



Newsletter from the research environment [CHILD](#) at Jönköping University

## Collaboration is Everything



**We do better together.** Research questions and research methods are of course influenced by the culture in which they exist. The knowledge generated might not be applicable outside the setting in which the research is implemented. However, the only means for finding out is to collaborate over national borders and cultures with other researchers.

[Full story](#) by Professor *Mats Granlund*



## Goodbye GEDS ... or What We Learned from 51 Transatlantic Exchanges



The GEDS experience was an exchange project between three American universities and three European universities within the field of Early Intervention. Between 2008 and late summer of 2013 in all 24 European and 27 American Master- and Ph.D-students participated in semester-long mobility experiences across the Atlantic. [Full story](#) by *Eva Björck-Åkesson*, Coordinator for Europe

# Academic Achievements & News



**Part time:** *Johanna Norderyd* successfully passed her part time in September. Johanna Norderyd is a PhD-student in Disability Research at School of Health Sciences and SIDR, and her research project is called: *Oral health in and dental care for children and adolescents with disabilities*.



**New PhD-student:** In August *Frida Lygnegård* started as a new doctoral student in the CHILD-group. "I think my curiosity and sincere interest in research concerning children will be important when starting this journey", she says. [Full story.](#)



**Book release:** *Jag är med!* is a very useful and beautiful guide on how to manage everyday life when you have to include personal assistants in your household and in your family. The book by CHILD-researchers *Jenny Wilder* and *Anna Karin Axelsson* is about how to make children with multiple disorders more participant in family life. [Full story.](#)



**Public Lectures:** Live streamed over the web or live at Jönköping University, professor *Mats Granlund* lectures (in Swedish) on the topic *En diagnos säger inte mycket om hur man mår - om barns delaktighet och lärande i vardagen* on 10 October 2013, at 6.30 pm at School of Education and Communication, room Hc113 or via [live streaming](#).



**STINT-scholar in Singapore:** CHILD-Professor *Karin Enskär* teaches in Singapore all fall. "I have received a fantastic welcoming at the National University of Singapore", says Karin Enskär. For six months, Karin Enskär will teach and make contacts for future research projects. [Full story.](#)



**ISEI Conference in Russia:** CHILD-researcher *Margareta Adolfsson* recently got back from a regional ISEI-conference in St. Petersburg, Russia. The conference attracted around 500 delegates from 42 nations. Margareta Adolfsson contributed with a presentation within the ICF-CY concept. [Full story.](#)



**SIDR Kick off 2013:** The two-day kick off within the Swedish Institute for Disability Studies this year focused on strategies. The CHILD-group is responsible for the SIDR-research concerning children. It's a great job! [Full story](#)

# Received Funding & Publications



The project *See Me - Talk to Me!* received 1 million SEK from Forte. The project is run by a group of CHILD-researchers at the School of Health Sciences and starts off with a study on children as relatives in the health care system. [Full story](#)



Congratulations, *Karin Bertills*, at the School of Education and Communication, who received 200 000 SEK from Sunnedahls handikappfond. Karin Bertills will join the CHILD-group as from January 2014 and her project is called *Elever i behov av särskilt stöd i ämnet Idrott och hälsa - lärares arbetssätt, betygssättning och elevers självtillit*. [Full story](#)



The project *Early detection - Early intervention – a longitudinal study of children's engagement and behavior problems in Swedish preschool environments* received 2, 5 million SEK from Forte. [Full story](#)



So far this year, the CHILD-group has published 26 articles in peer reviewed journals. Check them out! [Full story](#)

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## Collaboration is Everything!

Research is a universal activity that is ongoing in most countries of the world. One aim with research is to generate knowledge that is universal and applicable in different countries and cultures of the world. This applies also to research concerning children in need of special support. However, this is easier said than done. Research questions and research methods are of course influenced by the culture in which they exist. The knowledge generated might not be applicable outside the setting in which the research is implemented. However, the only means for finding out is to collaborate over national borders and cultures with other researchers.

International collaboration is a necessary but not sufficient requirement for generating high quality research that produces universally applicable knowledge. During the last years the involvement of researchers from other countries in the research efforts of CHILD researchers has increased. So far in 2013, fifteen out of the 29 published articles in peer reviewed journals have been written in collaboration with at least one researcher from another country (primarily South Africa, Australia and the USA). This relatively high proportion of international collaboration of course requires that we also actually collect empirical data in collaboration with people in other countries. During the last five years we have collaborated with researchers in South Africa on ICF-CY and human rights, with researcher from several European countries and USA on ICF-CY and children in need of special support, and with universities from the USA and Europe on early intervention.

