



Case Study Impact Report on
Education and Teaching in Early
Years from International
Perspectives, ETEIP
Intellectual Output 5



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In this Erasmus+Ka2 project, university teachers and preschool teachers from England, Norway, Spain, and Sweden are partners/participants. In addition to these, several colleagues both within universities and preschools, parents, and active preschool teachers in the ECEC field have taken part in the project's purpose and goals and shown interest in the results.

Many thanks to all of you!

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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Background.....	5
<i>Educational structure for preschool settings.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>England.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Norway.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Spain</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Sweden</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Education for Early Years Educators.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>England.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Norway.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Spain</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Sweden</i>	<i>13</i>
Literature	16
Theoretical frame	17
Methodology.....	18
<i>Preschools in the project.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Higher Educator Institutes, HEI.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>University of Gävle, HiG.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Kingston University.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Comunidad del Centro Superior de Estudios Universitarios La Salle, LS</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Activities that support EYE in action research.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Transnational meetings and Mobility Visits.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Mobility Visit, MV</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Short visit.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Job Shadowing.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Intellectual Outputs</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Focus Group interviews.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Data collection and analysis procedure.....</i>	<i>26</i>
Result	26
<i>Professional development.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Knowledge and keyideas</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Knowledge of educational system and legislation</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Ethos and values and teacher's knowledge.....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Teaching strategies</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Different environments potential in teaching</i>	<i>32</i>
Discussion and conclusion.....	33
<i>Sustainability</i>	<i>34</i>
References	36

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Introduction

This ERASMUS+Ka2 project involves Early Years Educators (EYE) and researchers; HEI from England, Norway, Spain, and Sweden. The project aims to support EYE with their professional development through supportive materials, manuals, and information to develop their knowledge and understanding of the different international educational systems, ethos, and values, that early years holds and reflect upon these through collaboration during mobility visits.

The use of mobility visits, with short visits and job shadowing at preschools together with reflections from focus group interviews provide Early Years Educators and Teachers with the opportunity to compare international perspectives of ECEC provision and practice to improve quality.

The objectives of the projects concern the Early Years Educators' (EYE) professional knowledge, and their awareness of the opportunities international perspective has on teaching and education in the early years. The implementation aimed to give EYE experiences and to develop knowledge about different educational/school systems and the impact the school systems have on the EYE profession. An expectation was that collaboration with international colleagues would inspire EYEs and based on that new thoughts would be created to support professional development. The project highlights awareness and understanding of key ideas in the EYEs own preschools, and how to present and describe a preschool to other colleagues.

With the implementation of the project opportunities arose for EYEs to develop their theoretical and practical understanding and skills of reflection. They were able to deepen their reflective thinking and professional development/practice and establish an awareness of how reflection can be used to support and improve professional practice. The implementation also created possibilities to highlight the teacher's role and an awareness of the value and purpose of reflection in relation to teaching in Early Childhood Education (ECE) and its importance for pedagogical strategies in teaching in different contexts.

The Case Study will enable the project to concentrate on key ideas in teaching young children and the impact assessment addresses the following:

How has the project supported EYEs' knowledge and understanding about teaching and children's perspectives?

How has the project supported EYEs' knowledge and understanding of values and ethos in teaching?

How has the project equipped EYEs with different tools to identify teaching strategies?

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How has the project supported EYEs' knowledge and understanding of different environments and their potential in teaching?

How has the project supported EYEs' knowledge and understanding of different materials and their potential in teaching?

How has the training and job shadowing, focus group and discussion forum been effective in sharing key ideas in practice and enhancing EYEs' skills?

Background

In this part we give a short description of the education structure for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) including educational system, curriculum, adult:child ratios and education qualifications that are required for EYEs in the four countries.

Educational structure for preschool settings

Table 1. Educational structure birth to 6 years

	Educational system	Curriculum	Ratio (adult:child)
England	Early Years Foundation Stage	-Quality and Consistency	Birth to 2 years: 1:3
			2-3 years: 1:4
	Birth to 5 years	-Secure foundation	3-4 years: 1:8 or or 1:13
	Pre-school 3 – 4 years	-Partnership Working	4-6 years: 1:30
	Reception 4 – 5 years	-Equality of Opportunity	
		-Areas of Learning and Development	
Norway	Kindergarten 1-5 year	-Care and Play	1- 2 years: 1:3
			2-3 years: 1:3
		-Formation (Bildung) and Learning	3-4 years: 1:6
			4-6 years: 1:6
		-Communication and Language Competence	
		-Friendship and Community (Social competence)	
Spain	Early Years	-Growth of harmony	Birth to 1 year: 1:8
	- First Cycle – Birth to 3 years	-Discovery and Exploration of the Surroundings	1 to 2 years: 1:14
			2-3 years: 1:20
	Early Years - Second Cycle – 3 - 6 years	- Communication and Representation of reality	3-4 years: 1:25
			4-6 years: 1:25

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Sweden	Preschool 1-6 years	-Norms and values	1- 2 years: 1:5
	Preschool Class– 6 –7 years	-Care, development and learning -Participation and influence of the child	2-3 years: 1:5
			3-4 years: 1:5-6
			4-6 years: 1:15

England

In England, the compulsory age for children to start their education is the term after they are five years old. However, children often start full-time school at the age of 4 years.

There are a number of different types of early years providers in England. All settings have to be Ofsted registered and comply with the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory requirements (DfE, 2021): Schools: Maintained Schools, Faith Schools, Free Schools, Academies and Independent schools with Nursery Classes, Day Nurseries, Pre-school, Kindergarten and playgroups and Child Minders. The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework (EYFS) (DfE,2021) is a statutory framework in England relating to the Childcare Act 2006. It sets out the statutory safeguarding and welfare requirements for all providers registered with Ofsted and is used by all early year's practitioners from birth to 5 years. Early Years Entitlement entitles all 3 to 4 year's old to 15 hours of free early years provision for 38 weeks a year. "Local authorities are required to plan to pass-through 95% of their 3 and-4-year-old funding from the government to early years providers" (Education and Skills Funding Agency, 2020:9). Some settings do not follow the EYFS ie Steiner Kindergartens and some independent schools – they have to demonstrate to the DfE that they are meeting the requirements of the EYFS through their own curriculum.

Norway

In Norway, kindergarten is for children between 1 and 5 years and attendance at preschool is not compulsory. Kindergarten has municipality or private owners. Other types of kindergarten are Family Daycare and Open kindergarten. Family Daycare are in private homes, mentored by a kindergarten teacher. Mainly for children under 3. Open kindergarten, part-time drop-in center led by a kindergarten teacher. Parents/caregivers stay and participate in the program together with the child.

The kindergarten Framework Plan (2017) core values are about children and childhood, democracy, diversity and mutual respect, equity and equality, sustainable development and life skills and health. In line with this all kindergartens shall promote respect for human dignity and nature, and operate in accordance with freedom of thought, compassion, forgiveness, equality, and solidarity. The core values of kindergartens shall be promulgated, practiced and manifest in every aspect of a kindergarten's pedagogical practices. The Framework Plan for Kindergarten (2017) is divided in six objectives and content parts and each part start with kindergartens shall: meet children's need for care, meet children's need

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for play, promote formative development (Bildung), promote learning, promote friendship and community and promote communication and language.

The Framework Plan (2017) is regulated by the Kindergarten Act and follows the UN Convention of 20 November 1989 on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO Convention 169).

