

CHANGING PRACTICES TOWARDS HIGH QUALITY ECEC THROUGH PARTICIPATORY CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)

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S6: Role of CPD in developing participatory pedagogies

Time: Wednesday, 08/sept/2021: 2.00 pm

Chaired by: Helen Lyndon, Centre for Research in Early Childhood, United Kingdom

Democratic Early Childhood Pedagogies

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of professional development in improving the quality of early childhood education has been increasingly recognized and appreciated internationally in recent years (Jensen & Iannone, 2018).

The ways in which continuous professional development (CPD) can be coordinated and organized optimally, as well as how its influence on practice and significance for educational quality and children's development can be traced, is still being discussed (Schachter 2015, 2019; Brunsek et al. 2020).

This presentation will contribute to this research by **mapping the design and findings of a series of research projects in Denmark.**



RESEARCH AIM AND CONTEXT

The aims are: **How can high quality ECEC be advanced through CPD, when facilitated through learning communities and shared reflection between participants? How can high quality be enhanced?**

Citing Vandell & Wolfe (Vandell and Wolfe 2000), Brunsek et al (Brunsek et al. 2020) we conceptualize quality in ECEC as comprising both structural and process dimensions. **Indicators of structural quality are conditions such as child/educator ratios, and educator training and experience, while process quality focuses on “dynamic exchanges between individuals and their environments, which include children’s interactions with educators,” (ibid, 218).**

We focus here on **process quality**, while indicators of structural quality, *are* considered because they set conditions for process quality.



RELATIONSHIP TO PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Existing research highlights the need to strengthen collaboration between all actors in ECEC to improve quality: managers, qualified professionals, as well as assistants and family daycare practitioners (with lower or no education), where CPD has the potential to support these processes (Urban, 2014).

In line with the limitations and opportunities identified in existing literature, new orientations in research endeavour to understand and support CPD in ECEC in an alternative way in relation to expert-driven instruction and one – to – one coaching styles.

This can be described as a paradigm shift (Vescio, Ross, and Adams 2008), where focus will be on increased awareness of 1) how CPD is linked to specific practices and 2) how the professionals learn to work collaboratively across different contexts and actors.



THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework builds on **theories of learning communities** within and across ECEC systems.

- Practice Theory (Schatzki, 2002) offers an approach that focuses attention on how organizational practices interconnect and inform one another.
- Social learning theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991) focuses analysis on the persons populating the practices and the learning processes unfolding within and across them.
- An organisational learning perspective (Argyris, 1996), specifically informed by social learning theory contributes to consideration of professional learning perspective emphasizing “processes of participation across practices” (Brandt & Elkjaer, 2012)

By establishing a cohesive and inclusive learning environment and focusing on developing specific, situated practices, learning can become a collaborative endeavour.



PARADIGM AND POSITIONING

The study builds on the pragmatic paradigm.

Democracy- is defined as a key value in educational research and includes freedom, inclusiveness and equality, membership , human rights.

Policy on ECEC in Denmark aims to strengthen children in their well-being, democratic development and academic skills, e.g the policy focuses on ECEC in a holistic perspective, proposing ECEC work with the children's democratic education (bildung) and emphasises process quality in terms of relations and interaction between adults and children

Ref: Socialministeriet. 2018. "Lov om ændring dag-, fritids- og klubtilbud m.v. til børn og unge (dagtilbudsloven) " In *Lov nr. 554 af 29. maj 2018.*, edited by Socialministeriet.



METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

- Data stems from four Danish studies of participatory professional development emphasizing different aspects of facilitated shared reflection and learning processes inspired by the ideas of communities of practice based on the theories mentioned (slide 5).
- Data was gathered through surveys, desk research and case and field studies a multimethod design.
- Ethics as a requirement for research – here anonymity of informants was respected, with researchers following a strict ethical protocol.



