



INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (IECE) PROJECT

EXAMPLE OF IECE PROVISION: SPAIN

1. Abstract

Zaleo State Preschool is characterised by a unique and integrative educational project as well as by a continuous quest for pedagogical innovation that is reflected in its key projects in science, art, information and communication technology (ICT) and inclusion. These have seen it receive major awards and prizes both at national and regional level. It stands out for its participation and co-ordination, since 2010, in European projects in two fields: innovation in preschool and the inclusion of families in the teaching-learning processes.

The school opened in 1985. It teaches the whole preschool stage (first and second cycles) for children aged between 3 months and 6 years. The school is characterised by its continuous search for pedagogical innovation, which is reflected in its key projects connected to art, science and ICT integration in preschool, its continuous team training and documenting of those experiences and projects that identify it as an educational community. It has six classrooms for learners from 0 to 6 years.

Consistent with its educational principles, and as a 21st-century educational community, the protagonists in the teaching-learning process in Zaleo are not only the learners, but also teachers and families.

For Zaleo, educating in diversity means adopting a model which facilitates learning for every child from different family, personal and social situations in order to give an educational response which allows each of them to optimally develop all their abilities. All of them have the opportunity to express themselves, create, communicate, diversify their learning and develop all kinds of competences (artistic, creative, research, reading, musical, digital, etc.) through educational settings recreated inside and outside the school by the teachers, using every language and resource appropriate to their ages.

The percentage of learners with specific support needs ranges between 5 and 10% (depending on the school year), which necessitates close co-ordination with other external resources, such as the Area Early Intervention Team. Therefore, diversity in the school prompts it to adopt a model which facilitates the learning of every child, from different family, cultural, personal and social situations.



The school's team

There are 14 teachers, a specialist in English (who is shared with another school) and six administrative and services staff. The school leadership team comprises the headmistress and a secretary. This team believes that education is an instrument for personal and social development. It sees learning as persons and citizens as being key to achieve learners' full development.

In each classroom or school project, children are offered the opportunity each day to create, express themselves, make themselves heard and felt at school and, most importantly, also outside school by means of activities such as exhibiting paintings and sculptures, doing scientific experiments, etc., in the library, cultural centres, museums, etc. This enables the school to fulfil its goal: to make today's children visible.

The educational commitments taken on by the team in recent years have been and are key. They came from a process of reflection and internal participative consensus, which they sought out and planned, and self-evaluation and reflection processes carried out in the past years.

The development of the school's own innovative and creative project mainly entails:

- continuous staff training
- teamwork
- social commitment
- a free and open space where they can include work with families and the educational, social and cultural agents surrounding them.

Regarding the families, which are one of the key pillars in the school's educational and social project, 85% are of Spanish origin and 15% are other nationalities. Their socioeconomic level is middle income. This means adjusting educational intervention to each child's individuality, compensating learning difficulties or balancing differences which have their roots in the different social, cultural and/or economic environment. Their educational actions are aimed at compensating for inequalities, teaching children to read and write at early ages, and responding to the ever-changing educational challenges.

The values and principles that guide their educational work are, among others:

- To respect the complete inclusion of children with special educational needs, setting up the appropriate resources.



- To individually deal with each child’s needs, respecting their levels of maturity and emotional development by means of a holistic and procedural methodology.
- To educate children about equality of rights, overcoming any type of discrimination.
- To respect diversity, based on acceptance of the different races, cultures and ethnic groups.
- To develop innovative projects which allow them to evaluate and make public their practice.
- To promote the participation and collaboration of families to contribute to the better attainment of educational objectives.
- To educate about values: education for life, peace, health, as well as respect and appreciation for the natural environment.
- To guarantee integration in our environment through co-operation with the other institutions in the neighbourhood.
- Teamwork as a key factor to unite the group when assuming common goals.
- To evaluate in order to improve and adapt to the most progressive educational currents and to the needs of our society.
- To collaborate with families in a comprehensive education, opening their doors to culture and their surroundings, in an enriching, recreational and caring environment which helps learners to grow up happy and be visible in today’s society.
- To share their experiences and open the school to other environments.
They have different spaces on the internet to do so:

