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# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN FINNISH NEWSPAPERS DURING 1960'S

Faculty of Education and Culture  
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# ABSTRACT

Johanna Vaaja: Early childhood education in Finnish newspapers during 1960's  
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Finland's early childhood education system has been in existence for over 135 years. There are many books and articles written about its history, but most of them are written in Finnish, leaving very few options for those, who are not fluent enough in the language. To offer further insight to those interested, the aim of the study is to investigate, how the early childhood was discussed in Finnish newspapers during 1960s and present the findings in English.

This study was conducted as a secondary, qualitative research. The newspaper data was collected from Helsingin Sanomat's digitalized archives, and then analysed according to content analysis approach. The data was examined through historical and media perspectives.

The analysis shows that the early childhood education was a reoccurring topic within Helsingin Sanomat during the 1960s. Most of the discussions focused on the formal kindergarten system, with varying concerns and general information being accorded markedly prominent spaces. Non-formal care and other related circumstances were another regularly featured topic, although to a lesser extent than the formal care. These findings also give an overview of the newspaper coverage tendencies from the 1960s. Newspapers reported the matters which were felt to be important or pressing enough by the public opinion, with particular attention being given to drama-filled aspects.

Keywords: childcare, early childhood education, history, newspapers, 1960s

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# TIIVISTELMÄ

Johanna Vaaja: Early childhood education in Finnish newspapers during 1960's  
Kandidaatintutkielma  
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Suomen varhaiskasvatusjärjestelmä on ollut olemassa vuodesta 1888 lähtien, yli 135 vuoden ajan. Järjestelmän pitkstä historiasta on kirjoitettu useita kirjoja ja artikkeleita, mutta suurin osa niistä on kirjoitettu suomeksi, muunkielisen tarjonnan jäädessä hyvin suppeaksi. Koska nykyaikaa ja tulevaisuutta on mahdollista ymmärtää syvemmin tiedostamalla historian ja sen annin, tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on tarkastella, kuinka varhaiskasvatuksesta keskusteltiin suomalaisissa 1960-luvun sanomalehdissä, ja esittää tulokset englanniksi.

Tutkimus toteutettiin sekundäärisenä, kvalitatiivisena tutkimuksena. Tutkimusaineistoksi valikoitui 1960-luvun merkittävä sanomalehti, Helsingin Sanomat. Aineisto kerättiin Helsingin Sanomien digitaalisista arkistoista, jonka jälkeen aineisto analysoitiin laadullisen sisältöanalyysin periaatteilla. Aineiston tarkastelussa otettiin huomioon sekä historiallinen että median perspektiivit.

Tutkimustulokset paljastavat, että päivähoito ja varhaiskasvatus olivat toistuvia aiheita 1960-luvun Helsingin Sanomissa, aikakauden asenteiden heijastuessa kirjoituksissa. Suurin osa keskustelusta keskittyi julkiseen päivähoitojärjestelmään, erinäisten huolten ja yleisen informaation ollessa erityisessä keskiössä. Julkisen järjestelmän ulkopuolinen hoito, sekä muut päivähoitoon liittyvät asiahaarat saivat myös oman tilansa uutisissa, vaikkakin huomattavasti pienemmässä mittakaavassa kuin mitä julkinen järjestelmä. Tutkimustulokset antavat myös yleiskatsauksen 1960-luvun sanomalehtien tavasta raportoida uutisia ja aiheita. Sanomalehtien uutisraportointien keskiössä olivat yleisimmin aiheet ja tapahtumat, jotka koettiin kansan parissa tärkeiksi. Myöskin dramaattisille, usein negatiivissävytteisille aiheille annettiin erityishuomiota.

Avainsanat: childcare, early childhood education, history, newspapers, 1960s

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Starting from a young age, I have been interested in history. History contains so much interesting knowledge, some ugly, truthful, and polished. It can be plainly expressed, hidden between the lines, or even left unsaid. Besides, to develop as a student and professional, it is crucial to truly understand what you are getting into and what came before you. Thus, history offers an excellent pathway to increase learning and knowledge.

Although researchers have written books and articles about both Finnish and international early childhood education systems and their histories, throughout my studies it became evident that there were not many available sources for Finland in English. While this lack of sources did not prove troublesome to me - a native-born Finn with Finnish as my mother language – personally, it could have, and I believe, did present a problem for my study group, where not all students were able to access the historical sources, therefore depriving them of enlightening learning opportunities. This disparity is one of the notable reasons I chose this historical focus on the topic. Although the focus and sources are limited, my thesis adds to the field by compiling the previous knowledge and making it available in English.

By examining the historical perspective on Finland's early childhood education during the 1960s, I aspire to present the public with findings highlighting the state of our country's ECEC system in the 1960s. This enables all of us, whether we are teachers, students, or a member of the public, to have an opportunity to gain a more thorough understanding of the profession's current and possibly even future state.

To answer the main research question, how was the early childhood education system discussed in Finnish newspapers in the 1960's? I chose the review of newspapers and content analysis as my approaches. I gathered the data from the newspaper sources and then proceeded to analyse it according to the chosen approach.

I acknowledge that throughout its 140-year-old history, the classification of the Finnish daycare system has changed from being a social service to being considered as part of the education. The same goes for the services' names (Välimäki, 1999, p.126). It was only in 1973, with the passing of the Act on Child's Daycare, that the general term 'daycare' replaced the traditional names for different institutes (Hänninen & Valli, 1986, p.196; Vanha-Similä, 2020, p.68), also becoming an umbrella term for different service options.

Therefore, throughout my thesis, I will use the various terms interchangeably, except should the need arise to use a specific term. I clarify the latter kind of situation in the writing. In addition, I recognize that the modern terms are oftentimes not direct translations of the equivalent Finnish or English language term, nor do they necessarily directly correspond to any of them.

