

Measuring Children's Engagement in Early Childhood Education and Care Settings - a scoping review

Participation – Inclusion in Action

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<https://ju.se/en/research/research-groups/child.html>

SU^{SS}

SINGAPORE UNIVERSITY
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DREAM,
DARE, DO.

ENGAGEMENT



- Results from an international study showed differences in **engagement** during a day in preschool.
 - Coelho, V. Åström, F. Nesbitt, K. Sjöman, M. Farran, D. Björck-Åkesson, E. , ... Pinto A. (2021). Preschool practices in Sweden, Portugal, and the United States. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 55, 79-96.
- The study showed that engagement is a concept that needs further attention resulting in a **scoping review**.
 - Ritoša, A., Åström, F., Björck, E., Borglund, L., Karlsson, E., McHugh, E., & Nylander, E. (2023). Measuring Children's Engagement in Early Childhood Education and Care Settings: A Scoping Literature Review. *Educational psychology review*, 35(4).
- The goal of **inclusion** in ECEC is participation i.e. attendance and **engagement** in activities and interactions.
 - Imms, C., Granlund, M., Wilson, P. H., Steenbergen, B., Rosenbaum, P. L., & Gordon, A. M. (2017). Participation, both a means and an end: a conceptual analysis of processes and outcomes in childhood disability. *Dev Med Child Neurol*, 59(1), 16-25.

Patterns of observed level of engagement, pretend play, associative/cooperative interactions, and proximity to a small group including teachers in preschool free play ($N = 453$)

Engagement measured by Child Observation in Preschools (COP, Farran & Antony, 2014)

<i>i</i>	Cluster label	Engagement level	Pretend play	Associative/cooperative	Proximity SGT	<i>n</i>
1	Very high participation	H+	H+ + +	H+	L	46
2	Average+	(H)	H+	A	A	68
3	More socially complex	A	A	H+	A	73
4	High proximity to small group including teacher	A	A	A	H++	52
5	Engaged, less socially complex	H	(L)	L-	A	47
6	Average-	L	(L)	A	A	92
7	Low participation, high proximity to small group including teacher	L-	L	L-	H+	56
8	Very low participation, low proximity to small group including teacher	L-	L	L-	L-	19

Differences between the clusters

- Cluster 8 - Very low participation and low proximity to a small group including teachers had on average a significantly higher number of Second language learners
- A marginally significant difference was noted in the number of children with Special Education Needs (SEN) in the clusters.
- But - A low number of children with SEN in cluster 8

Åström, F., & Almqvist, L. (2022). Patterns of observed child participation and proximity to a small group including teachers in Swedish preschool free play. *Frontiers in Education*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.982837>

Questions about engagement

- How is children's engagement in Early Childhood Education and Care Settings (ECEC) conceptualized in quantitative empirical studies?
- What engagement measures have been used in ECEC settings?
- What are the Characteristics of the identified engagement measures?

