



NETQ6

Early Years Learning Network

COMENIUS Multilateral Network

Network for the Quality in Early Childhood Education from 0-6 years

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Deliverable 32: Compilation of Best Practices



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	P4: AMEM	Ankara Milli Egitim Mudurlugu (Ankara Directorate for National Education)	TR
	P5: WCL	Wandsworth Council – Lifelong Learning Service	UK
	P6: LEB	LEB Thüringen e.V (Thuringia Rural Adult Education Department)	DE
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	P9: EYO	Early Years – The Organisation for Young	UK

The NETQ6 project has set up a panel to look at good practice in Early Years around Europe. We put some examples in our E handbook and some we have reproduced here for you to have a look at.

The panel felt good practice should nurture the following

- Childrens awareness of others
- Should be different and innovative in approach
- Should enable children to look outside themselves and become empathetic and independent thinkers and worthwhile citizens

The following four examples do all of these things and they are as follows

1. Training of childminders in Germany
2. Conference of children in Germany
3. Informal learning in Romania
4. Early diagnosis of learning disabilities in Italy

If you are interested in finding out more about any of these please contact the partners concerned through this website. www.netq6.eu

From Germany we have two examples of good practice...

1. Certified child-minding (Germany)

1. Please give a brief description of the example of best practice which you are planning to use

Child – minding is no new approach. But the national policy decided to regulate it to assure quality. Child minders don't just have to care for children but also have to support them by their self-learning processes and offering education to them. There is a central curriculum to train child-minders and an association who controls the training and certifies child-minders. In the meantime just those who did the training, pass the exam and receive a certification are allowed to work as child-minders.

The child-minding approach means to care flexibly and individually for children in a family similar situation connected with special educational offers. It considers the needs of children and their families.

2 to 5 children learn to live together in a group. The children learn all the processes and activities that happen in daily life situations playfully. They come together in the morning, have breakfast together, sing, play and learn together. They spend time inside and outside, go for a walk, go to the playground, and go buying things with their child-minder. But they also took part on processes inside like setting the table, cleaning up things and also cleaning themselves, cooking together, eating, playing, and sleeping and so on. In this way they learn cooperation, inclusion, helping each other in their small group in a situation comparable to a family. Furthermore those activities support the physical development and the sensual development of the children

The target group includes children from the age of 0 until the age of 3.

Children at risk of any kind can be integrated in a group of a child-minder as long as the child minder has a special qualification for disadvantaged and disabled children.

Child –minder offer education and care in an individual way for those who are disadvantaged in a way like single parent who has to work late or early.

To summarise this in bullet points:

- Child minders don't just have to care for children but are now expected to take on a more professional role in promoting the children's learning.

- There is a central curriculum to train child-minders and an association who controls the training and certifies child-minders.
- It considers the needs of children and their families.
- The main aims are: Promotion of language, Development of social and soft skills, Cognitive development, Preparation for an active participation in a nursery.

2. Can this practice be used in different countries/contexts? Please explain and give examples if any.

The field of child-minding is growing. Adult education organizations like the LEB who are certified to train child-minders are doing so on an ongoing basis and training new child-minders. On the one hand parents ask for individual care that fits to their personal situation. On the other hand there are not enough nursery offers for all the demands. The development in the field of child-minding will go on. There will be more child-minder and child-minders with specializations.

With the fact in mind that parents in other countries also need education and care for their children that have to be more flexible child-minding is a possible alternative. Child minding is offered in some countries but not always in such a regulated way.

We assume that it is possible in other countries too, that adult education organizations engage in cooperation with youth welfare offices, social welfare offices or job centers to interest women and men in the work of a child-minder, to educate and train them for some months and to support them to establish as a child-minder and offer further support and further education.

3. What are the aims and objectives of the practice?

The main idea of that approach is the individual work with children in small groups under conditions similar to family conditions.

The main aims are:

- Promotion of language
- Development of social and soft skills
- Cognitive development
- Preparation for an active participation in a nursery

That children learn to listen and speak is part of the educational responsibility of a child – minder. Furthermore social-emotional skills like self-confidence, cooperativeness, mutual consideration, self-regulation and helping each other are important to take part in group activities and for development. The development of both – language and social skills is supported by learning in a family like situation. It also supports the cognitive development. Children who are with a child-minder are between 0 and 3 years old. Their cognitive development refers to learn daily processes and the schedule they follow. They start to understand how a group or a family works. Furthermore they learn more or less set theory while solving tasks like setting the table or cooking. That knowledge will help the children to participate in nurseries. Child-minders have the task to prepare children for an active participation in a nursery.

