

How can ECE-intervention in day-care best improve socially disadvantaged children's opportunities in life?

The research project and model programme 'Knowledge-based efforts for socially disadvantaged children in day-care' (VIDA) examine how an ECE-intervention in day-care can improve the life opportunities of socially disadvantaged children.

The comprehensive project will document which types of pedagogical day-care efforts are most effective at providing better opportunities in life for socially disadvantaged children. The aim of this effort is to improve the children's well-being and learning. One approach is to stimulate their personal, social and language competences as well as logical understanding.

The research project comprises some 6000 children in 120 day-care centres in four municipalities in Denmark and implements and examines two types of pedagogical efforts. The day-care centres are divided into three groups. In the one group, focus is on the children's well-being and learning (i.e. the VIDA model programme). In the other group, focus is also on the children's well-being and learning (as in group 1) as well as parental involvement (i.e. the VIDA + parents model programme). A third group (the control group) is left to continue with their ordinary practice.

The efforts are implemented in inclusive environments, which are the children's ordinary day-care environment that they share with other children.

The project has been commissioned and is financed by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

The VIDA research project consists of the following four elements:

1. Development of the VIDA model programme and the VIDA + parents model programme

The development of the model programmes are, in part, based on previous experiences from the ASP project (<http://www.dpu.dk/site.aspx?p=8182>). Thus, the evidence-based VIDA model programme is further developed on the basis of the knowledge acquired in the ASP project. A Clearinghouse-review will map existing research on the effects of parental programmes, and this knowledge will substantiate the development of the evidence-based VIDA + parents model programme.

Throughout the development phase, VIDA will update the material previously produced for and used in the ASP Qualification Folder. Moreover, a new IT-based tool for analysis, which will facilitate the day-care centres' interpretation of own practice, is under development. Lastly, as part of the qualification process, an IT-based version of the 'ASP-tool' will be employed as a means to train the day-care staff in early discovery of socially disadvantaged children.

For further description of the VIDA project in Danish, please see www.dpu.dk/vida

2. Testing the two model programmes through intervention in four municipalities

The intervention lasts two years. The participating day-care centres will be randomly selected and divided into two intervention groups (VIDA and VIDA + parents). They will

be offered education and training that will qualify the managers and preschool teachers to implement the evidence-based knowledge in the daily routines and possibly renew practice.

One particular quality of the VIDA intervention is that it is based on three elements: *Knowledge, reflection and action*: First, the managers and preschool teachers acquire the knowledge in the VIDA-material through individual study and an educational course. Secondly, they use this knowledge to take a new look on the existing practice, and thirdly, actions that are based on this knowledge are initiated to renew and improve the existing practice. Subsequently, these actions will be the object of the next phase of reflection, just as other knowledge-elements may be involved in the ongoing process of reflection in the staff group. The three elements foster a certain type of learning dynamics that will lead to the promotion of innovative staff skills.

The educational course, which is integrated into the implementation of the VIDA model programme, covers all three elements. In order to implement the VIDA model programme and to reach the goals of the model programme, the managers and preschool teachers are taught how to work systematically with learning and change-processes in day-care. As part of the implementation of the VIDA + parents model programme, the managers and preschool teachers are educated to involve the parents in collaboration about the children's learning and well-being. The intention is to involve social workers from the participating municipalities in this process where and when this is possible.

The managers of the participating day-care centres are offered additional training called 'facilitated learning processes'.

The control group of day-care centres proceed with their existing practice and serve as reference group in the project's effect measurement. At the end of the research project, these centres will be offered in-service

training in collaboration with the involved municipalities.

3. Effect measurement; integrated analysis and the efficiency of the two model programmes

The effects are measured by the children's outcome of the intervention, which is studied by exploring the relation between the intervention and the effects, and through a comparison of the two model programmes and their effects.

A further comparison of the educational course and the more intensive training is also included in the efficiency assessment. Like the model programme, the effect study will be based on a randomised controlled trial, which means the day-care centres participating in the VIDA model programme, the VIDA + parents model programme and the control group will be selected randomly from the same four municipalities.

The outcome is measured by the development in the children's social and learning competences registered at three screenings. Data from these screenings are correlated with data from Statistics Denmark via anonymised civil registration numbers in order to correlate the effects with social background and for investigation of longitudinal effects. The quantitative part of the effect study is supplemented by qualitative studies of organizational practices that are changed as a result of the interventions.

4. Presentation, dissemination and suggested entrenchment of specific models

The project results are disseminated in ways that make the acquired knowledge available for the field of practice. In a long-term perspective, the project contributes to the general development of models that are likely to become entrenched in day-care, municipal efforts as well as educational programmes and in-service training in Denmark.