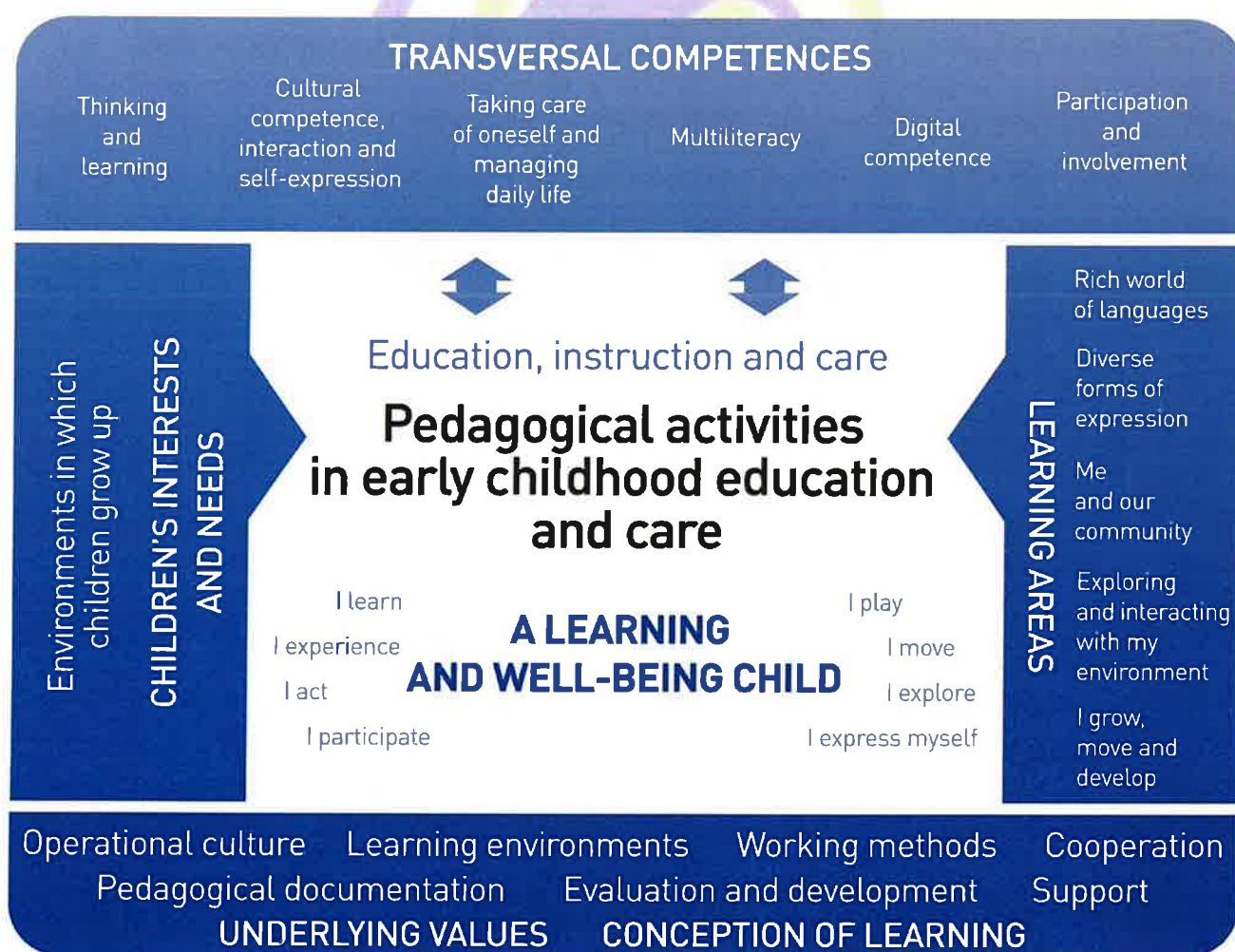


4. Planning and implementing pedagogical activity in early childhood education and care

4.1 The framework for pedagogical activity

A holistic approach describes the pedagogy activities of early childhood education and care and their implementation. The aim is to promote children's learning and well-being as well as their transversal competence (Figure 1). Pedagogical activity is carried out in interaction and shared activities between children and personnel. Children's free activities as well as those that the children and personnel come up with together or that are planned by the personnel supplement each other. Pedagogy is emphasised in all activity.



