



VALUE DIVERSITY IN CARE AND EDUCATION

EECERA conference 2019

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DISCUSSION

- Is the issue of ‘invisible assistants’ recognizable? What’s the role of assistants in your country, how is it related to educare?
- How are assistants supported in their role?
- Is there already collaboration between assistants and core practitioners? How do you in your practice / country stimulate this? What inspiring practices do you know?



Introduction

- Quality ECEC depends on well-educated and competent staff (EC, EQF, 2014/2015)
- Not only core practitioners, also assistants in ECEC (CORE, NESET II)
 - Invisible: not in policy documents, no competence profile, limited initial training, few CPD opportunities, low job mobility
 - Edu vs care?
 - Diversity?
- Need to value the diverse background and experiences of all staff members



Aim of VALUE

Improving ECEC quality through strengthening the professionalisation and interprofessional collaboration of the whole staff (both core practitioners and assistants) within an educare approach.



Erasmus+ KA3 (01/01/2018 – 31/08/2020)

Partners:

- Belgium: VBJK, Erasmushogeschool (PJK & Kleuter), Karel de Grote Hogeschool (PJK & Kleuter)
- Denmark: Aarhus University, The Danish School of Education
- Portugal: Aga Khan Foundation Portugal, ESE-IPSantarém
- Slovenia: Educational Research Institute

Actions:

- desk research
- professional learning paths in pilot schools
- development of a training toolbox
- publication for policy and practice





2 PILOTS



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Erasmus University college Brussels BECE(C)

The Pilot-school: The Chameleon

Anderlecht: Urbanised, low SES, 'the place in between'

Population:

- 2,5-12y (split system)
- School as first environment outside the family
- Classes with almost 100% divers pupil population

The team:

- All-female (middle class) pre-primary corps (n = 8)
- Assistant educators (n = 3)



■ Aims of the coaching path

- Creation of **awareness** about perspectives on ‘education and care’
- Installation of a climate that enables and valorises **Multiperspectivity** and working in divers teams
- Agency and **giving voice** to all members of the team
- **Intrinsic motivation** to enhance pedagogical quality



■ How?

■ Inspired by a **narrative and collaborative approach**

*How we relate to the situation and context we are currently in, the sensing of the situation **is pre-reflective (preconscious and not verbalised)**.. we act on our auto-pilot, on the basis of **habits routines and internalised processes** (Stelter, 2007, p192) Coaching can be an important way to help the focus person to **put the implicit into words**, and thereby make **his or her actions reflective and present**. (Stelter, 2007, 193)*

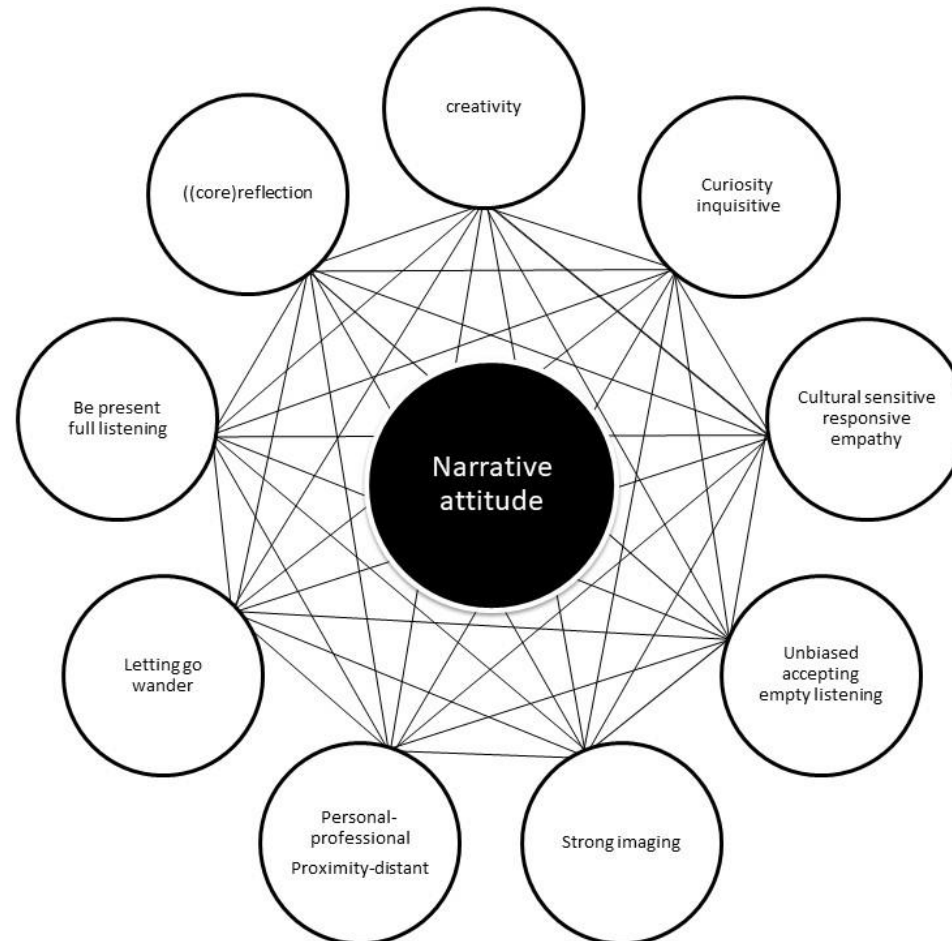
→ Exploration of values and meaning making

