

Concepts of Pedagogy and Early Childhood Education and Care

Ulla Marita Härkönen
Emerita Professor
University of Eastern Finland
Finland

Abstract

The aim of this article is to create and present the one scientific upper title over the concepts of early childhood education and care, early childhood education, early education, and variable meanings and views of the already noticed today's concepts of pedagogy, and other varying concepts that matters for focused discussion. The difference must be found especially between the fundamental concepts of education and pedagogy. Another basic task is to solve the connection between thinking and acting, and language and practice. The data consists of central literature focused on the mentioned main concepts. Methodologically, the study presents objective-hermeneutics. Both the reality with human's activities, and language, texts, expressions and thinking, have been embraced to be constructive to form active multisystems. Methods belong to qualitative content and concept analyses of language and practice, thinking and acting, and systems thinking. Härkönen pedagogical systems theory has its part to do with this study but also it will be presented under scrutiny, earning new complements through this study. The context is mostly Finnish but at the same time international.

1. Introduction

In this study, it is aimed by the critical analysis pass through the basic concepts systems of *pedagogy*, and *early childhood education and care*, and *early childhood education*, and *early education*, and possible other variations. It presumes analyzing through the whole *early childhood education and care* systems and all the sub-systems of *early childhood education and care*: science, culture, society, teacher education, and practice. The very central area is practice, because concrete *early childhood education and care* activities happen in practice. The *early childhood education and care* in practice is a societal institution. All the other sub-systems are also social institutions, needed to form the whole institutional systems. This wholeness forms its mode and points inside and outside relationships. The influence of *pedagogy* must be studied clearly. The analyses can open possible confusions of concepts and their meanings. In this article, some ready studied grounds and the results or incomplete conditions must be taken for a starting point. This is planned to do around and inside the

earlier formed and still developing *Härkönen's pedagogical systems theory* referring to its and other literature. The article forms the bases by referring to the significance to historical and today's literature moving sight forward to the new future of *pedagogy*, what of these concepts is a newcomer – however let's say: again, after a long time.

The number of concepts connected to each other on the field of under question, is very great in this study. When I speak my own interpretation or to make clear the quite common level text, I use the longest concept of *early childhood education and care*. But, when the focus is on the reference text, I use its concepts. When I make comparisons between the meanings, I use exactly the concepts seen in their contents and meanings, word by word. But the aim is to discuss especially the difficult conceptual problems. The context of the study is Finland and at the same time it is international.

In Finland, it can be noticed that the lifespan of *early childhood education and care* has been actively developed forward. Nowadays teachers' education is organized at university level, and it means also action on the scientific, cultural and societal levels. Already long ago, a common discussion began to cast light onto the problems in day care centers and in *early childhood education and care* – also on every level in some ways. The reasons for the problems are many-sided. The societal political institutions took a leading position to open a new direction. In the 2015 version of the Act of *Early childhood education and care*, it was written by stressing especially *pedagogy* to be taken as the aim. [1], [22].

Early childhood education and care concept is in Finnish *varhaiskasvatus* (*early education*). Nowadays it is seen in texts that the meaning of *pedagogy* concept is not well known. But, however, it has been used at least in articles and there in several quite different meanings. But those persons who have read historical literature about *pedagogy* is a quite normal concept, and then meanings can be understood as clearer. Earlier, also at some universities, when some “quarterbacks” wanted to end speaking about *didactic* there and at schools, *pedagogy* was offered on the place of *didactic*.

It may cause problems if the new concept is settled to cover the former one, without scientific analyses. In such a case usually confusing and

ruining are what happens. But on the other hand, may only concept cause problems all over the phenomena? Yes, it does. [20][21] We must understand that *pedagogy* is a systems concept and a systems phenomenon. With acumen and brain [24], it is understood that also the whole *pedagogic systems* must be opened and learned before using in new way.

In this study, it is aimed, by the critical analysis, pass through the main concept systems of *early pedagogy* and *early childhood education and care*. The analyses open a confusion of concepts and their meanings. For the beginning, some ready studied ground must be taken for a starting point. It is planned to do around some historical literature [8] and *Härkönen pedagogical systems theory* [9-12].

Early pedagogy and *early education* have usually belonged to the larger field of *early childhood education and care*. In this study, I shall use the above-mentioned concept of *early childhood education and care*, when it is needed to speak generally about the largest phenomenon in article text. The selection could be also something else as to the literature.

The context of the study is Finland and at the same time international. In the text I try to write the important concepts clearly *italicizing*, *sometimes bolding* for to notice *differences* and *similarities* and the **central** concepts for comparing them. In this article I present the questions and methods already after Introduction. In qualitative research the process may be structured in this way. [8].

