Next to these, there are also courses organised by the “VDAB” (the Flemish government service for employment-finding) for long-term unemployed and semi- and unskilled workers to reintroduce them in the job market. They organise a course for workers in facilities for “buitenschoolse opvang”.

There is the course ‘Manager of a “POI”’ as well, organised by Centres for Retail Trade Education (see higher). Other training concerning management and support of EC workers is organised by training centres on behalf of the executives of “kinderdagverblijven” (VBJ K, 1994).

■ EDUCATION

In the Decree concerning teacher training (16/4/1996), in-service training is reformed in depth. Through a direct financing of the schools, with a control post factum by the Inspectorate, one opts for a demand-driven in-service training. The purpose is that every school draws up an in-service training plan annually. The school gets financial means - calculated on the basis of the number of full-time subsidises staff - and has to spend it on the realisation of its in-service training plan. In the school year 1996-1997 110 million BF was put at the disposal of “Basisonderwijs”. The policy engaged itself to raise this amount annually with 50 million BF and this until the school year 2002-2003.

Next to the in-service training on the initiative of the schools self, the “inrichtende machten” and their umbrella organisations can take the initiative to in-service training. These initiatives however have to be directed towards the staff of the “PMS-centra” and the “Pedagogische Begeleidingsdiensten”. There is also the possibility for initiatives which are specific for the own pedagogical project. Each year, the Flemish Community puts 60 million BF at the disposal of the “koepels” or umbrella organisations.

Finally, in-service training can be organised on the initiative of the Flemish Government. Each year, about 60 million BF was disposed to develop initiatives for in-service training which serve the policy priorities settled each year²³. (Janssen-Vos & Laevers, 1996)

Career prospects in ECEC work

■ CARE

In the area of care, there are no (real) career prospects. Now, with changing legislation, there is a debate going on about the possibility for “kinderverzorgsters” to become “hoofdkinderverzorgster”. This means that they would be responsible for a small “kinderdagverblijf” that is part of a larger one.

■ EDUCATION

As in care, there aren’t many opportunities for mobility in education. A “kleuterleidster” can become “directeur”, she/he can move on to the Inspectorate after 10 years of teaching and after she has passed the selection procedure, or she/he can move to a “Pedagogische Begeleidingsdienst”. The Diploma voor Hogere Pedagogische Studiën - DHOS-course²⁴ [Diploma for Higher Educational Studies] is officially recognised and is remunerated with a modest bonus on the salary.

Gender issue

■ CARE

In the current policy plan of “Kind & Gezin” an option is taken to stimulate the development of a more gender-mixed workforce, though nothing concrete has been agreed on. The motivation for this option is that children should learn to know men in a caring role. It is also seen as a means to upgrade the sector by bringing the man/woman proportion in balance²⁵.

| Tab. 8: Budget in-service training 1999-2000 (in million BF) (Departement Onderwijs, 1998b) |
|---------------------------------------------|-------|
| formeral regulation (extinguishing) in-service training | 12 mil. |
| on the initiative of the schools in Basisonderwiis | 134 mil. |
| secondary education | 96 mil. |
| on the initiative of the “onderwijsnetten” | 54 mil. |
| on the initiative of the Flemish Government | 54 mil. |
| TOTAL, in-service training | 350 mil. |
**EDUCATION**

There is also a growing awareness of the feminisation of the staff. An indication for this is that the topic has been put on the most recent list of research priorities by the minister of education.

---

**Payment for training, basic or in-service**

Both in care and education, the basic training is subsidised or financed by the government. For the teacher training, the students have to pay a limited registration fee. In the educational field, a lot of in-service training activities are subsidised by the government, either directly as a budget for the schools, either through subsidies for institutions that offer in service training. For a smaller part of this training offer, participants have to contribute with a subscription fee (see the heading ‘In-service training of EC workers’).

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**Statute & wages**

**CARE**

The “POIs” and “POGs” are self-employed and have an independent statute. There are no specific training or minimum qualifications required in statute, although a lot of efforts are made towards professionalism through in-service training. These self-employed facilities get their earnings out of the parental contributions they receive directly from the parents. These earnings however are taxable.

The “opvanggezinnen” have no recognised statute. They are directly paid by the “D.O.G.”. They receive 475 BF per child per day (this sum is regularly adapted). This sum is considered as reimbursement of expenses and is not taxable. All other compensations and advantages above this sum are taxable. This unfavourable statute has to do with the fact that the care takers in “opvanggezinnen” aren’t seen as really part of the workforce. (Departement Alg. Zaken & Financiën, 1998)

Workers in the subsidised sector fall under the statute of salaried employment. Their wages are determined in a collective agreement. A number of “kinderverzorgsters” is employed via special employment programmes for long-term semi- and unskilled workers. This is advantageous for the employer because the government contributes in the wages.

---

**Wages (gross income)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Just starting work</th>
<th>Several years of experience (16-17 years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual wage</td>
<td>Monthly wage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CARE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“kinderverzorgster”</td>
<td>608 332 BF</td>
<td>50 694 BF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse (certificate)</td>
<td>696 559 BF</td>
<td>58 046 BF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social worker/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse (diploma)</td>
<td>753 316 BF</td>
<td>62 776 BF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogue or psychologist</td>
<td>994 594 BF</td>
<td>82 882 BF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUCATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“kleuterleidster” 046</td>
<td>792 852 BF</td>
<td>66 071 BF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“directeur Basisonderwijs”</td>
<td>1 029 684 BF</td>
<td>85 807 BF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Para-medical staff</td>
<td>776 208 BF</td>
<td>64 684 BF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tab. 9: Annual and monthly wages according to statute
**EDUCATION**

Since 1991 each of the umbrella organisation has its own staff statute. The statute describes - among other things - which duties and which incompatible tasks are linked to the teaching profession. Also the conditions for appointment are listed. A distinction is made between three gradations of certificates of competence: required certificate, satisfactory certificate and ‘others’. These gradations express a priority settlement. For pre-school education the diploma of “kleuterleidster” is required, that of primary teacher is considered satisfactory and qualifies when there are no persons with the required diploma. (Janssen-Vos & Laevers, 1996)

**Rates of staff turnover**

There are no data about rates of staff turnover. In home-based arrangements there’s a certain amount of turnover. Most home-based arrangements work for about 5 to 10 years. In “kinderdagverblijven” and in “buitenschoolse opvang”, a lot of the staff works part-time. Because care is a ‘feminine’ sector staff turnovers have much to do with family matters. The same goes for the field of education.

**Professional and public status of ECEC workers**

**CARE**

Workers in care have a low status. This has to do for a part with the fact that most employees (99%) are women and mainly because the sector is still looked at as just ‘keeping’ children. With the large attention for and also the improvement of quality, however, the sector and its workers are getting more regard.

Part of the status is linked to the salaries. Within the independent statute of “POIs” and “POGs”, a point of attention is the improvement of the taxability. For instance the tax-free reimbursement of expenses of 450 BF has to be indexed just like in the subsidised “opvanggezinnen”. Concerning the statute of the “opvanggezinnen” now and then simulations regarding the financial consequences of giving them a statute are done, but because of the high costs it is left like before. There’s also the demand to raise the salaries for “kinderverzorgsters” since they have to fulfil more and more expectations and demands, like the obliged specialisation year for childcare.

**EDUCATION**

“Kleuterleidsters” have always had a lower status than primary school teachers have (despite of a training in the same kind of institute with equal duration). But a positive evolution can be observed. Since 1/1/1996 the salary of “kleuterleidsters” is equal to that of primary teachers. This was an important element of appreciation in the experience of the “kleuterleidsters”. Recently (April 1999) consensus has been reached about equal salary treatment of pre-school and primary teachers with secondary teachers of the first grade (who at this moment, earn more).17

As a side-effect, the temporary project “Zorgverbreiding” contributed to the status of “kleuterleidster”, because their work is seen as equally important in securing success in children’s school career while at the same time, a lot of the innovations in this project have been part of pre-school practice for a long time and are taken over by primary education.

Finally one can expect that the recent introduction of job descriptions for the educational staff can have repercussions on the working conditions and status of the jobs.

**Roles of trade unions or other professional associations**

The role of trade unions is in the first place to watch over and defend the interests of their members. They defend the material and moral interests and also the professional interests of their members. This they achieve with means typical of a trade union. An important means is the possibility to negotiate and consult with policy.

In Flanders there are three large trade unions. These interprofessional unions are linked to the three main political streams: the Christian Democratic, the Socialist and the Liberal. These unions are active both in the care sector and in education.
CARE
In care, there is, next to three unions mentioned before, also an association for the “POIs” and a pressure group for the home-based arrangements.

EDUCATION
There are separate teachers’ unions, which are part of the large trade unions. Three focus on “Basisonderwijs”: COV & COC [christian teachers’ union & christian education central], ACOD [socialist] and VSOA [liberal], of which COV is the largest one. They are through membership in the general trade union represented in the negotiation and consultation structures. Informally teachers’ unions are consulted for almost every important educational problem but formally they are also members of several councils and advisory bodies which exist in the education sector. (Onderwijszakboekje, 1998-1999).