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Figure 1. The framework for pedagogical activity in early childhood education and care

The underlying values (Chapter 2.4), the conception of learning (Chapter 2.5) and the operational culture (Chapter 3) based on these as well as versatile learning environments (Chapter 3.2), cooperation (Chapter 3.3.), working methods (Chapter 4.3) and support for the child (Chapter 5) lay the foundation for goal-oriented and inclusive activities. The planning of the activities begins with the children's interests and needs as well as meaningful aspects in the environment where children grow up. The learning areas described in Chapter 4.5 are also used as a basis for the planning. The precondition for high-quality pedagogical activities is systematic documentation, evaluation, and development (Chapters 4.2 and 7). The objectives of transversal competences also guide the planning of the activities (Chapter 2.7).

The local curricula for ECEC shall specify the objectives and principles for the pedagogical activities. When specifying the objectives, the different forms of ECEC services, their personnel structures and other characteristics should be taken into account. The local curriculum for ECEC as well as the children's individual early childhood education and care plans (Chapter 1.3) shall be used as a basis for planning the activities for the group of children. The activities shall be implemented so that each child has the right to progress in learning, ensuring that ECEC and pre-primary education form a continuum that is meaningful for the child.

4.2 Pedagogical documentation

Pedagogical documentation is an essential working approach in planning, implementing, evaluating, and developing early childhood education and care. This documentation is a continuous process where observations, documents and their interpretation in interaction create an understanding of pedagogical activity. Pedagogical documentation enables the participation of children and guardians in evaluating, planning, and developing the activities.

Pedagogical documentation produces concrete and versatile knowledge about the children's lives, development, interests, thinking, learning, and needs as well as the activities of the group of children. Individual documents, such as photographs, drawings or the personnel's observations make it possible to examine the children's development and learning together with the children. The knowledge and skills already acquired by the children as well as their interests and needs are made visible through pedagogical documentation and used as a basis for planning the activities.

The aim of systematic documentation is that the personnel get to know individual children, understand the relationships between the children as well as the nature of the interaction between the personnel and children in the group. The purpose of pedagogical documentation is to implement ECEC in a child-focused manner. The knowledge and understanding acquired through documentation are utilised for such purposes as continuously shaping the working methods and learning environments as well as the goals, methods, and contents of activities to better meet the children's interest and needs. The individual ECEC plan of a child is part of the pedagogical

play as a vehicle for learning but a way of spending time, living, and perceiving the world instead. Experiences that stimulate the children's emotions, curiosity and interest inspire them to play.

For the child, the significance of play lies in the play itself. Play produces joy and pleasure for the children. Children are active agents when they play: they structure and explore the surrounding world, create social relations, and form meanings based on their experiences. Children construct ideas of themselves and others through play. Through play, children imitate as well as create new things and alter what they have seen. By doing so, they model and test their hopes and dreams. The use of imagination enables children to experiment with different roles and ideas which they could otherwise not carry out. Through play, children can process experiences that they find difficult. Play makes it safe to experiment, try and fail.

Play combines key elements that promote learning: enthusiasm, doing things together and challenging personal abilities. Play evolves and takes different shapes as children gain more experiences. Interactions between the personnel and children as well as among the children lay a foundation for the development of thinking, language and developing play skills. Children make observations, experiment, and learn the rules of the community through play. When playing in a group, children learn to regulate their emotions and desires as well as to take the viewpoints of others into account. Play increases sense of community, which strengthens a positive emotional atmosphere.