This article will study the basic concepts of *early childhood education and care*. But it is structured so that the mentioned large focus *early childhood education and care* is going to become larger than yesterday situation. The whole era will be started from about 1888 and last to these days, looking roughly also to the future. The whole era will be divided into three parts, smaller eras. Analyses are not coming to be in the same form nor about the same kind of contents. The idea is that the selected ways of digging “gardens” may raise questions and help to note changes along the long process of history of *early childhood education and care* and *pedagogy*.

Three eras of the whole historical line of *early childhood education and care* and *pedagogy* are titled in this study as follows:

- 1) *Pedagogical era* 1888–1970
- 2) *Early childhood education and care era* 1970–2024
- 3) *Early childhood education and care and pedagogy era* 2015 –

It is meant to select one person to present the first Pedagogical era. We have one, a member ex officio, Friedrich Wilhelm August Froebel (1782-1852), who has been the most important pedagogue for Finnish

early education and pedagogy. The whole large *pedagogical history* is being and could be useful to be written by somebody. At least, when it is a big question just today in Finland: What does pedagogy mean?

In this study, the second era has the longest text. It also happens to be the time when I have worked from 1970 to this time 2024 continuing as an emerita Professor. The contents of the second era were branching as several directions. On the ending part of the second era the new ideas aroused as to *pedagogy*. Its extent is already in the Act, so it is right to speak about the third era. It has come to influence combined with *early childhood education and care*. But in this text, together-living time has separated as the third era, beginning from 2015 forward. In text, the second era material is many-sided, so it is divided into three different quarries that have influences on *early childhood education and care*: 1) Acts, 2) Professors and teachers, 3) Science, research and theories.

Acts are important to note, because they have strong power to define *early childhood education and care* and *pedagogy*. In the next text, little be later, *Act on Early childhood education and care* 13.7.2018/540 [1], shows in which way the act texts give the concepts, aims, and activities for thinking, learning, and acting.

In *early childhood education and care*, and *pedagogy*, also *science*, *research*, and *theories* are necessary. In Finland, during a long era, one theory, Bronfenbrenner ecological systems theory [2–5], [6] has been largely in use in *early childhood education and care* research in Finland. Bronfenbrenner’s theory has offered one kind of systems thinking but it is not a *pedagogical* or *educational* or *didactical theory*, but it offers in a simply way an ecological developmental systems frame for the tasks of many-sided [7].

Also, Finnish professors and teachers have produced a lot of different kind of variations, ideas, and directions as to early childhood education fields, published in Finland for instance during the years 1972-2003. I have analyzed them throughout, figured and compared to each other’s. This book is published in 2003 [8].

Under work I have a new methodology and method for the use for writing a new *Pedagogical systems theory* book. The latest given presentation was 28th August 2024 at the 11th WCE-2024 World Congress on Education at Churchill College, University of Cambridge, UK. Also, the contents of the presentations and this article include things that belong to my theory and may appear later in my book. The construct is constructing! In my theory, brain, thinking and interpretation are moving through all levels and all kinds of extensions and intensions of the concept and different activities on different kind of contents, all in systems way [11].

After orientation, I present two large questions, settled after the Introduction texts.

2. Questions

What kinds of results can be summarized out of the meanings of the concepts analyzed from the data, zooming especially *early childhood education and care*, and *pedagogy* (in Finnish: *pedagogiikka*) (Swedish: *småbarnspedagogik*), presented in literature?

What kinds of influences have the main concepts for the main discipline, and what ought the main discipline to be?

3. Methods

In this research, the literature is selected while planning the process. It consists of the literature found in References. Because the theme is extensive and needs a lot of knowledge, text must be widely commenting, and because question is also about the exact concepts, they must be written withing the limits and bounds. The data is based to language, and namely on meanings of language. The analyses are the content and concept analyses comparing at least in mind also other styles [23]. The background philosophy for the *Pedagogical systems theory* is objective hermeneutics [13-15]. By these starting points, through language and its meanings the practice and corresponding thinking and activities can become referred to [16-18]. Because the *Pedagogical systems theory* [9-12] and the historical literature [8] and *Bronfenbrenner ecological systems theory* [2-5, 7] are multilayer, divergent, and complex systems theories and texts, they can offer a deeper awareness and societal, political, cultural, teacher educational, and practical understanding on *early childhood education and care* [2-5, 6, 7].

Educational texts are seen as generated from practical educational reality, and the texts are seen to influence practices, and all in systems ways [2-7, 13-15]. Science and philosophy, theory and concept formation are learned also from Niiniluoto philosophical theories [19], [23].

4. Results

4.1. Introduction to the results

In Finland, *early childhood education and care*, and about at the same time its 136 years' history, have begun 1888, when the first kindergarten was laid foundation in Finland. After four years the first kindergarten teacher education started in 1892. The *first era* of the whole history can be thought to last about until 1970, altogether about 80 years. Really, in good reasons this time can be named as a

pedagogical era. *Pedagogical* theories and models and material came to Finland primarily from Germany. Especially Friedrich Froebel's *pedagogy* was what was embraced to Finland.