The scoping review

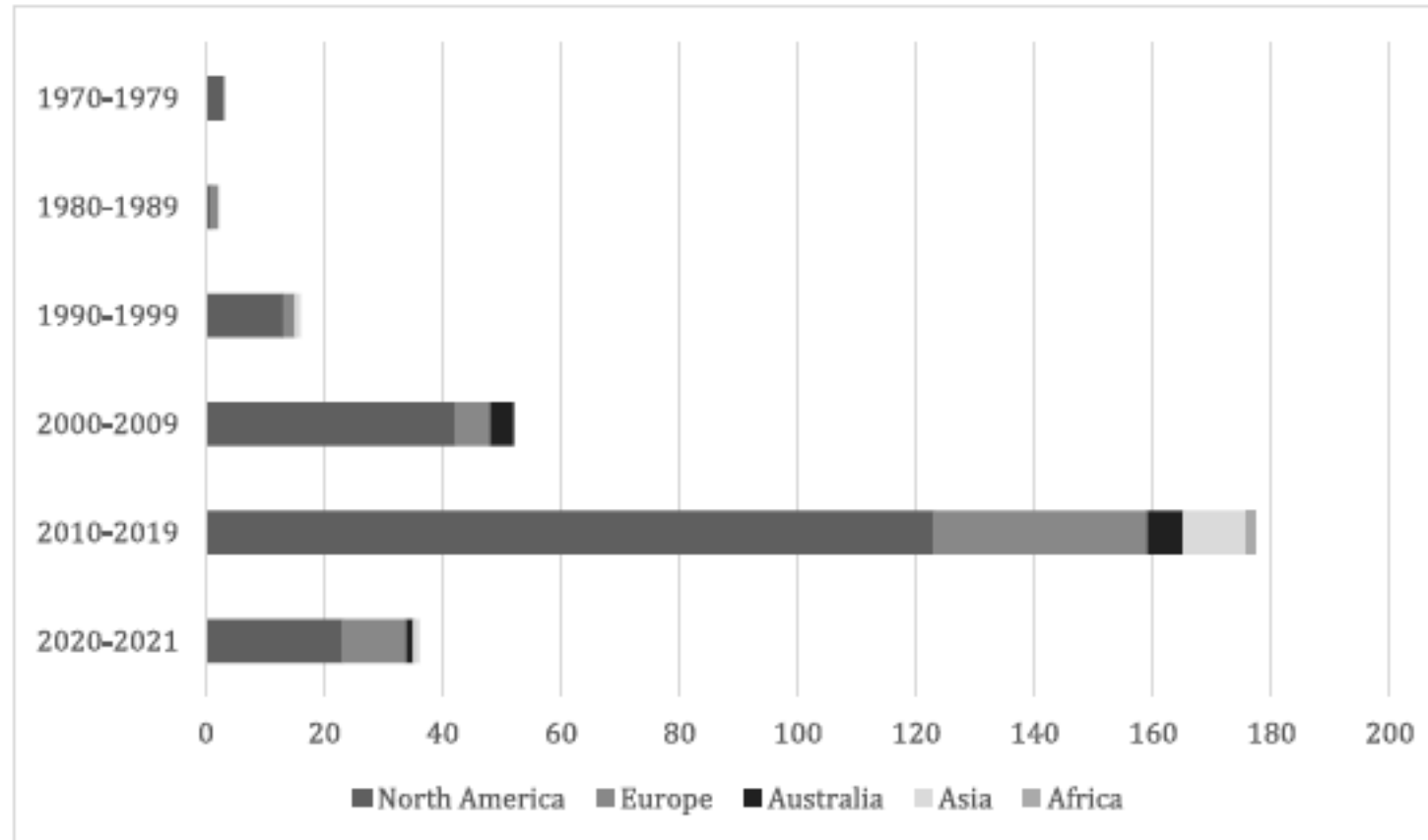
The literature search aimed to identify studies where child engagement in ECEC settings was quantitatively assessed mapping key concepts, types of evidence, and gaps synthesizing existing knowledge.

- The review used the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines.
- It resulted in 5965 articles, of which 286 were included

Data were extracted about

- Conceptualization
- Theoretical frameworks,
- Study population
- Study design
- Engagement measurement tools and methods.

Overview of included studies



Examples – most cited

Measure	Year	Number of citations	Method	Authors
Children's engagement questionnaire (CEQ)	1991	9	Survey	McWilliam (US)
Leuven involvement scale for young Children (LIS-YC)	1994	15	Observation	Laevers (Belgium)
Individual Child Engagement Record	2008	6	Observation	Kishida et al Australia
The Individual Classroom Assessment Scoring System (InCLASS)	2010	22	Observation	Downer et al US
Child Observation in Preschool (COP)	2014	10	Observation	Farran & Anthony US

Variations in definitions and measurements of engagement

- 90 studies out of 286 provided a definition of child engagement (31%)
- Child engagement was typically defined as behaviors and interactions with the social and material environment
- More than two-thirds of the studies lacked an explicit definition of child engagement
- Seventy-seven unique established measures of child engagement were identified (27%)
- More than two-third of the studies did not appear to have undergone any validation procedure through conventional psychometric methods
- The most common method of measuring children's engagement in ECEC was observations (76%) by an external observer, followed by teacher surveys (24%)
- Measures of general child engagement had a focus on behavioral aspects of engagement, whereas most measures with a focus on engagement in academic activities included cognitive and emotional aspects.

Conclusions

- To advance research about child engagement in ECEC settings, it is necessary to clarify the concept of child engagement in terms of its:
 - Generalizability
 - Specificity
 - Temporality
 - Operationalizations should be precisely described.
- Understanding is needed to attend to the challenges and developing valid measures of engagement in young children (3-5) is necessary to develop intervention approaches that can be integrated in the everyday activities of the preschool promoting inclusion of all children

Practical implications recommendations

- Validating existing measures of child engagement
- Developing self-reports for young children
- Involving practitioners in developing measures focusing on engagement in inclusive practices



Thank you!

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