Spain

In Spain children can attend preschool from the age of 4 months and continue until the course in which they turn 6. ECEC is divided into two 3-year cycles: the first cycle for children age 0 – 2 years and the second cycle for children aged 3 -5 years. Participation is voluntary. In the first cycle 94.1% of children aged 0-2 are enrolled and in the second cycle 97.3% of children aged 3 to 5 years. (Ministry of Education Data 20/21).

Organic Law 3/2020 (LOMLOE) establishes the educational curriculum in the Spanish State and Royal Decree 95/2022 establishes the organization and minimum contents of Early Childhood Education. Educational competencies are shared between the General State Administration (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training) and the Autonomous Communities (Departments of Education). The most important objectives are: self-knowledge and personal autonomy, the relationship with the family, emotional and social development in a peaceful way: respect, communication in different languages: verbal, artistic, audio visual and body language.

Sweden

In Sweden children can attend preschool at the age of one year and continue until the autumn of the year in which they turn six. Attendance at preschool is not compulsory, however, it is estimated that 85% of children aged between 1 and 5 attend preschools (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2019). Other pedagogical activities are Pedagogical care/Childminders and Open preschools. The national preschool curriculum (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018) is structured in two parts with the fundamental values and task of the preschool and guidelines and goal to strive for. The goal areas include democracy, the equal value of all people and more subject-specific goals. Furthermore, the curriculum states that preschool education should be based on the children's interests and initiatives, which further indicates that children can contribute to their learning. In Sweden, the curriculum does not state *how* work towards the striving goals is to be implemented.

Education for Early Years Educators

In the four countries there are some differences according to early years educator and their own education.

England

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College - Further Education – Higher Education

These are funded by the government for young people between the ages of 16 – 19 years of age (students over the age of 19 will pay fees). They provide opportunities to study an academic or vocational course.

Early Years Practitioner (EYP) level 2

This is a one-year course for student from the age of 16 years. This is a knowledge and skills-based qualification for birth to five years.

To find out more go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-practitioner-level-2-qualifications-criteria>

Early Years Educator (EYE) level 3

This is a two-year course for student from the age of 16 years. This provides students with knowledge and experience of birth to five years, which will allow them to work with this age group. Students on this course must have GCSE (General Certificate in Secondary Education [level2]) by the end of the course. This course also enables the student to progress onto Higher Education (HE).

To find out more go to: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-educator-level-3-qualifications-criteria/early-years-educator-level-3-qualifications-criteria>

In order to be able to work in early years you will need:

- Early Years Practitioner (EYP) level 2 and/or
- Early Years Educator (EYE) level 3 (licence to practice)

Early Years Practitioner (EYP) level 2

This is a one-year course for student from the age of 16 years. This is a knowledge and skill-based qualification for birth to five years.

To find out more go to: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-practitioner-level-2-qualifications-criteria>

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Apprenticeships

An apprenticeship is employment-based training that combines work experience with study. Apprentices are paid a small wage and work alongside an experienced member of staff. They are usually given one day a week for study, which may take place at a college or training center.

To find out more go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/childcare-and-education-apprenticeships>

Foundation Degrees

Some colleges provide HE provision. Some foundation degrees are work-based and other require full-time attendance at college. These courses are studied at level 4 and 5 and students can then progress to top-up their qualification to a full degree either at college or university. The students' complete assignments that relate to theory and practice. Students are either employed and work in an educational setting or are provided with placement experience within the educational sector. The foundation degrees particularly suitable for the education sector are Early Years, Childhood Studies, Teaching Assistant and Special Education Needs and Inclusive Practice.

To find out more go to:

Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years: <https://www.pacey.org.uk/training-and-qualifications/childcare-qualifications/foundation-degrees/>

Sector Endorsed Foundation Degrees in Early Years <https://www.sefdey.com>

Higher National Diploma (HND)

There are a number of different HNDs that offer students the opportunity to develop their knowledge, and skills in the educational sector either work-based or full-time.

To find out more go to:

<https://universitycompare.com/advice/student/hnd/>

Higher Education Institution (HEI)

Higher Education is for learners over the age of 18. There are many different pathways to becoming a teacher in England. To be a teacher in England a degree is required. To be acknowledged as a qualified teacher, Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) or Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) is required. Here are some of the pathways below:

- BA Primary/Early Years with QTS
- PGCE Primary/Early Years or Secondary with QTS
- BA Early Years with EYTS
- PGCE Early Years with EYTS
- Schools Direct (Training and Salaried)
- SCITTs (Salaried)

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To find out more go to:

<https://getintoteaching.education.gov.uk>

Norway

Primary school is compulsory for all children in Norway between the ages of 6-16. Before 1997, compulsory education in Norway started at the age of seven. Students often have to change schools when they enter secondary school and almost always have to change schools when they enter upper secondary school, as many schools only offer one of the levels. In grades 2-7 they are introduced to mathematics, English, science, religion (not only Christianity but other religions as well), aesthetics and music, supplemented by geography, history and social studies.

Teaching Profession

The titles of educators in Norwegian schools vary with the degrees they have. Preschool teacher can work in kindergarten and the first four grades of primary school. Pre-school teacher in Norway requires a bachelor's degree.

Adjunct teacher can work between the 5th and 10th grades of lower secondary school, or at high schools, usually in minor subjects. Adjunct requires a bachelor's degree in a particular subject. If subject knowledge from different courses, a one-year course in pedagogy is required.

Lecturer can work in upper secondary school and high schools, from 8th grade up to the third year of high school. Lecturers need a master's degree, along with a pedagogy course.

Roles and responsibilities:

- Pedagogical leader = the kindergarten teacher who is the team leader for a group (class)
- Assistants, some with specific vocational training upper secondary school, but many have no higher education or formal ECEC-training

Preschool (Kindergarten) teacher education (three – years bachelor degree)

Year one and two the areas of knowledge involve:

Children's development, play and learning,

Society, religion, beliefs and ethics,

Language, text and mathematics,

Art, culture and creativity,

Nature health and movement.

During the third year the areas include leadership, co-operation and development, Bachelor thesis and specialisation course.

The education include 100 days of practice integrated in all areas of knowlegde.

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For more information about the Framework Plan go to

<https://www.udir.no/globalassets/filer/barnehage/rammeplan/framework-plan-for-kindergartens2-2017.pdf>

<https://www.udir.no/laring-og-trivsel/rammeplan/>

Kindergarten Act (Barnehageloven)

<https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2005-06-17-64>

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training is responsible for the development of kindergarten and primary and secondary education. The Directorate is the executive agency for the Ministry of Education and Research.

For more information go to:

Directorate of Education (Utdanningsdirektoratet)

<https://www.udir.no/>

Ministry of Education (Kunnskapsdepartementet)

<https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dep/kd/id586/>

Spain

Higher Education

All higher education is pursued in courses and programmes. The courses can be taken separately or as part of a study programme to lead to degrees. The scale of a course or study programme is measured in 'credit points' in line with the ECTS. Full-time studies for one year equal 60 credit points. Higher education institutions (HEIs) decide about the organization of their courses.

University studies 4 years Bachelor degree and a master degree and Ph.D. is 1 to maximum 5 years at University college. Advanced vocational training for 1-2 year

Specialized education

- Language education, are provided in the official language schools.
- Artistic education, music and dance education, professional artistic education and higher artistic education.
- Sports education, organized into intermediate and higher training cycles and taught in the same institutions as vocational education.