From the beginning of 1970 until these times as 2024 is, the period can be named as the *second era*. The length of it seems to be 54 years, can be said 50 years. The second era in Finnish *early childhood education and care* has had many-sided contents and movements, but it cannot be named as a *pedagogical era* - not in any case. On the contrary, this period at its end is in the condition in which the Act [1] has been needed to ask the professionals to begin to pay attention especially to *pedagogy*. The name for this second era could be along as it has been: everything else but *no pedagogy*! The next pages prove that this period is titled mostly as *early childhood education and care*. There will also be several variations or modes. Only seldom the concept of *pedagogy* is presented. This study is namely interested in the concepts of the whole history and differently of its eras that can be compared to each other's.

Nowadays it is already noticed that the *third new era* has been in process, in small star already some time *inside the second era*. In Finland, in the year 2013 the book *Varhaiskasvatuksen pedagogiikka* [21] (transl. by the author: *Pedagogy of Early Education*; or *Early Education Pedagogy*) was published.

In this study, in hands, it is not meant to analyze our whole *early childhood education and care* history deeply. But the views will be directed to the most central concepts of that whole era, dressing more at the latest era. The question will be focused especially on those concepts that are used as upper titles for the main *educational* and / or *pedagogical* phenomena, all called *young children* before school age. Primarily, the question is about both *institutional early childhood education and care*, and *pedagogy*.

4.2. Pedagogical era 1888–1970

This era can be figured with a longer statement as Historical Pedagogical era seen from Finnish early education and early childhood education and care. This is named in this study as the First era.

4.2.1 Historical Froebel Pedagogy. Here only one pedagogue, Friedrich Wilhelm August Froebel (1782-1852) is taken for presenting his life and pedagogy. He was the main person whose whole pedagogical theory came to our knowledge in Finland and has lasted as a main pedagogical theory until at least by the 1970s. Then for instance Piaget developmental theory came for students to learn. It means the influences of new nearby disciplines.

I present here *Froebel's pedagogy* only shortly, compared to his whole theory. There are several books possible to find to hands for reading and plan new research, articles and practice about his literature. It could be useful for today to understand what *pedagogy* means.

As mentioned above, the first era is historical, basing to *German pedagogue* Friedrich Wilhelm August Froebel (1782 – 1852). Froebel was a student of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi. It is mentioned in literature that Froebel laid the foundation for *modern education* based on the recognition that children have unique needs and own capabilities. [25]

Here, it is gathered some of his special results, possible to read and get books, texts, and toys to hands also today. Even today, the travel to Froebel-Center (Fröbel-Zentrum) in Dresden can offer Froebel history. Froebel's main interest was *Pedagogy*. His main written work was published in 1826, named *Die Menschenerziehung* ("The education of Man") [26]. The book is translated in many languages, also in Finnish in 2012 by Professor Aili Helenius [27]. For instance, the book of Neuman, Karl, Sauerbrey, Ulf, und Winkler Michael, "Fröbelpedagogik im Kontext der Praxis" [28] has a good list of books some written by Froebel and some by other authors. All those books present *Froebel's pedagogy*. The concept is namely *pedagogy* not, for instance, *early childhood education and care*. In the texts it is emphasized that *Froebel pedagogy* is meant to children namely from the birth to school age. [26] [27] [28]

Pedagogy Friedrich Froebel is known also about his next work results. He developed a special *pedagogical house* for children. Froebel had explained to his friend: This house may not be an institution neither a school. Then suddenly Froebel turned around and cried his just insighted new idea: it must be - *kindergarten*! At that moment he created the new concept of *kindergarten*. He said that it must symbolize the relationship between humans and nature! Froebel himself generated *kindergarten* as the place for children to *play*, to *work*, and to *act* as children's ways. The foundation day of the first kindergarten was 28.6.1840. [29]

The famous and important *pedagogical tools* that Froebel created are known as *Froebel Gifts*. Also, the concept of "*free work*" (*Freiarbeit*) was his idea and concept. He influenced to create the 19th-century *philosophy: Modern philosophy*, where his main interest was *Pedagogy*, where *play* and *work* education and children's own *action* were at the first place. [29]

Henriette Schrader-Breymann (1827-1899) was Froebel's student, who devoted herself for *Froebel's pedagogy* and constructed her whole career on Froebel's ideas. Henriette Schrader developed Pestalozzi-Froebel Hause in 1873 and led it twenty years. The Hause acted firstly as a humble

kindergarten and later also as a *first kindergarten teacher seminar*. Some Finnish young women studied and graduated at that seminar. One of them was *Hanna Rothman*. She was who began kindergarten work in Finland. In 1888 she founded a private *public kindergarten* in Helsinki. In addition to that in 1890 she founded another *public kindergarten* to Sörnäinen, later in 1908 it was moved to Ebeneser home. Also, Elisabeth Alander graduated in 1892 from the same school as Hanna Rothman. Henriette Schrader had educated these both ladies. Both Hanna Rothman and Elisabeth Alander are pioneers of *kindergarten work* in Finland. Uno Cygnaeus belongs to the development process of kindergartens and *Froebel pedagogy* in Finland [29].

