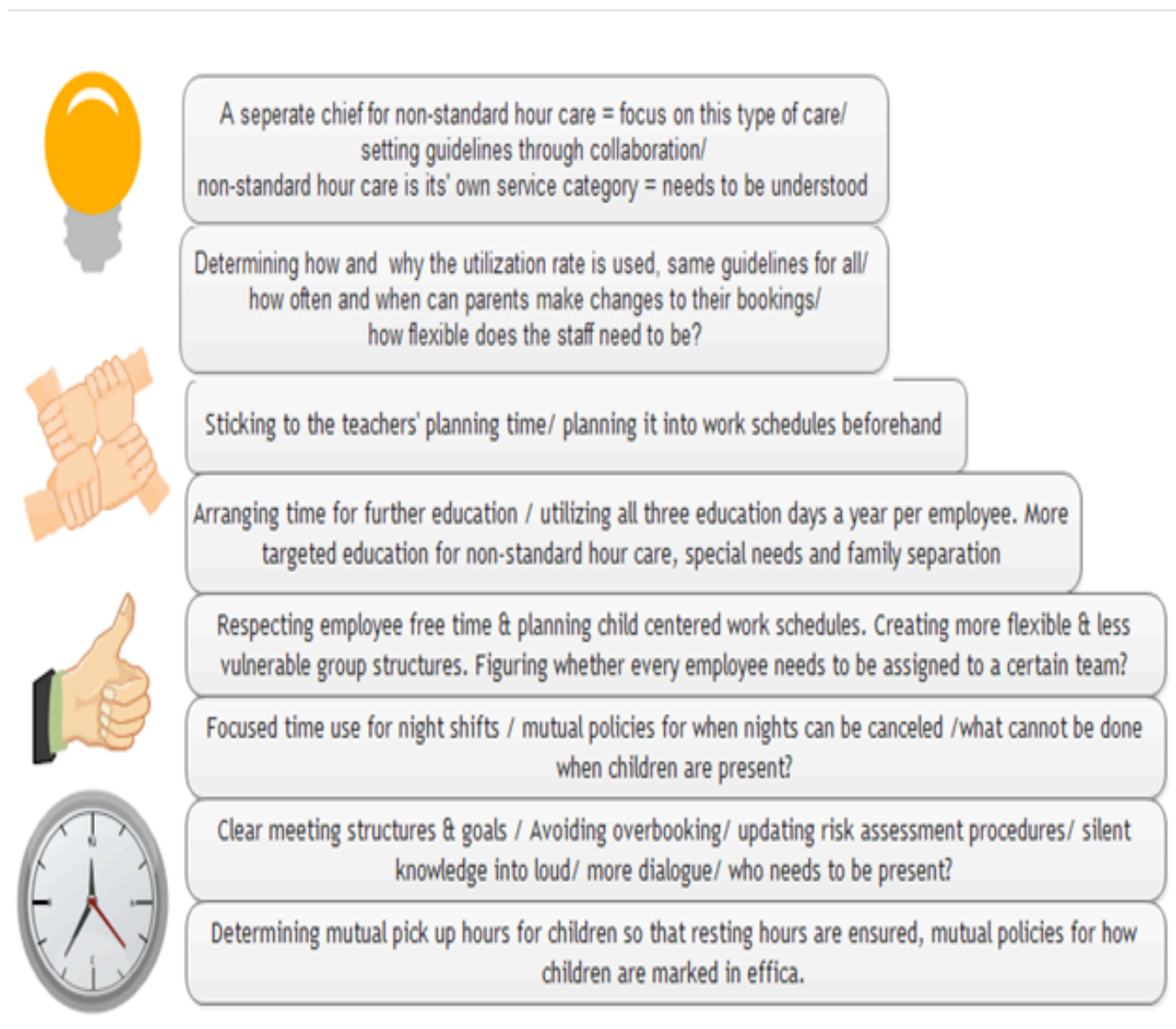


Figure 6: List of dreams and solutions

“Jakamisesta voisi syntyä ratkaisua ja oivalluksia”.

“Sharing could produce solutions and insights.” FGI-

“Joku visio sillä on... se ois irti ryhmäsidonnaisuudesta jolloin se ois joustavin-ta... ja saatas kaikkien taidot käyttöön ... yhteistä oppimisympäristöä... sen vois kehittää niin.”

“He has some vision...it would be let go of group attachments when it would be most flexible... and every ones’ skills would be put to use...mutual learning environment...it could be developed so.” -FGI-



Dividing tasks, sharing & utilizing specific skills for the whole unit = maximizes time use & increases work motivation

Developing skills to read and use online resources

More collaboration with the daycare side and other units / utilizing outside resources/ consulting more with special needs teachers & sharing materials

Taking time to clean and invest in the learning environment

Integrated special needs groups for non-standard hour care

Planning activities and field trips for children already in the work schedule planning phase

Focus on the recruitment process= substitutes until a suitable person is found

More child nurses that are willing to move from group to group/ unit to unit instead of using Seure = more familiar adults to the children

Better marketing for students and employees & making it clear beforehand what non-standard hour care is like

A better salary would attract better employees

Giving employee compensation also when prolonging one's workday with a short notice (häilylisä)

Figure 7: Ideas for change

“ Koska kuntien taloutta kiristetään, ni päiväkoteihinkin resurssit tulee vähemmän, eli tavallaan sitten pitäis oppia myös meidän tekemään asioita uuella tavalla,, irtautua tietyistä vanhoista systeemeistä”.

