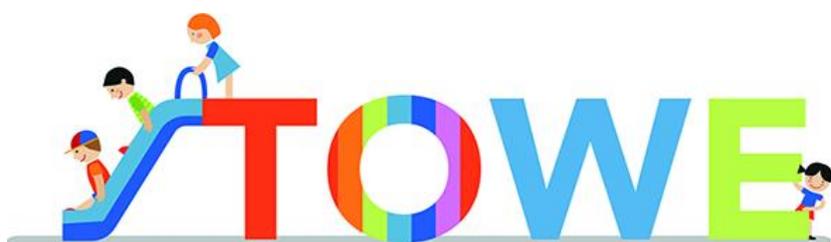


ToWe Project 2015-18

Enhancing The Education and Wellbeing of Disadvantaged Toddlers Through the Development of Training and Materials to Support Early Years Practitioners.



CASE STUDY REPORT

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Introduction

The aim of this report is to generate knowledge on how the TOWE-project has influenced the participating practitioners' practice working with disadvantaged toddlers. TOWE is the acronym for Toddlers' Wellbeing and the project has a universal approach (e.g. Allan, 2007) to disadvantaged toddlers, meaning that the ongoing work and the project's different outputs/manuals were directed to support diversity and social equalization. With a more inclusive educational approach (e.g. Vik, 2015) the resource of change and enhancement of toddlers' wellbeing is based in the environment/the setting and not directly towards individual toddlers with specific disadvantages. It is a holistic approach supporting the wellbeing of all toddlers, including toddlers from a disadvantaged background (e.g. economics, minority, emotional-, affective, physical-, motor-, social-, cognitive development).

The TOWE-project is a part of the Erasmus+ programme, and designed by a research group from Kingston University (UK), The University of Stavanger (Norway) and Universitat Ramon Llull (Spain). Kingston University and Helen Sutherland has been the leader of this project. TOWE consists of four different Intellectual Outputs, labelled 1.) Toddlers' Wellbeing, 2.) Toddlers' Meal Time, 3.) Toddlers' Voice and Expressions and 4.) Toddlers' Additional Languages. Early Years Practitioners (EYP) in different settings in UK, Norway and Spain studied and used the manuals and audit tools, developed by the university partners. Practitioners' experiences working with these training materials, and how this have influenced their practice, have been collected through feedback during workshops, questionnaires and local focus group interviews with setting partners in each country. Job Shadowing (EYP's from different settings visiting each other) as a method of sharing practice has also been documented through group interviews – one in each country. The data collection addresses the following questions:

How has the TOWE-project supported EYPs' knowledge and understanding of disadvantaged toddlers?

How has the TOWE-project equipped EYPs with tools to identify strategies to enhance toddlers' wellbeing?

How have the continuous professional development opportunities (training and job shadowing) been effective in sharing practice and enhancing EYPs' skills?

How has the project impacted and influenced the EYPs' provisions and practice in supporting the wellbeing of disadvantaged toddlers?

The report aims to emphasize the setting partners' experiences of changes in practice, where the practitioners and the different settings¹ represent cases working with the TOWE-material. Interviews have been analyzed through a hermeneutical content analysis approach, inspired by Van Manens (1990) description of phenomenological themes.

The setting partner's feedback in workshops and interviews have also contributed to further development and commission of the TOWE manuals and audit tools.

Theoretical background of the TOWE approach

The reading materials in TOWE have an eclectic theoretical background where different theoretical perspectives address the phenomena toddlers' wellbeing. The point of the departure is the university partners' diverse base of knowledge on young children's wellbeing in early years settings. The rationale of the overarching concept of wellbeing is anchored in reports (UNICEF, WHO, British Parliament) outlining diverse societal frameworks as well as references to research. An ethnographic perspective on mealtimes depicts this daily routine as a time and place of communication, bonding, acculturation and growing autonomy. The acknowledgement of toddlers' cultural background and identity, rooted in linguistic theory, creates the rationale of promoting toddlers' early languages within different educational realities. The issue of toddlers' voice and expression is linked to Nordic studies of peer relations in play, interpreting them phenomenological by the concept of the "lived body". The concept of the holistic body in an open communication with the interpersonal, cultural and material world may also be regarded as a kind of common ground of all the training materials. The holistic concept of toddlers' wellbeing in early years settings is visualized in a "wellbeing wheel", with seven dimensions that orbit around the nave of toddlers' wellbeing.

