

V Seminar on Psychology and Guidance in School Context

Quality Inclusive Early Childhood Education for all Children



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Basic elements for engagement, development and learning

Children are born wired for feelings and ready to engage, develop and learn

Nurturing relationships are essential for engagement, development and learning

Environmental factors set the scene for engagement, development and learning

Society is changing and the need of young children must be addressed in perspective of today and the future

Interaction among science, practice and policy is needed to create a real opportunities for inclusion for all children



A criteria for evaluating the health of a society is the “concern of one generation for the next”

The children are our future

A preschool teacher that finishes her/his education today - 2017, will be active in this role in 40 years, - 2057.

The children she/he meets at that time will be adults by 2074 and be active in society until 2125????



“It is said that the merit of any nation may be judged by how it treats its children....”

“Early childhood education and care (ECEC) can bring a wide range of benefits – for children, parents and society at large. But the magnitude of The benefits is conditional on Quality” (OECD, 2012, Starting strong)



The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) Project

Siraj-Blatchford et al (2004)

The key findings show that **good outcomes for children** are linked to early years settings that:

- View **cognitive and social development** of children as complementary and do not prioritize one over the other.
- Have **strong leadership and long-serving staff**
- Provide a strong educational focus with **trained teachers** working alongside and supporting less qualified staff.
- Provide children with a mixture of practitioner initiated group work and learning through free play
- Provide adult-child interactions that involve '**sustained shared thinking**' and open-ended questioning to extend children's thinking.
- Have practitioners with **good curriculum knowledge** combined with **knowledge and understanding of how young children learn**.
- Have **strong parental involvement**, especially in terms of shared educational aims with parents.
- Provide **formative feedback** to children during activities and provide regular reporting and discussion with parents about their child's progress.
- Ensure **behaviour policies** in which staff support children in rationalising and talking through their conflicts.
- Provide **differentiated learning opportunities** that meet the needs of particular individuals and groups of children e.g. bilingual, special needs, girls/boys etc.

ECEC benefits - quality

- Social and economic benefits
- Better child well-being and learning outcomes
- More equitable outcomes and reduction of poverty
- Increased intergenerational social mobility
- Higher female labor market participation and gender equality
- Increased fertility rates
- Better social and economic development for society at large
- ...
- ...

A growing number of European and international studies have shown that the positive benefits of ECEC are directly conditional on “quality”.



Quality in the inclusive preschool

- What are the quality characteristics in preschool?
- Are provisions for all children with special/additional needs included in quality characteristics?
- How can we cover provisions for all children with quality indicators?
- We need a common language for quality in IECE?



Inclusion = being in preschool and participating in activities

It is necessary to be in preschool (attend) but not sufficient for inclusion.

Children also have to *be engaged* in the activities and interactions in the inclusive preschool.

Engagement is defined as active participation of children in preschool activities or routines or as appropriate interactions with the environment.





**INCLUSIVE
EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION**

3-year (2015-2017) Early Childhood Education project with focus upon early childhood educational experiences that have an important impact on a person's life – provision of high quality early childhood education has positive effects on achievement and social adaptation of children.

Key question:

What are the main characteristics of quality inclusive early childhood education for all children?

Ecosystem model of Early Childhood Education

A self-reflection tool for the IECE environment has been developed for practitioners to use.

Ecosystem Model of Quality in IECE

Inspired by combination of:

- Structure-process-outcome framework (OECD, 2009; Pinta et al, 2009).
- Ecological systems framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1999; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Odom et al., 2004).
- Inclusive education framework (European Agency, 2015).

Enables collaboration among policy makers, researchers and practitioners – a common language for quality.

