PLAY AS A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL:
TRANSFORMING YOUNG CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES

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OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP
The focus of this workshop is to increase the participants understanding of play in early childhood education (ECE). Theoretical perspectives and empirical research will be used as a foundation to support current views on the importance of play as children’s activity, and as a pedagogical tool in ECE. An emphasis will be placed on play in classroom settings for young children, and the role of teachers in guiding and enhancing children’s learning and development through and with play.
WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES
• The workshop will be delivered through lectures, small group discussions, and participant activities. Video material will be used to illustrate concepts and ideas, and to encourage participants to engage in meaningful discussions about key ideas. Handouts of main lecture points and supporting documents will be made available for the participants.

• Active participation is expected
CONTENT OF THE WORKSHOP
• Reconstructing play, and importance of play in Early Childhood Education

• Development of play

• The different perspectives on play

• Play and learning

• Play, imagination, and creativity
• Enhancing learning and development with and through play
• Enhancing and scaffolding play; teacher’s role
• Play-based curriculum
• Linking and making connections to Singapore’s two frameworks (Early Years Development Framework and the Nurturing Early Learners Framework)
• What is your personal aim/goal?
• What do you want to learn?
• Multidisciplinary university

• Founded in Turku in 1640, transferred to Helsinki in 1828

• Bilingual (Finnish and Swedish); English also used for teaching and research

• 11 faculties, 20 independent institutes

• 35,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students, and 28,000 students in continuing education and the Open University

• 8,300 staff members, including 4,700 academic staff
Faculty of Behavioral Sciences

Department of Behavioral Sciences

Degree programme in class teacher education
Degree programme in special education
Degree programme in kindergarten teacher education
Degree programme in home economics education
Degree programme in craft sciences education

Department of Teacher Education
DEPARTMENT OF TEACHER EDUCATION

- 2200 degree students
- 430 students in subject teacher education
- 180 staff, including 140 teachers and researchers
DEGREE PROGRAMMES AND DEGREES

- Degree programme in class (primary) teacher education
  - Master of Education
  - Major: education or educational psychology

- Degree programme in special education
  - Master of Education
  - Major: Special education

- Degree programme in kindergarten teacher and early childhood education
  - Bachelor of Education
  - Optional Master’s Degree Programme in Early Childhood Education
  - Major: education (early childhood education)

- Degree programme in home economics education
  - Master of Education
  - Major: education or home economics science

- Degree programme in craft sciences education
  - Master of Education
  - Major: education or craft science

All Master’s graduates are eligible for postgraduate studies
  - Licentiate of Education
  - Doctor of Education
RESEARCH-BASED TEACHING AT THE HEART OF TEACHER EDUCATION

- A research-based approach is the central guiding theme of teacher education in Helsinki.

- The research-based approach is integrated into every course and courses in research methods are introduced from the very beginning of the studies.

- Another central aim of the teacher education in Helsinki is to achieve a balanced development of the teacher's personality in which the teacher's thinking is essential.
• Yearly intake for Bachelor’s Degree Studies in early childhood education is 120 students

• From these 120, 20 students get a right to accomplish a Master’s Degree

• Separate study program for Master’s Degree. Yearly intake for Master’s Degree Studies in early childhood education is 40 students (has an entrance examination)
STUDENT ADMISSION FOR TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

The admission criteria:

Stage 1:
- Written examination (VAKAVA-examination, a national level examination)

Stage 2:
- Aptitude tests
- Interviews

Stage 2 is more diverse and the procedures rise from the needs of the different degree programmes
Teachers and researchers as well as postgraduate and undergraduate students take part in research, experimental activities and on developmental work conducted at the Department.

Research-based teaching has been developed for a long time at the Department. In addition to the own Department’s teaching, the research has also focused on subject departments’ teaching as well as cross-faculty teaching.