The training materialsⁱⁱ, written and published within this project, consist of these units:

- 1) *Toddlers' wellbeing*, a manual of 42 pages and audit tool of 26 pages
- 2) *Toddlers' voice and expressions*, a manual of 21 pages including an observation guide
- 3) *Toddlers' meal times*, a manual of 15 pages and audit tool of 17 pages
- 4) *Toddlers' early languages*, a manual of 15 pages including 3 observation tools

These materials offer EYPs a reading material for continuous professional development at the work place. This is a beneficial context, since the work place may facilitate embodied learning in a community of practice (Lave, 1988). The ToWe project is inspired by an action research model of observe, reflect, act and evaluate, asking practitioners to explore their own practice and develop strategies to improve their provision (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The training materials build on the idea of reading and critical thinking, observing and reflecting on practice and furthermore developing skills and attitudes within the team. The ultimate objective is enhancing toddlers' wellbeing and education.

The training started with the distribution of the four manuals/tools to the setting partners during *a five days training*, in which the authors presented their materials and invited the EYPs to share their thoughts in round table discussions. After this, the setting partners used the training materials in different ways in their teams, but every setting had to work on all the manuals and to organize this by themselves. In year two, the five days of *mutual job shadowing* took place. For this training event, two EYPs from each setting in two countries hosted the setting in the third country during the same week. Thus, all the settings experienced being a host and some EYPs from every partner got the opportunity to observe the everyday life in a foreign setting.

Method, participants and analysis

The TOWE-project's method for collecting data material, analysis of the material and findings that's presented in this report, comes within what Denzin & Lincoln (2005) describe as a qualitative interpretive approach. We use group interviews as a method for collecting data, asking EYPs how the work with the TOWE material has influenced their practice. It is a retro-perspective on the EYPs' experiences and these experiences will in a hermeneutical sense (e.g. Gadamer, 1989) be held in the foreground when analyzing and presenting findings. As a research project, where the researchers form the core in the research and are situated in a specific time and tradition (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), we lean upon a description of a postmodern climate where a variety approaches to knowledge and narratives exists side by side. Different worldviews (ontological and epistemological assumptions) in different theoretical perspectives in the TOWE material address questions about reality and knowledge, and the material will therefore influence the participant's outcome of these questions. The aim for this project was to explore how EYPs' work with the training material has influenced their knowledge and understanding, strategies, their practice, when it comes to supporting toddlers' wellbeing. With a common assumption that knowledge evolves in encounters between people and the aim of exploring EYP's experiences, we have used focus group interviews.

The partnership embraced seven researchers from England, Spain and Norway and a total of four setting partners from the same countries. The settings represent a variety of toddler provisions, regarding size, ownership, opening hours, language emersion and cooperation with parents. There is a private school for toddlers, introducing English as a second language (in Spain). Another partner is a Children's Center in the UK, in which EYPs provide stay and play sessions for children and their caregiver, alongside with health and social care services offered at the same location. Additionally, there are more traditional day care settings in Spain and Norway.

Focus group interviews with EYPs were carried out in each country under the lead of the university partners. In each country three group interviews were conducted and in addition a reflective session after the jobshadowing. In total 12 group interviews. The university partners developed a common interview guide with open questions regarding the chosen themes. The interviews took place in the settings and at the universities. There was some variation regarding the EYPs' participation in the interviews, due to the settings actual plan of the day, illness or staff changes. Each group interview lasted about 60 minutes and was audio recorded. The interviews were transcribed and collected for a common analysis. The Catalan and Norwegian interviews are translated to English.

