

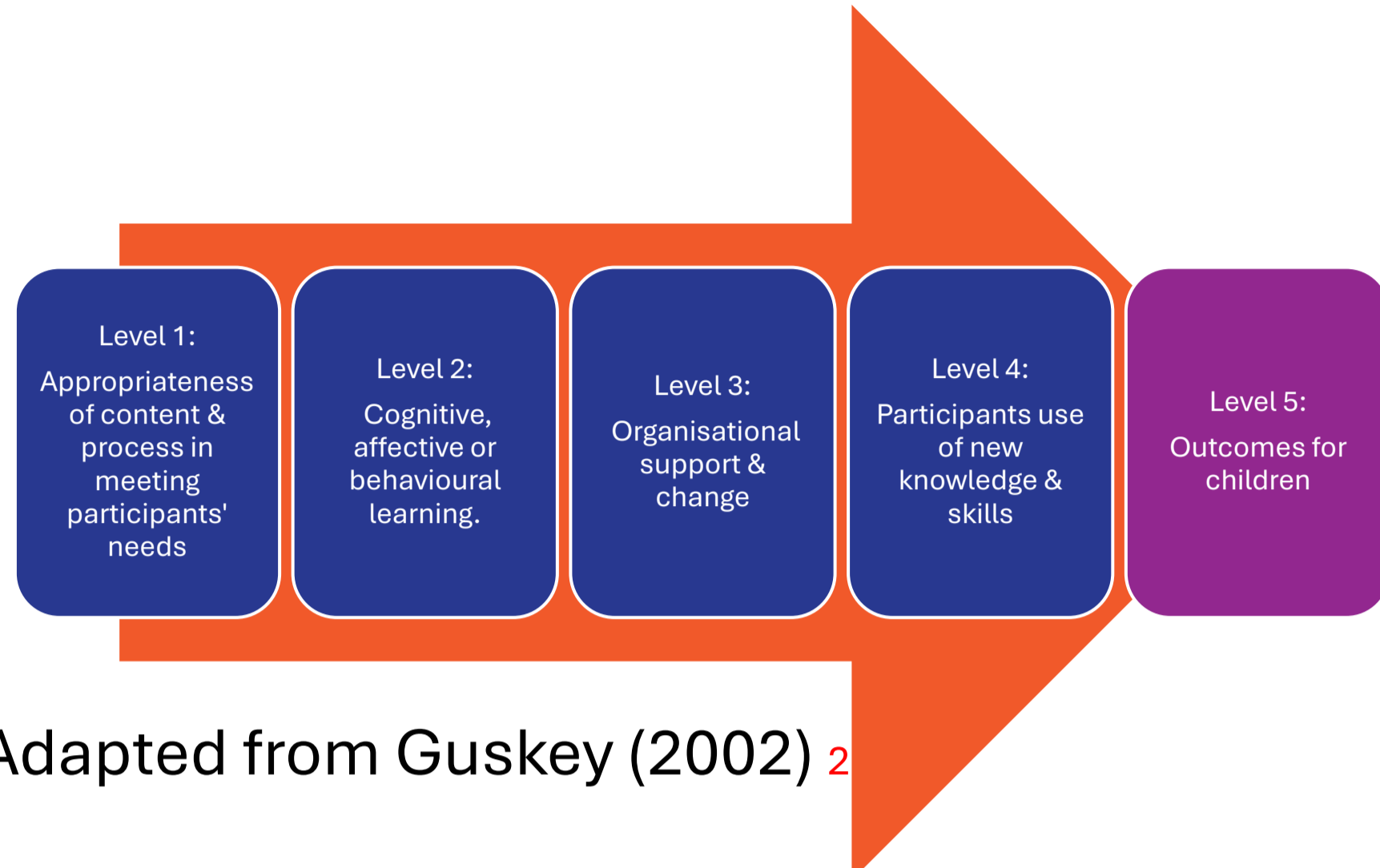
The Child's Perspective in the Final Evaluation of Phase One of the Leadership for INClusion in the Early Years (LINC) Programme ¹

LINC Consortium – comprising of Mary Immaculate College (MIC), Early Childhood Ireland (ECI), Maynooth University - The Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education (MU).
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Research Aims:

- To consider if participating in the LINC programme has influenced how educators, children and their families experience inclusion in Early Learning and Care Settings.
- To consider if participating in the LINC programme has benefits for the inclusion of children with additional needs in the early years.

