

## The adidas daycare center Profile<sup>1</sup>

A learning concept will be implemented in the Adidas daycare center that meets international quality standards for early childhood education. The description below explains this unique concept, which is marked by the following characteristics:

01. *The focus of the concept is on the child as a unique individual with his/her own skills and strengths. reinforcement of the child's development and the educational path of the individual.*

Educational systems to date have been focused more on the institution (kindergarten, school etc.) and less on the child. They justified themselves via the preparation and dissemination of knowledge. However, since the end of the last century the focus has been on the child instead. New educational systems reinforce the development of the child as an individual. With these, the child is given an active role from the start and acknowledged for his/her individuality. The Adidas concept follows this approach, reinforcing the child's skills and thus making an active contribution to a successful educational path.

02. *The child is treated as an active co-constructor of his/her development and education and is involved in it from the beginning, with the cooperation of the parents, professionals and other children.*

Since the 1970s the prevalent notion has been that a child comes into the world equipped with skills that enable him/her to actively participate in his/her development. The idea of the 'capable child' has been at the heart of every educational scheme since then. This is not an entirely new realisation: such a position was advocated in the early 20th century by Maria Montessori. In the second half of the last century, constructivist developmental psychology with principal advocate Jean Piaget (1896-1980) revived this notion and opened up the opportunity for children to explore their environment autonomously. Throughout this exploration children developed a subjective view of this reality and education. More recent educational concepts accept this position, but go further by embedding the child in social relationships and treating the generation of knowledge and investigation of meaning as the result not (only) of individual, subjective construction processes, but as the result of interaction, discourse and other dialogue-based learning processes, in which children, parents, and other children and

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adults also play an active role. All jointly construct the child's development and learning and also contribute to the outcome. The child, along with other people, is an active co-constructor in this co-construction process.

03. *All co-constructors of a child's development and learning organise their action plan on the basis of the same fundamentals and principles and thus contribute to consistency in the educational concept.*

Educational processes are not the result of individual effort alone, but are co-constructed by multiple participants, so it is of substantial importance that the participants shape this process on the basis of internalised, shared behavioural principles. They all use the same educational architecture plan. The image the child has cannot vary, for example from actor to actor. This understanding of learning, the methodical didactic approach of co-construction, the definition of educational goals, the interpretation and handling of diversity and the understanding of differentiation and individualisation in educational processes represent concepts that need consistent basic understanding among all actors as a prerequisite. This prevents the child being confronted with different 'philosophies'. All must implement the shared educational plan. They work on one and the same educational path for the child. This in turn endows the educational process with a great deal of consistency.

04. *In accordance with international developments, the understanding of learning is based on the notion that the generation of knowledge and the investigation of meaning take place via interaction and discourse that is organised jointly with children, parents, professionals and others.*

As already stated, the child is embedded in social relationships (at the latest) from birth. Finely-tuned interaction and communication processes are established, first with the parents, then with other significant individuals, and later with professionals. The quality of these processes is of critical significance for the development of the child and for successful educational paths. Education in this sense consequently represents a social process that is also embedded culturally and socially. It ties in with the child's everyday experiences and uses them systematically in order to meet the requirements of the child's social and cultural background. Knowledge is generated in dialogue, in interaction with others. It is evident that children would not develop high verbal competence without interaction and dialogue with the other people in their environment.

The same applies for the development of the child's concept of self, which is considered to be a function of the quality of comparable interactive processes in which children, parents, professionals and others are actively involved.

05. *At the focus of every effort is the development of the child. This happens on three levels in the Adidas Kindergarten: (a) by reinforcing visions, (b) by strengthening skills and (c) via 15 learning areas that in their totality ensure holistic development.*

More recent educational plans present a clear, well-founded architecture. They define visions, sketch out a tableau of basic competencies that become reinforced and outline learning areas that are used to co-constructively organise holistic educational processes.

The Adidas concept follows five visions:

- (a) the strong child;
  - (b) the communication-friendly and media-competent child;
  - (c) the creative, imaginative, artistic child;
  - (d) the learning, enquiring child who loves to discover and (e) the child who is acting responsibly and in a values-centred way.
- These visions outline an 'anthropological' picture of childhood that binds and obliges every participant.

The skills to be strengthened are split into four areas:

- (a) *Competencies as an individual:* Development of a positive self-concept, self esteem, cognitive competencies (problem-solving skills; creativity; memory function); emotional competencies (to talk about emotions, to identify emotions), motivational competencies (self-efficacy, self-regulation, curiosity) and competencies in relation to one's own body (well-being, to take responsibility for the own health)
- (b) *Competencies in a social context,* i.e. strengthening those competences that enable the child to participate in, co-create and share in responsibility for society. These specifically include: social competencies (empathy, ability to work in a team, ability to communicate), development of values and competent orientation (awareness and observance of distinctiveness and otherness; feeling of belonging to a culture; solidary behavior; socially and ecologically responsible behavior in one's own freedom of action; impartiality towards people with different values etc); and not least ability and preparedness to accept responsibility (for one's own

behavior, towards other people and for the environment and nature).

- (c) *Learning and meta-cognitive competencies:* Once disseminating and storing knowledge no longer represents the primary goal of modern educational systems, special emphasis is placed on the acquisition of 'methodical learning skills'. This means reinforcing every capability that enables the child to find suitable knowledge and to organise it in such a way that problems are solved (together with others) and that he/she takes social responsibility. Such skills are established early (usually during the first eight years of life) and can only be strengthened through interaction. Methodical learning skills are largely prognostically relevant for educational and academic development.
- (d) *Competent handling of change and stress - resilience.* This field of attention strengthens skills that enable the child to actively face challenges and deal with stressful situations in such a way that individual risk is minimised. Learning to deal with change constructively is one of the goals that inform educational plans.