These collaborations have generated not only knowledge and articles but also friendship and extended networks. We have been able to test and adapt concepts and methods we use in other countries and cultures. We have also provided several researchers with opportunities to communicate in English, the language we primarily work in within an international perspective. Many of these collaborative projects are ending soon. We do have new opportunities for international collaboration coming up in Singapore (see text below from Karin Enskär), Australia, Vietnam, Portugal and the USA but still no concrete funding other than for faculty exchange. Thus, we now need to put a lot of efforts into applying for funding from STINT, EU and other funding agencies that promote international collaboration. It is a necessary requirement for staying in the front line of our research field that we are active in the international arena.



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[Avregistrera prenumeration](#)



# Goodbye GEDS!

## ... or What we learned from 51 transatlantic exchanges

The GEDS experience was an exchange project between three American universities and three European universities within the field of Early Intervention. Between 2008 and late summer of 2013 in all 24 European and 27 American Master- and Ph.D-students participated in semester-long mobility experiences across the Atlantic. In addition faculty exchanges have been part of the project. To summarize, GEDS provided a large number of students and faculty with learning and research experiences that are extremely valuable for their future development and professional advancement. In addition they have gained friends for life and an understanding of other cultures and an international perspective of learning and education. The saying “Education transforms lives” is highly relevant as a finalizing comment about this long-ranging project, both for students, faculty and in the long run for those who are in focus for the outcomes of the project, i.e. the children and families in early childhood intervention and education all over the world.

## Full story: To summarize the GEDS-project 2008-2013

*By Eva Björck-Åkesson, European Coordinator*

The Global Education and Developmental Studies project (GEDS) has been developed and implemented 2008-2013 by a Transatlantic Consortium through collaboration between three European universities (Jönköping University, Porto University and Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich) and three American universities (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, NC, Vanderbilt University, TE, and University of Colorado, Denver, CO). In all 24 European and 27 American students have participated in semester-long mobility experiences across the Atlantic. In addition faculty exchanges have been part of the project. The project has been financed by EU and FIPSE and has been coordinated by professors *Eva Björck-Åkesson* (EU) and *Rune J. Simeonsson*, (US).

The overall purpose of the Transatlantic Consortium has been to identify and build on national and international perspectives and understandings about young children, early childhood intervention and education to achieve the goals below:

- strengthen practice and policy in early childhood intervention and education
- expand the research base for early childhood intervention and education
- prepare students for leadership roles in early childhood intervention and education

GEDS builds on an international curriculum in Early Childhood Intervention developed in an earlier phase of the Transatlantic Consortium in Early Childhood Intervention (2001-2005) with the following objectives:

- To develop an innovative, transatlantic model of training in higher education in the form of the GEDS concentration for students in education and related disciplines.
- To implement a transatlantic program of study for students through academic work at home and partner universities.
- To evaluate the efficacy and added value of the GEDS concentration as an instructional model for training on global issues in education and child development.
- To disseminate information on the GEDS concentration model of training, findings on its implementation in student mobility and its potential as a sustainable and flexible form of transatlantic study.

The innovative transatlantic curricula was named “the GEDS experience” with academic courses, field experiences, language and culture experiences/courses and independent studies as a base for individual study plans for the students who took part in the GEDS concentration. Intensive Institutes were part of the project. The first was held in Jönköping University in 2012. It was attended by American and European students from partner institutions, with additional Swedish and South African students and faculty. The second was held in Porto University 2013 with students and faculty from partner universities and additional students and faculty from other countries.

The GEDS-concentration has been proven to be a sustainable and flexible program of study applicable across partner universities. The project expanded an international curriculum and built on the successful track of two previous Transatlantic projects. Activities reflected strong support across partner universities as evidenced by memoranda of agreement among participants. It included both masters and doctoral level students. They were advanced graduate students in different disciplines related to developmental studies. They received a Certificate in Global Education and Developmental Studies to document this aspect of their education as part the work towards the degree.

The training model for the graduate concentration (master and Ph.D) was developed including four courses to be completed at the host university and two courses to be completed at the home university by students. The concentration represents an innovative model in that it (a) combines academic courses with field work, (b) is interdisciplinary in nature, (c) includes a research

perspective and (d) focuses on universal issues in societal systems for children and families and their implications for research and practice.

An important goal of the GEDS concentration was to broaden student perspectives through participation in course work in a different culturally academic environment, field-based experiences, along with exposure to global initiatives in the form of declarations advanced by the UN and the EU and the US. Assessment of these perspectives and knowledge of global issues is included in the overall evaluation plan. The concentration model proved to be an innovative means of building on students' home university experience by adding an individualized international component.

