

Pedagogical play in hospital

Briitta Hiitola, M.Ed

Department of Special Education, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland

This presentation included two perspectives to early childhood education in a hospital setting in Finland. The first part of presentation will concern a development of the National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education in Hospital. Secondly, I'd like to present my ongoing study of child-adult play in hospital.

The National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care provide a national tool for guiding early childhood education and care (ECEC). This document was published in 2003 and it included the central principles and development priorities for publicly operated and supervised ECEC. The document also bring out the first time the children in hospital as a special group and express these children needs to ensured co-operation between different ECEC services. The National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education in Hospital will be published this year. The document impress hospital one for the early childhood environment (learning environment) and described early childhood education principals in hospital. The main issue will be play as child's general action, playing, physical activity, exploration (goals from ECEC) and value of play prepare child to hospital experiences. This document will guide early childhood education in a hospital setting in national level and it will be also general tool when legislation on child day-care and preschool will be reformed in the near future.

In my ongoing study I am interested in child-adult play in a hospital setting. Child-adult play is the most common form of play in hospital. In health care settings, like in other environments, children play what they see and detect. Children play their own experiences. In hospital environment the child needs an adult's intervention to create play would and satisfying playing action. Research of the value of play in health care settings indicates that play programs increases children's self-comforting, decreases their pain and stress experiences and promotes their sense of control over illness and institutionalization (Gaynard, L. 2006) Studies also reported that play helps prepare children for impending medical procedures (Child Life Council 2007). However, research on childhood and children's everyday living by children's point of view in hospital settings are less than fully documented. I 'm also interested how adult's, preschool teacher in hospital setting, developing a pedagogy of play in hospital environment.

The present study focus on three primary questions: what are the themes of children's play in hospital, what play acting shows about children's experiences in hospitalization and how support children with chronic illness in educational challenges by adult-child play. The data come from approximately 14 hours of video-recordings of play sessions in a hospital play department involving child (aged 3,5 - 8) and adult (preschool teacher). The other data is stimulated recall (later STR) interviews with preschool teachers after every play sessions. Participants are four (4) children with chronic illness who undergo organ transplantation. Data collection time was one year by every child. The first data analyzing displays of episodes and themes of children's play. A second threat to analyze data is child and adult interaction in play sessions. Analyzing the STR interviews obtains information regarding intervention ideas to support children's educational needs.

By activity reform police in early childhood education and stated actions in childhood and education research field could have major effect to the Play Programmes and Early Childhood Education in Hospital in Finland.