## 2 THE BACKGROUND

To be able to understand the study, it is essential to have a knowledge of essential, related contexts. These contexts are historical context and how education has been discussed in the media during recent times. In the section below, I offer further information on both contexts.

### *2.1 Historical context*

The 1960s is among the most recognizable periods in the world's history. From the sexual revolutions to presidential assassinations, from rising living standards to the birth of the Beatles, a great deal occurred during the said decade. Finland was not an exception to the flowing tides and underwent monumental societal changes during the 1960s.

In their research, Laakso et al. (2003, pp.254-257) point out that those who lived in the decade tend to remember it rather well. In the previous 20 years, Finland had been forced to fight two wars against the Soviet Union. While the country was able to maintain its independence, the following "war repair" era of 1945-1965 brought its difficulties (Laakso et al., 2003, pp. 254-257) as the nation had to heal and repair itself from the traumatic war experience. Nevertheless, the old saying "every cloud has a silver lining" strikes particularly true for the period, for the foundations of several monumental changes were laid during that time. People's values began to change, new ones replacing the old ones (Laakso et al., 2003, pp. 254-257). According to Laakso et al. (2003, pp. 254-257), foreign influences enabled events and people previously considered outsiders to be involved and have more voice in the public sphere. The public's views on single mothers are an excellent example of this. As the number of single mothers rose and became a more visible part of life, people's attitudes began to shift towards acceptance (Vanha-Similä, 2020, p. 41) in contrast to previously held shunning. General living standards rose (Laakso et al., 2003, pp. 254-257; Vanha-Similä,

2020, p.13), which made it possible for other changes to follow, such as rising educational levels for lower classes (Laakso et al., 2003, pp. 254-257).

Alongside the occurring changes, or arguably due to their influence, during the 1960's, a significant move happened within Finland. Before, most of the population had lived in the countryside. However, as employment outside the traditional home sphere increased, and people wanted to advance their education, they moved from the countryside to the larger cities (Laakso et al., 2003, pp. 254-257; Ranta, 2012, p. 207; Vanha-Similä, 2020, p.48). People believed cities to offer better life opportunities, and soon enough, for the first time in Finland's history, cities' population outnumbered the countryside's (Ranta, 2012, p.207).

The women's position within the 1960s Finland mirrored the general societal changes. Among the most notable aspects of it was related to education. More and more women felt enabled to pursue better educational opportunities during the 1960s (Vanha-Similä, 2020, p.18). Approval for women's education was not society-wide however, for educational institutes could be rather costly investments for families (Vanha-Similä, 2020, p.18). Parents' opinions on girls' education were another key influence in encouraging or discouraging it (Vanha-Similä, 2020, p.18).

Although women had always taken contributive jobs, in the past such jobs were principally located within a farm or home sphere (Välimäki, 1999, p.54). The post-war era, and the 60s especially, brought about the shift in that. Ranta (2012, p.73) and Vanha-Similä (2020, p. 46) assert that in 1960, half of Finland's women worked in the professions outside the home. Third of the women worked in agriculture and forestry, another third in the transport and service sector, and the rest in the commerce and industrial sector (Ranta, 2012, p.73; Vanha-Similä, 2020, p.46). The public sector and its substantial expansion also provided numerous working opportunities for women (Vanha-Similä, 2020, p.50; Välimäki, 1999, p.59).

Despite the changes in society's attitudes and women's employment, childcare – particularly the formal care given outside the home – did not advance at the same speed. In the '60s, childcare was still primarily viewed as women's responsibility (Vanha-Similä, 2020, p.13), and any formal care outside the home was considered more of a complementary social service to make everyday life



easier for families (Laakso et al., 2003, pp. 254-257). Moreover, the old stigmas related to kindergartens and unfamiliarity with the services led many families to prefer hiring domestic servants to help with childcare (Ranta, 2012, p. 209; Vanha-Similä, 2020, p.66).

During the era, Finland had several institutes that offered care or education for younger children, such as nurseries [lastenseimi], kindergartens [lastentarha], and infant schools [pikkulastenkoulut] (Hänninen & Valli, 1986). However, the public daycare system offered by Finland during the era was in a poor state (Välimäki, 1999, p.54), to the point where Ranta (2012, p.209) implies that no such system even existed. The number of kindergartens remained low (Välimäki, 1999, p. 175), and whenever places became available, the demand far outnumbered the supply, especially for children under the age of three (Laakso et al., 2003, pp. 254-257; Vanha-Similä, 2020, p. 67). Child groups tended to be large, workers were partly unqualified and often changing, and the physical environment itself was often not designed for the early childhood services' purposes (Välimäki, 1999, p. 125). The nature of the kindergartens' services raised concerns in people's minds, as they feared them becoming too institutionalized for the children, which was at the time not considered the best approach for caring for the children (Välimäki, 1999, p. 119).

The 1973 Act on Child's Daycare proved to be a turning point in Finnish early childhood education history. Not only did the Act simplify the terms used within the field, but it also made the young children's mothers' work more acceptable (Vanha-Similä, 2020, p. 67) and started off a new expansion era in the daycare services.

## *2.2 Education in the media*

According to Oxford University Press (n.d.), media is a communication method through which nearly everyone receives and shares information and entertainment. Media has taken various forms and evolved throughout the years, from public pamphlets to televisions to online forums. Mustola et al. (2020) argue that the rising ascendancy of social media has not diminished the importance of more traditional forms, such as newspapers, which retain a considerable amount of readership (Fenech & Wilkins, 2018).