Relations between care sector and education
There are practically no relations between the care sector and pre-school. Only some recent initiatives at the level of policy have brought them together in some ways. The government intends to raise the entrance level for pre-school from 2.5 to 3 years of age. This has provoked a fierce debate about the importance of an early start in pre-school, the difference in expertise between “kinderverzorgsters” and “kleuterleidsters” and the differences in accessibility of both types of facilities.

A second field of interaction has been created by the recent regulations concerning the “buitenschoolse opvang” for children between 6 and 12 years of age, who now fall under the responsibility of “Kind & Gezin”. “Buitenschoolse opvang” can be organised by all care facilities under certain conditions. It can also be organised in “IBOs” (under the condition of a certificate), initiatives that only organise “buitenschoolse opvang”.

The relations between pre-school and primary education are much closer. In most of the cases both form together a “basisschool” [elementary school] and have one “directeur”. Concerning the training of pre-school and primary teachers and also teachers of the first grade of secondary education, there is the notion of ‘communality’. The teacher training institutes are now working on the determination of the communality. This notion however, has to deal with a lot of opposition. The argument is made that in this way the individual character of pre-school education will get lost.
Main philosophies and goals

**CARE**

For a long period, hygiene and nursing took most of the attention. Pedagogic objectives only became apparent in the 80s. Starting points for the general pedagogic objectives are the most essential needs of young children and their parents, namely the need for safety, the need for a stimulating environment and the need for a strong relationship based on trust between parents and care.

Three pedagogical objectives can be put first:

- **Safety and challenge.** To develop a feeling of safety and basic trust in children, a child needs a regular caretaker. With this person the child can develop a unique emotional bond. When the child feels safe it will explore its surroundings, challenged to do so by its caretaker. To stimulate the child a variety of activities and play materials must be offered.

- **An own rhythm:** Each child has its own rhythm of rest and activity. It is important to organise care in a way that the rhythm of the individual child can be followed, e.g. through the provision of a separate sleeping room.

- **Parents as partners:** A good contact with the parents is an inseparable part of good Care practice. This contact can be showed in the daily conversation between parents and caretakers, in the organisational co-operation and in the co-operation at management level (VBJK, 1996).

In “buitenschoolse opvang” these objectives are slightly differently described. “Buitenschoolse opvang” belongs to recreation time. This requires that children have the opportunity to choose themselves what they want to do and that they must feel at home. “Buitenschoolse opvang” is a space for social experimenting. To make this possible mixed age groups are essential and the worker in “buitenschoolse opvang” has to be a person the children can trust. Next to confidence in the tutor, it is important that the child believes in its own possibilities. That it can foster its self-confidence and independence. Parents as partners in care is also in “buitenschoolse opvang” an important objective (VBJK, 1998).

**EDUCATION**

The curriculum of the “kleuterschool” was regulated in a general framework, ‘Werkplan voor opvoedende activiteiten’ (‘Work Plan for Educational activities’, 1951), revised in 1977. Now, a new framework has been developed by the “koepels” to include the recently implemented “ontwikkelingsdoelen” (see section II. A.) because these are now the official minimum conditions for the drafting of curricula. As in the past, these curricula have to be approved by the Minister of Education. The implementation of the new curricula, supporting the ‘ontwikkelingsdoelen’, will start in 1999-2000.

Common curricular/ pedagogical approaches

**CARE**

In the practice of care there are moments, situations and/or activities that recur everyday in one way or another. Much importance is attached to the start of the day: the children must feel at ease and there must be time for a pleasant chat. Snack times and meals situations are moments when all sit together around the table. In these moments a sense of cosiness and sharing is promoted. Especially for the younger children there must be the time and place for sleeping and/or resting. Play, organised by the tutors or on the initiative of the children, forms an important and large part in care. Different opportunities (toys, a diverse infrastructure, ...) have to be offered to the child to explore its surroundings and to be creative (VBJK, 1996).

A small-scale research (studying 16 settings) however, indicated enormous differences in quality between settings (Laevers, 1997).

In “buitenschoolse opvang” leisure has to prevail, but for school age children some time has to be dedicated to the making of homework (VBJK, 1998).

**EDUCATION**

In general one can conclude that the basic philosophy of Flemish pre-school is child-oriented with a concern to meet the needs of young children. As a consequence the approach is informal with room for play, but at the same time a concern to stimulate cognitive development without copying the formal approach of primary education.
Guiding principles of the daily class routine are: working around centres of interest, the use of the impression-expression cycle, a concern to cover all developmental domains, teacher guidance apparent in the planning and execution of activities, child-centredness and a concern for socialisation. Despite the predominance of the “kleuterleidster”, the global impression given by the average pre-school is one of child centredness. The elements that contribute to this are: the amount of free initiative (although concentrated in the afternoon), the predominance of playlike activities even in the cognitive areas, the room for artistic expression, the fact that “kleuterleidsters”, in contrast to their colleagues in primary school, often use small group activities instead of academic work with the whole group, and the informal atmosphere.

Although these principles reflect well the current preschool practice it is important to stress that within these limits an enormous variety can be discerned while visiting settings. This is very much depending on both the personality and competence of the “kleuterleidsters”, the culture of the school in which they are embedded and the participation in innovative projects.

One of these is the project ‘Experiential Education’ which has brought and brings about shifts in practice: more working in small groups, less rigid planning of activities and more child initiative, rearrangement of the classroom space with activity centres, a wider offer of (less conventional) materials and activities, a shift in the kinds of themes in the direction of children’s interests and more attention to the emotional wellbeing of the child (Janssen-Vos & Laevers, 1996).31

Innovative strategies

- **CARE**
  The innovative impulses (not taking into account the non-official actors) are linked with the Quality decree which provokes a great deal of reflection and new initiatives in the settings. As is indicated by research concerning innovations in education, the use of explicit criteria by the inspection of facilities has an impact on the kind of initiatives taken to improve quality.

- **EDUCATION**
  Looking at the official initiatives concerning the improvement of the quality of education, the ‘project Zorgverbreding’ has to be mentioned as one of the most important, together with the initiatives under the heading of ‘Onderwijsvoorrangsbeleid’.

Since 1993-1994, the Flemish government gives an extra impulse to “Basisonderwijs”, in the scope of the projects “Zorgverbreding”. The projects originate from the fact that 20 to 25% of all pupils are seen as threatened in their development and that 17% of the pupils are at least one year behind at the end of elementary school. In addition, policy is concerned about the growing number of children oriented towards “Buitengewoon onderwijs”.

Schools can get extra teaching periods for “Zorgverbreding”. Therefore they have to hand in an action plan. In this plan, they have to address 6 points of action: (1) the optimisation of practice both in terms of preventive and remedial action, (2) the stimulation of language skills, (3) the support of the social and emotional development, (4) the realisation of an intercultural approach, (5) the co-operative work at the level of the team and (6) the involvement of parents. Again, a lot of concrete action plans can be submitted, within these general guidelines.

The extra teaching periods are allocated on the base of background characteristics of the school population, the number of target group pupils and a positive judgement of the action plan by an officially appointed commission. In 1995-1996 the budget amounted to 657 million BF, of which 407 million BF went to primary education and 250 million BF to pre-school education. These means only regard the cost for extra staff and don’t suffice to grant every school the project. For 1996-1997 37.7% of the requests for pre-school were approved. 585 schools providing pre-school education were allocated extra teaching periods “Zorgverbreding”. The strength of the innovation strategy is that the assignment of the means is dependent on the quality of the action plans that are submitted and on the evaluation by the inspectorate in the stage of implementation. School knows that the subsidies are not allocated automatically even if they have a lot of pupils in the target group (Departement Onderwijs, 1998a; Janssen-Vos & Laevers, 1996).
“Zorgverbreding” has the aim to start an innovative process in the school for the benefit of children who do not profit from the actual educational efforts. Although the first target group consists of children with low SES backgrounds, it has an overall impact on practice and benefits all children. It helps schools to broaden their scope so that they really take care of all children enrolled.

The whole process is supported by three centres of expertise: the “Steunpunt ICO”, the “Steunpunt NT2” and the Centre for Early Childhood and Primary Education.

The impact of “zorgverbreding” reveals itself in evolutions that occur to greater or lesser extent in schools:

- The introduction of child monitoring systems leading to a greater awareness of the differences between children with more attention for pupils at risk;
- More flexible teaching methods, with more child initiative and differentiation;
- More attention for motivational and social-emotional aspects (well-being and involvement);
- Improvement of communication at the team level and between staff of pre-school and primary section;
- Improvement of the relation with the parents and more parent involvement;
- A positive evolution in the relationship between schools and “PMS-centra”.


In the framework of the projects “zorgverbreding” a pilot project “Cooperation between mainstream and “Buitengewoon onderwijs”” was set up. It is an action research that explores how mainstream and “Buitengewoon Basisonderwijs” can work together. Main purpose of the co-operation is the transfer of specialised expertise to support children with difficulties in mainstream education. The expectation is that this collaboration will influence the practice of orientation and facilitate the replacement of children out of “Buitengewoon onderwijs” back to mainstream. (Departement Onderwijs, 1998a)

“Inclusief onderwijs” [Inclusive education] has been explored and discussed extensively in the “VlOR”, which led to the formulation of an advice by the “VlOR” on 7/7/1998, in consensus with all educational participants. The advice recommends that the current projects concerning co-operation between mainstream and “Buitengewoon onderwijs” should be based on the concept of inclusive education and that it is desirable that future educational developments are tested by the concept of inclusive education. The given advice is a general exploration. There’s still a long way to go towards the implementation of inclusive education.