<http://www.educa.madrid.org/web/eei.zaleo.madrid/index-nueva.htm>

<http://www.educa2.madrid.org/web/zaleando>

2. Inclusive features

Based on the view that quality preschool education influences the improvement of children’s social adaptation and their greater inclination for continuous learning throughout their lives, it can be said that the school has a clear plan to achieve it. Close family-school collaboration (taking into account the resources in their social, educational and cultural settings) is one of the pillars on which the school’s educational project is based. From its presentation to its educational community (<http://www.educa.madrid.org/web/eei.zaleo.madrid/index-nueva.htm>), i.e., the



image it projects and how it shows itself, it can be understood that we are dealing with a different school, with approaches towards inclusion and quality education for everybody.

The educational project prioritises the idea that education must not be limited to the educational institutions. It is possible to learn in any space and in society. In order to do so, the connection and co-operation between families, schools and the community have to exist. Involving parents in the school's dynamics will not be possible if these institutions do not recognise them as strategic agents in the learning process and articulate the necessary mechanisms to understand the social reality of the families and their learners (Education Strategy 2020). Parents' involvement in the school in a quality indicator.

The teachers in Zaleo are introducing changes in the methodology which support the families' proposals and the learning need of each and every of the preschool learners in order to educate them holistically.

Through their methodological proposal they expect a global impact of each result of their educational practice and improvements in the following areas:

- Active family participation in schools and curriculum development
- Acceptance of families as educational agents (breaking down old stereotypes)
- A joint and multidirectional organisation between the family and the school (feedback)
- Improvements in communication
- Better and more efficient use of technologies for the exchange of information
- An increase in the relationships with the social surroundings
- Greater dissemination of their work and the consolidation of new learning communities.

This video (<https://youtu.be/caGWTivYQto>), which summarises the activities carried out during the last school year, gives an idea of the methodological approach and the different types of activities that are done at the school. One of the strong points of its project is the methodological approach based on projects, active learning and families' participation for integral development.

In this way, it is sure of being able to offer the necessary resources so the children can adapt to a constantly changing society which requires learning to learn, lifelong learning and even learning to unlearn. The members of the school's educational staff are the agents responsible for this change and for others to



come. Their objective is to favour an educational model in which not only creativity and innovation are key, but so too is making the school a place where inclusive, interactive and educational projects are carried out. They work so that collaboration between the school, the family and surroundings allows them to increase educational quality and favour education to develop the abilities and competences for life which children need in order to become involved and committed citizens in the 21st century.

The school has a specific plan for attention to diversity, included in its School-based Educational Project, which includes, among other principles, that the Attention to Diversity Plan in the Preschool must be understood as a global and integrative action of the school in order to adapt the educational response to the learners' characteristics, so as to cater for everybody: those with learning difficulties, those with a higher capacity or motivation to learn, as well as those whose diversity has more to do with their social or cultural environment.

That is why, during each school year, the school organises the support and educational attention measures that are best adapted to the needs of every learner in the school, including learners with special educational needs and those with high capacities, and their families.

In this way, the school tries to give a global and integrative educational response to all the learners, to establish curricular and organisational measures to adapt the curriculum to the different needs learners may have, to organise the different groups so as to carry out the ordinary and specific support measures, and to efficiently use all the resources the school has, with special emphasis on resources from families and the social, educational and cultural background of the school.

