Professional Guidance: Citizenship Education and Identity in courses for those who will work with Pre-school children

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CiCe Professional Guidelines

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Children's Identity & Citizenship in Europe

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Contents

Introduction

This booklet is a result of cooperative work on a European project concerning children's identity and citizenship. The working group included people from Denmark, France, Iceland and Slovenia. Our narratives in some way reflect the pedagogy in those countries, but our philosophy is also based on the 'Code of quality in early childhood programme' (on the following page), which we put to and was agreed by the delegates from all over Europe at the CiCe Conference in Braga (2003). Our aim is to put forward some ideas for educators of preschool teachers to use when teaching about citizenship and democracy in preschools.

Definitions of citizenship that are drawn on in the booklet are clarified, and approaches to issues concerning citizenship are introduced.

We use throughout this booklet the terms *preschool* and *early childhood institutions* for institutions for children up to the age of six, as most children in Europe start compulsory education the year they turn six. We use the terms *early childhood educator* and *preschool teacher* for the personnel working with those children.

The booklet is divided into two parts. In part one we present our theoretical framework and in the second part we offer two different approaches working in early childhood programs with citizenship. The first is Alistair Ross's (2003) issue-based model of learning political concepts. The second approach uses narratives to analyse social relations and/or working methods. We have collected narratives from four different countries. The narratives are used to interpret and reflect on a deeper understanding. We recommend Osler and Starkey's (1999) work on citizenship as a framework to interpret these narratives. The narratives reflect in some way our code of quality in early childhood programs which is presented in Part One.

Part I: the pedagogic frame

As part of our analysis, we present first what could be called our pedagogical creed. This set of beliefs - a code of quality - is constructed from the responses to a set of issues presented through a questionnaire to a group of CiCe members drawn from across Europe. Most agreed upon the following as being important for early childhood programs in Europe as a foundation for quality and democracy.

A Code of Quality in early childhood programs

- All children should be in an educational setting that enriches their life experiences, allows learning to collaborate with others, and allows them to become a strong person.
- To further the process of democratisation, it is important that children are able to participate in a democratic society within an early childhood program from an early age. In this way children develop both a sense of their self-worth and of the worth of relationships with others.
- The skilled preschool teacher should be able to choose pedagogical methods and philosophy in line with recent knowledge about how children learn.
- No single educational method is preferable to another. Methods must depend on the cultural context of children and their families as well as professional knowledge. This freedom places a large responsibility on each teacher to always act professionally and ethically.
- Part of being in a democratic society is to have the right to be oneself and to be acknowledged as a person with personal needs. Children's backgrounds - social, cultural, economical or racial - should not be held against them in any way.

Goals and Tasks

In accordance with this creed, we present the goals and tasks that we think fundamental for early childhood programs to address as the basis of education for democracy. We believe each child's struggle to become an active citizen is based on the child's ability to:

- understand self and others;
- have the power to recognise ones' own and others' feelings;
- have the capacity to negotiate with others and oneself;
- develop creativity, communicative ability and critical thinking, in order to strengthen their self-image, security and ability to resolve problems in a peaceful manner;
- participate in a group with peers, and to learn from the group.

Education always takes place in a specific context, built upon existing reality. For the most part it is possible to agree upon a certain basic ideology that applies to all early childhood education. We look upon this code as a basic ideology rooted in democracy. An early childhood institution that has the freedom to choose the working method described here is likely offer a quality education leading to democratic awareness and capacity.

Citizenship in early childhood

Citizenship for young children - is there really such a concept? What could citizenship for the young child consist of? Would it be different from citizenship for an adult?

We believe that the child is a citizen from birth, but also that the young child has to grow into the responsibility and rights that are part of being an active member of a democratic society. In one way, being a citizen is different for young children than for adults. The child has to develop and grow into an active citizen, working from experience and trying out different roles, gradually taking on an increasingly active role.

One of the aims of every early childhood program should be to teach the child to become an active citizen in a way that does not conform to their surroundings, but is imaginative and exploratory. This emphasis on experience in early childhood institutions reflects certain values that firstly indicate that the child is looked on as an active citizen from the beginning, and secondly show that children are trusted to make decisions concerning their everyday life, which will lead them to being able to make decisions about wider society. Early childhood institutions that exercise a democratic pedagogy give children the sense that everybody is part of society, and that they are valued, included and have a say.