Co-operation between mainstream and “Buitengewoon onderwijs”

“Geïntegreerd onderwijs” (GON) is a co-operation between mainstream and “Buitengewoon onderwijs”. It is meant to integrate pupils with SEN temporary or permanently, part-time or full time (at least two half days) in mainstream education with support of a teacher of a school for “Buitengewoon onderwijs”.

This school therefore gets additional teaching periods and, via the working budget, an integration subsidy (Decree on “Basisonderwijs”). Until 1994-1995 only children of the types 4 (motor handicap), 6 (visual) and 7 (auditory) could participate. Now pupils of type 1 (light mental handicap), 3 (behaviour problems) 8 (serious learning disabilities) can also participate, on the condition that they have been enrolled for at least 9 months in “Buitengewoon onderwijs”. The number of pupils in this ‘integrated special education’ was 790 in 1996-1997, (728 the year before). Expressed in teaching periods this meant 1081 hours of educational support and 736 hours of paramedical support. (Departement Onderwijs, 1998a)

In the framework of the projects “zorgverbreding” a pilot project “Cooperation between mainstream and “Buitengewoon onderwijs”” was set up. It is an action research that explores how mainstream and “Buitengewoon Basisonderwijs” can work together. Main purpose of the co-operation is the transfer of specialised expertise to support children with difficulties in mainstream education. The expectation is that this collaboration will influence the practice of orientation and facilitate the replacement of children out of “Buitengewoon onderwijs” back to mainstream. (Departement Onderwijs, 1998a; Basis, 1998b)
Issues of diversity and multicultural education

**CARE**

The aim of the MEQ project (Milestones towards Quality through Equality) in Flanders was twofold: (i) to realise full-time contracts in “kinderdagverblijven” for a number of immigrant women, linked to a qualifying training and (ii) to gain experience in creating a multicultural and multi-ethnic care (NOW, 1998b).

Further, “Kind en Gezin” employs intercultural intermediaries in order to make care more accessible for immigrant parents. This has more to do with preventive care, than the organised care. Several projects have given attention to the care for children of ethnic minorities and to support their families.

A source of influence was the “European Network on Childcare” which produced a CD-ROM “RESPECT for Diversity in childcare”. The CD-ROM has as starting point the quality objectives for facilities for young children formulated by the Network and other measures to stimulate the combination of professional and family life.

Finally, issues of diversity are established in the “eindtermen” of the training of “kinderverzorgsters”. In the curriculum of the specialisation year for “kinderverzorgsters”, this is mainly translated in a module ‘intercultural work’. The training centres offer courses regarding diversity.

**EDUCATION**

In order to eliminate the educational disadvantages and to promote the integration of ‘target group pupils’ through a better connection between the education and their social and cultural characteristics, “Onderwijsvoorwaarden voor migranten” (OVW) [Educational priority policy in relation to immigrants] was set up in 1991. To this end schools can get extra teaching periods, “PMS-centra” are reinforced and additional guidance and support with regard to content is provided. Target group pupils are pupils who experience learning and/or developmental difficulties because of their ethnic origin and social-economic or cultural background. The definitions of the target group pupils take place on the basis of the origin and educational level of the mother.

In pre-school education “OVW” is built on several pillars:

- “taalvaardigheidsonderwijs Nederlands”: a specific approach to stimulate immigrant children to acquire the school language, Dutch. Language development is stimulated in the normal activities and through special activities inserted in the program;
- prevention and remediation of developmental and learning difficulties with attention to educational and social-emotional components;
- “Schoolopbouwwerk” (SOW): consists of initiatives oriented towards decreasing the gap between school, home and neighbourhood by means of a greater involvement of parents, pupils and teachers;
- “Intercultureel Onderwijs (‘intercultural education’, ICO) aims to learn pupils of different cultural and ethnic background to live together. It isn’t restricted to schools with immigrants but is directed towards all schools in the Flemish Community;
- “Onderwijs in Eigen Taal en Cultuur” (‘minority language and culture teaching’, OETC) offers the immigrant pupils opportunities to develop an ethnic identity.

Box 5: “Onderwijsvoorwaarden” in Flanders

To claim the extra teaching periods, schools have to fulfil certain conditions of which one is the handing in of an application plan that indicates the way “onderwijsvoorzorg” will be implemented and how the extra teaching periods will be used. In 1997 684 application plans were handed in for pre-school and primary education, of which 80% (548) were approved. 94 plans (15%) were rejected because of budgetary reasons and 32 (5%) because of the content. (Janssen-Vos & Laevers, 1996, Departement Onderwijs, 1998a)

Regulations about “Onderwijsvoorwaarden” and about “Zorgverbreding” (in which intercultural education is one of the domains to be addressed) are laid down in circular letters by the government. Within the “ontwikkelingsdoelen”, some topics refer to the understanding and acceptance of cultural diversity.
Another relevant fact is the installation of the “Non-discriminatieverklaring” [Non-discrimination statement]. The representatives of the “inrichtende machten” [school boards] and the minister of Education signed a ‘non-discrimination statement’ on 15/7/1993. It is based on the recognition that there is structural discrimination in the education of immigrant children with respect to that of native children. The schools are encouraged to work out a non-discrimination code that covers all the aspects of the provision of education where discrimination is possible. There also has to be an active admission policy at the local school level. A proportional presence of immigrant young people is striven for by means of local agreements between schools on admission policy. Measures have been taken by the government to support such a policy.  

For several decades, the transition from pre-school to primary school has been a point of attention. Preschool education has its own identity, it stands for a child centred approach. The transition to formal instruction in primary school can therefore be problematic, as is shown by the ± 15 % of children hold back in the first year of primary education. 

In the 80s the attempt to smooth this transition was one of the major objectives of the project “Vernieuwd Lager Onderwijs” [Renewed primary education].

A new step towards integration are the projects “Zorgverbreding” in which the input of extra manpower is used to optimise the educational approach of the 4 and 5 year olds in pre-school education and for the first and the second year of primary education. Through the angle of “Zorgverbreding” the pre-school and primary schools get a common goal, without touching the individual character of pre-school education. On the contrary, the message is that primary school has to implement a more differentiated approach.

In general, pre-school education in Flanders seems to be a protected area, which is also confirmed in the use of the term “ontwikkelingsdoelen” instead of “eindtermen”. “Eindtermen” have to be reached, “ontwikkelingsdoelen” have to be striven for and it is the task of the primary teacher to close up to the developmental level of each individual child. (Janssen-Vos & Laevers, 1996; Departement Onderwijs, 1995)

Policies and practices to ease transitions

85% of the 2.5 years old attend pre-school. Some of them only visit school for half a day when just enrolled, so that they can gradually adjust to this new situation. The transition can be seen as problematic in some cases because the conditions in schools are not always adapted to these very young children: the accommodation (for physical care) is poor and during some periods the adult/child ratio is getting above 1/25. Since 1997 the measure has been taken to limit the possibility to enrol in pre-school 5 moments in the year, in order to help schools to take the necessary organisational measures.

In 1996 “Kind & Gezin” has worked out a global and coherent policy concept for the care sector. Within this concept, they call for co-operation with the field of education, concerning the transition from care to pre-school education and concerning the transition from education to “buitenschoolse opvang”.

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Role of parents and families in ECEC

Involvement of parents in the care and education of their child is essential and therefore a policy priority. The central objective of parent participation is to contribute to the well-being of the children. But parent participation and involvement have only recently become important issues in care and education in Flanders. Parents were kept away from the facilities. Although the climate is changing, not all parents do feel the need to participate. They will look carefully for an appropriate facility or school for their child and then put their thrust in the chosen facility or school. Facilities aren’t always keen on parent participation either. Teachers are sometimes resistant towards parent participation: the classroom is their territory.

**CARE**

Parent participation is asked for in all regulations but is vaguely described and has no concrete interpretation. A lot of attention though is directed towards the dissemination of information. Parents who do participate, are mostly the ones that are emancipated, that have had a good education... So barriers are greater for parents with a low income, low educational level ... Projects have been implemented in order to eliminate these reinforced barriers (income and ethnicity) and in order to increase parent participation. Now is explored how the strategies used in these projects can be adopted in regular care provisions to improve parent participation in general.

In its policy “Kind & Gezin” plans projects to stimulate parent participation\(^\text{35}\). Extra efforts will be made to involve the fathers more in care. This is linked to the striving for an equal assignment of tasks between men and women. A training and information programme is being worked out. The Department of Welfare, Public Health and Culture distributes the “Gids voor Gezinnen” (guidebook for families).

**EDUCATION**

In education, the role of parents\(^\text{36}\) manifests itself formally in the participating of representatives in the “lokale schoolraden” [local school committees] of Community schools and in the “participatieraden” [participation boards] of the network of subsidised education (started in 1991 and 1992). The local school committee has a part in the management of the school, the participation board has the access to information, the right to consult and to give advice.

There are also parents’ associations linked to school. Most of these parents’ associations have an umbrella organisation with a support centre, that receives financial means from the government and guides the work of the local parents’ associations, by giving ‘training’ in parent participation and through a journal. There are three large parents’ associations, linked to the three educational networks.

