



Towards Opportunities for Disadvantaged and
Diverse Learners on the Early childhood Road

Report

Promoting the Wellbeing of Toddlers within Europe

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Introduction to the Report

The TODDLER Project focuses on one of the EU Commission's priority themes for 2009-2010 identified in EURYDICE (2009), by supporting early years' practitioners, teachers and students in their understanding of how to promote development of toddlers (aged 18 to 36 months) from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds.

“The policy challenge, therefore, is to (re)build (current) systems of early childhood care and education that meet crucial design features as outlined above, that provide high quality care and education for all children, that are integrated, attractive and affordable to all families regardless social class or minority status, yet that is sensitive to differing educational needs and to compensate early educational disadvantages” (EURYDICE, 2009:39)

The aim of the TODDLER Project is to develop reflective practitioners who can promote and improve practice to provide effective early years care and education for diverse and disadvantaged toddlers in reaching their full potential.

This report has been compiled using experiences and expertise from each partner country exploring the different contexts and perspectives of wellbeing that influences practice. These materials have been left verbatim, as far as possible, to maintain the context and originality of each country.

Each partner has been asked to provide a definition of wellbeing and to identify their country's underpinning legislation and research on wellbeing. This information has been compiled into a report/handbook which can be used as teaching materials in conjunction with the PowerPoint.

Contents include:

- Definitions of wellbeing
- Theoretical backgrounds
- Literature Reviews
 - Curriculum documents
 - Piece of National Research
 - Recommended Reading

These materials are photocopyable for teaching purposes.



Denmark

Definitions of wellbeing

Wellbeing is in a meta-perspective connected to an understanding of the welfare state and democracy and the idea of care.

A study in dictionary of the Danish language defines 'trivsel' (wellbeing) as:

- that a living being (a tree or a child) thrive, get good and healthy growth, health and vitality
- About people or a society's development, progress in happiness, wellbeing, prosperity, spiritual values etc., or whether the conditions in which people live well, living happily and in good conditions.

In the field for Toddlers wellbeing is closely connected to the idea of care. Wellbeing is essential for the Child's activity and attention to the world. It is related to development of social relations such as development of contact between children and social contact to parents and adults in the crèche and day-care. The professionals must be able to take care of and look after. Developing the Child's ability to take and give care as a part of the Child's understanding of giving and taking care is the core of the Danish pedagogic for Toddlers. The concept of care and wellbeing is closely connected to the concept of learning and teaching, which is a part of the concept of wellbeing.

Wellbeing and care is often related to an individual understanding, and can therefore be a central matter for discussions.



Denmark

Theoretical background to children's wellbeing

There is a common understanding in the Nordic countries of early childhood, day care and of the general didactics as well as in the legislation. You can find minor diversifications between the countries.

In Denmark The Act on Day-Care¹ is using the word welfare (in Danish 'trivsel') which is a synonym for the word wellbeing (for more information please look at item 5). In the Act on Day-Care they translate 'trivsel' by the term Welfare. Welfare appears to times in the Act on Day-Care. First time in the purpose of the Act (§1.1):

"The purpose of this Act is to promote the welfare, development and learning of children and young people thru day-care, after-school and club facilities and other socio-pedagogic after-school facilities"

and in section [§ 7.1] Purpose of day-care facilities:

"Children in day-care facilities shall have a physical, mental and aesthetical child environment that promotes their welfare, health, development and learning."

In the explanatory notes to the Act on Day-Care the government underlines our commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), but we do not have a national definition or description of what 'trivsel' / welfare / wellbeing is.

Language is one of the sixth categories in the Pædagogiske Læreplan (curriculum for day-care)² :

1. Personal competence
2. Social competence
3. Language
4. Body and movement
5. Nature and natural phenomenon
6. The act of expressing culture, cultural artefacts and cultural values

There is a special demand and focus on socially deprived children.

Further information is available at:

<http://english.sm.dk/social-issues/children-and-youth/daycarefacilities/Sider/Start.aspx>

Since 1st August 2004 a day-care institution in Denmark has to have at curriculum. The Act of Day-care is the frame for the local institutions curriculum.

¹ http://english.sm.dk/ministryofsocialwelfare/legislation/interior_legislation/day-care-facilities-act/Sider/Start.aspx

² <http://www.sm.dk/temaer/sociale-omraader/boern-unge-og-familie/dagtilbudsomraadet/dagtilbud/paedagogiske-laereplener/Sider/Start.aspx>

In Denmark it is possible to have maternity or paternity leave for one year. Statistic documents that women take the main part of the child's first year.

A child can start in day-care in private home or in a day-care institution from the age of 10 – 12 month. For day-care in private homes, there is no demand on special education. When the child is three years of age they start in kindergarten. When the child becomes 6 years of age they are integrated in the public-school system.