To find out more go to:

Spanish education system

Ministry of Education:

[Skriv här]

[https:// www.educacionyfp.gob.es](https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es)

Teaching Profession

The current teacher education programmes in Spain include two different professional degrees:

FIRST CYCLE: Advanced technician of Pre-Primary Education. Is a Initial Education “Advanced Vocational Training” Cycle in Early Childhood Education”. With 120 ECTS and a duration of two academic courses. This cycle is organized into modules based on the minimum teaching standards:

- Didactics of pre-primary education. 125 hours. (14 ECTS)
- Personal autonomy and child education. 105 hours (12 ECTS)
- Child game and methodology. 105 hours (12 ECTS)
- Expression and communication. 100 hours (11 ECTS)
- Cognitive and motor development. 105 hours. (12 ECTS)
- Social and emotional development. 75 hours (8 ECTS)
- Social abilities. 60 hours (6 ECTS)
- Intervention with families, 60 hours. (6 ECTS)
- Project for attention to childhood. 25 hours (5 ECTS)
- First Aid. 35 hours (3 ECTS). Work training and guidance. 50 hours (5 ECTS)
- Enterprise initiative. 35 hours (4 ECTS)
- Training at workplace. 220 hours (22 ECTS)

SECOND CYCLE: School teacher of Early Childhood Education. “Bachelor Degree in Early Childhood education”. This degree is taught in universities with 240 ECTS and a duration of four academic courses. Contents:

- Educational processes, learning and personality development.
- Learning difficulties and development disorders.
- Society, family and school.
- Learning and personality development.
- Education processes and contexts.
- Didactics of natural sciences, social sciences and mathematics.
- Childhood health and food.
- Organization of the school room, materials and teaching abilities.
- Pre-Primary School.
- Systematic observation and contexts analysis.
- Didactics of languages and Reading and writing literacy.
- Music, plastic and body language.
- Other contents defined by Universities freely.
- Qualifying mention: Foreign language, Physical education, Music, Therapeutic Pedagogy, Hearing and speech disorders...
- Final Degree Thesis.
- Work placement in public, private or publicly-founded schools.

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Roles within Preschool

The Spanish national curriculum for preschool

Roles within Early Years:

Management team: principal and secretary. Principal is the pedagogical leader and head of preschool teachers, child caregivers and other staff in the preschool, the head has the overall responsibility to ensure that education as a whole is directed towards national goals. The boss is responsible for the quality of the preschool.

Classroom tutor: teachers with Bachelor Degree in Early Childhood education.

The teachers of the Teacher Corps with the specialty of "Early Childhood Education" will teach all areas of the Early Childhood Education curriculum. In the second cycle of Early Childhood Education may be supported, in their teaching work, by teachers of other specialties when the teachings taught require it under the conditions determined by the educational administrations. The functions of early childhood education teachers are: direct educational attention to children, the elaboration and monitoring of the pedagogical proposal.

Educators with Advanced technician of Pre-Primary Education participate with the teacher in the programming of leisure and free time activities, taking responsibility for their execution and attending to the students in these periods; they also coordinate and control the studies in extracurricular hours and collaborate in the monitoring of the educational process of the students, facilitating the contact between the school and the families and the environment.

Specialist teachers: English's teacher, Early Intervention and support team (external), technic specialists in social integration, ...

Child assistants: collaborate in the care, order, feeding and personal attention of children in Early Childhood Education. They are specifically responsible for the cleaning of the students during the class.

Services staff Management team: administrative, service staff, IT staff, secretariat, interpreters, concierges, head chefs, cooks...

To find out more go to:

Curriculum for Early Year Education (Education y Formación Profesional Ministerium 2022
Information about the new law in education (coming from the Ministry of Education)

<https://educagob.educacionyfp.gob.es>

Information in English about all education systems

<https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems>

Sweden

Higher Education

All higher education is pursued in courses and programmes. The courses can be taken separately or as part of a study programme to lead to degrees. The scale of a course or study programme is measured in 'credit points' in line with the ECTS. Full-time studies for one year

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equal 60 credit points. Higher education institutions (HEIs) decide about the organization of their courses.

To find out more go to:

<https://www.skolverket.se/download/18.31c292d516e7445866a218f/1576654682907/pdf3984.pdf>

Teaching Profession

The current teacher education programmes in Sweden include four different professional degrees:

- a degree in preschool teacher education
- a degree in primary school teacher education
- a degree in subject education
- a degree in vocational education

The teaching profession has for many years struggled with declining status. The government has during the last years initiated several reforms to improve the status of the teaching profession and to increase the number of applicants to the teacher education programmes.

Preschool teacher education in Sweden is on bachelor level and include three and a half year at a university college. The courses can vary between universities but the content cover:

Perspectives on the preschool teaching profession,
Nature, environment, and outdoor education,
Children and childhood,
Children's creation and aesthetic learning,
Inclusive pre-school with specialization in special pedagogy,
Cultural meetings in the preschool,
The preschool's value base,
Leadership and social relations,
Sustainable development with a focus on preschool,
Children's socialization and communicative processes,
Children's learning in language and mathematics,
The preschool and the preschool class in an international perspective,
Scientific theory and method,
Bachelor thesis

Practice during the education is included with 30 credits and is spread over several courses.

Roles within Preschool

The Swedish national curriculum för preschool 2018 express:

Preschool teachers are responsible for

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- each child's development and learning being continuously and systematically followed, documented, and analyzed so that it is possible to evaluate how the preschool provides opportunities for children to develop and learn in accordance with the goals of the curriculum,
- documentation, follow-up, evaluation, and analysis covering how the goals of the curriculum are integrated with each other and form a whole in the education,
- carrying out a critical examination to ensure that the evaluation methods used are based on the fundamental values and intentions as set out in the curriculum,
- results from follow-ups and evaluations systematically and continuously being analyzed in order to develop the quality of the preschool and thus the opportunities of children for care, as well as conditions for development and learning, and
- using the analysis to take action to improve education.

The work team (Child minder and other staff) should

- continuously and systematically follow, document, and analyze each child's development and learning in order to make it possible to follow changes in children's knowledge and to evaluate how the preschool is providing children with opportunities to develop and learn in accordance with the goals of the curriculum,
- follow up and evaluate how children have the opportunity to exert an influence over the education and how the education takes into account the needs, interests, perceptions and opinions of children,
- follow up and evaluate the opportunities for guardians to exert an influence, and
- analyze the results of follow-ups and evaluations in order to develop the quality of the preschool and thus children's opportunities for care, as well as conditions for development and learning.

Even if the municipality preschools are most common in Sweden there are a number of different types of early years providers. In Sweden the alternative structures in early childhood education and care within the formal system primarily encompasses four types of care and activities for children up to the age of 12. These activities go under the name "Other pedagogical activities".

- Pedagogical care/Childminders,
- Open preschools,
- Leisure-time centers,
- Care at uncomfortable times. According to the Education Act the municipality should offer care for children during the times that preschool or leisure-time centers are not offered and it should be offered to the extent that is needed based on the parents work and the family situation in general.

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Literature

Dewey (e.g., 1933; 1938) is recognized as an early advocate for reflective thinking to support professional development and practice. Dewey's work explores the differences between 'routine action' and 'reflective action', promoting reflective action as an experiential process, which leads to learning. Dewey states that the attitudes of 'open-mindedness', 'responsibility' and 'whole-heartedness' support well-structured, coherent, and reflective enquiry that facilitate problem solving. It is not about accepting daily realities of doing things as we have always done them without question, but it is about reflecting to find effective and meaningful solutions and ways of working. This then takes the 'routine' out of the action replacing it with 'reflective action'. It enables the challenging of perceptions and assumptions with a willingness to engage in self-appraisal and self-development.