The role of parents lies mainly in support of the teacher during excursion and aiding at school feast. Sometimes parents participate in activities (Janssen-Vos & Laevers, 1996).

In the projects “Zorgverbreding” and the “Onderwijsvoorrangsbeleid”, a lot of attention is paid to co-operation between school, home and neighbourhood. An action plan for this part is even a condition to get additional means. It is precisely in the field of support of immigrant families that the most expertise has been gained in relation to parent involvement in schools.

The Department of Education developed diverse initiatives in order to involve parents more in the education of their children: they distribute a periodical especially for parents (‘Klasse voor ouders’) and the “Gids voor Ouders met Kinderen in het Basisonderwijs", a guidebook for parents with children in the “Basisonderwijs”; they have set up a “Steunpunt Ouders en Leerlingen Basisonderwijs” (a centre for support of parents and pupils in “Basisonderwijs”), for parents who have (general) questions about the education of their child.

In the “VIOR”, there’s a growing concern about the (weak) participation of parents and about the right positioning of the parents with regard to teachers, “directeurs” and “PMS-centra”. This topic is one of the VIOR’s action points.
Information available to parents

**CARE**
“Kind & Gezin” intends to provide families with all the information they need to choose an appropriate care facility. Therefore it distributes brochures about the possibilities of Care to all kinds of instances where parents with young children regularly come (medical practices, hospitals, ...).

Despite of the brochures, it can be difficult for parents to overlook the possibilities, because of the diverse offer of care facilities. Therefore “Kind & Gezin” has the intention to develop an interactive information network. Through this parents would get the necessary information to choose a facility and secondly the use of the capacity of Care would be greater, because the information about available places would be centralised.

**EDUCATION**
In education access is easier because schools are easy to spot as they can be found in the vicinity of nearly any residence. Sometimes schools advertise themselves, especially in area’s where schools of different educational networks are located. Parents who need additional information can consult the “PMS-centra”, but here the visibility and access are very low especially when children are not enrolled yet.

Expectation of parents

**CARE**
Recently the expectations of parents concerning their children’s ECEC are receiving (more) attention³⁷. Unfortunately, there aren’t much data about this topic yet. There are surveys about the use of care and indirectly the evaluation by parents reveals their expectations. Generally speaking, the first concern for parents is to have someone who takes care of their children while they are working. Top priority for parents is that their child feels good in Care. In view of this they have clear expectations about the infrastructure, the activities, materials, nursing of the children, the climate and the attitude of the caretaker towards child and parents. A lot can still be done to meet all these expectations. Criticism is uttered towards some facilities that are crowded and that lack staff (Maes & Van Meensel, 1994).

**EDUCATION**
The expectations of parents with regard to the school system have not been examined or expressed in a systematic way, but are brought in the discussion at every topic addressed by the VIOR (Raad Basisonderwijs), where the parents organisation have a formal membership.

Support from public and private employers and facilitating policy

Different measures are developed to reconcile work and family responsibilities. Such as:

- Pregnancy leave of 14 weeks, of which 8 weeks have to be taken after birth. The woman gets an allowance which amounts to 82% of her wage the first month and 75% thereafter.
- Parental leave: each employee has the right to 3 months full-time or 6 months part-time parental leave per child. This can be taken after birth (until the age of 4) or by adoption (till 8 years of age) of a child. By a full-time leave the monthly compensation is 20,000BF.
- Career interruption is a right. It can be taken with a minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 1 year with a possible prolongation (the maximal interruption of a career amounts to 5 years). There’s a monthly allowance between 12,000 and 14,000 BF. During the career interruption, rights regarding health care, unemployment compensation, family allowance and retirement remain. Protection against discharge is secured.
- Part-time work is encouraged through a better legal protection and a more extensive social security. Financial compensations are allowed.
- Tax deduction for Care for children under 3. (Maes & Van Meensel, 1994)

Box 6: Measures to reconcile work and family responsibilities
Parent education

■ CARE
In care there isn’t much education foreseen for parents. The recognised and subsidised facilities are obliged to organise educational meetings for parents, a few times a year. Often a guest speaker is invited to speak about a subject important for children.

The VCOK organises courses for every one who is involved in the care for children between 0-12, so also for parents. “Kind & Gezin” is busy preparing a type of ‘family support’ within which the possibility of education is foreseen.

■ EDUCATION
In the field of education, the parents’ associations can play an important role. They have the task to inform parents and to offer them chances for education. They want to involve parents in the decision-making in the school and set up projects to build up relationships with the school and to get more involved in school matters.

Since 1996-1997 a Decree (20/6/1996) is into force through which subsidies are granted to the support centres of the parents’ associations and to recognised associations which organise education for parents of school-aged children. Every year 13 million BF is reserved to this end. The content of the educational offer of the parents’ associations and social and cultural associations can cover both, child-rearing and educational matters (Van Heddegem & Verhoeven, 1999).

Support for parents and families with children with SEN

Support for parents and families with children with SEN is being provided by “Centra voor Leerlingbegeleiding (CLB)” [centres for the guidance of children at school], which will replace the PMS-centra.38 Every school in Flanders has a contract with one of these centres. Their task is to contribute to “the well-being of children, the basis of all learning” (Art 5 par.1). Child guidance consists of integrated, multidisciplinary actions towards children from a preventive, remedial or educational point of view (Art. 4). The guidance of children is situated within four fields: learning and studying, school career, preventive health care and psychological and emotional functioning. Children, parents and teachers can consult the centres (free of charge).

Support of community-organised initiatives

■ CARE
The way care facilities are subsidised leaves a lot of room for all kinds of bodies to organise care. Sometimes communes or cities are initiative takers in this. In the legislation of “buitenschoolse opvang”, a condition to get recognised is the organisation of local concertation. All concerned parties have to sit together in order to determine in a policy plan how the “buitenschoolse opvang” in their municipality can be organised.

■ EDUCATION
In education, any body or any organisation can start a school and get subsidies, although the threshold is very high for private persons or groups. About 20% of elementary schools are organised by communes, which form one of the three networks of schools.
3.5 FUNDING AND FINANCING

Costs of providing ECEC

I CARE

The major sources of revenue for the recognised facilities (“kinderdagverblijven” and “DOGs”) are subsidies by “Kind & Gezin” and parental contributions. Next to it are the investment subsidies. The subsidies by “Kind & Gezin” cover staff salaries, additional subsidies for the payment of the “opvanggezinnen”, subsidies for administrative costs, subsidies for “buitenschoolse opvang”, subsidies for medical-social supervision and educational meetings and subsidies for children with a handicap who require special care (a 250 BF per child per day).

In 1997 “Kind & Gezin” paid 2.310 million BF subsidies to “kinderdagverblijven”. For the “DOGs” the subsidies amounted to 630 million BF.

In the “kinderdagverblijven” the subsidy for working expenses are completely covered by the parental contributions. “Kinderdagverblijven” collect the parental contributions, which depends on the taxable income. Because of the varying parental contribution, a settlement is done quarterly. When the average of the received parental contributions in a “kinderdagverblijf” lies above a fixed norm, then the surplus is claimed by “Kind & Gezin”. From this is drawn on to make up the difference for “kinderdagverblijven” who remain under the norm. In 1997 parents paid for a full day in the subsidised sector an average of 438.5 BF.

The total amount received by “kinderdagverblijven” out of subsidies of “Kind & Gezin” and out of the working subsidies financed through the parental contributions, amounted to 3.053 million BF. The portion of subsidies of “Kind & Gezin” was 75.7%. The “DOGs” received 2.259 million BF out of subsidies of “Kind & Gezin” and parental contributions. The parental contributions are the main revenue. The portion of the subsidies of “Kind & Gezin” was 27.9% in 1997. Next to this there are investment subsidies. In 1997 66.700 million subsidies were given for infrastructure works in “kinderdagverblijven”.

The private sector (“POIs” and “POGs”) isn’t subsidised. They get their earnings out of the parental contributions. The amount of this contribution is agreed on by the caretaker and the parents. In 1997 the average parental contribution for a full day in a “POG” amounted to 473 BF and 535 BF on average in a “POI”. Next to this they are entitled to tax deductions for their working expenses. They can get a fixed sum of 430 BF per child per day.

Local authorities (the communes) can support a care facility and at Flemish level there are employment programmes to reintroduce long-term, semi- and unskilled persons at the labour market. By employing such a worker a facility gets additional subsidies. (Kind & Gezin, 1998a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Centre Based</th>
<th>Home Based</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>2295</td>
<td>280.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional subsidy for the “opvanggezinnen”*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>165.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration costs</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>180.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidies for medical-social supervision**</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational meetings***</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidies for handicapped children</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total of subsidies by Kind &amp; Gezin</strong></td>
<td>2310.1</td>
<td>630.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tab. 10: Subsidies by “Kind & Gezin” in 1997 (in million BF)

* The payment of the “opvanggezinnen” is partially done by the parental contributions, but because of the sliding scale for the parental contributions, “Kind & Gezin” makes up the difference to 500 BF per child per day.

** A contribution is given in the fee and travel expenses of the physician.

*** “Kinderdagverblijven” which organise an educational meeting for parents get a subsidy of 1500 BF per meeting.
EDUCATION

Education is almost completely financed or subsidised by the Flemish Community. The share of education amounts to 43.8% of the total budget of the Flemish Community. In 1998 the Flemish Education Budget was 246.251.5 million. 27.9% of this went to the “Basisonderwijs”. From this budget 59.1% went to schools of the private network, 17.55 % to the official subsidised network and 23.35% to Community Education.