The main objective guiding the research is the aim for interaction between different disciplines and subjects.
EDUCATION IN THE FINNISH WAY
CHARACTERISTICS OF FINNISH EDUCATION

(LAUKKANEN, 2008; NIEMI ET AL., 2012; SAHLBERG, 2011)

• Common, consistent and long-term policy-models

• Research-based teacher education programmes at University

• Educational equality
  - need to mitigate socio/economic backgrounds
  - education is free (books, meals, health care, …)
  - well-organized special education (inclusion) and counselling
• Devolution of decision power to the local level
  - leadership and management at local level (headmaster)
  - teachers are responsible for local curriculum and assessment

• The culture of trust and co-operation are based on professionalism (academic expertise and respect for highly qualified and professional teachers):
  - no inspectors, no national exams (testing)
  - no private tutoring or evening schools
• Policy learning, rather than simply policy borrowing (Sahlberg, 2011)

• We ‘own’ our education system and vision, rather than borrow it from elsewhere
FINNISH TEACHER EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (2002): THE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES SHOULD HELP STUDENTS TO
MASTER:

- high-level subject knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, and knowledge about nature of knowledge,
- social skills, like communication skills; skill to cooperate with other teachers
- moral knowledge and skills, like social and moral code of the teaching profession
- knowledge about school as an institute and its connections to the society (school community and partners, local contexts and stakeholders)
- skills needed in developing one’s own teaching and the teaching profession
- academic skills, like research skills; skills to use ICT, skills needed in processes of developing a curricula
• http://plchelsinki.fi/  (Kumpulainen, Lipponen, Sintonen, Mertanen & Sairanen, 2014)
TALKING ABOUT PLAY
In early childhood education, we Finnish educators have always valued play as a critical source for children’s learning development.

- National curriculum guidelines on early childhood and care in Finland

- “The child’s way of acting”
• Re-invent play

• Joy of learning, learning to learn

• Painting, singing, hands on activities
• Task: My childhood memories of play

• What are your memories of play as a child? What kind of play you played?

• Now as an adult, what kind of plays or how do you play?

• You have 5 min to write some of your memories down
Form a group of 3-4 four persons and share your memories with the group

You have 10 min
• How preschoolers should be taught has just recently moved from the realm of academic discussion to that of policy and instructional practices in the West

• Pressure to start teaching academic skills at a progressively younger age at the expense of traditional early childhood activities (Kindergartners are learning what used to be learned in the first grade)
• Is it more important for kindergartners to focus on academics and learn their ABC’s and numbers?

• Or is it important to spend more time on play and social and emotional issues?
• Some early childhood specialists voice concerns about the suitability for young children of the emphasis on 1) standards and testing (performance rather than meaning making), 2) the teaching of predefined knowledge rather than play, discovery, personal choice and the responsibility of the child – the traditional tools of early childhood learning, and 3) the neglect in ECEC curricula of developmental readiness (Taguma, Litjens & Makowiecki, 2012)
• The examination of the effects of academically-oriented preschool programs reveals that they do not necessarily guarantee future academic success, especially in long-term, and may even make worse children’s problems in social and emotional areas (see e.g. Golinkoff, Hirsh-Pasek, and Singer 2006; Marcon 2002).
• Parents and educators have strong opinions regarding the value and place of play.

• Play is considered fundamental to early years development and education, but is there a decline in children’s opportunities to play?
WHAT IS PLAY?
Play has a long history in ECE

- Pedagogical play

- Theories on play have informed conceptualizations of childhood, curriculum?
  - Rousseau: childhood innocence and protection
  - Froebel notion of children being at work when playing in the children’s garden
  - Dewey’s focus of the active learner working on real life problems;
  - Boyce’s embedding of content knowledge in play;
• Developmental view(s) on play (Piaget)

• Postdevelopmental view(s) on play
  • Sociocultural (Vygotsky)
  • Sociology of childhood (Corsaro; James)
• Postdevelopmental orientations are inspired by theories and practices located outside child development theory, and suggest that play, and the pedagogical use of play, are not governed by individual children’s ‘needs’. Instead children are viewed as competent, socially active learners who are able to co-construct their learning intentions, learning strategies and learning outcomes in culturally meaningful ways with peers and adults (Nolan and Kilderry, 2010, p.113)

• Talking about play is much more than just talking about play
• TASK: What is play?

• How do you recognize play?

• How do you know that children/humans are playing?

• How are you able to make a difference between play and other everyday activities?
• Form a group of three to four persons
• Discuss with your colleagues (use questions to help scaffold your conversation)
• As a group, make notes of your ideas
• You have 15 minutes
Play has been studied:

- What is play?

- What happens in the play (for instance, in terms of learning, change and creation of meaning)?
• Different definitions of play: no standard definition (see dictionary)

• One of the difficulties in understanding play lies in the fact that play does not have explicit goals or material results (Hakkarainen, 2004). **Play is unproductive activity.** The meaning of the play is in play and playing itself
• Why children/humans begin the apparently pointless activity of treating things as what they are not, and imagine things that do not exist?