Theoretical Framework:



Adapted from Guskey (2002) ²

Methodology:

Researchers used a Video and Talking Mats, named *Exploring and Telling* (Ring and O Sullivan, 2019³). This approach saw **seven children** from **three ELC settings** where an Inclusion Coordinator had been appointed, wear child friendly unobtrusive cameras on their clothing to capture a video recording of how they experience a day in their ELC setting. Video recordings ranged from **1-2 hours** in length.

Children later were invited to participate in a **semi-structured conversation** with the LINC researcher based on the video observations

The video footage and interview data were analysed to produce a portrait of each child's day in their setting. The LINC Programme Competency Framework for Inclusion was used as the basis for analysing the data.

Ethical Considerations:

Ethical approval was granted by the MIREC. Considerations included: Parental consent, consent from the setting and the educators and child assent. It was explained to children that their participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time. The researcher stayed attuned to children's verbal and non-verbal cues to ensure assent continued throughout the process.

Key Findings:

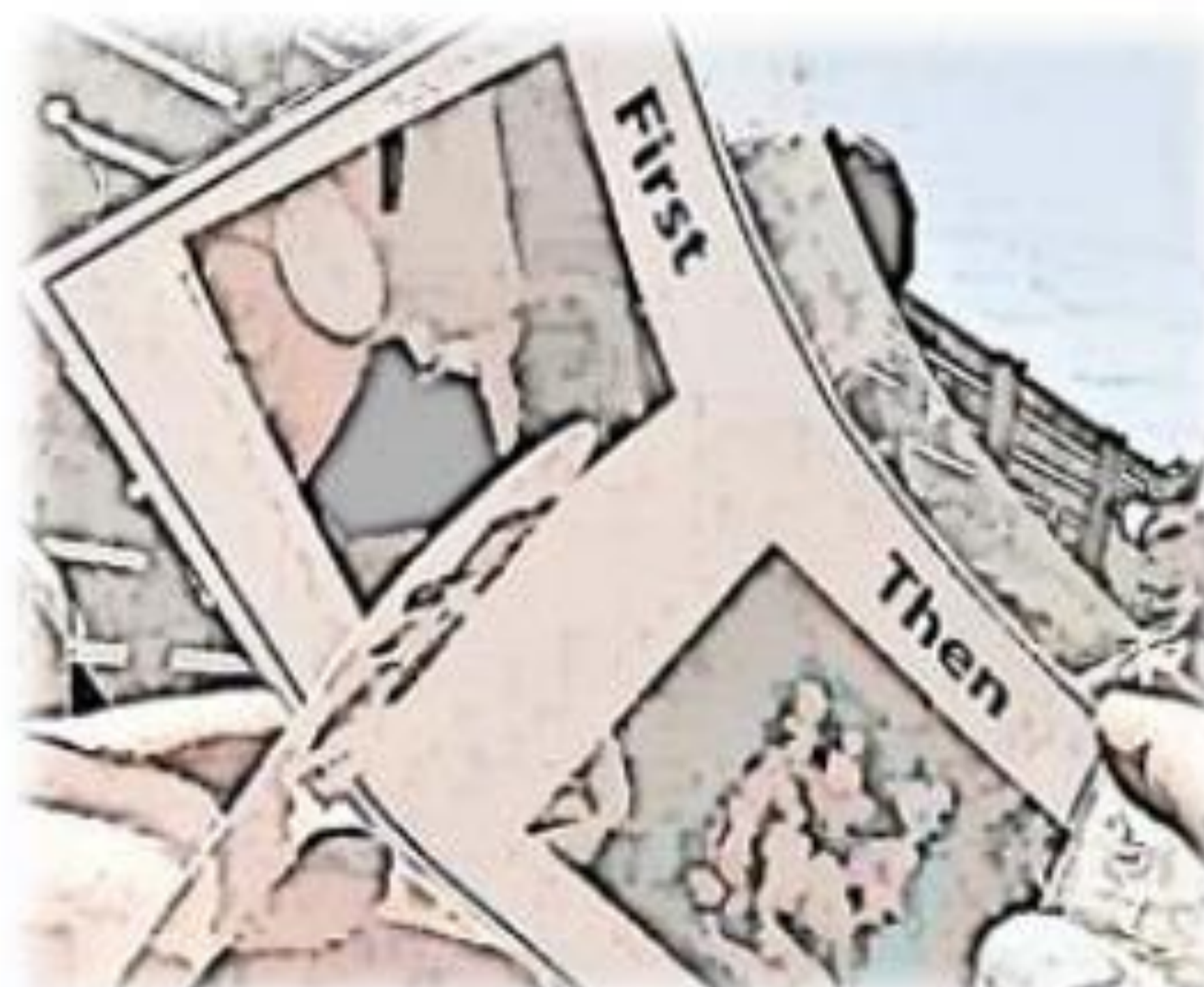
Elements of the LINC competency framework for inclusion (LINC Consortium 2019⁴) being evident across each setting and providing a basis from which to understand how children experience and perceive inclusion in their environment.