→ Conscious professional identity

■ **The role of the coach and creation of narrative space**

A narrative coach creates a holding container in which people can courageously and creatively bring their narrative material into the world' (Drake, 2014, p.125)

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(Verhaeghe, Den Haese & De Raedemaeker, 2018 In Verhaeghe & Den Haese, IN PRESS)

■ Three phased model for narrative collaborative coaching

(based on Verhaeghe, Den Haese & De Raedemaeker, 2018)

- F2f coaching + thinking-reflection exercises
- 2 coaches
- Transcription of ‘interesting moments, words,...’ to deepen the process
- 8 moments
- Core-team meetings

■ Phase 0: building **trust**

- Moments of informal meeting: cooking event, attendance in teacher room, soup moments for parent

■ Phase 1: Getting insight in the **subjective reality of individuals** and the **group dynamic** involved



- **Coach as facilitator**
- Lab 1: getting to know you
- Lab 2: image of job, educate

BELGIUM

■ Phase 2: **confronting** and **contesting perspectives**, multiperspectivity



■ **Coach as confronter**

■ Lab 3: while laughing you tell... the truth?

'Brussel has eating- and sleeping schools' lab 2

'My place is on the playground' assistant educator, lab 2

'the team and appendix' teacher, lab 1

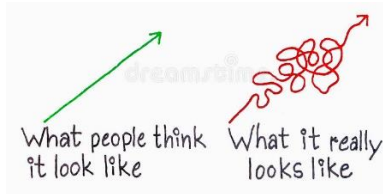
*'parents don't see the importance of the early years, it's only
taking care of the children' lab 2*

■ Lab 4: 'professional role' → **La resistance**

■ The role of the assistant: strengths, downsides, dreams
and wishes? (2 groups)

■ The choice for teamteaching

-
- Phase 3: making **choices**, **concretizing** and sustainability
 - Coach as **co-creator and inspirator**
 - Lab 5: the choices we made and what they mean...
 - Teamteaching? → pedagogical involvement of the ‘assistant’ as a team member
 - Reciprocal relation with parents as active agents
 - Lab 6: let’s make a plan
 - ‘on our way to become a ‘child ready’ school
 - involvement of all members of team
 - involvement of parents



*‘Enhancing transition suitcases in cooperation with the parents’
‘lower the barriers for parents by class involvement’*

■ Challenges

- 'professional identity': You say what?
- Ownership
- We already work together...
- Speaking the 'educare language'
- The role of the coach... 'la resistance'
- A safe space for all

■ Lessons learned

- Professional identity and ownership as a starting point
- Getting insight in the narratives of individuals to write a new story
- The role of the coach and a safe context are crucial
- The leadership of the school is conditional to the success of the process
- Structural changes will be mandatory
- Think about the future (sustainability)
 - A compass, a light at the end of the tunnel
 - 'reflection on pedagogical themes', inspiration
 - Train the trainer



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VALUE DIVERSITY IN CARE AND EDUCATION

Changing practices in ECEC aimed at Inclusive Education through VALUE Learning Laboratories – a Danish Case

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EECERA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

SYMPOSIUM E 15, 22 August 2019, Thessaloniki, Greece



Co-funded by the
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OBJECTIVES

The Danish pilot explore the question:

In what way are the VALUE Learning Laboratories improving collaboration between two professionals groups (Early childhood teachers) (with a bachelor's degree) and childcare assistants (with a short vocational qualification or no formal qualification)?

