Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

STRATEGIES TO TACKLE CHALLENGES IN IMPROVING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND WORKING CONDITIONS

Challenge 4: Workforce development

Many countries offer some form of professional development opportunities for ECEC staff. However, the take-up rates are often found to be low. First and foremost, information about training opportunities may not be well known, or the benefits of participating may not be clearly articulated, especially among low-qualified ECEC workers. Second, continuous training and professional development might be disconnected from what they wish to learn, and, therefore, they may not be motivated to take training.

Even when staff are informed of such opportunities and are motivated to take up training, their manager may be reluctant to send them to professional development courses. It is often argued that, when the training leads to the possibility of a higher level of qualification, staff may subsequently wish for a pay raise or leave for a higher paying job elsewhere.

Another challenge is observed in aligning the contents of professional development, those of initial education and the implementation of a curriculum.

Focusing on professional development for quality enhancement

- In Norway, continuous training is not mandatory. Employers are responsible for continuous training. As the government considers competent staff the most important factor concerning quality, a strategic plan was designed for a competence development initiative spanning 2007-10. The strategy prescribed NOK 60 million per year and prioritised pedagogical leadership, children’s participation, language/ language stimulation and transition from kindergarten to school. The strategy led to increased activity among municipalities, encompassing all kindergartens public and private.

- Belgium’s French Community sees a need to improve initial education in order to improve the quality of ECEC services; however, a lack of funding currently prevents making modifications to improve initial education for staff. The government has focused on the importance of continuous education to ensure that staff is adequately trained to provide quality ECEC services.

- Japan commissioned a report in 2002 “Improvement in the Quality of Kindergarten Teachers – for the Purpose of Self-Study by Kindergarten Teachers”, which was intended to encourage both current and potential teachers to strive to improve the quality of their services throughout employment.
In the Netherlands, training is free for staff working in ECEC institutions. A source book was created to help training institutions include ECEC in their education programmes; and research is being done on whether institutions can offer a programme focusing solely on young children.

In Germany, the federal government is investing EUR 400 million over four years towards professional development for specialist staff and systematic human resources development on the part of providers. There is emphasis on language and integration support in early childhood. Additionally, as part of the Qualification Initiative for Germany, the federal and Länder governments resolved, in 2008, to train more nurses and day care staff. These initiatives are in preparation for 2013, when every child from the age of one year will have a legal entitlement to child care in an institution or day care facility.

Making continuous training a job requirement

All early years practitioners in England (United Kingdom) are required to continually update professionally. This includes undertaking first aid training every three years and attending training provided by the local authority on safe guarding children.

In Finland, the annual amount of in-service training for employees in social welfare (including day care staff) should be three to ten days depending on the employee’s basic education, the qualifications required for the job and the job description. This is laid down in the Act on amending the Social Welfare Act (50/2005). This Act also obligates local authorities to ensure and offer an adequate level of continuous training to ECEC staff. The goal of the obligation to continuous training is to maintain and renew the professional skills of the staff.

Raising awareness of the importance of continuous training among staff and their employers

England (United Kingdom) has been working on, through an awareness-raising campaign, convincing employers and practitioners of the need for and the value of high-level qualifications.

In Germany, in 2009, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the Robert Bosch Foundation and the German Youth Institute launched the project “WiFF – Advancing Further Education of Early Childhood Professionals”. The project sets out to analyse, initiate and promote professional development of early childhood professionals. The project provides careful empirical analyses of the various actors, decision makers and institutions involved in this field. In collaboration with the field, WiFF has developed standards of good practice for the professional training of early childhood staff and promotes consistent use of these standards. Four sets of background materials for training have been compiled, enabling trainers to prepare for the following topics: working with children under the age of three, collaborating with parents, fostering language development in children, and the role of early childhood professionals in supporting early learning processes. The materials, along with related publications, are available free of charge and can be ordered on the project's website. WiFF actively supports lifelong learning and aims to ease the transition from vocational training or professional practice to academic studies. WiFF employs a team of fourteen social scientists from various disciplines and is sponsored by the European Social Fund.
Designing demands-driven training

- **Norway** foresees a need for increasing the number of preschool teachers and raising the competence of staff through targeted measures. Efforts will have to be made by getting educated preschool teachers to choose to work in kindergartens and providing professional development for all staff. A national forum for kindergarten has been created to develop dialogue among stakeholders, which will, among other things, discuss the question of competence and quality in the sector. The government also uses the forum to discuss challenges and solutions with relevant stakeholders.

- In **Finland**, municipalities are responsible for determining the content of social welfare training; however, municipalities do not always maintain diversified know-how about the needs of the social welfare sector. Therefore, the government created centres of excellence on social welfare in 2002 to convey expertise to municipalities on this topic and ensure that training content is consistent and relevant. These centres of excellence work in close connection with universities and other education institutions. For example, at the University of Tampere (Finland), continuous training is carried out in co-operation with the city of Tampere and the kindergarten staff (especially the leaders of the kindergartens and the day care centres) as custom-made training. Identifying the demands and need for training derive from the staff and leaders.