“ Because the economy of municipalities is being downshifted, so daycare resources will also be reduces, so sort of we would need to learn to do things in a new way and let go of old systems.” -FGI-

The evidence indicated that better communication was wished for by the majority of participants. One clear communication channel was seen as one solution that could reduce the amount of secretary work. The following features are a combination of requests and ideas that were presented during two focus group interviews. It was also considered whether one clear channel could improve communication flow between parents.

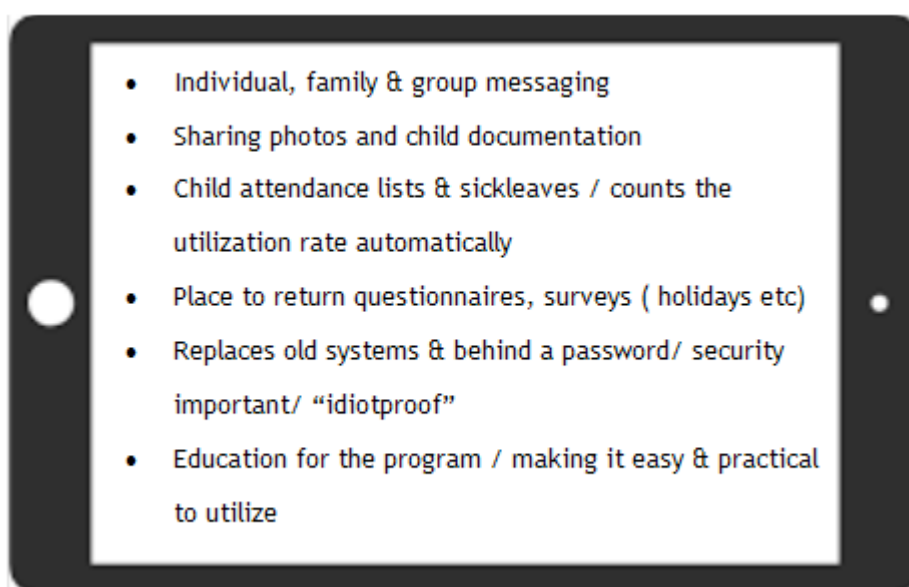


Figure 8: Solutions for one clear communication channel

“On paljon kanavia mistä ilmoittaa, jotkut ilmoittaa suullisesti, jotkut soittaa, ilmoittaa tekstiviestil tai sit siel s postista löytyy. Yksi kanava olisi selkeempi meille päin ettei sitä informatiota tule monesta tuutista.”

“There are many channels from where to inform, some inform verbally , some call, some inform via text messages or then you find it in the e-mail. One channel towards us would be clearer so information would not come from so many places.” -FGI-

6 Discussion

This study set out to determine whether the resources utilized in the field meet the needs of children attending non-standard hour childcare. As presented earlier, there were both differences and similarities found among the care units. These findings may be connected to the level and accuracy of support a child may receive during their stay in care. A child learns best by taking examples and living alongside other people. The existing relationships in the day-care are critical, even though, the family is the basic “cell” in society. At its’ best family life is filled with love and joy. However, family is not the only “institution” raising a child. The relationship between a persona and community develops already in day-care. (Kurki & Nivala 2006 , 171-172).

“Suurin osa meidän työtä on sitä mikä ei näy kun vasta sitten vuosien päästä”.

“Most of our work consists of what is only seen after years pass by.” -FGI-

Values include both feelings and rational thinking, and they have a direct impact on commitment. Through values, people evaluate what is an appropriate way to act. (Honkola & Jounela 2000, 90). Early childhood educators and employees are an exceptional work community in the sense that often children and parents can be very satisfied the service they receive. However, this does not stop the caregivers from developing their work practices. (Reunamo 2014, 9). The desire to create something better tells about the great attitude in the field. Change is not an absolute value: protecting what is already good was seen crucial in the interviews as well.

Time was presented as an issue during every focus group interview. However, one can question whether effective time management is possible without explicit visions or goals? A clear vision of where non-standard hour care stands in general or where it is going was not gained during the interviews. Some shared a positive view regarding their workplace and some a more negative vision for the future.

Stress was an element in some of the interviews. Work results and quality suffer from too much stress. It is more difficult to keep up with schedules and even communication. Creativity can suffer when actions are not planned, renewed or developed. The importance of delegating tasks is forgotten when the illusion of “I am irreplaceable” appears. Stress is unproductive for an organization. (Rytikangas 2008, 21).