DESIGN OF CPD IN FOUR PROJECTS

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- The overall democratic thinking in these studies was that all partners should be involved as equals – the professional learning model was originally based on theories of organizational learning and further developed theoretically.
 - The designs evolved from the first project (**ASP, 2005-2009**) to next (**VIDA, 2010-2013**), **VALUE (2019-2020)** to the current project **EQD (2014-)**
 - A model of collaborative/co-created learning labs was offered – and learning processes were facilitated through different contexts: workshops, learnings labs and practices involving teachers, assistants and managers in creating new practices towards high quality ECEC



FACILITATION OF CPD – AN EVOLVING RESEARCH AGENDA IN DENMARK

- ASP explored the practice based CPD by moving away from expert instruction and embracing **broader learning dynamics** between contexts and participants in order to create high quality inclusive pedagogy in ECEC for 3-5 yrs. Two municipalities.
- VIDA explored **facilitation of critically reflective working methods** that were initiated to share and further develop the model for high quality inclusive pedagogy and interactions in ECEC provisions for 3-5 yrs. Focus shifted from providing individual qualification to changing collective practices. This happened through working with shared understandings and meaning (the Five Step Model) Four municipalities .
- VALUE facilitated learning laboratories as a way to create **intercorrelations** between all employee groups - practitioners with a bachelor degree in education, those with no formal qualifications and managers. The idea was to further explore the model of collaborative learning that was designed so far but now in a context of diversity among practitioners in ECEC (3-5 yrs). One municipality.
- EQD - a new study currently being implemented in the context of family daycare ECEC - an amalgamation of VIDA and The Abecedarian Approach towards changing practices in ECEC (0-2 yrs) 11 municipalities.



