

Playfaces

Children's experiences of play in a Finnish Preschool

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Abstract

In Western early childhood education, play has become an instrument for learning future competencies and contradicting the notion of play as being child led, spontaneous and motivated in itself (Rogers, 2011). This study examined the children's experiences of play in a Finnish preschool, from the children's perspectives. This study was especially interested in how children define play; tell the difference between play and not play as well as where, what and when play is preceded in preschool. Preschool play was revealed more as an attitude, rather than a certain kind of activity. In the end it is just the child who defines what is play or isn't (Hakkarainen, 2006). Play had a prominent position in preschool, but there was a difference between the amount of child initiated and the adult led play, the implementation and manifestation.

The research was conducted in a Swedish speaking preschool in the Helsinki metropolitan area, with a research sample of 11 participants. A variety of methods were used to gather the children's perspectives; observation, photographs, focus group discussion, play maps, interviews and child led walk. The analysis consisted of classifying the data from the various methods, transcribing and translating it to English.

Keywords: Children's perspective, preschool, play, children, qualitative

Glossary

Adult led play

Organized play by adults, i.e. tag, finding numbers or play with collaborative exercises.

Children's perspective

The way children see things or also meaning the way an adult tries to see the world from children's point of view.

Child's perspective

The child's point of view.

Kyrkråtta ("kirkkis")

A form of hide and seek game, played outside. You need one to seek and count to an in advance determined number i.e. 20 while the other children find a place to hide. The seeker counts on the home base often against a wall. The seeker tries to find all and when he/she finds one he needs to touch the wall and say that person's name. If you get caught you need to get back the home base and hope someone saves you by touching the wall without being seen and saying *all rats saved* ("kaikki råtat pelastettu"). Then the seeker counts again while the others find a new place to hide.

The game continues until all are found or the seeker gets enough and a new seeker is chosen.

Mosaic approach

A multi-method approach used for gathering children's perspectives from their everyday environments.

Participatory methods

A mix of activities, giving the participants an active and influential role in the research. The participants are being listened to, heard and their voices are made visible.

Playfaces

Playfaces and “let’s pretend, are my English translation for (“pää lek”). It means that children put on playfaces while playing to show the other players that this is play and they pretend to be someone else who they really are.

Play space

The child's own environment, where the “invisible” happens in play.

Play place

The physical and visible playground or environment i.e. room, bush or climbing frame.

Preschool

In Finland children start preschool the year before compulsory school starts. It is provided free of charge and is mandatory for every six year old.

List of acronyms

| | |
|-------|--|
| CIA | Central Intelligence Agency |
| CRC | The Convention on the Rights of the Child |
| ECEC | Early childhood Education and Care |
| ECECP | Early Childhood Education and Care Policy |
| EU | The European Union |
| UNCRC | United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child |
| NGO | Non-governmental organization |
| NIFP | The National Institution for Play |
| NSD | Norwegian Social Science Data Service |

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

This chapter presents the source of inspiration for my study, the aim, the research questions and objectives, the significance of the study and the outline for this thesis.

1.1 Inspiration

I would like you to think back on the time when you were about 6 years old and try to find your inner child. This is to help you get in the right mood before reading the poem “Just playing” written by Wadley (1979).

Just playing

When I am building in the block room,

Please don't say I'm "Just Playing.”

For, you see, I'm learning as I play,

About balance and shapes.

Who knows, I may be an an architect someday.

When I am getting all dressed up,

Setting the table, caring for the babies,

Don't get the idea I'm "Just Playing.”

For, you see, I'm learning as I play.

I'm expressing myself and being creative.

I may be an artist or an inventor someday.

When you see me sitting in a chair
“Reading” to an imaginary audience,
Please don’t laugh and think I’m “Just Playing.”
For, you see, I’m learning as I play.

I may be a teacher someday.

When you see me combing the bushes for bugs,
Or packing my pockets with choice things I find,

Don’t pass it off as “Just Play.”

For, you see, I’m learning as I play.

I may be a scientist someday.

When you see me engrossed in a puzzle or some

“plaything” at my school,

Please don’t feel that time is wasted in “Play.”

For, you see, I’m learning as I play.

I’m learning to solve problems and concentrate.

I may be in business some day.

When you see me cooking or tasting foods,

Please don’t think that because I enjoy it, it is “Just Play.”

For, you see, I’m learning as I play.

I’m learning to follow directions and see differences.

I may be a cook someday.

When you see me learning to skip, hop, run, and move my body,

Please don't say I'm "Just Playing."

For, you see, I'm learning as I play.

I'm learning how my body works.

I may be a doctor, nurse, or athlete someday.

When you ask me what I've done at school today,

And I say, I "Just played."

Please don't misunderstand me.

For, you see, I'm learning as I play.

I'm learning to enjoy and be successful at my work,

I'm preparing for tomorrow.

Today, I am a child and my work is play. (Wadley, 1979)

Why not read it one more time through the eyes of an adult. This time to see that even though we were children once and played, we might forget and overlook the importance of play. The poem clearly speaks for the great significance of play, it shows that play is complex, hard to define and does not always meet the eye of adults.

1.2 Aim with the study

I have many fine memories from my own preschool time, full of joy and play. I was a really passionate, imaginative and action-packed player that never had to worry that it would get tedious. Things have not changed that much, I still play every day at work, working as a kindergarten teacher, learning new things true play with the children. Since that time preschool has changed tremendously. The recent changes in the Finnish preschool system are the revised preschool curriculum 2014, making it mandatory for children to attend preschool. In 2015 and 2016 the preschool curriculum was implemented (Finnish National Board of Education, n.d). All in all, this led to an empirical ethnographic study about children's experience of play in a Finnish preschool.

I chose to write my thesis about play because I feel it is a great, interesting and important topic, always current and in need of further discussion. The choice of using children's perspective was to give justice and validity to the children taking part, in addition to the topic and research in itself. Children's perspective is the centerpiece of my thesis. As the poem by Wadley (1979) presented, play is so much more than "just playing" and the adults nonchalance towards play is quite shocking. Even if we all were children once and played, growing up to be adults have changed the way we play, making it hard for us to understand and sometimes value play the way children do. By positioning children's perspective on play in preschool I hope to open the eyes for play. Throughout the study the reader should see the perspective of the children as well as of the individual child. As Eide and Winger (1999)

contend there does not exist one authentic child perspective, but instead multiple childhoods and perspectives are represented.

In this thesis I will look at what the preschool curriculum, Finnish institutional law, children's rights and other non- governmental organizations (NGO) have to say about play. Linked to relevant literature on children's perspective, play theories and definitions of play.

Play can be looked at from different viewpoints and disciplines. Coming to one common definition of play is not possible. According to Johansson and Pramling Samuelsson (2007) many have tried to define play, but few have succeeded. Moyles (1989) states that play is certainly a means by which animals and humans test a diversity of experiences in a variety of situations for diverse purposes. Siren-Tiusanen (2004) disputes play to be a problematic substance in the atmosphere of recent history both in preschool and in society. According to some studies and observations only a small part of the activities are play activities.

Hjorth (1996) used children's own descriptions and experiences to interpret how the children perceive play in preschool and that I also intend to do. Yet Åm (1989) remarks that play get little space in the debates of what preschool should contain. The educational trends seem to value and focus more on the adult led activities, forgetting that preschool life needs to be considered from two viewpoints; the children's and the adults'. The main form for children to express themselves is true play and so far no studied educational arrangement have replaced the experiences and feelings children gain from playing. Lillemyr (2002) inform that especially for children in the transition between 5-7 years, play is a

fundamental life and learning form, through which they learn to express themselves. When playing children are not afraid to be judged by how they behave, because play is a free arena for trying out things and potentials.

Christensen (2004) speaks for the value of children being fellow human beings with the researcher. Recognizing children as social agents and active participants has affected the way children are perceived within the human and social science and led to less taken for granted assumption within child research. Kalliala (1999) observes the daycare yard and is watching one child swinging, another one sliding down the slide and others playing tag. However, the majority of the children seem to be doing something at the yard, but it is not enough to identify exactly what just by looking. So to be able to identify play in preschool, I realized that I had to use a variety of methods to have a chance to reveal the children's experiences of play in a Finnish preschool. This led to this empirical ethnographic study combining participatory observation with the mosaic approach, mixing different kinds of methods together. For this study the following methods have been used; observation, photographs, focus group discussion, play map, interviews and child led walk; all to help me present the children's perspective and to value the children as active social fellow human beings.

When the four-week long fieldwork was over, I transcribed the relevant material from the original mix of Finnish and Swedish child language to English.

1.3 Research questions and objectives

The aim of my research is to gather children's experiences of play in a Finnish preschool, using the child's/children's perspective. I am especially interested in how children define play, if they can tell the difference between play and not play as well as where, what and when play is preceded in preschool. By using the children's perspective, I hope to give children the credit for their own knowledge and show appreciation for the valuable knowledge received.

The following objectives were part of the research project:

- A. Get knowledge about children's perspectives
- B. Explore children's perspectives on play in preschool
- C. Get more insight on play in preschool
- D. Finding ways to define play and explore it from an empirical setting

My research questions for this study will follow. The few questions are rather for guidance than to be asked from the children directly. The questions are more my thoughts that hopefully will be answered during the fieldwork, by using various methods to find the answers. The interview questions asked from the children can be found in the interview guide attached in the end of this thesis (see appendix 1). The following research questions were addressed:

1. How to identify play in a preschool context?
2. How to distinguish play from not play?
3. Where is play preceded?

4. What are the children playing?
5. When are the children playing?
6. How can play be defined and explored from an empirical setting?

1.4 Significance of the study

Strandell (2010) notes that in research and society children's participation has been a somewhat underdeveloped theme. *"It seems that the idea of real influence does not easily find its way into administrative processes and practices in matters pertaining to children"* (Strandell, 2010, 175) the dilemma is that even though participation rights, like the rights of the child (CRC) exist, it is all overshadowed by the possible harmful outcomes of risk, marginalization and social exclusion instead of aiming the attention on greater inclusion and participation of children. Unfortunately, children's right to participate is one of the least developed rights and a limited amount of research have been done.

There exist a lot of research on play, also done in the Finnish preschool, however not lately and mostly by connecting play and learning or play to the child culture, rarely asking for the children's perspective. Hjorth (1996) points out that if play is to get a more prominent position in the pedagogical work of today, the play process needs to be studied and identified. Play has been a subject of interest for researchers for years, which mainly retrieved knowledge about play through observational studies. Research on play has not directed the interest on children's own perceptions on play. Preschool aged children have rarely been used as informant participants. Children's own perceptions are crucial for understanding the play processes. Lindqvist (2001 in Schackel, 2015, 56)

expresses what is lacking in the research of play. The different areas of play should be united to represent the whole of human play mechanisms. Also there is a lack of specifically “*in- depth qualitative understanding and evaluation of how children actually experience play*” (Lindqvist 2001 in Schackel 2015, 56).

Hjorth (1996) notes that play belongs to the ones playing - who else can better tell about play than the player. In play the child is supreme, which in my research empowers the children. Lillemyr (2002) notes that research shows play to be important for children in the age of 0-12 years and especially for children between 5 and 9. In this age play is especially significant, because children spend most of their time playing. Above all it brings intrinsic value to the children and essential value for learning and developing. The transition between preschool and school play is especially rich, comprehensive and developing, as well as very social and communicative. This is why I decided to represent the preschoolers in my study, giving the children the opportunity to participate and give voice to their opinions about play in a Finnish preschool.

James (2007) believes that by “*listening to what children say about their everyday lives and experiences can allow us to both theorize and act on their understandings in relation to larger issues of social and political change*” (James, 2007, 267). The results of this study will not directly benefit the participants. More likely their following preschoolers, the workers and policy makers will get to enjoy the valuable knowledge and information gathered. Helping to develop and enable children’s participation and their perspectives more in the everyday life decisions

will affect them in preschool and why not in daycare and school, as well. I certainly hope the discussions of the importance of play will continue.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters.

Chapter 1 introduces the study, presents my source of inspiration, the aim, research questions and objectives, the significance of the study and the outline of this thesis.

Chapter 2 explains the background and context, more specifically introduces the reader into Finland, Swedish speaking Finns and the Finnish education system. I also present the Finnish pre-school and the curriculum. In addition, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the Finnish institution law and other policies that emphasize play are presented.

Chapter 3 emphasizes the research from a child's/children's perspective, present the field and sample, the six methods used in my study; observation, photographs, group discussion, play map, interviews and child led walk. As well as the research role, data analysis and interpretation, ethical considerations and the challenges and limitations with my study.

Chapter 4 gives the theory framework. Presenting the Social Studies of Childhood, children as social actors with agency, the characteristics of play, play in preschool as well as earlier research and views on play.

Chapter 5 presents the analysis and my findings.

Chapter 6 discusses the results and findings.

Chapter 7 sums up with conclusion and further recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This chapter introduces the reader into a brief presentation of Finland, the Constitution of Finland and The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). It will also present the education system, especially preschool with its curriculum.

2.1 Finland

Ministry of Foreign affairs of Finland (2007) presents Finland or the Republic of Finland, as a country situated in the northern Europe and one of the Nordic countries, sharing borders with Sweden in the west, Norway in the north, Russia in the east and the maritime border with Estonia. Finland is known for its thousand lakes and islands, numerous rivers and is rich in forest and extensive areas of marshland. The capital city is Helsinki. At the end of February 2017 the population was 5,503,879 (Statistics Finland, 2017). Ministry of Foreign affairs of Finland (2007) states Finland to be a parliamentary republic with the central government based in Helsinki. According to this, there are 317 municipalities with their local governments and Åland Islands with their own autonomous region. Finland is part of the European Union (EU) and is the only nordic EU country to use the euro as national currency. Before its independence 1917 Finland was part of first Sweden and then Russia.

According to Infopankki (2014) and Citilinkia (2015) the official languages of Finland are Finnish and Swedish. In the north of Finland the Sami language is official and also the Finnish Romani and Finnish sign

language are recognized in the constitution. This means that the municipalities can be monolingual or bilingual, and you can use either Finnish or Swedish when dealing with your municipality. Infopankki (2014) notes that Finnish is the dominating language in the country with almost 90 % of the population speaking Finnish. About 5 % of the population has Swedish as the native language, mostly spoken along the west and south coast, in addition to the autonomous region of Åland. The constitution protects the minority groups like the Swedish speaking Finns, Sami and Romani people (Citilinkia, 2015). Infopankki (2014) says that both Swedish and Finnish are mandatory subjects in school. Students whose first language is Swedish study Finnish and vice versa. The institute for the Languages of Finland (n.d.) mentions that the Swedish spoken in Finland differs from the Swedish spoken in Sweden. The spoken Swedish in Finland is usually referred to as “finlandssvenska” in Swedish and “suomenruotsi” in Finnish, meaning Finnish- Swedish. The Finnish -Swedish vary by pronunciation, words and expressions compared to Swedish spoken in Sweden.

According to (CIA, 2016) the key features of the 21st century in Finland’s modern welfare state are high quality education, promotion of equality and a national social welfare system. However, all these are challenged by an aging population and the fluctuations of an export-driven economy. In the Finland Politics (2015) interview with the child ombudsman Tuomas Kurttila, he admits that even though the children’s academic skills are great in Finland, there are vast problems in the social environment. According to him there is no common ground shared by the different ministries acknowledging children’s wellbeing and rights. All

ministries should work together and bear in mind the best interest of the children. Looking at the country from a global perspective, children have access to clean water, food and housing and also the minority children have access to education. Still there are huge differences between the municipalities as to the respect for children's lives and services.

2.2 The Finnish Constitution and UNCRC

Kinnunen (2003, 18) claims that at the legislative level Finnish children's lives are the most secured in the world. The social security benefits all population groups comprehensively. A child is a valuable citizen for the society, not only as a future taxpayer, but as a human being as such. This speaks for the care that is reflected on those who will never be able to pay taxes. As the Finnish Child Ombudsman Tuomas Kurttila says '*Care for children is the basis of a sustainable society*' (Finland Politics, 2015).

As stated, the Finnish Constitution does not let anyone without acceptable reason, be treated differently based on sex, age, origin, language, religion, belief, opinion, health, disability or other reason that concerns his or her person. There are other obligations based on other legislation and international agreements, which Finland is committed to follow and should be considered e.g. when preschool is arranged. This includes the law of equality, observance of equality law, the European Convention on Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Finland ratified the CRC 1991 (UNICEF, n.d.).

In Finland "everyone is equal under the law" (Ministry of justice, 2011, 2) and yet children are mentioned specifically; they "*shall be treated*

equally and as individuals and they shall be allowed to influence matters pertaining to themselves to a degree corresponding to their level of development.” (Ministry of justice, 2011, 2).

There are some overall and basic principles that countries should emphasize in the implementation of UNCRC (1990). For my research, the most relevant are the best interest of the child (art 3), respecting the views of the child (art 12), freedom of expression (art 13), right to education (art 28) and right to leisure, play and culture (art 31).

Under the Constitution of Finland (Ministry of justice, 2011) everyone has the right to freedom of expression and the right to information. Everyone should be able to express, spread and receive information, opinions and alternative means without hindrance from others. This right is also expressed in the UNCRC (art 13), including freedom to explore, receive and convey information, as well as all kind of ideas. This can be conveyed orally, in text, through art or media depending on what suits the child the best. According to article 12 (UNCRC, 1990, 4) a child should be capable of forming and expressing their own views freely in all matters concerning themselves and this should be assured according to age and maturity. According to the rules of national law, children should also be heard in judicial or administrative proceedings which concern them.

Under the Educational rights in the constitution of Finland (Ministry of justice, 2011) the basic education is free for all. An act is provided for the public authorities to guarantee education services, equal for all, according to their abilities and special needs. This is also a way to prevent

economic hardship. The UNCRC article 28 also points out the equal opportunity for education to all. Article 3 under the UNCRC (1990, 2) is to ensure that institutions, services and other facilities take their responsibility to caring for and protecting the children after the agreed standards. Another important right is the article 31 in the UNCRC (1990, 9) of leisure, rest and play, children should be engaged in different activities freely, appropriate as to their age both in cultural activities, art, play and recreational activities. This should also be respected and promoted by the state parties. Nikko (2006) explains that the roots in Finnish history and culture, national traditions in education and European pedagogical heritage lay the directions for the Early Childhood education. As well as the international agreements on children's rights, national acts and ordinance and other local instructions for early childhood education.

2.3 Building the education system

This part will introduce the reader into the history of early childhood education and how the education system in Finland has been built up.

2.3.1 The history behind the Finnish early childhood education and care

According to Hänninen and Valli (1986) Uno Cygnaeus (1810-1888) also called the father of the Finnish elementary school, became famous in the 1860s as a pioneer of the kindergarten idea. He was also the first to implement Friedrich Fröbels pedagogy in the Nordic countries, but did not succeed with implementing the idea of kindergarten. According to Kalliala (1999) daycare was the beginning to kindergarten, inspired by

Friedrich Fröbels kindergarten, precisely a garden. In this parable, the children were the seeds and the adults were the gardeners, respecting the demandings and needs of the various species not rushing to burst the buds open and tearing the petals. Hänninen and Valli (1986) emphasizes that it was two powerful women, Hanna Rothman and Elisabeth Alander that inspired by Fröbels pedagogy established the kindergarten idea to Finland. The first kindergarten was founded in 1888 by Rothman in Helsinki and that became the start for the later known early childhood education and care. Her intention with kindergarten was not to replace the home, instead supporting the poor mothers in taking care of their children. Kindergarten emerged as a kind of welfare for working class children. The Early Childhood Education and Care Policy (ECECP, 2000) notes that the introduction to kindergarten activities developed as a private activity, incoherent and marginal. The structural changes in 1960s and 1970s society had led to urbanisation and growing employment of women away from home. Alila et al (2014) reveals that after the post-war time, Finland lived a powerful change of social structure and the need for and shortage of childcare places in the large cities especially in Southern Finland, were the leading causes to the development of the child care system. The ECECP (2000) admit that it was the pressure that created the development of municipal daycare. Hänninen and Valli (1986) reveals that when the Act on Children's Daycare came into force in 1973, the municipalities were obliged to arrange daycare in accordance with the growing needs. The daycare places multiplied during a short period of time. Daycare became a service with the aim to equate men and women into working life. ECECP (2000) notes that in the 1970s and 1980s the welfare state lived its 'golden years' and subjective rights were realised

by the state. The central issue was the right of each child to be supported in growth and learning. To secure the possibility to take care of the child at home, a home care support was established in 1985 as an alternative to daycare (Hänninen and Valli, 1986).