This view of the early childhood institution's role in building up citizenship corresponds with Ocaña's (2003) definition: citizenship is not a passive condition (simply enjoying a set of rights and freedoms) but should be active, based on political and civic participation. He points out that historically national citizenship has been constructed through social participation, and that this involvement has often adopted the shape of clashes and conflicts. Over time, this led to the development of a set of civil, political and social rights and duties, conscience and identity. This can also be said to be the cultural and historical route that early childhood educators follow when educating and talking about citizenship, and how children become active members of their societies.

Korsgaard *et al*. (2001) explains democratic citizenship in a similar way. The first right of a citizen is to establish a law and the first duty of the same citizen is to respect that law. Medve_ (in Krofli_, 2004) states that while education should prepare children for the social reality of life, it can never truly embraces the realistic conditions of life. In the end, therefore, education is always a discourse of a person with values. For the early childhood educator who aims to work for democracy, the journey must therefore begin with a clarification of values: which values are important, and why do we want those values transferred to our children?

Learning to relate to other people

It is human nature to respond to others and to seek responsiveness from others. The first people the new-born interacts with are normally her or his parents. In early childhood children form relationships with siblings, but also with other children beyond the immediate family. The child's network of relationships increases with preschool teachers, classmates, neighbours and so on.

From the very beginning the *feeling of belonging* is very important for attitudes toward life. The earliest attachments act as prototypes for all later relationships. The securely attached baby uses the mother (the caregiver) as a safe base, and this seems to predict future social competence, for the insecurely attached child is often hostile and isolated (Ainsworth, 1978). The importance of relations with others in early childhood is stressed in all developmental theories which deal with the domain of psychosocial development. The roots for basic trust or mistrust are found in the early years (Erikson, 1977).

It should be stressed that the child has an active role from the beginning, because she or he not only incorporates what is offered by the caregiver, but from the very beginning also tries to be wanted and learns how to be wanted. This can cause conflict within the child, and conflicts will differ according to the developmental stage. How a child resolves these challenges involves both the child's competencies and the responses of others to the child. His or her sociability will differ in degree as a part of inherited temperament – a source of individual difference (McIlveen and Gross, 2002). So each developmental conflict depends on the interaction of the individual's characteristics and the support from the social environment.

The social setting or microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) has a direct influence on how to learn to relate to others. The microsystem that most directly affects the young child, beside the family, is the early childhood institution. Through play with peers, children acquire skills, ideas and values that are crucial for growing up. In this play, brain maturation develops the imagination and language and the basic structures of logic (even though children formulate their ideas by quite different rules of logic than those used by adults (Stassen, 1994)). This is important when we discuss understanding rules and how children become responsible citizens and eager learners.

Kolberg's theory of moral development puts preschool children at the pre-conventional level of moral development, meaning that the emphasis is on avoiding punishment and getting rewards, so their morality is shaped by the standards of others. Rather than seeing

reinforcement and punishment as always being external, social learning theories argue for internal sources of reinforcement (McIlveen and Gross, 2002). Thus children can reward themselves through feelings of pride, and punish themselves through guilt. This suggests that it would be reasonable to focus discipline on 'what it means to be a responsible member of the group', and not on rewards and punishments.

The role of the teacher of preschool children is very complex. As well as professional knowledge, it is also important to have sensitivities to children's needs. We already mentioned the need for *belonging*, but equally important are the needs for *autonomy* and *competence*. Conflicts are important factors of personal development. If an educator tries to intervene in every conflict to reduce tension between children, there will not be sufficient opportunities for the child to overcome conflict and to build a higher level of understanding (Krofli_, 1997). It appears that the most constructive atmosphere in which to understand rules, develop moral reasoning and solve moral dilemmas within a group is when teachers lead the group of children a step higher than has been usual in the children's understanding. This is the core of the social nature of learning, and accords with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the 'zone of proximal development', which represents the cognitive distance between the child's *actual* level of development as determined by independent problem solving and the level of *potential* development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

How does the child construct ideas about citizenship and democracy?

This is another critical question.

Cox (in Howard and Gill, 2000) believes that children need more than just a formal knowledge of how a political system works. She argues that if children are to become active, socially conscious citizens, they also need to understand the purposes of democratic systems and the principles that underpin democratic citizenship. Logically then, citizenship education should begin with and build on the child's already existing understanding and experience of power in the world.