Play is the key working method in ECEC. In pedagogical activities, for example drama, improvisation or fairy tales can be combined in developing plots for play and constructing imaginary worlds. The personnel must acknowledge the significance of concentrated exploration, spontaneous creative expression as well as boisterous play and physical games on children's well-being and learning. Different situations may be enriched by introducing playful aspects to them. Nursery rhymes, wordplay, songs, and playfulness strengthen a positive atmosphere, which supports learning and well-being.

The personnel have the duty to secure the preconditions for playing in line with the principles of inclusion, supervise play in a suitable way, and ensure that each child gets an opportunity to participate in playing together as allowed by their skills and capabilities. The personnel must support the development of the children's play with a systematic and goal-oriented approach by either guiding it from outside or participating in it. The physical and psychological presence of the personnel support interaction among the children and prevent conflicts from arising.

The personnel must observe and document the children's play. Observation of play increases the personnel's understanding of children's thoughts and interests as well as their emotions and experiences. The observations are used in planning and guiding play and other activities. Subtlety, professional competence as well as gender sensitivity in detecting children's initiatives for play and responding to them in an appropriate way are required of the personnel.

Rich world of languages

The task of ECEC is to strengthen the development of children's **linguistic skills** and **capacity** as well as their **linguistic identities**. ECEC strengthens children's curiosity towards and interest in languages, texts, and cultures. Supporting linguistic development is connected to the development of the child's multiliteracy (Chapter 2.7). It is also connected to, among other things, transversal competences associated with children's cultural skills and interaction. The developing linguistic skills provide the children with new ways to influence and to participate actively.

Language is both an object of and a vehicle for learning for children. It provides children with means to manage different situations and things as well as interact with others, express themselves and acquire knowledge. A versatile language environment in ECEC as well as cooperation with guardians, support children's linguistic development. In ECEC, children are provided with encouraging and consistent feedback on their language use and interaction skills.

ECEC supports the development of each child's skills in the language of instruction. The fact that children grow up in different linguistic environments and may learn several languages simultaneously is taken into account in the education and instruction. The ways of using language and interacting vary between families, and several languages may be spoken in the children's homes. Linguistic and cultural diversity is made visible in ECEC in cooperation with guardians. For its part, this supports the development of children's linguistic identities. Perspectives related to language and culture in ECEC are discussed further in Chapter 4.6.

It is important for language learning to acknowledge that children of the same age may be going through different phases in different areas of linguistic development. **Linguistic identities develop** as children are provided with guidance and support in the main areas of linguistic skills and capacity.

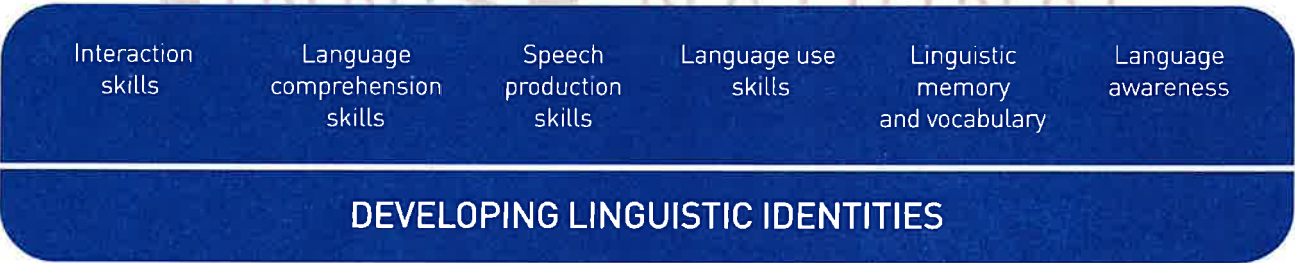


Figure 2. The main areas of children's linguistic development in early childhood education and care

For the development of **interactive skills**, children's experiences of being heard and getting responses to their initiatives are important. The personnel's sensitivity and responses to children's messages, including non-verbal ones, are essential. The development of interaction skills is supported by encouraging the children to communicate with other children and personnel.

forms and cultural heritage. A holistic approach and creative combination of different ways to express characterise children's expression. Artistic experiences and expression promote children's learning potential, social skills, and positive self-image as well as their capacity to understand and structure the surrounding world. Children develop their thinking and learning skills as they explore, interpret, and create meanings by practising different ways to express. The ability to imagine and evoke mental images is also key to the development of the child's ethical thinking. Familiarisation with cultural heritage, art and different forms of expression also strengthen children's competence in the areas of multiliteracy, participation and involvement.