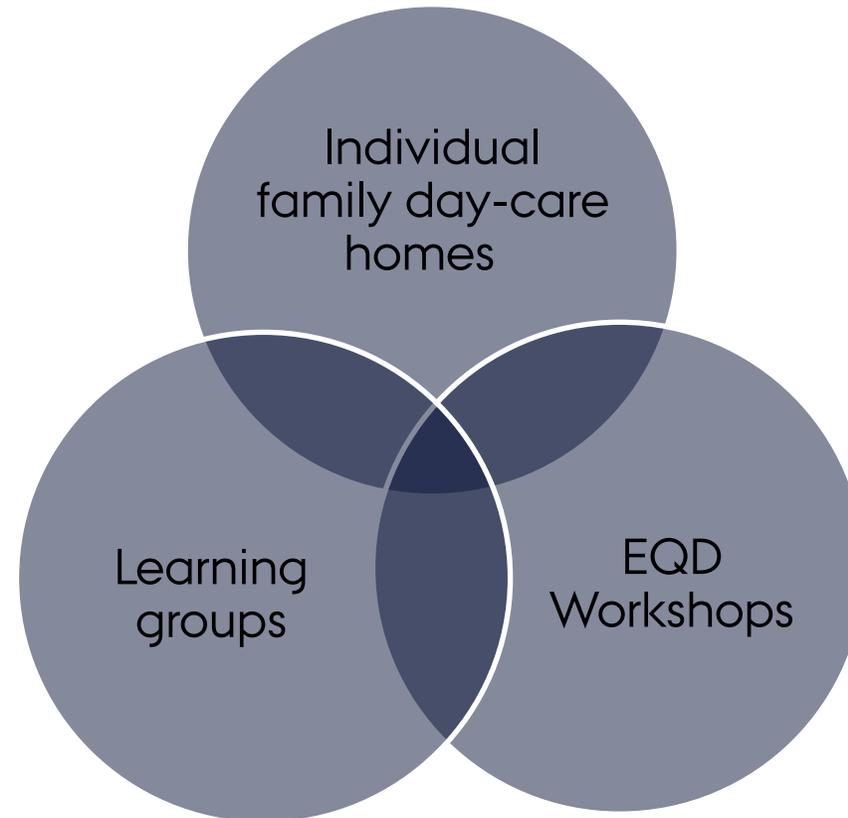
FINDINGS

- ASP – Findings showed, that the following prerequisites should be present to ensure that ASP could be applied appropriately in practice (Jensen et al. 2009, 241): **It was important that the ASP intervention, in the view of the professionals, contributed to the qualification of an organizational culture**, i.e. the structural factors should support the efforts. Findings suggested that these prerequisites were interpreted and applied in different ways in the institutions. Across the municipalities, it turned out that the manager/management was decisive in terms of translating the efforts into actions.
- VIDA – Findings showed that overall CPD process benefited from the systematic work that was made possible through **using a specific tool: The experiment and 5 –step model** (Jensen, 2014) (see slide 11). The learning dynamics that were set for the inter-critical analysis of practice improved the professional's own and collective practice by working with collective reflection across contexts (Jensen and Brandt 2018).
- VALUE - Facilitation of collaborative learning within learning laboratories influenced participants to work systematically with renewed practices using the experiment model (based on VIDA). The participants expressed, that what they 'learned' – was not just knowledge – **but also beliefs in their own competences and ability to participate on an equal footing** in the collaboration in this environment of diversity. Increased engagement was an important outcome (Jensen & Marquard, 2020).
- EQD pilot studies gave rise to the design of a scaled-up project (amalgating VIDA and Abecedarian) in family daycare as a two-year CPD initiative (now half-way). **The idea was to operate within three learning contexts (see slide 12): (i) the individual family daycare home, (ii) learning groups and (iii) EQD workshops**. This design builds on the previous projects experiences with organizational learning and **that participant-driven processes** offer greater potential than those implemented by managers **should not be managed from above** (Jensen & Walker, 2020).

FIVE STEP MODEL



EQD LEARNING ACROSS CONTEXTS



MAIN DISCUSSION

By facilitating processes of questioning and investigating existing practices through the collaboration of different actors in ECEC, the studies of four cases found that crucial aspects for sustainable development of quality ECEC include

- supporting and facilitating shared collective reflection,
- learning communities,
- an inclusive and democratic approach to education, as children and professionals are seen as experts in their own lives,
- the role of facilitation (often by managers) are proved pivotal



CONCLUSION

Incorporating a participatory approach to learning communities expands CPD and high quality by including all employees in a collective, democratic and participant-driven innovation process in ECEC.

Insights indicate that CPD can be supported by working with collective competence development strategies characterized by i) that they make sense to the participants, ii) build up as continuous professional learning processes in practice-based and organizational learning-based perspectives, and iii) mobilise the involvement of the participants.

Both professionals and children benefit of this paradigm shift (Vescio, Ross and Adams. 2008), from teaching to support collaborative learning in professional learning communities.



IMPLICATIONS

Insights indicate that CPD can be supported by working with collective competence development strategies.

From a practice-theoretical point of departure (Schatzki 2002), the manner in which practices are connected and inform each other across contexts is important to investigate and analyse,

Social learning theories (Lave and Wenger 1991; Dreier 2008) are to be used to train analysis on the at the people who participate in and populate these practices.

Furthermore, this analytical framework, allows consideration of the implications of organization and leadership, the impact of the projects's resources and tools, and eventual changes in participants' understandings and professional identity.



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THIS PRESENTATION BUILDS ON THE PAPERS

Jensen, B. and R. L. Iannone. (2018). Innovative Approaches to Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in Europe: Findings from a Comparative Review. *European Journal of Education* 53 (1):23-33.

Jensen, B. & Walker, R. (2020). Learning in, and from, practice-based professional development in interventions in ECEC: a research agenda in Denmark. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, Volume 29 Issue 6, December 2021.

Jensen, B. Walker, R. & Marquard, M (2020). Bæredygtig kompetenceudvikling I dagtilbud. *Temanummer i Pædagogisk Psykologisk Tidsskrift "Pædagogisk kvalitet gennem organisatorisk og professionel udvikling". Pædagogisk Psykologisk Tidsskrift 4 2020, 39-58.*

Jensen, B. & Walker, R. (2021). *Participatory continuous professional development. Cultures of reflection.* In Ringsmose et al (eds). *Participatory continuous professional development.* Springer (Forthcoming).



THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

Bente Jensen, professor, PhD at the Danish School of Education, Department of Education Studies, Aarhus University.

She has led a number of research projects on the welfare society's efforts to counteract negative social heritage and improve the life chances of vulnerable children through high quality ECEC. These include intervention and effect studies exploring the impact of practice-based organisational learning and sustainable competency among daycare professionals 'working with children aged 0-6 years. Learning processes among professionals with diverse background and inclusive is of special interest.

Roddy Walker, postdoc, PhD at the Danish School of Education, Department of Education Studies, Aarhus University. Roddy conducts research into organizational learning, management and professional development from a practice-based perspective, with an ethnographic approach. The manner in which learning processes unfold across different contexts is an area of special interest.