It could be said that the quality of a school can be measured, among other variables, by the capacity to plan, provide and evaluate the optimal curriculum for each learner in the context of learner diversity. The school's online magazine (one of the means of communication with the community and of training) showcases the activities which are done in each classroom, as well as all the projects and main dynamics: <http://www.educa2.madrid.org/web/zaleando>

The school considers education an instrument for personal and social development, and not as a classifying instrument. Diversity always has to be present when planning educational action in preschool: children from 0 to 6 years are so different that it is essential to start working with the differences. Every child will learn if they have help. However, this help cannot be the same for the whole group, but will depend on the needs that are detected in each of its members.

From this approach, we may talk about *individualisation* of teaching, which is understood as the process by which, starting from the analysis of the individual



characteristics of the learners, educational action is integrated from the concept of the child as a 'global and unique person'. This consideration is always important, including when it comes to children with special educational needs.

For the Zaleo Preschool team, educating in diversity means adopting a model which facilitates the learning process of each and every child from different family, personal and social situations. It is therefore necessary to find solutions for the organisation, methodology, adaptation of the curriculum, etc., in order to give the most adequate, diverse and creative response which facilitates the optimal development of all the competences in each and every one of the learners at the precise moment.

The curriculum is very much focused on the development of artistic and scientific competences. To this end, the school offers a multitude of projects and classroom activities focused on getting all learners to have access to learning from different activities and approaches. Some of these projects can be consulted on <http://www.educa.madrid.org/web/eei.zaleo.madrid/index-nueva.htm>, which shows the school's strength with regard to the curriculum for all.

In order to give an adequate educational response, the school starts out by analysing the context of its own diversity and the resources present inside and outside the school.

Educating in diversity and attending to individuality requires the adoption of models of school organisation and curriculum development which facilitate learning in each and every of the learners (with their differences). That is why the school applies measures for global school functioning, the use of spaces and times, and child grouping. School organisation is an element that determines the educational response, affecting the development of activities and the attainment of objectives. To sum up, the organisational structure is:

- Flexible: organisation must be a tool at the service of curricular decisions. It creates a general action framework, but evaluation must be continuous so the detected problems can be solved.
- Functional and participative: organisation should be such that it allows and facilitates the attainment of the planned objectives in each yearly didactic programme, in collaboration with the early intervention team and including the presence of other educational agents in the school, such as families or others from their social and cultural setting.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=16&v=ljtjy5jWDYk>

3. Inclusive highlight

In recent years, the school has looked for good practices outside its immediate surroundings as an associate in European projects, as well as co-ordinator of a multilateral Comenius project between 2010 and 2012 (<http://www.educa2.madrid.org/web/cec/home>). It has worked in collaboration with other European schools, established ties with schools from other European countries and has had the opportunity to exchange experiences and learn about many other educational projects. This has had a clear impact on incorporating new methodologies and improvements to its project.

Since 2014, it has been working on effective collaboration with families inside the teaching-learning process in favour of higher quality curricular development. This challenge has been reflected in a European project, which Zaleo is co-ordinating: S.E.L.F. (Sharing Education and Learning with Families). Through this project it expects to offer families (over 200) the opportunity to participate in educational projects within a European dimension. The children (more than 400 aged between 0 and 6 years) have the chance to be active agents in their own learning process. The teachers (46) use new resources and are building a new pedagogy, sharing with the families the teaching of curricular contents and also facilitating communication between learners, teachers and families.

The following website, created by the school, outlines all the project characteristics and activities and offers an overview of the daily reality and the educational objectives pursued:

<http://erasmusfamiliesandschools.blogspot.com/es/>

It is expected that this project may be used as a model to share with other schools and encourage innovation in other educational communities in the near future, because anyone can learn from the knowledge and experience of other schools and make the most of other good ideas and practices. All these efforts share the common objective of fully educating future European citizens.

An online guide for teachers is currently being prepared. It includes proposals, resources, processes, visual documents and families' opinions, among other aspects, and is available using the following link:

<http://erasmusfamiliesandschoolsguide.blogspot.com.es/2015/02/english.html>

This way of working makes the school an educational model in the local area and beyond. Far from wanting to keep the benefits of its project to itself, the school creates materials that can be used by other colleagues and are available online.