Froebelian pedagogy has spread to the Northern countries, European countries, America, and around the world. The International Froebelian Society in Germany is active.

Other pedagogies who are well-known in Finland and have influenced in Finnish pedagogy, are as follows: Loris Malaguzzi (1920—1994), Paulo Freire (1921—1997), Helen Parkhurst (1887—1973), Aleksander Neill (1888—1973), Vasili Sukhomlinsky (1918—1970), Célectin Freinet (1896—1966), Maria Montessori (1870—1952), John Dewey (1859—1952), Rudolf Steiner (1861—1925), Friedrich Fröbel (1782—1852), Johan Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746—1827), Jean- Jacques Rousseau (1712—1778).

The literature of the younger of them belongs to the pedagogical era, but they are also nearer the second and the third era. For instance, the author and colleagues have read pedagogical literature of all of them. Their books are also nowadays for getting in libraries or in Finnish National Library or/ and abroad.

4.3. Early childhood education and care era 1970–2024

The texts of the main concept of *early childhood education and care* era is named in this text as **the second era 1970 —2024**. Here the contents of the text are divided to three chapters. In them it is spoken about influences of professionals' work, science and research, and Acts in *early childhood education and care*.

4.3.1. Professors and teachers influence early childhood education and care. Also, Finnish professors and teachers have produced a lot of different kind of variations, ideas, and directions as to *early childhood education and care* fields, published in Finland for instance during the years 1972 — 2003. It was gathered their books, and some articles published by them. In my docent study in 2003 I analyzed them throughout, figured and

compared to each other's. There were 22 authors from the Finnish universities and teacher seminars, and national administrations, 17 scientific books and articles formed the data, 42 figures were formed, 267 pages new texts were written by me. Research represented the whole country [8]. In this study it is used bolding for easier reading.

In the above-mentioned research, the concept of **early childhood education** and the concept of **preschool** were still figured as follows:

- a) one dimension **practice** model,
- b) two dimensions **science** model, two dimensions **renewable** model,
- c) three dimensions **education science** model, three dimensions **broad-minded / liberal** model, three dimensions **didactic-pedagogical** model, three dimensions **traditional** model, three dimensions **modern** model, three dimensions **academic** model, three dimensions **didactical** model, three dimensions **developmental** model,
- d) Systems theory four-dimensional model of the concept of early childhood education (ECE). It means four dimensions **systems** model,
- e) **Preschool**-concept was figured in every analysis by the same basic concept and logic with early childhood education -concept.

As a result, it can be commonly said that during that period 1972–2003 all the texts and books and studies (that now formed the part of the data) focused on the same basic upper-level conceptual phenomena. But categorizing had formed different from each other, conceptual contents were varying, also different qualitative and scientific directions were found.

The results rolled on the same upper content areas that were commonly known by every teacher education institute at those times. In every way, the results showed also different directions. Views are interesting and useful with the variations. In the texts, there were not any straight mentioned proposal for the main science field. But by digging some ideas, **early childhood education** can be seen as **the main science**, but at the same time as **a part of education science**. In some cases, early childhood education can be seen nearby **didactical, pedagogical, and developmental science**. **Preschool** was seen in the same way as **early childhood education**. Other references from later periods were **modern, academic, liberal** directions and values, and **systems thinking** and **theory**.

As a summary to say: The researcher could find the joined concepts to create some wholeness, catching-all, organized, pervasive, independent own and main science field, or a willingness to set things in the relation with each other in better way, was not consciously in time neither in horizon to seen. [8]. At those times the texts seemed to be quite near each

other, not any big differences. But the theoretical base was not very deep or large. The concept of **pedagogy** was not in use. One person had written, that "*early childhood education theory*" is until in beginning". - But apparently changes appeared and became visible later.

4.3.2 Science, research and theories produce results. Acts are needed, but in early childhood education also science, research and theories are necessary. In Finland, during a long era, one theory, Bronfenbrenner ecological systems theory [2-5], [6] have been largely in use in early childhood education research in Finland. Bronfenbrenner's theory has offered one kind of systems thinking but it is not a *pedagogical* or *educational* or *didactical theory*. But it offers an ecological developmental systems frame for the tasks of many-sided [7].

We have also several other theories applied in early childhood education, but they are not namely pedagogical. I have named them **non-pedagogical theories** because they are mainly based on developmental, psychological, social, or on other sciences. However, they are needed in early childhood education. Bronfenbrenner theory is like these others.