Alila et al (2014) reports that to its current form as early childhood education and care has been a long process, formed and influenced by different social and ideological changes which reflected the legislation and its amendments. Strandell (2010) expresses that childhood has been implanted in the midst of the nation's concerns about social and economic success in the global, competitive world. Regulation of children, control and risk, in combination with the mobilization of children's own participation, self-regulation and agency all keywords of the present child policy. Finnish childhood has to a great extent stopped being a separate and marginal issue in society. ECECP (2000) shows that overall, a more open and increasingly outward-oriented operating strategies have developed into the early childhood education and care. In pedagogy there has been a growth from an adult-driven to a child-focused approach which pays attention to each child's individuality, subject status and the peer group as a valuable initiator of the child's growth process. Since the late 1960s preschool education has been prepared for six-year-old children in Finland. In 1971 the first preschool experiment was launched, but it was not until 1999 when the Government Programme declared preschool education free of charge for all six year olds to be introduced August 1st, 2000.

2.3.2 The Finnish education system

Ojanen (2002) contends that the Finnish education system is built up for the entire population to access education and training. In other words, lifelong learning. This means that people can constantly learn regardless of their age. This is an essential basis starting with daycare and preschool, followed by basic schooling and continuing into adult education. The base for a good lifelong learning is laid already in daycare, where a large amount of the toddlers and children spend most of their days. Uusiautti et al. (2013) confirms that in today's Finland the majority of both parents work full-time, which leads to the more strengthened rearing role and need for daycare centres and schools. What is good child rearing and what type of rearing is suitable at home is defined particularly by the professionals. According to Nikko (2006) the fundamental idea of the Finnish daycare is to assist families with their daily lives and provide them with high quality care and education for their children. A particular concern is the well-being of the children. The Finnish daycare and early childhood education focuses on care, upbringing and the general development of the children than recognition of numbers and letters. Nikko continues presenting the typical Finnish preschool, including guided learning sessions by the pedagogue, acquisition of information and problem solving, play and games in interaction with children and adults. The work done in preschool is based on different play forms and activities appropriate to the child's stage of development. There are a broad range of vital areas to practice; language, interaction, environment and nature, physical and motor development, understanding mathematical concepts and phenomena, art and culture, ethics and the view of life. Utbildningsstyrelsen (2016) implies that the

preschool education is based on the notion of childhood's absolute worth. Each child is unique and valuable just as they are. All children have the right to be heard, seen, taken into account, understood both as individuals and as members of the group. Children have the right to learn and form an opinion about themselves and the world from their own perspective. In addition, they have the right to learn through play, movement, exploring, through performing small tasks, create and express their experience and rejoice in their learning. Their previous experiences and knowledge are part of the learning path. Lillemyr (1990) relates that for early childhood education play is by no means the most central subject area. It is an important activity in a preschooler's life and raises the child's engagement.

Hjorth (1996) explains that the preschool curriculum is divided into routine situations, adult controlled activities and play. There is time and space for play in preschool when children do not have to participate in adult led activities. Often the responsibility is passed on to the children that themselves have to create content and standards in their joint actions during play time.

Utbildningsstyrelsen (2016) reports that according to the law of basic education, a child that is attending preschool education daily is entitled to be taught according to the curriculum, given guidance and support as required for favorable development and learning. The guardians should ensure that children participate in the preschool education or in other activities, through which the objectives of preschool education will be attained. In Finland the municipalities are obligated to arrange preschool

education the year before compulsory education for children living inside the municipality. The obligations that control the preschool education are based on the Finnish Constitution, the Act and the Regulations on Basic Education and City Council Regulations issued by virtue of the pupils and student health care law and on the grounds of preschools education curriculum. Ojanen (2002) points out that there does not exist any actual preschool teaching. It is all provided combined either with daycare or school. The intention is to raise children's capacities for learning new facts and skills through play. The legislation requires all municipalities to provide free of charge preschool education for all six year olds. Preschool last from 9-13 five days a week and most of the children continue in daycare afterwards in the same location. The duration of a preschool year is 700 hours (Nikko, 2006). Ojanen (2002) notes that the parents have a crucial role together with the pedagogues to support the child's learning and prepare an individual curriculum plan for the child.

Utbildningsstyrelsen (2016) notes that the preschool education, teaching materials and tools used in teaching are free of charge in Finland. The same applies for the student welfare services. Each preschool day the child is served a full meal, an appropriately organized and supervised activity free of charge. The essential aim for the preschool curriculum is to be materialized in the whole country so everyone would get a high quality and uniform preschool education (Utbildningsstyrelsen 2016).

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(n.d.) states that in Finland each child under school age have the right to early childhood education and care (ECEC). Municipalities are responsible for organizing the ECEC just as for the quality and

supervision of the service. It is a legal duty to arrange the pre-primary education. The last word comes from the guardians who choose, if they want to use the service or not. They are also given the option to choose a private sponsored ECEC service for their child. ECEC is based on the “educare model”, built on education, care and teaching without forgetting the essential way of learning through play. The road to learning in the preschool curriculum is relying on the view that children accomplish new knowledge and skills in interaction with other children, teachers, different environments and groups around them. Learning is a comprehensive process including actions, emotions, sensations, physical experience and thoughts. Everything starts with earlier experience and knowledge.

In August 2015 it became mandatory for all children to take part in the pre-primary education. Generally, all the 6-year olds already entered the pre-primary education when it was voluntary. Finnish National Board of Education (n.d) reports that the preschool curriculum was revised 2014 and implemented 2016. The reason was a broader change in the curricular reform in general education. This means that the child’s development is being followed throughout the whole ECEC, pre-primary and basic education.

Ojanen (2002) notes that after preschool is over the children in Finland start compulsory education at the age of seven. The compulsory education lasts for about nine years. The majority of children start school at the age of seven and finish by the age of sixteen. The law requires that children resident in Finland including other nationalities, must complete the curriculum of compulsory education. This can be done either by

attending compulsory education or through other means by comparable education e.g. home schooling. 1921 the general compulsory education in Finland came into effect. As with preschool education, the municipalities have a responsibility for arranging the basic education and making it available for all. Each child attending basic education is served one hot meal per day. Basic education is free of charge and should be arranged close to home according to the law. In addition, the law declares that it is the municipalities' responsibility to take care of the costs and arrangements of school journeys exceeding five kilometers.

The figure below is taken from Nikko (2006, 142) to give an idea of the Finnish Policy in Early Childhood Education and Care.

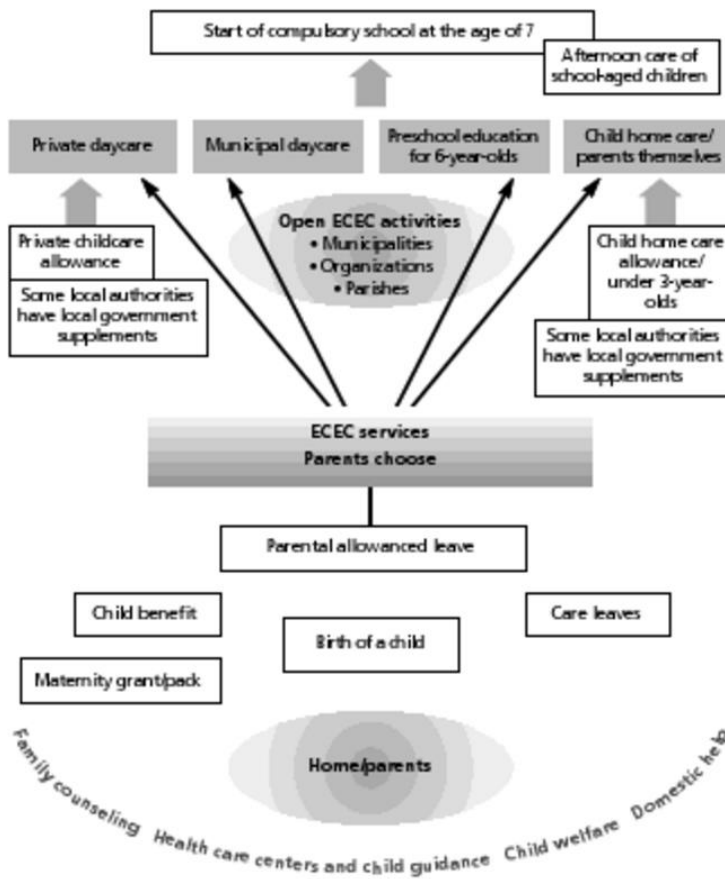


Figure 6.1. Early Childhood Education and Care Policy in Finland.

Ojanen (2002) points out that the children need to make a difficult choice after comprehensive school, as they have to choose whether to continue general education i.e. upper secondary school or to apply for a ca 3 years' vocational education. Then there is the possibility to apply for higher education i.e. either university or polytechnics.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH PROCESS

This chapter presents research from a children's perspective. It includes, the methodology, research process, the field and sample, the six methods used for the study, the research role, data analysis and interpretation, ethical considerations and challenges and limitations with the study.

3.1 Research with children's perspective

Eide and Winger (1999) emphasize the pedagogical idea within the Nordic early childhood, where the wellbeing and development are the main aims for children. A lot of professionals assert that they are seeking the children's perspective, being spokespersons for the children in varied ways and trying to develop high quality in the pedagogical setting with the best interest of the children in mind. Broström (2012) implies the children's perspective to be an umbrella term, meaning that researchers have different ways to view the concept. Some researchers focus "*on the ways in which adults look at children and reflect on what they, as adults, perceive to be children's perspectives*" (Broström, 2012, 259) others "*focus on how children look at their own world, their conditions and themselves*" (Broström, 2012, 259). I chose the latter option for my own research and developed a flexible and versatile mix of methods for my research.

Johansson (2003) declares the ambition with children's perspective to be expressing something about children's lives, making their voices heard and doing it on the terms and conditions of the child. The child

perspective is not inevitably comparable to the child's own point of view or perspective, even if adults frequently seem to think so. Still generally childhood and children's lives are entirely investigated through the understanding and views of their adult caretakers. Woodhead and Faulkner (2000) explains the research expertise to be all about empathizing the experience of children, understanding their beliefs and respecting their concerns. According to Einarsdottir and Wagner (2006) the concept children's perspective include the way children's lives are being understood by society and adults, as well as the way children experience and describe their lives. Everything goes through the adult filter even the children's own descriptions, since the adults are the ones interpreting and transcribing the provided information. While planning my research, I thought of how to minimize my own adult interpretations and maximize the children's perspective and to be honest. Merleau-Ponty (1962) claims that it is not a question of empathy, nor feeling, but more of an effort to understand the other person's existence in the world. Nevertheless, we cannot fully understand other people because we cannot get out of our own body and into another. There will always be something left in the other that we cannot get access to. James (1996) fails to acknowledge that to write from a child perspective means exposing the authentic child, instead of mildly contributing to the impression of what childhood might be like. I feel that it is easy to claim to be researching from a child's perspective, but adults always give the research their own twist and end up saying something else. Johansson (2003) affirms us to be a part of the world we are studying with all that it entails of our own experience and understanding. Our ability to fully understand the child's perspective, intentions and expressions of opinion

is limited, and the knowledge that can be obtained is complex and hardly complete. The South African proverb summarize the dilemma for doing research with children, by saying that until “*the lions have their own historians, history will always be written by the hunter*” (Lolichen 2006 in Alderson and Morrow 2011, 29). The meaning is that children are capable, social actors with creative capacities to communicate their experiences (O’Kane, 2008) but this will not be possible until they have their own researchers. Eide and Winger (1999) question our responsibility as researchers, pedagogues and teachers to search for children’s point of view and see the reality from their perspective. I believe that it is possible to search for children’s point of views and peek in to reveal parts of their perspectives, but to reveal the whole reality will be harder before the South african proverb becomes reality.

Solberg (1996) rejects that particular methodological problems would raise simply due to research with children. The argument usually is that children’s cultures are difficult to grip and children are easily influenced. Clark, Kjørholt and Moss (2005) note that there is a need for adults to revalue and relearn other languages when listening to young children. Effort and time is needed and entails a willingness to be multilingual. They claim that it is difficult for adults that have lost the hundred languages of childhood in adulthood. Merleau- Ponty (1962, in Johansson, 2003, 43) acknowledges that we all communicate by taking part in each others worlds, by meeting and interacting with people to understand them better. Communication is nuanced not only by words uttered, but by the gestures, intonations, facial expressions and the existence, revealing people's thoughts and ways to be. Johansson (2003)

argues that the base for understanding the child's perspective lies in the respect, sensitivity, privacy of children and judgement of the method. Solberg (1996) argues that research done with children does not differ from research with adults. She emphasizes an ignorance of age when doing research. I do not see any difference between research done on children or adults there is always the researcher and researched, with the same ethical consideration except for children not being able to choose for themselves to participate. So by listening to the children's voices and doing my best to represent their lives true reflexive methods, I am hoping to get a peek here and there of the child perspective and rebut some of the earlier believes of child research.

Qvortrup (2000) confirms ethnography to be an especially useful method for studying children. Giving a more direct voice and participation in the production of data to the children. To best present the child's perspective through my research, I decided to use the mosaic approach. As Clark (2005) notes, it combines participatory tools with traditional methodology of observation and interviewing. This way the diverse voices or languages can be recognised in the multi-methods and through the participatory methods the children will be positioned as agents and experts of their own lives. Ennew et al. (2009) reveal that there are both participant and research centred methods. They claim that the research methods empower both the researcher and the participants to communicate through different types of methods like talking, writing, ranking, remembering, acting, seeing and watching. Beazley and Ennew (2006) point out that no method is better than the other. Instead they suggest to use multiple methods and mix them to cross check results and

compare data. The methods should also be inventive, exploratory and flexible and they agree on an enjoyable research process for both participants and researcher. To be able to mix methods I had to choose between different techniques when gathering the children's perspective. These methods were put in a specific order, not only to complete each other, but also to help build the trust between the researcher and the participants and give time to get to know each other. The research started by unstructured and structured observations, followed by photographs combined with focus group discussion, play maps, individual interviews and was finished through child led walks in and around the preschool area.

From the start it was crucial for me to show the children's perspective throughout the thesis and involve the children in my research. That is why I used participant centred methods and preferred active rather than passive methods to let children's own experiences and views be expressed (Ennew et al. 2009). According to Beazley and Ennew (2006) the case with participatory methods should be equal to the researcher and respect the participants own words, ideas and understandings. O' Kane (2008) adds that participatory techniques empower children to talk more about issues affecting them. This method was earlier used with adults who had a low level of literacy and was found suitable for children because of the value in defining the participants own situation and ideas in addition with the dialog between the participant's own reality.

3.2 The field and sample

Already before the planning stage, it was clear to me that I wanted to do research in my home country Finland. I had only a few criterias for my coming research field and sample, to narrow down on the coming options. The first criteria was that I wanted to do my research in a Swedish speaking preschool. One reason was that I am bilingual myself and Swedish is my mother tongue. Another that I went to a Swedish speaking preschool myself and wanted to do research in a Swedish speaking preschool as they are fewer and the majority of research is done in the Finnish speaking preschools in Finland. I also wanted to have easy access and save time on travelling to and from my research field, giving me as much time as possible at the field. There are the main reasons for choosing the Helsinki Metropolitan area as the region. According to Johansson (2003) time is of great importance when trying to get access to children's life worlds, as well as the presence, propinquity, sensitivity and respect. It is also essential for my research that the research field and sample is unfamiliar to me from before as the Swedish speaking circles are small. The rest was left to chance, as I did not want to influence the research to any direction beforehand.

In the end the research field consisted of a daycare, preschool and primary school, with two preschool groups, six daycare groups and a primary school environment. All really nearby divided into three buildings. My research was mainly done in the building closest to school and in the primary school with the surrounding yard. The research was only done in one of the preschool groups, using their group room with

surroundings such as the hallway, lavatory, a smaller office room and the nearby forest for my research.

The plan was to be out on the field for four weeks, starting on the 5th of September and finishing on the 30th of September. The reason for timing the fieldwork a bit later than originally set by the faculty, was that better timing as Binns (2006) argues is important and should be based on local knowledge. As the Finnish preschool follows the basic education calendar year, preschool in Finland starts in August and ends in May. This left me with no other alternative than to start the fieldwork in September, when everyone has settled in the new environment of preschool.

The choice of age group and space was motivated by the fact that research is usually done with older children and I wanted to hear the younger ones, whose opinions are seldom asked.

After having received access from all the different gatekeepers, the research sample was determined by the parents' consent for their children and children's consent for themselves. At first I was worried that the sample would be too small, but it was all solved by a coincidence.

A small misunderstanding happened when I told the children about my research project and explained that the children participating need to use pseudonyms, a secret name just used for the research so they would remain unnoticed while presenting their knowledge, ideas and experiences in the project. All pseudonyms were made up by the children themselves. It was not until the next day when I had just arrived to the preschool, when Apple arrived as well with her mom.

Apple: *Oh yes, it's exciting today, when we have that secret thing.*
(sees me and says happily)

Apples mom: *Apple was so excited at home yesterday, speaking about the secret club.* (talking to me and one of the pedagogues)

After this episode, “the secret club” was used as the name for the research, as the name spread rapidly among the children as the interest among the children rose quickly. The research sample consisted of 11 out of 16 possible preschoolers; 7 girls; Sofia, Ellen, Appel, Riina, Kiira, Glitter and Linn and 4 boys; Konu, Merlock, Lloyd, Spartacus (all pseudonyms made up by the children themselves). The children were all born 2010. Some were six years old and some were still five during the research.

The sample size changed during the four weeks due to returned consent forms as well as due to children’s absence and interest to participate in each task throughout the fieldwork. Everyone except one child in my research sample were bilingual and most of the children mixed Swedish and Finnish words when talking. I noticed that when playing the children usually spoke Finnish with each other or mixed the two languages.

I did not have any interpreters or research assistants to help me while conducting my research at the field.

3.3 Research methods

The mosaic approach was used with a mix of participatory methods to gather the data for my research. Kalliala (1999) states that the integration

of interview and observation brings the researcher closer to truly understanding the interpretation. The methods are therefore not alternative but completing each other. Ennew et al (2009) reveal that through active rather than passive methods, children will feel more involved in the research. By utilizing the methods, their own views and experiences are expressed, which is the aim with all the different methods chosen; to complete each other and to give the child's perspective space to show in my research.

I will use overall six different methods in my research. All carefully considered to give a versatile picture of play in preschool, to involve the children and let their perspectives show. I chose unstructured and structured observations combined with photographs as a starting point for discussion, group discussion, play maps, individual interviews and child led walks in the preschool, which all will be presented separately below. Like with all methods, these may not be appropriate and adequate for everyone.

Every method will be recorded as far as possible, to make the data more valid and to enable me to be more present with the children during the data gathering and thus make my analysis process easier. The plan is to record and make notes during the play map and child led walk depending on background noise. During the fieldworks daily observations and specific situations, thoughts and comments from both children and me were all written down in my notebook. This was to support the records, to help me memorize things and note other factors that might otherwise pass by unnoticed, such as face expression and mood among others.

3.3.1 Observation

According to Ennew et al. (2009) observation is the base for all rewarding research, adding valuable information. The method is researcher-centred and easily combined with other methods and supporting them. By combining this method with the other I can receive knowledge about e.g. children's play in preschool, distinguish play from not play, see where play is preceded, what and when children are playing etc. Christensen (2004) have called observation the act of looking and relates to it as being an especially useful method for forming and conducting children's social relations. Warming (2005) confirms that a researcher cannot neutrally observe and listen in a privileged position. There is always some interaction between the observer and the observed and a power relation to consider. Ennew et al. (2009) points out that it is good to try to attract less attention to oneself when observing, not to put too much weight on a particular activity, to make detailed notes and to use the observations sheets as a helping tool. Warming (2005) emphasizes participant observation as it allows the researcher to get to know the children as they act and react both in verbal and body language in the specific context e.g at preschool. Learning more about the specific context and what is observed and interpreted depends on the relation to the studied phenomenon and may qualify the reflections on the research. While observing it is especially significant to listen with all the senses, using ears, eyes, nose, taste and to feel with the body. Listening with all senses is fundamentally about empathy and reflections on the limits of empathy. This becomes important when trying to achieve the children's trust.

According to Lillemyr (2002), observing play teaches us much about children and the unique activity scope that play represent them. Play has an intrinsic value for the children and it is a significant part of children's culture.

There are two types of observation, the structured and the unstructured. Both are crucial for understanding the context of data and for writing an exciting and realistic research report. Unstructured observation will be used especially the first week when gathering information, developing research questions and finding patterns (Ennew et al, 2009; Desai & Potter 2006). The unstructured observations will continue throughout the fieldwork together with some more structured observations to see the possible patterns (Ennew et al, 2009).

3.3.2 Photographs

Ennew et al. (2009) emphasize that both children and adults find it easier to talk about a picture or a photograph than to answer to questions. Pictures and images urge to stimulate the discussion with individuals and groups. The photographs were part of the group discussion to stimulate and open up for discussion. I borrowed an ipad from the preschool and used it during the time at the field. This gave me access to already existing photographs from their preschool activities and daily life, which I could use for the focus group discussion, together with some I took myself, of children playing inside and outside. Ennew et al (2009) note that photographs as a visual method discloses the way children see the world and their place in it, when they get to express themselves.

Revealing glimpses of the children's perspectives reduces the risk of missing out on important subjects.