The spaces and surroundings of all the educational communities participating in this project will enrich the learning experience of all the participants in the



educational community. Moreover, the schools, through this project and others, are opening their doors even more than before and promoting learning environments that go beyond their borders, the borders of their cities and the borders of their countries.

In short, including families is a key objective for Zaleo, essential for understanding the new proposals for the learning process, where collaboration between the family, the school and the surroundings introduces positive changes to the educational contexts and generates new challenges and educational opportunities for the family, the school and society, since they are considered important educational resources which undoubtedly improve the quality of education. All the activities in the school, which can be viewed on its website, show us how the classroom and school educational project continue to be built with full collaboration from families, from daily classroom activities to more specific workshops, after-school activities, etc.

4. Other evidence of quality IECE

a. External recognition

During its 30 years of teaching experience, Zaleo has wanted to become a place of discovery for its preschool learners. Numerous distinctions and prizes at European, national and regional level are the result of this commitment:

- Third Prize ‘Marta Mata Quality Award in educational centres 2006’ awarded by the Ministry of Education at a national level.
- National Prize ‘CREARTE 2009’ awarded to educational centres for their level of innovation and promotion of creativity in the learners by the Ministry of Culture.
- School selected at a national level by the Ministry of Education as an example of a school with innovative practices in the use of ICT, school year 2008–2009.
- First National Prize in Scientific Stories 2008 organised by Fundación La Caixa in the Preschool and Primary category.
- First Prize ‘Children’s Ombudsman in the Autonomous Community of Madrid 2006’ for our project on the use of ICT by all the educational community.
- Special Jury Mention in the fourth edition of the Excellence and Quality in Public Services in the Autonomous Community of Madrid Award 2002.

- Educational Innovation Award of the ‘Dirección General de Ordenación Académica’ of the Autonomous Community of Madrid 2002, with Special Jury Mention for its project on Children’s Art: ‘La Pirámide Americana’.
- School chosen in Erasmus+, Comenius and Regio projects, by the National Agency of European Programmes with the roles of associate and co-ordinator. Special acknowledgement to the quality (STAR PROJECT) of the project co-ordinated in 2002 by the C.E.C. School on creative and significant inclusion of ICT resources in Preschool on the European Shared Treasure webpage:
http://www.europeansharedtreasure.eu/detail.php?id_project_base=2010-1-ES1-COM06-20398

b. Children and families

As a starting point, we cannot ignore the major impact that initial educational experiences have on the life of a person, or that the most important physical, socio-emotional and cognitive changes occur during the first years of development.

Ideas like the ones included in this didactic proposal for teachers mean that educational centres and faculties must be willing to assume a new challenge and a new way of understanding the learning-teaching process in preschool learners, in which the family-school-surroundings collaboration introduces changes to the educational contexts and generates new educational opportunities for the family, the school, the learners and – why not? – the surroundings.

The presence of these new educational agents in schools has also brought them closer to the concerns about education which affect every sector in our society and allowed them to give more adequate and appropriate responses to the reality of our learners, giving priority to learning for life as a basic competence in education and to lifelong learning for the adults involved.

On the other hand, the school’s open attitude has been key to replace ‘acting for’ the families with ‘being with’ them, dealing with educational joint responsibility, co-operation and alliance between families and teachers in a proactive, innovative way.

c. The school team: teachers and the leadership team

We can boast 30 years’ experience of running a school and more than 20 years of collaborative work, in which the leadership team has supported and encouraged innovation and continuous improvement proposals which have allowed this school to feature in the top rankings of schools of acknowledged educational



quality in Spain. It stands out for listening to the needs of its learners and their families.

Its social and cultural commitment are also remarkable, having managed to make preschool learners visible in environments such as the arts and science through the implementation of innovative and pioneering projects.

In recent years, involvement in diverse European and national projects has made its model open, flexible and shared with the whole community.