Nowadays our early childhood education field is more an interdisciplinary branch. And that is one of the main reasons causing the mass for different concepts and the headings of the branch fields.

I have constructed **the pedagogical systems theory**. For this article, I go through only some ideas of my main published texts. I want to gather the main concepts and answer the questions of this article. I am going to present the results as to the main science itself, which ever it ought to be named [9-12].

When speaking now about **pedagogy**, we have real and ready **pedagogical theories** written by the **pedagogues** like Pestalozzi, Rousseau, Froebel, Steiner, Dewey, Montessori, Parkhurst, Suchomlinsky, Freinet, Neill, Malaguzzi, Freire. Their long historical era has been reaching until today and that is why is continuing forward [9-12].

Due to my research, their pedagogical views together form a multidimensional **systems pedagogical theory**, and they are pluralistic **models**. If we can understand, we see that together they present the basis for **early pedagogy science** and models that have new ways to divert the directions for pluralistic world. When everything is in plural form, it shows diversity, it opens history and today and future views, it opens multicultural and multisocietal views. Every extension has systemic intensions, and intensions can be thought to be new extensions, and their intensions can be found, and so on. In this way to study, the whole big systems from outside and through inside into all other extensions and in the same in every direction [9-12].

In systems, everything is in plural form, even the word systems. It is so, because all the focuses, materialistic and thought ones, are always constructed from smaller and smaller parts. It means many (s or es), and then it means diversity, it opens history and today and future views, it opens multicultural and pluralistic views. Its all-single category has systemic influences in all other categories. Systems thinking units the categories found to be inside the theories, concepts and in the pedagogical models of each pedagogue. [8].

This theory is not the same as that of Froebel's or those of other pedagogues. This pedagogical theory is realized from the perceptions that, from the theory of every of them, are same-like as to the pedagogical structure and the relations between the parts of the whole. After that the new form could be used, (not yet, do not use yet). The new common "häkkyrä" or "brainbit" [creations of these two concepts: copyrighted by Ulla Härkönen] are still moving. Subjects or pedagogical thoughts were not the same but, however, almost the same. I gathered them much and learned about all what revealed and what not. On that moment no or not or empty part of the model revealed. In the same category may be full of the same thoughts or opinions or principles and some other person has different or contrary ideas, or somebody has not those ideas. But later I noticed that the empty area is not "empty", because usually there can be found the reasons for "emptiness" and a justifying for the different opinions. This means that the person has a view that belongs to the same era or category or systems or subsystems – because they have **the same question extension**, but **their views may be a little or more or totally differing**. - This is only a very short example about the differences compared to all the educational theory, also different to each one pedagogical theory. I respect them, but still more, these kinds of moving, living, owing systemic relation between different parts and at the same time the wholeness, are opening the way for the real activities and real thinking. And still much more, the wisdom in near realistic situations with children plus a pair of teachers in real places.

Teacher education, science, culture and society, and the whole university belong to this theory. Also, ready models are written, by this theory we can answer also political, societal, world-wide different ideas and diversity and to understand pluralism in this world and universe. There is much to do in systems pedagogy. [9-12] This is only a short text not ready to use yet. But for thinking well.

4.3.3 Acts define early childhood education and care. Acts have powers to define *early childhood education and care*, and later also *pedagogy*. The national Finnish Acts have their own systems, how they are changed after the former ones. Sometimes only some parts of the text are changed. At the end

the Act is wholly empty, not valid anymore, the Act is ended.

In Finland, the first ordinary Act was from the year 1973/36. It was titled at that time *Act on Children's Day Care*. There were no mentions about *pedagogy* nor the *aims of activities*. The first Act was changed for the second Act.

The inclusive principle was taken with, and the title of the first Act was named as the *Act on Early Childhood Education and Care*, 13.7. 2015/580). **Pedagogical action came to the law in the year 2015.** The national Finnish Act shows the definition written in the 2a§ of the *Act on Early childhood education and care*. There *early childhood education* means systematic and goal-oriented wholeness formed by *education, teaching, and care*, in the way where especially **pedagogy** is emphasized. Still, it is told in the 3§ that in *early childhood education* ought to have many sided *pedagogical activities* connected with children's *play, physical education, arts, and cultural heritage* [1].

The third Act, being valid, is from 2018/540 the *Act on Early Childhood Education and Care*. In the 3§ it is said that the aim is to put **pedagogical action into practice** with play, physical education, arts and cultural heritage activities. (free translation by the author) [31].

Act 2021 (16.12.2021), titled by *Act on Early childhood education and care* is the latest at this moment. The aims stayed as before, only the principle of inclusive was taken with [32].

As a result: pedagogy and its relations to activities came to the law in 2015, and the same was repeated in 2018. **Early childhood education and care and pedagogy combination** is done!