The stress factors of the work itself e.g. noise, the amount of responsibility, time issues and large group sizes can influence anyone’s performance at work. Hurry and stress often contribute to “waste of time”. Tasks are not carried out as well as they could be and multi-tasking

quickly leads to errors. It is necessary to map out resource use together which is cheaper in the long run than trying to bite one's teeth. In a hurry people easily assume what others say and some things are left unsaid. Non-standard hour day-care cannot afford to suffer from communication problems because communication is of high priority in child care. While some groups still felt very creative and could concentrate on new ideas others felt that they are busy only "putting out fires" meaning they were capable of doing only what had to be done. Creativity, on the other hand, also requires space. (Rytikangas 2008, 23).

If any important function of an organization suffers, new processes, resources and mechanisms need to be found and developed. Putting out fires can be one function of day-care, but reformative leadership is required in situations where specific value needs to be created or increased. Leadership is a tool used to achieve that value. Quality should be a principal value in child care. If decision-making is incoherent, there is only a continuity of small transformations. (Niiranen, Seppänen-Järvelä, Sinkkonen & Vartiainen 2011, 40, 86). Due to the differences among different units, the idea of having an own chief for non-standard hour care seemed like an excellent one. It stands to reason whether strategic planning was more child-centred in other units/groups compared to others.

6.1 Overcoming the efficiency paradox

Based on the results changes are welcomed in non-standard hour care settings, yet individual wishes varied from unit to unit. It is possible for resource - efficient organisations also to experience problems. Based on the research findings there are many things to take into further consideration. Otherwise, the challenges can become more negative from an employee and child perspective. Time, or, in fact, long throughput times, is often a source of inefficiency. During this time, important windows of opportunity might close. If primary needs are not met in time secondary needs are generated. For this reason, accurate support in early childhood settings is crucial. Secondary needs create new challenges that again require new resources and new activities. (Modig & Åhlström 2012, 48-49).

Early childhood aggression was regarded as a safety concern that would need more attention. Time is needed to understand whether a child is actually angry, testing limits, disappointed in oneself or just feeling desperate. The right support and reaction requires reflection: comprehending what lies behind the child's behaviour. A caregiver is the person who assesses whether a child needs a hug or firmness. Children also need predictability from the adults around them which is especially important when for example learning to control rage. There should always be enough time to deal with anger. (Sinkkonen 2012b, 142-145).

When resources are needed to maintain order, early childhood educators still face making decisions that their inner voice would not want them to make. In bigger groups, discipline is often a priority compared to for example listening to a child. (Sinkkonen 2012a, 134,136). If problems begin piling up, this often reduces resource use even more. Instead, extra resources may be needed to break the chain and get back to positive results. In harmonic environments, educators feel that time and resource use is adequate and quality childcare can be achieved. (Reunamo 2014, 220-221).

It might be necessary to consider whether an efficiency paradox exists regarding resource use when downsides arise. If the focus is only on resource efficiency, a well-managed organisation would have no available capacity that again might create a need for additional resources. (Modig & Åhlström 2012, 47). Since work satisfaction and wellbeing surfaced as important topics, it is very necessary to, for example, consider what happens if an employee uses all of one's capacity? How does this impact the children?

Secondary needs quickly create other secondary needs and this can become an unfortunate chain reaction. This domino effect can become harmful to an organisation because more resources are consumed, even when no real customer value is created. This domino can be linked to threat responses on both employee and child level. Secondary needs create superfluous work that is a sophisticated form of waste of time that organisations often fail to realise as waste. In contrast, it is often even mistaken for adding value. (Modig & Åhlström 2012, 59). Reflection on resource use and both primary needs of children is one solution.

Flow efficiency is about satisfying needs and is a new form of efficiency because it breaks the traditional view of utilising resources. Meeting the customer's needs and utilizing resources efficiently both at the same time is important. Flow efficiency focuses on the amount of time it takes to satisfy a need from the first time the need is identified, and it looks like many needs have now been identified. (Modig & Åhlström 2012, 5, 13). As an example, if parents feel guilty for having their children in non-standard hour care because their particular needs might not be met, then the service is not as efficient as it could be.

It is necessary to understand an organisation's processes and how they work. There are development processes, purchase processes, service processes and so on. Employees and children in non-standard hour care go through many processes each day. These elements need to be recognized to understand what flow efficiency is: processes are very central. Defining the process from the perspective of the "flow unit" is more important than from the viewpoint of the organisation. This enables organisations to understand the small but very significant difference between resource and flow efficiency. The value transfer between families happens through partnership and dialogue: through people, who are an exceptional resource. A value

transfer occurs when one side (the resources) adds value to the receiving side. Classifying activities in the process, especially value-adding ones is critical to understanding the flow. Using an activity that does not add value is not practical. (Modig & Åhlström 2012, 17-24).