Schön (1983) builds on Dewey's theory, providing an alternative perspective to reflection as 'professionals' are encouraged to use their knowledge and experience to inform their actions when dealing with specific situations. He calls this 'professional artistry'. Professional artistry comes from 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action'. It is where professionals move away from tacit knowledge, 'knowing-in-action', that is used in everyday life, through routine unconscious actions that are carried out because it seemed right, or it has always been done that way. It is about thinking again, in a new way, about the specific situation, drawing on professional thinking and professional knowledge. Schön refers to this reflective practice that engages conscious actions and contemplation as 'professional artistry'.

Pollard (2019) draws on Dewey and Schön's notions of reflective practice and describes it as a moving away from 'routine action' towards 'reflective action' that is grounded in professional thinking. This is about more than just using 'common-sense' to address a situation or problem. It requires monitoring, evaluation, and revision of practice through evidence-based professional enquiry. Pollard uses seven characteristics of reflection that are key when applied to teaching:

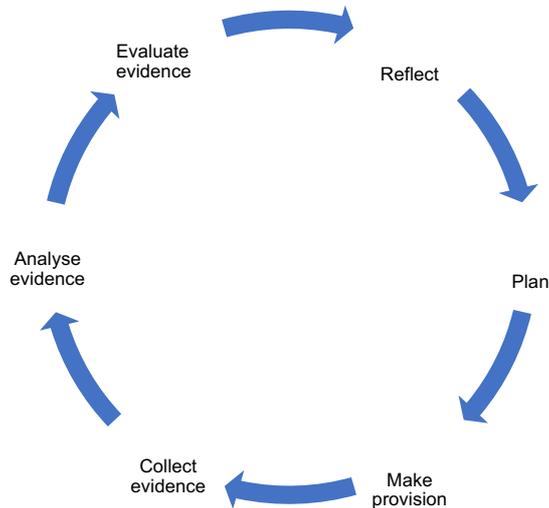
1. "Implies an active concern with aims and consequences, as well as means and technical efficiency.
2. is applied in a cyclical or spiral process, in which teachers monitor, evaluate, and revise their own practice continuously.
3. requires competence in methods of classroom enquiry, to support the development of teaching competence.
4. requires attitude of open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness.
5. is based on teaching judgement, which is informed partly by self-reflection and partly by insights from educational disciplines.
6. along with professional learning and personal fulfilment are enhanced through collaboration and dialogue with colleagues.
7. enables teachers to creatively mediate externally developed frameworks for teaching and learning."

(Pollard, 2019:85)

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Pollard uses a cyclical process of reflective thinking, which has strong links between reflexive processes and action research, where educators also become researchers in their own practice (Pollard, 2019:87, figure 1). This links to how Early Years Educators work in planning, making provision and implementing sessions for the children that they are caring for/working with.

The Process of Reflective Thinking (figure 1)



Theoretical frame

The theoretical frame derives from sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1981) which emphasizes development and learning in social settings. Collegial reflections in focus groups are highlighted as significant for widening and deepening the reflections in the processes during the project. In a Communities of Practice (CoP), colleagues come together to share best practices with each other (Wenger, 1998). The CoP provides a shared context for EYEs to communicate and share information, key ideas and personal experiences in a way that builds understanding and insight. The theory enables dialogue between early years educators coming together to explore new possibilities, discuss challenging problems and create new, beneficial opportunities. The concept of CoP has been described by Wenger (1998) as a group of individuals who share a concern for something they do and create a common identity by engaging in and contributing to a specific practice. According to Wenger, the structure of a community is mainly defined by three interacting factors: the extent of mutual involvement, a shared understanding of the mission, and a shared repertoire of tools (Wenger, 1998, pp. 72–73). CoP is used in conjunction with a sociocultural perspective, where practices are seen as situated in historical and cultural contexts that give them structure and meaning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). CoP in this project can be the early years educators that share experiences and opinions about the role of the teacher and teaching in preschool, and their collaborative reflections support professional development and improved reflective skills.

[Skriv här]

Methodology

The project follows an interpretative qualitative paradigm. Action research including focus group interviews (Salo & Rönnerman, 2013, reflections (Dewey, 1933, 1938; Schön, 1983; Pollard, 2019) and case study (e. g. Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011) are used as the main methodology approaches. During the research process we created and used manuals and questionnaires to support reflections and development.

Each partner country adhered to relevant ethical guidance with informed consent gained from participants and identities anonymized following General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in each country. Photos were taken with the project's iPads and stored at the university by the coordinator at HiG. The data from the focus group recordings were gathered by each HEI using mobile phones. The recordings were transferred to a platform on Box for collaborative reflection and analysis. The original recordings are stored in USB sticks at the university in a secured filing cabinet.

During the study the EYEs have produced documents that present their different settings and their pedagogy and values in teaching. The mobility visits offer short visits, job shadowing, focus group interviews and collaborative reflections. EYEs have had focus group discussions where contextual questions where structure, school system, organization, children's perspective, and values in teaching from international perspectives were highlighted.

TM action research collegial discussion, MV

Table 2. Participants

Country	Preschools	Preschool teachers (EYE)	Universities	Teachers (HEI)
England	1	1+	1	2
Norway	1	2+	1 (HiG)	1
Spain	2	2+	1	3
Sweden	2	2+	1	4

Preschools in the project

Surbiton Children's Centre Nursery (SCCN), England

This maintained preschool has been graded as outstanding by Ofstead for more than 20 years. SCCN has an interesting outdoor environment and pedagogical approach with the value "Every Child, Every Chance, Every day" and they include the outdoor environment in education. SCCN has a long collaboration with Kingston University and has been involved in student exchanges between HiG and Kingston University for several years.

[Skriv här]

INSTITUCIÓN LA SALLE (ILS), Spain

The preschool has six departments and is a part of a big school with 1600 students. ILS works with “learning based on projects”, cooperative learning, use the indoor environments in their pedagogical approach and they work with a New Learning Context, NCA. The preschool has long and good cooperation with La Salle University.

E.E.I. Zaleo (EZ), Spain

In this preschool there are six departments, and EZ has close cooperation with families and parents who are involved in the preschool work, as well as a specialized art teacher. This preschool has an inclusive approach to support diversity, centering on the ‘unofficial curriculum’ with a focus on everyone’s strengths: children, professionals, parents. New technology is integrated into the preschool’s daily activities. Creativity, flexibility, innovation and collaboration are some of the values of EZ, with a focus on ‘learning by playing’ and ‘learning with projects. The environment has an important part in the education. EZ have experience of international projects.

Bönans preschool (BP), Sweden

This preschool has three departments called “hemvister” and work a lot with children’s influence, democracy, and equality. As an extension of the work with equality and gender stereotypes they continued to challenge standards around them and the children’s understandings for differences has increased. BP has an interesting and large outdoor environment used in education and has long-standing experience of students exchanging for short visits with the University of Gävle and Kingston University.

Spunkens preschool (SP), Sweden

The preschool has long-standing experience of students exchanging for short visits with the University of Gävle and Kingston University. SP was a personally driven, cooperative preschool and had an interesting, thematic approach with books; one book underpinned the children’s learning experiences across the year.

Svangårdens preschool (SGP), Sweden

This preschool has 4 departments and a similar catchment area to SP and entered the project when SP was closed down. SGP has a thematic approach where the children's ideas, experiences and interests are captured. Children’s opportunities to participate and have an influence is an important basis of their work. The activities are designed to be inclusive for all children. They work norm-creatively, i.e. they consciously challenge prevailing norms and the pedagogical approach includes work with a hundred books per year and a pedagogical approach with drama and “bokfiluren”.