- **Finland** and **Mexico** aim to cover a wide range of skills, such as communication with parents, orientation of activities’ contents and materials, and teaching strategies and upbringing practices with a child-centred focus (e.g., how children move, play, experience art, explore, etc.).

- **Portugal** and **Sweden** focus on language development, mathematics, experimental sciences and child assessment of learning and well-being. Following a recent evaluation of continuous training programmes, Sweden mostly focuses on children's linguistic and mathematical development as well as evaluation of preschool activities.

- **Korea** has diversified the training possibilities ECEC staff can participate in so as to meet the diverse needs of staff. Since time limits are often a barrier for staff to participate in training opportunities, on-line trainings are currently being offered as well.

Offering diversity training

- **Flanders** (Belgium) recognised a need to diversify the workforce and adapt the pedagogy of child care centres to the multicultural society. In 1995, *Kind en Gezin* supported a large-scale action research project on respect for diversity in child care. Numerous narratives were collected from ethnic minority and majority trainees and showed how the project confronted practitioners with a paradigm shift. Trainees testified about the difficulties of addressing diversity issues and of constructing an inclusive professionalism.

- **Finland** recognised a need to develop inclusive education and multicultural working methods for ECEC staff. From 2007-11, they have participated in the European Commission’s project INCLUD-ED, which analyses educational strategies that contribute to overcoming inequalities and promoting social cohesion as well as educational strategies that generate social exclusion, particularly focusing on vulnerable and marginalised groups.
• **Australia** funds the Inclusion and Professional Support Program, which funds Professional Support Coordinators and Indigenous Professional Support Units in each state and territory. These co-ordinators/units provide professional development, advice and resources to assist child care services to provide quality care and to be inclusive of children from diverse backgrounds.

• **Korea** developed a 60-hour training programme and a teaching manual for teachers working with children from multicultural family backgrounds in 2010. Teachers can register voluntarily for the training course, and when they do so, they receive full financial support.

_Offering training for curriculum implementation_

• **New Zealand** focuses on the implementation of _Te Whāriki_, the Early Childhood Curriculum, and provides training to improve learning outcomes for all young children, especially those at risk. Teachers are expected to strengthen their teaching practices. The government also provides training to support the implementations of _Kei Tua o Te Pae_, Assessment for Learning. Teachers are expected to develop effective assessment practices that meet the aspirations of the curriculum.

• **Prince Edward Island (Canada)** provided developmental and implementation funding to allow for entry-level training of all uncertified staff working within Early Years Centres so they could be educated as an Early Years educator and learn about the new Learning Framework. The province also provides in-service training to early childhood directors and educators already working in the centres on the newly established Early Learning Framework, a curriculum document for the early childhood sector focusing on children from birth to school entry.

• **Mexico** is providing training courses and workshops to support teachers as they implement new curriculum and adapt to revised pedagogical orientations. The government has also consulted educational promoters to inform the development of materials on how to improve their work through self-evaluation and reflection on practice. A [web page](#) has been established to help all educational figures find materials on this topic and exchange pedagogical practices and advice. Additionally, the government is working on providing safety strategies to all child care workers, focusing not only on care but also on education elements. New professional development plans are being proposed for child care workers, which introduce more pedagogical orientations to training that was focused on care.

• In **England (United Kingdom)**, local authorities are responsible for providing training and support on implementing the _Early Years Foundation Stage_.

• The National Agency for Education in **Sweden** has, in co-operation with Swedish Television, made short films to give inspiration on how to implement and stimulate different curriculum subjects, such as mathematics and natural science, in preschool. Additionally, training in the curriculum subject of language development is very common in Sweden.

• In **Korea**, 20 000 ECEC professionals were trained in 2011 to implement the new _Nuri Curriculum_ in 2012. Training sessions focused on the differences between the _Nuri
Curriculum and the existing kindergarten and child care curricula, including basic principles, areas of learning and development, and teaching methods.

- In Finland, regarding continuous training and development, municipalities (the providers of training) focus on the centre’s child-specific ECEC plans, which are based on the national ECEC plan. They focus especially on the processes of drawing up the ECEC plans and the contents of the ECEC plans, such as parental engagement, interaction between the child and the adult, the environment, the child’s ways of acting (how the child moves, plays, experiences art, explores, etc.), leadership and special needs of children.

Supporting employers for staff replacement

- Manitoba (Canada) has established a replacement grant to pay for staff members’ salaries when they are attending workplace training.

- Japan remunerates staff pursuing training and substitutes staff with staff members who are hired to replace individuals away on training.