According to the ‘Financieringswet’ (16/1/1989) ‘donations’ are assigned to the communities. These donations are financed through the revenue of the VAT and are indexed every year. The communities are free to add own financial means. Since this year (1999) the distribution of the national budget will be adjusted according to the number of pupils on the basis of objective criteria determined by law.

The labour costs represent about 90% of the budget. The Flemish Community is responsible for all wages for all “onderwijsnetten”. Next to wages the ministry gives funds for working expenses and administrative support (about 10% of the budget). The basic amounts of the working and investment means for Community and subsidised schools are fixed by decree (30/7/1990). The working means are determined on the basis of a scale based on the number of pupils. There’s a difference in the budget depending on the “onderwijsnetten”. This difference, since long in the advantage of Community Education, is made progressively smaller.

For buildings the subsidised education gets an allowance of 70% of the invested capital. For the non-subsidised part in subsidised education, the investment fund of the Community intervenes for the municipal schools and/or loans are guaranteed by the Service for Investments in Subsidised Education (“DIGO”). The investments in Community Education are completely at the expense of the community.

The overall expenses per child, by the Flemish Community, came to 98.140 BF in mainstream preschool and primary education and to 315.482 BF in special pre-school education in 1998 (Vlaams Onderwijs in Beeld 1997-98).

Tax benefits to help parents pay for ECEC

Parents who receive professional income are entitled to a tax deduction for the costs of care for their child(ren) under 3. These costs have to be paid to a facility or a person recognised or under supervision of “Kind & Gezin”. Up to 80% of the costs paid per child, are deductible, but this deductible sum cannot exceed 345 BF per day per child.

Parents that don’t make use of this tax deduction, can apply another measure. They are entitled to a tax-free sum of 12.000 BF per child under 3 for whom the costs for care are not subtracted. The parental contribution in the recognised and subsidised sector is determined on a sliding scale according to parental income. Since 1/7/1997 this contribution varies from 64 BF to 609 BF per child per day. This contribution is determined by Ministerial Order. A reduction is allowed for families with two or more children and if more children of the same family are in Care. (Departement Algemene Zaken & Financiën, 1998)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost per child per network</th>
<th>Elementary Education</th>
<th>Special Elementary Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Education</td>
<td>119.162</td>
<td>457.605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidised Private Education</td>
<td>88.730</td>
<td>261.788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidised Official Education</td>
<td>92.171</td>
<td>255.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighed Average</td>
<td>93.424</td>
<td>296.530</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tab. 11: Cost per child per network for special and normal elementary education in BEF. Source: Vlaams Onderwijs in Cijfers 1996-97
Balance between universal and targeted public funding of programmes

**CARE**
Care funding is not meant to be universal. The main target group are children of working parents. This group is very large, which means that funding is almost universal.

Subsidies go mainly to the common facilities, less than 1% goes to the projects that focus on low-income and migrant families. An additional grant is provided for the care for children with a handicap. Besides this there is a mechanism through which income is transferred from facilities that enrol children of parents in the higher scale of the subscription fee to the others.

**EDUCATION**
In education, the most prominent criterion for subsidising or financing is the number of regular pupils. Targeted funding goes to projects ("Zorgverbreding", "Onderwijsvoorrangsbepaling", ...). To qualify for these projects, schools have to submit an application plan and fulfil a number of conditions. Moreover, they are inspected while implementing their action plans. In this it becomes clear that the education networks are a bit resistant to targeted public funding because of the number of conditions that have to be fulfilled in order to qualify for a project.
Mechanisms for policy and programme evaluation

**CARE**
First of all, there is the regular inspection of care facilities. The summary of the evaluation reports with respect to the individual facilities is an instrument for policy evaluation. Further systematic data collection about the number of actual occupied places is a necessity to allocate subsidies appropriately. For instance, when the occupation of a “kinderdayerblijf” falls under 75% of its recognised capacity during a period of one year, the subsidised capacity will be diminished the following year. Finally scientific research, e.g. about the use of care by the parents, is relevant to evaluation.

**EDUCATION**
For the evaluation of policy and programme on micro- and meso level the Inspectorate and “Pedagogische Begeleidingsdiensten” are responsible. Through its annual report, the Inspectorate gives an impression of the evolution in educational practice and educational innovation. All inspection reports on individual schools are sent to the Minister of Education in order to enable him to conduct a policy based on information relating to developments within the educational field.

A lot of research activities from university departments of educational sciences (and other disciplines) are dealing with themes related to policy. This type of research is being regulated and stimulated by the Department of Education under the heading of “Onderwijskundig beleids- en praktijkgericht wetenschappelijk onderzoek” [Educational scientific research directed at policy and practice]. In principle annually, the Department of education - in consultation with the DVO, the Inspectorate and the VIOR, formulates the themes and questions that have great priority and for which institutions can submit project proposals. The yearly budget is about 110 million BF.

Bodies that promote data collection and evaluation in ECEC

Data collection and evaluation is made obligatory by the government. In Care, data collection and evaluation is in the first place done by “Kind & Gezin”. In 1997 “Kind & Gezin” spent 5.0 million BF on staff costs for quality control in Care.

The ‘Administratie basisonderwijs’ is responsible for the data collection and follow up concerning the number of pupils. Beside this, the Inspectorate collects and evaluates information about the functioning of schools, mainly during their “schooldoorlichting”. Schools are obliged to record data on pupils, staff etc. in order to get subsidies.

There are no separate funds allocated for the purpose of data collection. Means are extracted from the general educational budget.

Indicators related to ECEC and to child well-being

**CARE**
In care, indicators that are important for the pedagogical quality of the centre-based facilities are embodied in the rating scales for inspection. These are used to get a view on the care offered and make improvements possible when shortcomings are detected. Other indicators are the number of children, places, facilities, ...

**EDUCATION**
Since a couple of years the Department of Education publishes “Vlaamse Onderwijsindicatoren in internationaal perspectief” [Flemish educational indicators in an international perspective]. It consists of basic data and indicators which are relevant to evaluate educational policy and make comparisons with foreign countries possible. The structure of the publication follows the CIPO-model (see II.A).
This is also the framework for the instrument used for the “schooldoorlichting” by the inspectorate. A permanent working group consisting of members of the Inspectorate and the DVO is formed to act upon the evolution of the working of the inspection instrument.41

Information routinely collected

CARE
Data regarding the care sector are collected four times a year by “Kind & Gezin”. They are published in the annual report. Data are collected about the number of facilities, the number of children inscribed in a care facility, the number of places in care and this in relation with the total number of children under 3. Next to this “Kind & Gezin” regularly organises a survey concerning the use of care for children younger than 3 in support of its/her policy. Every two years this survey takes place. Data are collected regarding the size of the use of care, regarding the bodies that organise care and concerning the fees parents have to pay. Next to this, in the inquiry of 1997 the ways families cope with a sick child and the extent in which families make use of atypical care were examined.

With the introduction of budget financing some of the regular data collection becomes less necessary in future because the facilities will get a budget that they have to distribute themselves with regard to the working and staff costs.42

Data about facilities that have only fulfilled the duty to report, are scarce. These facilities aren’t numerous (about 2 or 3% of the “POIs” are only reported). These reported facilities mostly have a very specific goal (e.g. only care for a couple of hours a day) which makes it irrelevant for these facilities to ask the supervision of “Kind & Gezin”.

To solve these information gaps time consuming surveys and research will be necessary. One of the key options in the new policy plan of “Kind & Gezin” is to develop an electronic information and communication system for the Care sector.

EDUCATION
At the Department of Education the largest part of the data on pupils and staff, is sent by the schools via electronic way. Since 1995 ‘EDISON’ is used. EDISON stands for the electronic passing of information between schools and the Department of Education in Flanders. At the moment there are already 2500 schools using this system. For pre-school education, the data concern the number of pupils and the composition of the staff (the number of educational assignments). All data including the data about salaries are kept in databanks that are actualised continually.

At the moment there are three large databases, namely budget (all data about payment), educational staff (all allocated assignments) and institutions & pupils. On the basis of these three databases all sorts of applications can happen, for instance regarding policymaking. Regularly questions of policymakers are answered through the unlocking of data banks. It is also possible to execute a form of quality control on the basis of the data banks. A special project group within the department is in charge of these operations. Thrice a year the Department of Education asks all schools data about the pupils. By each of these countings different data are asked for: number of pupils, identification data or background characteristics.