In the later study we also explore the questions:

- How are the professional identity and role (in the two professionals groups) improved through VALUE
- Are there any signs that the new model for practice based affect children's development and learning – by working together on the educare approach to adversity and inclusion?

THE DANISH CONTEXT AND PILOT

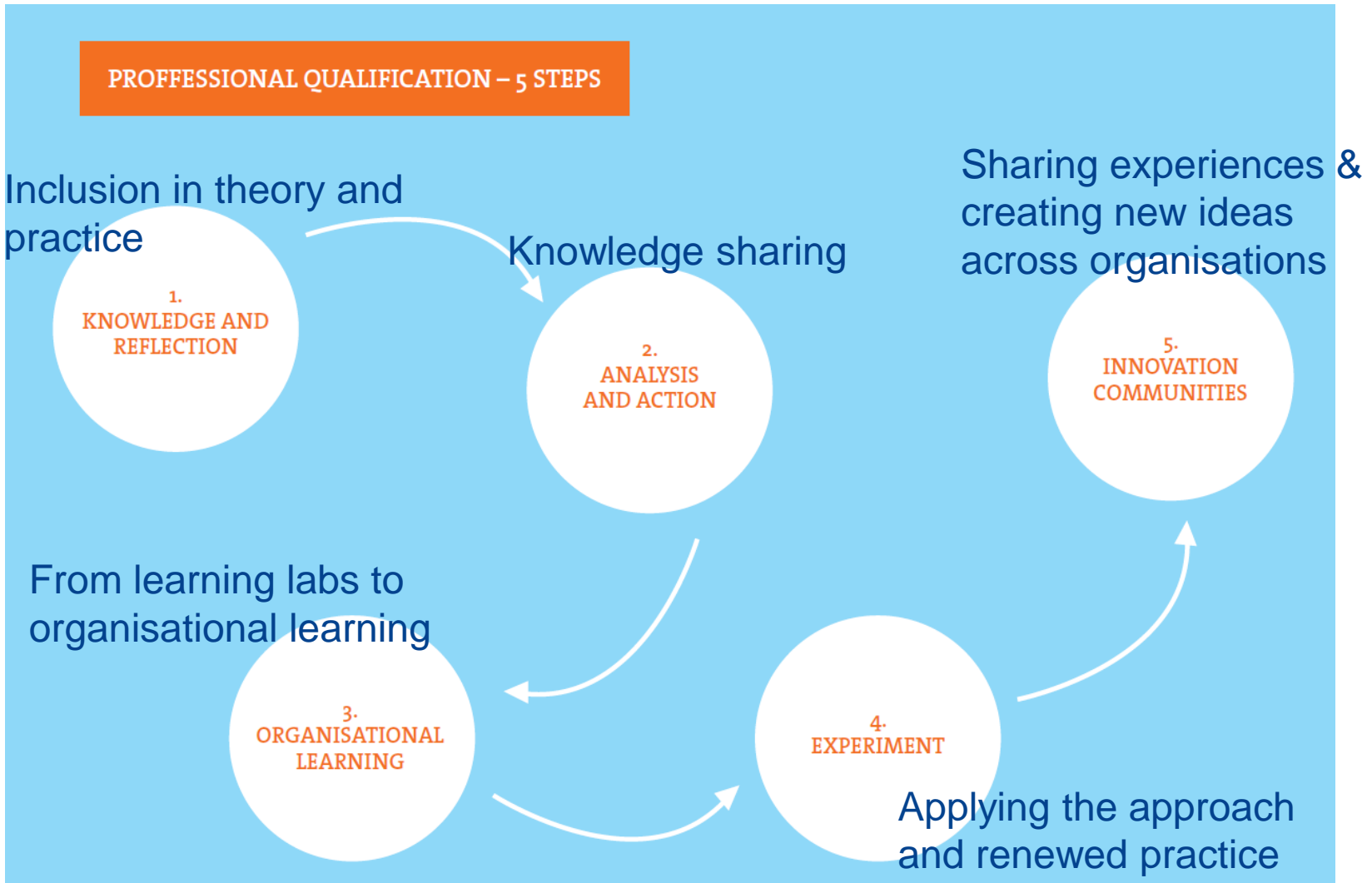
- For Denmark the overall picture is that the preschools are divided in age-specific (one school) or mixed groups of children.
 - The EDU-care approach (e.g. education and care seen as integrated aspects in daily pedagogical work in ECEC).
 - This has been the case since the Danish Legislation 2004, revised in 2007 and reformed again in 2018.
- Some of the discourses in the political ECEC area in Denmark is the discussion of staff: child ratios, if it should be mandatory with specific norms.
 - Consequences might be that the municipalities are in a lack of resources for CPD