Sandvedhaugens preschool (SHP), Norway

SHP is a big preschool consist of 6 buildings with 2-3 departments in each building. The preschool focuses on inclusive practice, language, and the quality of the adult’s role.

[Skriv här]

Sandvedhaugen has many children with a minority language background, and children with minority language background who receive special education assistance. SHP has experience of long-standing collaboration with Kingston University in the Toddlers Wellbeing project, ToWe.

Higher Educator Institutes (HEI)

The collaboration in the ETEIP project has an open-minded ethos based on earlier collaboration between the HEI partners. Thanks to the earlier collaboration, HEI partners in each country and their collaboration with PS, a new culture of communication has been built up during the project. All HEI partners have a minimum of two nominated participants to ensure that at least one representative is always available for transnational meetings.

University of Gävle (HiG)

The University of Gävle (HiG) is a long-established provider of higher education and research in Sweden and the coordinator of the ETEIP project. HiG has approximately 16 000 students and more than 50 study programmes and second-cycle programmes. 350 courses are offered in the fields of Humanities, Social and Natural Sciences and Technology. In July 2004, as the second higher education institute in Sweden, HiG was environmentally certified according to ISO 14001. This certification comprises education and research in collaboration with the surrounding community. HiG is divided into three faculties; the Faculty of Education and Business Studies is involved with this application. International activities at the University of Gävle have developed from being mainly concerned with cooperation within the European Union to becoming more global. Today, the University of Gävle has just over ninety collaborative partners all over the world.

One of the teacher programme at HiG is the Preschool teacher programme, 210 cr a three-and-a-half-year education on bachelor level.

Kingston University (KU)

Kingston University (KU) is a long-established provider of Higher Education and research in the UK, and one of the largest universities in the South East of England with good travel links to Central London. It has approximately 25,000 students studying at first degree and postgraduate levels and is divided into five faculties; the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education is involved in the ETEIP project. KU has provided courses in Initial Teacher Training (ITT) for over 100 years. The School of Education has an outstanding reputation for the delivery of education and is consistently ranked in the top 5 within London (Guardian, 2021) and internationally is in the top 150-200 of universities for Education in the prestigious QS Top Universities league table. The School of Education is regarded by Ofsted (the government agency that monitors teaching standards in education) as a high-quality training provider across its early years, primary and secondary courses offering a stimulating, and high-quality preparation for professional life. The School of Education provides a range of ITT and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes across the educational field with the

[Skriv här]

Early Years team involved in developing and delivering a range of programmes that provide opportunities for widening participation for both work-based learners and mainstream students. The School of Education has a particular commitment to developing and enabling different professionals to work together more effectively in the interests of children and young people. The School of Education and the Early Years team work collaboratively with the School of Health and the School of Social Work and Care to deliver multi-disciplinary programmes at Foundation, Degree and MA levels.

Comunidad del Centro Superior de Estudios Universitarios La Salle (LS)

University or institution of higher education (tertiary level) (EDU-UNIV) is attached to the Autonomous University of Madrid. It is organized in several centers: The University Center with large areas of knowledge: Education Sciences, Health Sciences. Area of Sciences of Religion and the International Graduate School (IGS) that manages postgraduate courses. The offer of university degrees are; Teaching Training for Infant Education and Primary, Social Education, Social Work, Design and Management of Transmedia Projects, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy and Podiatry. Offer of Professional Training: Infant Education, Social Integration. The methodological renewal is continuous and investigates and experiments with new ways of teaching in a more effective way. It is part of an international network with 350 years of experience, presence in 82 countries, 73 Universities and Business Schools and one million students worldwide. Number of students: 1,370 undergraduate and 400 postgraduates. Centro Superior de Estudios Universitarios. La Salle (CSEULS) has experience of more than 70 years training future teachers and is a reference for a huge number of educational centers, due to their involvement in innovation and new teaching processes of children and social changes, according to recent psycho-educational studies. During these years, many innovation projects have been carried out related to Project Based Learning (PBL), Competence Based Assessment (CBA) and Cooperative Learning (CL), to name the most relevant. Specifically in early years there has been a focus on logical and mathematical thinking, processes research in early years education and educational work with children with Special Needs.

Activities that support EYEs in action research

EYEs have been involved in all Mobility Visits (MV), with learning school systems, legislation, documentation, visits and job-shadowing as both hosts and visitors, teaching/training activities in each country, reflections and focus group interviews.

All partners have been included in all Transnational Meetings TM, MV and Multiplier Events ME (local and international) and in several national and international Zoom/Team meetings. Before the MV all EYEs, both in the role of host and visitor for the visit and job shadowing, have prepared and created manuals about their preschools; the visitors have documented their reflections from the visit and job shadowing in a reflection manual.

[Skriv här]

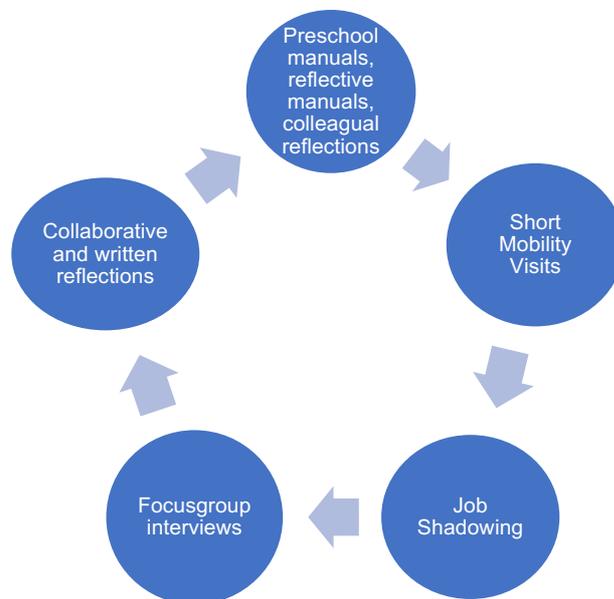
Transnational meetings and Mobility Visits

The three transnational meetings (TM 1-3) have been held for expert discussions, planning, coordination and major decision making through each stage of the project, and to identify the next steps for the development of the IOs 1-6, mobility visits and multiplier events. These TMs have provided opportunities to monitor progress, clarify responsibilities and evaluate the outcomes. The meetings have included all partners (HEI and EYE) and one of these meetings has been held after each transnational event. The kick-off meeting and the preparation meeting provided the partners with opportunities to meet, set agenda, academic framework, dissemination, communication, finance, clarify roles for the project and clarify and define the responsibilities of IOs for the project.

Mobility Visit (MV)

The mobility visits have provided the EYEs from the partner countries with transnational professional development and experiences that would otherwise not be available to them. The MVs have provided them with an opportunity to create reflective, transnational dialogue together as EYEs, share their practice, and enhance and improve on the quality of their provision and practice considering what they have learnt. The activities and action research during MV can be described as a cyclical process that improve EYEs professional development and awareness. The repetition (four mobilities) with short visit, job shadowing, reflections during focus group interviews, written documents and finally work team reflections in the cyclical process has been crucial for the professional development (figure 2).

The process of professional development and awareness (Figure 2)



To support EYEs during TM and MV different documents/manuals have been created, for example, the *manual for the preschool* which includes descriptions of each partner's preschool, the *visiting manual for the preschool* which contains presentation/information and

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the *reflection questionnaire* that enables EYEs to reflect on specific aspects of the visit and to consider how this will then impact on their professional practice. The documentation includes parts for reflection about new experiences during the visit and job shadowing as well as reflections and preparation for the focus group interview/discussions. The *Reflective Early Years Educator Handbook* has been used as a base for the focus group interview/discussions alongside the questionnaire.