Undoubtedly, it is necessary to follow which children attend day-care as it is necessary to follow how staff is present. However, looking at numbers, meaning the utilization rate, does not tell everything about the day. At worst, a child is left without any needed support. What lies behind the numbers is important, and behind every number is a child. Time spent worrying about the utilization rate in those cases when nothing can be done about it could be time spent elsewhere. However, this does not mean it should not be looked at if something can be done about it. That should be for the benefit of both staff and children: a right amount of people present for the children. It is counted every day in non-standard hour care in any case, but it is sad some workers feel guilty for not having enough time with the children. Does this add any value?

Systems' building is about working to improve an existing system, and change processes should be designed together. There are many evidence-based components of systems change in childcare such as a positive working environment, shared vision, specification of practices, open and frequent communication and ongoing monitoring of systems. Evidence-based practices can demonstrate desirable outcomes by applying different scientific research methods, and this is important when working with families and children. Research in the field of early childhood helps professionals to produce real change. When making resource decisions, it would be best to integrate research and values. An evidence-informed practice can be guided by theory, wisdom, values, service design and research. (Smokey Mountain Research Institute 2013, 6- 9). Thinking openly in a group increases the wisdom of daily practice. A wise educator seeks the values and opinions of others to deepen what they know. (Hughes & Naughton 2008, 106)

Traditionally many resources in the social field are used to prevent surprises because they can be experienced as negative. Instead, new methods should be discovered to prevent this irrational organizational paradox. (Niiranen, Seppänen-Järvelä, Sinkkonen & Vartiainen 2011, 158 -161). Besides increasing values and flow use when making resource decisions there is the main thing that cannot be left out of decision-making processes: children's rights. Service design is about making the service you deliver useful and desirable to the customer, in this case to various types of children (Schneider& Stickdorn 2013, 31). Arguably, some groups and units seemed to add more value to child care than others.

The findings also showed that time is needed for many things and creating a better learning environment was on many agendas. In that sense, it might be profitable to look at time from

the perspective that what can and should be done when the utilization rate, for example, is low. Is it necessary to cancel a night shift if it results in making arrangements or developments that cannot be done when children are present? What if this results in creating a better learning environment faster that is an enormous resource? What if an employee does not have to worry about changes during one's free time? It was an excellent point made during an interview whether workers have contributed to making themselves too efficient? The researcher feels after listening to the interviews that this is a risk due to exceptionally good work ethics.

6.2 Developing new communication services

Efficiency is a common feature attached to information and communication networks, meaning, for example, that the internet saves time and money. Yet, this does not necessarily mean that communication and interaction itself is effective and understandable. However, this should not prevent creating new possibilities for improving communication. Health and education concern human beings, but computers are very technical machines. Still, there is much confusion between tools and human beings. (Matikainen, 2001, 14).

With collaboration and planning together new solutions should be possible. Some services could be replaced by more convenient ones. There is a huge potential to make better use of modern technology in delivering high-quality services to children and their families. Health informatics is about sharing the right information with the right people at the right time. Insufficient information can lead to missed opportunities to help children. (Eichwald, Hinman, Linzer & Saarlans 2005, 1923).

Communication obstacles exist more between people than between computers. One can always consider whether a paper and pen are safer tools than technology? Which message is more likely to get lost? Co-operation should also be possible for both parents whether they are together or not. The opportunity to get involved should be secured for all family members, and this is also something new services could ensure more effectively.

The use of information technologies and also media education has been studied in Finland and in 2010 it was studied how scarce the use of technical tools in day-care was. Many day-care groups did not benefit from information technologies at all, which is surprising when there are already webpages designed for under three year olds. Tablets and smartphones are not much at use. Different programs can also support special needs of children but require devices and knowledge of how to use the programs. The opportunities for documentation are simpler than for example creating a folder from scratch. At a press of a button something important to a child can be recorded. (Reunamo 2014, 162- 170).

Physical evidence can also trigger a memory of positive service moments. Managing this well has the potential to increase customer satisfaction. (Schneider & Stickdorn 2013, 42). As an example: sharing photos or video of a child's day adds service value. Why not also have parents send a video to their children if they have a long "stay in" cycle? Concerning children and their health, transparency is a safe option and a valuable resource.

6.3 Ethical considerations

Values, beliefs, expectations and emotions are present when studying children and, therefore, the observation cannot completely be a neutral process. Everyone has had their own childhood which affects their attitudes towards children in the present, and this needs to be taken into account when reflecting on children in one's own care. The key is to be aware of one's own perceptions, and an examination of self will require effort on the part of the researcher. (Leeson, Parker-Rees, Savage & Willan 2010, 63-67).

The researcher reflected a lot on one's own childhood and the level of support received as a child. Childhood experiences in a country where adults and friends change and did not speak the same language as at home have had an impact on the researcher. The researcher's bias is influenced by personal observations of how important it is to learn to express one's feelings already as a child and how important it is that those feelings are heard.