The Danish pilot schools (centers) from Randers municipality participated in the pilot

- In all 3 managers and 62 staff. The number of children were 57 in one pilot school, 98 in a second and 135 in a third school (N= 290).

BACKGROUND

- Important arguments for considering innovative CPD to strengthen collaboration between teachers and assistants within systems of professionals (Peeters et al, 2016). The Core Study and the NESET II study argue that there is a hierarchy between education and care.
- Arguments for innovation in CPD that targets social inequality and the vulnerable also by improved collaboration. Each ECEC system in European countries experience challenges that are calling on CPD to become even more responsive to classroom changes in relation to inclusive ECEC education CPD (Jensen and Iannone, 2018).
- Whilst there is no consensus on the best kind of collaborative CPD, research suggests that a broad range of CPD, involving various social learning processes among professionals (participation, reflection, learning, co-creation) that support an overall strategy for CPD are most useful investments (Jensen & Iannone, 2018).
- Case study of the VIDA 5 step model found improved professional qualification on both individual & organisation learning levels with focused, systematic, & knowledge-based efforts to change practices through the VIDA model of professional (Jensen and Brandt, 2017)





VALUE IS BASED ON THEORETICAL BASIS OF VIDA'S 5 STEP MODEL

- Theories of knowledge-sharing (**Krogh**, 2011)
- Communities of practice (**Wenger**, 1998)
- Expansive learning (**Engeström**, 1998)
- Social development & interaction theory (**Vygotsky**, 1935/1978)
- Experience-based learning (**Dewey**, 1938)
- Social inequality (**Bourdieu & Passeron**, 1990)

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF VALUE

The Danish VALUE model for **learning laboratories** further develops the theoretical approaches that builds on the VIDA approach with focus on

Expansive learning:

Drawing on Engeström's theory of change laboratories
Starting with identifying problematic situations
in practice.

Co-creation, drawing on Bason's theory
of Mindlabs and innovation.

Translation, with the goal of understanding
what happens when the 'outer' conditions
and 'local' practice come together
- a bottom-up approach (Røvik).



PARADIGM, METHODOLOGY, DATA, METHODS AND ANALYSIS

Desk research behind building the Learning paths, professional learning in ECEC (Learning laboratories in 6 months), data collection

- The study builds on a social constructivist paradigm.
- **Data** were gathered through a survey (baseline all 4 countries based on questionnaires for assistants, teachers, managers), personal logs, (electronic collected), desk research and case studies within three pilot schools based on observations and focus group interview.
- **The anonymity of informants** was respected where required, as researchers followed a strict ethical protocol.
- **Analyses and findings** are going on (2019-2020) and will be validated by various researchers independently, triangulated and also framed with contextual data (baseline data). (Jensen et al., 2019 - working paper).



VALUE – A LEARNING LAB PERSPECTIVE

- Kick-off for all participants (teachers, assistants and managers in the three institutions).
- Workshops based on the idea of expansive learning (Engeström, 2013).
- Six scenarios (each 4 weeks long) based on the model of interplay between education (Learning Lab (LL)), working with changes in practice (1 week), reflection and evaluation and communities of reflection and practice (½ day) (inspiration from VIDA)
- Managers a part of the LL's
- End off for a selected group (a third of participants at kick off – representatives for participants
- Tools for implementation & reflection: Experiment model and facilitation.