3.3.3 Focus group discussion

According to Desai and Potter (2006) focus group discussion is not a left alone method but a multi-method approach to field research. Ennew et al. (2009) notes that this method is especially useful in the beginning of the research to explore different ideas and attitudes, It is a formal discussion with one specific topic at a time. It provides a superior environment for accessing group beliefs, understandings, collective social action, behaviours and attitudes that might be unnoticed in- depth interviews (Desai and Potter, 2006). Focus group interview is a nondirective way to interview a group of children and encourage a diversity of viewpoints and thoughts (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2006). Desai and Potter (2006) explains the importance of keeping the group of participants limited, due to possible difficulties recording, transcribing and analysing the focus group discussion. Ennew et al. (2009) consider the method easy but time consuming. They also point out that when planning the group status, differences should be taken into consideration.

According to Ennew et al. (2009) visual stimulus as in pictures and images urge to stimulate the discussion with individuals and groups. For the participant it is essential to see what the researcher wants them to see and talk about during the discussion, but when it comes to my research this is less vital. My curiousness towards what similarities and differences can be found on play in preschool is more relevant.

During the workshop week in February 2016, observation was discussed more in detail. It was considered an especially good method to encourage and empower children to talk with each other and to gather various opinions. It is an easy and cheap method, well adaptable and lead to further exploration. It is very good for cross checking information and for building on topics. But as with all methods there are some disadvantages. When it comes to the focus group discussion it is time consuming and it is hard to discuss difficult topics. Dominant participants might take more space than others and the amount of data to analyze is massive. Still the biggest advantage with this method is that children's thoughts and ideas are challenged by other children and together they will make intellectual progress (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2000).

3.3.4 Play map

Desai and Potter (2006) and Ennew et al. (2009) advocate the innovative methods used for exploring the world from children's perspective. According to Ennew et al. (2009) visual methods like the maps are used for collecting information about how space and time in daily life is being used. In my research play maps will be used for marking out what the children play in preschool. It will be an individual map done by many children at the same time. Each child is given the same instructions and the possibility to brainstorm together about different types of playing. Ennew et al. (2009) declare maps to be one of the visual methods, used with both individuals and groups for gathering new perspectives. Children are good at capturing details and especially this method gives the children the power, knowledge and the children's perspective that the researcher otherwise might miss out on. Desai and Potter (2006) endorse

maps to be useful for collecting verbal information and yet keeping focus on the discussion.

During the workshop week in February 2016, we talked with each other about the strengths and weaknesses using maps. For a research method it turned out to be a child led tool, empowering the participants, engaging them and being fun, as well as easy to combine with any other methods. Children are allowed to be in full control while the researcher receive meaningful data and acquire insights from the children. Time together with some creativity and clear instructions are required for this method. Another difficulty may be to keep the focus on the topic/theme and not to document everything that comes to mind. As we can remember from our own childhood, there was a difference between what we did and what was expected of us.

Some children might find it challenging, as they do not like drawing or find it hard to draw a play on paper or to separate play from not play in the preschool setting. This might also vary from day to day and some might not even think of it as play- they just do it. There can be no right or wrong, what the child draws on the map and sees as play will be viewed as play.

3.3.5 Interviews

Through interviews children get the chance to express their own experiences and views of their world (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Desai and Potter (2006) advocate interviews to be used after appropriate interview questions have been established in the research process. Ennew

et al. (2009) point out that designing interview tools can be challenging. All depends on the researcher's capability to ask the right questions. According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) simple, brief and open ended interview questions present the most valuable replies. Ennew et al. (2009) notes this tool to gather views and knowledge from individual participants. Semi- structured and unstructured interviews will be used for gathering data during the time at the field. As Ennew et al. (2009) acknowledge both types of interviews give the participant the freedom to control the conversation, enabling them to tell their stories in their own way. Eide and Winger (1999) remark that children have the right to know how the interview material will be used and the same applies to the use of tape recorder. The interview is based on my observations, photographs, group discussion and play maps.

The interview guide was done before entering the field, to help to structure the conversation with the children, but not to be followed too strictly. According to Ennew et al (2009) it is crucial to lose as little as possible from the interview. An interview guide (see appendix 1) and standard observation sheet (see appendix 2) can help in performing the interview, noticing body language and other factors that can influence both participant and researcher during the interview. These factors could otherwise be unnoticed and forgotten.

In interviews the language can turn out to be an issue both with children and adults, as we all express ourselves differently through our language. Therefore, testing the research questions in advance is essential, as is the use of simple and easily understandable language and, if possible,

involving children in the development of the research questions. Hjorth (1996) claims that by interviewing it is possible to capture children's perceptions in a more direct and detailed way as the children themselves are able to portray their thoughts and ideas about play in their own words. A child interview needs to be combined with other methods to be useful.

The children were all asked were they would like to be interviewed. Thus they could feel more comfortable and involved. Because of limited space, the hall or the office room was used and sometimes their own preschool group room.

A tape recorder was used during the interviews to get all the views from the children, save time and to enable me to be fully present. Before each method I asked if it was alright to interview them and if they felt comfortable being recorded. They could also listen to the recording afterwards if they wanted.

3.3.6 Child led walk

The last tool to be used in my research was the child led walk. Ennew et al. (2009) assert that the key for this method is understanding the views, priorities and experiences of the children in the community or neighbourhood. In my research it was the preschool environment. The children are allowed to guide the researcher around on the premises where they play every day. The Child led walk is well suited for both individuals and groups. I will use this method in the end of my research. It will cover both indoors and outdoors to see which places children view important while playing. I will then compare it with my earlier observations and data gathered through other methods.

The tool requires time and a smaller group of children to be able to listen to everyone and read the participants. Also good notes are required during the process of mapping. One topic at a time and not too many questions asked during the walk will improve the result.

The children should not be hungry, tired or bored as that has a negative impact on the research and makes it hard to gather sufficient pieces of data. These same conditions apply to all methods.

According to the findings from the workshop week in February 2016, neighborhood walks empower the children and make them experts. As an active tool it offers more spontaneous reactions. It is also seen as a child-led activity giving knowledge of children's daily routines and can be very time consuming if a larger group walk together.

This tool can arouse ethical concerns as I walk alone with the children and it may even be dangerous in less safe environments. Naturally security will be taken into account in advance and not endangering the children in any way. Child led walk was chosen one of the methods as it gave a very good insight to things that otherwise might have passed unnoticed. A lot of knowledge was gained from how children view their environment.

3.4 Research role

I may have been somewhat naive to think that I can set my role as a kindergarten teacher aside during the research on the field. Still the plan was to leave this and the typical adult role behind, to focus on working hard to get a good trustworthy contact with the children. My desire was

that by giving the children an active role in the data gathering and by choosing more active than passive methods, the children would be involved in the research and utilized the methods where their experiences and views could be expressed (Ennew et al., 2009). For me it was hard to think of a proper role in advance, so I decided to be open for letting the children give me a role and take the role that felt natural on the field.

Hjorth (1996) notes that play belongs those playing. Who else could better tell about play than the player. In play the child is supreme, which in my research empowers the children. Åm (1989) expresses that occasionally it is possible for adults to visit the children's world, more literally to sit down on their level and be together with them on their premises. She reveals that she learned a lot about children's perspectives by participating in their play. By participating in everything going on in the preschool, especially play, I was optimistic to think that I would learn a lot about the children's perspective as well as get to be part of their world. Corsaro and Molinary (2008) developed a procedure for getting children actively involved in developing the research role, expecting the children to draw Corsaro with them. I could just hope that the same would happen to me and the children would help me find my natural role. According to Corsaro and Molinary (2008) it is essential to take a less powerful role as an 'atypical' adult while researching children. They clarify the central goal to be creating a membership status and an insider's role. Disclosing the goal depends on dealing and developing the trust from diverse gatekeepers, acquiring working knowledge of the social structure and nature of interpersonal relations, regular routines in the setting as well as achieving the acceptance of the children and

teachers. Aiming for this less adult role does not mean I would pretend to be a child or think I could be fully equal with them. I just wanted to be the real me in each and every situation, curious about the child's perspective, knowing that my research role will be crucial for how the research project develops. My wish was to develop a non-authoritarian, a least adult role for reducing the power relation between the children and myself as an adult (Christensen, 2004). Clark (2005) reveals that by accepting the shifting in power the adult is released from knowing all the answers, which is what I am hoping to achieve, as well as establishing a sense of trust and acknowledgement from the children (Corsaro & Molinary, 2008). Beekman (cited in Johansson, 2003, 44) emphasizes that the researcher strives to get to know the children, get accepted and show commitment to get access to the children's worlds. An interested attitude and openness to the children's actions is being interpreted but not valued. He points out that the researcher should remember to carry out the methods on the terms of the children, be physically close, try to see what the child sees, understand the different expressions of them and find a way to express their life worlds in which also the researcher is a part. As Cook and Hess (2007) express, researchers need to learn about a child's perspective, be able to listen to children in different ways and get beyond their own beliefs. By using methods and techniques that empower the children and make them the experts and by really listening to the children with all my senses I hope to present the child's perspective in a valid and reliable way.

Warming (2005) represent a participant role, where the researcher makes the attempt to be part of the children's everyday life in kindergarten, in

the same way the children do; by playing with them, being exposed to the authority of the adult carers and give up one's own adult authority and rights. Kalliala (1999) reveals that even though the children's play culture would be part of the same culture with the researcher, the researcher as an adult is always a foreigner to the play culture. The physical, social and cognitive distance between a child and adult influence the relation between the participant and researcher. Clark, Kjørholt and Moss (2005) relates that listening to children requires relearning and revaluing of other languages. It requires time, effort and enthusiasm to be multilingual. For adults this is especially hard as they have lost the hundred languages of childhood. Eide and Winger (1999) agrees on that the most important element in research is the researcher's attitude and point of view. The understanding will come out through the ways of seeing, knowing and relating. By keeping an open mind, staying eager to learn from the children, communicating and listening with all my senses, I and the children would understand each other better and I would get invited to their world.

3.5 Data analysis and interpretation

Data analysis and interpretation have been a continuous process throughout the research. By writing down valuable observations and notes in my notebook, followed by writing a research diary every day after field day, I got closer to analyzing and interpreting the research bit by bit.

The research diary was to remind me of what happened each day. I made notes of possible ethical issues, problems and solutions, questions that

popped up, my impressions and feelings, as well as general comments to help record the research process (Ennew et al. 2009).

By daily observation I got valuable knowledge about the routines in preschool. I was able to get closer to identifying play in the context of preschool, how to distinguish play from not play and what, where and when play is preceded. All this helped me understand the children's perspective and to find possible research questions and answers. It minimized the risk of not asking essential questions and to support the other methods used. I also tried to take up all the different ways to communicate, keeping in mind the hundred languages of children.

Tape recorders were used in all methods, except when working with one of the children, as I had not received a consent for that and instead I wrote everything down. The tape recorder was a very big help to me when transcribing. I transcribed everything, that I considered to be of great importance for my study. The transcribing was challenging and took time as I had to translate the data from a mix of Finnish and Swedish to English. While keeping in mind the real meaning behind and sometimes how it was said. The examples might not always be proper english and professional translations, I apologize for that. I feel it would be impossible to translate the exact way they speak into another language and trying to do so would not give justice to the children and only confuse the reader. After transcription, I went back and forth between the two transcripts and listened to all recordings once more to be shore of not missing out on anything important. Then I started categorizing them and

make my analysis and interpretations. The play maps gave me the child's own track to the analysis and was interpreted by the children.

The photographs used to support the children in discussion of play and their play in preschool, were taken on the preschool groups own ipad.

This way the ipad was in daily use, the children could show me Lego friends, Monster High, Nexo Knights etcetera and talk about play.

I had content to photograph them but the pictures were left at preschool when I left to keep the children safe and to protect their privacy.

This way I had access to earlier pictures taken by the pedagogues and children and more pictures in use for discussion.

The interpretation starts right away when stepping to the field and continues until the thesis is completed. I have to keep in mind not to make to early interpretations and make them final, before all is done.

3.6 Ethical consideration

The ethical procedure for this research started with a visit in June to the preschool to present my research aim for the daycare and preschool director. In the beginning of August, I would go back to the preschool to present my research at their parent meeting, handing out the information package for each family to take home with them. The package included more information about the research, the informed consent sheet (see appendix 3) for the parents to sign and my contact information. The aim with this presentation was to inform all at once about my research, giving all the same information, possibility to ask me questions and get to know me a little as well as give workers and parents with their children time to

think about their possible participation. According to Alderson and Morrow (2011) consent builds respect for the whole relationship between participants and researcher. After parents have given consent the children will be asked for their consent to participate. For me it was particularly important to inform and give information about research to the children so they could understand and decide for themselves. Johansson (2003) notes that children turn out to be in a subordinate position. They have little opportunity to uphold their integrity and own interpretations against researchers and gatekeepers that have given their consent for children to participate in the research. Children have learned some social norms like deference and politeness towards adults that can bind them. According to O'Kane (2008) the challenges for doing research with children is in the power and status between an adult and child. Corsaro and Molinary (2008) claims there is an obvious difference between adults and children, that is shown in the cognitive, communicative maturity, physical size and power. They continue by endorsing the acceptance and participant status. Pointing out the importance of establishing the membership status and insider's perspective already in the field entry. A lot of work still need to be done and depends on the trust from the varied gatekeepers. Gaining the acceptance is time consuming, hopefully I will achieve the acceptance from all gatekeepers and especially as many children as possible so the research will show the child's perspective, experiences and views.

Warming (2005) reveals that although we learn a lot through the children's perspective by participating, to represent children's perspective in a valid way is challenging. As Eide and Winger (1999) expresses that listening to children is an everlasting balance between

inviting the child to openness and protecting the child from being manipulated. Children always have the right not to speak, inform, express or participate in research. Cook and Hess (2007) notes that to be able to learn about a child's perspective researchers have to listen to children in different ways and get beyond their own possible beliefs. I need to be aware of this from the start. Clark (2005) thinks that the question of power is involved in the communication with children, whether it is adults impacting knowledge to children or children communicating their ideas to adults. Other factors also contribute to the imbalance i.e. language, adults expectations and view on the child. My aim throughout the research process is to be as equal as possible with the children and that is why I chose participant observation and the mosaic approach to find the right ways to communicate and gather the children's perspective in the data. Finding a way to "*develop a sense of trust and acceptance in the children's peer culture*" (Corsaro and Molinary, 2008, 245) is essential for how the research turns out. As Clark (2005) emphasizes the mosaic approach "*requires adults to relearn other languages they may be unfamiliar with using in an educational context or to acquire new skills*" (Clark, 2005, 26). Continuing with seeing adults taking the leap to be co-learners with the children in order to listen better. Solberg (1996) reveals the same issue of power-powerlessness that may create difficulties concerning validity and ethics. O' Kane (2008) acknowledge the dilemma of being an adult researching children and trying to perceive as well as express children's experiences while not being a child oneself.

My own research role will be determined after I met with the children in person and interacted with them. Accepting that I am an adult and in

some ways different and other ways similar to the children will help in finding the balance and right role. Solberg (1996) explain that the research role is partly given and negotiated, which give me time to think about my own role.

O' Kane (2008) argues that participatory methods can help resolve several ethical problems when researching children giving more valid and reliable research findings. By giving an active participant role to both the researcher and the researched in the production of data, enforcing the issues of power, control and authority to be recognized in the research process. Somewhat switching the roles so the researcher becomes an active listener and the researched get the active role and space to talk about their needs.

Participating in my research is voluntary, children can withdraw at any time, all information will be confidential and kept out of reach for others. The research will be done after the daily permission from the children, followed by their interest, concentration span, tiredness and hungriness etc. No real names on preschool, children, pedagogues or parents will be used. All will get pseudonyms and through the naming activity with the children all participants will get to choose their own pseudonym.

Graham et al. (2013) states that *“Researchers should maintain integrity and strive to ensure that research is reported accurately, fairly and in ways that are not discriminating or misrepresentative of children’s voice, experiences and circumstances.”* (Graham et al., 2013, 36). Ennew et al. (2009) affirm that the researcher has to take responsibility for protecting participants from harm in research, ensure their safety and respect them

as they are. Throughout my research it is necessary that the children feel involved in my research, that there is a mutual trust and an open forum for discussion (O'Kane, 2008).

During the fieldwork I will be using my notebook and the recorder to gather data, which will all be kept safe and unshared for others. The records and notes will be deleted and destroyed afterwards.

My gratitude will be shown the last day by playing, offering cookies and giving a diploma (see appendix 7) to all the children.

3.7 Challenges and limitations

Starting fieldwork later than supposed was the first challenge I had to deal with. This limited me in the way that I could just wait and make everything ready for fieldwork as well as starting writing on other parts before being fully sure about which methods and theories to use, so I would not get too much behind of the others.

The second challenge was the long process getting true all the different gatekeepers before even getting close to the children. Starting with getting true with my project description at the University, applying for research permission from NSD, then applying for research permission in Finland, mailing preschool directors to ask for their interest to participate, get acceptance from preschool director and workers, parents and then meet the children to ask for their participation at the field. This was all time consuming taken me from the end of April to September before it was all clear.

The third challenge that also limited me and the research was that I could not present the research project for the parents in the conjunction to their parent meeting at the preschool as planned. I had to wait until I got to the field to present myself, my research and answer possible questions. Leaving it to the last minute. Thankfully the preschool director handed the information package in advance to the parents with consent sheets and presented me and my research a bit, but the parents and workers did not get to make a first expression of me in beforehand.

I made a risk assessment (see appendix 4) to evaluate the potential risks of my project. This was to prepare for possible challenges and limitations.

A disappointment and big challenge was that during the first week at the field none of the ordinary pedagogues were there. Which limited the way I could do my research. Fortunately, the children and substitutes took well care of me and I got to know both of them well.

After the first week the challenge was the new start again, not with the children but with the ordinary pedagogues. The pedagogues reactions to me when they met me were like day and night. One was warmly welcoming me, really happy to have me visit and eager to know more about my research. The other was the complete opposite, from the first moment we met and I said hello and presented myself I could see from the eyes and body language that I was not welcome here and I was seen as a treat. I could not imagine that this would be the reaction I get after

met with the first one. I really took it hard when my stay there and my research was questioned and criticized, without any constructive ideas for changes to make it better. I decided right away to take the challenge and get to know the pedagogue better and be so clear as I could get with everything that come with the research. Which led to positive results and I found the pedagogue relaxing and open up much more, even relying on me with confidential things. The pedagogue then quit working in the preschool in the middle of my research depending on other conditions than my research. The preschool group got another pedagogue to work instead of the earlier and everything just continued as before. This of course influenced the children a bit, but as most of them new the new pedagogue from before the group dynamic actually turned out better than it had been before.

Time was a challenge that I had to deal with each and every day, because I had only four weeks at the field I had to use the time wisely, sticking to my four-week plan (see appendix 5) without running over the children, given them space to influence the data gathering.

What also limited me and children being part in the research was the late replies of consent from the parents and then children wanting to be part of the research but for some reason did not get consent. So I had children waiting and begging me to let them be part. Which first felt really bad but I could not let them be part without consent from their parents, so I decided to spend some time with them as well and do some small task to let them feel part. Another challenge was how to ask consent from the children in person. I ended up using a ‘magic pen’ (normal ink pen, with

four different colours to press and use from the same pen) with whom the children that felt they wanted to take part would get to write their name and draw something in my notebook. Making it clear that this is nothing binding, they choose for themselves if they want to take part and when, always having the possibility to withdraw. This was meant to be a way for me to know which child had given their consent.

The biggest challenge was translating and transcribing the data from a mix of Swedish and Finnish child language to English. I was afraid that this would limit the child's perspective as some of the words and descriptions from the children lost their child voice because of translation. This way I also lost the bilingual touch as most of the time the play language was a mix of Swedish and Finnish, for some totally Finnish.

Usually a crucial part of the research is the note taker and the facilitator, in my research there were none of them. As I got to be both with some help from the tape recorder. Challenging myself and also in one way limiting my research as I can only focus fully on one thing.

Interpreting the research data in a correct way was a challenge. As I did not have any of the children with me so we could have interpreted the data together. We had only listened through the tape recorder once with each child that wanted and gone true some of the material gathered with the children at the field, the rest was up to me to interpret and present the child's and children's perspective in the research.

CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In this chapter I will present the Social studies of childhood, particularly from the child actor perspective and agency that have formed my empirical research. In addition, I will describe the characteristics of play and present play in preschool, followed by earlier research and views on play.

4.1 The Social Studies of Childhood

Kjørholt (2007) declares that the Social studies of childhood, also called Sociology of childhood, has been developed by an interdisciplinary group of international researchers i.e. Chris Jenks (1998), Allison James (1990, 1998, 2008, 2009), Alan Prout (1990, 1998), Leena Alanen (1998, 2001, 2015), Jens Qvortrup (2005) and William Corsaro (2005, 2008, 2012). Various academic fields, starting with anthropology and sociology, have been influenced by other disciplines like geography, history, pedagogy, philosophy and psychology, leading to the social studies of childhood. The social studies of childhood present a noticeable ‘tradition’ in the international research on children and childhood, without clear and definite boundaries, approaches and perspectives.