• Play is an activity that extends over the life span, from early childhood to adulthood, and across cultures, worldwide (Huizinga, 1938; Perone & Göncu, 2014) - “Playing house” is a life-span activity

• Childhood/adulthood - Play/work - Voluntary/forced
• Meaning making. In play, children share their life-worlds with other children, and create their of meanings built upon experiences (Corsaro, 1985, 1997; Damon, 1997; Johansson, 1999; Vygotsky, 1995) -

• Children’s natural way of acting in their surrounding world (cf. Dahlberg & Lench Taguchi, 1994)
• Play is voluntary activity. One cannot force children to play (or even induce); play will lose some of its elements/features.

• Players are always free to quit. If you can’t quit, it’s not play.

• As if‘. To play, and to have the awareness that one is playing.

• “The playful nip denotes the bite, but it does not denote what would be denoted by the bite” (Bateson, 1955)

• Symbolic aspects
• Unpredictability and improvisation

• Creativity, imagination and problem-solving

• Flow and commitment

• Communication and interpretation

• Play is about making affordances/offers. Rejecting an affordance/offer: yes, but…..Accepting an affordance: yes, and…..
FORMS/TYPES OF PLAY
• **Solitary play** (a child playing, for instance with blocks, alone in a corner)

• **Parallel play** (two or more children playing with blocks near each other but not talking with each other)

• **Associative play** (two or more children playing with blocks building the same thing, talking with each other but not working together to create something)

• **Cooperative play** (two or more children are playing with blocks building the same thing, talking with each other and working together to create something)
- Object play: play based on object manipulation
- Symbolic play (around 2-year-old)
- Make-believe play, role play, pretend play, fantasy play, (3-4 year-old)
- Play based on rules (5-year-old)
• Make-believe or pretend play (Bodrova, 2008; Donalsson, 1992)

• 1) Physically present objects (people, tools) are made to stand for or serve as others

• 2) Attribution to objects of properties which they do not in fact possess, and

• 3) The use in play of totally imaginary things when in reality there is only empty space
• Indoor play / Outdoor play

• Play interactions entail always a use of multiple semiotic resources (language, tools, body)
• Preparatory Task: observing play

• The task is to observe children’s play in your own day care center. Select an episode/a moment when, according to your present understanding, a group of children is playing. Observe the play 10-15 min. Whilst observing, make notes with a pen and paper/tablet/computer. You can use the following questions (but you are not restricted to these) to guide your observation and note making:
• What is the play about?

• How and where the play starts? Who starts it? Who decides what is played?

• How the play ends?

• What kind of tools and materials are used during play?

• Who plays with whom?

• What kind of roles children play? (If they are playing make believe).

• How children express their emotions during play?

• What kind of symbolic play activities children perform?
WHY IS PLAY IMPORTANT FOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT?
if play is to be considered educative in basis it would have to teach children ‘something?"
• Play reflects child’s overall development

• Play as children’s experiencing of joy and meaning:

• Children enjoy re-creating stories—such as with literature or the media—because such activity enables them to create their own versions

• Play stimulates several abilities, such as fantasy, empathy, communication, symbolic thinking as well as collaboration and problem-solving, social skills, regulation of emotions, ‘mind reading and taking perspective’, negotiations and renegotiations (roles, rules, values, power), framing, control their impulses and behaving in accordance with social expectations, control fear
• In fact, we adults would be in a big trouble if we should teach children all the things that they learn by playing and through play: to think creatively, to get along with other people and cooperate effectively, and to control their own impulses and emotions.

• Play is essential for optimal development and learning in young children: It is the natural means by which children and other young mammals educate themselves.

• The right to play as such.
• We want to educate people who can ask questions and seek answers to new questions, solve new problems and anticipate obstacles before they arise. These all require the ability to think creatively. The creative mind is a playful mind (Gray, 2014)
Play and Brains (Pellis, 2014)

Experience of play changes the connections of the neurons at the front end of your brain; without play experience, those neurons aren’t changed.

Without play experience, those neurons aren’t changed.

It is those changes in the prefrontal cortex during childhood that help wire up the brain’s executive control center, which has a critical role in regulating emotions, making plans and solving problems. So play prepares a young brain for life, love and even schoolwork.