Observation is needed to ensure that child care practitioners are responding appropriately to help children progress towards their early learning goals. Observation helps to link theory into practice and can provide a base from which to challenge current information on children's development and needs. (Leeson, Parker-Rees, Savage & Willan 2010, 63, 67). In order to gain real information it was important to adapt the sessions according to the children's language and cognitive skills. The use of pictures provided a solid platform for this and the use of the Askeleittain material was done in a way that it secured the involvement of all children even if Finnish was not their native tongue.

It was important to create an atmosphere where the children knew that they could talk about whatever comes to their minds. The fact that the children worked in groups of three to four ensured that it was mainly the children who did the talking instead of the researcher. Children speak and express themselves more effectively and act more relaxed when they are the majority and surrounded by peers. An individual interview might not be the most trustworthy method among younger children because the method is more adult lead (Lagström, Pösö, Rantanen & Vehkalahti 2010, 37).

Legally, children can be seen as vulnerable and research concerning them should be of importance to them. Small children are not capable of giving fully informed consents but their wishes were respected during the research process. (Kuula 2006, 147). It was also a benefit that some of the children already had previous research experience and their ideas and thoughts on research issues were listened to.

It was considered important that the children themselves were motivated in participating so that information would not be forced. Despite their young age the children were capable of understanding whether they wish to attend the session or not. Giving power meant also giving the right to refuse. In one situation a guardian had granted permission and a wish for her child to join, but the child refused in the beginning. It was the child's right to refuse which was respected. However, also the right for this child to change one's mind was also respected. After a while this child wanted to join and was allowed to. Children should not be manipulated into expressing views against their wishes but it is also reasonable to also give them time to consider their involvement (Lansdown 2011, 152).

The main goal talking about feelings was established. After the first few sessions the researcher realised that whatever worked best for the children worked also best for the results. It did not come as a surprise that the material had to be adapted but orientation also took time during the first sessions. Luckily the children helped to overcome this challenge and led the sessions that had no repetitive structure. The children were allowed to pick the stories or pictures they wanted to discuss. This was done to provide more meaning to the children. In this way they also managed to learn ways to use the material independently.

For research validity reasons it was relevant to mention that the Askeleittain- material was not used in a "traditional" way. The children participated in the session planning on the spot. It was seen as their right to express what they felt necessary during the time they attended. Listening to children requires taking time and also providing time for children to exercise autonomy. Respecting their rights might take time for adults to understand the languages that children prefer, such as creative expression and play. (Hall & Rudkin 2011, 13).

For ethical reasons it was necessary to be consistent while guiding children towards positive behaviour. Teaching to take responsibility for one's own behaviour was seen as important. (Kanninen & Sigfrids 2012, 191). Some interference by the researcher was required during the sessions, for example, practicing how and why to apologize if needed. Positive empowerment was given to the children who showed extremely good examples of teamwork and supported one another very well.

Young children are very trusting of adults and the researcher wore the hats of both teacher and researcher. However, the role of the teacher was seen more important also in this thesis.

Teacher researchers also need to respect those whom they work with and without collaboration this research would not have been supported. (Castle 2012, 62- 63). Wellbeing of all children and workers was respected when timing the sessions. Arranging small group sessions in a non-standard hour care setting requires counting the utilization rate for safety reasons as well. For example when the session was held inside it was important to ensure that a colleague would not be alone outside with too many children and that if a child would have wanted to withdraw from the session there needed to be again an adult close by.

Throughout the process, it became easier to handle uncertainty. It is necessary to trust that the research subjects know their lives and own interests better than the researcher. (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood & Maguire 2003, 21). Listening genuinely and understanding how another person feels can sometimes be challenging when we may feel different. It is dangerous to make assumptions when people have different expectations of work. It is necessary to stop and reflect upon work situations and to listen to everyone's thoughts. (Kauppinen & Silvenoinen 2007, 48-49). However, it was also eye-opening for the researcher to evaluate why one felt differently and own thinking was challenged in a positive way.

Confidentiality and anonymity underline the importance of the right to privacy. People can feel harmed, bruised and even violated if they find out something is made public what they would have preferred to keep private. (Gregory 2003, 50-52). Giving a transcript to all focus group members was considered but the researcher experienced that for anonymity reasons it would be safer not to pass on the texts because sensitive matters were discussed. The researcher came to the conclusion that one had the capacity to understand what had been said.

6.4 Trustworthiness

Objectivity increases validity. Having dual moderators for the focus groups was used to overcome the bias of a lone investigator. Some methodologists argue that this is a naïve basis for doing research, but for this research purposes it provided a way for more rich data. (Lindlof & Taylor 2011, 275). Two moderators ensured that the risk of over-rapport meaning identifying too much with the interviewees was minimized (Atkinson, Coffey & Delamont 2003, 31).

The contrast of having one researcher being close to the topic, and another with no experience in the field provided more powerful questions from different perspectives. Coaching as a theme "forced" the moderators to come up with meaningful questions on the spot. Due to the method, it was also ensured that the data received lead the way. The findings were discussed with the fellow researchers that provided more understanding of the same event.