Research data

In appendix B a list of recently completed and current research is inserted. Most of these projects deal with (1) special needs provision and the educational priority areas policy (Cossey, H.; Heene, J.; Laevers, F.; Vandenberghe, R.; Verhaeghe, J. - P.; Verhoeven, J.) and with (2) quality in education (Laevers, F.; Vandenberghe, R.; Vandierendonck, A.; Van Peteghem, P.). A third field (3) of research draws attention to the issue of the number of repeaters in our educational system (Van Damme, J.; Van Landeghem, G.). Both projects are longitudinal studies. The research project by Verhoeven (current research 1999) deals with a fourth domain (4): what has been researched in Flemish educational research since 1989 and how this relates to international research? These questions aim to identify the blind spots in past and current research in Flanders. The evaluative research within this inventory, has not been concluded yet. The research by Verhoeven will certainly help to get a more complete picture.
5. CONCLUDING COMMENTS AND ASSESSMENTS

The most significant changes in ECEC policy and examples of innovations

**CARE**
Recently a series of innovations has been started in order to raise the quality and meet the growing needs for care. The most important are:

- The introduction of a new financing system (still in an experimental phase): budget financing. In this way “Kind & Gezin” wants to simplify the current subsidising system. This new system also allows to adjust the budget when greater demands are placed on care. It also fits into the tendency to make facilities more responsible for the use of the means.
- The extension of the subsidised care. In the last 10 years the number of subsidised child places has increased with 67%.
- The further shift in focus from a medical model to a more pedagogical approach and the growing attention for quality with the development of rating scales for the pedagogical environment. A new view on quality has been launched with the Quality Decree.
- The legislation on “buitenschoolse opvang” (see section II. Policy approaches towards quality improvement). With the new regulations, the area of “buitenschoolse opvang” is finally getting in shape, eliciting initiatives at the local level.
- A growing international co-operation in care, especially concerning diversity. “VBJK” [the Research and Training Centre for Childcare] is member of the international organisations ENSAC (European Network for School-age childcare) and IFDCO (International Family Day Care Organisation) and takes part in the international MEQ-project (Milestones towards Quality through Equality). The aim of the MEQ-project is to raise awareness and to take positive action to support quality care through developing training programmes and materials which reflect equality of opportunity.
- More and more initiatives are taken with regard to special groups: immigrant children and women, children of low-income families and children with a handicap.
- A tendency is evident towards more flexibility in the provision of care. The care facilities recognise the needs of families for this. Considered are: care that has a longer duration than 10 hours a day, care on unusual moments, irregular or part-time care, immediate entry possibilities as a result of situations which ask for a quick solution. Prudence is in order regarding this evolution. In the extent of flexible care the interest of the child has to prevail.
- A recent movement is the formation of pressure groups for home-based arrangements and for the private centre-based arrangements. They strive for the upgrading of their profession.

**EDUCATION**
In education the main facts and innovations are:

- The implementation of the “ontwikkelingsdoelen” as the means through which society can give expression to its expectations concerning pre-school education (and beyond).
- The attention for specific groups, like immigrant children (“Onderwijsvoorrangsbeleid”) and children in mainstream education who don’t profit from the common approach (“Zorgverbreiding”). Although temporary projects, they have the aim to lead to permanent changes at the level of practice in the direction of a better adjustment to the educational needs of individual children. Without endangering the individual character of pre-school education this innovation supports communication between both parts of elementary schools and brings the notion of one ‘basisschool’ nearer to accomplishment.
- The installation of “Support centres” [Steunpunten] attached to universities to develop and disseminate innovations in the area of “zorgverbreding” and “onderwijsvoorrangsbeleid” has been a major factor in the impact of these innovations.
• The reforms of the inspectorate and the installation of a more advanced approach of quality control.
• The financial upgrading of the profession of “kleuterleidster” (1/1/1996). Now their salary is equal to that of the primary teachers.
• The reform of the financing of in-service training, making it more dependent on the demand of schools.
• The Decree leading to a reform of the “PMS-centra” into “Centra voor Leerlingenbegeleiding” [Guidance centres for pupils].
• The valuing of the paradigm of inclusive education with the formulation of an advice by the “VlOR”, which gives suggestions on how to work on inclusion. At the same time this is an indication for the importance of this advisory body which represents a active forum where all partners in the educational field find each other.
• As to the resolution to raise the entry age of preschool education from 2,5 to 3 years of age (1997) the last words aren’t spoken yet. The final decision will be taken after a thorough exploration of the implications.
• ‘Experiential Education’ – developed at the Leuven University since 1976 – has had a great impact on the educational field through its publications (including a journal for teachers) and in-service training (1,700 hrs yearly). The integration of a lot of its expertise in the scientific support of the ‘projecten zorgverbreding’ has helped to change the practice and thinking of preschool and of primary education.
• The last 10 years, there’s an increase in the number of alternative schools (following pedagogues such as Freinet, Montessori, Steiner), schools also established out of discontent with the current school practice.
• The decree on “Basisonderwijs” (25/02/97), the decree on teacher education (16/4/96) resulting in a decree on professional profiles and basic competences for teachers (19/12/98).

All these forces have shaped the evolution towards a more child-oriented education with as a consequence the rethinking of the educational practice.

**The national and/or international significance**

### CARE

Compared to some other countries, the care sector - covering children younger than 3 - can be regarded as a well-organised area. Even if there are several types of facilities, one can observe structure and transparency in terms of regulations and funding. At the same time, Flanders is one of the first European regions to develop a coherent policy concerning “buitenschoolse opvang”.

### EDUCATION

In general, the inclusion of preschool in the educational system since the end of the 19th century (accessible to all children from 2 1/2 years on) has created ideal conditions to develop expertise and quality. Part of these conditions are the provision of training, the regulations concerning quality and content and the inspection as part of quality control, and all this since the beginning of the century. It is only through this historical background that the above mentioned innovations were possible. Flemish preschool was the ideal breeding place to develop the ‘Experiential Education’-model that is expanding beyond the preschool level with growing applications for primary and higher education. Publications of ‘Experiential Education’ are being translated in different languages and ‘Experiential Education’ is more and more influencing educational research and practice in other European countries.

### Areas of weakness in current policy and practice

### CARE

In care these are the main points of concern:

- The “kinderdagverblijven” lack pedagogically trained staff. The management is mostly in hands of a nurse and a social worker. Only in a few “kinderdagverblijven” the possibility to replace a part of the “kinderverzorgsters” for “kleuterleiders” is used. A psychologist or pedagogue can be employed since 1983 but this is only possible for large facilities. With the shift towards a more peda-
gical approach, this means that there aren’t many employees in “kinderdagverblijven” who are pedagogically oriented. More pedagogical disciplines are necessary for which a broadening of accepted disciplines is necessary.

• The “opvanggezinnen” have an unfavourable statute. This is not in line with the increasing demands concerning quality towards them. At the same time the access to the profession for caretakers in “opvanggezinnen” is open to everyone. Everyone can start such an arrangement. There are almost no training requirements. An extension of these requirements and a selection procedure should be regulated.

• In the “POIs” there’s a need for regulations and subsidising. Most “POIs” are so busy to keep the head above water financially, that they hardly come to talk about pedagogical quality, more over no diploma or training are required.

• The “IBOs” are completely employed with long-term unemployed and semi- and unskilled workers. People who have studied for this purpose are not eligible. This is difficult to accept. A minimum of 50% of qualified staff is required.

• There’s a strong division between care and “buitenschoolse opvang”. As a consequence, opportunities are missed to integrate management, expertise and infrastructure.

• The distance between the central level of “Kind & Gezin” and the local level, is experienced as a point of attention, asking for a closer co-operation between both.

• The evolution to family support in care, must be given a more concrete form in the future.

EDUCATION

In the field of education the following topics are object of concern:

• One of the main problems concerns the conditions in which the classes with the youngest children have to work during the periods preceding the splitting of groups. The need for more staff in the younger classes and more nursing facilities is evident. Despite the measure to let children from 2.5 start on 5 fixed entry dates a year, it is still possible that while the youngest class started with 18 pupils in September, it ends with up to 30 pupils in April. Even if this is only for a part of the year, taking into account the very early age of these children it is an anomaly.44

• Some observe a lack of coherence in the support of schools, because of the separation between two bodies. On the one hand there are the “Pedagogische Begeleidingsdiensten” which are part of each educational network with the task to support the whole of the school, on the other hand there is the guidance of the “PMS-centra” (in the future: CLB) whose task it is to support the pupils. It is argued that a lot of work is done twice and the guidance of pupils and schools cannot be separated, they’re intertwined.

• In comparison with secondary education, preschools - and primary schools as well - get insufficient support, especially in terms of administrative staff, infrastructure and educational materials. The latter means that in many cases teachers invest themselves in the equipment of their classes.

• A debate has started concerning the idea of inclusive education with a plea to work at the integration of special education in regular elementary schools.

• Policy is concerned about the fact that the contents of the innovations in the field of “onderwijsvoorrangsbeleid” and “zorgverbreding” are not yet integrated in the initial teacher training. At the same time the very scarce number of migrants choosing for the teaching profession and ending their courses with success, is a major obstacle in the strategy to integrate immigrants in society. Therefore a new project has been launched, providing teacher training institutes with extra funding for approved action plans that aim at the integration of the above mentioned expertise and the increase of migrants in the teaching profession.

• With the recent impulses in education, teachers have a great need for support to bring these innovations in practice. This seems to be missing to a certain extent. The pedagogical support services of the educational networks have to offer this support, but refer to a lack of manpower.

• The “directeur” function is becoming more important and extensive. More responsibility is given to the “directeur”, because of the growing autonomy of schools. They need an appropriate training in order to fulfil their tasks properly. They also have to be released from tasks that don’t fit that function.

• There’s a trend towards increase in scale (making schools bigger). This holds the risk that the educational policy will happen at too great a distance
from the educational practice and through which it will lose the sight on the real needs and problems.