And, in my mind it can be said that the years 2015 ja 2018 showed the societal and political power and direction of education through the owned knowhow, as to the Acts, because the concept of *pedagogy* was named and added the *early childhood education* for a special position for the long future.

4.4. Early childhood education and care, and pedagogy - era 2015 —

4.4.1. Today's question is What is Pedagogy. Modern time scientific approach to define early childhood education and care, and pedagogy combination

Today's opinions on the concept of *pedagogy* can be found for instance from journal articles published during the immediate past. The next example is an article titled *Teachers' Pedagogical Competence in Finnish Early Childhood Education - A Narrative Literature Review* [30]. From the same article the concept of *early childhood education and care* and its shorter modes are found. All the authors are Finnish academic professionals on *early childhood*

education and care - in my own explaining textual parts like the one in backside, I still use this long concept as an example about the most comprehensive concept on the main phenomenon. The long concept mode is often mentioned also inside this article.

I have read the article throughout from the beginning and over the reference list to the end. I have marked variations of concepts of *early childhood education and care*, and the concept of *pedagogy*, and some others between them. In this article the authors aim to answer what is pointed by *Pedagogical competence*, not asked straight by *pedagogy*. In the Finnish Act already (2018) [1] and already earlier Act (2015) [1] had stressed *pedagogy* to take to *Finnish early childhood education and care*. I do not begin to review the article, but I am interested in main concepts as also otherwise in my article. I try to say some main ideas that I noticed.

There were concepts of *pedagogy*, *competence*, *early childhood education*. *Pedagogy* was not straight in a focus, that was *teachers' pedagogical competence*. *Early childhood education* was here without *care*-word. It was not told, why. Competence has also near concepts like *expert*, *professional*, *specific*.

The focus is complicated. I have noticed that in late times the concept of *care* is not always with. Care has influences in other things. Laying it away ought to be defined, why so. The concepts have their extensions, so borders ought to be in consciousness. Those all concepts are related to each other. Which kind of connection they are, and which kinds of influences each of them has? The beginning setting can be planned by thinking the whole study through.

Nowadays it seems that during late years only new concepts are gathered, but they have been single swinging word, like fashion. Then everybody is springing to take it for his/her collection. Often people cannot know where they come from. But some concepts are psychological, some societal, some from education science from school site. Science fields ought to notice. And the most important: what is or will be the most central discipline in *early childhood and care* field. And still, also *pedagogy* has been a discipline of its own, the concept **pedagogy** is not a small toy ball. And it is not adjective which is *pedagogical*, and it needs theoretical definition, too.

The concept is already linked to the concept of *pedagogy*, *early childhood education*, competence uncertain, vague, indefinite, undefined concept. Also, the concept *competence* has a close synonym concept, also mentioned in the article, *expertise*. Both the starting concepts (in fact three concepts) are under scrutiny: the main concept *pedagogy* is without the theory, and it needs it. After that, all other concepts if connected to *pedagogy*, all need to be defined and handled.

This is not easy to get to know what *pedagogy* alone means. Now it is connected to almost whatever concept. It can be a multi-dimensional conceptual word, but its own essentiality must be found and understood first. Until then, it is possible to understand where its place in relation to *early childhood education and care* is.

Also, the concept of *early childhood education and care* is a one backlog. It is not always known what *early* mean. May I ask, where are 0-3 years children and which kind of science and pedagogy and methods and actives and professionals they get? The concept of *childhood* means in Finnish *lapsuus* in common. It belongs to sociology, which is a nearby science field to ECE.

The most dangerous result will be, if the *pedagogy* will be set to link with all other different single concepts: 1) first error: *pedagogy* is now without its own theory because vanished itself, 2) the relationships also between all the used concepts are not known, and if *pedagogy* is linked there around every other, is a mass. Making research will be like this example showed. 3) It seems to have already long time to be common way to change concept as an adjective, as *pedagogical*. This is an easy way to kid. And, already for some time this way has been in use!

In the article that I read here, the best and the rightest result and honestly told, was to tell that: "Our research has brought to light a notable concern among our research team regarding the insufficient use of the term "pedagogy" in studies focused on Finnish ECE. It has come to our attention that in many of these studies, the term "pedagogy" is frequently mentioned without being adequately defined or accompanied by a clear comprehension of its meaning and specific practices. The term "pedagogy" seems to be used carelessly, almost as a filler word lacking substantive content."

As to my knowledge, the matter has been over ten years in this way. The most common way is to use *education and pedagogy* as synonyms totally through own ideas. In addition, this method has been noticed also with the concept of teaching and learning. Competitions between disciplines and trends are influencing.

The biggest problem will be if the concept of pedagogy will be settled only in the context of practice, handling it only as actions. A historical, great, big discipline, greater than education, is spread only to practical pieces. Problem also is that in Finnish education has been without and seems to be without systems thinking.