The analysis of the transcribed interviews departs from the hermenutic alteration between parts and the totality of the empirical material. There is used a content analysis in order to create thematic aspects of the EYPs' expressed experiences. This approach is inspired by Van Manen's (1990) description of evolving phenomenological themes. According to Van Manen, themes may be understood as points or clusters in our web of experienec. Creating such kind of themes may enable our understanding and offer new insight in the fenomenen studied.

Findings

This part outlines how the ToWe training opportunities supported practitioners' knowledge and understanding of disadvantaged toddlers, equipped them with tools and strategies in the work with toddlers' wellbeing, how discussions and sharing have enhanced practitioners' skills, and how this project has influenced their practice. The presentation of findings follows the research questions mentioned in the introduction.

Knowledge and understanding of disadvantaged toddlers

Relevant and applicable reading materials

All the group interviews contain statements of contentment with the reading materials. Having them in different languages is key for the team member's participation. The EYPs describe the manuals/tools as clear, useful and motivating.

"All the materials that were given to us, both the reading and training manuals, the observation and evaluation tools, are useful, and are very, very applicable to our daily work, and are very relevant to issues for our day to day life. It seemed very interesting, very well constructed and very well explained and transmitted. It managed to motivate us a lot and we found them very useful."

"I was not there (training week), but reading the manuals and all the information you understood a lot. I mean, you get it, everything is well documented and explained."

"The manual *Toddlers' Voice and Expressions* we are working on, was again concrete, very motivating. They got again very engaged: how shall we work? How shall we do this?"

"When you see it in writing, read it and apply it, you see the simplicity and complexity at the same time, because I think that they are the most complex things to work out, fix and pick up. (...) But at the same time, you think it is basic and able to do."

The practitioners value the manuals' relevance and the style of writing seems to be well adapted to this target group of readers. They also comment on the cohesion and connectedness of the content:

"Very concrete and a lot of foundation. It's the foundation, it works from the foundation, you realize that you might want to go further with many things (...). And you realize that you may have to go back and start from the foundation."

"I also think it is very transversal and that is the voice of the children. And something for me, is the communication. Everything that is part of the role of the adult is very much reflected. The truth is that I found it super interesting."

"What has drawn our attention most is something that we believe all manuals have in common, which is the attitude of adults towards children, because for wellbeing to be possible there has to be a specific attitude of the adult. It has been something that has had an impact on us from all manuals and that has been affecting our work a great deal."

“All the manuals are related. Especially we see them as closely related to each other through our role as well, our way of interacting with the children and offering things. The adults’ practice affects the children’s practice, and so everything you prepare, everything you observe or don’t observe plays a role. So given this, we have seen that all the manuals are connected and have taken us right there.”

Even though the training materials comprise four different manuals addressing different topics, the readers were able to see some read threads across the manuals. The practitioners talk about the educator-child relation, the adult’s attitude and the communication with the children; and how this relationship affects children’s wellbeing.

Understanding diversity and disadvantage

Due to the universal approach, the training materials did not put emphasis on identifying children at risk, but on the wellbeing of **all** the children. Working on this, the EYPs express that they have a wide understanding of diversity and disadvantage:

“I think that the only option to work and achieve well-being for children is to take diversity into account. Diversity in all senses, not just the diversity of thinking of the disadvantaged, right? But the diversity with the entire range of potentialities that you have, right? The levels you have, characteristics”. – “Every child is different.”

“You guarantee this attention to diversity, because what you’re doing is respecting the pace and individual needs of each child. Therefore, to me this is diversity.”

“They are well off families, they have jobs, they are secure, they are very confident. But then I met the little boy and he is 14 months (...) he was completely overwhelmed by the fact that he was allowed to go and get stuck in himself and it was the first time he had picked up a pen or done any sort of painting. And then you think: there are children who we would deem disadvantaged and we might look very differently on those families and think ‘Oh, you have not provided them with the opportunities’, but neither have this very well-off family.”