Quality framework: Structure, process and outcome

- **Structure**

- the environment in which an activity or intervention takes place

- **Process**

- the specific means through which changes occur

- **Outcome**

- make the effects of actions and interventions visible

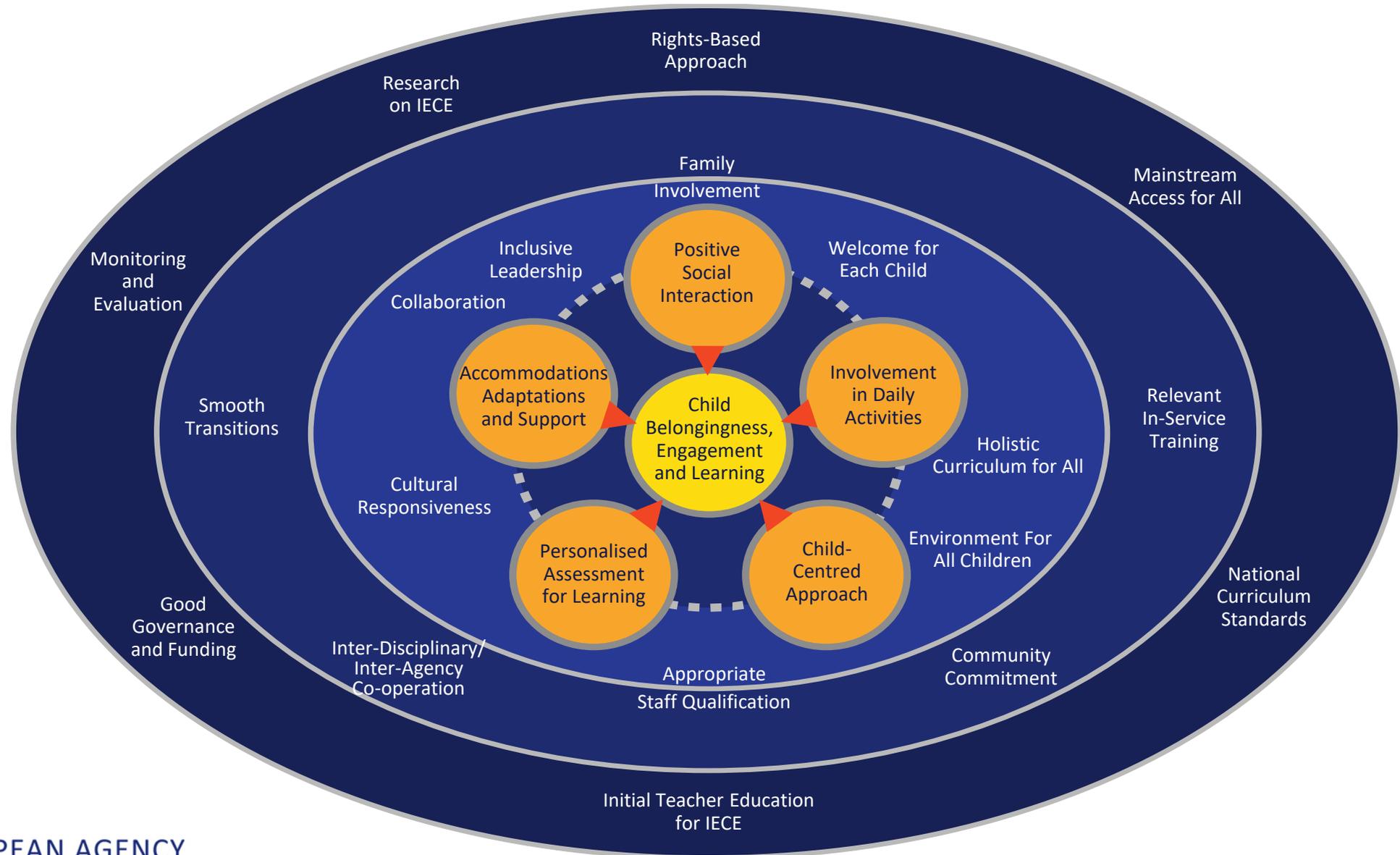
Inclusive Early Childhood Education 2015-2017

Focus on five thematic areas:

