ECEC – Early Childhood Education and Care– in Finland

Leena Turja

PhD, Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood Education
University of Jyväskylä

Administration

- Early childhood education and care services (public child-care and open early education services & control of the activities of private child-care and education providers) are under the administration of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

- Pre-school education for children at the age of 6 years are under the administration of the Ministry of Education.

- On municipal level most of the large municipalities have already joined these both services to be under the administration of Education Affairs.

Financial support in EC

- The day care fees are based on family size and income level.
- Client fees cover about 15 percent of the total day care costs.
- Over 90% of day care services are municipally provided.

- The maternity leave and allowance were granted in 1964 and in 1978 fathers got the possibility for paternity leave and allowance. The period of parental leaves is currently altogether about 43 weeks.

- The child home care allowance can be granted immediately after the parental allowance period ends and can be paid until the youngest child in the family is three years old, or enters the municipal day care.
Pre-school for 6 years old

- Pre-school education is provided in the year preceding the commencement of compulsory education.
- Pre-school education is provided 700 hours annually during the academic year.
- For families it is voluntary and free of charge.

Morning and afternoon activities for school children

- In 2004 National Board of Education approved the principles for morning and afternoon activities.
- In order to receive a state subsidy, municipalities must offer services at least 570 hours annually per a child.
Regulations

- The educational personnel in day care centres is required to have at least a secondary-level degree education = child-care nurse
- One in three of the staff must have a post-secondary level degree (Bachelor of Education or Bachelor of Social Sciences) = kindergarten teacher
- Pre-school teachers are required to be a Bachelor of Education
- Family child minders must have appropriate training

Adult-child -ratio

**Full-time services**
- One adult / seven children aged 3-6 years
- One adult / four children under the age of three

**Part-time services**
- One to thirteen for 3-6-year-olds
- One to four for children under the age of three

The adult-child ratio in family day care is one to four

The old Day-Care Act is from 1973 with many changes during the past decades

**THE NEW EARLY EDUCATION ACT IS NOW IN PROCESS**
- governance under the Ministry of Education,
- terminology,
- regulated group-sizes,
- qualifications of personnel,
- compulsory quality management
The content of ECE

- Pre-school education as a part of ECE and basic education form an integrated entity progressing consistently in terms of children’s development

- The content of ECEC is guided by the National Curriculum Guidelines on ECEC (2003/2005) and the Core Curriculum for Pre-School Education (2000/2010)
  - The first document is only optional to follow. Still over 90% of municipalities use it as a basis for their own curriculums
  - The second document is obligatory to follow.

Some features of Finnish ECE

- Roots in Froebel pedagogy

- Kindergarten teacher education now 120 years old (first started by Hanna Rothman - who was educated in Berlin Pestalozzi-Fröbel-Haus seminar by herself – and Elisabeth Alander)

- A first Finnish speaking nursery and kindergarten started in the context of Jyväskylä Teacher Education Seminar in 1863

- Play, creative activities, movement, exploration are seen to be the typical activities for children

- Orientation to natural, social and cultural world (including pre-academic skills) by using these activities

- Aiming to social, physical and emotional wellbeing
Features ….

- Partnership and educational cooperation with parents
- Inclusive education (only very few separate special classes for 3–6 year olds)
  - Multidisciplinary cooperation
  - Special education studies for all kindergarten teachers
- Lifelong professional development within the personnel
  - Educational leadership
  - Learning together in teams
- Children’s participation in the pedagogical process

REFERENCES

Core Curriculum for Pre-School Education in Finland 2000. Stakes.  

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(OBS: This document includes some errors concerning e.g. the Figures 1.1 and 1.2, and the Table 1.2)