Day-care facilities in Denmark include crèche ('vuggestue'), family day-care ('dagpleje'), nursery schools ('børnehave') and age-integrated institutions ('aldersintegrerede institutioner').

In day-care institutions you will find a mix of qualified and non-qualified people taking care of the children.

Statistics Denmark (2009) tells us that 28.200 kindergarten teachers, 21.300 kindergarten assistants (uneducated) and 18.600 uneducated child-minders takes care of 312.000 children. Denmark is cover by 1.900 kindergarten, 325 crèche and 2.400 age-integrated institutions.³

A person with adequate education comes from a University College as kindergarten-teacher.

The Danish government guarantees the family, via local authority, a place in day-care facilities.

In Denmark (2009) over 95.6 % of the children between one to six years of age is enrolled in crèche, day-care and kindergarten. You may think that it is a large institutionalization of the early childhood, and you are right. We have never had a fundamental discussion about this phenomenon. It has just become that way.

As my contribution to the project I have made a peer review on literature concerning Toddler in a Nordic country perspective. I have added links to this paper (please have a look at the State of the Art Report).

In 2006 the Danish government presented a national strategy for "Vicious circle of deprivation and equal opportunities". The 2007 finance act allocated DKK 9 million for the period 2007 – 2010 *"for at study of the help to the most disadvantaged 0 – 3 year-olds and for identification of the optimum methods for meeting their needs."* The final report is still to come.

Further information is available at:

<http://english.sm.dk/social-issues/children-and-youth/viciouscircleofdeprivationequalopportunities/Sider/Start.aspx>

³ The population of Denmark (august 2011): 5.566.856

In January 2009 the government presented the bill Children's Reform: *"The objective of the reform is to improve initiatives targeting disadvantaged children and young people. The central element of the reform is to ensure that consideration for the child outweighs everything else.*

The overall objectives are:

- *To secure continuity in placement outside the home*
- *To secure a stable and close relation to an adult*
- *To strengthen the focus on the child rather than focusing on the parents*
- *To secure the rights of the child*
- *To secure early efforts to improve the child's opportunities"*

Further information is available at:

<http://english.sm.dk/social-issues/children-and-youth/childrensreform/Sider/Start.aspx>



Denmark

Literature Review

Curriculum Documents

<http://www.toender.dk/subhtml/pdf/Vuggestuen.pdf>

Suggestion: Try using the Google translator. It is not perfect, but the translation can give you an impression of a Danish curriculum.

Within the framework of The Act of Day-Care, each Danish crèche, day-care, nursery and kindergarten must prepare a local curriculum (The Act on Day-Care 2005)

I quote from the curriculum for Tønder kommunes Vuggestue:

“Goal-settings are as follows:

- to preserve, strengthen and enhance children's self-esteem
- to give children love, care and warmth
- to preserve and enhance each child's personality
- to preserve and strengthen the children's needs and happiness of being in contact with other people
- children must learn the use of language options in contact and play with others, and the joy in singing and making music
- ensure that children go through a healthy physical development

“What is a child in vulnerable position?

It is in our experience:

- a child with physical disabilities
- mentally ill parents
- parents with drug problems
- families with physical and / or psychological violence
- families with incest / pedophilia
- a child living in a family that does not support child's needs
- a child without a secure base and safe connection
- a child who is delayed in its development
- a child who is born too early
- family with temporary crisis - divorce, death

Professionals recommend using a month for introduction before starting.

The exemplary institution in this study use Sally Ward's book Baby Talk (2004).

National Research

Knowledge-based Efforts for Socially Disadvantaged Children in Day-care

<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:YNZds4wHSyMJ:www.dpu.dk/en/research/researchprogrammes/organisationandlearning/vida/>

VIDA – Vidensbaseret indsats over for udsatte børn i dagtilbud. Statusrapport 1. 2011

http://www.dpu.dk/fileadmin/www.dpu.dk/e-boeger/VIDA_rapporter/VIDA_statusrapport_foraar_2011.pdf

VIDA – forskningskortlægning. Programmer for 0 – 6 årige med forældreinvolvering i dagtilbud. 2011

http://pure.au.dk/portal/files/37957789/VIDA_forskningskortl_gning_BILAG2.pdf

Recommended Reading

Sommer D. Pramling Samuelsson I. and Hundeide K..(2010) *Child Perspectives and Children´s Perspectives in Theory and Practice. International perspectives on early childhood education and development. Springer. New York:*

Dion Sommer is, in my view, our foremost Danish researcher in early childhood. He is professor at the University of Aarhus (Denmark), Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson is a Swedish professor in early childhood at the University of Göteborg (Sweden). Karsten Huneide is former professor at the University of Oslo, and has developed The ICDP-program – International Child Development Program.

I think this is the most important book for years concerning wellbeing / welfare for early childhood presenting Scandinavian and international research.