The Adidas concept is geared towards holistic strengthening of the child's development and prevents bias of any kind. In order to strengthen these skills a total of fifteen educational areas are conceptualised that are built on the organisation of learning processes, of which five emphatically increase in significance:

1. movement, 2. health, 3. demonstrative art, 4. music and 5. natural science.

Other learning areas are: emotion, social relationships and conflict; life practice; language and literacy; media; technology and early maths; values orientation; society, economy and culture; democracy, politics and the environment. In their totality, these learning areas offer adequate bases in every respect for excellent reinforcement of the child's development.

- o6. *In order to shape educational processes perfectly, the didactic methodical approach of co-construction is introduced, guaranteeing better results compared to every other approach.*

Recent research results indicate that the methodical didactic approach of co-construction enables better learning results to be ex

pected than with any other approach (see report from the Ministry of Education of New Zealand by Mitchell et al, 2008, and the results of the EPPE study, Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2002). In general the 'self-education approach' in the kindergarten is regarded as obsolete and the impartation approach of schools as less efficient. The co-construction approach pursues the goal of generating knowledge jointly with others and constructing meaning. Processing new information together; understanding different perspectives; solving problems with others; expanding the current horizon of understanding and developing ideas, sharing them with others, discussing these with them - a prerequisite for acquiring high verbal competence. It is the first concept in the history of pedagogy that does not envisage any passive participants.

07. *As children come from different cultural backgrounds, intercultural acceptance and capability is defined as quality criteria of the Adidas daycare center. The same also applies for multilingualism. Cultural and linguistic multiplicity is welcomed and approved and systematically used for greater individual fairness and higher individual and collective gain.*

The way society is developing emphasises high social complexity and cultural diversity. This is characterised by a high degree of discontinuity, by losses and breaches with which children are confronted. However, cultural diversity has reached the education system in Germany already: 31% of all children have at least one parent who does not come from Germany. An attribute of modern educational plans is to emphatically endorse a sensitive, appreciative approach to diversity, whatever the type. Therefore, a philosophy on approaching and assessing diversity that keeps the social and cultural background of children and their parents in mind, will be lived in the adidas daycare center. As Johann Wolfgang von Goethe put in his family album at the beginning of the 19th century: "Tolerance should actually be a merely temporary attitude: it must lead to acknowledgement. To tolerate is to offend."

The majority of children in the world grow up in a bi- or multilingual environment. Bi- and multilingualism are skills that are worth strengthening. Every European and everyone who wants to help shape the overall development of the world is required to acquire several languages. This particularly applies to children who come from another linguistic background. Consequently, besides a respectful approach to the mother tongue of each child, the Adidas concept provides for consistent and technically supported implementation of a bilingual language concept. Native speakers are used for this.

o8. *In collaboration with the parents, the Adidas daycare center overcomes former concepts of "working with parents" and introduces the concept of "educational partnership".*

Educational partnership is based on the premise that a child's education involves various places. Learning happens primarily within the family. The inclusion of these places of learning contributes to the optimisation of the child's development. The institutional contribution to this does not justify a special claim to power or a position of privilege in the context of the co-constructors. Rather it requires a co-constructive approach based on mutual appreciation and preparedness to enter into a debate that involves various perspectives/contributions, and uses these systematically so that the educational paths of children can be built successfully. This involves every area of education, every skill or vision to be reinforced, and applies to every phase of the course of a child's educational path.

- o9. *The development of children is recorded by means of an observation and documentation process and the data used for optimising the separate processes.*

The Adidas concept goes away with the popular perception of so-called 'intercomparisons': comparing one child with another, or one facility with another.

It is more interested in intra-individual change processes: where does the child currently find him-/herself, what progress can be expected in one/two years, how this individual progress can be successfully moulded. Hence the focus is not on comparison with others, but on comparison with oneself. This requires qualitatively different processes that do not capture the development status at a specific point in time but guide development procedurally and permanently. This reinforces the development and learning process. Portfolios and similar approaches are used with this in mind.

10. *High educational quality can only be guaranteed with qualified staff. Therefore special care is given to the selection of experts and a tailored qualification programme.*

Staff are qualified both before the start of opening the facility and afterwards. The subjectively apparent need for qualification is determined and a qualification programme drawn up that largely addresses the requirements of the professional. Various qualification methods are used for this. (Sometimes the qualification offering is designed as in-service training and video sequences are used.)

This qualification process is due to be enhanced and expanded with an intranet that should encourage the exchange of information between every participant and, over time, develop into a virtual working community.)

11. *The steering group, which consists of representatives from the company and children's centres, takes responsibility for all decision-making processes, for ongoing development and for ensuring high quality.*

The steering group takes all the strategic decisions and guides the facility as a controlling and supervisory board for the facility.

Besides the steering group, it has to be decided if a *commission* is put together that meets once or twice a year and guides, advises on and supports the facility's development processes.

In this way, a high level of information and participation is achieved, leading to enrichment, social acceptance and recognition for the facility. The ability of the company, the employees, their representatives and not least the parents to identify with the facility is of substantial significance for its ability to function consensually, seamlessly and successfully.

External communication is down to the steering group.

12. *The quality of the daycare center will be ensured by setting up a parent advisory panel (Elternbeirat).*

In accordance with the Bavarian Child Education and Supervision Act (BayKiBiG), a parent advisory panel has to be appointed. It will be decided if further representatives of other places of learning can also become involved (eg. representatives of the community, from the company). If education represents the result of co-construction in different places of learning, then it makes sense to follow the same logic for the advisory panel. Communication and cooperation with all involved parties, in the same spirit, can substantially contribute to the success of the children's educational paths.