4. How is the impact of the best practice measured?

The youth welfare office evaluates the work of the child-minders. For that purpose the welfare office of Jena organized a study about the satisfaction of parents.

Parents all over Germany had the possibility to evaluate the work of the child-minders. The result of a survey in 2012 is that 95% of the parents who bring their children to a child-minder are satisfied with the child care. Furthermore 95% of the parents state that their children feel comfortable with their child-minder.

Apart from this the question of impact has not been measured because integrative child-minding is a quite new field. There are not so many child-minders offering integrative care in Germany yet, not at least because they need special qualification. As far as I could find out commissioning of these services by local authorities does not exist. Child-minders and associations and educational institutions act on their own initiative and organize qualifications based on model projects.

5. What materials and resources are required?

Child-minders offer their service either in their own home or in extra rented place.

Furthermore each child-minder has a special and individual concept he or she is working with. But they are in a special kind free to choose how to reach their educational aims.

A child-minder has to be very flexible. That is not always easy to manage.

Child-minding can be very exhausting if the children are at nearly the same age.

Child-minders can take care for 1-5 children in their own home or in a rented flat. If a child-minder also cares for her/his own children/children the number of other children is lower.

The rooms have to offer enough space for playing and movement. There must be space and rooms for the children to retire and sleep. The environment has to be appropriate for children referring to sanitation, wholesome meals and safety. Furthermore possibilities to play outdoor should be nearby.

The childminders course costs 740,000 Euros and some childminders who get a referral from a job centre are paid for- others have to fund it for themselves. Funding for other resources varies with each federal government.

6.How does this intervention link to parents/carers and families?

The child-minding approach means to care flexibly and individually for children in a family similar situation connected with special educational offers. It considers the needs of children and their families.

7.How does this intervention link to existing policies and/or curriculum?

1. There is a central curriculum to train child-minders and an association who controls the training and certifies child-minders.
2. Since the 1st of August 2013 parents have a claim for child care in nurseries for their infants from the first birthday. But large cities and area of high population density suspect shortages of offers. More places for child care are required. That makes child-minding more important. If a nursery can't offer a place parents can bring their child to a child minder.

2.The conference of children

1. Please give a brief description of the example of best practice which you are planning to use

Conference of the Children is an approach used in kindergartens to support child focus learning. Conference of the Children means that projects within the kindergarten for children are created by children in kindergartens. Children from 4 to 7 years are included from the first moment of identifying a topic they want to work at until the moment of representing their results in a group to their parents or another group.

The kindergartens monitor the children and talk to them to find out the several and different interests of the children. The kindergartens support children to talk about their interests in a meeting and develop topics with the intention to include as many interests as possible. The topics are introduced in the Conference of the Children. The children have to decide democratically which topic they want to work at. There are translators for those children who don't speak German very well. Furthermore the several topics are introduced by pictures and symbols and examples to make sure that each child will be able to decide which his or her favorite topic is. The kindergartens inquire if each child has understood the offered topics. Those children who already took part at a conference help those who are new.

After the conference the project work starts including the parents and the daily life experiences of the children as much as possible.

More or less the children decide when the project is finished. The results are represented to other groups and to the parents in different ways.

The children spend a lot of time outside, with sports, dancing, collecting materials, watching their environment and so on

The children have to:

- introduce their interests
- communicate in a group
- plan the project work
- talk in German (if German is not their mother tongue)

- work with signs and symbols, e.g. traffic and nature
- represent the results of their project
- The children are interested in new projects and are developing new ideas and interests that promote their interest in new topics and in learning new things. They learn to present arguments, to defend own ideas but to make compromises as well.

Several experts are included into the conferences and projects to give each child the possibility to take part, e.g. translators, speech therapist, social workers.

The practice does not target disadvantaged families especially but the cooperating kindergarten who introduced their implementation of that approach to us is an integrative kindergarten in a township with a high percentage of immigrants and social disadvantaged families living there.

But the approach is used in other kindergartens in different variations, too. It is closely connected to the so called situational approach, an approach with which a lot of german kindergartens are working with and which attach high importance on participation of children.

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To summarise this approach:

- Projects within the kindergarten for children are created by children in kindergartens.
- Children from 4 to 7 years are included from the first moment of identifying a topic they want to work at until the moment of representing their results in a group to their parents or another group.
- The several topics are introduced by pictures and symbols and examples to make sure that each child will be able to decide which his or her favorite topic is.
- After the conference the project work starts including the parents and the daily life experiences of the children as much as possible.
- The main intention is to include all children. The Conference of Children is first of all for all those children who don't experience activities at home.
- Children who don not experience activities at home like communication, playing with others etc. have the possibility of participation, interaction and communication at the kindergarten.