To produce this sort of brain development, children need to engage in plenty of so-called free play. No coaches, no umpires, no rule books.
“Researchers have raised young monkeys and rats in ways such that they are allowed other types of social interactions but are deprived of play. When these animals are tested, in young adulthood, they are emotional cripples. When placed in a moderately frightening environment, they overreact with fear. They panic and freeze in a corner and never explore the environment and overcome the fear as a normal monkey or rat would. When placed with an unfamiliar peer, they may alternate between panic and inappropriate, ineffective aggression. They are incapable of making friends” (Gray, 2014)
“Whether it’s rough-and-tumble play or two kids deciding to build a sand castle together, the kids themselves have to negotiate, well, what are we going to do in this game? What are the rules we are going to follow?” The brain builds new circuits in the prefrontal cortex to help it navigate these complex social interactions” (Gray, 2014)
• Brown (2009) “interviewed some 6,000 people about their childhoods, and his data suggest that a lack of opportunities for unstructured, imaginative play can keep children from growing into happy, well-adjusted adults. “Free play,” as scientists call it, is critical for becoming socially adept, coping with stress and building cognitive skills such as problem solving. Research into animal behavior confirms play’s benefits and establishes its evolutionary importance: ultimately, play may provide animals (including humans) with skills that will help them survive and reproduce.
Learning through play can be problematic and misleading: having fun and participating in “free play sessions” learning taking place is not necessarily (Yelland, 2011)
CHILDREN’S VIEW ON PLAY

• Children do not use the term ‘play’ to describe their activities in the classroom and playground

• Children can distinguish between play and not-play activities

• Children who are in more play-oriented and less structured settings blur the distinctions between play and not-play activities (McInnes et al., 2011)

• Children in more teacher-directed and structured settings are more likely to have a clearer cue distinction between play and not-play activities (McInnes et al., 2011)
PLAY AND LEARNING
• Expectation that teachers should integrate play and learning in the daily activity in preschool
• Play-based curriculums
HUMAN LEARNING IS:

• Constructive
• Cumulative and structural
• Self-regulative
• Goal-oriented
• Situative
• Abstract
• Individual
• Social and collaborative
• Mastering, perceiving, experiencing, understanding something in a new and qualitatively different way, and by relating to the surrounding world in the light of this experiencing

• A process of meaning making

• Relative permanent changes in behavior as a result of experiences

• Ways of learning varies across communities
• Piaget: biologically programmed maturation, (cognitive) development takes place through four different stages - development precedes learning (DAP, developmental appropriate practice)

• Vygotsky: human beings do not live in a vacuum, but our thinking and activities are mediated through the cultural symbol systems and artifacts we use, and social mediators, such as rules and division of labor - learning precedes development. Learning is about interacting and being in relationships. Development as continuous
• Play and learning—inseparable dimensions in preschool practice? (Pramling-Samuelsson & Johansson, 2006)

• Play and learning - two interrelated phenomenon?
• Tension between play and learning(?)

• Play is something initiated by the children. The child itself forms the goal. The child has an intention of what he/she (we) is doing or is about to do

• ‘Real learning’ is something that is initiated and organized by the teachers, and it takes place in special activities (or moments)
• When young children act they do not separate between play and learning, although they separate them in their talk (Williams & Graneld, 1995)

• Informal learning: One learns all the time without teachers
The difference between the subject of play and school learning. The individual learner is the subject of school learning and learning results are measured as individual mastery of skills. Play has another dimension of subjectivity, which makes it difficult to find out what the individual’s learning process is. (Hakkarainen, 2004)
• In research, as well as in the preschool practice, play and learning have been kept apart (space, time) (in curriculum?)

• From a scientific aspect, it might be important to maintain a distinction between play and learning (Pramling-Samuelsson & Johansson, 2006)
• There are play dimensions in learning and learning dimensions in play.

• Play as well as learning is about experiencing and creating meaning of the surrounding world.
• It is not fair to ask (every time when children play) what do they learn (or do they learn at all) while they play

• Children do not play to learn but they learn while they play: For instance, when children construct role relations they are not training social skills of the adult world purposefully, but experimenting with the idea, sense and motives of of these roles carried out in symbolic actions in an imaginary situation (Hakkarainen, 2004)
• Adults try to narrow play to a learning method? Play as a means to reach a further goal or learning result, not the inherent value of play (learning-centered play, playful learning, pedagogical play, play-based learning).