Pedagogy can be found also today at least from Germany. German language could be a nice friend now for speaking and reading about "*Pädagogik*". Also, Swedish, our second official language shows that they speak about "*småbarnspedagogik*". Age, child, and pedagogic, a good combination.

5. Conclusion

I feel that the original question can write also at the end. These problems do not change without changes in theories and changes in practical work. BUT, if only science is taken on focus but not practice not, it is not a good result. The big question always is, how theory and practice can be combined? It ought to solve by scientific theory, create by oneself if no ready is founded.

What kinds of results can be summarized out of the meanings of the concepts analyzed from the data, zooming especially *early childhood education and care*, and *pedagogy* (in Finnish: *pedagogiikka*) (Swedish: *småbarnspedagogik*), presented in literature?

At the beginning the hypotheses were as follows: In this study, the problems open confusion as to the ideas about *pedagogy* and about *early childhood education and care*. Influences of historical roots have almost vanished from sight. The hypotheses are as follows: 1) the real historical base of *pedagogy* is ruined, and 2) the many-directional *pedagogical* ideas lead to the pieces, and 3) connections of the *pedagogical* pieces to the practical activities will be more difficult than acting with real hard theories, and 4) creating the new science will be a strong challenge.

Pedagogy in different forms and combinations has wormed inside to *early childhood education and care* field — but at the same time any earlier group of different concepts had not vanished away. But now it is sure that research, theories, variations, unifications, concepts etc. are going to be presented in still more complicated variations. Also, in this study it is a good reason to suppose that the third era must be separated as its own one. Though it has begun inside the second era, it is already continuing the new era.

One common answer to the questions in this study:

It is obvious to find the results to the questions above. There can be found three main answers as to the earlier science fields in question. The first is near the old models with lasting and still adding problems. The second is a different one by changing some problems. The third theory needs deep philosophical roots. What will it be? Instead of many different titles plus many confusions and disorders, I answer: Clear, I prefer the title for the new science field.

What kinds of influences have the main concepts for the main discipline, and what ought the main discipline to be? In my mind, also a new discipline could offer the best possibility to renewal the whole problem.

What was written at the beginning can be presented also here: In this study, the problems opened confusion as to the ideas about *pedagogy* and

about *early childhood education and care*. Influences of historical roots have almost vanished from sight. The hypotheses are as follows: 1) the real historical base of *pedagogy* is ruined, and 2) the many-directional *pedagogical* ideas lead to the pieces, and 3) connections of the *pedagogical* pieces to the practical activities will be more difficult than acting with real hard theories, and 4) creating the new science will be a strong challenge.

The worst will be the results, if the concept of *pedagogy* is linked only to practical methods, to activities, and only to practice. The situation already has seemed to show this direction, also as to the Act. [1] [31] [32]. Pedagogical concepts aside with practical concepts! No!

Still worst is the situation if the concept *pedagogy* is seen only as a synonym for education! The situation has been just this kind already a long time. [21].

It is needed scientific process to teach, read and research *pedagogy*. Systems theory has principles to construct the multi-directional theory for the whole phenomena.

6. References

- [1] “Act on Early childhood education and care 13.7.2015/580”.
- [2] U. Bronfenbrenner, “Developmental research, public policy, and the ecology of childhood”, *Child Development*, 45, pp. 1-5, 1974.
- [3] U. Bronfenbrenner, “The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design”. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979.
- [4] U. Bronfenbrenner, “Ecological systems theory”, *Annals of Child Development*, 6, pp. 187-249, 1989.
- [5] U. Bronfenbrenner and S. J. Ceci, “Nature-nurture reconceptualized in developmental perspective: A bioecological model”, *Psychological Review*, vol. 101, 4, pp. 568-586, 1994.
- [6] E. Hujala, ”*Uudistuva esiopetus*”. [Renewable preschool education]. Jyväskylä. Gummerus. 2002.
- [7] U. Härkönen, “The Bronfenbrenner ecological systems theory of human development”, *Scientific articles of V International Conference Person. Color. Nature. Music*, pp. 9–22, 2007.
- [8] U. Härkönen, ”Mitä termit *varhaiskasvatus* ja *esiopetus* tarkoittavat?” [What do the terms *early childhood education* and *preschool* mean?] *Research Reports of the Faculty of Education*, 86. 267 pages. University of Joensuu. ISBN 952-458-339-9, 2003.
- [9] U. Härkönen, “Child and children in ECEC viewed through the Pedagogical Systems Theory”. *Conference concerning Nordic Research in the Field of Early*

Childhood Education and Care. Quality and relevance for policymaking, Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. Norway, pp. 150-165. 2010.