As a significant communication method, media holds great power and influence in our society, to the point where certain researchers have dubbed it an “agenda setter” (Coe & Kuttner, 2018; Snaider, 2018). What is chosen to be brought forth in media and how it is presented can significantly influence the general public’s opinion and what they consider to be essential and worthy of attention (Coe & Kuttner, 2018; Fenech & Wilkins, 2018; Rauhala et al., 2011; Snaider, 2018). From a political perspective, research has found media to be a key force in influencing governmental policies and actions, including education-related matters (Coe & Kuttner, 2018; Fenech & Wilkins, 2018).

Media is not an equitable force when it comes to treating its topics and subjects. Education as a whole, but early childhood education in particular, tends to get scantily covered (Coe & Kuttner, 2018; Fenech & Wilkins, 2018; Rauhala et al., 2011), and even when given space in media, topics commonly center around negative aspects of the field, news portrayals easily making it seem like education is in a permanent state of crisis (Coe & Kuttner, 2018). Violence, quality levels, funding-related issues, race and ethnicity matters, and youth welfare all occupied prominent portions of education’s received coverage (Coe & Kuttner, 2018; Snaider, 2018).

A set of reasons can explain media’s lack of interest in covering the subject area. First, there is what I call ‘excitement level’. Compared to politics and breaking news, education does not have the same drama-filled, heavy presence which is a clear disadvantage in the media reporting (Coe & Kuttner, 2018).

Second is that the form of media influences coverage. According to Coe and Kuttner (2018), television news, for example, tend to prefer dramatic, all-affecting stories over more mundane and focused ones, which, when repeated, can lead to subjects – including education – receiving less and less attention in the media.

However, there are timed exceptions to scant coverage. Both Rauhala et al. (2011) and Fenech and Wilkins (2018) found in their studies that during political election seasons, coverage of childcare and early childhood education tends to rise to a considerable degree. Regardless, much of such coverage has been found to focus on politicians and giving them the space to voice their opinions (Fenech & Wilkins, 2018; Rauhala et al., 2011), minimizing the space for other groups, such as families, children themselves, workers in the field and various minorities. Such disparity in voice allocation is somewhat problematic, for Fenech

and Wilkins (2018) argue that “giving prominence to particular voices gives legitimacy to the respective claims they make and are reported.” What is more, people cannot assume that their voices are being heard and actively considered if there is no coverage from their perspective to prove it (Rauhala et al., 2011).

# 3 RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODOLOGY

My research question is How was early childhood education system discussed in the Finnish newspapers during 1960's?

## 3.1 *Qualitative research*

According to Byrne (2023a), qualitative research is first and foremost “exploratory research”. The aim of qualitative research is to gather in-depth knowledge and understanding of a research topic, subject often being more focused in nature (Bhandari, 2023; Byrne, 2023a). In human sciences particularly, the focus of the research tends to be on people’s thoughts and beliefs (Mukherji & Albon, 2018, p.92-93) instead of generalizable numbers and assumptions, which are more commonly found in quantitative research (Byrne, 2023a). Studying a concentrated topic to gain a deeper understanding was exactly what I intended to do in my research, and therefore I found qualitative research design to be most suitable for my thesis project.

## 3.2 *Content analysis*

Content analysis is an analysis method that can be used in both quantitative and qualitative research studies (Luo, 2023). The primary idea behind content analysis is to examine the source material and learn about different meanings, patterns, relationships and presences within the communication (Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health [CPH], 2023; Luo, 2023) through quantification of researcher’s determined units. The unit within content analysis can be a single word, phrase, theme, or even a relationship between different categories (Byrne, 2023b; CPH, 2023).

There are two main kinds of content analysis – conceptual content analysis and relational content analysis (CPH, 2023). In conceptual content analysis a researcher counts the occurrences of determined units and bases their analysis on that. Relational content analysis takes the former a step further - it examines the relationships between units within the communication (CPH, 2023).

Content analysis can be applied to a wide-ranging source material, such as face-to-face communications, historical documents, newspapers, photographs, research notes, social media posts or commentary, and many more (Byrne, 2023b; CPH, 2023; Luo, 2023; Neuendorf, 2017). Consequently, it has been a favorite analysis method in various research areas such as marketing, psychology and anthropology (Luo, 2023; Neuendorf, 2017), and according to Neuendorf (2017), the number of researchers using the approach is only on the rise.

I found conceptual content analysis to be a well-suited analysis method for my study, which is why I chose to follow its steps in my analysis. The first step was to become familiar with the data, which I achieved through multiple readings and summarizing each article's content. Then, I started the coding process, which was mostly inductive. After that had been achieved, I decided upon different categories to which articles were divided. These codes and categories were then used to find out emerging themes and viewpoints of the topic. To make the process easier, I opted to use Atlas.ti program as a support and analysis tool.

### *3.3 Data collection*

After consideration, I chose to use Helsingin Sanomat (HS) as the data source. It became a best-suited choice for several reasons. For one, HS has a long-established history, having been in publication since 1889. Secondly, the newspaper offers the easily accessible online archives for old magazines, going as far back as 1889. Finally, the paper's considerable circulation, which has made it rank among the most widely read newspapers within Finland (Audit Media Finland Oy, 2020), both today and in the past.

All data was collected from Time Machine [Aikakone] service, provided by Helsingin Sanomat. Time Machine is an online archive, which offers digitalized access to nearly all old Helsingin Sanomat and its predecessor, Päivälehti, from

1889 until 1997. Time Machine is a premium service, and in order to access it, one must purchase a digital subscription to Helsingin Sanomat. I purchased such a subscription.