Inclusive Culture:



In Setting One, children's individual art pieces are displayed

Inclusive Practice



First and then schedules were used in Setting Two to support Sophia's Transitions

Inclusive Pedagogy:



Insar Practices Irish with one of his ECT in Setting Three

Parents Voice:

A parent noted the relationship between the INCO in her child's setting and her child.

I know if, let's say, I thought she was a bit off; I would text [the INCO] and say she is a bit off, but I will chance her and see, and [the INCO] might set up her favourite activity, or for when she comes in, she might set up water play or something like that just to settle her in, and they know how to settle her, their own strategies to settle her are different to what we would do, but they know her favourite toys and the songs she likes

Conclusion:

The video observations of children across three settings in Ireland demonstrated how each child experienced and interacted with the ELC environment in diverse and unique ways.

The play-based, child-led curricula along with the environment and materials in these settings accommodated children's various interests, abilities and strengths, supporting children's learning and development.

Elements of the LINC Programme Competency Framework for Inclusion were evident across each setting and provided a basis from which to understand how children experience and perceive inclusion in their ELC environment.

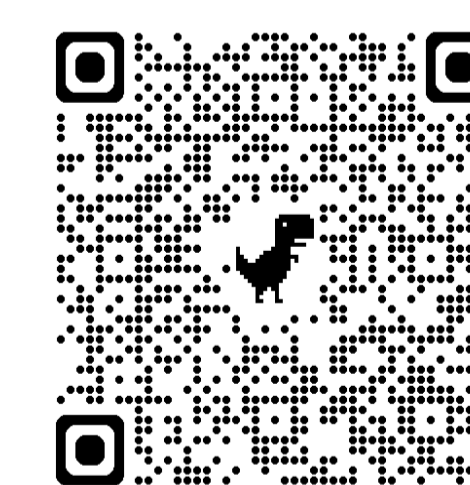
The LINC programme is supporting educators in leading inclusive culture, practice and pedagogy in their settings, however further research is needed here .

Acknowledgements:

The LINC consortium would like to thank the DCEDIY for funding the LINC programme and to our students, early childhood setting managers, early childhood teachers, children and their families for participating in the research for the Final Evaluation of Phase One of the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years Programme.

Further information

To find out more about the LINC programme, please scan the QR codes below



Final Evaluation



Newsletter

References

1. Leadership for INClusion in the Early Years Consortium. (2024) *Final evaluation of phase one of the leadership for inclusion in the early years (LINC) programme 2016-2020* (Kelly, L., Ring, E., Heaney, S., O'Sullivan, L., Fortune, N., Heaney, T., Kerrins, L., Stafford, P. and Thompson, H), Limerick: Mary Immaculate College, available: <https://lincprogramme.ie/final-evaluation-of-phase-one-of-the-leadership-for-inclusion-in-the-early-years-linc-programme-2016-2020/>
2. Guskey, T.R. (2002). 'Does it make a difference? Evaluating professional development', *Educational Leadership*, 59(6), 45-51, available at: https://uknowledge.uky.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=edp_facpub.
3. 5 Ring, E., O'Sullivan, L., O'Keefe, S., Ferris, F. and Wall, E. (2019) *An evaluation of the Teach Me As I Am early years programme*, Dublin: AsiAm, available at: [first21 pages](https://www.asiam.ie/first21-pages)
4. LINC Consortium (2019) *Interim evaluation of the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC) Programme* (Ring, E., Kelleher, S., Breen, F., Heaney, T., McLoughlin, M., Kearns, A., Stafford, P., Skehill, S., Campion, K., Comerford, D. and O'Sullivan, L.), Limerick: Mary Immaculate College, Available at: <https://lincprogramme.ie/research>.