Rules are important factors in all democracies - both the rules that govern our societies and those that govern our daily lives. In the preschool, some rules can be established by children, but not all of them. In our experience, children realize who has the power in the preschool at a very young age, including the power to establish or change rules. When asked who is in charge, they seem to have a firm knowledge of the hierarchical structure within the organisation. This matches Howard and Gill's (2000) research on children's understandings of power relationships.

But not all rules are those that may or can be changed as one desires. Some rules are looked on as fundamental, and can even be considered universal. Rules against incest and violence are basic in contemporary societies. Respect for these laws is what gives us our humanity, and is what allows us to exchange and speak through a symbolic dimension. These basic laws cannot be challenged, since it is precisely these rules that allow language and discussion.

The importance of rules

We have described how there are some universal rules that govern our life and are part of what makes us human. All other rules can change over time, and their content is likely to vary depending on contexts. Helping children to understand the value and importance of such rules, in situations tailored for them, is essential. They must understand that laws are created by men and women.

The way in which they will obey the law, and will contribute to the establishment of new laws both now and in the future, will depend on this initial understanding. Citizenship education does not begin with a detailed learning of the laws of one's country, but by understanding *what laws are for*. During the early years, the finality of laws may be understood on the basis of limited real experience, but not from adoration or submission (Fumat, 2004). Democracy is not only about citizens complying with the law: it is also about citizens being willing to change the law.

This view of rules is reflected in various national curricula. The wording may differ, but the main concept is the same. For example, in the national curriculum for Icelandic preschools it says:

> A child should be taught democratic practices in preschool. It [the child] should take part in planning; making decisions and evaluation. Various plans which concern the child and [his/her] interests should be discussed with the child. It [the child] must feel that consideration is given to [his/her] desires and views. From the beginning a democratic working method is recommended, and that the children are involved in setting rules for the group and discussing those rules.
>
> (Iceland; *National Curriculum for Icelandic Preschools*, 1999).

It is stressed that all societies are governed by rules that the child as a citizen must learn to follow, to enable the society to function. The preschool has an obligation to teach the child how to live and participate in democratic societies (Iceland, 1999).

The ideas behind these words from the Icelandic curriculum apply to almost all preschool education in Europe. How they are thought out and practiced is another matter, with a variety of answers in pluralistic societies. We suggest some of these in this booklet, and demonstrate how they can work by giving examples.

Developing political concepts - learning that leads to democracy

Erwin and Kipness (1997) point out that in democratic societies people are given opportunities to make meaningful choices every day, and it is this freedom to choose that gives us a sense of empowerment. They conclude that educational settings that emphasise passiveness and conformity are unlikely to give this sense of empowerment, and are therefore unacceptable. To empower children, education for democracy must include having the power to make decisions, the power to try, and the power to do (Hendrick, in Erwin and Kipness, 1997). We suggest that this could also be considered a criterion for quality early childhood education.

Howard and Gill (2000) show how children develop a range of political concepts that are both broadly and narrowly defined from their knowledge of life in families, schools and exposure to the media. They advocate that any civics curriculum should recognise this everyday knowledge and use it as a starting point. In an early childhood setting, this includes the daily interaction between children, as well as interaction with educators and families. Both nonverbal and verbal interaction sends messages that children read and try to understand. Children research their physical and their psychological surroundings all the time, and through this everyday research they:

- try out and make rules, not only in play but also in relationship and communications;
- show empathy and look for friendship.
- find knowledge of self, and others' reaction to that self;
- discover being together in life and play.

Kroflič (2004) points out that a common characteristic of the ethos of a democratic school is where the emphasis is on social confidence, friendship, personal trust and trust in institutions, and decency. In such a preschool, children will have many opportunities to make decisions, to try out and to do things.

To speak of 'civility' or of 'humans living together' is to speak of citizenship education, its premises and foundations. Children's identities, their relationships to others, and their participation in a group are at stake. In a democratic society, children's socialisation involves supporting their individualisation, autonomy and participation. Democratic societies aim for the development of individual creativity and critical thinking (Fumat, 2002, 2004). The socialisation process in a democratic society - and *for* a democratic society - assumes specific features that must be asserted at each stage of children's secondary socialisation.