EXPERIMENTAL MODEL LINKING THEORY AND PRACTICE

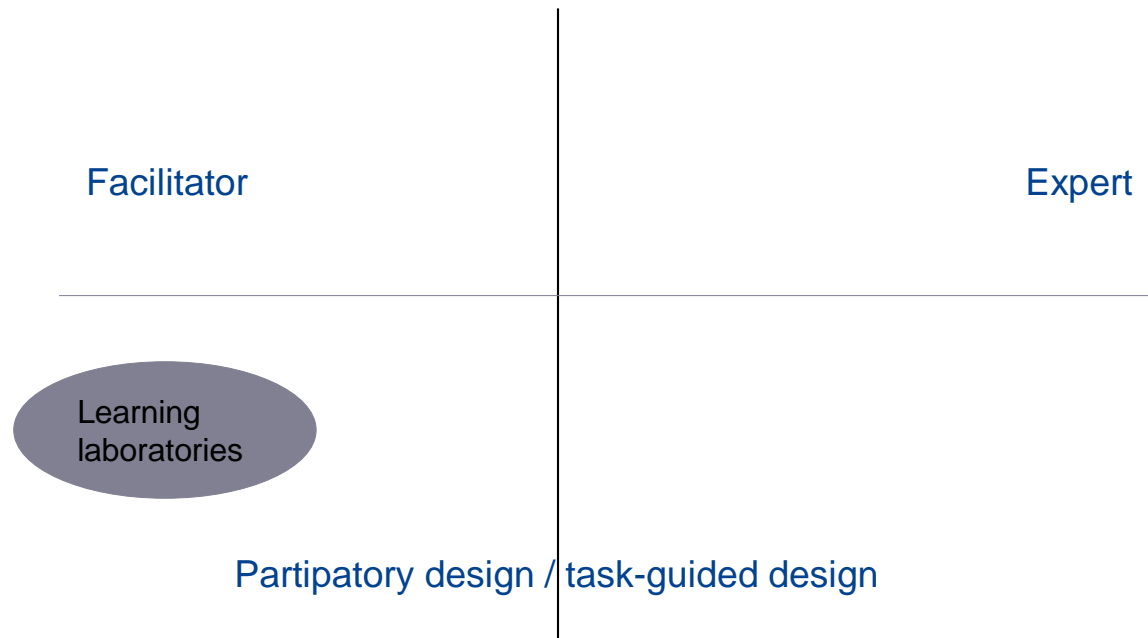
- Workshops started by identification of a problem in practice in terms of inclusion.
- Professional's (all) work with connecting theoretical framework 'educare' and inclusion with own practices, knowledge and goals.
- Professionals share experiences of good practices and get new impressions from each other through the process of developing new practices.
- Create new perspectives for individuals and groups. The groups are composed in different ways (sometimes managers work alone, other times they integrate), Teachers and assistants mostly work together, across schools and within schools.
- The experimental model is used as a tool to keep focus on proces, reflection, analysis and evaluation thinking

FACILITATION

- Facilitators facilitated the proces with knowledge-sharing, questioning own practices, worked with respect for staff involvement, participants worked theoretical and research-based as inspiration to own practice
- Guided critical reflection, planning social relations/collaboraton, new possibilities.
- Using a tool, the experiment model, developed and tested in the VIDA approach to professional development.
- Getting everyone involved, and giving all a voice.
- Document own practice and changes – inspiration across the schools