- The reform of the area of the non-academic higher education has led to the fusion of many institutions to become large entities. They provide a wide variety of training, in which teacher training is only one section. As a consequence of the deregulation, these large entities can decide upon the staffing and other financial matters. One result of this seems to be a further reduction of staff especially at the expense of practice oriented counseling of students. One can expect that this movement could have a negative impact on the quality of the training of pre-school teachers.

Areas of strength in current policy and practice

Throughout the mentioned changes and initiatives the following points reveal themselves as strengths in view of future development:

**CARE**

- An outstanding system of quality control, with the introduction of the rating scales, is being implemented.
- Despite, or thanks to the weak initial training requirements, an extensive training offer is available for all people involved in care.
- The “buitenschoolse opvang” sector is a very young, new sector with a very modern pedagogical concept that corresponds to the Universal Declaration of Children’s rights.

**EDUCATION**

- Since Flanders became responsible for its own educational policy, more attention is directed towards the quality of education. In earlier days the focus was mainly on regulations, now more attention is being paid to a vision on education.
- Efforts have been made to simplify regulations, to make them more transparent for everyone.
- Schools have been given a greater autonomy to execute their policy and are learning to use that freedom.
- The recognition that pre-school education has its own character that has to be preserved.

- The innovative strategy developed for the temporary projects (“Zorgverbreding”, “Onderwijsvoor- rangsbeleid”, ...) fits within a managerial approach in which means are attached to efforts.
- Teachers in pre-schools - and in primary schools as well - are very open to in-service training. As a consequence, all participants put a lot of energy in professional development.
- The new approach towards quality control with the realisation of the “schooldoorkijkings” means a total rupture with the former strategies and means a real impulse for schools to improve quality.

Questions or issues meriting further investigation

All of the topics mentioned in the series of concerns (weaknesses) are possible points of attention for further research.

At a fundamental level the challenges for further research are linked with the need to assess the impact of the many impulses given to the care and education system in practice. But beyond that, the impact of the advocated and implemented changes at the level of the development of children is the core of the question. It is obvious that this research demands (i) a longitudinal approach and (ii) the use of paradigms that transcend the ones underlying traditional academic measures. In this search the development of instruments capable to measure the basic competencies and attitudes, crucial for success in school and in life, will show up to be the most difficult part, for which international co-operation will be indispensable.
GLOSSARY

Basisonderwijs [Elementary Education: comprises pre-school and primary school]
Basisschool [Elementary school]
Buitengewoon onderwijs [Schools for special education]
Buitenschoolse opvang [Care of children outside the school hours]
Centra voor Leerlingenbegeleiding [Guidance centres for pupils]
Diensten voor Opvanggezinnen [Recognised centres organising home based care]
Dienst voor Onderwijsontwikkeling (DVO) [Department of Educational Development]
Diploma van Hogere Pedagogische Studieën (DHOS) [Diploma for higher educational studies]
Eindtermen [Final goals: the minimal objectives for elementary school]
Gezins- en Welzijnsraad [Family and welfare board]
Geïntegreerd onderwijs (GON) [Integrated education: a monitored integration of individual handicapped children in mainstream education]
Initiatieven voor Buitenschoolse Opvang (IBO) [Initiatives for care of children outside the school hours]
Inrichtende macht [School board]
Inspectie Basisonderwijs [Inspectorate for elementary education]
Kind & Gezin [Child and family: the key institute for the co-ordination of care policy]
Kinderdagverblijven [Day care centres]
Kinderopvang [the area of Care]
Kinderverzorgster [Qualified child care worker]
Kleuterleidster [Pre-school teacher]
Kleuteronderwijs [Pre-school: the area preceding primary education]
Kleuterscholen [Institutions for pre-school education]
Nationaal Werk voor Kinderwelzijn [National work for the well-being of the child]
Navormingscentra [In-service training centers]
Officieel Gemeenschapsonderwijs [Official Community education: network of community schools]
Officieel Gesubsidieerd Onderwijs" [Official subsidised education: network of municipal and provincial schools]
Onderwijsvoorrangsbeleid voor migranten" (OVB) [Educational priority policy in relation to immigrants]
Onderwijsnetten [Educational networks: three subsidised categories of institutions for education]
Onderwijskoepels [Umbrella organisations of schools within the three educational networks]
Ontwikkelingsdoelen [Developmental goals: the minimal objectives for pre-school education]
Opvanggezin [Family providing home-based child care]
Schooldoorlichting [School audit by the inspection for elementary education]
Steunpunt Intercultureel Onderwijs (ICO) [Support centre for intercultural education]
Steunpunt NT2 [Support centre for the learning of Dutch as a second language]
Particuliere opvanginstellingen ("POIs") [Private day care centres]
Particuliere opvanggezinnen ("POGs") [Private home based care]
Pedagogische Begeleidingsdiensten" [Pedagogical support services linked to the ‘onderwijskoepels’]
Projecten Zorgverbreding [Projects aiming at the extension of care within mainstream education in order to support children at risk]
Project Wetenenschappelijke Ondersteuning Zorgverbreding [Project for the support of schools involved in the ‘projecten zorgverbreiding’]
Psycho-medisch-sociaal centrum (PMS) [Centres for psycho-medical-social guidance of pupils]
Vlaamse Onderwijsraad (VlOR) [the Flemish Education Council]
Raad Basisonderwijs [the council for elementary education: a section within the VlOR]
Vrij Gesubsidieerd Onderwijs [Private subsidised education: network of private schools]
APPENDIX A - Footnotes

1 In the future, care will aim at a broader target group: care as family support for families living in difficult conditions.

2 Flanders counts 5 provinces.

3 Departments such as the council for elementary education and the department for special elementary education. The councils and departments work autonomous and give advises concerning the involved educational level.

4 Policy proposals have to be discussed in the Flemish Parliament and have to be approved of by the Flemish Government before they are legally determined.

5 This decree is only obligatory for the subsidised facilities. But “Kind & Gezin” aims the implementation of the Quality decree also in the private sector. Therefore it supports this sector to develop itself in the philosophy of the Quality decree. A policy option is creating a forum where the private initiatives can determine minimal quality requirements for their sector, which will than serve as the basis for the grant of the certificate of supervision by “Kind & Gezin” (Kind & Gezin, 1999).

6 ‘Ontwikkelingsdoelen’ are formulated for five learning fields: physical education, expressive arts, language, environmental studies (learning about nature, man, society, technology, time and space) and mathematics.

7 Because of the ‘freedom of education’ an exception procedure towards the established “ontwikkelingsdoelen” is foreseen. A school governing body can judge that the “ontwikkelingsdoelen” do not provide the space to express its own educational and didactical views and/or are incompatible with those views. In that case the school governing body can apply for an exception to the Flemish government. (Departement Onderwijs, 1995; Eurybase; Janssen-Vos & Laevers, 1996)

8 The first rating scale consists of an observation of a group of children, which takes 4 hours, and an interview with the executive of the “kinderdagverblijf”. The second rating scale is derived from it, but is conceptualised in a somewhat different way, because of the great diversity in “POIs”.

9 The criteria relating to pedagogical interaction are concretised in nine situations (toilet situation, resting, eating situation, activities, welcome moment, toys, communication with the children, infrastructure and special care situations).

10 There was the need for coherence in the field of “buitenschoolse opvang” because the supply and authorities concerning “buitenschoolse opvang” were very fragmented among different instances and ministries. With this legislation, “buitenschoolse opvang” comes under the authority of “Kind & Gezin” and therefore the duty to report for Care is risen to include children in the “basisschool”. Important conditions for all the facilities are the execution of the Quality Charter with stipulations regarding pedagogical aspects, the staff, parent participation, infrastructure, safety and health; and the introduction of local consultation which was entrusted to the actors of “buitenschoolse opvang” and not to the local authorities.

11 Output isn’t been investigated yet. Research is started to fill in this part, starting with the development of an instrument and strategy to measure the satisfaction, involvement and wellbeing of pre-schoolers.

12 Pedagogische Begeleidingsdiensten (Pedagogical Support Services). These services were established by the decree of 17/7/1991. Before support was one of the tasks of the Inspectorate. But the combination of a controlling (sanctioning) and a supporting function gave often rise to criticism. Since 1991 both instances work independent, although a good co-operation is striven for. The pedagogical support is an external assistance to teachers, “directeurs” and schools. The “onderwijsnetten” have their own “Begeleidingsdienst” with pedagogical advisors. These advisors support the process and work on quality improvement. In this way they contribute to the realisation of the pedagogical project of the own umbrella organisation and the own schools. The “Pedagogische Begeleidingsdiensten” consist of former inspectors, former “directeurs”, but also of part-time teachers who still have contact with the educational practice. Statistically there is one advisor per 850 teachers. (Janssen-Vos & Laevers, 1996)

13 In practice it turns out that the families who make use of the subsidised Care particularly belong to the higher income categories. Three-quarter of the families who use subsidised Care belongs to the 40% richest families in Belgium; only 9% to the 40% poorest. Semi- and unskilled mothers with children under 3 have difficulties combining family and labour life and withdraw usually from the labour market. If they stay active they shall appeal mainly to grandparents and other family members for the care of their children (Vandemeulebroucke, 1996).

