

HOW CAN WE ADDRESS EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE (ECEC) MORE EFFECTIVELY?

**PRESENTATION OF A DANISH INTERVENTION PROGRAM (VIDA)
AIMED AT 3-6 YEAR OLD CHILDREN**

**Melbourne Graduate School of Education,
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Agenda

- Understanding the origins of disadvantage
- International research in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)
- The VIDA Intervention program, a Danish Randomised trial, an innovative approach – design, methods, content, selected findings
- Similarities and differences between VIDA and others studies
- Conclusions and thoughts for a future design of VIDA Young - a program for the 0-3 years

Socially disadvantaged children

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- a socially-impaired background, poverty,
- unemployment among parents,
- parents have short or no education,
- parents on welfare

Social inequality in intergenerational studies

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- focus on inter-generational educational attainment
- show that inequalities persist in children's educational opportunities across countries over time

Ref: Erikson and Jonsson, 1996; Müller et al., 1989; 1993; Shavit and Blossfeld, 1993

Children with social difficulties

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- have a higher risk of being involved in child service systems.
- are at risk already in daycare
- Interventions during early childhood are essential in order to reduce social inequalities

Ref: Irwin et al., 2007.

Why invest in ECEC?

- ECEC changes the child's educational, economic and social life chances
- ECEC implemented in a larger scale may have a positive effect on children's language, academic abilities, habits and socio-emotional development
- Worldwide more than 200 mill children <5 are failing to reach their developmental potential

Ref: Esping-Andersen, 2002; Heckmann, 2008; Heckmann et al., 2010; Barnett, 2012

Research in ECEC - selected studies

- Perry Preschool and Abecedarian
- Tools of the mind
- Effective Provisions of Preschool Efforts (EPPE)
- Effective Parental Programs

Perry Preschool Program

Objective: Improving children's cognitive development and learning

Theoretical approach: Piaget's theory emphasising the cognitivistic aspects of child learning

Teacher training: Teachers' planning of curriculum and learning activities

Results: Long-term follow up of effects (until they reached their early 40s)

Ref: Weikart, 1967; Muennig et al., 2009; Schweinhart et al, 2005; Nores & Barnett, 2009

Abecedarian Program

Objectives: Improving children's school readiness by social-cognitive and linguistic development

Theoretical approach: Piaget's theory combined with a developmental system theory

Teacher training: teachers' communication skills and quality of relationship between child and teacher

Results: Long-term follow up of effects

Ref: Ramey et al., 1998, 2000; Wasik et al., 1990; Roberts et al., 1989

Tools of the mind (TOM)

Objectives: Improving school readiness by cognitive control and logical thinking

Theoretical approach: Vygotsky's theory combined with support of children with low educational experiences

Teacher training: Education of staff emphasising teachers' work with a broad learning concept and quality in classroom

Results: Positive results from first studies

Ref: Diamond et al., 2007, 2011; Barnett et al., 2008

EPPE –UK

Objectives: Examine the effects of daycare on child academic and social outcomes

Positive results of high quality daycare

High quality is daycare provided by qualified staff, good staff-child ratio

Systematic curriculum-based efforts that focus on learning and development in a broad sense

Positive care giving and social relationships between teacher and child

Ref: Sylva et al., 2011; Siraj-Blatchford, 2011; Melhuish, 2010

Daycare and parental programs

A combination of daycare programs and parental involvement improve the effects (Kaminski, 2007)

- Teaching parents how to stimulate their child
- Teaching parents parenting skills

Offers for parents without involving daycare may even have a directly negative effect (Roberts et al., 1989; Wasik et al., 1990)

Ref: Review by Danish Clearinghouse for Education made for VIDA (Larsen et al., 2011)

Lessons from ECEC research

- Universal ECEC is not enough, quality matters
- Multiple approaches are effective, education is a key component
- Cycles with time for reflection and planning
- Cost-benefit analyses showed that each dollar invested in high-quality daycare came back seven-fold

The Danish Situation

The Danish government strategy, *Equal Opportunities for all Children and Young People*, that aims at combating negative social inheritance (2006)

The Daycare Facilities Act from 2004, revised 2007, 2010, 2011

The act emphasizes children's learning and wellbeing in a holistic way and that *all* children must be given equal opportunities

