

EASPD Conference: Salamanca - 15 years on Inclusion - A School For All

Workshop: Early intervention: inclusion in pre-school

Inclusive early childhood education – reducing barriers



Early Childhood Education in Inclusive settings – ECEIS

an EU Comenius project 2006-2009



The project group:

- Germany: Universität Siegen/ ZPE (coordinator)
- France: University René Descartes/Sorbonne; Paris
 - Hungary: Eötvös Loránd University; Budapest
 - Sweden: Mälardalen University; Västerås
 - Portugal: University of Minho; Braga



What we did:

- Observations in 20 preschools/ kindergartens/ école maternelles in 5 European countries
- Looking for Best-Practis Examples of inclusive Early education

Workshop: Early intervention: inclusion in pre-school

Content

1. Short video impression



Some results from the ECEIS project:

2. Different concepts and strategies in inclusive early childhood education in European countries *(hidden slides)*.
3. 'Important Principles' in inclusive early childhood education – What we found in our observations.

Different concepts and strategies in inclusive early childhood education in European countries – only some aspects (from France, Germany, Hungary, Portugal and Sweden)

- All five countries provide inclusive public educational services for children between 3 years and school-age.
- Statistics about access rates to kindergartens and pre-schools in the different countries are hardly comparable. Just an overview:
 - In Sweden and Portugal (nearly) all children with SEN visit mainstream preschools/ kindergartens.
 - In Hungary, France and Germany special institutions and (different forms) of inclusive education both exist and the rates of inclusive education differ between national regions.
 - For example: regarded on federal state level in Germany nearly 80% of all children with SEN in preschool age visit inclusive kindergartens.

Many things in common...



- In all five countries guidelines, frameworks or curricula on national or on regional level are implemented. These guidelines address *all* children visiting mainstream preschools or kindergarten.

- Basic goals and tasks of early childhood education are similar in the countries involved:
 - fostering the child's development and education;
 - supporting families;
 - social learning; broadening experiences of children beyond the family;
 - preparing for school; in a the life-long-learning perspective: being (beside the family) a first important station in the educational biography.

2. Different concepts ...

... some important differences:



We found times of *free-play*, *structured* and/ or *teacher led situations*, activities in *small-groups* and *individual work* of single children in all preschools, école maternelles and kindergartens in the participating countries.

The frequency and the emphasise laid on these different educational methods and strategies vary.



Nevertheless: We found high quality and successful inclusive situations in every setting!

Inclusion is more than being together ...

The project group has a common understanding about inclusion as aiming at creating an appropriate environment for all children.

This means to adapt the programs to the needs and interests of the children, and not vice versa i. e. to adapt the children. The arrangement of possibilities for the participation of all is implied.

On a general level our understanding of inclusion means that regarding the needs of each person society has to develop conditions to include everybody. (see: Kron (ed.)(2008): Early Childhood Education in Inclusive Settings, p.12).

Learning/ education: An interactive process of constructing knowledge and competences

In a social-constructivist sense, learning and education ('Bildung') are understood as two sides of a process where "the subject puts itself into a relation to the world of things and persons and gains an inner idea of the world and its own relationship to the world"

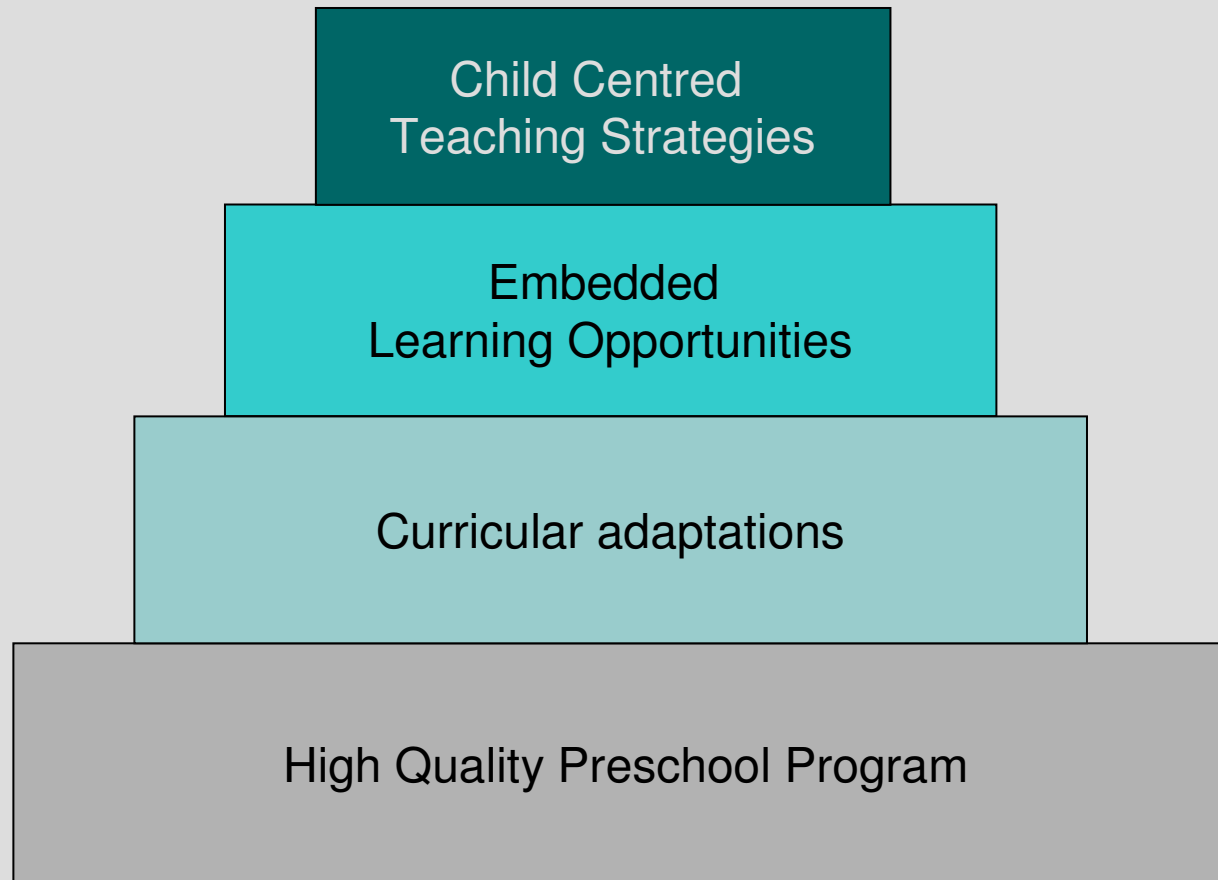
(Liegle 2003, 51; translation: B.P.).