The practitioners mainly understand diversity as using an individually adapted approach, which implies working in line with the specific abilities, needs and characteristics of each child. The last quote implies also some critique of labeling some children as disadvantaged, due to the lack of economic resources. In the case of this little boy, the practitioner depicts another kind of possible disadvantage, the lack of freedom to move and act in his family environment

The manual and audit tool on *Toddlers’ Wellbeing* outline the dimensions of wellbeing, as well as factors that may promote or hinder children’s growth in all aspects. For some this has been thought provoking:

“The questions about the family situation, it was a bit odd when I read them. But now, I think we should dear to ask them. Maybe dear to talk more about what it means to be less off”.

“I would definitely say the work so far has affected my understanding of disadvantaged toddlers. And I would say that this renewed my focus as well on researching not just wellbeing but resilience of toddlers, especially the disadvantaged ones, like how do they go on throughout their lives.”

For some practitioners the reading promoted a renewed focus on the issue of wellbeing and resilience in a lifetime perspective. For others, it shed light on the tacit issue of child poverty. All together, the practitioners seem to raise their awareness of diversity within the child group.

More child-oriented pedagogy

The practitioners talk frequent about episodes they have observed and they are concerned about the toddler's wellbeing:

“...OFSTED says ‘what it is like to be a child here?’ We know it is in the terminology, but when we are really thinking about our practice and re-evaluating our sessions, we are not thinking ‘how good did the session go, how did people used the resources over there’. We are actually thinking more deeply about particular individual children and what their needs are, not just if they are enjoying something, where is that child now, what his needs are”. UK

Here the practitioner tells that they think more deeply about the individual child's life. The terminology, the words are getting embedded into their considerations and planning. In another setting the team states:

“We are giving ourselves more time to focus on the children.”

Several statements contain implicitly this kind of attitude and the importance of the moment of hesitation before you act. They talk about not intervening too fast in peer conflicts. They tell that they changed their view on toddlers' running games and now give space to this kind of noisy play. When it comes to meal times (see below), the practitioners talk about how changed facilitation promoted the children's autonomy.

Shared language, better understanding of wellbeing

All setting partners used the training materials regularly in their team meetings. They read a manual, discussed, decided what to do, observed their practice (use of video recording, narratives, post it as a kind of log), reflected on and evaluated what they observed, discussed again. They tell about a continuous involvement of all team members fostering the development of a shared language.

“In our team, we recognize that we have achieved a shared language. Much of that knowledge we also had before, but now we have gone more into it, together. (...) Reflected upon the way we do things and why we do these things.”

“We have had discussions, but we did not have the good framework to put it in. Now we speak the same language in the team. It is somehow good, when we all have read the same, we get the same language.”

The practitioners compare this with the previous situation and value that this teamwork has created a common ground of knowledge, a framework for their discussions and a shared language, which makes it better to talk about pedagogical core issues. For instance the concept of wellbeing:

“I have got another perspective on the theme. What makes children's wellbeing? (...) The goal is now, that toddlers shall experience self-efficacy, more wellbeing. To carry your own cup is

not about fulfilling the task without spoiling, it is about the toddler's experience of self-efficacy. I am quite sure that this creates wellbeing."

"Talking about turning points, for me it is wellbeing, the adult's role and how we can enhance wellbeing."

"I think TOWE has given practitioners the confidence about wellbeing. Regardless of what the learning outcome is, there must be wellbeing in there, everyone needs to be valued."

"I think for us wellbeing is like an umbrella, overarching the others. We should have started with this manual."

These statements underline the importance of having a professional language that enables talking about core elements in the settings' mandate. The practitioners express proud and contentment about their shared understanding of the meaning of wellbeing.

Confidence and reaffirmation

The practitioners also address the pleasure of being well-informed educator doing a good job. They state that the ToWe-materials have contributed to such confidence:

"I think what I've really enjoyed is that it reaffirms what I know, and I could share it with other people and I could share it with the practitioners and I could share it with the parents. It also instilled that confidence that we are on the right track and what we are doing is really good and is up there with the best practice. (...) I know yes things can be improved, but I think there is a whole lot that we are doing that's really good and I feel quite proud of that."

"When reading Children's Voice and Expressions, people in my team said, it is so nice to get confirmed all the things we do well, read about it, yes we do this, we manage this. Of course, there are things to improve, but we felt we are on the right track, that we have good control. We talk about why we are doing this, not only that we are doing well, but why."