As Hänninen and Valli (1986) explained, during the 1960's there were several names for different formal early childhood services, such as nurseries, kindergartens and infant schools. Furthermore, the more modern term "early childhood education" [varhaiskasvatus] was not in use at the time yet. These differences between current and historical terms and systems really challenged me to ponder on proper search terms, as I wanted to focus more on the formal education that existed in my chosen decade.

In the end, I narrowed the search terms down to four, which I felt to be both relevant and broad enough to catch the topic in the era the best: lastenseim 196, lastentarha 196, päivähöito 196 and päiväkotii 196. At the time of data collection, the Time Machine did not provide a year-specific filter when using the text search, which necessitated the addition of the first three numbers of the year. This helped to narrow down results to a degree.

### *3.4 Research ethics*

Ethics are a significant element in any research, being integrated throughout the whole process (Mukherji & Albon, 2018, p. 106-197). All research conducted in Finland, regardless of the discipline, are bound by the guidelines set by Finnish National Board on Research Integrity, TENK. According to TENK (2019), there are three main, "umbrella" principles for the research: the autonomy of the human participants must be respected, biodiversity and various heritages must be respected, and the research may not cause significant harm to participants or others around them.

Other than I as a researcher, this study did not have human participants. I gathered the data from the publicly available archives. Hence, it is not necessary for me to acquire any statements from the university's committees or ask for prior informed consent. Nevertheless, there are ethical considerations which I had to keep in mind. My data could potentially include real people and their opinions. While it is a key characteristic of liberal science to be able to critically evaluate public figures and their actions (TENK, 2019), putting oneself into public sphere

does not take away people's right to privacy, which must always be respected. In addition, people appearing in the sources might also be deceased by now, which necessitates careful consideration and particularly respectful conduct (TENK, 2019).

Finally, part of the ethical considerations includes considering myself and my biases. All people have their biases, which have formed since earliest childhood (Scarlet, 2016). Some of biases are more visible, and some are more unconscious or hidden kind. It is my responsibility as a researcher to acknowledge these biases and how they might affect the research and attempt my best to minimize their effect on the results. In addition, I need to consider my own vulnerability and comfort zone while conducting the research, as vulnerability, according to Mukherji and Albon (2018, p. 114) "also extends to researcher". Since this research did not have direct human participants other than me, vulnerability did not become an issue.

## 4 RESULTS

The selected data pool included 73 articles from 71 different HS newspapers from the 1960s (see Appendix). The archive provided appropriate pieces for every year of the decade. Between 1960 and 1963, the number of articles per year remained between 1 and 3. As the decade went on, the number rose to 4 or 5 articles per year. The year 1966 became a notable exception, for 40 news articles were found from that year alone.

**TABLE 1.** Data division by the publication year

<b>PUBLICATION YEAR</b>	<b>NUMBER OF ARTICLES</b>
<b>1960</b>	1
<b>1961</b>	3
<b>1962</b>	2
<b>1963</b>	3
<b>1964</b>	5
<b>1965</b>	4
<b>1966</b>	40
<b>1967</b>	5
<b>1968</b>	5
<b>1969</b>	5

In the section below, I will explain the findings from my research. I have divided the results into two main categories: those related to formal early childhood education system which was in place during 1960s and matters outside the said system. The main categories have been further divided into sub-themes.



## 4.1 *Formal care*

The majority of the newspapers' discussion was about the formal kindergarten system, which was organized in Finland's cities, towns and other public organizations.

As I continued analyzing the data related to formal care system, four main sub-themes became apparent. These four sub-themes were: general information, challenges and critique of the daycare system, employment advertisements and staff training.

### 4.1.1 General information

A number of articles relating to early childhood education were neutral and objective in tone. Whether it was an informal comment to something written earlier or an announcement of a new daycare, articles offered information about the early childhood education system to the public.

From the data, 15 articles were about new kindergartens. Some of the articles announced cities' approvals for the new kindergartens' building plans (HS 9.12.1968, see Appendix). A number of pieces focused on a kindergarten's move from one service to another (HS 22.6.1966, see Appendix), while others announced the upcoming opening of finished institutes (HS 23.8.1966; HS 10.4.1960, see Appendix). Occasionally the newspapers described the celebrations which the city organized when the new kindergarten was officially opened, as the article on October 28, 1963, describes.

Many of the articles, regardless of their main theme, described the amount of both existing daycare places and the new ones that would come with the additional kindergartens within the area or city. An article from April 25, 1966 (see Appendix) focused on describing the general future plans for the expansion of kindergartens within Espoo city, and how they would accelerate the building speed from one new kindergarten per year to two new ones per year.

A group of articles offered more objective information about the existing daycare system to the public. Two pieces, a comment from October 5, 1966, and a correction from the city officials from August 20, 1967 (see Appendix) introduced the kindergartens and their work, potential waiting times and what the

placement guidelines are. However, it was more typical that the general information about the existing early childhood education system was included within articles that were focused on other aspects, such as new kindergartens.

The newspapers also served as places for public notices regarding kindergartens. One article from November 1, 1962, announces the start of the kindergarten within Ebeneser House, Helsinki. Article also goes on to mention the application period, and how there will be one Swedish-languaged unit within the kindergarten. Other articles, from May 6, 1966, and from August 28, 1966, announce the application period for kindergartens, with the latter being focused on registrations post-application period.

#### 4.1.2 Challenges and critique

The different challenges and critiques of the existing system dominated the discussions within the newspapers, the topic appearing more prominently than other themes. While the challenges were usually intertwined with other topics instead of having an article on their own, during the analysis process certain themes emerged repeatedly enough to become commonplace. These main critiques were a lack of kindergarten places, children's welfare and the issues related to funding.