2. Can this practice be used in different countries/contexts? Please explain and give examples if any.

We would suppose that this practice or method can be used in different countries in different institutions for early childhood and preschool education and for children at different age from the age of 4 because no special conditions are needed. I have not evidence that this approach is used in other countries. It is closely connected to the situational approach which was developed in Germany.

3. What are the aims and objectives of the practice?

The main intention is to include all children. The Conference of Children is first of all for all those children who don't experience activities at home,

It is delivered in kindergartens during the regular time. It means that children who do not experience activities at home like communication, playing with others etc. have the possibility of participation, interaction and communication at the kindergarten. But also parents should benefit from this method and learn to spend more time meaningful and active with their children.

Therefore also the parents are part of the target group because it is intended to include and support them to introduce more learning activities together with their children. Therefore team work of children and parents should be activated and supported.

The conference of children will influence and support:

- Team work
- Reflection of oneself, of others and of the group
- Self-confidence
- Cooperativeness
- Mutual consideration
- Self-regulation
- Helping each other

It supports furthermore the development of

- Creativity

- fantasy
- theory of sets (could you explain what is meant by this?) – the set theory – a part of mathematics – children learn to realize and work with different amounts of things
- simultaneous realization
- social competences
- Children's understanding of a basement for democracy
- Intergenerational learning.
- Inclusion of all children
- Consideration of the children's interests
- Including and activating parents
- Learning by project work – by doing

4. How is the impact of the best practice measured?

Generally the impact is measured by evaluation. The children, parents and kindergarten teacher evaluate the processes and the results of the conferences and the resulting projects.

5. How does this intervention link to parents/carers and families?

After the conference the project work starts including the parents and the daily life experiences of the children as much as possible. Parents should benefit from this method and learn to spend more time meaningful and active with their children.

6. How does this intervention link to existing policies and/or curriculum? It is part of the situational approach for kindergartens. This means that it takes into account children's educational and social background

From the University of Bucharest in Romania we have a practice entitled:

3. Romania-A different school

1. Please give a brief description of the example of best practice which you are planning to use

There is a designated week in every educational year in which every school has to organize activities in non-formal contexts. This programme has occurred nationwide, since 2012, through a legislative measure launched by Ministry of Education. In schools and kindergartens activities are planned in a flexible manner, with parents and community contributions. A number of NGO's are also involved in developing this project, bringing their expertise in non-formal education. Each educational institution can design its own activities during a week, taking into account the suggestions offered by involved parties, having the responsibility of establishing the details such as: type of activity, length, involved resources and responsibilities.

The lessons can be organized in parks, in the forest, at the zoo, or in any location where theoretical concepts are replaced with representative examples from real life situations, which cannot be presented in a traditional classroom. All the activities planned for this week are very important for personal development and opportunities for having fun while doing it.

The activities planned can be: cultural activities, scientific and technical activities, sports, activities to promote humanitarian values (including voluntary, charitable, active involvement in society, social responsibility, relationships and communication, etc.).

Children can participate in competition between kindergartens (painting, acting) can make thematic visits, practical activities (planting trees, acting, public speaking, cooking lessons etc) All institutions both private or public are obliged to participate.

Children at risk benefit from this experience having the opportunity to participate in activities which are usually inaccessible to them, either for financial reasons, for the lack of interest in the family for such activities (visits to museums, movies, outdoor

trips, meeting other children, contests), because of reluctance of parents to expose children in the community for those with various disabilities.

Here is a summary of that the practice means:

- ☒ the existence of a common database with activities designed/proposed by teachers /children/ parents which can be used in different settings by other kindergartens
- ☒ the approach encourages children to:
 - propose activities
 - have initiatives
 - take decisions (individual or for an entire group)
 - learn by discovery, responsibility
- ☒ helps in accomplishing objectives difficult to achieve in traditional class

2. Can this practice be used in different countries/contexts? Please explain and give examples if any.

Of course, with various adaptations this approach can be used in different contexts. It can be used as a base of practice for teachers, who will learn to give a more practical percentage to the lesson, and to teach in nonformal contexts.

3. What are the aims and objectives of the practice?

The aim of this project is to involve parents, children, and teachers in non-formal activities, which will emphasize the extra-curricular interests, talents, and competencies in different areas.

Through the awareness activities which can be organized in this framework, parents of children at risk can learn how to adapt to different situations, how to communicate and understand their children. It is also an opportunity to invite sponsors who can contribute with useful resources and sometimes update both parents and children about the latest research in the field, to put in practice different new approaches can share experiences; medical advice, etc.