LEARNING LABS LL'S

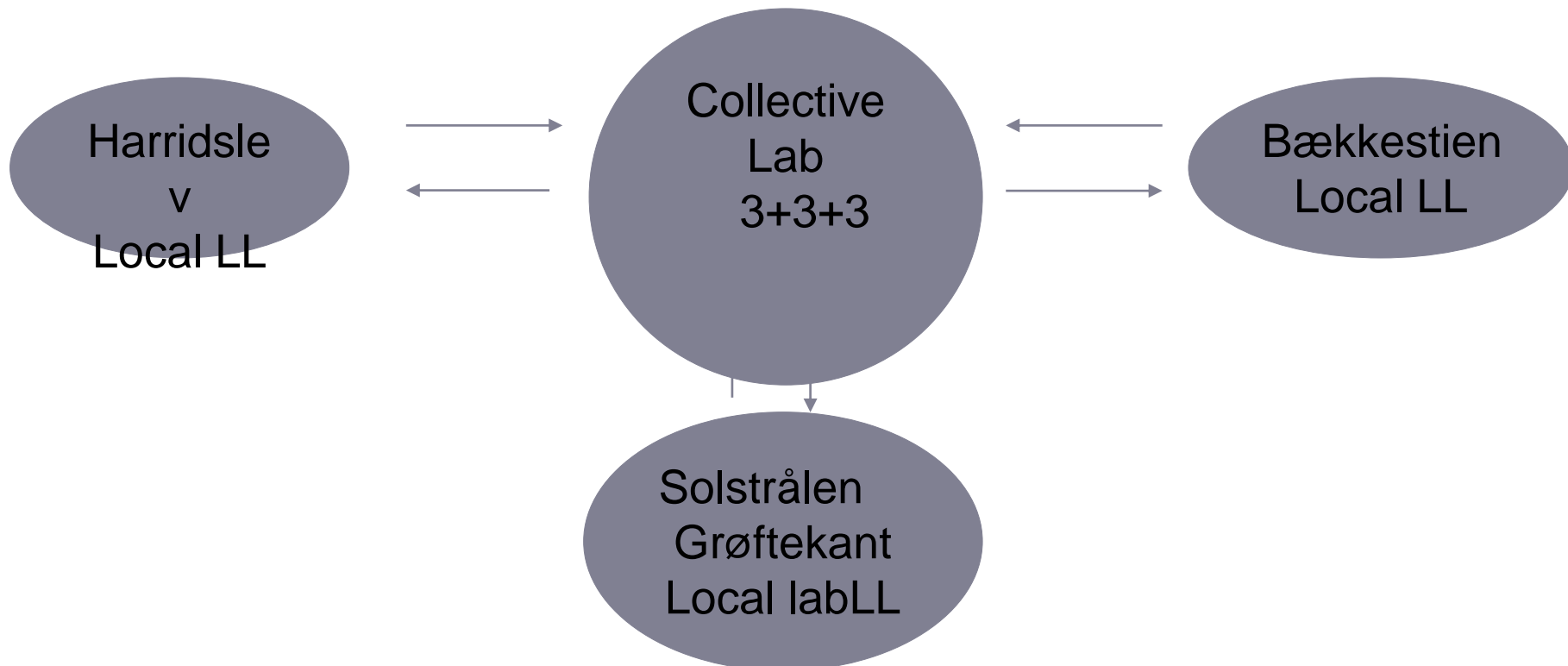
Content/curriculum Guided



A model developed by Marie Kirstejn Aakjær m.fl. In analyses for NVL 2014,

http://nvl.org/Portals/0/DigArticle/13698/Co-creating_learning_arenas_2014.pdf

INTERPLAY BETWEEN ANALYSES REFLECTION AND PRACTICE



DATA & ANALYSIS

- Quantitative data = baseline study (all four countries) (2018).
- Qualitative data = observations & focus group interviews (2019), and self-reported personal LOGS (the Danish case).
- Categories of analysis: 1) Professional identity and role, 2) Collaboration between assistants and staff, 3) the educare approach. In addition to 4) professionals' motivation and 5) perceived challenges & frustration.
- Data was compared across & within teacher groups and assistants.
- Analyses & findings: validated by various researchers independently, triangulated, & framed with participants' views & contextual data.



PRELIMINARY FINDINGS - CASESTUDY

By questioning existing practices in the collaboration of teachers and assistants we found that crucial aspects include:

- The facilitated process improved participants critical reflection:
 - on everyday practices, issues of inclusion, they discussed if they really included children
 - challenges in terms of tackling diversity among children. A problem in the pedagogy was identified across the three centers: The learning environment on the playground.
- The experiment model was shown to be very useful, as a tool for development the practice at the playground in a systematic way, and through the six learning laboratories for documenting the process and progress (learning and children's inclusion).
- Teachers and assistants collaborated with connecting the theoretical input (on inclusion) with own practice and experiences. A growing focus on a renewed inclusive education approach to work systematic and experimentally within collaborative communities of practices was raised.