Culture is an important part of the child's identity. ECEC provides children with opportunities to see and experience art and other culture diversely. The experiences related to art and culture strengthen children's ability to adopt, use and change culture. At the same time, the children learn to understand the meaning and value of art and cultural heritage.

Different forms of expression provide the children with means to experience and perceive the world in a manner that speaks to and inspires them. Artistic expression provides means for making observations, emotions, and creative thinking visible in a way that motivates children. Children familiarise themselves with different forms of expression by using multiple senses, working methods, and learning environments as well as the cultural offerings available in the local area. The aesthetic and inspiring qualities of the learning environments and versatile equipment and materials and sufficient guidance available in them are significant when children familiarise themselves with different forms of expression.

The arts education includes both spontaneous and planned activities. The processes of expression and learning emphasise experimenting, exploring, practising the different stages of doing things and documenting these. Each child's individual expression is supported, and a sufficient amount of time and space is reserved for children's joint creative processes. Utilising special competence of the personnel, children and other actors enriches arts education.

The aim of **musical expression** in ECEC is to provide the children with musical experiences as well as strengthen the children's interest in and relationship with music. Children are guided to immerse themselves in music and make observations on the sound environment. Children develop their capabilities for understanding music as well as the duration, volume, tonal colour, and strength of sound through musical activities. Children sing songs and enjoy nursery rhymes, experiment with different musical instruments as well as listen and move to music together with the personnel. Children gather experiences of basic beat, rhythm in words and making music with their bodies. Children are encouraged to use their imagination and express their thoughts and emotions stirred by music, for example by explaining them verbally, visually or through dance. Children also gather experiences of creating music together as well as the processes of practising small-scale musical performances and the joy of success brought by the performances.

transversal competences related to the children's cultural competence, interaction, and expression as well as their thinking and learning (Chapter 2.7).

The development of **ethical thinking** skills is supported by reflecting together on ethical questions that arise in different situations or that concern the children. For instance, the themes may be connected to friendship, telling wrong from right, justice or causes of fear, sadness, and joy. Ethical questions are discussed in a manner that enables the children to feel safe and accepted. The rules of the group and their justifications are also reflected on with the children.

Worldview education in ECEC focuses on examining together the religions and other worldviews present in the group of children. Religions and worldviews can also be examined more extensively with the children. Irreligion can also be examined. The goal is to promote mutual respect and understanding of varying worldviews as well as to support the development of the children's cultural identities and worldviews. The children are familiarised with different worldviews and related traditions. For example, annual celebrations and events as well as daily situations, such as dressing or meals, provide natural opportunities for examining worldviews. Room is given for the children's wondering, and life questions that puzzle them are reflected on together.

Worldview education is organised in cooperation with guardians, being aware of and respecting the background, worldviews, and values of each family. Among others, worldview education supports transversal competences related to the children's cultural competence, interaction, and expression as well as their thinking and learning (see Chapter 2.7).

By discussing **the past, the present and the future of the local community**, children's interest is geared towards historical matters and building a good future. Diversity in the children's growth environments is also observed.

Children are offered possibilities to immerse themselves in past events and situations. The children and their personal histories, members of the local community and its environments and artefacts are important sources of information. In addition, the expertise of the children's guardians in their cultural heritage may be utilised. For instance, the games and music from the childhood of the children's grandparents can be used in familiarisation with past times.

The presence is examined by discussing current topics that concern or interest the children. Diversity in the local community is also respectfully observed with the children. Among others, the diversity of people, genders and families is explored. The goal is to educate children to understand that people are different but equal.