Individuals can embrace their realities through dialogue that in itself is a matter of answerability. Living an ethically responsible life means living responsively with others, and it was

good to witness excellent co-operation skills among the interviewees. Focus group interviews are a “public method” in the sense that there are many witnesses to the same situation. During the analysis and finding phases thinking about the public/private split was required. (Dimiatriadis & Kamberlis 2013, 91-93).

For two quotes, the researcher checked for permission in case the respondents would have felt their anonymity was at risk. Permission was granted. The researcher considered the informants to be trustworthy and their experiences to be authentic which increased credibility (Atkinson, Coffey & Dealmon 2003, 139). Thought was put first on the children and their wellbeing so no ulterior motives were discovered throughout the study. No disagreements occurred during the interviews, only different perspectives. Some informants had worked in non-standard-hour care for a very long time and were skilful in telling what resource use had been in the past and what changes have occurred for example during the last two decades.

The research was conducted in two separate phases to collect appropriate data that also meant that a prolonged engagement took place. This study is not generalizable to other contexts, but there might reason to study to what extent similarities and differences occur in the field. Transferability refers to how much the results of the study are applicable to other situations and it is up to the readers to decide for themselves what results may or may not fit their situations or units. (Castle 2012, 129).

It was promised to the respondents that they would be receiving their copy of the thesis and through this raise discussion and more transferability if wished. When data from different sources, methods or literature point toward same conclusions, it increases the validity (Lindlof & Taylor 2011, 274). Even though the research two questions were different, and there were several findings, they did not weaken one another. The point for the triangulation in this thesis was to increase meaning and importance to the research topic from multiple perspectives.

6.5 Further suggestions

Only through good listening we can gain information on how to do our job well. Better listening has an impact on judgment and can make the difference between success and failure. Therefore, more co-operations between the different levels of employees involved in planning early childhood education services could be increased already due to efficiency reasons. Employees are active assets which should be respected and listened to. Listening can be confused with being more passive than but active listening requires understanding of why listening is happening. (Ferrari 2012, 2-12).

A need for better knowledge sharing was identified throughout the research process and more communication between teams and managers was wished for. Knowledge is a major resource in the early childhood education field, and more strategic goals and paths could be taken to utilize this resource. Behaviour related to knowledge sharing depends on the motivation of individuals in an organization. (Kazi, Troxler & Wolf 2009, 336). For the moment, it would be wise to maintain the motivation and keep employees on the positive track.

Where did all the differences in the field originate from and does this impact on the quality of care or children's rights? For the future, it might be practical to concentrate on the best practices, tasks and processes out in the field. Potential solutions might lie in identifying them in more detail. (Kazi, Troxler & Wolf 2009, 339). Therefore, more comparative research could serve a purpose when setting up mutual guidelines. Protocols could be designed and established based on the best and most child-centred ways to utilize resources. If one child is not able to receive enough individual attention while another one is, what does that tell about the amount of support available?

What if this dilemma could be solved by sharing knowledge? How could resources be divided and managed more equally? It is necessary to understand the entire environment of the service and keep the big picture in mind (Schneider & Stickdorn 2013, 44). Further investigation and comparing the alternative approaches and perspectives out in the field can lead to greater childhood experiences. Children can perceive the learning environment with all their senses: they can see, hear, smell, touch and feel.

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Appendix 1

Information and consent form for parents

SUOSTUMUS LAPSIHAVAINNOINTIIN

Hei,

Opiskelen Laureassa ja suoritan tutkintoa Master's Degree in Health Promotion. Päätötyöni aiheena on lapsen oikea-aikainen tukeminen vuorohoidossa resurssinäkökulmasta. Täten olen pyytämässä lupaa lapsihavainnointiin. Tavoitteenani on tutkia kuinka käytössä olevat resurssit tukevat lasta ja kohtaavatko lapsen tarpeet sekä resurssit. Lapsihavainnot antavat tietoa siitä, mitä lasten tarpeet ovat ja mihin he haluaisivat lisää tukea. Tämän jälkeen siirryn tekemään fokus-ryhmähaastatteluja vuorohoidossa olevien lasten kanssa työskenteleville.

Pienryhmä tuokioissa hyödynnetään askeleittain materiaalia. Tuokioita nauhoitetaan kymmenen kappaletta ja olen niissä itse läsnä osallistuvana havainnoitsijana. Askeleittain materiaali tukee tunteiden ilmaisemista ja ymmärtämistä erilaisen leikkien, kuvien, laulujen ja kysymysten avulla. Lisäinfoa materiaalista löydät osoitteesta:

www.psykologienkustannus.fi/askeleittain

Lapseltasi kysytään joka tuokion alussa haluaako hän osallistua tutkimukseen ja osallistuminen on vapaaehtoista. Lapsille kerrotaan, että heidän puhe nauhoitetaan. Mikäli lapsesi tai sinä haluat keskeyttää tutkimukseen osallistumisen missä vaiheessa tahansa, tätä toivetta kunnioitetaan. Kaikki informaatio on luottamuksellista ja nauhoitukset tuhoetaan tutkimuksen jälkeen. Mikäli haluat kirjallisen kopion oman lapsesi osuudesta tai sinulla on mitään kysymyksiä älä epäröi kysyä.