Ref: Ministry of Social affairs, 2004; Ministry of Family and Consumers Affairs 2007; Ministry of Social Affairs 2010, 2011

Access to universal ECEC in DK

- 97 % of all 3-6 years old children
- 85% of all 0-2 years old children
- Costs payed by state – and parents
- Free access for the poorest

The VIDA Project

The aims of VIDA

Theoretical approach

Two programs

Teacher education and training

Effect study, some preliminary results

The aims of VIDA

- Can VIDA improve the well-being and learning of socially disadvantaged children in daycare?
 - What is the effect of supplementing such efforts with focused parental involvement?
 - What conditions in the pedagogical environment advance the opportunities for strengthening the life opportunities of socially disadvantaged children?
 - What is the significance of teachers' qualifications for cooperating in a knowledge-based and innovative way?
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The child in a contextual perspective

The individual

Wellbeing

Social emotional
competences
(e.g. SDQ)

Knowledge,
learning
competences

Learning

Social inclusive
learning
environment

Early childhood
education and
Care (ECEC)

Society

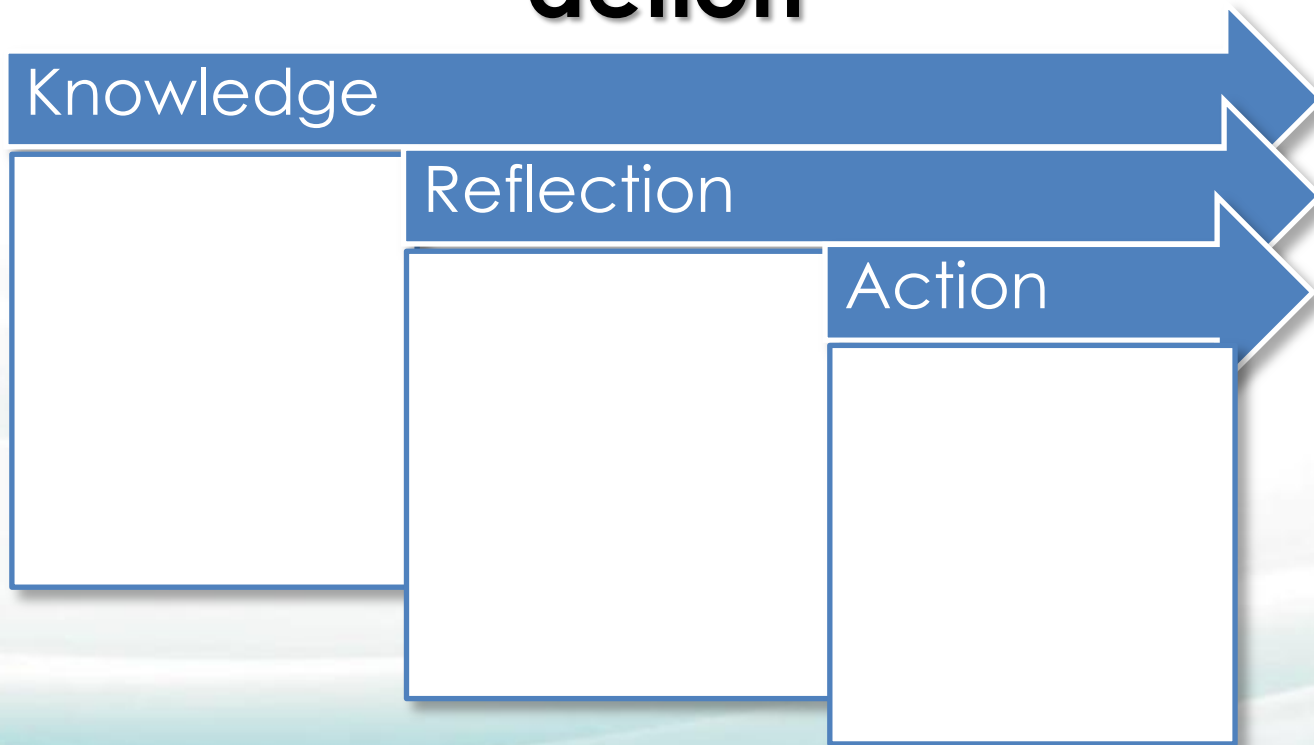
Two programs

- VIDA basis: A general program improving children's learning (cognitive, language etc.) and wellbeing (social skills). Based on Dewey's theory of learning, Rutter's theory of resilience and Bourdieu's theory of habitus
- VIDA + parents: The same program supplemented with a specific parental involvement program (also based on specific guidelines). Theoretical approach: The same learning theories supplemented with an empowerment approach