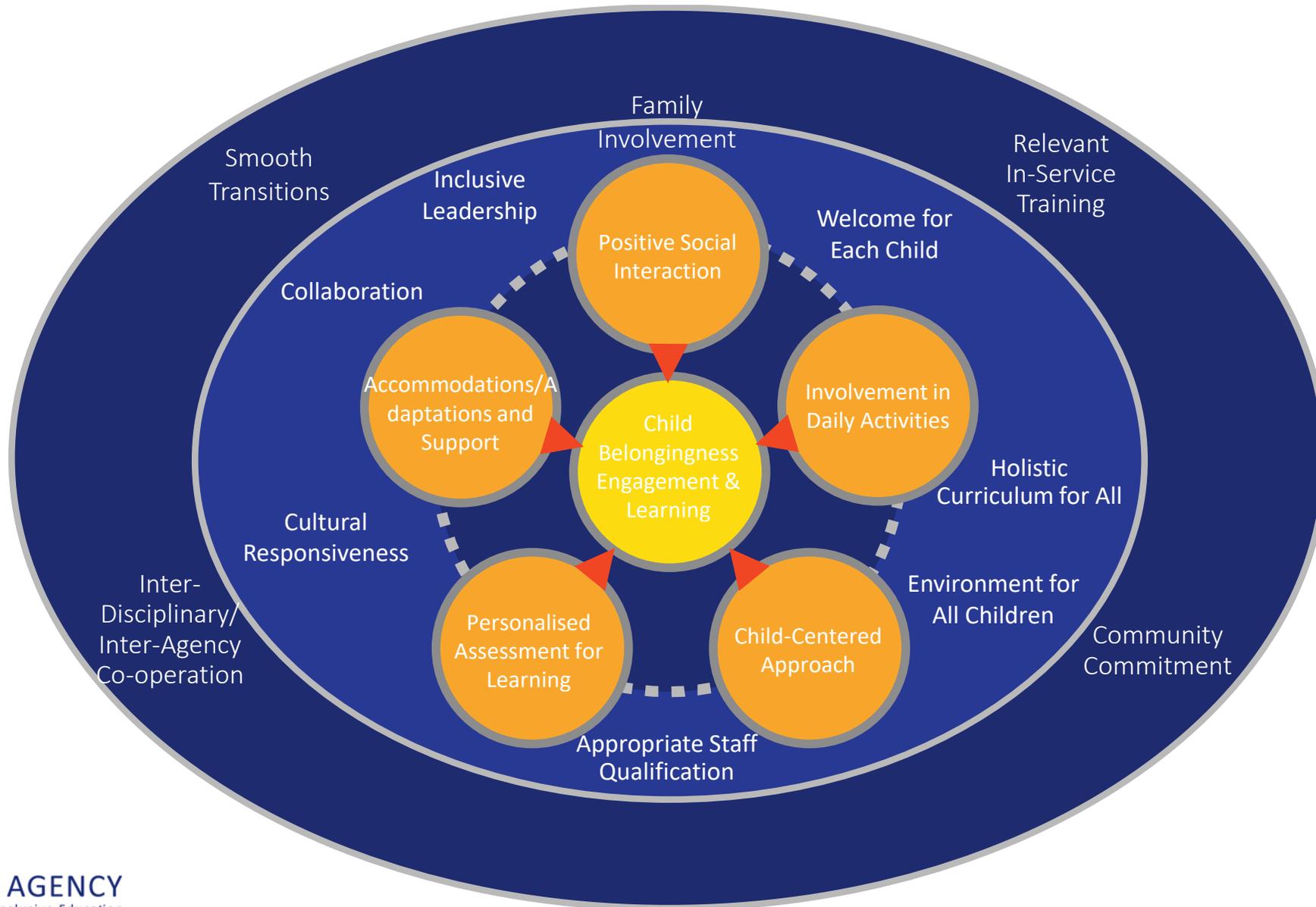
- Access
- Workforce
- Curriculum/content
- Evaluation and monitoring
- Governance and funding



STRUCTURES AT REGIONAL/NATIONAL LEVEL



STRUCTURES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY



STRUCTURES WITHIN THE SETTING



Structural factors – being in Early Childhood Education

Structural aspects are not a
guarantee for high quality

PROCESSES WITHIN THE SETTING

Children are directly involved in these five processes that enable them to belong, to be engaged and to learn



Process factors –
affecting children's engagement while being in ECEC

Process quality is more predictive of child outcomes
than structural indicators

Process aspects is not a guarantee for high quality

Inclusion OUTCOMES

Good structures and process are necessary but not sufficient for high quality

Child belongingness, engagement and learning is directly related to high quality



Preschool in Sweden

The context of the Swedish preschool

Is Swedish preschool inclusive?



Sweden

Families and working parents

Fertility rate: 1,9 children born/woman (2014 est.)

81 percent of mothers work outside home

92 percent of fathers work outside home

Each set of parents gets 480 days of paid parental leave per child, which must be claimed before the child turns eight.