Throughout the articles and the whole decade, a lack of kindergarten places was the most often voiced concern. Many articles (HS 20.8.1967, HS 17.12.1964, HS 9.12.1968, HS 19.5.1968, see Appendix) mentioned the struggle families faced because there simply were not any places available, demand far outnumbering the supply. The writers often portrayed the lack of places as a catalyst to other issues as well. The most notable examples were the cases of student families (HS 28.10.1966, HS 19.5.1968, see Appendix), where the parents' studies could suffer for not being able to arrange for childcare. Frequently, women's struggles were in connection with the issue, as women's entry into the working field could be affected by not being able to arrange the care place for their child (HS 7.8.1966, HS 1.3.1966, see Appendix).

Children's welfare and the suitability of kindergartens concerned people during the 1960's. Many HS newspapers, such as ones from 23.7.1966 or 3.8.1966 (see Appendix), featured articles in which the daycare centers were

portrayed from a negative perspective, with too large group sizes, institutional-like environment and potentially long days spent away from home highlighted as major concerns. As a comment from October 4, 1964, suggested, staying home with a mother was seen as the best possible option for young children.

The lack of funding was an occasional feature in the news articles. Two articles (HS 20.10.1966, HS 23.10.1966, see Appendix) specifically mention the removal of previously allocated grant for early childhood care services, while three articles (HS 10.12.1969, HS 18.11.1966, HS 1.3.1966, see Appendix) highlight either the general lack of money allocated for the services, or how the financing of early childhood care services has, for whatever reason, lowered in recent years.

#### 4.1.3 Employment advertisements

In service advertisement-sections within newspapers, kindergarten work field featured sporadically. Nearly all employment adverts were from the public sector, often directly from cities or towns, with the great majority being from Helsinki Metropolitan area. Exceptions did appear; one advert from May 30, 1969 (see Appendix) was from Lappeenranta City's Social Welfare Board. In addition, amidst the adverts on May 15, 1966 (see Appendix), a potential employee was looking for work within the childcare field.

The employment adverts had common features; the number of available places and roles, the salary and where and when to deliver the applications. Some of the adverts also described prospective benefits related to the jobs, and what additions applicant ought to attach to their applications. On one occasion, the advertisement from December 13, 1967 (see Appendix) described the upcoming circumstances due to kindergarten switching from temporary kind to another form.

One employment advertisement-section, from May 15, 1966 HS newspaper, stood out from the other similar areas (see Appendix). In it, the families were direct employers, seeking domestic servants to help out with the housework. Some of those adverts mentioned childcare as part of their duties, but others did not.

#### 4.1.4 Staff training

In contrast to other themes, kindergartens' staff' training was not a common topic in newspapers, appearing explicitly in only three articles, all in 1966.

HS article from May 1, 1966 (see Appendix) discusses the potential changes to Jyväskylä's kindergarten seminar's requirements. Before, an applicant needed to have completed the matriculation exams to be eligible, but recently, it had been suggested that middle-school level education could be suitable enough. The general attitude within the article was rather negative, with concerns expressed for the unequally prepared student pool in future, the level of respect and appreciation dropping for the field, and the loss of benefits from the university if matriculation exams were no longer required from the students.

The other two articles discussed further education for nurseries' [lastenseimi] directors and the expansion of kindergarten teachers' study places within Jyväskylä's seminar. The article about study place expansion (HS 14.10.1966, see Appendix) went on to describe the actual work of the teachers and what were the expectations for them. The article about directors' education explained how prior, there had been no education requirements for the nurses within nurseries and how the directors tended to have either teacher, social worker's or nurse's qualifications (HS 22.9.1966, see Appendix).

## 4.2 *Non-formal care*

Matters related to non-formal childcare featured within newspapers to a lesser degree than those of formal, institutionalized care. Nonetheless, they appeared frequently enough that their presences could not be left unmentioned.

During the analysis process, three main themes related to non-formal childcare emerged. These were: circumstances or actions outside the formal care, alternative education and care options, and full-time home care.

### 4.2.1 Circumstances outside the formal care

Circumstances outside, but related closely enough, the formal daycare system had irregular appearances within Helsingin Sanomat. The major focal points were

different benefits connected to childcare or maternity, home environment, women's changing position and children's well-being.

Benefits-discussions within papers tended to be focused on maternity pay [äidinpalkka]. Differing from our contemporary maternity allowance, maternity pay was often raised as a potential solution to overcrowding public kindergartens and nurseries (HS 7.8.1966, see Appendix). In addition, newspapers highlighted the maternity pay's potential in family planning, allowing mothers to stay longer at home instead of having to go back to work soon after the birth (HS 4.10.1964, HS 17.8.1966, see Appendix). However, articles often did bring up the changing world in relation to women working, and other related challenges such as who would pay, who would be paid, and women's own desires regarding their life (HS 4.10.1964, HS 7.8.1966, see Appendix).

Home environment rose in discussion in couple instances. In a piece from October 12, 1966 (see Appendix) the article discussed how home environment has a crucial role regarding the kindergarten children's health, noting how the children from lower-class families tended to be sick more often. Article went on to suggest that kindergartens could educate families about the matter to improve children's health.

Mothers' changing position within society gained visibility in the newspapers. Newspapers acknowledged on several occasions that the women's role and position within society was in a whirlwind, and the number of women working in active jobs outside the home was on the rise (HS 28.10.1963, HS 1.3.1966, see Appendix). In connection to formal care, some pieces, such as one from July 17, 1966, highlighted the helpful role kindergartens have played in enabling this change, allowing mothers to get back to working field after rearing children. On the other side, newspapers portrayed how it was best for the children to be raised at home environment, and how mothers could be enabled to make the choice to stay at home, if they so wished (HS 4.10.1964, HS 7.8.1966, see Appendix). One commonly discussed solution was the maternity pay.

