

SIGNAL – ICELAND

Rational:

Although international reports (OECD, 2001, 2006) state the importance of collaboration between parents and early childhood education services, research indicates that there is a lack of interconnectedness between children's experiences in provisions and their homes (Hughes & Mac Naughton, 2001) and that early childhood services tend to inform parents rather than communicating with them (Elliot, 2003; Einarsdottir & Garðarsdóttir, 2009). In Iceland participation with parents is stated in the National curriculum guidelines as the core of a qualitative preschool education. However, preschool staff regards working with parents being the most difficult part of their work (Einarsdottir, Jónsdóttir, & Garðarsdóttir, 2013). Children benefit from an active cooperation between professionals and parents, which argues for research where parents, teachers and children are involved in a mutual cooperation and collaboration.

Aim:

The aim of the project is to enable parents, children and professionals to find a joint approach to education and learning and to improve the quality of the pedagogical relationship among these three target groups.

Implementation:

A participatory action research project will be conducted in one preschool in the city of Reykjavík. The preschool has approximately 50 children in two playgroups and 13 educators.

Action research in schools concerns action and transforming practices. Those who participate in action research focus on developing and improving their own practices. New methods, developed in part by the participants themselves, are tested. Records are made of the actions that are taken, and data are gathered and analyzed throughout the study period (McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 2003). Participatory action research also aims at empowering the participants and supporting them in transforming and rethinking their practices (Einarsdottir, 2011; Mac Naughton, 2009, 2011; Yelland, Lee, O'Rourke, & Harrison, 2008).

The study will be divided into four phases—preparation, planning changes, implementation, and evaluation—that can be seen to fuse and become integrated with each other. During the preparation and planning phase the educators will be giving the opportunity to attend an in-service course at the University. Common courses for staff and parents in the preschool will also be held during the period of the study. Throughout the course the focus of the collaboration will be on the well-being of the children and their perspectives and voices will be heard. Thus, the team members (children, parents, educators) will meet in an equal partnership.