In their book *Theorizing Childhood*, James et al. (1998) present four different approaches to the social studies of childhood: the socially constructed child, the tribal child, the minority group child and the social structural child. For the purpose of this study I will not discuss them deeper as they are less vital for my study. However, I will present the social studies, the actor-oriented child research and the agency that are related to my research.

According to Broström (2006) the understanding of children's perspective, the competent child and children as participants is already extensively integrated in the early childhood education and care (ECEC). A new status, voice, role and view of children as equal members of society has been achieved. Qvortrup (2005) and James (2009) endorse that the social studies of childhood emphasise the child as a being, a competent social actor equivalent with adults. Children are seen as whole, complete human beings, having their own status, needs and rights (Broström, 2006). Children are involved in matters affecting their lives and not only what will be revealed about the future of humankind (James et al. 1998). Children are builders and creators of social relations themselves (Kalliala, 1999).

The children's experiences vary in particular times and places, which social, economic and political processes influence and operate on a multitude of various scales (Clark, 2013). Prout and James (1990) advocates that the studies of childhood aim to give a voice to the children and *children as people to be studied in their own right and not just as receptacles of adult teaching* (Hardman 1973, 87 in Prout and James, 1990, 34). It is especially relevant to make visible children's contributions to cultural, economic and political (re)production of society (Kjørholt, 2007). Qvortrup (2005) and Strandell (2010) stated that children are already members of society, they do not become it. As they are ready to participate in the social life as newborns (Broström 2006). The aim with the social studies of childhood as Strandell (2010) endorses is that cultural and historical changes influence the social construction of

childhood. According to Prout and James (1990) *the social science are not neutral commentaries on childhood but active factors in its construction and reconstruction* (Prout and James, 1990, 29).

4.2 Social actors with agency

Within the Social Studies of Childhood, children are ought to be viewed as social actors with agency. No longer do children have to be subsumed under social institutions like family or as “becomings”, the child has a status (Alanen, 2001). According to Prout and James (1990) children are agents, *active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and the societies in which they live. Children are not just the passive subjects of social structures and processes* (Prout and James, 1990, 8). They are also participants in the formation of their own childhoods (Alanen, 2001; Corsaro, 2005).

Kjørholt (2007) assert that children “*are constructed as competent, creative actors, and childhood is thought of as a domain in which children’s own authentic culture unfolds and can be understood relatively independently of adulthood*” (Kjørholt, 2007, 33). Rather than *as consequence of external social forces and influences* (Broström, 2006, 228). Children are now seen as people, who through their individual actions, can make a difference *to a relationship, a decision, to the workings of a set of social assumptions or constraints* (Mayall, 2002, 21). Nilsen (1990) gives a description of what the actor perspective is about;

An actor perspective in researching children involves an attitude where children are regarded as ‘whole’ and ‘complete’ human

beings. This does not mean that I look at children as identical to and like adults, but it means that children and adults have to be regarded as equals (in value). We have to acknowledge that children's knowledge of everyday life is valuable, and that their knowledge may be different from what adults know. We have to take seriously what children think is important and meaningful even though this may conflict with what we adults (educationalists and adults in other professions) think is 'good for children'. Before we can judge what is 'good for children', we have to know their standpoints, we have to know what children think is important, their interpretations, what they know, their skills and practices – on their premises (Nilsen 1990, p. 47 translated by Nilsen)

Nilsen (1990) definition comprises the relevant aspects to my research; viewing children as complete human beings, equal and having valuable insights to their everyday life, as well as seeing and getting to know the children's perspectives on their own terms.

In preschool agency is supported through cooperation (adult-child, child-child and adult-adult), participation and shared responsibility (Utbildningsstyrelsen, 2016). Continuing by ensuring that the staffs job is to guarantee that children may express their opinion and ideas, along with that their ideas and initiatives are taken into account in preschool. Kjørholt (2007) expresses that children in many respects are social participants in societies and in cultural life, reproducing and producing culture in their everyday lives in diverse localities worthy of comparison with adults. They are co-constructing their childhoods and as active agents establishing relationships with both other children and adults. The child-adult relation is particularly of importance in the childhood studies,

where generational and hierarchical relationships offer both limitations and opportunities for children's agency (Mayall, 2002).

Alanen (2001) notes that when exploring generational structures, where childhood as a social position is daily produced and lived, a specific concern should be on securing children's agency. In relational thinking, agency need not to be restricted to the micro-constructionist understanding of being a social actor (as in sociologies of children). Rather, it is inherently linked to the 'powers' (or lack of them), of those positioned as children, to influence, organize, coordinate and control events taking place in their everyday worlds. In researching such positional 'powers', they are best approached as possibilities and limitations of action, 'determined' by the specific structures (regimes, orders) within which persons are positioned as children.

It has now been generally accepted in education, psychology and sociology that children are viewed as active agents in their socialization and development (James, 2009). Abebe (2012) reveals that yet there exists a ghettoisation of children's agency. Although viewing children as social actors has been recognizable, not all social science disciplines have been fully permeated. This means that children's everyday lives move back and forth along a continuum of diverse experiences in relation to changing degrees of independence/dependence reflecting authority, rights, abilities, knowledge, responsibilities among others. (Punch et al., 2007). Despite our recognition that children are active social beings, it remains true that their lives are almost always determined and/or constrained in large measure by adults. There are few instances where

children are organized at a 'grass roots' level to represent themselves independently (Prout and James, 1990). The general agreement of the diverse ways in which agency is formed in children's everyday lives is still missing, agency is put against dependency in some of the existing literature. Kiili (2006) find out in her study of research for children's participation that children's agency and participation in their everyday life has to a great extent been more or less unnoticed in the welfare research and state institutions. This because still a strongly adult-centred and infirm adaption to the perspectives of children exist in the models. On the contrary, almost all political, educational, legal and administrative processes have a profound effect and yet children have little or no influence over them (Prout and James, 1990).

James et al. (1998) reminds that to understand how children deal with their circumstances (including changing formations of childhood), it requires studies that foreground their agency in social action. It includes the real life of childhood, the daily lived experience of children, their experiences and understandings, interactions with each other and with adults of various kinds and their strategies and tactics of action.

4.3 Play

While observing and being part of play on the field, I decided to present play from the children's perspective and from what had been visible for me. I will start this part with a quote from Brian Sutton-Smith's book *The Ambiguity of play* (2001) to pinpoint the challenges with studying play, especially in defining and making theories of it.

We all play occasionally, and we all know what playing feels like. But when it comes to making theoretical statements about what play is, we fall into silliness. There is little agreement among us, and much ambiguity (Sutton-Smith, 2001, 1).

Kalliala (2004) states that play is a universal phenomenon and children play everywhere. Play is seen to be an especially childlike form of activity, being both a historical and a cultural phenomenon that can only be practised by playing and by being part of it (Mouritsen, 2002). Hakkarainen (2006) explains that play has no utilitarian function as he says *children play for the sake of playing* (Hakkarainen, 2006, 191) giving them deep satisfaction at its best. Play is an attitude more than a certain kind of activity that for one child may signify play and for the other not (Hakkarainen, 2006). Sutton-Smith (2001) admits that researchers sometimes define play the way children perceive it. Proving that play is not a preparation for the future as many times thought, it is rather about having fun, being with friends, being free from restrictions, able of using imagination and drama, pretending, playing games and being work free.

Hakkarainen (2006) reports that peer groups have an enormous effect on the way playing situations develop as play is social by nature. In their play children use everything they see, hear and experience as elements. While playing, new things are created and reproduced. Hakkarainen (2006) points out that everything that is apparent in play is significant to the child, but not everything that is significant to the child is apparent in play.

4.3.1 Characteristics of play

It is easier to answer the question of what play is, when describing the characteristics of play. Kalliala (2004) specify that play differs from the other ordinary life even if it often retrieves its content from real life. When playing together it is important to distinguish play from doing something else (Kalliala, 2004). According to Sutton-Smith (2001) there are multiple forms of play, with different functions and characteristics, diversified play contexts and players makes the definition harder. As the studies of play come from an multidisciplinary field, across i.e. anthropology, art, evolution and development (Ailwood, 2003). Play is also more of an attitude than behaviour, the child/player is the only one in the end that know if it is play or not (Knutsdotter Olofsson, 1987).

The following characteristics of play were seen in preschool: metacommunication, playfaces or “let’s pretend” (“på lek”), “as if“, flow and nonsense.

4.3.1.1 Metacommunication

Gregory Bateson (in Kalliala, 2004) got interested in how the once playing notify each other of the significant message of play, “this is play”. He meant that to understand a play signal, means to understand the paradoxical nature of play i.e. a playful snap means a bite, but does not mean the same as a real bite. Pramling Samuelsson and Asplund Carlsson (2008) acknowledges that communication and metacommunication is spontaneously used in children’s play. The metacommunicative signal ‘this is play’ function as a frame for the whole play, separating play from what is not seen as play, announcing that what happens next is not for

“real” (Bateson 1976 in Knutsdotter Olofsson, 1987). These play signals can be both verbal and nonverbal, the playful attitude is often revealed by an expression or gesture (Kalliala, 2004).

4.3.1.2 Playfaces (“på lek”)

Rönnerberg (1989) suggest play might best be described as an adverb (“på lek”) or as an attitude to the phenomenon in question. My translation for (“på lek”) varies depending on the context, I use both *playfaces* and “let’s pretend” to describe the specific moment and situation.

Knutsdotter Olofsson (1989) claims that playfaces (“på lek”) is not necessarily explicitly expressed in the communication of play, mostly it is implicit. Through subjunctive, feigned votes, gestures and movements children mark that they are in a play sphere. According to Knutsdotter and Olofsson (1989) the message of “this is play” (“detta är på lek”) has an paradoxical character. As a reference to the reality outside play, the players statements and actions should not be taken seriously. Within the play sphere it is somewhat different.

In the beginning of the play situations and later on as well children often used *can we play* (“kan vi leka”), *let’s pretend I am an...* (“på lek var jag...”) or shall we play that... (“ska vi leka...”) to be sure that the other players would understand how the play would develop and what would happen next, while planning and playing at the same time.

4.3.1.3 “As if” (“som om”)

The most distinctive that researchers and scientists all agree on is the characteristics of play “as if” (“som om”) (Knutsdotter Olofsson, 1987). Åm (1989) emphasizes that true “pretending” (“på liksom”) children take the step into the world of play. For children’s play “as if” is a free zone for the inventiveness and fun (Lillemyr, 2002). Johansson and Pramling Samuelsson (2006) mention the following concept of “as if” play; the unpredictability, its symbolic, communicative and social aspects, the play process, the experience of pleasure and meaning, as well as the physicality and interconnectedness with the child's world. Play is characterized by imagination, excitement, dedication and commitment. In the “as if” play the child is engulfed by time and space and nothing else is important.

4.3.1.4 Flow

Lillemyr (1990) mentions that it is typical that play engage the child in an absorbed way. In a truly great play situation the child moves to another level above or outside itself. Also called flow, where the experience or activity in itself matters and gives meaning. Kalliala (2004) claims that the funny part of play is based on a spontaneous and unconscious connection. As the full insight of play can best be described with flow.

4.3.1.5 Nonsense

Strandell (1997) contends that in the modern western society play would be marginalized and looked at as a world of its own. Separated and differentiated activity from what is seen to be the real world, the adult world. Leaving play outside the “real” society and becoming something

childish. Something children often are left to do on their own. According to Schwartzman (1998 in James et al.) play is seen as both nonsense and sense, as about transformation and experiment and repetition and mimicry at the same time.

4.4 Play in preschool

Play in preschool, stands in this context for the child initiated play and the playful adult led activities (playful learning), limited by the routines and structures in preschool. Involving indoor and outdoor play, peer and social play, role play, physical play, rule play and technology in play. Which all include the various characteristics of play, mentioned earlier.

Cleve and Oleander (2004) states that play is the basic form of life and activity for under school-aged children and the value of play should be visible in the kindergarten rearing- and education. In early childhood education, play has long been one of the most central themes (Lillemyr, 2002 & Hakkarainen, 2006). Aalsvoort van der et al. (2015) declares that in the western society the early childhood play is broadly considered as a child-initiated activity. As Sutton-Smith (2001) stated *children are programmed to actively seek out information and play is the principle mechanism for doing so* (Sutton-Smith, 2001, 37).

Rogers (2011) reveals that although a general understanding of the value and benefits of play exist, play has increasingly become an instrument for learning future competencies within the dominant Western early childhood education. Which contradicts with the notion of play as being child led, spontaneous and motivated in itself. According to the Utbildningsstyrelsen (2016) an essential part of preschool is both the

supervised and spontaneous play, with an illustrative approach that promotes children's activity and creativity. Mentioning in the preschool curriculum that pre-primary education should be planned to give enough space for children's play, initiatives and experiments (Utbildningsstyrelsen, 2016). Giving children daily opportunities to play in pairs, in smaller groups, alone, alongside with others, and have adult time to explore together what is in the child's interest (Moyles, 1989). Play is important in the view of including the child's language development, when the child will learn new skills, manage their emotions and shape their cultural identity (Utbildningsstyrelsen, 2016). In preschool, children should have the opportunity to play on their own terms and learning new plays and gaming, these different forms of play should be used in teaching (Utbildningsstyrelsen, 2016). Which shows that play is often used as a method to teach or for learning something, not always being valued in the meaning of itself as mentioned earlier. Other factors that I saw influencing the play in preschool were the physical space, the available resources, time, presence of adults, playmates, toys and other tools that can be used, rules, possibility to save and continue play later on. In a more pedagogical setting play is more of a circularized and supervised activity Schwartzman (1998 in James et al).

Einarsdotter and Wagner (2006) points out that in Nordic childhood, preschool access has become almost a universal right. The content of preschool and pedagogy is broadly debated in the Nordic countries i.e the question of how much child initiated play should there be etc. Moyles (1989) contends that in an educational setting play does not only provide

real medium for learning but enables adults to learn about children and their needs as well.

However, this view of play is in contradiction with educational policies and programmes. Neither does it match the way many of today's parents and caregivers really understand play and the way play is generally founded in early childhood (Ginsburg 2007 in Schackel 2015). Pramling Samuelsson and Asplund Carlsson (2008) reveals that play and learning in the context of early childhood education are often separated in time and space. Routines like circle time, literacy hours and creative art are perceived as origin of learning, while play is put aside until leisure time or outdoor hours and is part of children's own resort. Hakkarainen (2006) reveals that several studies show that play in the Finnish early childhood education is less central in the daycare practice. Based on the early childhood educators rhetorics and the language in the official documents. The days are determined after the pedagogues schedule, routines, adult initiated activities, different circle time for singing or listening to stories, table activities, outdoor activities, nature walks and field trips. During the preschool time I noticed that there was mostly supervised activities and the little time for the spontaneous play, was mainly outside. Play, especially the spontaneous play had a bigger role outside the preschool hours (9-13), both before and after, as most of the children continued daycare.

For these preschool children role play, play with technology and rule play/games were the most popular play forms. The children played different role plays like home both as humans and animals with toys and without toys, the technology in play was influenced from tv- programmes

or games like lego Friends, Ninjago and Nexo knight, they also build their own computers and phones or became some tv or action figures, rule plays like tag, hide and seek, physical play like football, floorball, having running context or some “let’s pretend” (“på lek”) fighting.

4.5 Earlier research and views on play

Sutton- Smith (2001) admits that different academic disciplines also have quite different play interests. Some study the body, some study behaviour, some study thinking, some study groups or individuals, some study experience, some study language- and they all use the word play for these quite different things. For example, biologist, psychologists, educators and sociologists tend to focus on how play is adaptive or contributes to growth, development and socialisation (Sutton-Smith, 2001).

According to The National Institute for Play (NIFP) extensive amount of scientific research data on play exist, from developmental and cognitive psychology, neurophysiology, evolutionary and molecular biology to animal play behaviour. Current research describes patterns and states of play, explaining how play shapes our brain, ballast our emotions and creates our competencies. Even though children’s voices are heard and actions seen to a greater extent than before in contemporary Nordic society, education and research this phenomenon is not widespread or universal (Broström et al., 2016). Neither has the documents of today succeeded to dispel the doubts that circumscribe play, giving play a clear and leading role in the early childhood education (Hjorth 1996). There is a noticeable lack of investment globally in policies and activities that

promote and support children's free, spontaneous and creative play (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013). A clear limitation to research on children's play is the lack of in-depth qualitative understanding and evaluation of how children actually experience play (Lindqvist 2001 in Shackel, 2015). Schackel (2015) points out the central focus in understanding play, if play is to be valued, there need to be an understanding for why children play, what feelings, sensations and emotions are engaged and evoke in them. Today there exist two parallel discourses of play, both as gaining terrain and fading away in favour for learning (Pramling Samuelsson & Asplund Carlsson, 2003). Kapasi and Gleave (2009 in Schackel 2015, 56) is one of the few studies where children were asked about their play experiences. There is a demand for more research of this kind, especially studies of children's experience of play and not merely their choices of what play to engage in.

CHAPTER 5: EVERYDAY LIFE IN PRESCHOOL

Chapter five will go into the everyday life in preschool and present different themes for this study. Presenting and analysing children's views and experiences of play in preschool. The data for this chapter is drawn from the fieldwork observations, individual and group interviews, photographs, play maps and child led walks with the children.

The following will be presented through the children's perspective: the various methods and diverse examples of play in preschool, the play spaces and places, how play was communicated through playfaces, the rules for play, and popular type of play.

5.1 Time for play

The preschool curriculum lays high ambitious standards for adult led activities. The activities are highly organized and much of the time in preschool is passed by eating, cleaning, getting dressed/undressed and this steals time and space from play (Hjorth, 1996; Siren- Tiusanen, 2004; Hakkarainen, 2006).

Linn's (6-years) answer to what they do in preschool.

*Sometimes immediately after we arrive, we have a morning meeting
and sometimes we get to play after the meeting
and sometimes we make puzzles after the meeting
and sometimes we go out after play and making puzzles
and then after being out we eat
and after eating it's resting time
and after resting time we get to play a little
and after playing we go out
and after being out we go home.*

Linn's answer reveals a lot that is going on in preschool from morning meeting, adult led activities, playing, being out, eating, resting and following the same pattern each day. Her answer shows a typical day of preschool. Her use of "sometimes" highlight the changing possibility in the daily structure. Each day starts with a morning meeting after this there is sometimes play time or puzzle time as Linn said. She might have been referring to adult led activities as I did not see children doing any puzzles while I was there but there were some on the bookshelf.

I also noticed that most often the adult led activities started right after the morning meeting. Linn refers to play twice in her description that extend over the preschool hours, of which one is mentioned with sometimes (not a daily routine). Her description shows that playing time is competing with the daily routines and other activities. My observation was that the routines and adult led activities took a large part of the preschool time.

After preschool time was over, the children continued daycare and there was still daily structure and routine yet more time for play, especially child initiated play.

The research participants all felt that there was enough time for play in preschool. Their answers surprised me, before understanding that we thought about preschool differently. The participants did not separate the actual preschool time (9-13) from the daycare time (7.30-9 and 13-17). For them it was all part of preschool and only I had made a clear distinction between these two. I continued focusing on the playing time in preschool between 9-13 (as I focused and observed this part

specifically for 2 weeks already) and let the children have their view (not to confuse the children) as this was about their experiences not mine.

The playing time varied each day, depending on the program. During the preschool time between 9-13 children got to play on their own, either inside or outside for a maximum of 90 minutes, divided into two shorter sections, once before lunch when the adult led activities were done and once after resting time when calmer play was either organized or children organized it themselves. The child initiated play was less visible during the preschool hours and often happened outside, while after preschool the children had more time for playing both inside and outside as the adult led activities were fewer.

It takes time to plan the play and seek for the right toys and other useful materials. What I observed was that sometimes “arranging” play took so long that the children never got to play or just for a short time.

Time was also a vague concept for the children to understand, although they had been playing for a long time they felt cleaning time came in the middle of the play or game and disappointed comments like *No, not yet* or *Now already* or *We did not even get to play* came from the children. Whining was not heard.

5.2 Adult led play and activities

This chapter is about adult led play and activities, revealing the more organized program in preschool and the view of play.

In the Scandinavian early childhood education, the child initiated play is a central ideal, even if it is not always realized in daily practice (Hakkarainen, 2006). The purpose of preschool is to raise children's capacities for learning new skills and facts through play (Ojanen, 2002). Play should not, however, be formed solely as an instructional method after the adult's interest, used as an aid to learn important things, knowledge and skills (Siren-Tiusanen, 2004). None of today's documents have been able to dispel the uncertainties surrounding play and given it a clear and leading role in the preschool rearing (Hjorth, 1996). Play has become secondary in relation to the adult plans and adult led activities (Siren-Tiusanen, 2004).

A big part of the preschool day was adult led and the activities varied. Here are a few examples of what the adult led activities could be.