• Is it the playful approach and attitude that is taken to an activity, rather than the play act itself, which is beneficial for learning?
• At its best, play can change the culture of learning: it is collective activity, it crosses the boundaries of disciplines

• Play culture - school culture
• **Task: Preparatory Reading:**


• Form a group of three to four
VYGOTSKY ON PLAY

- Russian psychologist
- A Cultural-Historical perspective on learning and development (and play)
- Piaget: biological maturity as a condition for learning
- Vygotsky: learning leads/precedes development
• Vygotsky limited the use of the term play to the make-believe play typical for preschoolers and children of primary school age

• Play is a leading activity for preschool- and kindergarten-aged children subsequent development (means others are less important). To be a leading activity play should contain all three elements of ‘real’ play
• Real play has three components:
  • children create an imaginary situation
  • take on and act out roles
  • follow a set of rules determined by specific roles (If the child is playing the role of a father, then he has rules of paternal behavior)
- Children under three focus on objects. They are constraint what is visible

- Older children tend to substitute objects with meanings (symbolic actions). Play is a transitional stage
• Play is not a ‘naturalistic’, i.e. as an outgrowth of children’s instinctive tendencies

• Play is a cultural-historical phenomenon largely dependent on the degree and quality of adult mediation

• The role the child plays, and her relationship to the object if the object has changed its meaning, will always stem from the rules, i.e. the imaginary situation will always contain rules. In play the child is free. But this is an illusory freedom (Vygotsky 1933/1967, 10)
• Play is more than a reflection of child’s current level of development - it is a mechanism propelling child development forward

• For children of preschool and kindergarten age their mastery of academic skills is not as good a predictor of their later scholastic abilities as the quality of their play. In a four-year-old’s play one can observe higher levels of such abilities as attention, symbolizing and problem solving than in other situations (Bodrova, 2008)
• The zone of proximal development (ZPD) . . . is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86)
• “Play creates a zone of proximal development of the child. In play the child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself. As in the focus of magnifying glass, play contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed form and in itself is a major source of development” (Vygotsky, 1966)
• In play, children are head above their performance

• **Higher levels of self-regulation** of children’s physical behaviors in play than in non-play contexts. For example, when a boy was asked to be the lookout, he remained at his post and did not move for a longer period of time than he could when the experimenter asked him to stand still in a laboratory condition  (Bodrova, 2008)

• **Remembering words** (laboratory, play context)

• Developmental accomplishments do become apparent in play far earlier that they do in other activities  (Bodrova, 2008)
• **Concept formation.** Play creates a space for concept formation

• Scientific concept is a product of an institution, namely the scientific establishment

• Scientific concept cannot arise from the child’s everyday personal experience without any conscious effort or awareness. Needs instruction
• Two sisters who are sisters, play sisters. They have an everyday concepts of what it means to be a sister. They probably do not have a scientific concept of sibling relationships (sisterhood).

• Through playing sisters these two child consciously focus on the concept of sisters
IMAGINATION

(ZITTOUN & CERCHIA, 2013; PELAPRAT & COLE;., 2011 ; VYGOTSKY, 2002)

• A creative aspect of human cognition

• Enrichment, or expansion, of one’s experience and understanding of the world

• Imagination: differs from people’s thinking about “reality”—their material environment given by their senses, the presence of actual social others, etc. Imagination always seems to open a different space, or a different modality of thinking, which eventually terminates when the person “comes back” to reality
• Taking distance from the here-and-now from experience; it allows to consider alternatives, to reread the past or to open possible futures

• Imagination is a form of expansion of human experience

• What provokes the rupture that will induce imagination? (Can also be deliberately created): disturbance or opportunity?
• Piaget: distinguished the processes involved in imagination and in reasoning

• Vygotsky: imagination follows a disjunction from the normal flow of experience, but that it is also an important component of development, a way to expand one's experience. Imagination allows the child, and then the adult, to go beyond the limit of his or her understanding, and thus, to create his or her zone of proximal development.

• Gap-filling or as expansion of experience?
• *Deficit model of imagination*: mismatch between the flow of the given of experience, and the flow of consciousness (Zittoun & Cerchia, 2013)

• *Imagination as expansion of experience* (Zittoun & Cerchia, 2013)
• Evolving memory in early years "gives birth" for imagination. Imagination is the new formation that is not present in the consciousness of the very young child (Vygotsky, 2002)

• In early years imagination manifests itself through play activity
• One of the most improvisational activities of 3-to 5-year-old children is pretend play/make-believe play/role play. "By creatively improvising their play drama, children are learning the creative skills that are essential for everyday social life. Rather than learning roles or scripts, children at play are learning how to improvise in conversations with others and how to create a conversational performance. Play is important because it is unscripted — it allows the child to practice improvisation."