- 390 days full parental leave, 80 percent of income (up till €4700 per month)
- 90 days - daily sum of money, same for all
- Most parental leave is taken by mothers.
- Men now claim about 24 per cent of all parental leave taken.
- Child allowance 0-16 years, €115 per month



Preschool in Sweden

- Democracy forms the foundation of the preschool. It should promote ***all children's development and learning***, and a *lifelong desire to learn*.
- The basic principle guiding **all** Swedish education, from childcare to the transition period, is access to equivalent education for all, according to the Swedish Education Act (2010:800, 4 §).
- Pre-school is provided for children 1-5 years – when parents work, study, are unemployed or on parental leave for siblings.
- Children in need of special support should not be treated or defined as a group that is any different from other pupils and their rights are not stated separately.
- The concept inclusion is not mentioned in the curriculum for preschool



Preschool in Sweden

Preschool is a fundamental component of the welfare system

There is a focus on basic values in the curriculum such as playing together, tolerance and consideration for others.

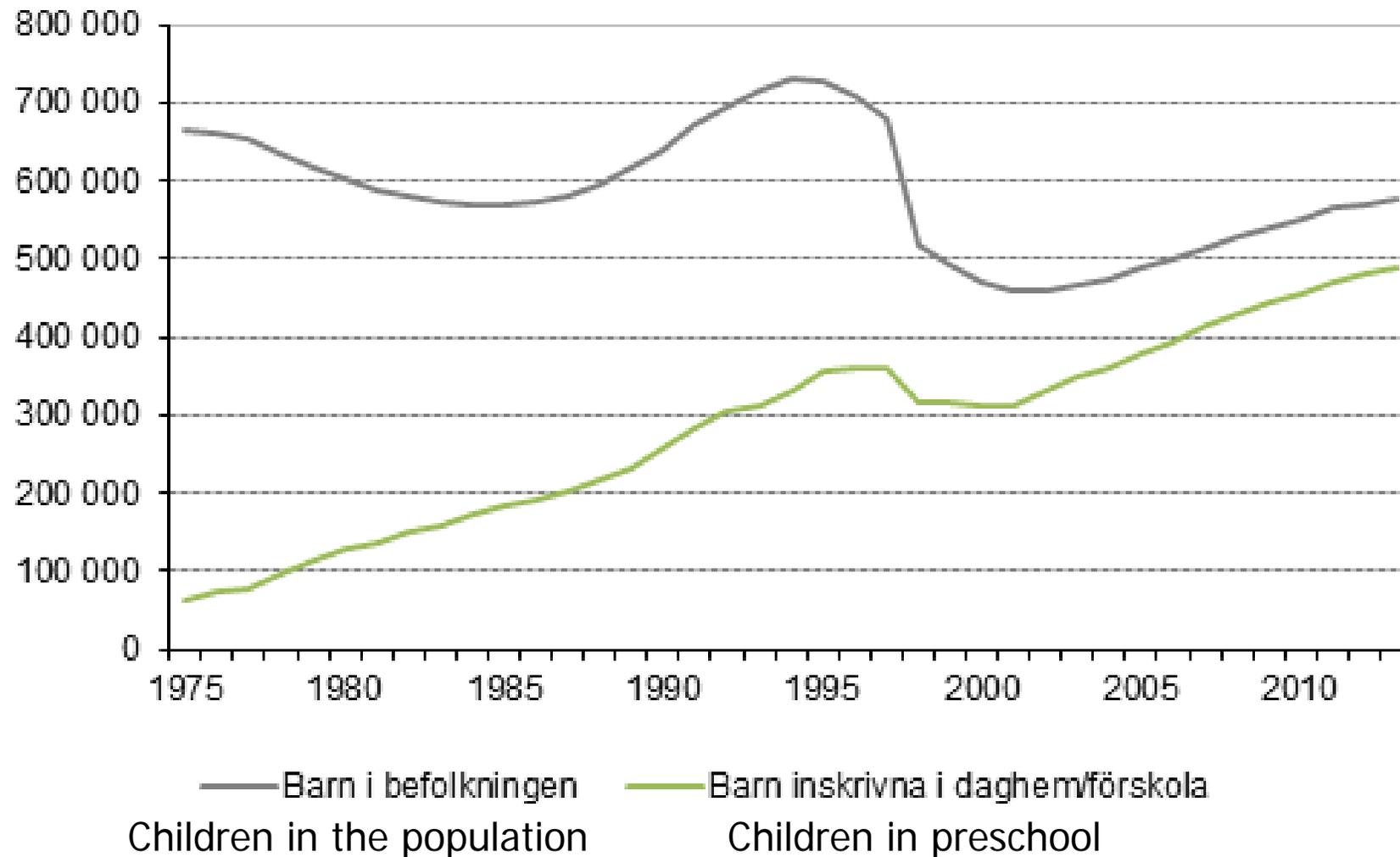
Responsibility of the municipalities to ensure that all children are offered a place.