We usually do preschool tasks. (Ellen 6 years)

We do task were you draw a sun, when we had Abc and then we have taken the length, and then we have made that you kind of draw as many, as if there is just one we draw one, and if there is two we draw two, all the time more. (Kiira 6 years)

Fun to do tasks, that we keep in our folders (Spartacus 5 years)
We do some kind of tasks, then we sing sometimes, sometimes we have free play and sometimes we do task or play on the schoolyard.
Sometimes adults will find a game and then you have to go with it, really stupid. (Linn 6 years)

Another part that children connect preschool with is the preschool tasks. Listening to the children's examples it becomes clear that the tasks vary, they are kept in their own folders and it is not always fun as Linn says "... you have to go with it, really stupid". Here the children refer to school

like tasks, but these are not the only adult led activities in preschool. The activities or tasks as the children call them, varied. As they could work inside or outside, have some cooperation exercises all together, work in small groups, sing together, have SFN (“Sammanhållen förskole och nybörjarundervisning”, translation unified preschool and beginner teaching), excursions, visit the forest nearby or have activities outside on the schoolyard or on their own yard. Regardless of what the adult led activity or task was, each child got to do the same, with the same explanation and then the children got to do it their own way. A huge part of the tasks were planned as playful activities, where the children got to use all their senses and think without having any right or wrong way of doing the task. In the morning meeting the task was presented and discussed. First they solved the task together, then they each got a turn to solve it and lastly the pedagogue helped by asking the child questions but never giving any correct answer.

The children were actively part in the adult led activities, either working on their own or together. A lot of playful activities were arranged by the pedagogues, but little child initiated play. For the children almost all activities were or could be play, it just depended on the activity and who you asked. It was not enough that the adult led activity was playful to be called play it had to be fun as well. This was indicated from my observations, interviews and the children’s play maps (see appendix 6). The excursion to Haltia, a Finnish Nature Centre and an ordinary situation in the preschool is presented below, showing examples of adult led activities that turned to play and fun.

The preschool group had travelled for the exhibition presenting the Finnish nature with interactive maps, videos, sound records, stuffed animals and a guide presenting lot of information about the Finnish nature especially about the forest and the green belt. For children the interactive and visual presentations were the most interesting i.e. on the floor there was a video playing nonstop with Finnish fish swimming in the sea that the children tried to catch and swim with. Another thing the children were interested about were the bird sounds. Trying to listen to familiar sounds. All the children's favorite was what looked like a tunnel, small and dark but when you crawled deeper into it you would touch something soft and fluffy, a hibernating bear. The children crawled in many times and Merlock and Riina pretend to be eaten alive while Lloyd, Spartacus, Glitter, Konu, Ellen, Kiira, Appel and a few others played tag, crawling in and out from the tunnel. Linn and Sofia crawled in and out to pet the bear and give food.

The second example is from preschool when the pedagogues had organized an mathematical activity to sort and arrange some of the toys (lego bricks, multilinks and toys from the home play corner). The children were divided into three groups, I observed Spartacus, Lloyd and another boy sorting and arranging the multilinks. The boys all agreed to sort the multilinks by colour and arrange them in smaller groups each taking one colour at a time. Then Lloyd started counting his while organizing the multilinks by colour, Spartacus went after paper and colour pencils and brought to each of them so they could all write the amount down, which led to discussions between the boys of how to write certain numbers. By this time other groups started to be ready and went out while I continued observing the boys that each worked on their own, not communicating much to each other. When they had arranged all the multilinks by colour. Lloyd started organizing the already arranged multilinks by colour each colour after each other, forming a long straight line. The other boys start helping as it is not so easy to get the multilinks together and Lloyd says *let's make a super long worm* and they all liked the idea and participated in their new project. One of the pedagogues came asking how it goes for the boys and if they want to come out playing, as the others are ready with the task. But Lloyd answered *no, we are going to build a super long worm throughout the room* and the pedagogue responded *okay, come*

out when you are done. The worm grow and grow, they had already gone far above the area given them. All the boys were eager, when the last multilink was put on place, they started counting all the multilinks again and come up to 121 multilinks in 8 colours. But this was not enough, Lloyd would like to measure the worm, but did not find a measuring tape that would be long enough just a short ruler, so the other boy helped with measuring, marking each end of the ruler on the worm but after used both of his hands and Spartacus had done the same, they still had some of the worm left. Spartacus and the other boys interest drops and they get up from the floor and then Lloyd also get up. Leaving the worm on the floor, for the others to see.

Children younger than school age move between play and not play all the time in their lives, from the children's perspective play can be defined as an activity through which they explore and acquire the surrounding world and the root causes of culture (Siren- Tiusanen, 2004). Both examples show that no matter where the children were, they were taking each chance they got and turned adult led activities to play as well. The pedagogues were permissive and rarely controlled the children as long as they did what was expected of them. What I found in both of the examples and other observations was that play after all was present all the time and the step from adult led activities to children's play was short. What first had been an adult led activity could turn and continue as play, like in these two examples. Play is so nuanced that the line between play and an activity vary depending on who you ask (Glenn et al., 2012).

It is impossible to know which adult led activity children saw as play and which not. What I observed during the methods was that children were eager to help, tell me about their everyday life in preschool and play. My

methods were adult led even if they gave a lot of space for children to freely affect the tasks or “secret club things” as the children called them. Before leaving and ending my fieldwork, a card was given to me from the preschool group, containing children’s drawings of themselves, their thoughts and experiences from my stay. Giving me valuable feedback from the child perspective, all participants thoughts except for Linn's’ are being represented below as she was ill the last day.

I like when Anna came here and worked. She was funny. When arrived in the morning, I said to myself, Oh, there's a new person coming today! (Ellen 6 years)

I liked when she (me) loaded in our voices (meaning the audio record). Really nice. (Riina 6 years)

She was funny. The tasks were the best. (Kiira 6 years)

The secret club was fun, super fun. (Glitter 6 years)

Anna always took me in her arms. She was super nice and I liked her. (Sofia 5 years)

She was funny. The tasks were fun, super nice. She was good. (Spartacus 5 years)

Pretty okay. (Lloyd 6 years)

Anna was super fun, because I got to help her play Nexo Knights. We got to do tasks and they were fun. I love her so much. (Merlock 6 years)

I will miss you! Why do you go away? You were fun. I like you. (Apple 5 years)

That Anna has loaded Nexo Knights. She’s nice. (Konu 5 years)

Even if not all the participants mention the tasks or the secret club, the fieldwork time was a positive experience from the children's perspective.

These perspectives can be seen from their answers, body language and direct feedback during and after the methods. Children enjoyed being part, thought it was fun and liked the methods. Playful, fun and enjoyable are characteristics of play, but even if the research methods were experienced as the characteristics of play, it cannot be determined with certainty if the children experienced the methods as play or not.

5.3 Playfaces

How to distinguish play from not play?

You see with your eyes if it is play or not. (Spartacus 5 years)

Well you play, you do it like, you say to a friend do you want to play with me and play and then you play. (Riina 6 years)

Well you just know it somehow, to look at oneself in the mirror, sing or scratch the fish is not really play, but to draw is not entirely play but almost. (Glitter 6 years)

The playfaces (different ways to communicate and show play) are crucial for getting into the world of play, something you get a strong impression of when observing or participating in children's play (Knutsdotter Olofsson, 1989). Just by observing you can not be sure what the children play. It is especially hard to observe children's play when they move around a lot and communicate in other ways than by speaking. Spartacus explains that you just see it with your eyes, Glitter just knows it and

Riina asks her friends. There are lots of ways to communicate play in preschool, verbally or nonverbally. The children recognized the ways to communicate i.e. have eye contact, change tone, laugh or giggle, change voice, communicate through body language, change of language, mimic or take on a role. The children often talked about and commented play. Talking a lot about what should happen next and what they wanted their playmates to say or do, it was a constant changing of ideas as the play continued and crushed ideas turned out to new once. Children often used let's play I am an... ("på lek var jag..") or we should play that... ("ska vi leka att"), while starting up a play together or also sometimes in the middle of play to make sure the other one understands it is play. The children also told what they did and they put 'på lek' (let's pretend) in the end like in this example where Konu builds with legos and play with a zombie ship and says *I could fly, let's pretend* ("Ja kunde flyga på lek"). It is common that children use let's pretend I'm a ... ("på lek var jag...) or shall we play that... ("skall vi leka att...) while playing to confirm that everyone knows what the play is about (Åm, 1989).

It was hard to know what the children were doing, if I had not observed the play from the start or participated myself, it was always good to get confirmation from the children. Through observation and interviews I got the most rewarding answers. I noticed that children are extremely good at reading the different playfaces, but it was harder to tell what kind of sign they used to communicate play. The next is an example, where Merlock and Konu tries to explain me how to show it is play.

Merlock: *Mm when you see that (thinking break) shall we show her*

Konu?

Konu: Mumbles, you can show.

Merlock: I can't, can you? (turns to Konu, while thinking a while).

When we play like this ha ha haja (making faces, first smiling a little then turning to show pure anger and hate in his eyes while fighting with his arms and kicking in the air with his leg towards Konu, making more of the same noise.)

Konu replies: Ha ha haja (making the same angry face and sound. Keeping an imaginary sword in his hands.)

Merlock: Now Konu knows it is play and not for real.

The example above with Merlock and Konu, reveal the use of body language, sound effects and face expressions to communicate that this is play (Knuttdotter Olofsson, 1989). Another thing most of the children did was to change language while playing. Either just a few words here and there or the whole play was in Finnish.

... I fly with my shield ... (Konu 5 years) Saying I fly with my in Swedish and changing to Finnish for shield (“Ja flyger me min kilpi”)

If it sees a bug it chases... (Glitter 6 years) Talking about her soft toy snake, saying if it sees a in Swedish and bug in Finnish (“Om den ser nå ötökkä så jagar..”).

...Come put your weapon beside the flower! (Merlock 6 years) Saying all in Finnish and getting the response I still manage (Lloyd 6 years) in Finnish (“mä hallitsen vaikka”).

At first I felt bad about interrupting their play to ask what they were doing and the children were a bit confused in the beginning, giving me short answers. Later on it got easier as the children got used to be asked about their play. Sometimes the children told me what they were doing before I even got to ask and other times they did not want to tell me.

What are you playing?

We are agents. (Spartacus)

We won't tell you (playing in the bushes). (Riina & Kiira)

We do something like (Apple thinking, when Glitter fills out her meaning) we do not play anything.

We play, pam pam (pretending to shoot) (Lloyd, Merlock & Konu)

Children used a variety of play signs while playing (Knutsdotter Olofsson, 1989). For the children, the play signs seemed obvious and nothing they had to think about while playing. The children were skilled readers of the different playfaces, easily differentiating between play and reality. The most used playfaces were the change of language, use of body language, commentating, using “let’s pretend” or “shall we play that” and lot of verbal communication.

5.4 Play places and spaces

Inside the preschool there were many popular things to do. Some of the things the children liked to do were: play and build with Legos on the floor, build their own huts of chairs and guilts, play home in the corner as either humans or animals, dress up, play store, play in the tent or write and draw on the table. Outside play was preferred by the children, which also been noticed in other studies (Glenn et al., 2012).

While outside, children were more active. They would do many activities such as the following: swing, make sand cakes, build cities in the sand, draw on the flower blackboards on the fence, play with their own toys,

and roll in the mud after it had rained with their own toys. Additionally, they played many kinds of sports and games such as: kick board, run around, climb trees, play tag, climb up the swing pillar, slide down, balance on the low fence and spin in the spin. Lastly, children would mix water with sand by bringing water from the pool and make “muta löllö” (a mix of water and sand) and then they made meatballs and buns that they sold. In the forest children build huts and ships, while also being ninjas, animals, ghosts and playing Frozen. On the school yard they throw basketball, climb and run in the climbing frame, hanging in tines from trees over a small trench (ropes hanging from the branches), swing and played tag around the climbing frame.

Play in preschool is regulated by the physical space, the resources available and the presence of adults (Ailwood, 2003). Play is restricted by the institutional space and the powers between children as well as between children and adults. Inside the children were more restricted to the physical space and the adults than outside. As can be seen in the following example.

Glitter, Riina and Apple are playing with their soft animals inside, hiding in the tent.

Glitter seems to be chasing them.

They all run around the preschool room and the hallway while Glitter is after them, all screaming and laughing. Riina explains that *we have sprinkles (“strössel”), that she wants. She is a marshmallow*. Glitter hears this and shouts *noo, I’m a wolf!* while continuing to chase the girls pretending to be eating them.

This play does not continue for long as one of the pedagogues interrupt them by saying *now you need to calm down and do something else in a*

while. The play is over and the girls decide to play a game at the table.

This example shows that lively play inside often got restricted because of the pedagogues and everyone's wellbeing. Inside the preschool, the group had one room and hallway for use that was shared by 16 children and two pedagogues. The noise level in the room got high fast and there was not enough space for all to play. Often the room was divided into three parts with a tensile door, to give children more privacy and tranquility in their play, but that took away the freedom to move around freely and restricted the play to a certain place. Overall, the adults were permissive when it came to play. Children got to use toys and material freely, even in other ways than originally meant. Children were allowed to climb in trees, balance on the fence, take water from inside to use in play, sliding down and hanging on the swing etc. and using the yard outside the way children needed in play as long as they felt that children managed it.

The preschool had a versatile environment with different playgrounds.

The preschool's own yard was used daily and the nearby forest was also used weekly.

The variety of playgrounds and other environments led to different plays and the same environment could be used in many ways, though not always what they were meant to be. Some examples of this were creating play spaces, i.e. a swing was not only a swing but also a place to hang and climb, most of the children could either sit or stand up while swinging at the same time as talking to a friend or singing.

The swings were a meeting place for the children. There was a short fence that went around a few bushes and trees where the children liked to

balance on the fence, as well as do tricks like jump, walk on it without any support. Often they used a floorball stick to balance on walking forward, backwards and sideways on the fence. The children were inventive, testing the playground and its surroundings as well as their own knowledge and limits while playing.

Children most often did not need much to find a place to play. The best places for play were easily formable where with just a few things, the play space was built. This was seen when Ellen and Kiira said they were building a circus.

Ellen and Kiira had found a twist band attached to one of the poles in the sand box. They had been playing with hula- rings doing tricks i.e. Throw it up in the air and catch. The twist band seemed to be more interested so they took their hula- rings with them and put the twist band through them, the other end of the twistband was in Kiiras hand. She started moving her hand up and down and the hula rings jumped up and down. Girls laughing and doing it a few times before it got dull and they tried to attach the end from the twistband to the other pole. First tried Ellen but she could not get it attached, then Riina tried and she could not either, it was too heavy and a normal knot was not enough to keep it attached.

The girls both tried a few times and then came to me to ask for help, it was not easy for me to get it attached but after I got it around the pole the girls were happy and continued their circus, both seemed to be circus performers now.

First they tested that the twist band stayed attached before they started throwing a ball through the hula rings and later trying to go through without touching the hula ring.

This example shows how girls invented and arranged their own play place and space for their play. They had a clear vision about how they wanted to have the space, trying out possibilities and not giving up before

it worked. The circus example also shows that children have different needs of various play and playgrounds. Which also becomes visible when observing and asking the children where they like to play.

The tent or at the table to get peace and quiet. (Kiira 6 years)

The floor, where you can build with legos. (Konu 5 years)

Mm, playing a little everywhere outside. (Merlock 6 years)

Outside, because there is air and inside is just a little bit of normal air. (Apple 5 years)

I like to play in the tent and build huts, most outside to be in those (thinking), the first best is the swings, then there are those other swings and the climbing frame. (Linn 6 years)

Somewhere you like to be yourself. (Ellen 6 years)

Home play and the swings. (Riina 6 years)

The tent, home play, I can hide all of me, all of my body. The house (outside on the climbing frame), bushes, trees I can climb. (Glitter 6 years)

*In the tree and there where you play with Legos. (Lloyd 6 years)
Home play, you can be a animal that can cook food or something, an animal doctor. (Sofia 5 years)*

I don't know. All the places, outside bushes and elsewhere to. You can spy really well from there; do you know why? (Answering his own question) Those leafs and twigs are in front and then you can look a little from those little holes. (Spartacus 5 years)

The children named parts of the playgrounds both inside and outside

and some even mention why they like the specific place. Spartacus mention the bushes to be a good hiding place as you can spy and hide behind the leaves and twigs still leaving holes to peek from. The bushes created several different play spaces for the children as it was a good spying place according to Spartacus, others used it as a nest, home or hiding place. Something that most of places had in common was that they are easily modifiable. Which is important in play and make them great play places creating space for play.

Are you missing anything on the playgrounds in preschool?

A playhouse and bunnies. (Riina 6 years)

A pumpkin to go into and be able to eat. (Apple 5 years)

Mini mouse's that can go anywhere and dig, dig, dig. (Ellen 6 years)

Trampoline and more spying places. (Spartacus 5 years)

A punching bag to practice for ninja school. (Konu 5 years)

Children's desires show their imagination and the possibilities in play. Their ideas mirror the type of play they like as well.

5.5 Common rules for play

This part is about the rules in play from both perspectives, children's and adult's.

5.5.1 Rules by the adults

Rules decided on by adults that children mentioned and sometimes restricted their play.

Sometimes we have to disrupt play when adults say. (Merlock 6 years)

When you want to play, you say to an adult. (Konu 5 years)

We get to play when the adults say. (Glitter 6 years)

Merlock takes up two of the rules, listening to the adults and doing as they say, which also comes up in Konus and Glitters answers. In all the three examples the adults restricted the playing time, by controlling when it is time for play and when to finish. Other rules that the children mentioned were:

We can play with everyone but not if there is already four playing with the legos. (Linn 6 years)

Tell what should be done in the play and then someone says I would also like to come along. Then someone is a big sister, someone a little sister and someone is a mother and there is a dad and a little brother and I will be the second big sister. (Ellen 6 years)

Here both Linn and Ellen take up the freedom to choose what to play, but also that everyone is welcome to participate in the play. Some plays are restricted by the amount of people as Linn also mentions, giving the example of Legos that is a popular play but not all the children can build at once. Ellen talks about asking to be a part of the play and the different roles in homeplay, herself being the second big sister. Also revealing was the rule that everyone can be part of play and there is a role for everyone,

they just need to come up with the role and then they can join play. Other rules that the adults decided on:

We must play calmly and also when they say that it is a meeting we have to clean before. (Sofia 5 years)

The toys and Lego bricks that are loose must be put in the box, but you get to save nice looking things. (Merlock 6 years)

We do not get to wrestle in preschool, though I like it. (Lloyd 6 years)

Especially indoors it was important to play quietly and peacefully as Sofia notes. Outside, the possibilities for play were preferable as the children could be speedier, running around, not having to think so much about the noise level and had plenty of space and places to develop their play or game. Both Sofia and Merlock mention cleaning. That was not preferred among the children as everything had to be cleaned and up back in their place. Merlock's quote *you get to save nice looking things*, which referred to the Lego buildings, they could be saved for another week. Other play was harder to save as they often took more space from the already small place they had. That the children would have preferred, rather than having to clean and then later if continuing building up everything over again.

Lloyd talks about wrestling, which is not allowed in preschool even if he likes it. Rather than seeing the child's perspective and allowing them wrestle, being present and believing in the children's capabilities to manage it, the adults want to protect the children from possibly harmful play.

5.5.2 Children's rules

Children also had their own rules in play and like in this following example, they used real rules from i.e. ice hockey, floorball and football that they used in their own game, modified to fit them better.

Observing a group of seven boys playing what I thought was floorball, but later on it seemed like they were playing a mix of ice hockey, floorball and football. They had built up a small field by themselves beside the toy storage outside, with two goals, each of them had a stick of their own and one ball. They had two teams, the other team had a player standing beside as a substitute. It was interesting to follow the game with the same rules as in a real hockey, floorball and football. A few of the players seemed to be players, referees and sports commentators all at the same time. Which led to more talking and shouting than actual playing when disagreeing. Somebody makes a mistake, right away someone shouts *Heey free shot!* And the opposite team responds *Noo, he is filming!*

Ending with a free shot and they score. Each team member shouting goal and celebrating together like they have seen on tv, first celebrating and then hugging and giving high fives. The same happens each time some of the team's score. Children whine about too many players on the field. Then the discussion continues what the score is and who is leading. Shouting out all kinds of sport terms; *sideline, hand, tripping, holding etc.* throughout the game. Terms they seemed to know well from different sports. This keeps on going over and over again without the game stopping or finishing at any time. Even if the children have different opinions the game goes on. I am asked to be a referee, while standing and observing the game. I continued standing on the same spot interfering when I see a mistake or fault happening and called it as a referee does, I could see some of the boys getting annoyed. I tried to be fair towards both teams, after a while they got enough of me and tell me with a determined voice that they play with their own rules. So I withdrew as a referee and continued observing the game that continued all in all for 25 minutes.