#### 4.2.2 Alternative education/care options

Discussions related to alternative forms of early childhood education and care appeared on a few occasions within newspapers. The main focuses within these

discussions were either private daycare or family daycare. The latter was private too.

The discussions about private and family daycares tended to have an apprehensive air about them. They were rarely mentioned in their own right, but instead, as part of the on-going discussion about various challenges within the formal daycare system. Moreover, the negative aspects were often given prominent space within the paper, with people's worries about the lack of proper supervision for these careplaces and what it could potentially lead to in terms of children's well-being being most often mentioned (HS 4.10.1964, HS 23.7.1966, HS 17.12.1966, see Appendix)

Some of the articles were more neutral, or even positive in tone. In one article from November 16, 1968, the writer described how the city of Pori would be starting an experiment with family daycare with increased supervision, in order to lessen the existing burden on the public daycare system. In another article, published two years earlier on December 4, 1966, the article highlighted the cheaper cost of supervised family daycare in comparison to kindergarten places, both for families and the cities. In keeping with reservations, the importance of supervision was highlighted, and positive examples from abroad, like Sweden, are brought forth. The writer finishes the article by mentioning the reservations people may have had about the system, with taxation and supervision being considered potential hindrances.

#### 4.2.3 Full-time home care

Helsingin Sanomat had dedicated areas within their newspapers for people to either offer full-time home care services for children and their families, or vice versa for families in need of such services. Areas were clearly titled, most commonly "Full-time care needed" [Täysihoitoa halutaan] or "Full-time care offered" [Täysihoitoa tarjotaan].

The advertisements from families in need and from those offering care had similar forms. For families in need, all adverts mentioned the age and gender of the child, as well as the family's contact information. It was quite common for the rough or exact work location to be included in the advert as well (HS 31.12.1963, HS 5.11.1966, see Appendix). Less commonly, the name of the child was

included, although this tended to be the case when the family had written the advert in the style of the child themselves seeking a carer (HS 1.10.1964, see Appendix). On rare occasions, the adverts included further information about the family itself, the potential benefits an applicant could have such as own room, and the job expectations families had for the childcarer (HS 5.8.1966, see Appendix).

The adverts offering to take in children had common patterns repeating throughout the newspapers. Like with families' adverts, the care offerers indicated the ages and number of children they were willing to offer a place to. In contrast to the families, the gender of child did not feature within care offerers' adverts. The contact information was provided, most commonly with telephone number and on slightly fewer occasions an exact or general location (HS 22.10.1961, HS 20.10.1965, HS 14.2.1966, HS 19.1.1967, see Appendix)

The adverts on both sides were mainly aimed at the children within the early childhood age group, from mere months old up to five-year-olds. However, on certain occasions care was offered to children up to ten years of age, although this was a rare occurrence. Furthermore, some of the care offers within Full-time care offered-section were more summertime care type or were not childcare by nature (HS 16.6.1963). Typically, these were placed in separate sections.

# 5 DISCUSSION

The aim of this research study was to explore, how early childhood education was discussed in Finland's newspapers during the 1960s, using both history and media as context lenses through which the data was viewed. Based on my previous knowledge and familiarity with the history of Finland's ECEC system, I expected to encounter discussions about kindergartens and childcare, but I was very curious to see, what kind of discussions there had been exactly. In addition, the 60s was the final full decade before the 1973 Act on Child's Daycare, which proved to be a turning point in Finland's ECEC history (Vanha-Similä, 2020, p. 67). I was interested to see whether there had been some kind of pretreatment for the Act within the media. The research delivered good answers to my research question.

## 5.1 *Formal care*

Formal early childhood education was a featured topic in newspapers articles during the 1960s. The fact that ECEC had numerous appearances in the newspapers is enough to dispute Ranta's (2012, p. 209) claim about no formal daycare system existing, for if there was nothing in existence, it would not have been discussed in the newspapers.

The major focus in newspapers' discussion about kindergartens was information sharing. Many of the articles included information about the newly approved building projects, registration periods for the daycare applications, the number of new and existing daycare places within different cities and areas, staff's training and finally, the employment offers from different cities and companies. This is in keeping with the media's role as a significant communication method (Coe & Kuttner, 2018; Oxford University Press, n.d.; Snaider, 2018): the intelligence shared there is bound to reach multitude of people and in case of employment offers, a greater number of potential



employees. The general information sharing can also be seen as a way to educate the Finnish public of 1960s, to combat the existing stigmas and reservations (Vanha-Similä, 2020, p. 66; Välimäki, 1999, pp. 119, 125). If members of public became more knowledgeable about the ECEC system, it is very possible that the old attitudes would be challenged or potentially even vanish entirely (Coe & Kuttner, 2018; Fenech & Wilkins, 2018; Rauhala et al., 2011; Snaider, 2018).

It was common for the newspapers to highlight different challenges and critiques in their articles about kindergartens. The complaints that appeared most often were those related to children's welfare, funding and the lack of places for children in kindergartens, with the last one being the most prominent single concern. That the newspapers would highlight the struggles was to be expected. The concerns represented part of what the people of the era were thinking about, and since the public was worried about the state of Finnish kindergartens (Välimäki, 1999, pp. 119, 125), the newspapers would understandably pick them up as a running theme.