In addition to the past and the present, it is important to reflect on the future and how we can influence the realisation of a favourable future. Anticipation of the future may be connected, for instance, to planning games for the coming season or personal learning environments. This can be

Different exercises are used to support children's perception of space and plane. Children are encouraged to examine objects and shapes and to play with them. In order to strengthen children's geometric thinking, opportunities for building, arts and crafts and clay modelling are arranged for them. The concept of time is explained, for example by observing the times of the day and seasons.

The goal of **environmental education** is to strengthen children's relationship with nature and ability to act responsibly in nature as well as to guide them towards a sustainable way of living. Environmental education comprises of three dimensions: learning in the environment, learning about the environment and acting for the environment. The local natural and built environments are not only objects of learning, but also learning environments.

Making field trips to natural and built environments and exploring the surroundings are an important part of ECEC. Through positive learning experiences, children learn to enjoy nature and the local surroundings, which strengthens their relationship with nature. Natural phenomena are observed through the use of different senses and in different seasons. They are discussed and examined. At the same time, children learn to use concepts connected to nature. Practice in identifying different plant and animal species strengthens children's knowledge of nature. Children learn to search for information on interesting topics. Nature can also be a place for aesthetic and peaceful experiences.

Children are guided to respect nature, its plants, and animals. Environmental education promotes the children's growth into a sustainable way of living and the practice of skills needed in it. These practical skills include not littering while on excursions, learning moderation and being economical, responsibility related to meals, saving energy as well as decreasing the amount of waste by such means as recycling, repairing, and reusing things. At the same time, children are guided to pay attention to the impacts of their actions. It is important to ensure that children feel they can contribute to a sustainable way of living through their actions, however without having to bear too much responsibility for maintaining it as children.

The goal of **technology education** is to encourage children to familiarise themselves with experimental and inquiry-based approaches. Children are also guided to observe technology in the environment and to come up with their own, creative solutions. Children are encouraged to ask questions, find explanations together and draw conclusions.

Technological solutions that children come across in their daily lives are observed with them. Children familiarise themselves with digital devices and applications and their functions. Particular attention is paid to the safe use of machines and devices. Children are provided with opportunities to carry out their own ideas, for example by building things out of different materials and testing how different devices work. Children are encouraged to describe the solutions they have made. The children solve problems and celebrate successes together. The goal is that their personal

The aim of **food education** is to promote positive attitudes towards food and eating and support versatile and healthy eating habits. Children are guided to eat independently and to obtain versatile and sufficient nutrition. Daily meals are organised in an unhurried atmosphere where the children learn to eat without disturbances and with good table manners. They are also familiarised with a culture of eating together with others. Children familiarise themselves with foods, their origins, visual appearance, textures, and tastes through the use of different senses and exploration. Discussions, stories, and songs connected to food promote the advancement of the children's vocabulary related to food.

Issues connected to **health** and **safety** are considered together with the children in ECEC. Children's capabilities for taking care of their health and personal hygiene are supported. The significance of exercise, rest and good interpersonal relationships to health and well-being are discussed with the children. Children learn about issues connected to safety in everyday situations. These may include situations where children are getting dressed, eating, playing, and spending time outdoors. Children's age-appropriate curiosity towards sexuality and the body is guided respectfully. Children practise safety in traffic in their local area as well as rules and customs related to safe mobility. The goal is to support the children's sense of security and to provide them with capabilities for asking for and seeking help and for operating safely in different situations and environments.

4.6 Special perspectives of language and culture

In the national core curriculum for early childhood education and care, perspectives related to language and culture are considered to apply to every child participating in ECEC. Children's varying linguistic and cultural backgrounds and capabilities are perceived to enrich the community in a positive way. In linguistically and culturally aware ECEC, languages, cultures and worldviews are integrated in all activity.