EU and US faculty members were actively involved in development activities throughout the project. There was collaboration among partner universities in teaching and student advisement facilitating exchanges. US and EU faculty members served as co-chairs and opponents on student theses and dissertations and also participated in seminars at the home- and host-universities. For students, the experience of participating in education and research in another country and academic culture were important aspects of participation in the project, leading to improved teaching and student achievement.

Dissemination of information about the GEDS concentration has taken several forms; dissemination within respective partner universities, information in Newsletters from partner universities, in student blogs, at conferences and descriptive information on the consortium websites. Within academic units of the partner universities the concentration was presented to faculty and students. Presentations have been made at several meetings by consortium faculty in Europe and the US. Students participated in a number of these presentations. An added value is that students and faculty from earlier ECI-projects were able to present together with faculty at these conferences.

The project demonstrated that despite differences among university schedules, credits, financial requirements, and procedures, it is possible to successfully implement a creative and meaningful new framework for international education. An aim of the project was to improve teaching and learning in an international perspective. Important for improving teaching were that faculty gained a deeper understanding of global issues through their interactions with foreign students and faculty and their participation in the educational process in a foreign country. Participants came to recognize that their understanding of systems was grounded in their knowledge and experience of their home countries and cultures. Experiences from seminars, institutes, committees and advisement contributed to the development of a common international framework for GEDS. The strong collegial relationships that developed among faculty members were also important for implementation of the demanding activities of the project. Through ongoing contacts and connections established in conjunction with directors meetings and other project meetings, faculty developed these critical relationships. Although faculty did not always receive direct compensation, they invested considerable time, energy and personal commitment to the project.

The students engaged in internships and in research in their own field of study. Thus they obtained direct experience in practice and in research. All students were required to produce a paper,



preferably together with a foreign student, building on their experience. Student papers addressed such topics as comparative studies across cultures, comparative policy analysis, issues for further research, and the development of measurement tools. In addition, a number of students participated in all the steps involved in submitting research proposals for IRB review in the US. All students learned that there are different models for institutional review and research development. Similarly, students were able to experience collaboration across countries in research preparation, in data gathering and data analysis, and in the process of submitting and revising proposals.

Because GEDS Project activities complement existing degree programs in education, psychology, health, disability research, social work, and related fields, the project added critical value to the students' educational experience. Students from these disciplines came to better understand the roles of practitioners in other disciplines, and to develop an interdisciplinary perspective on the issues. The project utilized the UN Convention on Rights of the Child and the World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning-Children and Youth (ICF-CY) as a framework for analyzing environments for child development and learning in different cultures. This proved to be a particularly effective means of facilitating collaboration as it gave a tool for comparative analysis across countries, and led to ongoing collaborative research by some students and faculty.

The intensive institutes provided a mechanism for offering considerable added value to this project. GEDS funding made it possible for US faculty to attend those held in Europe; European faculty funding was often provided by the home university. In addition, the university hosting the institute provided in-kind support to these activities through meeting space, involvement of additional faculty, and social activities. The institutes offered an opportunity for ongoing collaboration among EU and US faculty, as meetings and discussions were held throughout. Since the CHILD research program at Jönköping University has an ongoing relationship with the University of Pretoria, South African faculty and students were also able to attend European institutes, thereby adding to the international perspective. European faculty were able to visit participating universities in the US. They participated in conferences, seminars, and classes, and made presentations to students and faculty. New collaborative relationships grew from collaborative coursework and research. The sustainability of the project was enhanced by these visits, as they frequently included meetings with university administrators, including deans and leading researchers, department heads, and heads of international offices.

To summarize, GEDS has provided a large number of students and faculty with learning and research experiences that are extremely valuable for their future development and professional advancement. In addition they have gained friends for life and an understanding of other cultures and an international perspective of learning and education. The saying "Education transforms lives" is highly relevant as a finalizing comment about this long-ranging project, both for students, faculty and in the long run for those who are in focus for the outcomes of the project, i.e. the children and families in early childhood intervention and education all over the world.

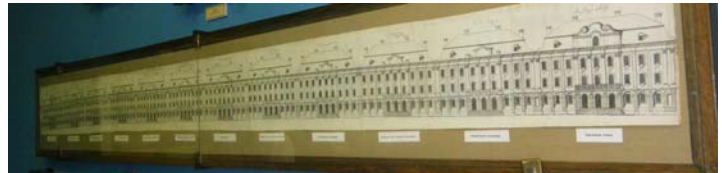
*Eva Björck-Åkesson*

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## From the Regional ISEI Conference in St Petersburg 1-3 July 2013: "Early Intervention to Promote Child Development and Mental Health: From Institutional Care to Family Environment".