4. How is the impact of the best practice measured?

Students are not formally evaluated during this period of time, only the activity itself is evaluated by each institution. In this evaluation indicators may differ from an activity to another because the evaluation is not unitary. Still, the criteria are related to: activity coherence, the aims, objectives and results, interdisciplinary nature, innovative approach, the number of participants. After each activity, the school/kindergarten has to submit reports to the County Inspectorate, in which they are obliged to mention the level of achieving the activities' objectives and results.

5. What materials and resources are required?

The resources are adapted to each type of activity. The educators are responsible in establishing the necessary resources as far as possible, and the institution is responsible to establish partnerships with different organizations which may provide resources (e.g. free entrance for museums, theatre, adequate spaces for competition, access to different technologies). Some activities are supported by parents (excursions).

6.-The framework of the activities organized under the premises of this approach offers to the parents/carers and families:

- the possibility to be close to children, to understand them, to interact and observe reaction in other settings than the formal one, or in the family environment**
- encourages the intergenerational learning**
- creation of relation between parents and encourages communication and exchange of experience

7. How does this intervention link to existing policies and/or curriculum?

- ☑ activities are consistent with the objectives established by the Ministry of Education in the methodology regarding the curriculum for early childhood education
- ☑ creates the framework of developing many learning situations that have a planned, systematic and methodical character
- ☑ completes the objectives mentioned in the curriculum
- ☑ the activities can be organized as small projects (individual per school or in partnerships with other schools, NGO's, other institutions) with benefit on children, community and parents

4. Italy - Prevention of learning disabilities in kindergarten

1. Please give a brief description of the example of best practice which you are planning to use

It is known that to have a diagnosis of learning disability the child must have completed at least the second year of primary school. This raises a problem of prevention and detection of children at risk felt in particular by teachers of kindergarten.

Therefore, in a similar manner in various parts of Italy (can you list the regions of Italy where this practice is in place?), in recent years there have been designed training courses for teachers of kindergarten aimed both at the early detection of learning disabilities and at the strengthening of abilities for these children who are at-risk.

This training course sees as trainers experts from universities and/or from other qualified associations (can you list the universities and associations if not too many). The most important aspect of the training is the use of standardized material that is administrable not only by specialists but also by trained teachers. In Italy this battery of tests is IPDA (can you put in the full title of the test? Is this a specialized test for the detection of learning difficulties or is a general test that identifies typical milestones?).

The teacher training involves use of IPDA tests, as well as interventions by the specialists to help to read the results and to design strengthening activities for the children at risk to support them integrate to the normal group activities of the classes. IPDA itself, other than the tests, contains strengthening cards related to the single aspects that might have resulted in the low score. At the end of these activities the children that keep having scores at risk are identified to the primary school teachers as part of a transition programme when they move to that grade. The specialists have a key role also in this step to give continuity to the individual plan designed for each child.

Thanks to this early intervention and prevention activity many children that initially appear at risk show an improvement to up to average performance before reaching the primary school.

2. Can this practice be used in different countries/contexts? Please explain and give examples if any.

It is sure possible to use this practice in any country/context, but there must be a standardized battery to apply. It is the specialists' role to identify the best one for their environment or build up one if missing. Regarding the strengthening techniques, it is also considered important that the teachers know them and use them if necessary.

3. What are the aims and objectives of the practice?

To intervene early to identify children at risk of learning disabilities.

To support all children achieve their full potential by reducing the incidence of learning disabilities through appropriate support for children at risk.

To provide training of trainer for teachers in kindergartens to support the early identification and intervention for children at risk of learning disabilities.

4. How is the impact of the best practice measured?

It is possible to measure the impact of this practice using the results from the standardized tests. It is possible to compare the number of children diagnosed with a learning disability during the second year of primary school in schools where this programme exists in feeder kindergartens and where it doesn't. It is also possible within a kindergarten to compare the number of children diagnosed with a learning disability before the strengthening activities have been applied and after.

5. What materials and resources are required?

A standardized test to apply to 4-5 year old children to measure detailed pre-abilities regarding reading, calculus, and other basic school abilities and training to enable kindergarten teachers implement the test and interpret results.

The role of the specialist in designing an individual programme for each child identified at risk is intense in the first years and needs appropriate financial resources. With time and growing the experience of the kindergarten teachers this specialist role should reduce to counselling on single cases.

6. How does this intervention link to parents/carers and families?

Screening and preventing learning disabilities leads the school to improve their information about the matter with the parents that have the chance to come to know of a possible "problem" with their child. With this knowledge the parents may request the proper diagnostic route or the specific pedagogical support.

7 How does this intervention link to existing policies and/or curriculum?

The intervention is actually a strong support to the national curriculum (as it is ment also in the 2012 new Directions) and to the basic policy of respect for every child's specific and peculiar abilities