The VIDA-perspectives

- A resource-oriented and asset perspective on socially disadvantaged children where children are seen as individuals with potential and *not* a deficit
- A learning perspective that views participants in the program, i.e. children, teachers and parents, as active, reflective learners
- An organizational learning perspective, i.e. the upgrading of staff qualifications in the entire daycare center

Teacher education – transformation knowledge into action



VIDA Full Training Program

1st year

- 1 full day of training every 2 weeks over a period of 4 months
- Teaching, reflection and knowledge sharing
- Local analysis of practices

2nd year

- 1 full day of training every 2 weeks over a period of 4 months
- Working with implementation and experimentation
- 3 full days of evaluation and documentation activities

Workshops

- A 2-day residential course for managers + 1-day follow-up regarding facilitation (1st year)
- Repeated 2nd year

Design of the VIDA program – a RCT study

- VIDA is implemented in 80 intervention daycare centers in two groups(40 VIDA, 40 VIDA+) and compared to control group (40)
- Involves 7,000 children in general daycare, randomized control trials (RCT-design) at the institutional level (120 institutions) in four municipalities (2010 -2013)
- Includes both qualified daycare teachers and assistants

Measurements used Children 3-6 years

Effects of the intervention are measured through:

- The different domains of the “Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire” (SDQ)
- Different cognitive learning goals, e.g. language, science, and concentration (measurements inspired by EPPE,) and a cognitive test (MINI-CHIPS)
- Data are correlated with data from Statistics Denmark (civil registration no. of each child)

VIDA baseline SDQ Preliminary results

- The more educated the children's parents are, the fewer emotional, behavioral and peer relation problems the children have. They are less hyperactive and more pro-social.
- Children with parents from non-Western countries have fewer emotional and behavioral problems than children with ethnic Danish parents.
- Girls have significantly fewer emotional behavioral and peer-relation problems, are less hyperactive and more pro-social than boys.

VIDA compared to international programs

- All are model program experiments (RCT designs)
- Perry Preschool Program (US): 123 children, randomized control at the individual level. Cognitive learning program
- Abecedarian (US): 97 children, randomized control at the individual level. Learning and social development program
- Tools of the Mind (TOM) (US). 147 children, randomized control at the individual level. New learning program including quality parameters
- VIDA program: 7,000 children in universal daycare, randomized control at the institutional level. Contextual learning program including quality parameters and inclusion

VIDA differ from well-known international programs

- Efforts in universal daycare demands, that considerations concerning exclusion and inclusion mechanisms in practice are important aspects of the program
- Daycare institutions randomly selected. The project may therefore include employees that are not particular motivated nor ready for change
- Staff consists of both teachers that hold a professional bachelor's degree and teaching assistants who hold no degree.
- These aspects places a demand on the VIDA program to train the head of the daycare centers in facilitating in reflection and knowledge sharing processes for entire staff

Conclusion

Systematic efforts in early childhood can generate positive effects for socially disadvantaged children, both short-term and long-term effects

There is a need for working more with social inclusion – as we understand disadvantage in an institutional way (not individual) - as a part of intervention and a need to educate staff to work innovatively with experiments and in a reflective way

VIDA scaled up to an EU contexts. Promising design for implementation in a larger-scale context in Danish daycare also for younger children (0-3 years), and presumably also in daycare in other countries worldwide

A design for a future project

Intervention should place special emphasis on socially disadvantaged children and the risks of social exclusion from earlier ages and include parentenal efforts too

Authorites and researchers worldwide should colloborate and together identify, develop and adapt assessments in ECEC interventions seen in a learning and social inclusion perspective – and use quality meaurements in order to comparative studies

Focus should be on identifying the impact on teachers (Nurseries and family daycare) training in order to help improve *all* children's well-being (short term) and later performance well-becoming (long-term)

Further information

http://edu.au.dk/fileadmin/www.dpu.dk/e-boeger/VIDA_rapporter/Status_Report_1_GB.pdf