Are children in early childhood institutions participating in experiences that prepare them for active citizenship in a democratic society?

Are there specific types of education and learning process that favour the development of 'democratic personalities' in institutions during the early years?

We think there are, and give some examples. Of course, these are limited, and there are many other ways to achieve the goal. They can be seen as a frame for the models that are demonstrated in Part 2.

The importance of first impressions in the preschool

Citizenship education begins when the child first arrives at the preschool. The institution should be attentive and take into consideration children's difficulties with separation and the new environment. To be able to do this, educators must first imagine what separation - from what is generally a smaller, cosy environment, dominated by affectionate relationships - implies for children. They should put themselves, so to speak, in the children's shoes.

When arriving in the new institution for the first time, it is important that the child is given her full *civil identity* by using the child's first name. This implies that the child is recognised as a named and individualised person (Imbert, 1994). Another important aspect of starting school is that this is often the first formal connection the families have with the school or/and social system. At this first meeting, the frame and basic partnership with the families is established. At this moment the preschool has a wonderful opportunity to give and receive information; giving information about the school and gathering information about the families – of course, with the child's best interest in mind. It is an opportunity to share experiences and stories with families. If a school has democracy at its heart, it will not let this opportunity go unused. The preschool teachers must have in mind that this first impression is the one that set the stage for further communication. This accords with Kroflic's (2004) argument that the teacher must be aware of the child's need for a personal relationship with primary and important others, and to be able to develop their understanding of the established rights of others; and that this relationship has to represent to the child an example or an ideal of justice and a caring emotional commitment. What is better to do this than to establish a close and meaningful relationship between home and school?

Singing, dancing, speaking in chorus are all activities that allow children to be part of a group and are important in terms of socialisation. However, they should not become the main or the only way of 'being with others'. This might lead to the child becoming over-dependent on the relationship with the group. We must distinguish between socialisation processes that aim to absorb the individual into the group (and lose one's identity as an individual) and socialisation in a democratic society which aims at the autonomy (auto nomos) of an individual to follow his/her own laws (exerting moral responsibility) and to build a political society where law is wanted by all (the 'social contract' of democratic societies).

The importance of other and self

The ideal asserted by democratic societies is that individuals *learn to govern themselves* (controlling their urges through moral law, constructing common rules for 'living together' and building the laws of the *City*). In democratic societies, individuals must act by themselves, think by themselves, and learn to be responsible for their own choices. The activities through which each person is given a place, a role to play, a contribution to make, deepen children's self consciousness and their consciousness of other people's roles.

Being recognised by others increases self-esteem. Group activities also favour the understanding of the rules of the game.

Children understand the principle of exchange at a very young age. As soon as children have physical contact they are capable of 'acting dialogues' (Bruner, 1996, 1996): exchanging, cooperating and even negotiating; accepting giving up an object, offering in order to appease. At a very early stage, babies know - often without the intervention of an adult - how to solve conflicts and even to set up rules for cooperation. The problem is the tendency for the teacher to resolve problems for children. If children never have the opportunity to resolve their own problems, it is unlikely that they will develop skills of cooperation and negotiation - skills considered more and more necessary in multicultural societies.

Some people view early childhood institutions as made of cries and violence: this is not true. Sometimes young children may be competitors and rivals, but not all the time. Expressions of solicitude are frequent: they know how to comfort, how show empathy to one who cries, to share and to communicate. Because some perceive early childhood programs as a kind of state of nature, a jungle, they separate children and watch over them out of fear of the risks and dangers of fighting. When such a view of the child dominates work in the early childhood institution, educators believe that their job is first and foremost to be an overseer, to see that children don't hurt themselves or others. Such educators do not see themselves as active facilitators.

Research by Pikler in Hungary (1994) and by CRESAS in France shows that peaceful exchanges only take place if children have a free rein, and adult intervention is not constant or constraining. If all children's activities are programmed, if all objects are formatted for 'educational purposes', then no real space for exploration is possible, no rules of the game can be built, and no genuine experiences of communication with peers is possible (Fumat, 2004).

Such an early childhood institution is not likely to foster democratic citizens: it is more likely to develop followers and people that unquestioningly conform to rules.