• (Script: is a sequence of expected behaviors for a given situation)
• No sharp dividing line between “improvisation” and “not improvisation”; rather, there is a continuum, from more improvised to less improvised

• An emergent system: interaction among constituent components leads to overall system behavior that could not be predicted from a full and complete analysis of the individual components of the system
• Striking similarities between improv and make-believe play

• Three levels: group interactional, textual, and historical-developmental

• Everyday improvised behavior (no specified script)
NARRATIVES AND STORYTELLING (BRUNER, 1986)

- Play and narrative go hand in hands

- Humans have two modes of thought:
  - The paradigmatic or logico-scientific: to fulfill the ideal of a formal, mathematical system of description and explanation
  - Narrative mode which leads to good stories, gripping drama, believable (though not necessarily "true") historical accounts.
Stories/Narratives are what we use to make sense of the world. They are the building blocks of human experience.

Narratives are a “window’ to understand children.

Actual minds, possible worlds.

Landscape of mind.

Landscape of action.
PLAY AND PLAYWORLDS
FERHOLT, 2010; HAKKARAINEN, 2004; LINDQVIST, 1995; RAINIO, 2010; VYGOTSKY, 2004)

• Playworld: Together, adults and children create a thematic fiction, by using stories, music, pretending, role figures (and so on)

• Encourage adults to participate with children in play at the same time as these adults are engaged in the more familiar project of strongly encouraging children to participate in art and science
• Imaginary situation

• A plot or a story as a starting point that is then dramatized (roles, actions)

• Learning and problem-solving are embedded in narrative context

• No pre-defined end (improvisation, imagination)

• A real life phenomena can be explored by the fictive narrative plot (Hakkarainen, 2008)

• Playworld creates a strong emotional stance towards learning and problem solving
• Time-space arrangements of playworld
  
  • Expands the physical learning environment (outdoors, and so on)
  
  • Expands the time scale of activities: Playworld sessions can occur weekly, last approximately two hours, and include reflection upon the enactments in the form of discussion and then free play or art activities
• Spaces were adult-child joint play could be promoted in institutional setting, and enter a common fantasy together

• Children's forms of creative imagining. embodiment of ideas in the material world through a combination of the disciplines of art and science, and play

+ 

• Adult forms of creative imagining with extensive experience
PLAY-BASED CURRICULUM

- Curriculum – A New Phenomenon in Early Childhood Education: In the middle of the 1990s curricula also began to appear in early childhood education in many places of the world (Sommer et al., 2010)
• **Curriculum determinants:**
  - Subjects
  - Student
  - Society

• **Curriculum ideologies:**
  - Academic
  - Learner-centered
  - Societal effectiveness (competent citizens)
  - Play-Based

• **Functions of curriculum:**
  - Curriculum as a part of the administrative system
  - Juridical/administrative document (norms rules)
  - Epistemic document (tells what to transform to next generations)
  - Pedagogical document (direct and guides teaching)
• Education is always normative, based on the intentions of the curriculum or the teacher’s ideas.

• There exists a kind of curriculum in all preschool settings, whether or not it is spelled out.

• It is important to make the curriculum visible.

• The curriculum must be internalized and lived by the teacher.
• There exists no single particular method or preschool programme which is the optimum choice and superior to all (Sommer et al., 2010)

• Children who attend well-planned, high-quality early childhood programmes in which curriculum aims are specified and integrated across domains tend to learn more and are better prepared for mastering the complex demands of formal schooling (Sommer et al., 2010)
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Source: Pianta et al., 2010; Eurydice, 2009; Laevers, 2011; Schweinhart and Weikart, 1997.
• **Curriculum-development for young children** (Pramling, 2004)

  • A direction for children’s learning based on values and norms

  • The largest freedom possible within the overall goals

  • Children benefit most from a combination of narrative and logico-analytic thinking

  • The same learning goals at all levels of education but at different levels of complexity
• A continuity of perspectives through ECEC and the school

• Children’s learning must be focussed on creating meaning

• Curricula must also look to the future

• The quality of staff is paramount

• ECE curricula should deal with play and learning and the relationship between them
• ECE programmes must be open and make room for children’s initiatives and experiences

• …and yet be inscribed in a life-long learning context with common learning objectives and approaches

• Strong evaluative processes built in

• Quality and its measurement

• Democracy and gender questions
• Both care and education should be reflected in the curriculum

• A daily schedule that includes active indoor and outdoor physical play

• Integration of music, movement and creative expression
ASSESSING A PLAY-BASED LEARNING/PROGRAMS

- Elementary knowledge, concepts and thinking skills (academic skills)

- Creative imagination, sense creation, free exploration of ideas, phenomena and their relations, emotional identification and motivation??