The majority of children in need of special support, due to a permanent condition or due to temporary elevated needs, are **included** in a regular preschool contexts.

Swedish preschool (ECEC) is affordable for everyone.

Fees are calculated according to income with low-income families paying nothing while the costs for more affluent parents are capped at SEK 1,287 (about €140) per month.

Almost all children attend preschool 1-5 years of age



Size of group and number of children per staff

År	Genomsnittligt antal barn	
	per grupp	per årsarbetare
1985	13,4	4,3
1990	13,8	4,4
1995	16,7	5,5
2003	17,2	5,4
2004	17,2	5,4
2005	17,0	5,2
2006	16,7	5,1
2007	16,7	5,2
2008	16,9	5,3
2009	16,8	5,3
2010	16,9	5,4
2011	16,8	5,3
2012	16,9	5,3
2013	16,8	5,3

Swedish preschool is characterized by

- Children spend relatively many hours a day at preschool from early age
- The proportion of staff with university training is relatively high
- Relatively small groups in comparison to other countries
- Preschools contains many small rooms rather than one large hall
- Much time spent outdoors
- New technology is increasingly used in preschools, digital cameras, interactive boards



Pedagogical activities (National curriculum)

- Pedagogical activities should be related to the needs of **all children** in the preschool.
- Children who occasionally or on a more permanent basis need more support and stimulation than others should receive such **support in relation to their needs** and circumstances so that they are able to develop as well as possible.
- **All children** should be able to experience the satisfaction that comes from making progress, overcoming difficulties, and experiencing themselves as a valued member of the group.

Pedagogical activities

- A large proportion of time spent in free play requires that staff can use naturally occurring opportunities for teaching
- Large proportion of free play increase demands on self-regulation in children
- Children must learn how to interact with peers and in groups from an early age
- A large proportion of children have other languages than Swedish as their first language (30% of the children have at least one parent born in another country)



Prevalence of preschool children in need of special support

3.7% of the children formally identified as children in need of special support

13.6% of the children required additional support to function in preschool according to preschool teachers

(Lillvist and Granlund, 2010)



Activities in preschool for children in need of additional support



Activities within the childgroup

Adaptation of adult's actions – being close
individualised routines
instruction

Small group activities

Planned activities together with peer who are "playmotors"