Part 2: Learning for citizenship through two different models

It is to be hoped that early childhood institutions work mostly in a democratic manner. It can be helpful for preschool teachers to have a model to frame their pedagogical work and clarify the meaning of democracy and citizenship. In this section we outline two models or frames that we suggest teachers might use. In many ways a simplification, these models can also offer some complexity: they demand an openness to new ways of thinking and working.

The preschool child is a young person with a different perspective on life to that of an adult. It is therefore most important to find the young child's perspective to work with and educate him or her to be an active citizen. Early in our work we decided to emphasise identity, feelings and life skills. For the pre-school child, learning for citizenship cannot and should not primarily be based on information about democracy, human rights or omnipotent values. As we have made clear, it is important that the child is a doer - one making choices and standing by them, one who shows empathy, one who negotiates and works in cooperation with others.

To demonstrate this aspect of democratic education we focus on a framework for understanding citizenship described by Osler and Starkey (1999). They identified features we think useful in projects initiated by the European Commission that contribute to developing active citizenship. Osler suggests key skills important for this development. In the stories that we use later, these skills and features are sometimes used.

Osler and Starkey's framework (1999)

- *Information and rights*. It is important that the child learn that she/he has rights. She does not, for example, have to accept that another child takes her toy. But she has to understand that other children also have rights: she cannot have the ball all the time in the kindergarten.
- *Identities and feelings*. The child can learn to reflect on her own identity through contact with others. She can be guided to develop empathy to other children, to accept their needs and to play together with them.
- *Inclusion*. Children can do things together as a group and learn to help each other, despite differences in age, cultural backgrounds, etc. It is important that the pre-school teacher notice and include all children in the group.
- *Skills*. Children should learn how to solve conflicts, how to argue and how to use their knowledge about their rights.

An issue-based model to work on political concepts with young children

Ross (2003) suggests a five stage model to work with children developing political understanding. This model was devised for work with primary school children, but we have adapted it for use with younger children. Ross emphasises that the model is to be used in a certain sequence, and we follow this.

① **The first stage:** Select an issue that is firmly based in children's life experiences, and that might be expected to provoke them. The aim is to get the children to become engaged in talk, discussion and argument about the subject. The role of the teacher is to facilitate discussion and to protect different points of view. She is not supposed to be neutral, but one who puts forward ideas and different viewpoints. Issues to be discussed can range widely, from homelessness to war, from rules in certain play-areas to children's ideas of what is fair.

② **The second stage:** The teacher needs to map out different events, points and concepts that may arise from the discussion. To help her it may save time to use a method such as that used in philosophy for children (see, for example, the homepage Philosophy for Children, 2004, and the journal *Thinking*). It can also be helpful to use a dictaphone in a similar way to teachers undertaking the pedagogical documentation that is part of the Reggio Emilia philosophy (Dhalberg, Moss and Pence, 1999). It is important to map the issues that include some of the core ideas of politics, the rule of law, representation, democracy, political rights and so on. For younger children it could be appropriate to write down ideas and discuss them in relation to their social environment. For the teacher the challenge is to connect the children's discussion of, for example, the rules in some particular game, or why it is important to choose a person to give the head teacher their vote on which new toy they would like the school to acquire, to those political core ideas.

③ **The third stage:** The teacher needs to be provocative but at same time make sure every voice is heard. It is important for the teacher to point out that every voice is an opinion, not a reality or the only truth. The teacher also protects minority viewpoints and comes up with alternative positions. The teacher's role is not to be neutral - we want young children to learn to make a stand: the point is to help children to participate in a political argument. To be able to do that requires the skill to listen to others, put forward evidence and arguments and allow others to differ, and to be able to pick up on similarities and differences. For the teacher it is important to be a chairperson. That includes making sure that every voice is heard, and that quiet children are

listened to, protecting the views of minorities. Another important role is to put forward views that have not been presented. This may require challenging the children's ideas about or around certain things and sometimes the teacher may have to do so even if those ideas are not hers. She must make sure the children know that those are ideas that she would like them to know about, but not her own views. A way of putting forwards ideas that are not the teacher's own is similar to telling the children stories with a wrong storyline – they will tell you that the story does not go that way. By putting forward such ideas the teacher will help the children to make up their minds, and to take a stand. It may be very helpful for the teacher during this stage to listen to her dictaphone to be able to spot her own voice and views.