Financing training costs

- To strengthen staff competence, Sweden has allocated SEK 600 million on continuing education for preschool teachers and childminders for a three-year period running from 2009-11 under the programme “The boost for preschool”. The training is primarily directed at advancing pedagogical competence for preschool staff. The programme gives some thousands of preschool teachers and childminders the chance to take further education courses – at the university level (for preschool teachers) and at the upper secondary/high school level (for childminders). Teachers and childminders keep 80% of their salary during the study period, co-funded by the government and the preschool principal organisers. The courses focus on children’s linguistic and mathematical development and evaluation of preschool activities. There is also an opportunity for preschool teachers to take research studies to have a licentiate degree. The purpose is to increase the number of post-graduated preschool teachers in preschool.

- Every year, Slovenia offers “Study help for school fees for further education of pedagogical workers”. The grant helps employed teachers and other pedagogical staff to reach a higher level of education or qualification. Candidates can apply if they meet the certain criteria (e.g., they must be employed; they must enrol in programmes for further education with which they will meet the level of education required by law).

- Finland provides state-funded in-service training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for teachers and other education personnel. Since 2010, the Ministry of Education and Culture has nearly doubled its funding for the CPD and in-service training of teachers and education personnel, including ECEC staff. Currently, a total of EUR 21 million is spent annually for this purpose. Additionally, the in-service training for employees in social welfare (including day care staff) receives about 33% of its funding from the state. This training amounts to three to ten days per year depending on the employee’s basic education, the qualifications required for the job and the job description. The state funding helps ensure that local authorities offer an adequate level of continuous training that maintains and renews the professional skills of ECEC staff.
• In **England (United Kingdom)**, funding for training for ECEC staff is available through local authority training budgets and other sources. Pathways to support the attainment of qualifications up to Level 6 are available with funding support.

• **Manitoba (Canada)** introduced training grants to support the child care workforce and assist facilities in meeting trained staff requirements. The grants include funding for students to study full-time as well as a workplace grant for those who study part-time while remaining employed. The province also has a grant for facilities to cover the cost of replacing a staff member who is enrolled in a workplace training programme.

• **Spain’s** Ministry of Education finances the Territorial Cooperation Programme “Teacher professional development”. The programme has been jointly developed by the Ministry and regional governments and aims at: agreeing on priority teacher professional development areas; increasing provision of teacher training programmes; guaranteeing attention to minorities; opening up new channels for collaboration and exchanges of experience among teachers; and fostering continuity of joint actions to share and spread good practices that may lead to successful educational projects. While the Ministry finances this programme, it is implemented by regional governments. Additionally, the Territorial Cooperation Programme, *Educa3*, includes among its measures the organisation of professional development provision for teachers of pre-primary education, especially of zero-to-three-year-olds. This is co-financed by the Ministry and regional governments.

**Funding institutions that provide continuous training**

• **British Columbia (Canada)** funded the following professional development initiatives:
  - Grant funding was provided over two years (2005-07) to a post-secondary institution that designed and offered professional development that built on reflective practice capacity to improve quality within child care facilities. The training focused on building capacity and bringing innovation to the field in direct work with children. The number of rural and remote communities coupled with the geographic and cultural diversity of the province makes it difficult to ensure professional development opportunities are available and accessible to all. The post-secondary institution worked with a broad group of Early Childhood Education (ECE) staff from a variety of settings within the South Coast area of the province, including Aboriginal, multicultural, rural, urban, part-time preschool, full-time day care and family child care.
  - Grant funding of CAD 2 million was provided to a professional association in 2006-07 to develop leadership capacity in ECE across the province, looking beyond direct child care to increasing the understanding and stature of ECE within communities as a whole. The association focused on constructing a culture of ECE leadership, recognising the unique and significant leadership capacity within the sector and developing ways that work to take knowing and being to the broader community. The association worked with the South Coast area as well as the North and Interior areas with staff from the following groups: Aboriginal, multicultural, rural, urban, part-time preschool, full-time day care and family child care. Fiscal realities did not allow for ongoing funding of this nature.
  - Grant funding of CAD 20 million was given to a provincial agency in 2006-07 to provide training directly to child care providers to increase the quality within their
programmes. A portion of the funding was for learning materials, supplies and equipment that contribute to quality child care and enhancing the development growth of children; some of the funding was intended for minor capital enhancements and/or facility repairs or renovations; and the remainder of the funding was to be directed towards professional development and training opportunities. Fiscal realities did not allow for ongoing funding of this nature.

- In Japan, the government provides funding to prefectures for training beginner teachers as well as teachers with ten years of experience. Teacher training is mainly paid for by the training providers.

- In New Zealand, the Ministry of Education developed a new programme for centrally funded professional development. The change was in response to a reduction in available funding, which provided an impetus for targeting professional development to ECEC services catering to children from the government’s priority groups: Māori, Pasifika and low-socio-economic communities. Centrally-funded professional development contracts are for a three-year period. Providers are required to go into targeted communities, carry out a needs analysis and plan a programme that best meets the needs of particular communities. This new approach to central funding for providers intends to decrease the competitive environment for providers and give way to a more collaborative approach to providing professional development.