Minä (vanhempi/huoltaja) annan luvan
lapselleni osallistua
havainnointituokioihin, jotka järjestää hänen opettajansa Jenni Tahvanainen.

Kiitoksia paljon ja kerron miten tuokiot etenee!

Appendix 2

Example list of questions used during the focus group interviews.

Differed from interview to interview based on where the discussion proceeded.

Gaining understanding on the present:

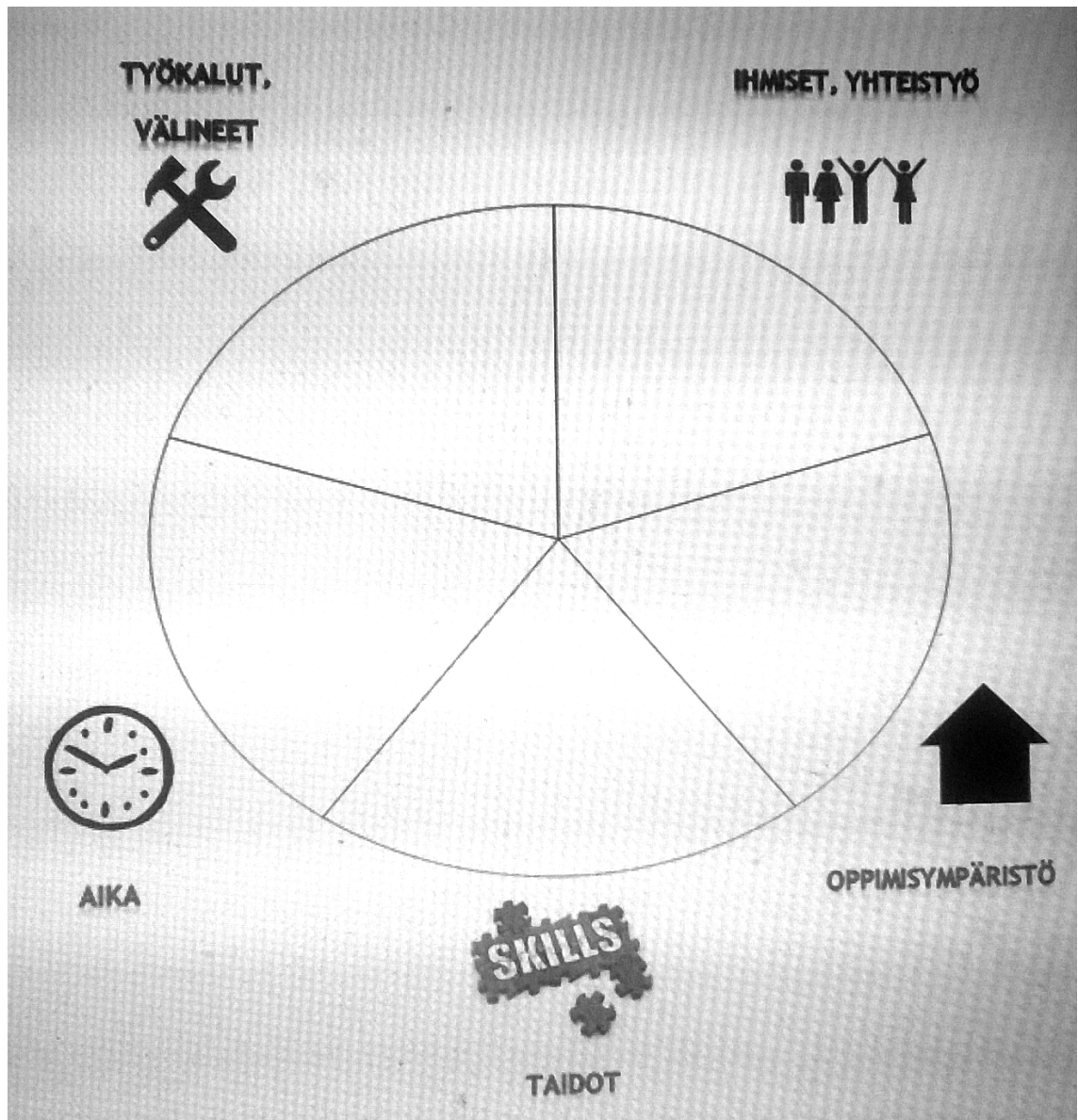
How do you feel this has an impact on your work?	What exactly is the problem?
How much does this cause you stress?	Do you have a common forum to discuss this?
How does this impact on supporting the child?	Why do you think that is?
What drives this way of action?	Is this connected to communal thinking, is there a link?
Is there a sufficient amount of training and education available? Is it targeted towards non- standard hour care?	What thought do you think is behind this rule of equality?
How do parents inform about changes?	Is non-standard hour care in your opinion its own category?
Have you always had one teacher per group?	Is this matter in your own hands` ?
Has this topic been on the table before?	What methods have you tried this far?
Where do these “acute matters” come from?	What does positivity mean?
Are people happy with their work schedules?	In which amount of time do you need to react?
Is it easy to ask for help?	What was good about it?
What wrong places does time go to?	How much do you do things together?
Does “being stuck” create negativity?	Does this happen in your work community?
Is this ever a certainty?	Have you expressed this to your manager?
What percentage of time do you feel you have enough staff?	Why do you think teachers would not necessary do evenings?
Have you had the chance to influence on interior decisions concerning the learning environment?	Why do you feel that supporting the children is challenging?
Why are nights cancelled?	Do you feel that the children’s’ needs are different than in day-care?