EXAMPLES FROM THE BASELINE'S OPEN QUESTIONS

“Before the start of this experiment, we have talked about how many times we adults went in and out to be able to measure whether it has an effect, that it is only a simple thing, but not all the staff at the playground. Subsequently, we have made a schedule of who did what and when. We have seen children who were not included” /from Evaluation/Documentation – quotes from participants)

The planning process is intended to release resources and more in-depth study as the pilot schools own evaluation showed progression in childrens' participative behavior .

- *“The children have the opportunity to choose the community that is in the game that the adult has introduced. The children have the opportunity to play their own games and draw on the "outreach" and help with the game. ”*

TO 'GET A VOICE'

We came more in-depth with questions about involvement, being moved from being employees (often assistants) ' without a vote ' to getting a voice.

At one LL late in the process, the following aspects emerged- especially assistants expressed a new feeling of being acknowledged:

- *"All voices are equally important, but it's not just the educators who decide" "It's good that each of us is allowed to say something" everyone has to say something we have ' check out and check-in ' .*
- *"Everyone has their own time in the dialogue – without interruptions. " "It has made an ongoing sense for the staff because VALUE has been inside all the meetings."*
- One of the managers put it in this way *"The project shows that "e have to create structures, otherwise we just do things by automatic". (the usual practice).*

CONDITIONS – OF IMPORTANCE

Room and space to create a common understanding

- Options for switching from an individual to a joint, coherent perspective.
- The opportunity to receive and share professional knowledge and expertise
- The ability to communicate perspectives on diversity and the children
- Time set aside for the collaboration

Participation of everyone from the three schools

- Process guidance by experts/facilitators in learning labs, experts in adult learning processes
- Content guidance by experts/and references to literature in the field of EDUCARE and diversity



ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR – REFLECTIONS BASED ON OBSERVATION

- The role of facilitator is to be able to work with the bottom-up approach as well as a participatory approach – using the dialogue as an active tool, looking for individual differences and initiating the common ambition for development and action.
- The role of facilitator is also to ensuring that all participants are involved on an equal footing with maximum experience of influence – discussion that all voices are important.
- Trusting atmosphere - Motivation and ownership are key prerequisites for a successful process. And the facilitator are the one who make sure, that this is happening through a trusting atmosphere

CONCLUSION I

In what way are the VALUE Learning Laboratories improving collaboration between two professionals groups (Early childhood teachers) (with a bachelor's degree) and childcare assistants (with a short vocational qualification or no formal qualification) ?

The presented results **are preliminary**.

The study showed so far (august 2019) indicators on how the collaboration between two professionals groups are strengthened:

- We have positive indicators on the strengthened collaborative practices and in relation to that, improved self-perceived professional role and identity.

The next step is to investigate and analyse what was happening from the participants perspective within and after the pilot study's first intensive course (the focus group).

And whether they continue to work with VALUE models and goals in practice and to what extent the conditions make it possible to continue with this approach.

CONCLUSION II

Main challenges seem still to be in relation to collaboration (see the baseline, 2019), e.g accepting that all opinions are equal, diverse views on the task and personals characteristics, lack of time.

- Leading the collective learning process local - ensure a safe environment for all staff might be a challenges.
- The facilitation the role is important and might be conducted by the manager and or a consultant.
- Coordination and involving all and diverse views will still be an issue.
- Future analyses will contribute with more in-depth analyses on the VALUE's impact on professional role and identity and the work with the educare approach – and to give up the hierarchy between education and care.

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION IN RELATION TO THE OVERALL VALUE PROJECT

- *Is the issues of invisible assistants recognizable in the Danish context and what can we learn of Danish VALUE learning laboratories as a model of change ?*
- *How is the assistants supported – what can we learn of this study – when we hear their own voices*
- *Is the collaboration that was already there changes and what might still be the challenges ?*
- *Resources, professional development traditions, learning culture - and policy ?*



THANK YOU!

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