"There might be different opinions in the team (...). As a leader, I can refer to TOWE; here it states that our starting point is wellbeing and self-efficacy. I have something tangible to prove how we shall work."

The practitioners highlight the importance of getting their competence and good practice affirmed and tell that the reading materials have offered both a standard and a language to describe the quality of their work. Although there are areas of improvement, the training material seem to have developed their confidence and self-efficacy as early childhood educators.

Tools to identify strategies to enhance toddlers' wellbeing

All the manuals contain reflective questions embedded in the theoretical part and a specific audit or observation tool. The setting partners have implemented these materials in a contextualized manner, based on their reality and their needs. Each setting decided where to start, what the priorities are, how to work in staff groups in order to improve particular areas of their work. In other words, the settings demonstrated autonomy and professionalism in their use of the TOWE-materials.

Need of change

As mentioned above, practitioners tell that the reading materials motivated them to go into specific areas like language learning, meal times and toddlers' expression in play. Encouraged by this, they started to investigate their own reality:

“It is very nice to read the handbooks with the team, to share them with them, to reflect on them. It seems that from the theory, we all agree very much, we are all very willing to evaluate, to observe, to change. And then in the videos, with observations or simply by being aware of your practice, you realize how routine is entrenched, and how hard it is to make these changes that you have proposed visible”.

“Well, the first thing we did was also a diagnosis. Where are we, you know? We recorded ourselves, watched each other, spoke with each other, diagnosed where we were, reflected together, worked individually as she said, applied changes and self-reflection and began again. We once again watched each other to start the process all over again.”

“But above all what has drawn our attention most is the attitude of adults towards children. A discourse that we thought was very clear for us, and that we thought we were working on very well. Once you stop to reflect on it and you begin to work, you work through videos, you observe yourself, observe your co-workers and think about it - you realize that it isn't so, that it is not clear, that the basis is not appropriate and that it should start there. And in all the outputs our work starts with the attitude of the adult.”

The observations uncover the fuzzy reality of everyday life in the setting and this becomes a call for change. Even though not all the settings used video as an observation tool, the practitioners tell about the discovery of some kind of shortcomings and the need for change.

New strategies

All the settings report that they have used the reading materials to evaluate the existing practice and to develop adequate strategies for improvement together. They report that it took a lot of time to get everyone onboard and to achieve consensus on deciding the strategies:

“We have made many changes in the dining room space, because in order to have a different attitude from the adult and give the child different autonomy, we had to make some structural changes, and this has had a lot of impact on our team meetings. We had to argue a lot, what had to be the way, how material had to be placed, what things we had to allow some of them to do and what others we shouldn't allow them to do... a work that has implied hours and hours of work for the team. And, in addition, it has impacted on the whole team. Everyone has had the power of decision, everyone has had an opinion, everyone has had to live it a lot and now the results of all these changes are starting to be seen.”

This statement shows a democratic time-consuming way of working, where the emphasis is to get everyone included. The setting wanted the new strategies to be anchored in the team. All the settings did great efforts to give more space for the children's autonomy and communication with peers. They also report, how this has created joy and contributed to the wellbeing.

“As regards the time of the meals, we have given much more autonomy to the children, we have reorganized some classrooms and the way to enter the food in the classroom, how to serve meals, so that the children can help the teacher to serve, they can leave their dirty dish, they can pick up the dessert, right?”

“Very quickly, so it was the furniture, that we used, I think I mentioned last time that we got the different sized chairs. And then we got new plates, and cups and cutlery which the children are really enjoying it and nothing has been broken. The mealtime snack café has really been a plus (...), the parents and children are really enjoying it.

“We had a demanding group of toddlers. We struggled with our meal times. The material has made us look a bit different on things. Now we have made changes. We do circle time on the floor, wash hands and do some movement games before get seated. Before we were sitting at the table all the time.”