Short visits

These visits have been structured so all visiting participants have opportunities to explore and have an understanding of each PS's pedagogical approach. This supported and widened EYE's reflections and opportunities to identify key ideas to strengthen and develop their critical thinking. The organization within the PS, their environment, material, and activities supported and gave an idea of the PS and their teaching. The structure has been built in the development of IO3-4.

Job Shadowing

The Job shadowing builds on the short visit and PS/HEI presentations. The focus for the job shadowing days was identified in collaboration with the HEIs. The host PS in collaboration with the local HEI also chose to share a specific aspect of pedagogical approach and teaching methods that was unique to the setting/country. Through the job shadowing, the visiting EYEs were included in the regular work at the PS. From this experience the EYEs were able to better understand how EYEs work in that particular PS and get a broader picture of the teaching in relation to the country's curriculum. The environment was evaluated according to the visiting EYEs' perspectives, IO3 and IO4. The job shadowing gave the EYEs opportunities to deepen the relationships and collaboration with different PS in each country.

Before each visit/job shadowing in a country the participants had an academic lesson given by HEI at the university about the school system and curriculum in the relevant country.

TM1 (Madrid Nov 2019), Kick-off meeting, planning, discussions

TM2 (London Feb 2020), Preparation meeting for MV and IO, planning, discussions

TM3 (Gävle June 2022 including international ME),

MV1 (London Oct 2021), Short visits and Job shadowing SCCN host, Focus group interviews

MV2 (Gävle Nov 2021), Short visits and Job shadowing, BP and SGP were hosts, Focus group interviews

MV3 (Sandnes March 2022), Short visit and Job shadowing, SHP host, Focus group interviews

[Skriv här]

MV4 (Madrid April 2022), Short visits and Job shadowing, ILS and EZ were hosts, Focus group interviews

ME local in each country were held in May and June 2022, all partners were involved and did presentations, Focus group interviews

Intellectual Outputs

IO1 State of the Art: Information on Educational Systems. KU was responsible and templates were used to ensure quality and parity of the information included within the manuals. All HEI supported with their country's State of the Art. The materials were presented at each mobility visit relevant to the contributing partner's country. Documented materials are on the project's website.

IO2 Ethos and values in preschool education. HiG was responsible and created manuals including values and ethos, key ideas in pedagogy, and didactical choices in each preschool. In this output the hosting EYE has presented their work in preschool based on the ECEC values and ethos. This includes a professional approach to children, colleagues and parents (caregivers) and the assessments and goals prescribed for the pre-schools applying to all children, considering age, gender, ethnic, cultural and linguistic background. All hosting EYEs used the manuals when they described their preschools, and all visiting EYEs used the manuals before short visits and job shadowing. The manuals are on the project's website.

IO3 Being a Reflective Early Years Educator Handbook and Framework. KU was responsible and wrote, reviewed, and implemented the handbook Being a Reflective Early Years Educator with the EYEs within the project. IO3 The aim of the handbook/framework was to develop understanding and skills of reflection, to deepen reflective thinking and professional development/practice. The objectives were to develop:

- an awareness of the value and purpose of reflection recognizing and understanding its importance in supporting good practice and improving ECEC provision,
- a knowledge of the processes of reflection and how these can be used to support a deeper level of understanding,
- reflective skills through the use of reflective models and the reflective tool and to establish an awareness of how reflection can be used to support and improve professional practice

The handbook was delivered at each mobility visit and used by the EYEs to support them in their reflection of the visits and job-shadowing. It also supported the EYEs and HEI with the reflective sessions for IO5. The handbook is on the website.

IO4 Building knowledge and understanding in international perspectives Early Years Educator Handbook/Framework. HiG was responsible and created a framework with manuals that supported the EYEs to identify aspects regarding environment and resources within international perspectives. The focus groups with the EYEs helped them to identify similarities

[Skriv här]

and differences of what they had explored and observed in two different preschools during each MV, making links to IO1, IO2 and IO3.

IO5 Case Study Impact Report on Education and Teaching in Early Years from International Perspectives, ETEIP. HIG is responsible.

IO6 ETEIP Website. The Website has been managed by LSM and all partners saved materials, videos and documents on the site. Results from the IOs is documented on the website.

Focus Group interviews

After each job shadowing day, the EYEs participated in a structured focus group. The focus groups have been developed in the IO5 to give structured questions to evaluate the visits and the job shadowing in order to deepen the understanding of each EYEs experience and reflection. The host gained an evaluation from international perspectives, showing the EYEs key ideas of what they will bring with them to their own PS; what thoughts EYEs have about the pedagogical approach and what critical aspects they brought with them during these job shadowing days. In the focus groups the EYEs had opportunities to reflect on all aspects of the MV. The EYE experiences of visiting and job shadowing in a new context in each country enabled a build up of reflections, key ideas, and ideas of ways to develop their own PS and subsequently cascade that experience to colleagues. The EYEs have, with all activities (MV) as a base, built international collaboration that supports their critical thinking and their professional development. The EYEs have gained experience of the different pedagogical approaches, different contexts and different didactical considerations in teaching through all partner countries' educational systems, ethos and values, and key ideas.

In conjunction with all mobility visits, focus group interviews were held afterwards and in centered on the short visits and job shadowing. All participants were divided into two groups during the focus group interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 1 hour and was recorded.

TM2 focus group

10th of February 2020 England, Kingston, participants divided in HEI and EYE recorded videos, three language groups

Focus group interviews online due to Covid19

The project extended 10 month and changes was done to secure the projects aim. MV was moved forward and instead EYE created videos that described their preschools and when all have watched a video a focus group were held. The focus group online were based on a constructed instruction guide, and the EYE should watch and reflect on videos produced from other preschools and reflected on in the work team before the interviews. The interviews were recorded and transcribed.

BP, 4th June,

[Skriv här]

SCCN 8th of June,

Spain 10th and 11th June 2020

- MV

5th and 6th of October 2021 England, Kingston, participants: 8 EYE and 6 HEI,

23rd and 24th of November 2021, Sweden, Gävle, participants: 11 EYE and 8 HEI

22nd and 23rd of March 2022, Norway, Sandnes, participants: 8 EYE and 6 HEI,

26th and 27th of April 2022, Spain, Madrid, participants: 8 EYE and 6 HEI,

Data collection and analysis procedure

The collected data consist of questionnaires, recorded videos produced by the preschools and published on the website, manuals from IOs and reflection documents written by EYE and the recorded interviews from the Focus Groups. Transcripts and recordings have been reading and listen to by each HEI, discussed together at analysis meeting and further collaborative analyses work in joint documents in Box online.

Result

To support EYE's professional development HEI has constructed documents concerning intellectual outputs (IO1, IO2, IO3, IO4, IO5), transnational meetings (TM), mobility visits and job shadowing. The intellectual outputs provide material to use and to understand the different educational system and learn from an international context. All this has supported EYE with tools to get a deeper understanding of context and pedagogy in practice.

The project aimed to give opportunities for Early Years Educators (EYE) to learn from international perspectives and that the mobility would support them in their professional development. The result show that the project has supported Early Years Educators (EYE) professional development, collaboration and exchange of knowledge and key ideas. They have learned about different educational system, curriculum, and legislation. During the project time EYE has deepened their reflective thinking and developed in their profession and the results has impact on their practices. EYE's mobility has given opportunities to explore the different realities of ECEC from an international perspective.