This conference, organized by the International Society on Early Intervention (ISEI) and the World Association for Infant Mental Health, attracted around 500 delegates from 42 nations. During the three days, more than 100 symposia and sessions were provided, in addition to three plenary sessions.

The plenary sessions took place in St Petersburg's University Main Building built in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century as 12 colleges, each for one of the nation's ministries. The 12 buildings were integrated into one long facade that spanned an entire block.



Other sessions were held in the Pavlov building, i.e. the Psychology Faculty. In this historical building, the organizers had installed computers and projectors in 10 rooms and engaged simultaneous interpreters. Just impressive! It was a special experience to listen to the mix of Russian and English languages.



**Dr Riftak Muhamedrahimov** told in his introduction plenary that the Russian Federation consists of 83 constituent entities including 200 ethnic groups with 83 languages. Children with disabilities or mental health problems have traditionally lived in orphanages, but nowadays these decrease in number due to the belief that children should live in families.



**Dr Elena Koznevnikova** was the second organizer of the conference and the very engaged "frontman", i.e. leader of the changes in the Russian system during the last 20 years. She told how it all began with the support of families with children with Down syndrome, the influence of Karl Grunewald and the normalization principle (living normal lives), and the education of families. Nowadays, the Early Intervention Institute in St Petersburg is one of the leading organizations to develop and disseminate advanced methods for working with families with young children in Russia and CIS countries. During the years, SIDA, Lärarhögskolan Stockholm, Ersta Sköndal, Stockholms läns landsting and more Swedish organizations have provided support. Today Larissa Samarina is the head of the institute and there is a manual establishing standard requirements for Russian early intervention. It should be functional, provided in natural environments, family centred and interdisciplinary. More information on [www.EII.ru](http://www.EII.ru).

**Dr Arnold Sameroff** from the University of Michigan presented the importance of the social context of early intervention. A longitudinal study across 30 years showed that IQ and mental health are stable over time. Unfortunately, also risk factors seemed quite stable.



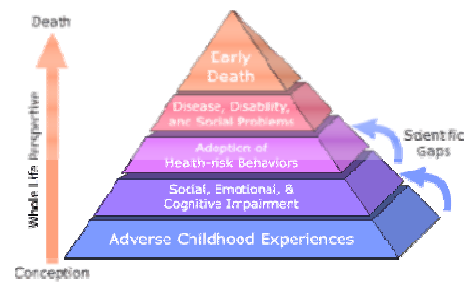
However, as children's development in first hand is dependent on the amount of risk factors, the environment should be the focus of interventions. Not least, the attitudes of parents are essential for child development.

**Dr Michael Guralnick**, the chair of ISEI, talked about connections between mental health and peer relationships for children with developmental delays. Around 8% of non-delayed children suffer from mental health problems whereas the number is 25% for delayed children at 36 and 48 months. 60-75% of even mildly delayed children in preschool ages show peer competence difficulties. Peer relationships are critical to promote a child's development and mental health. Parents are essential to foster peer competence; they should support inclusive preschools, promote establishment of the child's peer social networks, and establish horizontal parent-child interaction patterns.



**Dr Eva Melin** from Stockholm University also talked about peer relations. She defined *social participation* as Belonging to preschool, inter-subjective interaction that leads into acts of acknowledgment, situation dependent autonomy, and involvement. How children carry out activities is for example influenced by the teachers attitudes to children's roles as subjects or actors.

**Dr Joy Osofsky** from the Louisiana State University in New Orleans presented lessons learned from children exposed to trauma and its implications for early intervention. She used the expression "derail the normal developmental trajectory", i.e., the children get off the track when exposed to adverse childhood experiences. Data from more than 17 000 patients reveal staggering proof of the health, social, and economic risks that result from childhood trauma, which have long-term consequences, far more than depression, e.g. heart diseases. The Adverse Childhood Experience Study (ACES) can be found at <http://acestudy.org/>.



**I myself** contributed with the presentation of Delphi processes used to identify ICF-CY categories for participation-focused code sets for pre-schoolers. When developing code sets, the opinions of all involved have to be considered and each code set has to be adapted to the specific everyday life situation. For child functioning, the immediate family is most essential.

#### **International Society of Early Intervention.**

To get more information about the ISEI, you can apply for a free membership:  
<http://depts.washington.edu/isei/membership/memberapp.php>

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