<http://edu.au.dk/en/research/research-projects/vida/>

<http://edu.au.dk/en/currently/event/artikel/enrichment-of-daycares-in-a-perspective-of-social-innovation/>

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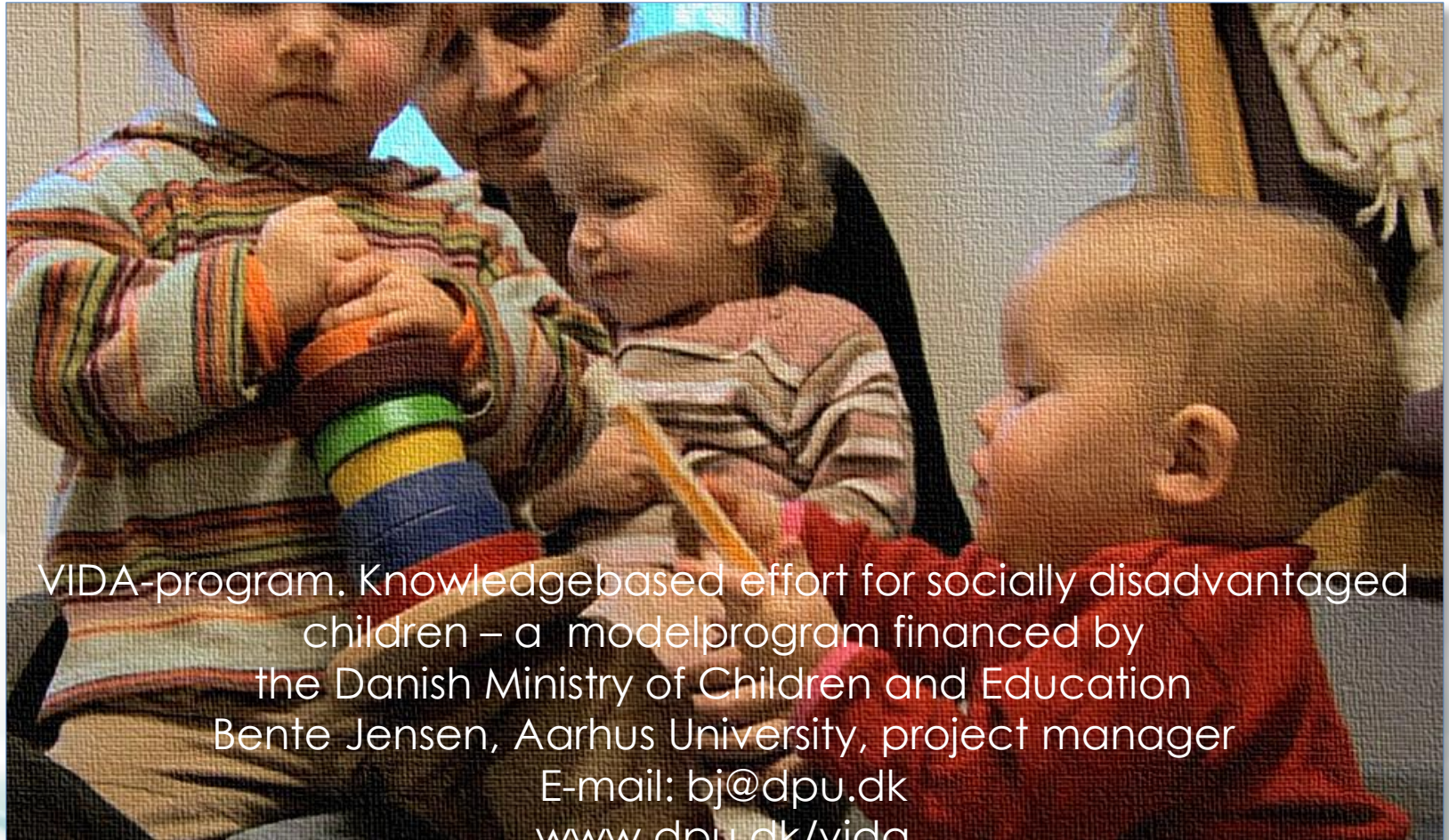


Photo from "That will teach them – the child from daycare to graduation", DPU 2009.