Professional development

The project has strengthened EYE's professional thinking in different ways, they compare and make changes in their practice, they are reflecting on more parts now. During the project, they have changed perceptions about working methods and teaching. The reflections have moved from more practical things about ratio and resources to more deeper reflections about teaching and teacher's role in preschools. The repetition of the four mobilities together with a short

[Skriv här]

interwall between the short visits, job shadowing, reflections during focus group interviews, written documents and finally work team reflections in the cyclical process has been crucial for the professional development.

When we got to see the environment, we were able to focus on working methods, approaches, and organization and how the everyday routines and structure worked [shortvisit].

They demonstrated and explained clearly about the environment and there was an opportunity to ask questions, after all, it's the case that all the questions don't come at once but have to sink in a bit and instead come later.

Now I've got 2 [preschools] to compare and I'm bringing that when I look at Norway. We are making different comparisons each time as we have a new version in our heads...now we are developing what 'looking' is

'It's almost impossible not to make that comparison because...it's like your heritage, your educational heritage, so that's what you're gonna bring and that's the eyes you're looking out with'

That's what you got with you. It's automatically you compare in a way, what I recognise and what I think is difference...like I can mirror...'

Your mind says maybe I can take a Little bit of each part to make my own'.

We have these habits and we don't think they are bad or that we can do it in a different way

all the things we reflect on today we need time as staff to reflect if you want to move forward together

... important for professionals to be professionals

Knowledge and key ideas

The project has developed knowledge about the profession as teachers in preschool and opportunities to share key ideas in practice. With the results from collaborative reflections, regarding similarities and differences according to ethos and values in the curriculum from each country EYE has contributed with key ideas from practice. The values of the pre-school include basic values, understanding and compassion in daily activities that integrates care, education and learning with a holistic approach. EYE have shared how the ethos and values that they hold are managed within the curriculum frameworks set out by each country. These key ideas have been reflected in the materials that they produce and provide examples, such as, routines, planning, photos, policies, meeting legislative requirements, set up of the environment

[Skriv här]

and space, supporting children's needs and activities. This has supported the EYE during reflections upon their practice and sharing this with other professionals.

The CS has enabled the project to concentrate on key ideas in teaching young children during short visits, job shadowing and focus group interviews. The activities have been effective in sharing key ideas in practice and enhancing EYE's skills. Even if all EYE works with child-centered pedagogy they have learned a lot from the job shadowing, discussions, and reflections in Focus Group.

...very much in the moment planning, being aware of child develop, knowledge of the teacher really evident.

In Norway I think the pre-school prepare the child for the school but in Sweden we want the school to prepare for the child

In Norway it's the process not the product/destination.

The fact that we were allowed to be in a preschool department meant that we got a deeper insight. Job shadowing and being physically on site makes it a stronger experience and creates a greater understanding, curiosity that is hard to get in any other way. Being part of the preschools work is a very important part of this project.

Key ideas that have been highlighted in the focus group discussions are *use children's capacity and interests, use of open questions, ethos and values, teacher's knowledge, teacher's role, calmness, structure learning environment, create good relations and use play.*

Children's capacity and competences and their opportunities to have influence in preschool activities has been discussed and reflected over

...yesterday inspired by structure, inspired by how they planned day with children's influence, work more effectively with a little more structure but keep child's influence and listen to their voices. Give children time to try, process, grow when can do for self.

...work a lot on children caring for each other, helping each other.

...staff step back,

...teacher being a facilitator knowing how to interact. Trust the child

Mixed learning from peers.

Here comes some examples from the participated EYE's based on their experince and key ideas from the mobility (short visit, job shadowing) in the four countries.

England

Use of every space, indoor and outdoor environment for learning and play

Use of material, example typical indoor materials outside," mud kitchen", brushes, animals, maths

[Skriv här]

Spain

Preschool teachers' structuring and organization (ratio) for learning and play

Preschool teachers' collaboration with parents for learning and play

Sweden

Connection with nature and free flow play in forest

Literature and play material - diversity and equality in play

Norway

Preschool teachers' present in play with children, child's perspective

Time for children's play and exploring," here and now"

Teachers working at the same level as children – the teachers are sitting in the floor with the children.

Teaching in/ during play. You learn better if you feel it, gives a deeper knowledge.

Teacher do teach, but they do not teach the usual way, they let the kids learn trough play and challenges. Let kids explore by themselves.

EYEs works with teaching and supporting learning with open questions has been discussed

...open questions, what are you doing?

Knowledge of educational system and legislation

Lessons about educational system and legislation in different countries has widen the horizons and created understanding about the different conditions EYE works according to. The academic lessons supported EYE's knowledge on the culturally specific context.

Curriculum knowledge

The academic lessons and job shadowing together with focus group discussions have given EYE a new understanding about teaching and that similarities and difference in pedagogy is affected by the steering documents key ideas.

The curriculum is lighter in the UK and denser in Spain. In Spain, the objectives in the curriculum are further developed and are mandatory in all schools

Curricular competences and skills and skills for real life (autonomy, be critical, be able to make hypothesis, social values, ...) [curriculum] as a base for all our work

We follow it [curriculum] loosely. The way the curriculum is formulated gives us a lot of autonomy as to how we approach it. The goals are not too specific

Ethos and values and teacher's knowledge

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[Skriv här]

The values of the preschools include basic values, understanding and compassion in daily activities that integrates care, education and learning with a holistic approach. Basic values are needed for children when they are learning to interact and communicate with others. Ethos and values are also about understanding others and building relations. In the project EYE often talked about children with special needs, in some countries they have separate department for children with special needs and in some countries all children are included in the daily activities and the differences are important parts of the ethos and value work in preschool. The result show cultural differences in the approaches to children with different needs in the preschools

... contributed with knowledge about children as worthy citizens of society who have rights to influence their learning and their surroundings. I also think that issues of gender equality and norms have raised many thoughts among the other participants and our materials such as toys and books have been discussed. Much based on a variety with functional variations and skin color as a natural part of materials, books, and images. I also think that play, learning and care as a whole in the teaching made a big impression.

... some ideas on about teachers how to work with diversity, respect the process, development, rhythm of each child, mixed groups, interested in the way adults are considered in the space

More enriching, when groups was more international, made us more able to compare and share experiences and thoughts.

I've have been more aware of my own values because you feel it in your body and in a different way in what you do back home (...) I have more ideas and I think my practice has change after this. Because know what I have seen at home and here different way of doing the same thing.

I see opportunities to change in a positive way much more. That, and I feel that my frame has been bigger, but I also have learnt to step out of the frame and look into it in a way I never wouldn't done.

The result show that valuing the children's voices and expressions has an impact on the daily work in the four countries and the participated preschools.

... children's influence so important so how do they choose the projects. Realize much harder to get the influence that we have. They have influence but not really to have influence –struggle with it as couldn't really see it. Conditions made it hard to do.

... yesterday inspired by structure, inspired by how they planned day with children's influence, work more effectively with a little more structure but keep child's influence and listen to their voices

... structure, work very much about the children's influence but can do both, more influence if a little more structure, miss things as so flexible and afraid of structure as crushes children's influence. Can be more flexible –lunch time –can we have a buffet?

Culture have to change.

