

Good afternoon everybody!

My name is Yvonne Söderlund and this is my two colleagues, Ulrica Ericsson and Yvonne Holmgren. We are all pre-school teachers from Sweden. We are going to tell you about our work with development of the quality of our pre-schools. It is a cooperation between three districts in Sweden by the use of ECERS. Early childhood environment rating scale. The background was that the Swedish pre-schools got their first curriculum in June 1998. It was a result of an ambition to raise the pre-schools status as the first important foundation in the Swedish education system.

The life-long learning starts in the pre-school years and because of that it's natural that the pre-school activity through a curriculum describes contents and background. But also give distinct expectations on quality in order to give the best possible conditions for development, evaluation and follow up of the pre-school. We needed a method, a quality development method for comparison over time, but also between different pre-schools.

The district then gave an assignment to some civil servants on central level to collect information about, and discuss different evaluation methods. Finally we decided to use the method of ECERS. The method is founded by Harms and Clifford 1980 on the University of North Carolina in USA. The method has been used in countries such as Canada, Japan, Italy, Russia, New Zealand and England etc. It's the most common instrument for systematic observation and evaluation of pre-schools for children up to 5 years old.

It's translated and adapted for Swedish pre-schools by Gunni Kärrby on the educational institution on the University of Gothenburg in Sweden.

Our goals was:

Visualize and achieve a higher quality standard through intern- and extern evaluation from the knowledge of what good quality is. Give the staff on the pre-schools and their leaders better possibilities to formulate their needs of- and to give further education. To increase the staffs professional role and competence of using this evaluation method as an instrument.

To make visible the staffs work with the children and make them see in what way they are a part of that. To make them able to express and define what is good about their work and feel proud of that. To see what is not so good and be able to improve that. Achieve a maximum standard of good environment for development and learning for every individual. Increase the co-operation between the three districts and take advantage of- and develop our total competence. The whole work with development have a direct connection with our curriculums demand of contents and quality.

And to the work all our pre-schools are carrying on to formulate their own workingplans and methods for evaluation and follow up. The most unique feature of the work we present is that it is a co-operation between three districts. We have found it very valuable that we visit each other's district and work with the staff there. We can come with an open mind and no prejudice because we don't know anything about them. And they don't know anything about us either. And we can share differences and similarities between our pre-schools.

Nine pre-schoolteachers and three civil servants responsible for development in the three pre-school districts was picked out and given the possibility of education on this method. It all started in February 2000. The education was led by Professor Gunni Kärrby, and two of her colleagues from the University of Gothenburg, Sonja Sheridan and Joanna Giota.

Joanna is also here with us in Athens and will talk about research and reality.

How and why children learn. You can listen to her tomorrow at 2.15 and I really think you should because she is a fantastic lady and have a lot of knowledge to offer. Our education was for 9 days with these three women and after that we went out two and two together to visit our first two pre-schools. We spent a whole day from 8 o'clock a.m until about 4 o'clock p.m at the different pre-schools doing our evaluations. Then we compared our results to see we made the same judgement. That is very important because now we are doing this on our own and you should know that you get the same evaluation independent of which person is visiting you.

After we have done our external evaluation we inform the staff at the pre-schools of the method. We give them the material and instruct them how on how to use it. Then they have two weeks to do their internal evaluation. They do it without any discussion with their colleagues and then send it back to us. After that, we make a written documentation and compare our result with the results from the staff. Then we set a date and go back and have a verbal discussion for about three hours. We give feedback and advice. We particularly look for differences in their evaluations and discuss why.

We try to help them to see their work from another point of view and then we focus on what developments they would like to start with. After that we give the staff some time to analyze the result and to work out a program for development and send that to us.

On the next visit we use their program as a starting point. We invite their head master or any other leaders for the discussion and make sure they get what they need to succeed with their goals and evaluation programs. For example materials, further education of competence and so on.

The twelve of us working with this, meet with each other continuously and make plans for further competence development. Both for us and for the staffs at our pre-schools. After a year we will go back to our pre-schools. We want to see what has been done and if there is something else we can help them with. We have had about two pre-schools

each to visit each semester and by Christmas this year every department of our pre-schools have had one of us visiting them. We have not been working in our own districts. We have traveled to visit each other's districts and that has been very educational for us. We have had the opportunity to see a lot of pre-schools with different conditions and administrations.

And we have had easier to look at their work with objectivity when we don't know anything about them in advance. We also think it's easier for them to take us seriously.

We have all been working as pre-school teachers for a long time and have a lot of different experiences. One thing we have learned by meeting people working with children of today in Sweden is a need for time to talk about educational questions. To discuss their work with someone from outside. To share thoughts and problems, and also to get feedback and appreciation of their work. For the first time I think we have got a chance to increase the status of pre-schools and pre-schoolteachers. Through our curriculum and through ECERS we have got an instrument to evaluate and increase the quality in our daily childcare. The tools we have had for observation of the children we have now got for the business. A material that gives us a lot of suggestions for discussions of how and why we do the things we do in our work with the children. A possibility to put it into words and to make others understand the advantage of pre-school educational learning.

It also gives ourselves time to reflection and a will to do some changing on the parts we don't do so well. This is along-term goal and we know that not everybody will take this to their hearts immediately. Some people will even find this a bit threatening. But when we succeed to bring about a desire to educational discussions we think we will get an enormous development and increased consciousness at our pre-schools.

Every-day-life-skills

>From different projects in the European Union about our future schools, a common aim and will have been settled for the schools. They have agreed that every child need to develop an very-day-life-skill.

That means that children develop theirs:

- abilities to cooperate
- sense of responsibility
- power of initiative
- flexibility
- abilities to reflexion
- active attitude
- communicative ability
- ability to solutions

- critical thinking, creativity
- ability to learn

PEDAGOGICAL QUALITY

defines as:

The degree of consciousness the educationalist show in his/her ambition to create a pedagogical activity, that offers the child maximum conditions for the child's aspiration for learning, personal development and well-being.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE EDUCATIONALIST

- To meet the goals for learning
- To interest the child for the goals of the society

THE APPROACH OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- The learning and development of the child is similar to each other
- The development of the child control the learning ability.
- the child's learning influence the development. Learning is development.

CRITERION FOR GOOD EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

- How the employers work and behave with the children.
- Goals, plans and their attitude of philosophy
- Cooperation with the parents
- The qualifications and development possibilities for the staff
- Leaderships and administration
- The frequency of persons in the staff
- Conditions in the local environment, such as space, material, physical environment and diet.
- Evaluation

The attitude to the child we carry, through the meeting with the child, is fundamental for what is possible for this child to be, and achieve in our activities on the pre-school.

The attitude on what knowledge is and how we get the knowledge will be the most important condition for what the child will learn of the surrounding world.