

National training program

*Sharing Good Practices of Working with Culturally Diverse
Groups of Children at Preschool Settings to Develop Language
and Promote Integration*



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1. The Title of National Training Programs:

Sharing good practices of working with culturally diverse groups of children at preschool settings to develop language and promote integration.

2. Contents of the training program

The training program was divided in two parts; one aimed at professionals already working at preschools in the province and one aimed at students in two different grades at an Upper Secondary School, studying to become child care professionals. During the interviews in the first stage of the project, two methods of working with language acquisition with diverse groups of children were mentioned, QR-codes and TAKK, a system of signs that is used as a scaffolding tool together with the spoken word. Both methods assist all children but particularly those with delayed speech, such as many of the non-native speakers of Swedish. For the training we asked Karin Wennberg, a seasoned preschool teacher, to hold the workshops and share her experiences and also educate the other teachers by motivation them with examples from the real world, leave them with a desire to educate themselves more after our training was over.

Childcare professionals, day 1

This part of the project involved thirteen child care professionals representing ten different public preschools in the region as well as two principals. The preschool teachers were selected because they belong to a network of teachers who meet regularly to support and encourage cooperation between the different schools to ensure that the children are getting an equal preschool education throughout the region.

Three weeks prior the planned workshops, questions were mailed out to the preschool teachers for them to make observations and talk to the other staff at their place of work. They were asked to bring notes and be prepared to present and discuss these questions at the workshop.



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The questions:

- How does the staff work to develop the children's language skills? Are there specific activities that are aimed at language development or is it something that saturates all activities? Explain and give examples.
- How do you work with children with another mother tongue than Swedish? Do you have experiences with children who speak different languages and what routines and procedures do you have in communicating with the parents? Explain and give examples.
- Is there staff who speaks other languages than Swedish at your place of work? What are the attitudes about other native languages than Swedish being represented amongst the staff at the preschool? What part does the native languages of the refugees have in language development and integration? Think both short and long term, when the child is in other schools.

Good practices

Through the conducted interviews, we found three different methods used by the teachers that we wanted to share with the other child-care professionals; using QR-codes, using signs as a scaffolding tool and sensory based learning utilizing the children's urge to touch and experience the world through all their senses, to expand their vocabulary and their interest in the world surrounding them.

Workshop

The workshop started off with a lecture by Karin Wennberg, preschool teacher at Lillberget Preschool in Söderhamn, Sweden, who has eighteen years of experience in working with refugee



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children and has many good ideas and examples of tried and tested activities, materials and attitudes to share. She gave examples of different ways to use the QR-codes both to stimulate language learning and to communicate more effectively with parents. She talked about using signs as a tool in the classroom to promote effective communication with all children and to lessen frustrations that can come with not being able to put words on what they want and need. She also showed examples of letting the children use many different senses to engage in vocabulary learning with words describing texture and volume, for example, and talked about the importance of this in the preschool setting.

After Karin's lecture, Maria Stigsvala, teacher at the Upper Secondary School's program for child care professionals, presented her experience of sharing good examples with her students in the child care program and talked about her students that would soon go out to different preschools to do their work based training and they would now have some ideas, skills and tools to use and to spread to the child-care professionals they would meet.

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Preschool teacher Karin Wennberg talks about using sign-language as scaffolding at the preschool to support language development and communication skills.



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Karin shows how they use QR-codes on tablet computers to help both in the classroom and in communications with parents.

The preschool staff use tablet computers in structured activities as a tool to spark creativity and enthusiasm in the students. They are used in different language activities, such as phonics and storytelling as well as documentation of their daily activities to share with parents. These books give many examples on how to use the tablets in pedagogical activities both indoors and outdoors.



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Surfplattan som pedagogiskt verktyg (Wahlström 2015), *Surfplatta utomhus- Lärande, lek och utforskande* (Kallin 2015), *Mediepedagogik på barnens villkor* (Lundgren 2014)



Preschool staff during the lectures.



Maria Stigsvala sharing her experiences.



After the large group discussions, the preschool teachers were divided into smaller groups where they shared the examples they brought from their own preschools. They were asked to take notes and be ready to share in a large group discussion later.



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After the small group discussions, there was a large group sharing and reflecting session where the teachers shared the good examples from their place of work as well as discussions about new things that they had learnt during the day. The groups wrote down summaries of their discussions and shared with everybody.

Day 2

We purchased a book called *Läroplanen, barnen och jag* (Strandberg, 2016) for each the teachers, in which the different parts of the preschool curriculum are discussed in terms of true life situations taking place in preschools today. The book gives advice and ideas about how to be a pedagogical leader and work in an inclusive way in the multicultural classroom. The preschool teacher read different chapters and presented it in the large group, where different aspects were discussed and experiences shared.



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Students at the Upper Secondary School

There were twenty-two students present for the session at the Upper Secondary School of Torsbergsgymnasiet in Bollnäs. Both first and second year students from the child care program. These students will benefit from learning about these good examples before they enter the workforce and will be prepared to share tips and ideas in working with all children, and especially those with another mother tongue than Swedish, when they do their workplace training during their three-year education in the program.



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*Karin shows the book *Vad har hänt här?* (Hygrell 2016)*

The workshop started off with a 90-minute lecture by Karin Wennberg where she shared her experiences and good examples of working to promote language development and integration in a preschool setting. There were many spontaneous questions and comments by the students during the lecture and a large group sharing of ideas and experiences afterwards.



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The students later had a 90-minute session where they discussed how to promote languages and integration at preschools, with the help of guided questions from us.

3. Outcomes:

With the preparation work done by the the preschool teachers, the workshops with lectures, shared experiences and reading/sharing of purchased book, we have passed on good examples from our initial interviews to teachers at ten different preschools in the region, ensuring it will affect the work of many more. We have chosen preschool teachers who excel at their job and therefor belong to a network of teachers working to sustain good quality and pedagogical excellence at the public preschools in the region. We also included two principals in the workshops, so they can learn and promote these good examples to other principals. The three most important examples of good practice were using QR-codes as a pedagogical tool both with children and parents, using sings to scaffold language learning and using sensory learning, involving different senses to maximize language development.

We also held workshops with students who are studying to become child care workers and gave them the opportunity to learn about tried and tested ways to include the children with other mother tongues than Swedish in the pedagogical work in the classroom. They were given the chance to learn from an experienced teacher who has been working with heterogeneous language groups for eighteen years, trying to promote as much language as possible before the children reach elementary school. This will give them tools and ideas that they can bring to their future workplace training and further along into their profession.



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These activities have helped us spread the good examples of working with preschool children to promote language acquisition and integration, both to staff working at preschools today and those who will be leaders in the classroom in the near future.

4. Materials:

Hygrell, Dorothea (2016). *Vad har hänt här?* Stockholm: Opal

Kallin, Eva-Mari (2015). *Surfplatta utomhus-Lärande, lek och utforskande*. Stockholm: Natur och Kultur.

Lundgren, Ulla-Karin (2014). *Mediepedagogik på barnens villkor*. Stockholm: Lärarförlaget.

Strandberg, Leif (2016). *Läroplanen, barnen och jag*. Stockholm: Studentlitteratur

Wahlström, Elisabeth (2015). *Surfplattan som pedagogiskt verktyg*. Stockholm: Natur och Kultur.

QR-code readers used:

QR-reader (free)

Cloud QR (small fee)

QR Code Reader (free)



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