According to the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, the municipality must ensure that the child can be provided with ECEC in child's mother tongue if the language is Finnish, Swedish or Sámi. ECEC may be provided in sign language for children using sign language. ECEC may also be provided in the Roma language.⁹⁹ Also other languages can be used in ECEC, provided that this does not risk the achievement of the objectives set in the core curriculum. In such cases, it shall be ensured that the development of Finnish/Swedish as the child's mother tongue is also supported. Cooperation between personnel, guardians and different cultural communities supports the cultural traditions of children and families as well as the children's opportunities for demonstrating their cultural backgrounds. Children are encouraged to interact in bilingual and multilingual environments.

⁹⁹ Section 8 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, HE 40/2018 pp. 88–89 and Sign Language Act (359/2015)

education and teaching situations. Concrete everyday language and its resource of expressions are the starting point for learning the Finnish/Swedish language. Language comprehension and production skills develop in connection with one another. Children learn to make observations as well as express their ideas, emotions, and opinions in a manner that is suitable for the situation and natural to them. Some of the children only start familiarising themselves with the Finnish culture and Finnish/Swedish as they begin ECEC. The familiarisation with and learning of Finnish/Swedish related to the child's linguistic development should not be compared to support provided in ECEC (Chapter 5). Guardians are informed about the goals, contents, and methods of Finnish ECEC. The family's linguistic environment, language choices, formation of plurilingual and multicultural identities as well as the stages and importance of the development of mother tongue(s) are discussed with the guardians. ECEC supports the integration of children into Finnish society.

Whenever possible, children are provided with opportunities for also using and learning their own mother tongue(s). Children's mother tongue and learning Finnish/Swedish as a second language lay the foundation for their functional bilingualism and plurilingualism. The family is primarily responsible for preserving and developing the child's mother tongue(s) and culture. If necessary, an interpreter should be used in the discussions with the guardians to ensure mutual understanding.

Bilingual early childhood education and care

Bilingual early childhood education and care is organised by decision of the municipality or a private actor. The goal of bilingual ECEC is to utilise the children's early sensitive period for language learning by providing the children with language education that is more versatile than mainstream education. Children are provided with opportunities for acquiring language skills and using languages functionally and through play, thus building a foundation for lifelong language learning. The objective is that acting in a multilingual environment will stir children's linguistic curiosity and desire to experiment. This will also enable diverse cultures to meet naturally.

Bilingual ECEC is divided into large-scale and small-scale bilingual education and care. The aim of small-scale bilingual ECEC education is to stir interest in and a positive attitude towards languages in children. The aim of large-scale bilingual ECEC is to create capabilities for the children to act in bilingual and multilingual environments.

Large-scale bilingual early childhood education and care

Early total immersion in the national languages in ECEC

Immersion in Swedish may be organised in ECEC provided in Finnish and immersion in Finnish in ECEC provided in Swedish. Immersion in Sámi may also be organised in ECEC provided in Finnish and Swedish. Early total immersion in the national languages is a programme that begins in ECEC and continues until the end of basic education. The language of instruction and the second

an endangered minority or indigenous language. The principles of language nest activities may be similar as those of language immersion.

4.7 Issues subject to local decisions

The local curriculum for early childhood education and care shall specify the following objectives and principles for the pedagogical activities, taking the child's age and development as well as the characteristics of the different forms of ECEC services into account. The objectives and contents of pedagogical activities in the different ECEC services can be specified in the local curricula.

The local curriculum shall describe and specify

- principles of planning and implementing pedagogical activities as well as related monitoring and evaluation practices
- principles and practices of pedagogical documentation in ECEC
- principles applied to selecting working methods and directing their use
- practices that support children's play in line with the principles of inclusion
- goals and contents of learning areas
- ways of taking into account the children's interests and participation in planning and implementing pedagogical activities
- implementation of ECEC for different linguistic and cultural groups
- implementation of bilingual ECEC, if this is provided
- supporting foreign-language speaking and plurilingual children in learning Finnish/Swedish
- cooperation and practices related to the family's language choices and supporting their mother tongue.

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