④ **The fourth stage:** This is to encourage children to gather information about the issues and about alternatives. This could be, for example, asking other children in the class about what toys they think are important – or about new rules for the playground – what do other children have to say about that, or the staff? This is the place in the process that children research their surroundings and the views of others. At this stage children can look for answers in books, on the internet, or ask adults or children. The teacher's role is to check her conceptual maps and make sure the research is on track. Maybe it is, maybe not, perhaps the children will find answers but may need to add new concepts or questions.

⑤ **The fifth stage:** Now it is important to revisit the first group discussions: it can be very helpful for the children to listen to their first arguments on the dictaphone. The teacher needs to encourage the children to reflect and make comparisons and to come up with alternatives. She must help the children use the information they have gathered to make generalisations that they can transfer to the political core ideas that were on the conceptual map. At this stage the conceptual learning will become evident: children can draw to events together and make comparisons, point out similarities, analyse and begin to make a prediction about a rule that may or may not apply.

The most difficult stage for the teacher is probably making the conceptual map – recognising the ideas that could be considered to be part of a citizenship dialogue and directing the children's thinking and conversation towards that path.

As a part of our study we decided to ask a preschool teacher to try to use the model with 4 to 6 year old children.

Narratives

We make sense of our self and others through stories. This is well known, and people have been telling stories from ancient times. Before the written word, stories travelled from one generation to the next through the spoken word. Today we use stories to make sense of our life experiences. Stories are even used as tools in qualitative research (Cooper, 2004). As a part of our cooperation in developing these guidelines, narratives and stories have been collected from early childhood institutions. Some were collected from teachers, other by observation. According to Polkinghorne (1988) narrative is the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful. He understands narratives as personal and social histories, myths, fairy tales, novels and the everyday stories we use to explain our own and others actions. In this work narratives are taken to be 'stories educators use to explain their own and others' actions'. The stories can be descriptions or illustrations of how educators or/and children actually act in the countries involved. The narratives carry values by providing positive models to emulate and negative models to avoid.

The narratives were chosen by one of us or by the preschool teacher. Since narratives can be interpreted in many ways (Bruner, 1996), we do not try here to present the only posible interpretation. We make an attempt to interpret some through questions, but we also hope that readers will make their own interpretations and use them for further discussion. We recommend that students use the frame we refer to of working in groups (Osler, 2001). Students might, for example, categorise stories from different points of view or what can be learnt from them.

Method of collecting the narratives used

These narratives come from early childhood institutions. For example, in one country they were collected in cooperation with a leader of an early childhood institution. Preschool teachers were asked to write narratives, based on their experience, in which children were learning democratic skills. The preschool teachers told their stories, one by one, to a group meeting, and the meaning of each story was interpreted together, to work out what kind of democratic learning they thought it illustrated. Key-words were written on a flip chart and categorised. In other countries, student teachers and lectures collected the stories and used other approaches. The result is a description of different kinds of democratic learning in preschools. Some narratives have had plural interpretations and can be placed in several categories. Sometimes it is helpful to know where the narrative are from but not always.

Stories from the field

Gifts

In France there is tradition that children make gifts for parents for Mothers' and Fathers' Day. In one school there were so many children from single parent families that they decided to start a new tradition, of Parents' day gifts.

- What do you think of this decision?
- Is this fair to everybody? Why, why not?
- Is this really inclusion or is this denying a fact of life?
- Is this a cultural problem?
- Are changing forms of the family a reality in your country?

The lighting of the Christmas tree

A parent doesn't want her/his child to go to the lighting of the Christmas tree, and tells the teacher. They explain that this is a Christian celebration. The teacher replies that it is not Christian, or in any way religious.

- What is religious education – how do you define it?
- What is a Christian education?
- How can the preschool respect all religions?
- Can an event that is part of some countries' cultural - but also religious - history be anti-democratic, because of the rights of the minority?

Songs from home

Every autumn the children in the preschool are asked to choose a song with their parents and to bring this from home. The songs are collected and made in to a songbook for the preschool. The songbook will have as many languages as the children speak in the school. Sometimes the parent has to teach all the children and the teacher the songs, and sometime they have the songs on a CD to share. There is a time for song in the schools every day and then the songbook is the centre of attention.

- Can you think of other ways to include all families in the everyday life and work of the school?
- Do you think this is really inclusion?
- Could this be used in your school, community or your country?
- Do you see any difficulties with this method? If so how can you solve it?