14 The PMS-centra are guidance centres for pupils. They give assistance to pupils of Elementary and Secondary education and are organised by the “onderwijsnetten”. In the region of their centre they enter into a contract with schools. The PMS team is multidisciplinary. It usually consists of a psychologist, a psychological assistant, a social worker and a nurse. On average the ratio PMS personnel-pupils is 1 for 1100 pupils. The “PMS-centra” aim to prevent problems of pupils and to assist in problematic situations. Hereby the focus is on three large guidance domains: choice of study and profession; the development of the learning process and the socio-emotional development of children and young persons. Prevention is oriented towards all pupils; the assistance towards some. The “PMS-centra” are complementary partners of parents and the school who are in the first place responsible for the pupils. Last year a draft Decree was approved of by the Flemish Government to integrate the “PMS-centra” with the “Medisch Schoollozeicht” (school-related health supervision). From 1/9/2000 on they will be part of ‘Centra voor
In the Network of the European Commission for early childhood care and other measures to promote the combination of professional and family life, one of the fields of work concerns supporting a greater participation of men in the care and education of children. The Network has published a report about men as workers in services for young children. An argument is made to employ more men in facilities for children and ways in which to reach this goal are described. In this network Flemish professionals in the field of childcare are represented.

Recently a specific regulation has been worked out. Of the sum that “POGs” receive per child per day, 450 BF is tax-free. The government sees this as a fixed sum for expenses.

The former ‘Werplan’ expressed ideas that were very much influenced by one of the most outstanding Belgian educational reformers of the 1930’s, Ovide Decroly. In this directive the needs and drives of children are taken as point of departure to realise an harmonious development.

The guiding principles are:
(a) Working around centres of interest:
One of the most important features of pre-school practice is the thematic link between nearly all activities. Every one or two weeks the teacher introduces a new centre of interest. The themes are mostly a reflection of events linked to the seasonal and the feast calendar. The centres of interest chosen by the teacher, gives a framework to select materials, games and tasks in the field of manual expression, songs, poems and stories.
(b) The impression-expression cycle
A more implicit but no less influential principle is the use of a two-phase strategy in programming activities. The phase of ‘impression’ is realised through activities as visiting places, inviting persons or, the more frequent variant, having a guided exploration of objects. The “kleuterleidster” reflects a concern to realise a broad spectrum of ‘impres- sion’ is realised through activities as visiting places, inviting persons or, the more frequent variant, having a guided exploration of objects. The “kleuterleidster” is the use of the ‘dosing principle’. In the scheme of the day, the “kleuterleidster” is the use of the ‘dosing principle’. In the scheme of the day, the “kleuterleidster” reflects a concern to realise a broad spectrum of ‘impression’ is realised through activities as visiting places, inviting persons or, the more frequent variant, having a guided exploration of objects. The “kleuterleidster” is the use of the ‘dosing principle’. In the scheme of the day, the “kleuterleidster” reflects a concern to realise a broad spectrum of ‘impression’ is realised through activities as visiting places, inviting persons or, the more frequent variant, having a guided exploration of objects. The “kleuterleidster” is the use of the ‘dosing principle’. In the scheme of the day, the “kleuterleidster” reflects a concern to realise a broad spectrum of ‘impression’ is realised through activities as visiting places, inviting persons or, the more frequent variant, having a guided exploration of objects. The “kleuterleidster” is the use of the ‘dosing principle’. In the scheme of the day, the “kleuterleidster” reflects a concern to realise a broad spectrum of
(c) Teacher guidance
In current practice the “kleuterleidster” takes a predominant place. She determines the centres of interest and programs activities. Every day is prepared more or less in detail. In the class-diary one can find the activities, the operational goals, the time of execution and the materials needed. Despite the willingness to go into unforeseen events, the school day has a rather predictable course. Another aspect of the impact of the “kleuterleidster” is the use of the ‘dosing principle’. In the scheduling of activities as well as in the interventions during the day, “kleuterleidsters” reflect a concern to realise a broad spectrum of activities. This is felt as a necessary condition to foster a harmonious development of the child. It is important to stress that the ‘dosing’ is taking place in terms of specific activities and not so much in terms of general developmental areas. “Kleuterleidsters” for example, will expect children to partici-
pate in ‘cutting and cleaving’ activity at least once a week; they generally won’t take into account other, more spontaneously occurring activities to develop fine motor skills, as equally valid.

30 Throughout the variety in the daily routine, one can discern a pattern in current pre-school settings. Most of the classes begin with “circle time”, in which children are welcomed and invited to bring in personal experiences or comments. Then, the first learning activity is started. In most of the cases this is a group activity (all children are participating). The content can vary from a so called ‘exploration’ (the “kleuterleidster” brings in a piece of ‘reality’ which is observed and discussed), to more specific cognitive activities as sorting tasks, initial writing and reading skills, spatial relation concepts, etc... but always in a playful, non-academic way. Next are activities in small groups. Every group has another task at which children work individually during more or less 25 minutes. Most of the tasks are in the area of expression. The teacher accompanies one of the groups in an activity, which involves more guidance. After a short snack-time children leave for outside time. During the second part of the morning, group activities are continued. Normally the groups change tasks. The morning is closed with a group activity in a more or less playful way: singing songs, dancing, all-round games... After a short gathering most of the afternoon is dedicated to free play. After a break children clean up and the day is closed with story telling.

31 The types 1 and 8 do not exist at the level of pre-school.

32 With respect to the content the CD-ROM is based on the ‘Anti-Blas Curriculum of Louise Derman-Sparks, an international recognised American expert in the field of combating prejudices by young children.

33 The number of municipalities that signs a non-discrimination agreement increases every year. In july 1997 28 municipalities had signed with 652 schools on their territory. But the road is long, a real dispersal policy being very complex. (Eurybase, 1996; Janssen-Vos & Lævers, 1996; Departement Onderwijs, 1998a)

34 To work this out, mutual visits of pre-schoolers (5 year olds) and the children in the first year of primary school are organised and of common projects are set-up.

35 “Kind & Gezin” wants to organise initiatives to make parents aware of their possible role in the quality evaluation of childcare. One project is oriented towards the development of a brochure about the notion parent of participation and quality evaluation. For the benefit of the facilities a number of ideas concerning parent participation shall be elaborated (parents’ evenings, participation in certain activities, ...). Finally a concept for quality measuring by parents and concepts and a methodology for the measuring of satisfaction of parents will be provided (Kind & Gezin, 1998b).

36 Four manners in which to involve parents in the care and education of their children can be discerned. In the first place parents have to be informed about what is important for the functioning of their child. Secondly, parents can take part in care and education through real involvement in activities. Parents can have an advisory function. For this it is necessary that parents have a place in the organisation and that they are organised, e.g. in a parents’ association. Than a final manner for parent participation is taking part in the management (Brug, 1997).

37 “Kind & Gezin” has decided (03/99) to investigate childcare by parents. Within research parents will be questioned about their expectations.

38 By the decree of the 1st of December 1998, the Psycho, Medical and Social Centres and the Medical Guidance centres, will be merged in child guidance centres. Starting September 1st 1999, contracts have to be closed. From 2000 on the implementation has to start.

39 From the 993 million BF collected parental contributions, the “kinderdagverblijven” kept 743 million BF in 1997. The “DOGs” can have the parental contributions totally for the payment of the “opvanggezinnen”. When the totality of the parental contributions is lower than the expenses of the “opvangge- zinnen”, “Kind & Gezin” makes up the difference. The total amount of the parental contributions in the “DOGs” amounted to 1.629 million BF.

40 This publication is related to the OESO-indicatorproject INES.

41 Recently a research project has started, to develop an instrument to take into account and measure the well-being, involvement and satisfaction of children in elementary school. This will be integrated in the instrument used by the inspectorate for the school audits. The core of this instrument will be the ‘Leuven Involvement Scale’ developed within the innovative project “Experiential Education”.

42 Still there are major information gaps. The collected data don’t provide a clear view on the children in Care today, in contrast to the annual data collection. For instance, it is assumed that one place in Care is taken in by two children, but evidence is missing. What is the background of the children in Care? Where do they live? In the vicinity of their homes or near to the parent’s working place? Are there waiting lists to get in a “kinderdagverblijf”? A lot of questions that “Kind & Gezin” can’t answer.

43 “Kind & Gezin” has decided to investigate childcare with parents. Within this research care arrangement of families will be evaluated.

44 It is important to notice that the educational community (c.q. VLOR) doesn’t choose to raise the entrance level to 3 years of age and leaving the younger children to the Care sector. They ask for a further improvement of the teacher/child ratio, a more adapted infrastructure and the appointment of “kinderverzorgsters” as teacher aids.
APPENDIX B - Research projects

CURRENT RESEARCH


COMPLETED RESEARCH

Cossey, H., Heene, J. et al. (1997). Mechanisms to correct the financing of education taking into account (1) special needs provision and (2) scale expansion. Research by order of the Flemish Minister of Education (OBPWO 95.04). Leuven: HIVA, KULeuven & Gent: Teaching Sciences, Ugent.


Appendix B - Research projects
APPENDIX C - Sources

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Verbond van de Christelijke Onderwijzers (COV), Brussel
Dirk Koppen

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Jan Depoortere & Bruno Saggart

Universiteit Gent, Vormingscentrum voor de Begeleiding van het Jonge Kind, Gent
Jan Peeters

Appendix C - Sources