The mealtimes last longer and are experienced as moments of pleasure, according to the practitioners. Parents are astonished and impressed by their toddlers’ skills during mealtime. This is also the case, when the “ToWe-toddlers” move to other groups with older children, as they are so skilled and ask for more autonomy. They prefer doing things themselves instead of getting “help” from an adult.

Self-reflection in teams

Practitioners report that the agenda in staff meetings has changed from practical details to reflections on children’s wellbeing and the educator’s role. They all struggled with obstacles, like the lack of time and turnover of staff. Nevertheless, the settings kept on working on the content of the manuals one by one. Thus, they introduced new knowledge to the team allowing reflections upon their practice from new perspectives. Many statements highlight the importance of reflecting together with colleagues.

“I think that a very strong point we have is the reflection. That is, the issue of when we have put it to the team and I believe that when we work on it, the need to reflect on whether we are doing it well or not, wanting to change, to consider whether we change it here or we change there. I think this is a strong point we have in the school, that we are interested. We do not give up”

“And that gives feedback, that is, it is also motivating to reflect on your practice, to realize your mistakes or the things you can do better, makes you better and it gets the ball rolling.”

A keys issue in the interview is the self-reflection. The practitioners’ use the audit tools and question for reflection in the staff meetings. They realize what is done, and ask for the rationale behind the actions. They discuss strengths and weaknesses of their work. This self-reflection by all the group members, through observation and discussion. It is not seen as an individual task.

Continuous professional development opportunities

We have already shown the importance of the well-organized, self-reflective staff meetings as a cornerstone of the professional development within the settings. These persistent meetings created an atmosphere of engagement and the courage to reconsider attitudes and established practices.

The project started with a training week for fourteen practitioners from the settings. The feedback gathered by a questionnaire, indicates that the majority of participants think that this contributed to new knowledge and that they are very satisfied with this initial training:

“What really helped is having the manuals for the week of training, and every day explaining to you and the energy transmitted helped a lot. (...) When you arrive home, you have a lot of information, which is all tied together well. (...) We explained it to our team, the manuals and all the explanations were a great help, and everyone on the team were reading them.”

The statement indicates that this training enabled the participants to offer an all over picture of the training materials and take leadership in their setting. In addition to the information, the participant values the transmission of energy. This face-to-face meeting established a kind of fertile condition for engagement, commitment and togetherness within the group. The participants tell that they returned home, full of energy and eager to start. This positive spirit set the scene.

Job shadowing, a peak experience of sharing knowledge

One week of job shadowing in each country, allowing two practitioners from each setting to observe and discuss the host institution’s way of working, was conducted in year two. This facilitated transnational discussions on the different cultures of early childhood education based on the visitors’ bodily experiences in an environment that on the one hand was familiar (promoting toddlers’ wellbeing and education), and on the other hand comprised unexpected ways of acting.

“It was fantastic, it was so invaluable. We had the best time ever(...), had such a good balance of observing and being in the classroom and then time to reflect as a group and then some self-reflection time as well.”

Several statements show how observing the strange practice functioned as a mirror on the own practice and thereby facilitated self-reflection.

“I was in Norway. There were things I thought I had already implemented, and I went over there and I am like ‘No, I am not even close’. Do you want an example? There was a young girl, she was two and she was trying to climb into the swing. I was watching and leaving her to it. Watching, watching, watching, watching what she could do and I thought: ‘I do not think she is going to actually be able to achieve this. I will help, so she feels empowered’ and then one of their practitioners said “No, wait! She can do it”. It took her another minute but she got in that swing on her own. That was a real light bulb moment for me. And I brought that back and shared it with some of the parents as well, because they are probably in the situation like the one I was in.”

“Something I can share from Barcelona, and I know we have always promoted it, but seeing it in real life is something you can really share with the practitioners at the conference. It was the way at lunchtime in one of the nurseries the children did everything! I know over here we have to say “Here are some plates, here are some cups, give them out”, but there they did everything, from opening swing-doors, to carrying tables through and at one point I was thinking: Do I need to intervene? Do I need to be ready?”