Fairy tales

A father came to the school and said to the teacher. 'I don't want you to tell the story about the three little pigs; you can tell stories about other animals.'

- What could be the reason for the parent's request?
- Is this censoring? If so, is such censoring acceptable?
- Is removing stories like this from preschools in the spirit of inclusion?
- Are there some values in schools that are worth fighting for? Why and how?
- How would you answer this parent?
- What would your solution be?

Being left out

Monika came to the teacher and complained because the other girls did not allow her to play with cards. The girls told the teacher that Monika didn't know how to play. The teacher asked the girls what they suggested, because Monika would like to play with them. The girls decided to teach her how to play.

- Is it always appropriate for a teacher to act as a go-between?
- When is it necessary - and when not - for teachers to intervene?
- How do you think the teacher handled this incident?

Power struggle

Three girls are deciding what to play: there is a power struggle. Finally, the strongest girl decides what they shall all do – they will make a pattern out of plastic pearls. At the same time, some boys are also deciding what to do. Two talk about playing with cars, and after plenty of time for discussion, they finally make a shared decision to play with cars.

- How does this story reflect democracy?
- Do you believe that the different approaches between how the boys and girls made decisions are common for the genders?
- Can it be looked upon as democratic that the other girls give up their right to decide? Does that in any way reflect how societies are run?

Teasing

Susan comes to the teacher from the sandpit complaining; 'Peter is teasing.' The teacher replies 'You should not accept it. Tell Peter that you don't like it, and then he will stop.' Susan returns to Peter in the sandpit and says 'Stop it, Peter.' Peter - who heard the conversation with the teacher - stops teasing.

- How can educators support children's struggles in learning social skills?
- How would you act in similar situation?

Caring, or ...?

Two children are playing in the climbing area. The boy climbs as high up as he can get. The girls tells him that this is not allowed, it can be dangerous and he can hurt himself.

- Is the girl caring?
- Is it possible that she is controlling?
- What can you read out of this little episode?

The young cherry tree

In the backyard of a preschool garden a young and small cherry tree is bearing its first few cherries. The berries are still unripe and green. Two little boys decide to pick the cherries, and as they do so they break a fragile young branch. But the same thing had happened the day before, and the teacher had explained to them that it was better to give the cherries more time to ripen, and that a ladder would be necessary to pick them. After the second incident, the teacher prohibited the boys from being on their own in the backyard.

A little while later, one of the boys came back to the teacher and asked her if they can go to the open area to play. The teacher said no, because nobody would be there with them. The boy said proudly: 'It is not necessary to look after us anymore', and took from his pocket a small piece of paper on which he had written (with many mistakes, because he was less than five years old) "ENEJ DONT PICK CHERY"

- What should the teacher do now?
- Should she allow the boys to play in the backyard after they showed her the message, even though they have broken branches twice?
- Do you think that the boys will break the branch again?
- Reflect on how the moral understanding develops through this conflict.

Rabbit story

Children in a mixed age group are telling what they did at the weekend. One little girl, Lana, tells that she saw a rabbit in the wood. Since she is not been able to pronounce 'r', she says that she saw 'yabbit'. An older girl says to the others, with a condescending tone in her voice, "Lana saw 'yabbit'". But Lana explain: "Not 'yabbit' but 'yabbit' – the 'y' which rattles"

- Should the teacher interfere?
- What do you think of Lana's way of handling the problem?
- Should the teacher praise Lana for good explanation? Why – why not?

Finder's keepers

'Why did you take my tinsel, Nina?' Ana asks.

'I did not take it from you, I found it on the floor,' says Nina.

'It's mine, I've lost it! I've been looking for it all morning, thinking that somebody might find it and return it to me,' says Ana.

'I found it and it's mine. End of discussion,' answers Nina.

'How can you say that?' says Ana. 'Tell me, if Sonja (the teacher) lost an earring or a necklace and you would found it, would you say it's yours or would you rather return it to Sonja?'

'I would return it to Sonja,' says Nina.

'Well then, give me back my tinsel!'

Nina gives the tinsel back to Ana.

- How does this story relate to the child becoming an active citizen?
- If you agree with the way that Ana handled Nina, how can the teacher promote this kind of behavior?
- Should the teacher have interfered in the girls' conversation? Why – why not?

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