The rules were important even if the children mostly did not want to follow them, except for when someone else made a mistake. The line

between play and seriousness was inexplicit and seemed to vary between the children as well. Some took the game more serious than others. While they were playing, it looked as a real game with a playful touch to it, switching between play and reality. Some played full speed, keeping the ball to themselves trying to score and when they passed the ball to a teammate, they asked for the ball back right away so they could score. Even if the children have different opinions, the game goes on.

In this sport games the rules were important and everyone had to have the same rules. Some concentrated on playing while others talked or kept track of the score. Everyone knew the score and what was going on, it was important to know who was leading.

Even if they were in the middle of the play and game they talked and planned which players they were going to be and what team to play in. Some shouted out different sport terms, not always aware of what they meant but the children got along well and mixed three different sports with their rules together. Especially one of the boys referred almost the whole game, sounding like the Finnish sport commentator Antero Mertaranta and being more involved in that than playing the game.

Another example is of a running contest the children organized in the yard, running around it.

First it is just Lloyd and Kiira competing who is faster. While Apple, Spartacus, Glitter, Riina and Merlock join by cheering for them. When Lloyd and Kiira come back the children continue running. This turns into a running contest. Glitter is not so interested about the contest but she cheers and takes off her gloves, to use them as a flag. The others

who are not running do the same but stand in two lines waiting for their turn to come. Next up is Riina and Merlock competing against each other and the running contest continues. Then Lloyd runs against Spartacus, first they are really even until. Lloyd decides to try a shortcut. The children get angry shouting *cheating, you can't cheat!* While the next two in line continue running, but only Glitter cheers for them as the others try to solve what to do with the cheating. The children decide to start over and go through the track and add a rule that before the next one in line is allowed to run, the one before should touch the other's hand, this way no one could cheat. More children gather around to cheer and run. While some run around the field, advertising the running contest shouting for more participants *who wants to take part in a running competition, who wants to take part in the running competition...* More children join and some leave the competition and start cheering instead or walk away to do something else. The play continues without bigger problems, just a few false starts until it is time for lunch.

In all these examples children are alone constructing the rules and testing them while playing. The rules also vary and the children are good at discussing and clarify misunderstandings and mistakes. The rules are a crucial part of the play to understand, feel part and develop the play. In preschool the rules were clear and the children most often played by the rules, testing their limits and knowledge. In the running contest example when Lloyd cheated, the unwritten rules that everyone was thought to follow changed after this and Lloyd was given a new chance and play could continue. It was fun to play until the rules were not followed and playing time had to go on to sort out the play, before continuing play. These two examples the game and the running contest I think are telling that the rules changed and adapted while playing. Unfortunately, play could also end or divide the participants.

The children liked to compete in a playful way, trying out their strengths and weaknesses both indoors and outside, especially while playing different games like Uno, the running contest, the ice hockey/floorball/football game. The goal was to win.

Without good communication in play, reading others playfaces and following the rules the play does not work. When all participants follow the three main rules; listen to the adults, clean up after you and put the toys back to their own places there seldom comes any problems. These were the rules most visible for me and the once children mentioned specifically.

5.6 Children's play in preschool

What is play?

Play is fun and you can do something, because without play you do not move that much and otherwise it is not good. Play is something funny that one can make these kind of movie things or something that does not exist, in play anything can be played even though you would play to be a paper, but that does not matter because otherwise you can be a piece of paper, if you like. (Appel 5 years)

As Apple so well defined play is fun, imaginative and the possibilities are endless to be whatever you like in play. Play is the basic form of life and activity for under school-aged children and the value of play should be visible in kindergarten rearing- and education (Cleve and Oleander, 2004). Children should be supported to be children, to enjoy the freedom and pleasure that play give them (Schackel, 2015). In the Finnish early childhood education, a traditional adult vision has been that play can be

seen, but not affected (Kalliala, 2004). Only spontaneous play is not enough, to get full advantages of the developmental potentials of play, requiring efforts like professional management as well as providing room for development of the children's play from the adults (Siren-Tiusanen, 2004).

Children had the amazing ability to bring up play anywhere, even though it was not provided for. Sometimes putting me and the pedagogues in uncomfortable situations, not knowing whether to let the children continue the activity or finish it. These next two situations happened to me.

Example 1

We had just finished lunch and we had been talking a lot in my table, a few times a bit too loudly. The rest were almost done and had started clearing the tables. Linn had been abroad and wanted to hand out some candy. When she got to the table I was sitting in with Merlock, Spartacus, Konu and 2 other boys, one of the boys took the paper that looked like a strawberry and put it on his forehead.

Boy: *I'm bleeding (sounding badly injured and a bit giggly)*

Me: *Oh no! (trying to sound worried), that's a lot of blood.*

The rest had been following the situation and right away looked up, took their candy paper and put it on their forehead.

The boy: *You (me) could be a doctor and take care of us.*

Me: *I am sorry; I don't have enough patch for all of you. (in my mind hoping this way to end this and get up to clear the table).*

The boy: *I'm not bleeding anymore (took the other paper that had been wrapped around the candy inside the strawberry looking paper and put*

that as well on his forehead, sounding happy)

The others did the same and then start looking around noticing the other tables are empty.

Spartacus: *Can I get up?*

Me: *Yes.*

Then we all got up and the short play ended here.

Example 2

Linn and another girl had gone to wash their hands before lunch. The others had already sat down and it seemed to take longer for the girls. I said I could go check where they were. I went out of the room and could hear some laughing and whispering. Following the sound, I found both of the girls in the bathroom in front of the mirror with the tap on. The girls did not see me right away so I decide to wait until they notice me. The girls put makeup on (using water as makeup) on their lips and eyelashes and I could see that they had been doing their hair earlier.

After a while I decided to interrupt their play, asking if they had washed their hands and if they were ready for lunch. They laughed and told me that they put some makeup on and made a new hair look. Then turning off the tap and nicely walking back sitting down at the table.

Both these examples show that children play here and now without thinking about the future (Hjorth, 1996). A daily routine like washing hands or eating can suddenly turn into play. Under school aged children move between play and not play all the time in their lives, defined from the children's perspective as an activity through which they explore and acquire the surrounding world and the root causes of culture (Sirenius, 2004; Glenn et al. 2012). Children can get caught up by anything forgetting what they were supposed to do and sometimes also

doing it purposely to defy or test how the adult reacts. Children are so engaged in what they are doing that they forget the world around them. Play in preschool was full of pleasure and surprises. This happened daily in preschool, most of the time being a coincidence.

The play map (see appendix 6) was one of the methods, where children got to draw what they liked to do in preschool, revealing the children's perspective. Below are the children's favorite things to do in preschool, except for Spartacus as he had not permission to participate at this time.

Kiira was eager to start with her play map. She right away took the paper, a handful of pens and lay down on the corridor floor with Riina. Talking and giggling while working on her play map. In her first box she draws a map to play with sometimes she said. In the second box she drew a pen, to draw and to write with doing preschool tasks. In the third box she drew a palm tree but did not really know why she done that. The fourth box was full of ice cream, that she liked to eat and that they could get when somebody celebrated their birthday. In the fifth box she had drawn a preschool task paper, that they do in preschool. The sixth box was a book, looking like an ipad to show that they used books and pretended they were ipads when they played agents. In the seventh box was written Kyrkråtta meaning ("kirkkis") The eighth box had a book, she liked to read and listen to stories.

Riina was a bit thoughtful at the start and followed Kiira and layed down on the floor to start. She was talking and giggling with Kiira. Their maps look similar, but they have not just copied each other. In her first box she drew a treasure map, saying that they sometimes look for treasures outside. In the second box she drew a palm tree, she said that she had been to Australia and that they have palm trees there. In box three she draws a pen to draw with. The fourth box presented their cottage. The fifth box had ice creams; it was for birthdays she said. When I interviewed the children and asked them to present the play maps, Riina wanted to continue and add things to her map. She started up a game where she drew and I tried to guess what she was drawing. In the sixth box she added Uno, a card game that she enjoyed playing.

The seventh showed an animal book with the stupid cat eating the rabbits. The eighth showed a picture of a drawing, afterwards she wanted to write inside what each box presented, that she had done with the earlier boxes.

Konu stayed beside the small table in the hallway, looking around what the others were doing before getting started and talking out loud what he draws. In the first box was a swing. In the second a ninja. Then he jumped over the third box and tried to draw a Lego brick in the fourth box, but it did not go as he planned so he draws a new Lego brick in the third box. Then looking at his paper and changing to a pencil and drawing some land, countries in the other boxes. He did not tell me why he had drawn so many different countries and from where the idea came from.

Lloyd had a hard time with the task as he felt he could not draw. I told him that he could make any signs he liked or write as long as he later could tell me what he had put in his play map. This made him happy and he right away grabbed a pen and asked me how zoo is spelled. Zoo was written in the first box. In the second box he wanted to write kyrkråtta (“kirkkis”). In the third box he wrote Lego and drew a Lego brick. In the fourth box he wrote monkey Alex (“apan Alex”) which he liked to play and climb up in the tree. In the fifth box was written nexo knights and the sixth box had “ninjago”. He did not want to tell much about the play map in the interview except when we got to the islands. Then he told me the names of them but he did not know either why he had drawn them. It was just something fun he said.

Linn was really concentrated while working on her play map. She lay on the floor close to the little table in the hallway. Working on her own not saying a word. In her first box she drew a hut. She said she liked to build huts, play in them and that she was the best at building huts in preschool. In the second box she drew home play where she often plays with Sofia and another girl. In the third box she drew herself drawing. The fourth box showed the play yard outside. She liked to play a lot outside. In the fifth box she drew a resting time. Lying on the mattress under a blanket listening to a story. The seventh box presented her lying on the floor doing preschool tasks. The eighth box showed the spin and her spinning while Sofia gave her some more speed to spin. The last two boxes where ropes hanging from the trees on the

schoolyard that she liked to swing in.

Merlock sat around the table in the hallway looking around and down at the play map. He looked a lot at what Lloyd and Konu were doing. He was also interested in writing. In his first box he wrote zoo. Then he left a few boxes empty and drew a Lego brick. Then drawing planets and other worlds. Giving names to all.

Apple started right away with drawing. Lying opposite to Linn on the floor. Apple concentrated on her play map. In her first box she drew a girl that read a book. Something she often did on the sofa. In the second box she drew music. She liked the led music activities, singing and listening to music. In the third box was Glitters fish, that she liked to pat and play with. In the fourth box was her own Owl that she played with often. In box five she drew herself and a mirror, she liked to dress up and looked at herself in the mirror. The sixth box was a hair salon, to make new hairstyles to each other. The seventh was to put on her shoes as she said to me she had learned a new thing how to put them on (meaning that she had learned to tie her shoelaces herself). The eight box presented her resting on the mattress. The ninth was a pen that you could either draw or write with.

Sofia was not that interested about making her play map, so I said she could do it later as well. So when I interviewed her she also wanted to do the play map. In the first box she drew herself and then wrote her own things. In the fifth box she tried to draw the flower black board that they had outside on the fence, but she was not convinced so she drew over it. Then she wrote something again and did not finish writing before she started drawing again and again but always drew over it. Then I asked if she wanted me to help her. Then she wrote draw, play games and homeplay and told that this was what she liked to do at preschool.

Glitter took the task and started right away. Singing silently on her own while drawing. In the first box she drew headphones, because she liked to listen to music. In the second box she drew the swing. The third box showed the spin. The fourth box toys to play with. The fifth box her and a hairbrush, she liked to change and make new hairstyles. In the sixth box she had drawn the balance board from outside, where

she liked to play music stop. She explained that you are balancing on the board walking on it while someone sings and when they stop you need to stop moving.

The seventh showed herself with a necklace on, all dressed up. The eight box showed a pen and paper that she drew on. In the ninth box she was running.

Ellen was ill while the others had done the play map. So she did it in connection with the interview. She was really eager, did not want to draw but write instead. She said she knew how to write almost all the letters already. She was swinging on the chair while thinking. Then she started writing. In the first box she wrote to draw, that she liked to do a lot and drew every day. In the second box she wrote to bring toys from home as they could bring toys with them each day and play with them. In the third box she wrote barbie. In the fourth box she wrote lego elves. In the fifth box lego. In the sixth box building huts. In the seventh box home play. In the eight box resting time and in the ninth box playing with the children from the other preschool group.

Drawing was popular among the children and one of the reasons I chose the play map as a method. Some of the children were short in their telling and others had more to tell, but all of them found a way to present what they liked to do in preschool either by writing or drawing, only a few felt pressure to make it look exactly as it looks for real. The play maps show the result of a variety of things done and played in preschool. Revealing the child perspective. Alone this method would not have been so helpful but combined with what I had seen and heard from the children before it gave me valuable knowledge about routines; birthday celebration and resting time, led activities; preschool tasks, drawing and writing, music activities, and a variety of play; playing outside, homeplay, playing with specific toys from home, building with Legos, swinging, drawing, reading and listening to stories and fairytales. In addition, half of the

participants, developed their own drawings out of the real context added i.e. the countries or planets without really knowing the reason “*just something fun*” as Lloyd remarked.

For the children play meant free time to do whatever they wanted, alone or with friends, playing “*kirkkis*”, building huts, dress up, being ninjas or other figures with super powers, draw or write, read books, build with legos etc. The dominant features for children’s play where the availability of friends, time and freedom to play without structure (Schackel, 2015). Most often these features were best answered outside.

Do adults usually play with you?

Not really (short thinking break), but I remember seeing you (me) play tag and hide and seek. (Appel 5 years)

Yes, in tag, you (me). (Sofia 5 years, giggles)

Sometimes (short thinking break, You (short thinking break). Then she names one of the pedagogues in her group and another one from another group. (Riina 6 years)

No. (Lloyd 6 years)

*Yes, when they organize some play like tag. With you (me) “*kirkkis*”. (Linn 6 years)*

Children’s answers prove that at preschool play is not considered useless, but little interest is shown and the children are often left on their own to play (Hjorth, 1996). As their answers show the pedagogues seldom took part in the children’s play on their terms, I observed a few times that they tasted some of their sand cakes but not much more than that. Confirming

what already noticed by Kalliala (2004) that play can be seen but not touched by adults. The pedagogues let the children be and only interfered when somebody hurt themselves, to clear up the noise or a problem.

Children's play in preschool also revealed the role of toys and materials varies depending on the type of play. I also noticed that the other side of play was jealousy, power, exclusion and being enemies which I did not seek to identify and the children rarely talked about.

5.7 Fantasy and role play

Fantasy and role play were among the most popular plays together with rule play in preschool i.e. "kirkkis" and the police and thief. The fantasy play could start anywhere at any time alone or together.

In the children's play they often imitated their heroes and if they could not play with them *they could pretend to be them* as Riina said, when I asked if they had Lego friends at preschool. Riina's answer works well for all the children as preschool did not have the same Legos they had at home, so they got to build their own and use their imagination. Often the children took some smaller Lego buildings with them from home and played with it at preschool. Other times the children played that they were the Lego figures with the same powers. Like in the example below.

Glitter and Apple played Frozen inside. Glitter was Elsa and Apple Anna. Glitter had dressed up with a cloth, crown and a stick. Apple had put on a dress.

Glitter: *We practice our witchcraft and shooting, our super powers. I'm shooting ice and snow.*

Apple: *Anna is a little fire; she likes when it's warm.*

Glitter and Apple swirl around the room, talking about their superpowers and practice them with their hands shooting ice, snow and fire.

Frozen is a Walt Disney movie, inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale "The Snow Queen". Frozen tells the story about two princess sisters Elsa and Anna. Elsa has icy powers and has unintentionally captured the kingdom in eternal winter. Her brave sister Anna leaves for a journey with her friend a rugged iceman, a trustworthy pet reindeer and a naive snowman to looking for her sister and saving the kingdom from eternal winter.

In the example children used their imagination to feel like their heroes. Glitter and Apple dressed up so they could be Elsa and Anna from Frozen. Other times the children used other toys and material to be able to emphasize with the character they were playing. Apple and Glitter spoke out loudly about their ideas and changes for play. Which was common for especially role and fantasy play to make it easier for the others to follow the play.

The next example is from outside where the boys seem to be playing Ninjas.

Konu: *Come to the Ninja scooter! (shouting happily to a boy close by, himself sitting on the toy scooter and fencing with a shovel.)*

The boy smiles and runs after a floorball stick.

Merlock: *Come, come get yourself a weapon if you don't already have*

one. (urging)

The boys run around with their weapons (floorball sticks and shovels) and fencing against each other on the grass.

Merlock: Let's put the weapons beside the flowers (chalkboard formed like a flower, hanging on the fence.)

Boy: Lloyd, the weapon.

Lloyd: I still manage... (sounding confident, hiding his face with his neckcloth)

The children continue fencing at each other without the weapons. Konu mistakenly hits Merlock and says *sorry Sensei* and they go on fencing at each other both with and without weapons.

In the Ninja play the boys use floorball sticks and shovels to fight with and fence. The floorball sticks and the shovels lose their real meaning in play and turn into weapons. Each of them wear their playface and can continue play even if Lloyd wants to hide himself behind the neckcloth and they do not use the weapons. Each of them knows this is play and even when Konu accidentally hit Merlock while fencing, he does not get angry as he knows it is play and Konu apologizes by saying *sorry sensei* (what I later got to know means the leader of the ninjas. Someone to look up to and teach the ninjas their tricks.) This type of play fighting happened almost daily, not always being ninjas but the ongoing theme was the good guys against the bad guys (Edmiston, 2008).

Outside a popular form of tag was Police and thief, played in diverse ways, always having at least one police and many thieves. The rules were almost the same each time if you get caught the police brings you to a

predetermined location “the prison”, where you had to wait until another thief came to rescue by touching you. The play continued until children got other interests and starting new plays or when everyone left were either police or thief. Below an example of a police and thief play.

Konu and another boy are policemen, having their own police station in the sandbox close by the two pillars. The policemen had caught Lloyd and tied him up with a twist band in the pillar. As they catch some more thieves and try to tie them in the same pillar Lloyd gets annoyed.

Lloyd: Hey, *for real!* *This is my pillar.* Don't destroy! (disappointed and upset)

Konu and the other boy move the other thief away to the other pillar close by and try to catch new thieves while some of the already caught get saved. More and more thieves take part and the police station gets too small as more and more thieves get caught. The play ends when Konu gets enough and starts playing something else and the boy decides to be a thief as well. Without anyone wanting to be a police, I say I can be a police and try to catch them and tie them so they cannot escape, this without greater success. The play goes on for a while until it is just me and one child left, so we decide to end the play.

The most common play inside was building with the Legos. It was popular among boys as well as girls. Even if the boys more often played and build with the legos. The Lego buildings and play had inputs from Nexo Knights, Ninjago, Lego Friends and Lego Elves.

Nexo Knights is a fantasy-based Castle theme Lego series, animated series and a mobile game. Following the adventures of five young Knights battling against Jestro and his monster army, trying to save their home.

Lego Ninjago is a TV show and a Lego series about four ninjas Kai the master of fire, Jay a master of lightning, Cole master of earth and Zane master of ice. All four forming a team with Sensei Wu, to stop the evil Lord Garmadon from assembling the four Golden weapons of Spinjitzu.

Lego Friends is a Lego series and a TV show. Built around five girls Stephanie, Mia, Emma, Olivia and Andrea and their adventures in their hometown Heartlake city. With various Lego building sets to build and play with i.e. a beach, a school and a cafe' set.

Lego Elves is a Lego series and a TV show build around a story about Emily Jones, that receives an amulet after her grandmother's death. The amulet can teleport her to a parallel world called Elvendale. Where her four elf friends live together with other fantasy and fairytale figures like dragons and pegasuses and adventures happen.

The children often took ideas from these movies and series they had seen and invented new things out of it in their play. A big part of the Lego building was the joy to build, create and recreate before deciding who to be and what kind of superpowers to have. The superpowers were common in both the boys and the girls play, not only with the Legos.

What was special about the Legos was the great interest to build with them. Often the Lego bricks changed ownership. That was a big part of the play as to introduce what you had built yourself, then might swapping with someone else or giving it away. Legos were also used combined

with other toys. Glitter, Riina and Apple built slides from Legos for their pets.

In role and fantasy play, play had no limits (Hakkarainen, 2006). Anything was possible. The roles were often given to me as I was a guest in their play, but I felt we were equal with the children.

5.8 The continuity and development of play

Play in preschool is nuanced. The plays start off with one story and keeps on changing turning back and forth from the original play, while children engage more and more into it. Coming up with new ideas and reflecting the ideas with their playmates. There is a continuity and internal interest that keeps developing play further. Play is full of possibilities and children have enormous flexibility in play (Kalliala, 1999).

Next comes a long observation that I had to cut down a little not to get too long. Showing the continuity in play and the genuine development.

This observation starts in the middle of play outside on the yard. Where the girls already started their play. When Spartacus and Lloyd start to play monkeys.

Riina: *You could have a viper in your throat.*

Appel: *Me? (looking like a question mark, then running around shouting snakes, snakes)*

Kiira looks up and continues what looks like cleaning around a tree.

Spartacus and Lloyd first hang on the tree branch. Then Lloyd climbs

up and after goes Spartacus. Beside and under the tree Riina and Kiira continue their play.