- Skills associated with play ultimately lead to better grades
• **Learner centered:**

  • School curriculum: knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs that learners bring to the educational setting

  • Play-based curriculum: ????

• **Knowledge-centered:**

  • School curriculum: help students become knowledgeable

  • Play-based curriculum: ????
• Community-centered

• Assessment-centered (feedback)

• Formative: the use of assessments (usually administered in the context of the classroom) as sources of feedback to improve teaching and learning

• Summative: what students have learned at the end of some set of learning activities (teacher-made tests given at the end of a unit)
• **Pedagogical documentation: content and process** (Dahlberg and others, 2007).

  • Content involves recording everyday practices in early childhood education. It focuses on what children (and educators) are doing and saying.

  • Process: recorded information can be collectively discussed and reflected upon in social interactions with different parties. This is what refer to as the process dimension of pedagogical documentation.
• **Playful learning** (Resnick, 2004)

• To integrate play and learning

• Best learning experiences emerge when one is engaged in activities that one enjoys, cares about, and has even passion

• Opportunities to learn when one plays and play when one learns)

• Hands-on activities that help children learn through playful exploration and inquiry
ENHANCING AND SCAFFOLDING PLAY: TEACHERS ROLE
• Traditional model of teaching:

• IRE - initition - reply - evaluation (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975)

• IRE appears to be universal/cross-cultural pattern of classroom interaction
SCAFFOLDING MAKE-BELIEVE PLAY
(BODROVA, 2008)

• Using toys and props in a symbolic way - repertoire of different uses for the same object

• Developing consistent and extended play scenarios - background knowledge to build play scenarios
• Developing and maintaining play roles and rules - children cannot learn by simply observing adult behaviors. Therefore, to promote mature play, teachers need to explain the purpose of these behaviors, their sequence, the cause and effect relationships between different behaviors.

• Teaching children to plan ahead - asking children what they want to play or what they want to be encouraging them to discuss the choice of the roles with their peers.
• Adult intervention or not?
• Play transforms the traditional model of teaching and interaction. It creates a space for children to be active and make initiations

• It support horizontal interaction
• Practitioners’ understanding (or lack of) of play has consequences on pedagogy (McInnes et al., 2011)

• Practitioners tend to focus on children’s behavior rather than analyzing their own
• The importance of teachers taking part in the play in a genuine and sensitive way

• **Sensitivity** to recognize children’s initiations; **take part** into the play (right time, right way); **autonomy** (let the children plan and accomplish the ideas of play)

• Children wish that adults take part in their play, and they try in many ways to invite the adults to take part in play (Pramling-Samuelsson & Johansson, 2009)

• Children form closer and stronger relationships with teachers who play with them
• With teacher support children stay attentive for longer periods: committed and long-term a play (Hutt et al., 1989).

• Teachers can also enrich children’s play by helping them with material, ideas and practical attainments.

• Children’s play becomes more complex when teachers participate (Sylva et al., 1980)

• There is a growing number of ‘things’ that are challenging to play (modern dad or mom)
• Building, maintaining and renewing a play environment

• How to know whether the play environment is suitable and not too ready made for children? (The balance between traditional use and innovative use)
• The physical environment and space: inviting and encouraging to play, imagination, improvisation, exploration, and inquiry

• Social and emotional environment and space: warm and trusting relationships supporting collaboration and friendship between children (and adults)

• Temporal space: It is necessary that children can continue their play over several days (if they want). Aim should be committed and long-term a play
CONCLUSIONS

• Intentional instruction in preschool and kindergarten can and should foster the prerequisites for the academic skills

• It should do it by promoting foundational competencies that are ‘uniquely preschool’ and promoting them through play and playful activities

• (Make-believe) play should be seen not as competing with academic learning but rather as enhancing it