<http://www.educa2.madrid.org/web/cec/home>

<http://www.educa2.madrid.org/web/smol/home>

Some of the ideas and proposals accomplished in order to achieve families' inclusion in the teaching-learning processes (and which define the school) are:

- to be able to adapt to a changing world which affects them without knowing when or how;
- to be flexible and creative to introduce the necessary changes in the methodology so as to incorporate the presence of the families into the classrooms;
- to constantly undergo training;
- to be in contact with the cultural and social life of the surroundings;
- to be prepared to collect, listen to and support other proposals;
- to practice active listening on today's children's needs of learning for life.

Without a doubt, prior reflection in teams and individually must be the starting point for each teaching team, and for European exchange environments or fora.

The leadership team has been the promoter, motivator and facilitator in inclusive projects. It has been directly involved in their development and launch, being the guarantor of their inclusion in the school's educational projects and their continuity over time.

d. Collaboration

Art

Zaleo Preschool has been a member of the Enterarte group since its foundation in 1998. This group includes teachers and learners from preschool up to university and is committed to generating, developing and managing innovative artistic projects. It serves as a group for meeting and a think-tank for research and creation in the educational world. This has meant leading the way and being ground-breaking in introducing art to the world of preschool education, leading to



the opening up of museums, cultural centres, contemporary art centres, etc. for our learners' installations and productions. In this way the children's art has been taken to the Museum of America, Fuenlabrada's contemporary art centre and the Círculo de Bellas Artes in Madrid, among others.

The learners (from babies to six-year-olds) have taken part in all these projects, bringing the world of art closer to their families. Creativity, imagination, art, the emotion of expression, the acceptance of the differences in the artistic experiences, the discovery of other sociocultural realities, the research of the surroundings, the development of new visual, sound and plastic languages (the child's 100 languages by Malaguzzi), the connection of the preschool learners and the whole educational community with Madrid's cultural life, etc., have been fostered through each and every project the school has accomplished as member of this educational and artistic group. Website:

<http://blogenterarte.blogspot.com.es/>

Science

The school has stood out for taking part in science fairs organised by the Department of Education, which introduce all citizens in Madrid to science in connection to daily life through experiments and the approach to concepts such as Archimedes' principles, surface tension and the Big Bang, from a methodology adapted to the preschool stage.

Details are available on the following websites:

<http://www.educa2.madrid.org/web/zaleando/ciencia>

<http://www.madrimasd.org/Madridporlaciencia/Feria-IX/stand/default.aspx?idStand=210>

http://www.madrimasd.org/madridporlaciencia/feria_VI/participantes/default.aspx?idStand=9

http://www.madrimasd.org/Madridporlaciencia/Feria_VII/portal/stand/default.aspx?idStand=41

http://www.madrimasd.org/madridporlaciencia/feria_VIII/stand/default.aspx?idStand=67

ICT

The school was a pioneer in including these resources in preschool classrooms. It has been responsible for the launch of innovative and creative projects using these resources, as well as for the training of other educational teams in Spain. It has led and participated in European projects in order to share and acquire new experiences with this type of content. It has collaborated with IBM (KidSmart



project), the Technical University of Madrid, the Autonomous University of Madrid, and BT (in the project 'Learning with ICT in an inclusive preschool. Rescuing the hidden languages of childhood'), among others, to boost and develop these types of competences in learners from preschool, adapting to the reality of their environment. This is because the school has to respond to today's societal challenges and prepare learners to understand the world in which they happen to live, making them autonomous to participate and get on in it.

This collaboration helped the school to create an innovative, creative and experiment – the inclusive curriculum – through the use of ITC.

One of the main ITC resources that it has used is Radio Zaleo, six podcasts created with the participation of children and families. That is an important and new way of learning and making families and communities participate. The details are available on the following websites:

<http://www.educa2.madrid.org/web/zaleando/comenius-regio>

<http://www.educa2.madrid.org/web/cec/home>