Spartacus: *We are monkeys, who could be our nurse? (Sitting on the branch)*

Lloyd: *Could you be? (looking down from the tree at me and before I get to answer he continues). You have to give food to them daily (short break, thinking) or you don't really need to everyday, they have food. You don't have to give food at all.*

Me: *Mmm (making notes in my notebook, writing down what the children say and I see.)*

Lloyd: *You have your own monkeys Anna! (shouting happily trying to get my attention).*

While Riina and Kiira still play beside the tree and the bushes, cleaning and playing home, cooking. Apple has not returned back to play.

Lloyd and Spartacus are making monkey noises: *"ooh ooh eee eee and ooh ooh ah ah."* When the girls get to close to their tree.

Riina: *Shouts to the monkeys, this is the line! (While drawing a line on the ground close to the tree.)*

Spartacus and Lloyd: *Sits steadily on the branch.*

Riina: *Shouting, monkeys go away (with a determined voice)*

Spartacus: *Sitting on the branch not moving to any direction.*

Lloyd: *Climbing higher up making the monkey sound ooh ooh eee eee and ooh ooh ah ah (sounding a bit angry).*

Boys continue making monkey noises and scratching each other and themselves like they probably seen monkeys do. The girls ignore the boys and continue their play.

Lloyd turns to Riina and Kiira saying: *Come look at your monkeys.*

Kiira: *First nodding and then saying this can be a pet store. (satisfied, like she got a great idea)*

Lloyd: *Noo, this is not a pet store. The monkeys just like to be here (talking about himself and Spartacus).*

This is when these two plays from first being two separate plays, come closer to be a play that they play all together.

Lloyd: *Don't you want to take a closer look at them? These are the kindest monkeys just a little mischievous. (asking me)*

I am walking closer to pat them.

Lloyd says: *"Ooh ooh aah ah"* and then *"aargh"* trying to bite me, when I got close.

I am pretending to be afraid.

Lloyd: *Starts to ask each and every one passing by to pat them. Still sitting on the branch.*

The girls continue their play as sisters and occasionally notice the monkeys in their play.

Riina: *I am cleaning the monkey poo (what first had been berries in the pail had now turned to monkey poo.)*

Kiira: *This is monkey poo (sweeping away the poo with a floorball stick.)*

Lloyd: *We don't want to come down because there are snakes that can eat us. This one only poops.*

Riina and Kiira continue cleaning up after the monkeys.

Lloyd: *This one likes guest when they come it goes crazy. Likes to be*

patted. (tells Spartacus)

Konu comes walking, asking what Spartacus and Lloyd are up too.

Lloyd: *You can be part of our play, you could be an animal or veterinarian.*

Konu: *I am a dragon.*

Lloyd: *They don't exist.*

Riina: *You could be a baby?*

Konu: *A baby dragon.*

An adult interrupts their conversation, by saying that it is cleaning time.

Lloyd is protesting: *"No! First it has to be night."*

Of the playing time Spartacus did happily sit on the tree branch, saying: "Now it's night", pretending to sleep and snore.

The observation ends at night, in the play. The boys continue playing monkeys, the next day and now and then going back to the same tree playing monkeys, other children are part as well. Would have been interesting to follow the play further and how the baby dragon would have influenced the play, but the play ended.

This all started by chance with two different plays going along side by side. What is interesting is that the same place gives two different spaces for play to continue. While developing to a common play in the end. While observing and being part i noticed so many different impressions in the children both mentally and physically. They all had to collaborate

while playing and Kiira used her creative thinking and problem solving to combine the two plays into one, put the pet shop was not seen as a good idea. They all had to emotionally regulate their feelings, Riina drawing the line for the monkeys (meaning do not disturb us) and Lloyd protesting, when having to end play.

The children were good at reading each other's playfaces and at the same time being able to develop and continue the play. The children had two different plays, with different rules and views on how to continue play. Play is a subject with unwritten rules, the one who wants to take part in the play need to subordinate the rules. This applies to adults as well, being part of play and leading to a feeling of equality while playing. The line between play and reality can be vague as everything first seems okay in play and then suddenly i.e. dragons do not exist. Revealing that even in play there might come times when the reality in play is met and not everything is possible within the play.

The course of action naturally changes in play as more children participate and come with their ideas as happens i.e. when Lloyd says that they are Riina's and Kiira's monkeys. The children seem to catch each second and play in the moment. What is hard to write down and present in the observation is the continuous feedback and reactions given to the other players while play goes on i.e. a special glaze, laugh, giggle, change of body language and voice.

The play in preschool was often recurrent as the same themes come up in various plays. Play continues and develops as the spark is a live, when

the spark goes out a new spark lights up. Starting a new play, story and gathering new playmates that continue and develop the new play.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Under this section I will discuss the findings from my research together with some earlier discussed theoretical perspectives and backgrounds.

The main form for children to express themselves is true play (Cleve & Oleander, 2004) and so far no studied educational arrangement has replaced the experiences and feelings children gain from playing (Lillemyr, 2002). This project was not an exception, rather supporting the argument. Children's own perceptions on play have rarely been studied in the research even though it is a crucial part for understanding the play process (Siren-Tiusanen, 2004). These two statements, made me want to contribute to filling this research gap. I did my research on the following topic; *Playfaces, children's experiences of play in a Finnish preschool*, using the children's perspective. The research was collected in a Swedish speaking preschool group, in the Helsinki metropolitan area, during a four-week period, with a sample of 11 participants between 5 to 6 years. The following research methods were used; observation, photographs, focus group discussion, play map, interviews and child led walk. I was particularly interested in how children define play, tell the difference between play and not play as well as where, what and when play is preceded in preschool.

My findings reveal a prominent position for play in preschool. Even if the meaning of play is vague and yet it is hard to say how much of the activities can be called play in preschool, as the answers varied depending on who you asked. For most of the children, play only meant the child initiated play, "free time" to do whatever you liked, alone or

with friends. Sometimes play could even be an adult led activity, that children either saw as adult led play or preschool tasks, kept in their own folders. These adult led activities often changed the adult led activity to play like when they did the excursion to Haltia or when the boys made a worm when they had mathematics. The pedagogues were permissive and rarely controlled the children as long as they did what was expected of them. A lot of the adult led activities were playful but that was not a guarantee for being seen as play by the children. The play was characterized by fun, commitment, dedication, excitement and imagination. However, play is not always fun, innocently and delightful as it often appears to be (Knutsdotter Olofsson, 1987).

Play could start just from a coincidence, adult led activity, continue from previous play or be something children planned and created in that moment. Children could bring up play anywhere, even though it was not provided for. Play in preschool is nuanced. The play starts with one story and keeps on changing turning back and forth from the original play, while children engage more and more into it. They come up with new ideas and reflect the ideas with their playmates. This happened with the two plays, monkey play and home play outside.

The children played both indoors and outdoors, especially the outdoor play was popular as it more often was child led play. The type of play, played in preschool were role plays, fantasy plays and rule plays. Varieties of play, were seen from playing alone to play with friends, building Legos, huts, drawing, resting, playing “kirkkis”, police and thief, home play and dressing up. A genuine theme in play was the good guys against the bad guys, either in games like police and thief and different

forms of tag or in role play as ninjas, nexo knights figures and animals play fighting or as frozen or nexo knights testing out their super powers and magic.

It has been generally accepted in education, psychology and sociology that children are viewed as active agents in their development and socialization (James, 2009). Yet this is not thoroughly permeated as can be seen from the preschool curriculum and the daily life in the studied preschool, where the children's lives were frequently determined and/or constrained in large parts by the adults (O'Kane 2008). Even if the preschool curriculum (Utbildningsstyrelsen, 2016) states that in preschool agency is supported through participation, cooperation and shared responsibility, it is not enough that children may express their opinion and ideas. Their ideas and initiatives should also be taken into account. In this research the children were viewed as capable social actors with agency, communicating their experiences of play in creative ways through varied methods.

Play was regulated by the physical space, the resources available and the presence of adults (Ailwood, 2003). Not much was needed for finding a good place to play, just a few things and a space for play. The floor, tent, home play corner, climbing frame, sand box and the bushes and trees were popular places for play. Common for the popular play places were that they were easily formable and offered many various play opportunities.

Play was defined and explored from an empirical setting by gathering the children's perspective, their experiences, observing their everyday life in preschool especially play and using theoretical perspectives that describe the characteristics of play; metacommunication, playface(s) ("på lek"), "as if", flow and nonsense. The characteristics help in distinguishing play from doing something else (Kalliala, 2004). My study showed that play in preschool is both preparation for the future (Sutton-Smith, 2001) and not. Children live in the moment and for them play is all about having fun, be with their friends, free to do what they want, able of using imagination, drama, pretending and playing games.

The current educational trends value and focus more on adult led activities, preschool can be viewed from either a child's or an adult perspective (Åm, 1989). Even if the adult led activities often where playful children did not see them as play and as Aalsvoort van der et al. (2015) admit, in western society play is considered as child-initiated play. If this is the case, I would claim that there needs to be more child initiated play and less adult led activities and adults need to be part of the play more, not leaving it to the children giving the impression that play is just nonsense. Instead the adults can observe and take part in children's play on the children's terms. Rogers (2011) expresses that play has become an instrument for learning future competencies. What can be better learning than playing together? On the Child's terms, learning future competencies while playing instead of arranging the adult led activities that together with the daily routines take so much time away from play. From children's perspective they would be playing all day and still learning, probably even more as it would be child led,

spontaneous and motivated in itself. This is a romantic picture of preschool and childhood, but I am determined that after all this would be better for the children as their individual perspectives would be more visible and children would be really get to be the social actors with agency.

Each child had their own perspective to what play meant, revealing play more as an attitude than a certain kind of activity, that for one might not be revealed as play but for the other it will (Hakkarainen, 2006). Children used a diversity of playfaces when playing. Most often they explicitly expressed it verbally by commentating on what was coming in play or by saying *let's pretend I'm a..., shall we play that., ie. saying I could fly, let's pretend* (“*Ja kunde flyga på lek*”) to tell that this is what happens but so you know it is not for real it is play. Children also communicated nonverbally by changing language or voice while playing, laugh and giggle, mimic, exaggerate facial expressions, show a smile or take eye contact to confirm that the other one understands.

The results of this research can be questioned, as the children and I had different views on preschool. For children preschool meant all day while I thought of preschool as the time between 9-13 as stated by the Finnish law. So I compromised, using the children's perspective of preschool with my observations during the preschool time from 9-13. The amount of child initiated play would have been greater, as there was more time for that after the preschool time. The research would also have been more

comparable if some of the participants would have been “half time” children just in preschool between 9-13, to see how they would have experienced play in preschool.

What I find alarming is that within the early childhood education there does not exist any document that would be able to give play a clear and leading role in preschool. I think this is the biggest reason why play is losing its position in preschool and teaching and learning have become more important as it is easier to document. This needs to be changed so play can be seen from the children’s perspective.

The results of this study will not directly benefit the participants. More likely, their following preschoolers, the workers and policy makers will get to enjoy the valuable knowledge and information gathered. Hopefully noticing that the child lead play should be more valued in preschool learning. Developing and enable children’s participation and their perspectives more in the everyday life decisions in preschool and why not in daycare and school, as well. I certainly hope the discussions of the importance of play will continue.

Last I want to remind that no generalizations or greater conclusions can be drawn from this research, this is a case study and more research still needs to be done.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Conclusion

Many different theoretical definitions exist on play, but when wanting to catch the children's perspective, play is easiest defined through the characteristics of play. From the children's perspective play is fun, imaginative, mostly child led, happening anywhere at any time as well as constantly changing and developing. Children communicate play to each other by using various playfaces and that way showing what can be seen as play and not. Children play anywhere at any time, even when play was not provided for. Especially fantasy and role play as well as rule play were popular types of play. An ongoing theme in the children's play where the good against the bad.

This case study reveal that play as a learning form needs to be viewed from the children's perspective, giving more space for the child initiated play in preschool. Overall children were pleased with the amount of play in preschool.

7.2 Recommendations

In this project I have presented children's experiences of play in a Finnish preschool, which does not allow me to make any extensive generalizations of my output. There are many more opportunities for future research left.

By positioning children's perspective on play in preschool I hoped to open the eyes for play and this made me question the way play appears in the curriculum. Why does the Finnish preschool stand for high quality care and education, but not play? What is the real role of play in preschool? Why is not play as well documented in the curriculum as everything else that the child should learn and experience throughout the preschool year?

It would also be interesting to gather and compare the children's experiences of play throughout the country and look for similarities and differences.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview guide

1. What is your research name?
2. How old are you?
3. What do you like best in pre-school?
4. Is there something you like less?
5. Where is it best to play?
6. What do you like to play?
7. What is needed for play?
8. What do you like to play in preschool?
9. With whom do you play?
10. When do you get time to play in preschool?
11. What is needed for play?
12. Do you play different things at home and at pre-school?
13. Do you like to play more inside or outside?
14. Do you feel you get to play freely in pre-school?
15. How would you describe play for someone that do not know what it is?
16. Can you describe what playing means to you?
17. What would you do if you could not play?

Appendix 2: Standard observation sheet

(From Ennew et al.2009, 6.7)

Researchers name

Date of session: _____

Time of session: From _____ To _____

Used Research tool

Place of data collection

Number sequence of data collected

From _____ To _____

Factors that might influence the collection of data during the session

Researcher: _____

Children/adults: _____

Characteristics of the place where data was collected:

Weather: _____

Interruptions/distractions:

Other things noticeable:

Appendix 3: Parental informed consent form and the latest version in Swedish, handed out to the parents.

Parental informed consent form (English version)

This is a consent form to ask for consent on the half of your child to take part in a research project conducted by Anna Martola from the Norwegian University of Technology and Science (NTNU). The purpose with the study is to research how children value and experience play in preschool. The research will be part of my Master's degree program Childhood Studies at the Norwegian University of Technology and Science (NTNU).

Please take some time to read true and discuss the decision of participation with your child and others involved. The decision to participate is up to you and if you decide to let your child participate you will be asked to sign this consent form in the end of the document. This study consists of a variety of methods like observation, focus group discussions, play maps, individual interviews and child led play walks, all done at the pre-school. Some of the methods will be recorded if possible and if allowed by participants to be used to save time and make analysis easier.

The research data will be gathered in the pre-school, over a period of five weeks from 29.8-30-9.2016. I have submitted and reported the project to the Data Protection Official for Research at the Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD) as well as applied for research permission from Espoo City.

The participation will not require much of your child's time. Maximum one hour per day, depending on method and the child/children. Also here children will be asked beforehand for participation separately to each method used and everything will go after the child's/children's premises. Your child will not be put at risk at any time during the research process. Safety and the child's wellbeing is always put first.

The results will most likely not benefit the participants, but give valuable knowledge and information about children's value of play in preschool for the workers, policy makers and help children starting pre-school later on. It will hopefully open up for discussion of the importance of play for the children in preschool as well as showing the children's perspective.

The research will be about children's value of play in preschool. This is because I am interested to see how the changes in the pre-school policy document and the law to make pre-school obligatory for all affected the children and especially play. For me it is important to hear the children's views and experiences of play in preschool and how children value play in preschool. Throughout my research process I want to keep the children's perspective visible for all to see.

To participate in the research is voluntary, all information will be confidential and the participants and pre-school will be given pseudonyms to keep the anonymity. To decide to participate does not obligate you in any way to the research and you are free to withdraw from the research at any time. All the material gathered will be kept safe and unreachd for others. The only once having access to the data will be the supervisor and researcher.

The results will be presented together with the rest of my Master Thesis in the end of May at a seminar at the University. All data will be kept safe and preserved for some time further; the data will be non-identifiable and stored in a secure location accessible only for the researcher. In the end all the data will be destroyed. The children will not get paid for participating in the research but receive a diploma in the end to show they participated in the research.

As a researcher I am obligated to report situations of child abuse, child neglect or any other life-threatening situation for the authorities this is the one and only exception to confidentiality. Hopefully this will not be the case, because this type of information will not be part of the study and

questions about these issues will not be asked at any time during research.

If you have any question or concerns during your child's participation, afterwards or you would like to get a copy of the final results of the research do not hesitate to ask and contact the supervisor or researcher.

Researcher's name: Anna Martola
annamart@stud.ntnu.no

Supervisor: Anne Trine Kjørholt
anne.trine.kjorholt@svt.ntnu.no

I have read true this consent form and understood what the research is all about. I give consent for my child to participate in the research project.

YES

NO

I also give consent for my child to be audio recorded:

YES

NO

Child's

name: _____

Name of parent/ caretaker:

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Föräldrarnas samtycke till deltagande i forskningsprojekt (The Swedish version handed out)

Bästa vårdnadshavare och barn!

Det här är en begäran om samtycke till ert barns deltagande i ett forskningsprojekt gjort av Anna Martola från Norges teknisk-naturvetenskapliga universitet (NTNU).

Avsikten med projektet är att undersöka hur barn upplever och värderar lek i förskolan. Undersökningen är del av min magisteravhandling och en del av magister programmet "Childhood studies" på Norges teknisk-naturvetenskapliga universitet (NTNU).

Vänligen ta er tid att läsa igenom och diskutera deltagandet med ert barn och andra involverade. Deltagandet är frivilligt och ifall ni beslutar er för att delta ber jag er vänligen fylla i förfrågan om deltagande och ert samtycke i slutet av dokumentet. Undersökningen kommer innehålla olika metoder som observation, fokus grupp diskussioner, lek kartor, individuella intervjuer och barnledd lek promenad. Allt detta sker i förskolan. Med ert samtycke kommer en del av metoderna att bandas in och fotograferas för att spara tid, underlätta fortsatt diskussion med barnen och analysen. Bilderna kommer inte synliggöras i den slutliga magisters avhandlingen. Bilderna är till för att synliggöra vardagen i förskolan för barnen samt fungera som diskussions botten för både fokus gruppens intervju och den individuella intervjun.

Undersökningsmaterialet kommer att samlas in på förskolan, över en tid på 4 veckor i september (5-30.9.2016). Jag har överlämnat och

rapporterat mitt projekt till Esbo stad samt till Data Protection Official for Research at the Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD).

Deltagandet i projektet kommer inte att uppta mycket av ert barns tid. Högst en timme per dag, beroende på metod och barnet/barnen. Barnen kommer ännu enskilt att tillfrågas om deltagande skilt för var och en metod och allt sker på barnens villkor. Ert barn kommer inte bli utsatt för några risker under undersökningstiden. Barnets säkerhet och välmående går före allt annat.

Barnen kommer inte direkt att dra nytta av resultaten av undersökningen, men det insamlade materialet kommer däremot att ge personalen i förskolan, beslutsfattare och kommande förskolebarn värdefull information och kunskap om barnens upplevelser av lek i förskolan. Undersökningen kommer förhoppningsvis att öppna upp för diskussion om hur viktig leken är för barn i förskolan och föra fram barnets perspektiv.

Undersökningen kommer att handla om hur barn upplever och värdesätter lek i förskolan. Detta är för att jag själv är intresserad av hur ändringar i läroplanen och förändringen att förskolan är obligatorisk för alla barn påverkat barnen och speciellt leken. För mig är det särskilt viktigt att höra barnens syn på och upplevelser av lek i förskolan. I min undersökning vill jag genomgående föra fram barnets perspektiv och synliggöra det för alla.

Deltagande i forskningen är frivilligt och all information kommer behandlas konfidentiellt. Barnen och förskolan kommer att ges pseudonymer för att säkra anonymiteten. Valet att delta binder inte på något sätt till undersökningen och det går när som helst att avsluta deltagandet. Allt material kommer att bevaras tryggt och oåtkomligt för andra. Tillgång till materialet har endast forskaren och handledaren.

Resultatet av undersökningen kommer att presenteras i samband med resten av magister avhandlingen i slutet av maj 2017 vid ett seminarium på universitetet. Allt material kommer att bevaras tryggt och säkert en tid framöver. Materialet kommer att vara odefinierbart och tillgängligt endast för forskaren.

Som forskare är jag skyldig att rapportera fall av barnmisshandel, vanvård eller något annat livshotande för myndigheterna. Detta är det enda undantaget till konfidentialiteten. Jag utgår från att detta inte kommer att behövas, eftersom denna typ av information inte är en del av min magisters avhandling och frågor kring dessa ämnen inte kommer att ställas i något skede av undersökningen.

Om ni har frågor eller undrar över något visavi ert barns deltagande, eller ifall ni vill få en kopia av de slutliga resultaten får ni gärna kontakta forskaren eller handledaren.

Forskare: Anna Martola
anna.martola@stud.ntnu.no

Handledare: Anne Trine Kjørholt
anne.trine.kjorholt@svt.ntnu.no

Härmed intygas att ni läst igenom detta formulär och förstått vad undersökningen innebär. Tillåtelse ges/ tillåtelse ges inte till barnets deltagande i undersökningen.

JA

NEJ

Tillåtelse ges/ ges inte för inbandning på bandspelare.

JA

NEJ

Tillåtelse ges/ ges inte för fotografering, bilderna används som diskussions botten.