[10] U. Härkönen, U. "The Process of Creating the Pedagogical Systems Theory for Early Childhood and Preschool Education". In M. Veisson, E. Hujala, P. Smith, M. Waniganayage & E. Kikas (Eds.) *Global Perspectives in Early Childhood Education. Diversity, Challenges and Possibilities*. Peter Lang Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, pp. 47-65, 2011.

[11] U. Härkönen. "Pedagogical systems theory as a cornerstone of sustainable early childhood and preschool education". In Härkönen, U. (ed.) *Reorientation of teacher education towards sustainability through theory and practice*. Proceedings of the 10th international JTEFS / BBCC conference Sustainable development. Culture. Education. *Publications of the University of Eastern Finland. Reports and Studies in Education, Humanities, and Theology*, 7, pp. 411-449, 2013.

[12] U. Härkönen, 2022. "New pedagogical systems theory and early childhood education culture". In U. Härkönen (ed.) *Sustaining international views on early childhood education*. 2nd revised edition, pp. 22-61. ISBN: 978-952-61-3699-8 (PDF), 2022.

[13] U. Öevermann, T. Allert, E. Konau, and J. Krambeck, J., "Die Methodologie einer objektiven Hermeneutic" [The methodology of objective hermeneutics], *Aspekte qualitativer Sozialforschung. Studien zu Aktionsforschung, empirischer Hermeneutik und reflexiver Sozialtechnologie* [Aspects of qualitative social studies. Action research, empirical hermeneutics and reflective social technology], (P. Zedler and H. Moser, Hrsg.), pp. 95–123. Oplade: Leske Verlag + Budrich GmbH, 1983.

[14] T. Parsons, "Systems analysis: Social systems", *The International encyclopedia of the social sciences* (David Land Sills (ed.), vol. 15. The Macmillan Company & the Free Press, pp. 458–472, 1968.

[15] A. "Rapoport, Systems analysis: General systems theory". D. L. Sills (red.). *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 15, The MacMillan Company & The Free Press. pp. 452-458.

[16] L. Cohen and L. Manion, "Research methods in education", 4th edition, London and New York: Routledge, 1994

[17] A. L. Strauss, "Qualitative analysis for social scientists". Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

[18] S. Frigg, and S. Hartman, "Models in science", in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2006.

[19] I. Niiniluoto, "Johdatus tieteenfilosofiaan. Käsitteen- ja teorianmuodostus" [Introduction to philosophy of science. Formation of concepts and theories], Helsinki: Otava, 2002.

[20] E. Hujala, A-M. Puroila, S. Parrila-Haapakoski, & V. Nivala, "Päivähoidosta varhaiskasvatukseen". [From day

care to early childhood education]. Jyväskylä. Gummerus, 1998.

[21] K. Karila & L. Lipponen, "Varhaiskasvatuksen pedagogiikka". (Pedagogy of early childhood education and care). Tampere. Vastapaino. Tallinna Raamatutrükikoda, 2013.

[22] S. Mahkonen, "Varhaiskasvatuslaki. [Early childhood education Act]. Edita. Helsinki. Porvoo: Bookwell, 2015. www.edita.fi (Access Date: 12 June 2024).

[23] P. Mukherji, & D. Albon, "Research Methods in Early Childhood. An Introductory Guide." 2nd Edition, SAGE, Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC.

[24] L. Feldman, Barret, "Seitsemän ja puoli oppia aivoista". [Seven and a half dogma about the brain], Tuuma, Jyväskylä. ISBN 978-952-370-427-5

[25] Friedrich Froebel Article Talk. en.m.wikipedia.org. Wikipedia. Read 20.10.2024.

[26] F. Fröbel, *Die "Menschenziehung"*. Ausgewählte Schriften. Zweiter Band. E. Hoffman (Hrsg.). Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta. [Original 1826]. 1982.

[27] A. Helenius, "Ihmisten kasvatus." "Die Menschenziehung". Translation and publishing by A. Helenius. Kirja kerrallaan. A book at a time. 2012.

[28] K. Neuman, U. Sauerbrey, & M. Winkler, "Fröbelpedagogik im Kontext der Praxis." Gutenberg Druckerei GmbH Weimar. 2012.

[29] S-L. Hänninen, & S. Valli, "Suomen lastentarhatyön ja varhaiskasvatuksen historia". Otava: Helsinki. 1986.

[30] S. Ranta, J. Kangas, H. Harju-Luukkainen, T. Ukkonen-Mikkola, M. Neitola, J. Kinon, N. Sajaniemi and A. Kuusisto. "Teachers' Pedagogical Competence in Finnish Early Childhood Education - A Narrative Literature Review", *Education Sciences*, 2023, 13, 791. DOI: 10.3390/educscil308079. https://www.mdpi.com/journal/education. (Access Date: 4 April 2024).

[31] "Act on Early childhood education and care, 2018/540".

[32] "Act on Early childhood education and care 16.12.2021".