The result show that an important key idea in teaching is how to work with ethos and values and for example gender issues

[Skriv här]

...gender a big challenge in Europe, we don't realise things as common in day-to-day life, have to stop and think about it, what you say or think, working with this book, now realised that some books are not so good as we thought, it is a process and spend time to think about this. Gender attached to our experience, and we have to know very well and not project stereotypes.

Teaching strategies

By the different tools (e.g. lessons, manuals and reflection handbook) the project equipped EYEs with opportunities to identify teaching strategies and why they are used.

The result show that one strategy is to build good relations with children

...they have a good relationship; they have worked at the relationship, ok to be wrong

... relationship between children and adults, accepted into class, children asked for help, sat on lap, took your hand. Relationship with adults is respectful, feel fine with adults and this is very important

... relationships are built in that time, so watching the G team...they really know the children well because they spend so much time with them...respond to needs...tuned in'

Teacher's knowledge and role are important aspects in building up an interest for learning

...Calm, no rush, go with the moment, flowed, every moment calm

Other strategies are to be close and present with children and play

... playfulness, staff play with the children. Teacher being pushed on a swing by the children. Togetherness.

...staff with the children in different areas, available. Fun, role modelling for the children

... school for older children should be more fun and playfulness. School learn from preschool. Co-creating play together

...[children] give you a role in play

... observed child asking teacher where do you work? You don't work here you play.

...promote interest writing own names, more meaningful for them.

...here they really talk with the children, support language,

A permissive environment. The children get the possibility to explore the different stations and materials as they wish with support from a teacher or carer.

That they value learning through play.

Everything was available and reachable for the children, and they could choose activities and materials freely both in- and outdoors.

[Skriv här]

The children get to find solutions for themselves and are seen as competent.

There is little time for free play, the activities are very directed by the teachers, do a more targeted work, assign activities – the children don't choose the play.

Different environments potential in teaching

During the project the project tools with manuals that describe preschool, videos from preschools and the activities with short visit and job shadowing has supported EYES' knowledge and understanding of different environments potential in teaching. In the beginning of the project the EYE' focus was on differences and structure of environments.

...space for learning to read and write with a small group of 3-5-year-olds

Everything is designed with a good purpose in mind...a lot of the rooms felt more like a family room...little touches...it didn't feel like an educational institution

...Trust children more for independence, give more freedom within the classroom and make some more corners and spaces.

After job shadowings and reflection together in Focus groups the reflections was deeper and and they observed the pedagogy behind the structure in preschools. EYE' observations, reflections and discussions show their views on the potential the material and play has on environment as learning environment.

...pedagogy very clear in the environment. Use of walls, floors, small boxes...

...felt at home as environment was more for play and choose materials and where you go with them. Teacher sat down on floor with children. More interaction between children and teacher. Flour, salt, and water –exploring in tray, children supported in exploring, ok if they didn't want to participate. Staff enhanced play by adding to the soil. All very engaged.
Planned activity but to child's interest

...very mixed and materials very mixed. Some materials under the teacher's control ...to work on maths, language,

The project tools with academic lessons before short visit and job shadowing has together with the reflective handbook equipped EYE with knowledge, enhancing reflective skills and has been effective in discussions, sharing key ideas in focus group and in practice.

You do what you do and you don't question it until you see an alternative and then you see an alternative well done and it makes you question your own methods'.

[Skriv här]

I believe that our perspectives regarding activities, working methods, environment, teaching have developed a lot and broadened our view of how it is possible to think, organize and teach in preschool. We have been given the opportunity to reflect our own pedagogical approaches and key ideas against very different ways of working and thinking.

Discussion and conclusion

During the action research the project has been supported by Pollards (2019) notions of reflective practice and the description of it as grounded in professional thinking. The reflective handbook produced in the project has helped EYE to think critically when they write down their self-reflections and have their collaborative reflections together in the Focus Group. The reflection cycle described by Pollard fit well with the action research cycle (Salo & Rönnerman, 2013) and in this Community of Practice the EYE has a shared understanding of the mission and developed a shared repertoire of tools. In relation to Wengers (1998) description of CoP it is two of three interacting factors. The third factor 'the extent of mutual involvement' is also present, EYE and HEI has have shown great mutual commitment to the project's purpose and respect for each other's work. The EYE in this project is well educated and have a lot of experiences from local projects concerning ECEC and some of them for taking part in other international studies. Despite or because of their high educational level and long experiences as professionals the result show that they have learned a lot and developed in their profession. EYE has shown open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness in their engagement for ECEC and international issues in regard to teaching and the teacher role. Collaboration and dialogue together with the exploring of ECEC practices and teaching strategies in international contexts have highlight new questions and been supporting professional development which, among other things, has meant that certain prejudices have changed, and new opportunities have appeared.

The practices are situated in historical and cultural contexts and of course different opinions among the participants have occurred. Maybe one aspect of this is related to key ideas in the curriculum and teaching and is described in this quote

We consider that there is a lack of an organized structure of the methods and specific tools of evaluation that allows to assess the adequacy of the activities for the correct development and learning of the children. The most used method is the feedback of adults, families and especially teachers.

The projects focus on education and teaching in early years from international perspective have given the participants opportunities to deepen their knowledge about teaching conditions in the four countries preschools and discuss what teaching can be and how it can be carried out when it concerns very young children. The collaborative work, reflective communications, and the fun the participants have had during MV is a good foundation for further exchanges.

[Skriv här]

Sustainability

Sustainability has been built into the project as the website will be maintained after the project time ended. The website will continue to house information on the project, together with the project result.

One of the major drivers for the sustainability of this project is the new transnational relationships which will be forged with professionals across Europe and beyond who are engaged in the ECEC field. Within the partnership the discussion forum ensures that, during the project, contact between EYEs is not confined to the mobilities, but will be continuous and active, strengthening the links. This will provide an international network not only for current EYE and students in partner organizations, but also for future collaborations. Partners will also benefit from the extensive transnational links which will be made through the learning teaching training activities. The supporting contacts database will provide opportunities for lasting collaboration between professionals both within and external to the project, at the local, national, and international level. All material as manuals, questionnaires, handbooks remain on the website and give new opportunities for the professional field to collaborative learning and development. The circular process will go on for the participated preschools. They feel that in the end of the project the real work starts at home to do changes and develop from what they have learnt and experienced in the project.

The HEI partners have started to embed the resulting tools in their own curricula. In this way the tools will not only be used for education but will also be disseminated to future generations to EYEs. Through HEI networks the tools will be taken up by other universities/training providers, further ensuring their sustainability.

The project has municipalities as partners. Not only will this ensure the use of ETEIP tool in a much wider group of preschools but will also promote the ETEIP tools within their own education support for EYEs. The role in local policy will facilitate the embedding of the ETEIP approach in their own policy and support the promotion of this to their policy networks.

HEI presentations, publications and attendance at national and international conferences will continue to ensure the project's sustainability.

Conclusion

Despite various cultural and ideological differences, the common commitment to ECEC, job shadowing, focus group and discussions have been effective in sharing key ideas in practice and enhancing EYE's profession. The cyclical process in the action research has together with the colleagues' reflections in the international contexts. The process has proven to be supportive for the professional development including building knowledge, more aware of your own preschool's key ideas and profession, support reflections and develop critical thinking and re-evaluated values.

Material developed in the project has proven to be supportive and useful in the cyclic process. The international perspective has been highlighted in the collegial reflections and has resulted in strengthen the professional development and some new ideas when it comes to:

[Skriv här]

- teaching and children's perspectives,
- values and ethos in teaching,
- different tools to identify teaching strategies,
- different environments potential in teaching.

[Skriv här]

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[Skriv här]



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