

Practice-Oriented Scientific Research, 2015-2017

**Ine Hostyn & Liselotte Vandenbussche**, Bachelor in Early Childhood Education and Care; Bachelor in pre-school education (Artevelde University College). **Anna-Riitta Mäkitalo & Sylvia Tast**, Bachelor of Social Services Degree Programme (Metropolia University of Applied Sciences)

## Background and goals

Continuous professional development is important for professionals working with young children (European Commission, 2014). The professionalization of child minders and pre-school teachers needs systematic reflection, both individually as in group (Peeters et al., 2015; Urban et al., 2011). The daily work with children is the ideal starting point for this reflection (Fukkink, & Tavecchio, 2010; Bracke, Hostyn, & Steverlyncx, 2014). Looking at children is the core of pedagogical documentation, a method to chart and support children's development (a. o. Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; Malavasi & Zoccatelli, 2013; Pianta et al., 2008). In this research our goal consisted of gaining insights and developing concrete methods to **use pedagogical documentation in the process of collegial learning**. The three research questions were: (1) How and why are professionals working with young children using pedagogical documentation in their work? (2) Which methods can support collegial group reflection using pedagogical documentation? (3) How can the exchange of pedagogical documentation among partner organisations support professional reflection and growth?

## Practice-oriented design research

Information was both gathered in Belgium (split ECEC system: daycare settings (0-2,5 years) and pre-schools (2,5-6 year) as in Finland (integrated system 0-6 years). During the first research phase professionals (child minders, pre-school teachers, coordinators and schools' heads) were interviewed in 1-1 conversations and focus groups to map the ways in which they are working with pedagogical documentation. During the second research phase, focusing on collegial exchange within an organization, and the third research phase, focusing on collegial exchange between organizations, tools were designed. They were tested and refined in cooperation with two Belgian daycare settings and two pre-schools, and four Finnish daycare settings. After *informed consent* data were gathered through focus groups during and after the design process, through reports and a non-prestructured logbook. The data were analysed using a qualitative analysis according to grounded theory, member check and resonance groups.

## Results

The **first research phase** showed that pedagogical documentation is being used for three main goals: to show (facts and growth), to stimulate others to think, and to facilitate interaction (between adult and child, but also among adults). Those three functions were interpreted similarly for children, parents, professionals and the neighbourhood, and the interaction among those groups. The **second research phase** yielded insights about the conditions supporting reflective collegial learning while using pedagogical documentation. Simple instructions are of utmost importance. A playful, competitive element is not necessary: learning from each other is a gift in itself. It is important that both topic starter as buddy may learn from each other. Another added value is the tool allowing for the topic starter to ask a question without sharing a document first. Preparing the exchange individually, independent from time and place, proved to be efficient, but writing could not be the focus. A structured group discussion proved essential as a trigger to yield concrete insights and actions influencing one's own practice.

During the **third research phase** the participants exchanged documentation across organizations (Belgium-Finland or across partner organizations in one's own country). Four results come to the fore. 1/ The exchange with an external partner is an important motivator to present oneself as a professional / an organization (an exercise in reflecting, with a value in itself) and provoke questions. However, the first enthusiasm is followed by a range of emotions (anger, frustration), creating openness to exchange documents within one's own organization. Longing for the greener grass, and getting feedback from an outside colleague from the other side, invites to see one's direct colleagues as inspiratory. 2/ The input from a concrete pedagogical document creates a shared theme and space where colleagues can meet and learn in safety. The confrontation with the other stimulates a growing professional identity. 3/ The step towards a concrete action has to be deliberately initiated so as to create output and satisfaction in one's professional growth. 4/ By collegial exchange and discussion the initial documentation becomes more pedagogical in nature. ProuD! thus creates an entry for professionals working with young children to work with pedagogical documentation in an accessible and supported way.

## Conclusion

This research project yields instruments supporting the process of reflective collegial learning using pedagogical documentation. Building on the results from the three research phases a ProuD! toolbox is developed, which can be used within an organisation and across organisations, and which can be accessed in Dutch, English and Finnish via <http://proud-research.weebly.com>. After a start meeting in a group of colleagues, where agreements are made and everyone presents him/herself using a ProuD! profile (step 1), a pair may exchange documents and insights via e-mail or in real life, using a simple A-B-C structure (step 2). When

this individual exchange is done a couple of times, documents and insights are shared and actions are put forward in a collegial group discussion supported by a P-R-O-U-D structure (step 3). This cycle can be renewed over and over again, leading to individual reflection and exchange, group reflection and pedagogical documentation support each other.

## Pedagogical research documentation

Look! The growth and insights during the research process in a pedagogical documentation:



## Thanks

Many thanks to our co-researchers from De Knuffelboom XL (Ghent), De Speelboom and 't Trudeken (Wetteren), De Kleine Icarus (Ghent), and EDUGO Lourdes en Meerhout (Oostakker) (Belgium), Varistoniitty, Pikku-Ravuri and Ravuri Early Childhood Education centers, from Vantaa (Finland). Thanks to all parents and children cooperating in this project, and last but not least our appreciation for the useful input from the members of our advisory boards.

## Literature

- Bracke, G., Hostyn, I., & Steverlynck, A. (2014). *VerBEELDing. Interactie in beeld, interactie in gesprek. Beelden als motor voor groei in interactie met jonge kinderen*. Eindrapport PWO, Gent: Arteveldehogeschool.
- Dahlberg, G.; Moss, P., & Pence, A. (1999). *Beyond quality in early childhood education and care: Postmodern perspectives*. London: Falmer Press;
- Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books.
- Domitrovich, C. E., Gest, S. D., Gill, S., Bierman, K. L., Welsh, J. A., & Jones, D. (2009). Fostering high-quality teaching with an enriched curriculum and professional development support: the Head Start REDI program. *American Educational Research Journal*, 46 (2), pp. 567–597.
- European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014. *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe. 2014 Edition*. Eurydice and Eurostat Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Fukkink, R. & Tavecchio, L. (2010). Effects of Video Interaction Guidance on early childhood teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26, 1652-1659.
- Malavasi, L., & Zoccatelli, B. (2013). *Documenteren voor jonge kinderen*. Amsterdam: SWP.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to think like an adult: Core concepts of transformation theory. In J. Mezirow & Associates, *Learning as transformation* (pp. 3-33). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Peeters, J., Cameron, C., Lazzari, A., Peleman, B. Budginaite, I Hauari, H. and Siarova, H. (2015). *Early childhood care and education: working conditions, training and quality of services A systematic review*. Luxemburg Eurofound. Publication Office of the European Union.
- Pianta, R. C., Mashburn, A. J., Downer, J. T., Hamre, B. K., & Justice, L. (2008). Effects of web-mediated professional development resources on teacher–child interactions in ore-kindergarten classrooms. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 23, pp. 431–451.
- Sheridan, S. M., Edwards, C. P., Marvin, C. A., & Knoche, L. L. (2009). Professional development in early childhood programs: process issues and research needs. *Early Education and Development*, 20 (3), pp. 377–401.
- Urban, M., Vandenbroeck, M., Peeters, J., Lazzari, A. & Van Laere, K. (2011). *CoRe. Competence requirements in Early Childhood Education and Care. A study for the European Commission Directorate-General for education and culture*. Final Report. Brussels: European Commission, DG Education and Culture.