When examining the challenges and critiques from the media perspective, their continued presence comes as a no surprise. Negative aspects related to system tend to get more coverage due to their drama-level and newsworthiness (Coe & Kuttner, 2018) which makes the topic choices logical, even if occasionally questionable from the personal perspective. However, the continued representation of different crises might not always be a bad thing. By highlighting the aspects which the public and journalists feel need correction, the newspapers offer an information avenue for politicians, who might have the power and capability to make changes. As several researchers have found, what the media chooses to represent and in what tone can have a great impact both on people and the official governmental policies (Coe & Kuttner, 2018; Fenech & Wilkins, 2018; Rauhala et al., 2011; Snaider, 2018).

One of the key points within Finland's ECEC history is the 1973 Act on Child's Care. Although the Act came three years after the end of the 1960s, considering its monumental importance I expected to see direct pretreatment of its ideas, or even mentions of the future Act itself. Furthermore, as Coe and Kuttner (2018) and Fenech and Wilkins (2018) have explained, the media is a key player in influencing governmental positions and the actions undertaken

based on their policies, hence my expectations for Act's groundwork being visible in preceding decade. Yet, in contrast to my hypothesis, there appeared to be no direct groundwork discussions about the Act during the 1960s, although the overall topic featured plenty in the newspapers.

## *5.2 Non-formal care*

Non-formal care made less appearances within newspapers compared to formal care system, but nonetheless, they were a recurring topic.

During the 1960s, increasing number of women were able to access further education and jobs outside the traditional working spheres (Vanha-Similä, 2020, pp. 18, 51, 63). The newspapers from the era acknowledged the significant changes both explicitly and implicitly, several articles reflecting on how women's position had changed and how they were working outside the home increasingly. As the changes were rather radical in nature, striking contrast between the traditional old and modern new, it is not surprising that the topic would have been picked up by the media. One defining feature of the media is to broadcast exciting and dramatic aspects of life (Coe & Kuttner, 2018), and breaking with traditional expectations of women? I would argue it definitely exceeded the drama levels.

The varying adverts for full-time homecare were a notable part of newspapers' handling of the topic. This highlights the historical attitude of the era, in which families tended to prefer hiring domestic servants and nannies as childcare providers instead of enrolling children into kindergartens (Ranta, 2012, p. 209; Vanha-Similä, 2020, p.66). The families may have chosen Helsingin Sanomat as advertisement places for a logical reason: they had widespread publication, especially in the 1960s when computers and social media as we know them today were not in existence. Alongside televisions, newspapers were the mass media of the day, and a guaranteed method to spread the advertisement to as many homes of potential employees, or families in need, as possible.

On a number of occasions, alternative care options – family daycare and private daycares – appeared in the newspapers, discussion tone leaning towards negative in most articles. From historical perspective, this was rather curious as the general historical sources made no mention of those options, nearly

implicating that there were only two options for childcare: home care or public kindergartens. When examining the conventional attitudes of society, it does not remain such a curiosity. Although kindergartens had gained understanding and acceptance amongst the general public, the old stigmas and reservations still remained strong in people's minds (Vanha-Similä, 2020, p. 66). Thus, as it was difficult enough for the formal public system to gain appreciation, it is no wonder that alternative options, already in the minority, struggled even more so.

### *5.3 Limitations*

This study was a small-scale, qualitative research study with a focus on the particular decade. In addition, only one newspaper was used as a source material in the study. Therefore, the generalizability of the study's results is limited.

The language of the source materials presents a limitation. The majority of historical source literature, and all of newspaper articles were written in Finnish. Although I do believe myself to have rather good English skills, it is not my native language, and I am not a professional translator. Therefore, it is likely some information or nuances could have been lost in the translation process. Furthermore, any potential mistakes in translation are mine.

While the data source, and thus the articles themselves, are available online to anyone who has access to the Internet, Time Machine is locked behind the paywall. Therefore, the repeatability level of the study may suffer as not everyone might wish to pay to be able to access the source material first-hand. Additionally, Time Machine offered two options for the search: searching by specific date, month, and or year, or searching by text. The text search did not have other filters to narrow down the search. Thus, I felt it was necessary to add the first three numbers of the decade to the search, but it did seem to come at the cost of affecting the final data results – highlighted by disproportionate representation of the year 1966 within data.

## 6 CONCLUSION

This research aimed to investigate, how the Finnish early childhood education was discussed during 1960s in the contemporary newspapers. Based on the qualitative analysis of newspaper articles, it can be concluded that the main focuses of the ECEC discussions within newspapers were burning questions and information sharing. Contemporary worries about the state of kindergartens were reflected in the articles, as was as the changing world, particularly women's role within society. News articles often shared information about early childhood education, such as employment listings and up-coming kindergartens. In addition, a portion of the discussions focused on non-formal care and circumstances outside the public kindergarten system.

The results also indicate that the media's handling of education followed similar patterns as what the coverage today tends to follow. People's concerns and negative events were featured prominently. The amount of objective information sharing suggest that newspapers were seen as a tool to further people's knowledge about the practical matters and the early childhood care in general.

I went into this research expecting to focus on the formal kindergarten system of the 1960s. However, the newspapers discussed non-formal care and related circumstances to a such degree that I felt compelled to include that aspect in my research as well. The formal and non-formal care are very much intertwined, after all.

Despite the limitations, this thesis adds to the field by compiling the existing knowledge and historical data from the field and presenting it in English. For future research, this topic has an abundance of potential options. One possibility is to use newspapers to have a look at other time periods, especially the decades from the early era, 1880s up to World War II. Research could also use different kinds of source materials, such as private journals, letters, or official, historical documents to examine different perspectives about early childhood education.

Finally, I believe it would be invaluable to have an exhaustive history book about Finnish early childhood education, from its very beginning the 1880s, up until the current day. Especially if it was written in English, it would make the history of our field widely accessible and present a good source for students and researchers to come.

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# APPENDIX – NEWSPAPERS

Below is the list of newspapers used in the research.