Specific activities for children in need of special/additional support

Special training for language training and motor problems

Focus on social interaction with peers were not common



Challenges for preschool inclusion in Sweden

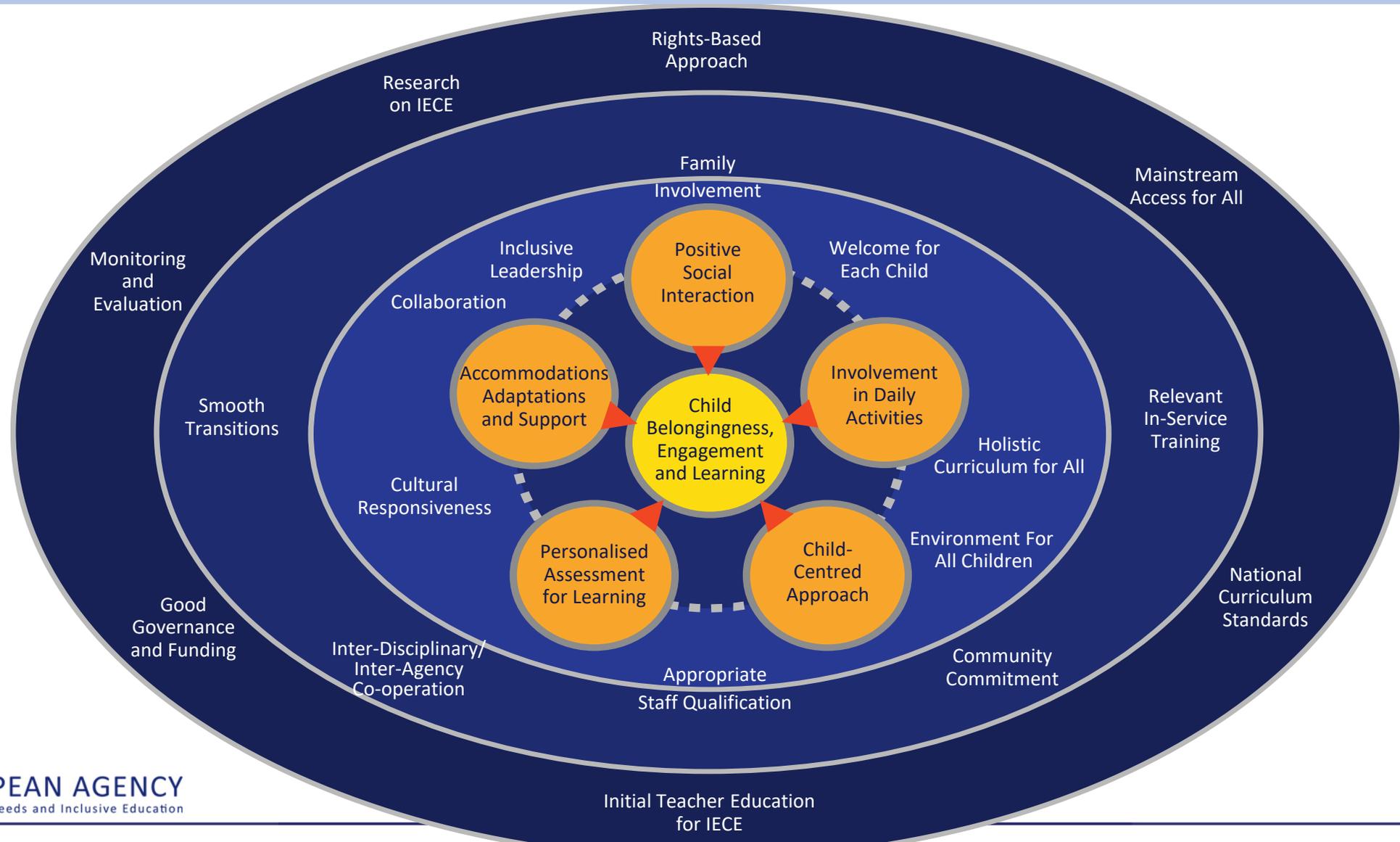
- The preschool is a naturalistic environment for children in Sweden from an early age (1-5) providing general activities for all children *and* special/additional support to some children.
- Children with disabilities (formally identified) tend to receive support in relation to their needs but not always children who are not formally identified
- Risk for not attending to needs of individual children.
- A dilemma to provide all children with good possibilities for learning and at the same time attend to differences in needs between children.
- Inclusion – means attendance and engagement
- Participation in preschool in the form of *being there* is a main goal that is reached but participation in form of *engagement* needs to be further researched and attended to in practice

Universal indicators of quality in preschool

- What are the quality characteristics in preschool?
- Are provisions for all children with special/additional needs included in quality characteristics?
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The ecosystem model of inclusive early childhood education – a framework for quality assessment



Inclusion OUTCOMES

Child belongingness, engagement and learning is related to high quality

Quality indicators must embrace outcomes on both group and individual level and cover all children



Strategies to promote inclusion

With the goal of promoting all children's engagement in preschool, what are *effective* strategies?

With the goal of specifically promoting engagement of children that show low levels of engagement, what would be *effective* strategies?

Factors that influence children's engagement in preschool – international study

Aims

- *What kinds of preschool environments do children with and without a need for special support experience?*
- *How are environmental characteristics related to children's participation in preschool activities?*
- *Do the relations between environmental factors and participation differ for children with typical development and children in need of special support?*

Interaction among science, practice and policy is needed to create a world for all growing children

Since we have so many theories, curricula and instruments available, why are there great challenges in Early Childhood Education related to inclusion?

- Maybe from theories to practice there is a long road to walk...
- Maybe from theories to policy there is a long road to walk...
- Maybe from theories and practice to policy there is a long road to walk...





Thank you!