They all tell about such *critical incidents* (Halquist & Msanti, 2010), a kind of turning point that creates opportunities for reflection and new knowledge. These real life experiences of comparative education can transmit a message of hope and empowerment: Another practice is possible! There are hitherto unused possibilities. It seems that this mirroring process in another setting promoted self-reflection and the practitioners' wish to bring these new practices home. After their participation in a *Stay and Play* session in Kingston, the Norwegian practitioners changed their previous *Parent Coffee Time* with the parents sitting around the table, watching their toddlers playing on the floor into a *Stay and Play* session. The observation of how the educators were modeling playful child-adult interaction to the parents was the definitive impulse for change, according to the practitioners.

The host institution also had to evaluate the strength and weaknesses of their provision. What do we want to show? Are there things that we should improve before these skilled colleagues arrive? During the week, there were opportunities to small talk alongside the work and more in depth discussion after the observation period very day:

“They asked a lot of questions which helped us reflect. It was a bit of an ego boost when they said ‘This is fantastic, we are going to try to do this. I really liked that’ and hearing it from people who are not familiar with the ways we do things. It makes things nice. It made me proud.”

This kind of feedback was also shown in the reflective group sessions at the end of the week, when the visitors and the hosts met with the university partners. There the practitioners showed that they are able to put their observations and reflections into words, which means that they have acquired a *professional language* for the promotion of toddlers' wellbeing. This development of a specific language to distinguish actions and dimension in teaching/fostering are important parts of the professionalization process of the staff in the field of early education.

Impact on provision and practice

It remains to answer the last question: How has the project impacted and influenced the EYPs' provisions and practice in supporting the wellbeing of disadvantaged toddlers? The practitioners have documentedⁱⁱⁱ and reported about many changes to improve toddlers peer communication and autonomy in mealtimes and free play sessions. They are more aware of the language emersion in the daily routines and they tell about the long process of changing attitudes in the team. This is also in regard to how they see and work with diversity at the setting. When we asked them to say some words about their toddlers, one team state that they see

“Joy and pride, the pleasure of participating, being helpful. Fantastic to see how they shine. There is more calmness. The meal times are now good moments.”

This is one of many statements about the practitioners' experience of toddlers thriving and being included. As we have shown above, the training have promoted many dimension of enhancing the wellbeing and development of toddlers. ToWe has not been an isolated project; it has influenced everything that is going on in the setting.

A continuous impact on the life in the setting.

In the group interviews, the practitioners have addressed that they have gained a better understanding of wellbeing and diversity, which made them develop a more child-oriented approach. Furthermore, they talk about confidence and reaffirmation of their professionalism. They used the

training materials for continuous self-assessment of their work, leading to changes in attitude and the implementation of new strategies. This is how one of the setting conclude:

“The major difficulty is incorporating new people into the team. All of this individual work that we have all done, they have to start from scratch. This is a major difficulty, not only the reading and training in the manuals, but also this self-analysis, this self-reflection, which is a long process and now they have to do it. The other major difficulty we found is maintaining the changes we’ve made. (...) Achieving something is difficult, but maintaining it is even more difficult.”

“The TOWE-project has influenced all the team positively. It has been a big change that will not match any particular output, but it has made us used to working reflexively, self-testing ourselves, analysing ourselves, watching ourselves, and this is a very important change that will accompany us as from now on, this way of working.”

Let us listen to the voices of these teams of reflective practitioners. They show that the training materials are beneficial to promote practitioners’ continuous professional development regarding the core issue of promoting toddlers’ wellbeing and education.

Last, not least we want to thank all the practitioners for generously sharing their experiences and thoughts with us.

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ⁱ In this report we use the term “setting” for various kinds of early childhood education and care provisions for toddlers. The term covers what in some countries is called day care centres, creche, children’s center, kindergarten or “the little school”.

ⁱⁱ The TOWE – training materials are online at <http://www.toddlerswellbeing.eu/training-materials/>

ⁱⁱⁱ See www.toddlerswellbeing.eu under the headline **workshop materials** (films and PDFs)
Under the headline training material Toddlers’ Voice and Expression Strategies and Toddlers’ Early Language Strategies (PDF in English).