Future and action oriented questions

➤ Do you feel this would impact positively on every area of your work?	➤ What would be the ideal situation concerning time use?
➤ How would the day look like and feel like from a child perspective?	➤ How do you think this would impact the overall atmosphere?
➤ What is there to improve?	➤ What would be the three key advantages of this?
➤ Could the planning of work schedules be more child centered?	➤ Could you bring this topic up from a new perspective?
➤ How would you market this idea?	➤ What percent of people do you think would be ready for new arrangements?
➤ What meeting is the place to ask?	➤ What should this meeting look like so that it would benefit you?
➤ Through this arrangement would there be more time for other things?	➤ Do you feel that child centeredness could be underlined more when asking for this?
➤ What would you decide as a chief if you could?	➤ What small thing can you change within your team?
➤ What would have to be solved for the situation would improve?	➤ What could bridge the gaps between the communication of workers and parents?
➤ What would reduce this fear?	➤ What would bring peace to your work?
➤ Are there things that you feel you can urge forward in practice?	➤ Can you improve something through your personal actions?
➤ Is there a possibility to arrange this?	➤ Could this practice be restored to life?
➤ When would this be?	➤ Who needs to understand this?
➤ What kind of support would you need or want?	➤ What are your opportunities for change?
➤ What would make the situation better?	➤ What skills are needed more?
➤ What would make this workplace great?	➤ What would you enjoy?
➤ With what kind of actions can you change the atmosphere?	➤ What is the time and place to share this?
➤ For what kinds of discussions do you need courage for?	➤ What could you say that you have never said before?
➤ What would be the number one change you would wish for?	➤ If you were a child here, what would you want more?

Appendix 3

Resource wheel



Appendix 4

<p>what can make a child happy</p> <p>If grandpa picks one up , when mom does not get angry , calling grandma and grandpa, visiting godparents, visiting families with children , a picture of mom or dad, playing princess games, playing Cinderella, doing crafts with friends, When a friend smiles watching a movie, playing games, when one gets candy, forward rolls, HopLop, Linnanmäki, A teddybear, petshops, climbing trees, playing ball, riding the moped, having a pet, nompparellit, going to Nuotta, birthdays, presents, santa claus, When one gets a flower, when you get to choose your candy, when a teacher takes a puppet, Late lammas, traveling to Turkey, a kite, face paints, stories during rest time, making sand castles, marbletracks.</p>
<p>what can make a child sad/ disappointed:</p> <p>if grandma does not listen, when mom gives commands, when a friend does not want to play anymore, if one falls down with their kick scooter, when a friend hits when someone throws rocks or pinecones, if someone kicks in the face, If somebody pushes If a friend throws things, When they do not get candy, When mom goes to work, When they miss their parents, If grandparents give commands, If they have to move to another table If somebody yells, If one falls off ones' bike, If mom gets angry, Broccoli and salad</p>
<p>what can make a child scared:</p> <p>Coming to daycare at night, that they draw messy pictures, If they do not have a flashlight at night, bad dreams , if you are far away from home, there can be monsters outside, a moose, horses, dogs when one is a baby, monsters, bees, going on the pirate ship, school aged boys Going too far in the park, when lions roar</p>
<p>What can make a child angry:</p> <p>If they are not allowed to swing, If they do not get buns and hot chocolate ever in day-care, If they are not allowed to pick flowers, If someone hurts them, If someone takes a toy from their hand, If someone throws a book at their chin, when bees buzzzz too much or try to sting, If they are not allowed to paint, Not being allowed to climb a tree or if the trees are too big, pistachio ice cream, If they do not get to go to a farm as promised, If the wind knocks one over, If they do not get a pet butterfly, If they are not allowed to walk the dog</p>
<p>What can be exciting:</p> <p>jumping on a trampoline, learning to climb, to overcome a fear of heights , to do something for the first time, going on a rollercoaster or ferris wheel, traveling to Greece, learning to swim, getting a new bike</p>
<p>What can make a child feel shy:</p> <p>starting day care, making friends, being photographed, when bigger children pass by.</p>
<p>What can be boring:</p> <p>resting time or no friends to play</p>