Helsingin Sanomat, 10.4.1960

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/43553a39-b221-4af3-81bc-f0a9bc6a5f4c/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 10.6.1961

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/d193863a-6d78-46bb-9b48-fb3a55e9c7d1/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 22.10.1961

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/250d2883-44a4-4d84-b407-e68e45a94b9b/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 29.12.1961

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/918d29a2-fecd-4a0e-b63f-b33ad17b110d/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 14.2.1962

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/ed8d1c4f-c0fe-4888-8d27-ec0f6f41c67f/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 15.6.1962

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/d5994691-4eb6-4a5f-acd3-040082c7a069/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 1.11.1962

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/780872d2-6c70-401a-990c-f25edb38ef40/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 16.6.1963

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/0498f408-a3c6-4ebf-a8bf-3b1c0158360d/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 28.10.1963

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/9d14ee89-9ce1-4b60-baa3-39853edde4f3/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 31.12.1963

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/47037d85-651c-4ee5-8496-8dc61662c006/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 5.7.1964

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/68a30f9e-825c-4951-bdb2-87da3ea82b85/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 1.10.1964

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/422482a0-31e7-4183-951c-4a3635c22cbd/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 4.10.1964

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/2eeadab0-8601-467a-96c2-98ba693cbe36/1>



Helsingin Sanomat, 17.12.1964

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/e7ab2e94-25f0-4b7d-8309-48b708a3f067/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 2.4.1965

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/fa6335a7-d2b6-43a6-87a9-671ddf39dae2/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 19.10.1965

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/5462e930-9866-40ab-b7f6-28f6b8c59af7/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 20.10.1965

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/694fca8c-a8bf-4caf-87d2-9a6b0eef0dd1/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 11.11.1965

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/d378c776-7b99-4388-ba20-f47594a36ff9/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 4.1.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/320558a3-5195-42b2-acef-9960ab18fd1f/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 8.1.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/d5ab7d8e-2c46-4066-8073-4e0caa85e634/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 27.2.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/2bb5e46e-1299-4353-9ace-3c63867ab301/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 1.3.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/e6922ca8-ccf8-4e8c-b6c0-811cbd0bc379/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 13.3.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/47a49596-d7e6-41cd-9480-41e2779a1481/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 25.4.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/a9991f07-1fd0-4971-b675-588b77c447b1/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 1.5.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/b4b58af4-1450-46f3-952c-841b9114a1a4/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 3.5.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/69fb8482-4964-4d03-b86b-d39a3566873e/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 6.5.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/3837634f-26ad-41b7-a085-57012087459e/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 15.5.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/203d8730-2fef-4e2c-a266-6aa6c88c5bb6/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 18.5.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/d95addcc-fdda-4463-bb90-a72673c8836c/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 22.6.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/e1b9c4f3-3d54-4b21-8d73-1b837073d901/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 10.7.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/0cc02241-a9ab-4773-825e-29c9451504e0/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 14.7.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/0b49745a-3221-4847-a344-bd0dd9da74c0/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 23.7.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/b011b73f-b456-42b8-a77c-a339e4842870/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 3.8.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/638c255e-7184-465d-b7f1-f162236e6db7/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 5.8.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/e8dc6e4c-2543-4e6b-a900-e93f5f57fec7/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 7.8.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/a5b10be5-df5f-4973-a233-83e7d29c0d45/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 17.8.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/45c28350-0b53-46af-ac0e-dc58a727daa5/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 20.8.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/4e549cd0-047f-4157-a4c7-fdf6f0253f2c/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 23.8.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/8bee83e6-80b6-4938-82cb-e87e6b489ebb/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 26.8.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/51647dbf-0b97-46e9-b7e7-45e8adde427f/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 16.9.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/2ef4ef6a-4e7a-47fc-a290-0a3a847337d4/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 22.9.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/01d76c83-7fe1-4413-a195-da631ce3513f/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 24.9.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/25dda948-e850-41d2-a7c5-a5b9138a701c/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 5.10.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/c98ac026-1c8f-4d73-9183-c00b8683c798/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 12.10.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/c47b6759-de20-4b5e-bb33-42f0a239e003/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 14.10.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/e3763376-8b82-4ff9-9a8f-b7f42b101af0/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 20.10.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/fd1f6458-755c-41dd-84ae-f64d2f2a188a/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 23.10.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/cc99b7ec-4ea6-4872-aaa8-2f51f16a2578/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 28.10.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/66110e94-2834-4cec-af00-54e991c356f4/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 5.11.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/283f9bd0-a95a-445d-8b32-ec3f4cd7354e/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 18.11.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/bf12dd84-e0bd-4935-a024-9570ac85d4a2/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 21.11.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/47e72e43-ab39-4e25-a6a3-c30c3dc305c7/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 30.11.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/598dee09-db81-4c88-b95a-38fa349f5964/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 1.12.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/9ee9ed67-769b-43f5-b21e-2ca80f9a78c8/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 4.12.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/2c1da134-dc73-40f8-b068-ec58f8d61d8b/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 9.12.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/dfbeb0dd-2a1a-4ecf-aed8-29c99c18a2df/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 17.12.1966

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/efda6426-6773-4468-ac80-494b7b51e95f/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 19.1.1967

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/1db55a17-1d03-4619-9f35-ad81c313c121/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 20.8.1967

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/c06f0da9-d4e8-4128-bc8d-82f6d6a97af8/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 7.10.1967

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/fb901485-9512-4c6a-a7dc-1b98287fcb21/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 17.11.1967

<https://nakoislehti.hs.fi/1e79ae91-a6d9-4eaf-8030-f9fbfc0b0afe/1>

Helsingin Sanomat, 13.12.1967

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