JA

NEJ

Barnets namn:

Vårdnadshavarens namn:

Datum: _____

Underskrift:

Appendix 4: Risk assessment

- Many gatekeepers to ask for approval before even coming close to ask the children themselves. The children might feel obligated to participate if their parents have given consent on their behalf to participate even if they are then given the chance to decide for themselves.
- The workers might as well feel obligated to say yes, to take part when the director of the pre-school have given approval. They might feel uncomfortable having a researcher doing research and observing the daily life in pre-school.
- My role as a researcher will affect how the children affected by my presence as well as feel that they want to take part in the research project. That is why I will go there present myself as a researcher and then trying to find a good power balance and taken the role given to me that the children are comfortable with.
- The time of the day for doing research need to be thoroughly planned, to give the best result. The children should not be tired, hungry or feel that they are missing out something important when taking part in the research project. The duration of a method depends on the child/children. The optimal is to have shorter sections now and then to keep the focus in the children and interest high as well as not taking too much of their time.
- Finding a good, neutral place for focus group discussion and the individual interviews where we get to be undisturbed.
- Some children might feel excluded if not getting consent right away or at all from their parent. Then it will be an ethical question if I let the child take part but not using the data gathered from them, but the issue will be that they will affect other participants and how can I then fully exclude them from the research. Then I might be able to interview them and let them do the individual exercise just for fun and to feel part and if this does not work I just have to exclude them.
- From the start I need to remember not just to listen to the children but also use all my senses to really be able to present the child's

and children's perspectives throughout the research and in the end present a valid and reliable research project.

- Some of the children can feel uncomfortable using some of the methods together with other children or the researcher. Especially in the interview and focus group some might refuse to be recorded.
- I need to be neutral to the responses, not propose any answers in anyway or guide the child to any direction in the research.
- There might be children that find it hard to talk about their value of play, because they have not thought about it before, are not used to be asked about their view or just because they can not play and need guidance with it.
- If it comes up that a child is being abused, I have to think of the child's best and report it and this will be the only time I make an exception to confidentiality. First of all the child will be consulted about it before proceeding to ask for help and advice.

Appendix 5: Weekly plans for the field

Week 1

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|----------------------------|---|--|---|
| -Meet the children. | -Get to know the children. | -Get to know the children. | -Get to know the children. | -Get to know the children. |
| - Present myself and the project to the pre-school. | - See daily routines. | - See daily routines and observe play. | - See daily routines and observe play. | - See daily routines and observe play. |
| | | -Take photographs for the group discussions | -Take photographs for the group discussion | -Take photographs for the group discussions |

Week 2

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|--|--|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| - Observe pre-school activities/ play. | - Observe pre-school activities/ play. | - Observe pre-school activities/ play. | -Observe pre-school activities/ play. | - Observe pre-school activities/ play. |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| <p>- Present the research and ask for children's participation.</p> <p>- Do an agreement together with the children for the research.</p> | <p>- Group discussion about play, using visual stimulus.</p> | <p>- Group discussion about play, using visual stimulus.</p> | <p>- Group discussion about play, using visual stimulus.</p> | <p>- Do play maps with the children.</p> |
|---|--|--|--|--|

Week 3

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| <p>- Observe pre-school activities/ play.</p> | <p>- Observe pre-school activities/ play.</p> | <p>- Observe pre-school activities/ play.</p> | <p>- Observe pre-school activities/ play.</p> | <p>- Observe pre-school activities/ play.</p> |
| <p>- Do play maps with the children.</p> | <p>-Do individual interviews about the play maps.</p> | <p>- Do individual interviews about the play maps.</p> | <p>- Do individual interviews about the play maps.</p> | <p>- Do individual interviews about the play maps.</p> |

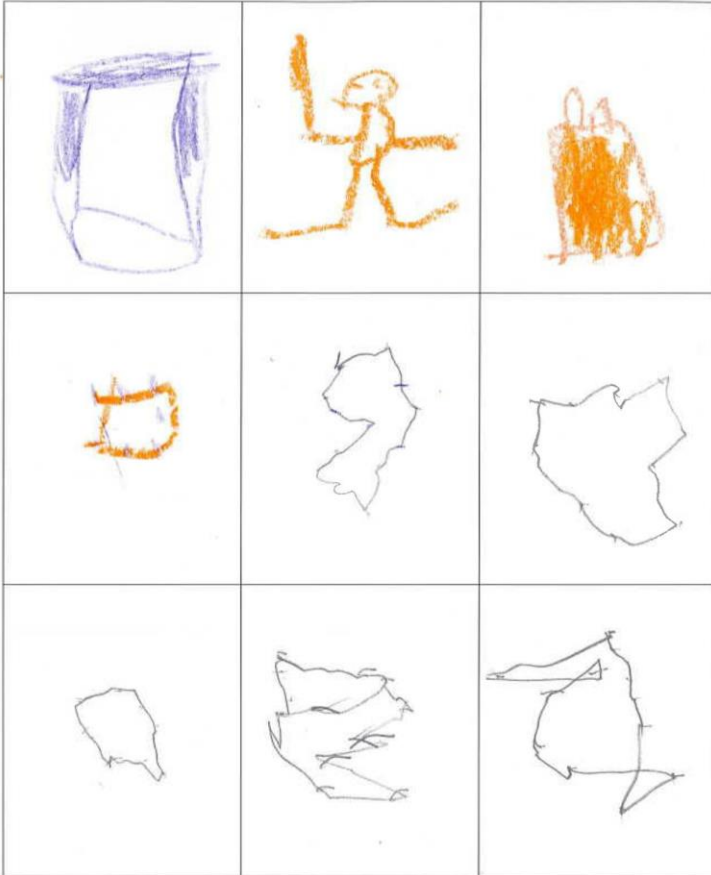
Week 4

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|--|------------------------------|
| - Observe pre-school activities/ play. | - Observe pre-school activities/ play. | - Observe pre-school activities/ play. | - Feedback from the children and adults. | - Surprise for the children. |
| -Child led walk in pre-school, children pointing out places for play. | -Child led walk in pre-school, children pointing out places for play. | -Child led walk in pre-school, children pointing out places for play. | -Left free for gathering more data, if needed. | |

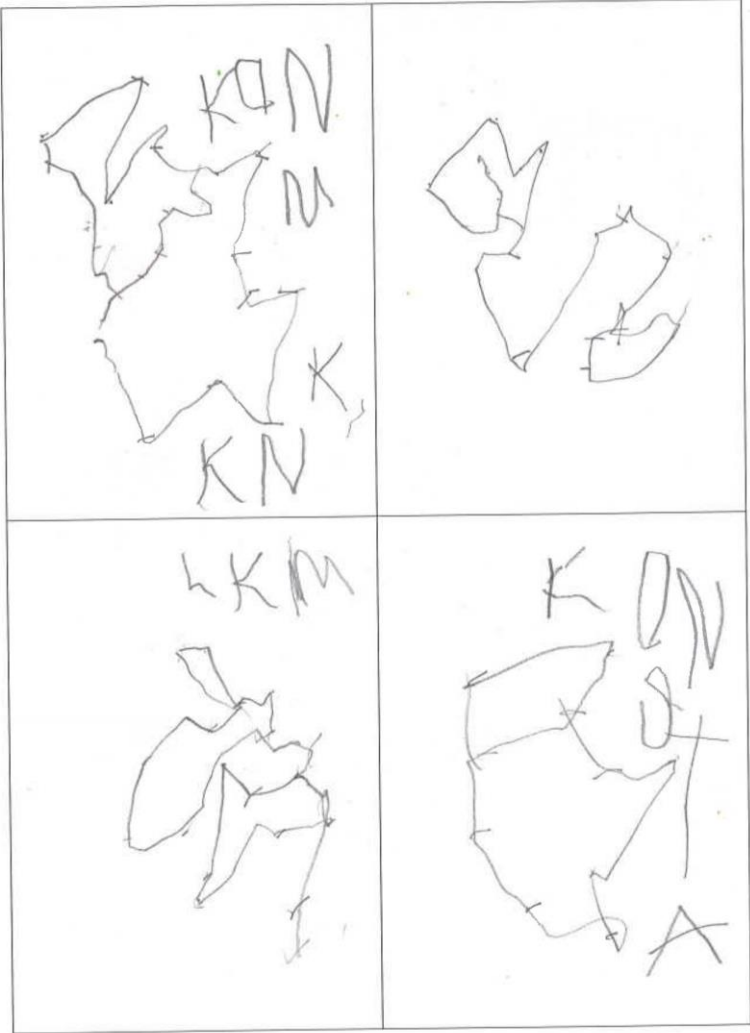
Appendix 6: Children's play maps

Konu

PLAY MAP







G

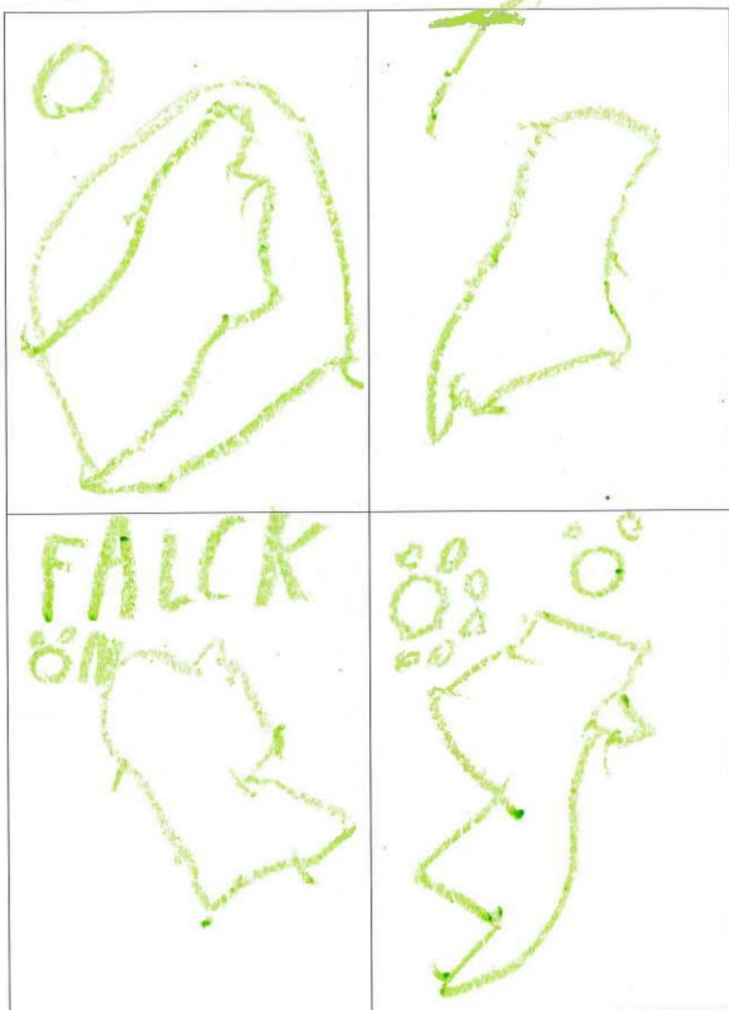


Lloyd

PLAY MAP

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 200 | KYRKO RATIA | LEGO |
|  | APA ALEX |  |
| NEXO RIGHTS | NINJA GO  | GOING  |

x



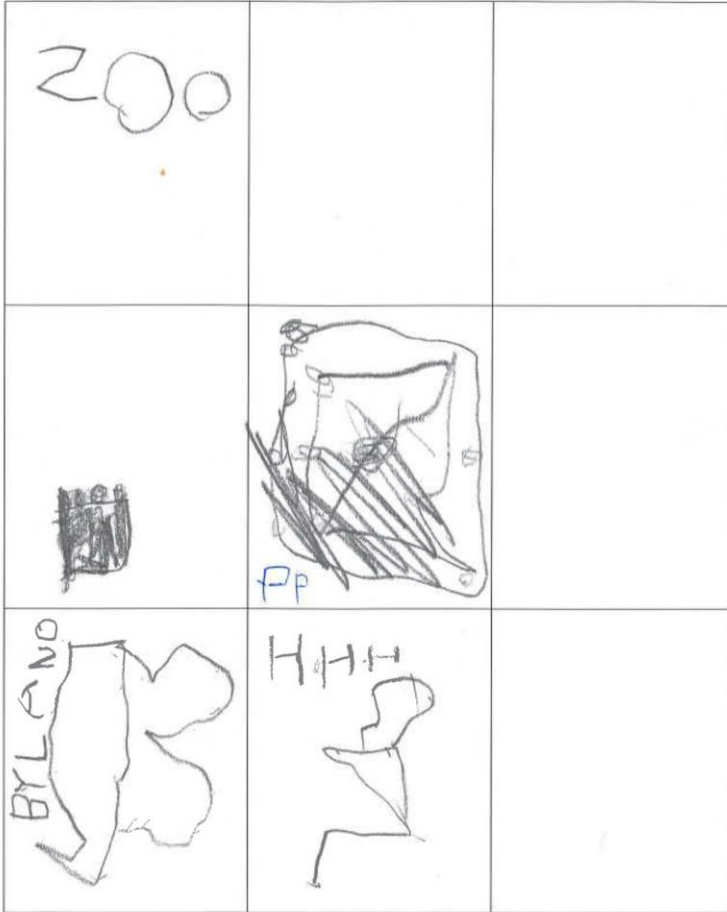
PLAY MAP

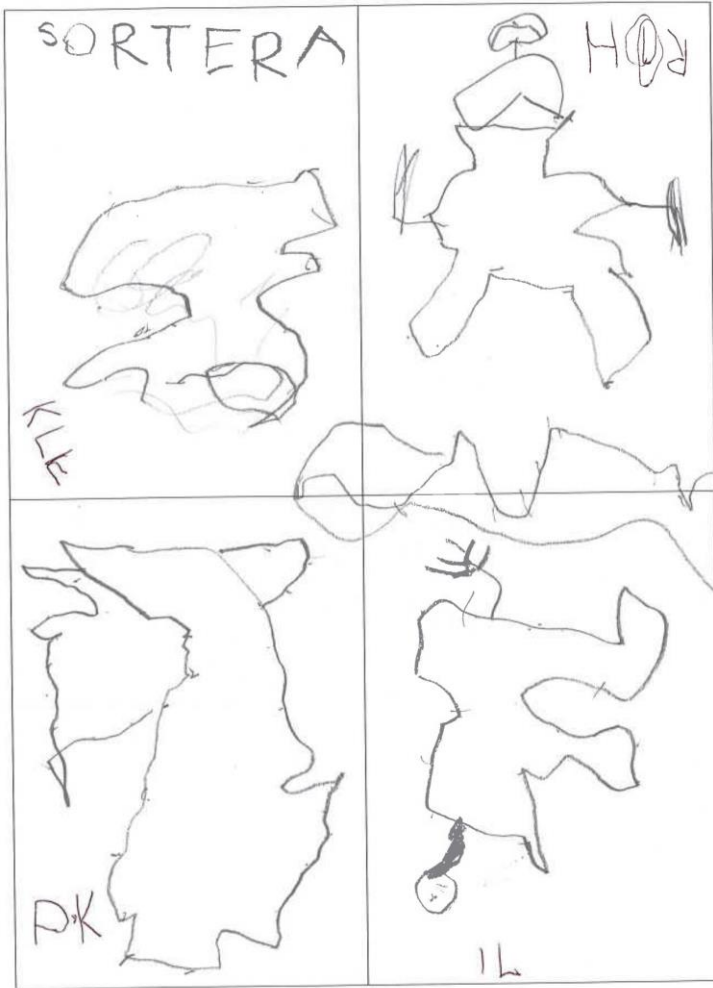
Linn



PLAY MAP

Merlock





Apple

PLAY MAP

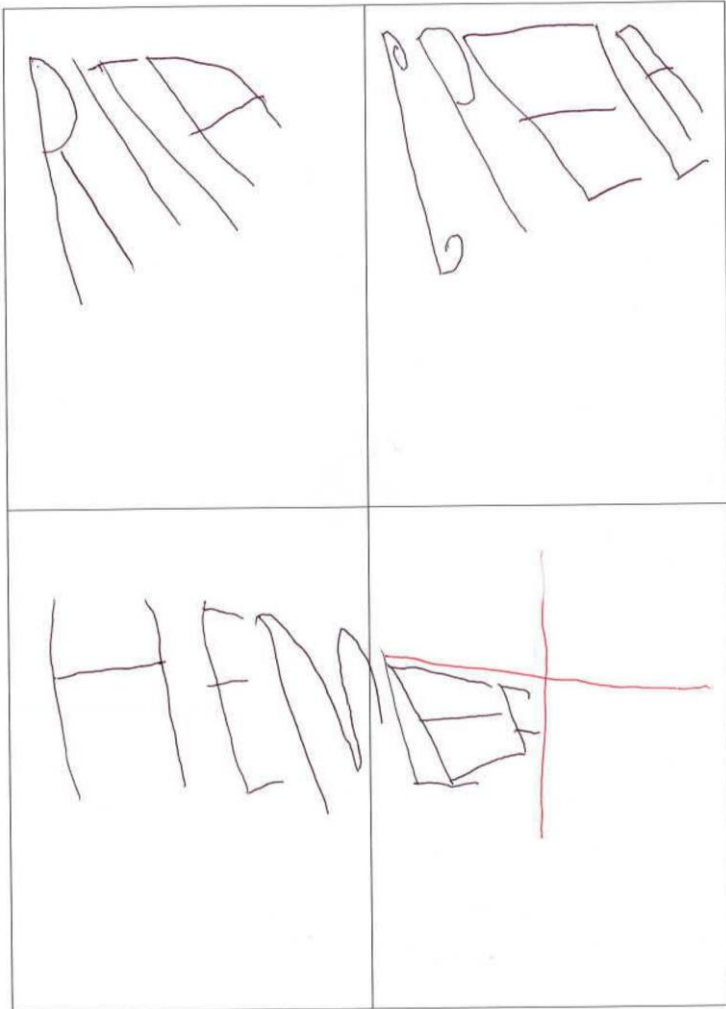


PLAY MAP

Sofia

RIVER

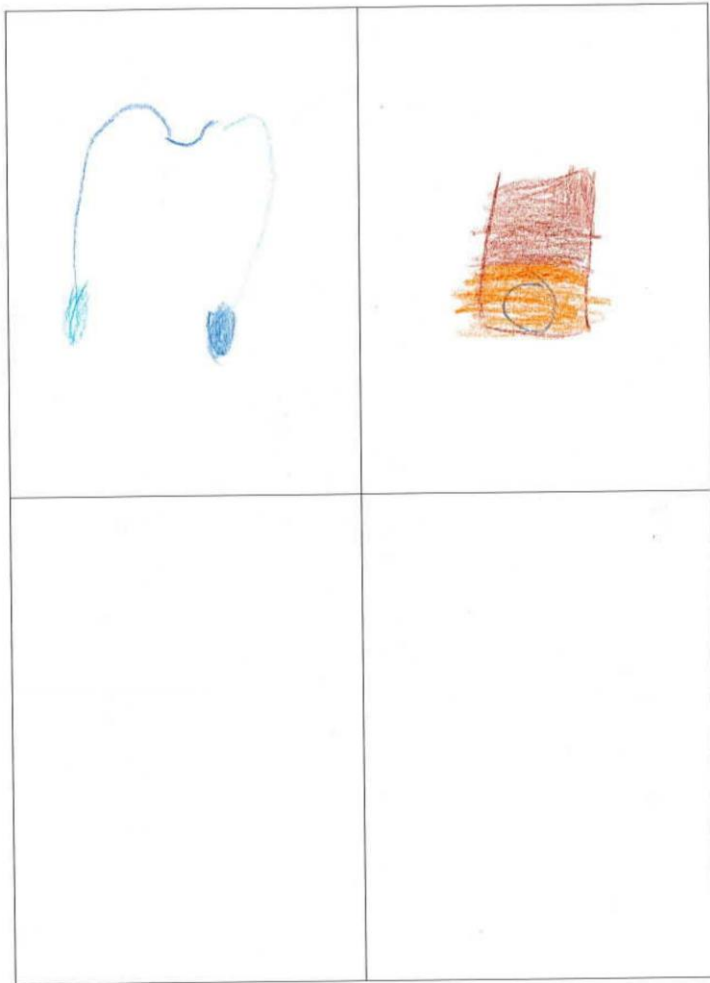




PLAY MAP

Glitter





Ellen

PLAY MAP

| | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| RITA | ELKA EMFRÅN PÅKER | BARBIE |
| LEGO ELVES | LÄMPLIG ALEGO | BYGGA KOJOR |
| LEKAM EDPARL ORNA | VILA | HEMLEK |



DIPLOM



Tilldelas

för deltagande i forskningsprojekt om lek 5-30.9.2016.

Ett stort TACK!

Anna Martola



NTNU

Norwegian University of
Science and Technology



**NORSK SENTER FOR
BARNEFORSKNING**
NORWEGIAN CENTRE
FOR CHILD RESEARCH