Inclusion means that this understanding of learning is true for all children – may they be boys or girls, rich or poor, may they have what we call ,SEN' or just seem to be ,quite normal' to us, ...

Therefore we should guarantee that 'the world' in which they learn and from which children gain experiences – the world to which they relate and refer – is the same 'world'.

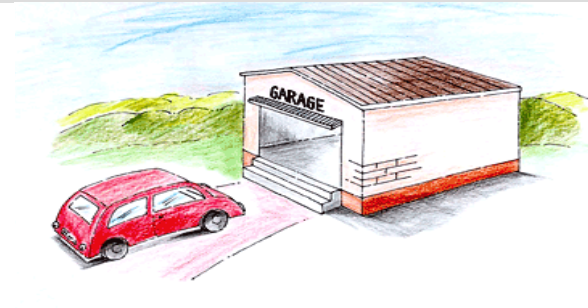
BUILDING BLOCKS MODEL

Sandall & Schwartz 2002



Reducing Barriers

Barriers of participation and learning are the result of an inadequate fitting of outer and individual conditions for the children's development and learning which seriously affects activities and relations.



Barriers occur quite differently; they may come up with the access to rooms or as communication difficulties between individuals or as learning difficulties.

Reducing barriers therefore can mean:

- changes in the surrounding;
- changes of structures and processes in group- or class life;
- using special materials, aids and tools for the child with SEN;
- by working out strategies of (embedded) individual support;
- modification / adaptation of learning tasks (e.g. individual tasks, individual time structures, ...) for the child with SEN;
- modification / adaptation of learning objectives for the child with SEN

Important principles for inclusive early childhood education (extracts from the ECEIS results)

1) Focus on the Child's Interest and Needs

...

2) Foster every child's participation in learning – organising Situations to foster everybody's skills

- working in heterogeneous groups
- flexibility in structure: switching between the whole group and small groups
- creating a climate of trust
- valuing everybody's skills
- balancing free play and teacher structured learning
- organizing individualised support and collective moments
- individual plans (IP) – realisation and integration in group situations



Important principles ...

3) The pedagogue's support in mutual understanding

- dealing with diversity
- creating attractive situations for the other children together with the child with special educational needs ('relationship management').
- making talents obvious for other children
- translating a child's unknown signals and behaviour to others





Important principles ...

4) The pedagogues' professional knowledge and attitudes in practice

- acceptance of the child as the protagonist of its own development
- reflections on the role model function
- cooperation with parents

5) Favourable Conditions

- Team cooperation (in the group); supporting backing by the institution
- influence of rooms, architecture, surroundings
- networking and cooperation in the community; cooperation with other services

Example: ‚John in his paddling pool’

The child: John, 3 ½ years old; suffered from a stroke as a baby. He communicates by a lively mimic and gesture, but without using verbal language. He crawls or walks with a two-hand-support, stands up while hoisting himself by objects. In some situations he uses his wheelchair.

The situation

All children play in the outside area of the Kindergarten. John sits in his paddling pool, while more and more children gather in the large swimming pool. The pedagogue fills dozens of corks into his pool. Now John sits in the water with at least 30 corks swimming around him. John grabs for them and laughs. Four younger children get attracted and come closer to see what is going on. They join John - playing together with the swimming corks. One boy climbs in the pool; the others play from the outside. As it is time for lunch, their play comes to an end and the pedagogue takes John out of his paddling pool, towels him and also helps the other boy.

The pedagogue’s perspective: “20 years ago we still had the ideal expectation of children always inviting others with special educational needs to their activities. But this often doesn't work and turned out to be rather the adult’s desire. Therefore we now try to offer something attractive to catch the children’s interest for a common activity with the child that currently is in need of a special regard.”

Which ‚important principles’ for inclusive education can we see in this example?

THANK YOU!

For more information about the ECEIS Project:

www.eceis.uni-siegen.de

published results of the ECEIS Project:

- Maria Kron (ed.)(2008): Early Childhood Education in Inclusive Settings. Basis, Background and Framework of Inclusive Early Education in Five European Countries. Siegen: ZPE-Schriftenreihe Nr.20
- *Coming soon:* Maria Kron et al (ed.)(2010): *Growing up together*
(This manual will be available in English, German, France, Hungarian and Portuguese)